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## **The Structure and Hermeneutics of the Third Book of Rumi's *Mathnawi* as a Whole**

Seyed G Safavi  
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### **Abstract**

*Mathnawi* is the masterpiece of *Mawlana Jalaliddin Mohammad Balkhi Rumi Khorasani* (1207-1273 CE), the greatest Persian mystic and poet who composed the *Mathnawi* around seven hundred years ago in Konya. Hitherto the most important criticism in regards with *Mathnawi* is its apparent lack of structure and plan.

However, in this paper, the author aims to illustrate the structure, hermeneutics and synoptic view of the third book of Rumi's *Mathnawi*, which hitherto has never been attempted before. The main theme of the third book is 'Intellect' and 'Wisdom' which has been presented in twelve parallel discourses. The sections within each discourse were not planned linearly but synoptically using the literary principles of parallelism, chiasmus and hermeneutics. The structure of the third book, which is comprised of 220 sections and 53 stories, is constituted of 12 discourses in 3 blocks.

The third book of the *Mathnawi* of *Mawlana Jalaliddin Mohammad Balkhi Rumi Khorasani* (1207-1273 CE) known as *Mawlawi* in Iran, *Mevlana* in Turkey and Rumi in the west, is composed of an Arabic introduction in prose, 4810 verses and 220 sections, which are written in the form of stories and gnostic teachings. The study of the structure of the third book of *Mathnawi* is in continuation of research I carried out on the first book and Dr Mahvash al-Sadat Alavi carried out on the second book with the help of Simon Wightman, in the years 1997 to 2003 CE in the University of London<sup>1</sup>.

The accepted theory among the specialists of *Mathnawi* in the east and west is that it has no structure, design, or specific order<sup>2</sup>. However 700 years after the creation of *Mathnawi*, through our research we discovered that the *Mathnawi* has a structure and a specific design, which has been created based on the holy Quran and Islamic ontological principles such as the 'visible and the unseen world' (*'alam qaib wa shahadat*), 'arc of ascent and descent' (*qous so'ud wa nozul*), 'we are from God and we return to God' (*Inna lillah wa inna ilayhe raje'un*)<sup>3</sup>, the six directions of nature (north, south, east, west, up and down), the seven heavens, the six days of creation, the theory of holy numbers (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 18, 40), '*Shari'at, tariqat and haqiqat*', 'the states of the Spirit (*ruh*) and the Soul (*nafs*)', 'Divine spiritual journey (*seiro solouk Ilahi*)', and 'the principle of love and the current of love in the whole of existence'.

### **The importance of discovering the structure in understanding the text**

Structure is the frame which determines the relationship between the elements or sections of a story, work or creation and which shows the organic relationship between the different elements or sections of the work. In the philosophical approach of analysing and understanding a text, discovering the structure of the text for understanding it, is of utter importance. The recognised method of interpreting the text line by line is not sufficient for gaining a deep understanding of the text. For the interpretation of the text must be based on the analysis of the different elements of the structure. From the structures present within a whole, which are a product of the special inner relationship between the different parts of the whole structure, new meanings which are above the exoteric dimension of the text are discovered, and therefore the hidden meaning which is the essence of the text is revealed. Based on the principles of structural analysis, the relationships, differences and contrasts of the elements of the text give meaning and form to the different signs within the text, and relate the formal elements to one another, creating the possibility of creating terms with a new meaning through the comparison of the different

textual elements. By analysing the relationship between the different paragraphs and sections of a work, the essential meaning of a story or the whole work can be discovered.

Structural analysis helps in portraying the verses and textual phenomenon above their exoteric dimension, and reveals that the meaning of an element (verse, paragraph, section and story) is discovered in its relationship with other elements. All these relationships which are the building blocks of the final structure or system of the work help in discovering the essential and hidden content and meaning of the text. In this method, the relationship between the indicator and indicated is not very important, for example in the first story of the first book, it is not only important that the king is the symbol of the spirit, and the slave girl is the symbol of the soul, but it is the relationship between one indicator with another indicator which is important. An indicator gains its meaning and importance within the chain of indicators, the context that it is placed within and the different textual elements. The context is of utter importance for understanding the meaning of the indicator. For example the meaning of love, differs in the first book, the context of which is the soul and the sixth book, the context of which is monotheism.

The primary and essential theme is still hidden within the appearance. Line by line interpretation of the text does not open the door to the whole story or work. We discover the relationship of the indicators and the essential theme, through discovering the form and 'structure' and 'hermeneutics' which is the art and method of esoteric interpretation of the text, or taking the text back to its origin, in order to reach the hidden and esoteric meanings of the text. However we are not structuralists in the sense of structuralism in the French cultural and intellectual atmosphere after World War II, in that we do not necessarily adhere to the method of structuralists such as Levi-Strauss or follow Russian formalists such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Boris Eichenbaum and Roman Jakobson. Unlike structuralists we wish to reach the content through the form and appearance. What is important to us is the content and not the form. Although we believe that for understanding the content we must discover the form, and by

establishing a dialogue between the form and the content, the inner meaning of the work can be discovered. Our approach to the structure is a synoptic (seeing the work or text together, or as a whole) rather than a sequential approach and is based on ‘parallelism’, ‘chiasmus’ and the ‘hermeneutic cycle’, or referring the whole to the part, and the part to the whole<sup>4</sup>. Based on this method, verse by verse interpretation or sequential interpretation is useful but not sufficient, for it does not lead to the interpretation of the whole text.

As the *Mathnawi* is comprised of long and short stories and teaching sections, which are in a close and deep relationship with one another, in the first stance we have identified the beginning and end of each story and then divided each section into paragraphs. After the mentioned analysis, we have identified the verses of each story and section, and after discovering the twelve discourses, we have discovered the structure of the third book of *Mathnawi* as a whole. Based on the sequential approach, the third book of *Mathnawi* is comprised of 220 sections and 53 long and short stories. However based on the synoptic approach, it is comprised of 12 discourses, which have a parallel relationship with each other. The technical term ‘Discourse’ is used to denote a series of sections which either have narrative and thematic unity, or narrative and teaching unity. Based on the introduction of the third book, the primary theme of this book is ‘wisdom and intellect’, which through symbolism, in 12 discourses discusses and analyses the different topics, dimensions and aspects of wisdom (*hikmat*) and intellect (*‘aql*), in the general frame of the journey of the spirit from the station of disconnection (*tabattol*) to the station of annihilation (*Fana*). Wisdom, is certainty in ones deeds and speech, knowledge of the reality of beings, knowledge of the plagues of the imperative soul (*nafs ammareh*), esoteric vision, the preventive power from wrong deeds, knowledge of the reality of things and the correctness of speech and deeds.

In the prose introduction to the third book of *Mathnawi*, Rumi says “wisdoms are like the army of God that he makes the devotees powerful with, and prevents their knowledge from turning into ignorance, their justice from the possibility of injustice, their generosity

from prudishness, and their patience from impatience. It brings the mysteries, wisdoms and realities of the world which is far from their realm of understanding closer to their understanding, and turns easy what is difficult to them from obedience and diligence". From this introduction we deduce that in Rumi's opinion, Wisdom alongside being a deep spiritual and esoteric vision is the power that prevents human beings from corrupting their souls. In this introduction Rumi names four groups who are deprived of gaining Divine wisdom (*ḥikmat ilahi*): 1. Those that choose the desires of their soul (*nafs*) over God. 2. Those that choose indolence, and turn away from the search. 3. Those that only strive for the material world. 4. Those that only serve themselves. But those who receive the blessings and guidance of God, and choose religion over this world, will reach the glorious lights and bounteous treasures, of the treasure house of Divine wisdom. In the introduction, Rumi defines Divine wisdom, as the teachings, proofs, and reasons of the prophets, and introduces God as the giver of wisdom to creations. Furthermore he sets forth the subject of Intellect, and likens the presence of intellect in human beings to the presence of the spiritual sky in the sky of this world. In the introduction of the third book, in the framework of wisdom, Rumi discusses the role of prophets and the intellect or the heart, God as the giver of wisdom to human beings, those who disobey the commands of God, and seeking of knowledge. The introduction begins by the phrase "Wisdoms are the armies of God" and ends by the phrase "God is the Hearer (*Sami*'), The All-knowing (*'alim*), and the Lord of the worlds (*rab al-'alamin*)".

Three types of knowledge and three types of intellect are discussed in the third book: 'Particular knowledge', 'Universal knowledge' and 'Intuitive knowledge' which is true knowledge. 'Particular reason' which is not capable of understanding the realities of the world and only understands the appearance of the affairs of the material world, 'Universal intellect' and 'Divine intellect' which is the intellect of the mystic whose intellect is connected to the Universal intellect and through this connection has become Divine. The Divine intellect is capable of understanding the realities of both the material and the spiritual world and the realities of existence as a whole. The process of ascending from particular reason to Divine intellect is

achieved through the metamorphism of one's perception and spiritual needs, and its preliminary step is the desertion of bad temperament which includes: loving the material world, which prevents the gnostic from living a spiritual life. The desertion of material life and a change of temperament are achieved by the guidance of the *pir* (spiritual master). The desertion of material or worldly desires is the preliminary step to entering a spiritual life and gaining intuitive wisdom. The exalted followers of spiritual wisdom, are Substitutes of the Truth (*abdal haq*), who are the followers of the path of Truth (*tariq haq*), and like Gabriel gain spiritual power from the friendship of God, and they are even closer to God than angels.

After a prose introduction Rumi has written a poetic introduction in 68 verses, which appears before the first story. In the poetic introduction the following topics which revolve around the issue of Divine wisdom and intellect have been discussed: Divine mysteries and wisdom and the limitations of the understanding of normal human beings; the unity of the people of Allah and the disunity of the people of the world; the existence of spiritual power, wisdom and intellect in the whole of creation; the necessity of abstaining from worldly pleasures and lust for reaching a spiritual existence; the annunciations and warnings of Divine saints to the creations, and the negligence of the people of this world.

Bestowal of mouthfuls comes (to pass) from every clustered fruit-tree (well-to-do person), but bestowal of a throat is the work of God alone.

He bestows a throat on the body and on the spirit; he bestows a separate throat for every part of you.

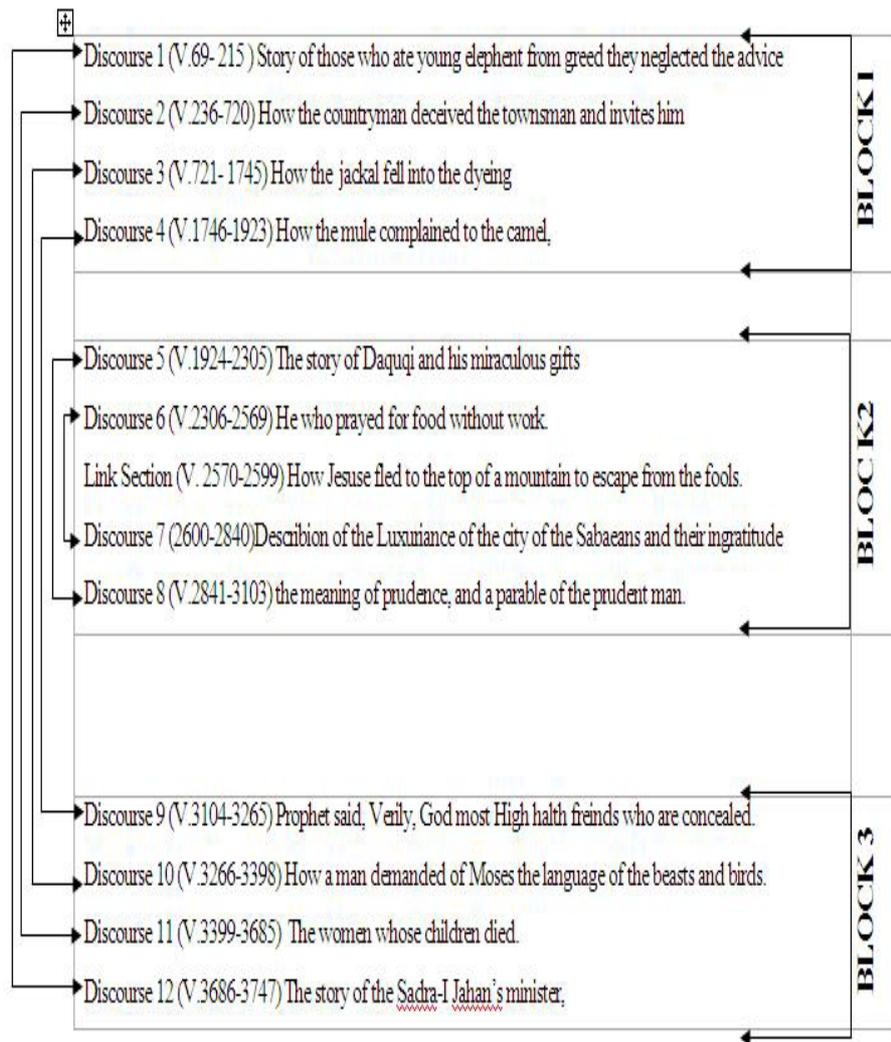
This he bestows at the time when you become Majestical and become void of vanity and deceit.

So that you will not tell the King's secrets to any one nor pour out sugar before flies.

The secrets of the (Divine) Majesty are drunk in by the ear of that one who, like the lily, hath hundred tongues and is dumb.

Book three of *Mathnawi*, Verses 17-21<sup>5</sup>

## The Structure of Book Three in Rumi's Mathnawi as a Whole



### **The Synoptic View of Book Three in Rumi's Mathnawi**

**Discourse 1.** *Story of those who ate the young elephant from greed and because they neglected the advice of the sincere counsellor.*

**Discourse 2.** *How the countryman deceived the townsman and invites him with humble entreaties and great importunity.*

**Discourse 3.** *How the jackal fell into the dyeing – vat and was dyed with many colours and pretended amongst the jackals that he was a peacock.*

**Discourse 4.** *How the mule complained to the camel, saying, “I am often falling on my face, while thou fallest but seldom”.*

**Discourse 5.** *The story of Daquqi and his miraculous gifts.*

**Discourse 6.** *He who prayed for food without work.*

**Link section.** *How Jesus, on whom be peace, fled to the top of a mountain (to escape) from the fools.*

**Discourse 7.** *Description of the Luxuriance of the city of the Sabaeans and their ingratitude.*

**Discourse 8.** *The meaning of prudence, and a parable of the prudent man.*

**Discourse 9.** *Setting forth how the Prophet, on whom be peace, said, “Verily, God most high hath friends who are concealed”.*

**Discourse 10.** *How a certain man demanded of Moses (that he should teach him) the language of the beasts and birds.*

**Discourse 11.** *The woman whose children died.*

**Discourse 12.** *Story of the Sadr-i Jahan's Wakil ( minister ), who fell under suspicion and fled from Bukhara in fear of his life; then love drew him back irresistibly, for the matter of life is of small account to lovers.*

### **The parallelism of the first discourse and the twelfth discourse of the third book of Mathnawi:**

The first discourse is parallel to the twelfth discourse through opposite and contradicting concepts.

### **The first Discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*:**

Hast thou heard that in India a sage espied a party of friends?  
Left hungry, lacking provisions, and naked, they were coming from travel on  
a far road.  
His Wisdom's love was stirred (within him), and he gave them a fair  
greeting and blossomed like a rose-bush.  
"I know" he said "that anguish has gathered upon you from this Karbala (of  
suffering) in consequence of hunger and emptiness;  
But for God's sake, for God's sake, O illustrious company, let not your food  
be the young of the elephant!  
Verses 69-73

The main story of the first discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi* is titled: "Story of those who ate the young elephant from greed and because they neglected the advice of the sincere counsellor". The first discourse starts from verse 69 and ends at verse 235. It is comprised of 166 verses, 6 sections and three short complimentary stories. The first story consists of three primary characters and a sinful act. The three primary characters in this story are: 'the elephant' which symbolises God, the 'young elephant', which symbolises prophets, Divine Saints and the perfect Human being, and 'those who ate the young elephant', who symbolise the adversaries of the prophets and Divine saints. Eating the 'young elephant' symbolises opposing to the tradition and ideal ways of the prophets and Divine saints.

The general context of the story is based on warning of destruction as a result of disobedience from Divine commandments and the advice of Divine saints; emphasis on communicating with God through performing innovation (*dhikr*) and supplication by a pure heart which is devoid of sin; performing the greater Jihad and patience in the spiritual journey towards Allah. It also points to the tests, traps and problems one faces in the journey towards God, and the inability of particular reason in confronting the traps of the devils and the desires of the soul (*nafs*). As Lahuri says "they have brought this story so that Substitutes (*abdal*) warn people of this world, so that they abandon it, and don't become world worshippers so that they are ruined."<sup>6</sup>

Dance (only) where you break (mortify) yourself and (when you) tear away the cotton from the sore of lust.

(Holy) men dance and wheel on the (spiritual) battlefield: they dance in their own blood.

When they are freed from the hand (dominion) of self, they clap a hand; when they escape from their own imperfection, they make a dance.

From within them musicians strike the tambourine; at their ecstasy the seas burst into foam.

You see it not, but for their ears the leaves too on the boughs are clapping hands.

You do not see the clapping of the leaves: one must have the spiritual ear, not this ear of the body.

Close the ear of the head to jesting and lying, that you may see the resplendent city of the soul.

Verse 95-101

### **The twelfth Discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*:**

The main story of the twelfth discourse is titled “Story of the *Sadr-i Jahan Wakil* (minister), who fell under suspicion and fled from Bukhara in fear of his life; then love drew him back irresistibly, for the matter of life is of small account to lovers”. This discourse, which is the last discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*, starts from verse 3686 and ends at verse 4748. However there is another story in the twelfth discourse, two sections of which are at the end of the third book and the rest is continued in the fourth book of *Mathnawi*. The twelfth discourse consists of 1054 verses, 49 sections, one main story, and 15 short secondary stories. The two main characters of the story are: ‘the lawyer’ who symbolises the mystic who as a result of his sins is distanced from the beloved and becomes the captive of the material world, but afterwards as a result of amorous repenting and pure love returns towards Allah, and ‘Allah’ who symbolises the Universal beloved.

The theme of both stories is the lowly condition of human beings in the material world. Hence in the first discourse the human being is destroyed as a result of Divine wrath, and is separated from the beloved because of his attachment to the material world, being captive

to the desires of the soul (*Nafs*), following particular reason and opposing the guidance of Divine saints. Reciprocally in the twelfth discourse, it is shown how the eager mystic in the same lowly condition of the material world, by opposing the desires of his soul (*Nafs*) and following the guidance of Divine saints, after a long spiritual journey and striving, through the forgiveness and kindness of the beloved, reaches the Universal beloved. Hence the first discourse is the story of ‘the fall’, and the twelfth discourse is the story of ‘ascension’ through the ladder of Divine love. Concepts such as invocation and remembrance (*dhikr*), patience (*sabr*), worship and intellect and reason have been presented in the first discourse and expanded, developed and evolved in the twelfth discourse.

**The parallelism of the second and eleventh discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*:**

The second discourse is parallel to the eleventh discourse through opposing and contradicting concepts and conclusions.

In the past, O brother, there was a townsman (who was) intimate with a countryman.

Whenever the countryman came to town, he would pitch his tent in the street of the townsman,

Verse 236-237

The main story of the second discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi* is titled “How the villager deceived the man from the city and invited him with humble entreaties and great importunity”. The second discourse begins from verse 236 and ends at verse 485, it consists of 11 sections and one long story and 12 short complimentary stories. The main symbols of the story are: ‘the city’, which symbolises the glorious, infinite and prosperous ‘Divine world’; ‘the villager’, symbolising the finite, ruined and sensual material world; ‘the villager’ symbolising the deceitful devil and the misguided sheikh; and ‘the man from the city’ symbolising the human being who through the temptations of astray people and because of a rebellious soul (*nafs*), leaves the ‘Divine city’.

The second discourse narrates the story of desertion of and fall from the glorious Divine city into the finite and desolate material world, and points to the inward and outward forces which lead to the fall and desertion from the Divine city.

Do not go to the country: the country makes a fool of a man, it makes the intellect void of light and splendour.

What is "the country"? The Shaykh has not been united (with God), but has become addicted to conventionality and argument.

Compared to the town, (which is) Universal Reason, these senses (of ours) are like asses (going round and round) in an ass-mill with their eyes bandaged.

Verse 517, 522-523

### **The eleventh discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*:**

That woman used to bear a son every year, (but) he never lived more than six months;

Either (in) three months or four months he would perish. The woman made lamentations crying, "Alas; O God,

Till, one night, there was shown to her (the vision of) a garden everlasting, verdant, detectable, and ungrudged.

In short, the woman saw that (Bounty) and became intoxicated: at that revelation the weak (creature) fell into an ecstasy.

She saw her name written on a palace: she who was of goodly belief knew that it (the palace) belonged to her.

After that they said (to her), "this Bounty is for him who has risen up with constant sincerity in self-devotion."

(Hence), as thou wert remiss in taking refuge (with God), God gave thee those afflictions instead."

Verse 3399-3400, 3404, 3408-3410, 3412

The eleventh discourse begins from verse 3399 and ends at verse 3685. This discourse consists of 286 verses and 14 sections. The connecting ring between the numerous short stories of the eleventh discourse is their thematic unity. The axis of their thematic unity is union with the beloved and returning to one's true abode and the Divine city.

When the human being does not willingly engage in asceticism, by Divine providence, he will face numerous problems, which will create the opportunity for the soul of those with spiritual potential to be awakened. In mystical terminology, when one is patient in dealing with problems he faces by Divine providence, the term ‘compulsory asceticism’ (*riyazat ijbari*) is used. Compulsory asceticism like ‘voluntary asceticism’ (*riyazat ikhtiyari*), results in the return of the human being to the Divine city. The Divine city is eternal; whereas the material city is transient. Outward death in return of being in the Divine presence, is insignificant, as the physical death for the mystics means the opening of the doors of Divine knowledge, Divine visionary disclosures (*mukashifat*), and the Divine envisioning of human deeds. The human being is responsible for his own deeds, and is the architect of his own identity, and by turning his back to the transient city (material world), he can ascend to the eternal city.

### Key Concepts

Compulsory asceticism (*riyazat ijbari*), supplication (*Istiqase*) and taking refuge (*Iltijae*), Divine city, Death, Divine envisioning of human deeds (verses 3457-3481), deliberation (*ta'ani*) and hesitation (*derang*), Particular reason (*'aql juzei*) and Universal intellect (*'aql Kulli*) (verses 3582-3587). Extinguishing the fire of anger, lust and egoism is only possible by the light of faith and desiring the Divine.

In the second discourse, the human being leaves the Divine city and falls into the ruined city of the transient world as a result of negligence, lack of prudence and following a misguided teacher and his own desires. Reciprocally in the eleventh discourse through asceticism, supplication and taking refuge in God he returns to the Divine city. Hence the second discourse is the narration of the fall or leaving, and the eleventh discourse is the narration of the ascent or return to the Divine city. The story of the second discourse is that of turning to the sensible world, while that of the eleventh discourse is that of turning to the immaterial world (*'alam mujaradat*). Through presenting two paradoxical situations Rumi aids the reader in achieving a deeper

understanding of the condition of the human being in life. In the eleventh discourse through *Hamzeh* (the master of Martyrs), Rumi calls this world the transient city (verse 3431), which he desires to leave. Reciprocally in the second discourse the eternal city which is the Divine world has been presented, which the human being leaves. In the second discourse (verses 432– 438) and the eleventh discourse (verses 3487-2389) the allegory of ducks refers to Divine human beings who are submerged in the sea of Divine knowledge and secrets. In the second discourse the temptation of the devil and in the eleventh discourse the revelation of the day of *Alast*, which essentially are opposed to one another (verse 3490) are stressed and compared to one another.

In the second discourse because of trusting particular reason, prudence (*Hazm*) is not used and the human being becomes a captive to the temptations of the devil, however in the eleventh discourse the human being is deliberant (*Ta'ani*) and hesitant (*derang*), which are qualities of the Divine intellect. Another parallel is that of the brief discussion about the Universal intellect and the senses in the second discourse (verse 523) and the comparison and description of the Universal intellect and particular reason in the eleventh discourse (verses 3583-3587).

Know for sure that the Statute is the Revelation of the Holy Spirit and that the analogy made by the individual is under (subordinate to) this.  
The intellect is endowed with apprehension and enlightenment by the Spirit;  
How should the Spirit become subject to its supervision?  
But the spirit makes an impression on the intellect, and in consequence of that impression the intellect exercises a certain governance.  
If the spirit has declared a belief in you, as (in) Noah, where is the Sea and the Ship (Ark) and the Flood of Noah?  
The intellect deems the impression to be the Spirit, but the light of the sun is very far from (being) the orb of the sun.  
Verses 3583-3587

### **Parallelism of the third discourse and the tenth discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*:**

The third discourse is parallel to the tenth discourse through introducing common concepts and opposing conclusions. In both discourses the character of Prophet Musa is the main axis of the story.

The third discourse consists of verses 721 to 1745 in 50 sections, which consists of a long story “the story of the pharaoh dreaming of Musa’s coming, and thinking of provisions for his coming” and 16 complimentary short stories.

In the third discourse Musa and the Pharaoh are two kinds of reality. Musa is the symbol of the Divine intellect (*‘aql rabbani*) and the intellect of resurrection (*‘aql Ma’ad*) and the pharaoh is the symbol of the particular intellect (*‘aql juzei*), the raw intellect (*‘aql Kham*) and the discursive intellect (*‘aql Ma’ash*)

The mention of Moses serves for a mask; but the Light of Moses is thy actual concern, O good man.

Moses and Pharaoh are in thy being: thou must seek these two adversaries in thyself

The eye of sense perception is only like the palm of the hand: the palm hath no power to reach the whole of him (the elephant)

The eye of the Sea is one thing and the foam another: leave the foam and look with the eye of the Sea.

Day and night (there is) the movement of foam-flakes from the Sea: thou beholdest the foam, but not the Sea. Marvellous!

Verses 1252-1253, 1269-1272

The tenth discourse consists of verses 3266–3398 in 9 sections. The title of the story is “How a certain man demanded of Moses (that he should teach him) the language of the beasts and the birds”

A young man said to Moses, “Teach me the language of the animals,

That perchance from the voice of animals and wild beasts I may get a lesson concerning my religion

“Be gone” said Moses “abandon this vain desire, for this (desire) holds (involves) much danger before and behind.

Seek the lesson and the (spiritual) wakefulness (which you want) from God,  
not from books and speech and words and lips.  
Verses 3266-3267, 3270-3271

In the tenth discourse Musa and the young man are two kinds of reality. Musa is the symbol of the Divine intellect (*'aql rabbani*) or the illuminative intellect (*'aql Ishraqi*) (verse 3372) “the one with the intellect first sees the end with his heart” and the young man is the symbol of raw and particular reason.

In the third discourse the pharaoh or the particular intellect (*'aql juzei*) does not agree to following Musa or the Divine intellect (*'aql ilahi*), and without success resorts to numerous means to strengthen his position in the material world.

In the tenth discourse the young man wishes to learn the language of animals, and though Musa doesn't want him to do so, he learns it and tries in many ways to strengthen his position but fails to do so. However the conclusion of the tenth discourse is opposed to that of the third discourse.

In the tenth discourse the young man who symbolises the particular and raw reason in the end agrees to follow the Divine intellect and hence is saved, and leaves the material world by a faithful spirit.

The intelligent man sees with his heart the end (final result) at the first (in the beginning); he that is lacking in knowledge sees (it) only at the end.

Once more he (the doomed man) made lamentations, saying, “O thou who hast goodly qualities, do not beat me on the head, do not rub into my face (the sins that I have committed).

That sin issued from me because I was unworthy: do thou give good recompense to my unworthy (action).”

He (Moses) said, “an arrow sped from the (archer's) thumb-stall, my lad: 'tis not the rule that it should come back to the source (the place whence it started);

But I will crave of (God's) good dispensation that thou mayst take the Faith away with thee at that time (of departing from the world).

When thou hast taken the Faith away (with thee), thou art living: when thou goest with the Faith, thou art enduring (For ever).”

Verses 3372-3377

In both discourses the concepts of asceticism, esoteric and exoteric knowledge, the difference and degrees of intellects and the outward and inward looking intellects have been presented. In the tenth discourse the relationship between asceticism, free will, and freedom is further developed.

**The Parallelism between the fourth discourse and the ninth discourse of the third book of the *Mathnawi*:**

The fourth discourse and the ninth discourse are parallel to one another through similarity and development of common concepts.

The fourth discourse consists of verses 1746 to 1923, in nine sections and 6 stories, which have thematic unity.

Said the Mule to the camel, "O good friend, in hill and dale and in the obscure (difficult) track  
Thou does not tumble on thy head but goest happily along, while I am tumbling on my head, like one who has lost his way.  
At every moment I am falling on my face whether (it be) in a dry place or a wet.  
Declare to me what is the cause of this that I may know how I must live."  
He (the camel) said, "my eye is clearer than thine; furthermore, it is also looking from on high:  
When I come to the top of a high hill, I regard attentively the end of the pass;  
Then too God reveals to my eye all the lowness and loftiness of the way,  
So that I take every step with (clear) sight and am delivered from stumbling and falling,  
(Whereas) thou dost not see two or three steps in front of thee: thou see the bait, but thou dost not see the pain of the snare.  
Verses 1746-1754

The fourth discourse is the end of the first block of the third book, which in general discusses topics related to particular reason and particular or sensual knowledge and their downfalls. In the beginning of the fourth discourse the camel is the symbol of perfect man, and the mule is the symbol of those who are captives of animalistic desires. Here Rumi explains how with the help of God-consciousness (*taqwa*)

one can escape the control of particular reason, and reach the Divine intellect and gain spiritual vision. The intellect is dominant to the sense, and the spirit is dominant to the intellect.

Sense perception is captive to the intellect, O reader; know also that the intellect is captive to the spirit.

The spirit sets free the chained hand of the intellect and brings its embarrassed affairs into harmony.

The (bodily) senses and (sensual) thoughts are like weeds on the clear water – covering the surface of the water.

The hand of the intellect sweeps those weeds aside; (then) the water is revealed to the intellect.

The weeds lay very thick on the stream, like bubbles; when the seeds went aside, the water was revealed.

Unless God loose the hand of the intellect, the weeds on our water are increased by sensual desire.

Every moment they cover the water (more and more): that desire is laughing, and thy intellect is weeping;

(But) when piety has chained the hands of desire, God looses the hands of the intellect.

So, when the intellect becomes thy captain and master, the dominant senses become subject to thee.

Verses 1824-1832

The ninth discourse consists of verses 3104 to 3263, in 9 sections which have thematic unity.

Another party go (to and fro) exceedingly hidden: how should they become well-known to the people of externals?

They possess all this (spiritual dominion), and (yet) no one's eye falls upon their sovereignty for one moment.

Both their miracles and they (themselves) are in the (Divine) sanctuary: even the *Abdal* do not hear their names.

Verses 3104-3107

The ninth discourse is the beginning of the third block of the third book of *Mathnawi*. In this discourse issues related to intuitive intellect unveiling intellect ('*aql Kashfi*), intuitive intellect ('*aql zoqi*), and transcendent intellect ('*aql mota'ali*) are discussed. Spiritual and esoteric people are divided into two groups: some are known to all, like the prophets and the majority of Divine saints, and some are hidden'

and unknown, to which the *hadith* “my saints who are under my veil and who no one knows but me” “*ulyayi tahto qabayi la ya'arafahom qairi*” refers to. They are the Divine saints that only God knows. According to the holy Qur'an they are servants and worshippers of the merciful (*'Ibad al-Rahman*). The revelation of the Divine power in Divine people disrupts the understanding of particular reason, and the order of the material world. The servants and worshippers of Allah (*'Ibad Allah*) are the elixir of the Divine and the sevenfold manifestations (*ašwar sab'aah*) and those who have passed the sevenfold degrees of perfection which consists of Nature (*±ab'a*), Soul (*Nafs*), Heart (*Qalb*), Spirit (*Ru'*), Secrets (*Sir*), the hidden (*khafi*) and the most hidden (*akhfa*). They love God with purity and are loved by God. The angel and the intellect (*'aql*) are of one essence, and in return the self and the devil of are one essence. The vision of the angel and the intellect are illuminated, as opposed to the dark vision of the self and the devil. Hence in the ninth discourse a higher degree of knowledge than what has been expressed in the fourth discourse has been presented. Both discourses have nine sections.

Become spirit and know spirit by means of spirit: Become the friend of vision (clairvoyant), not the child of ratiocination.

The Angel as well as the Intelligence is a finder of God: each of the twain is a helper and worshipper of Adam.

The Flesh (*nafs*) and the Devil have (also) been (essentially) one from the first, and have been an enemy and envier of Adam.

Verses 3192, 3196-3197

In the beginning of the fourth discourse the camel which is the symbol of perfect man is in parallel with the prophet of God in the beginning of the ninth discourse. Both discourses refer to the prophet of God, though in the ninth discourse a higher degree of knowledge and exalted individuals are presented.

The common axis of the short stories of the fourth discourse is the Divine saints (*uliya Allah*) from the chain of stellar saints (*silsileh uliyaye najmiyeh*), such as *'uzair*, *Sheikh Gomaname Vasel*, *Loqman*, *Bohlul* and the *Darwish*. However the common axis of the short stories of the ninth discourse is only the perfect and unique character of

Prophet Mohammad, who is the solar saint (*wali shamsiyeh*), and whose essence and rank has precedence over all other saints, and is similar to the Universal intellect.’

In the fourth discourse the degrees and conditions of the senses, the intellect and the spirit have been presented, In the ninth discourse Prophet Mohammad has been introduced as the Spirit of knowledge (*ruh ma'arif*) from an epistemological point of view, and as the Spirit of the created world (*ruh 'alam Khilqat*) from an ontological point of view.

### **The parallelism between the fifth discourse and the eighth discourse of the third book of *Mathnawi*:**

The fifth discourse or the story of “*Daquqi* and his miraculous gifts” (verses 1924-2305) is parallel to the eighth discourse (verses 2841-3103, Section 16), through the evolution and growth of the concept of Divine Intellect (*'aql ilahi*, *'aql rabbani*) and intuitive wisdom (*hikmat dhouqi*).

The fifth discourse is the beginning of the second block of the third book of *Mathnawi*, which deals with the Divine Intellect (*'aql ilahi*, *'aql rabbani*) and intuitive wisdom (*hikmat dhouqi*). The eighth discourse is the end of the second block of the third books of *Mathnawi*. The fifth discourse (the story of *Daquqi*) is one of the longest stories of the *Mathnawi*, which is approximately comprised of 400 verses.

In the fifth discourse Rumi discusses how Divine Love (*'ishq ilahi*) sets fire to the crop of the nature of particular reason (*'aql juzei*), and how the lover of the Divine (*'ashiq ilahi*) after reaching the Divine intellect (*'aql rabbani*) and intuitive wisdom (*hikmat dhouqi*) by connecting to the Universal intellect (*'aql Kulli*) evolves the knowledge of his heart (*ma'arifat qalbi*). Rumi in this mysterious discourse has masterfully presented some of the key concepts of *'Irfan* (Islamic mysticism), such as ‘unity of existence’ (*wahdat wojoud*), ‘the illuminative unity of the saints of Allah’ (*wahdat nouri uliya Allah*),

‘Immateriality of the spirit in imaginal hearts’, ‘appearance of the truth in the form of creation by Divine manifestation’, and ‘mystical disclosures and Divine realities’ (*Mukashifat wa waghe’at rabbani*)

In the fifth discourse ‘*Daquqi*’ is the symbol of a mystic who is kind and in love (verses 1922-1924 and verse 1933), and who in his external (*afaqi*) and internal (*anfusi*) wayfaring through the concentration of his heart, (verse 1976) is constantly submerged in the spiritual observation of Divine beauty (verse 1930). The Prophet is described as having kind and compassionate attributes (verse 1924). The Divine intelligent (*Aqil rabbani*) sees the outcome of everything from the beginning (verses 2197-2199). Also the necessity of prudence in spiritual wayfaring has been expressed in this discourse (verses 2200-2207, the end of the sixteenth section and of the entirety of the seventeenth section).

The heart reaches the station of manifesting the Truth, and becoming the spring of Divine wisdom (*hikmat rabbani*) when like a part which travels to its whole, it travels towards its whole, which is the absolute existence of Allah.

The heart that is higher than the heavens is the heart of the saint or the prophet.  
That (heart) has become clean of earth and purified; it has come to (full) growth and has been made complete.  
It has take leave of earth and has come to the Sea; it has escaped from the prison of earth and has become of the Sea.  
Verses 2248-2250

The heart is the circumference of the circle of existence and because of its generosity and kindness; it disseminates the treasures of intuition and revelation

The condition of having a Divine heart is need, presence of the heart with God (verse 2275), and continuously searching (verses 2302-2303).

Come, seek (them), for search is the pillar (foundation) of fortune: every success consists in (depends on) fixing the heart (upon the object of desire).  
Unconcerned with all the business of the world, keep saying with (all) thy soul *Ku, Ku* like the Dove.

Verses 2302-2303

In the eighth discourse the importance of continuity in the communion with the Divine intellect and the importance of prudence, which is one of the lights of the Intellect which vanquishes darkness and ignorance, have been stressed, and the mystics have been asked to have prudence of and think of the Day of Judgment (*ma'ad*).

O children of the vicegerent (Adam), deal justly: act with prudence for the sake of the day of Tryst (judgement).

Verses 2847

In this discourse Rumi also says that the battle between good and evil is constantly waged in the heart of the human being. On one hand the Divine intellect calls him to leave transient and destructive pleasures, and on the other hand particular reason calls him towards lust and transient pleasures.

The mystics do not pay attention to the transient desires of the soul (*nafs*), and avoid the traps and seeds of the material world; however the seekers of transient pleasures and the followers of particular reason become captives to the desires of the soul (*nafs*), and in the end meet their fall. Greed is the calamity of the intellect and thankfulness its spirit (verse 2892-2899). Each human being is born with a Divine nature, hence moving away and not abiding by the Universal intellect is considered as one of the accidental qualities of the human being.

In the eighth discourse like the fifth discourse Rumi points to some of the attributes of prophets as the best examples of Divine sages (*akiman ilahi*) such as Allah being the only aid of prophets (verse 2920) and being with them.

In the eighth discourse to stress more on the distinction and superiority of Divine intellect (*'aql rabbani*) over particular intellect (*'aql juzei*), Rumi engages in a descriptive comparison between the states and conditions, attributes and end of the followers of particular reason.

Paradise and hell are respectively the worshipping places of the generous (*kariman*) and the lowly (*foroomayegan*) (verses 2993-2995). The purpose of the creation of the human being is worshipping the Truth (*haq*), which means knowing the Truth, and knowing the Truth is the result of having wisdom of the heart (*hikmat qalbi*).

“I did not create the Jinn and mankind (save they might serve me).” Recite this (text). The object of the world is naught but Divine worship.  
Verse 2988

Divine sages (*hakiman rabbani*) are modest (*Khashe'e*) and *faqir* invokers in the Divine court.

In the eighth discourse like the fifth discourse love and loving are the evident and distinguishing attributes of Divine sages (*'akiman ilahi*) from others; although in the eighth discourse Love and the mystics who are the Divine sages (*'akiman ilahi*) have been discussed more extensively (verse 3014-3029). The nutrition of the mystic is love, and lovers have nothing to do with being, for they are residents of the Divine world.

The unity of lovers is another of the parallels between the eighth and fifth discourse.

Lovers have pitched their tents in none-existence: they are of one colour (quality) and one essence, like none-existence.  
Verse 3024

Lovers live in the Divine world. As the Divine world is the world of unity and oneness, Lovers have also become of one colour and have become like a unified spirit.

True cognition is not achieved through acquired knowledge, but it is achieved through the tranquillity and transcendence of the spirit (verses 3026-3027). For those who have not purified their heart cannot see the beauty of the Divine.

None with face unwashed sees the face of the *Houris*: He (the Prophet) said,  
“There is no ritual prayer without the ablution.”  
Verse 3033

The lovers see the beauty of the beloved but the distanced (*fareghan*) see nothing of love or knowledge. The nutrition and the source of power of the spirit is love.

In the eighth discourse (verses 3024-3025) Rumi deems a strong inner desire and urge to reach the truth to be the condition of reaching it, which is in parallel with the issue of need and searching that has been discussed in the fifth discourse.

In the eighth discourse a strong objection has been made to the scholars who only memorize concepts and terms and have not understood the true purpose and meaning of the truth and Rumi stresses, that by using the limited tools and principles of particular reason one cannot reach the truth (verse 3048).

(But) how should the foot of the scout reach that spot? For it is the watch tower and mountain fortress of none-existence  
Verse 3048

Only those reach the truth and become Divine sages whose God-consciousness (*taqwa*) is the similitude of their life.

The concept of prayer is another of the parallels between the two discourses. With the difference that in the fifth discourse a prayer done with full awareness is the topic of discussion while in the eighth discourse Rumi discusses drunken prayer. The latter form of prayer is the more perfect and exalted form of prayer.

In both discourses prayer is the symbol of the supplication of the wayfarer (*Salik*) with the Universal beloved (*ma'ashouq Kull*). In the eighth discourse Rumi points to absolute Monotheism (*Tawhid*) (verse 3060)

The sixth discourse (verses 2306-2569 in 12 sections) is parallel to the seventh discourse (verses 2600-2840, in 12 sections) through a detailed evolution of concepts.

In the sixth discourse, “the story of the man who sought to receive (from God), lawful means of livelihood without working or taking trouble, in the time of Prophet David” has three main characters which are, ‘the claimant of the cow’, who symbolises the imperative soul (*nafs ammareh*), ‘the cow’s killer’ who symbolises Intellect, and ‘prophet David’ who symbolises the Truth (*haq*) or the Sheikh who is symbolises the shadow of Truth.

In the sixth discourse Rumi discusses the battle between the intellect and the imperative soul, or ‘particular reason’ and the ‘intellect of servitude’ (verse 2526) or the ‘resurrection intellect’ and the ‘sustenance reason’, in the material world. Rumi says reaching Divine wisdom is equivalent to destroying the imperative soul, and the particular reason following the Universal intellect.

Kill your fleshy soul and make the world (spiritually) alive; it (your fleshy soul) has killed its master: make it (your) slave.  
The intellect is a captive and craves of God daily bread (won) without toil, and bounty (placed before it) on a tray.  
But it depends upon sacrificing the cow: know (that) the (spiritual) treasure (is found) in (sacrifice of) the cow, O you who dig in (holes and) corners!  
Verse 2504, 2507, 2512

In the sixth discourse Rumi also points to the superiority of Divine wisdom and intuitive wisdom over pure argumentative philosophy, and says philosophers are in the chains of theoretical concepts, but mystics are the possessors of true knowledge.

The philosopher is in bondage to things perceived by the intellect; (but) the pure (saint) is he that rides as a prince on the Intellect of intellect  
The Intellect of intellect is your kernel, (while) your intellect is (only) the husk: the belly of animals is ever seeking husks.  
Verses 2527-2528

In essence the sixth discourse which is the middle section of the third book of *Mathnawi*, contains the primary message of the third book, which is the superiority of the intuitive and Divine wisdom over argumentative philosophy, and the necessity of particular reason following the Universal intellect, through the destruction of the imperative soul, and the principality of the essence of Divine wisdom, and reaching the station of Divine wisdom through connecting with the Intellect of intellects or Universal intellect or Allah.

The story of Prophet 'Isa's escape to the mountain top from the fool (verses 2570-2591), connects the first part of the third book to the second part. Fleeing from the fool (imperative soul) symbolises the intellect seeking refuge in Allah, who is the Intellect of intellects and Universal Intellect.

The seventh discourse (verses 2600-2840, in 12 sections) is the story of the people of *Saba* and their foolishness, and the lack of effect of the teachings and advice of prophets to foolish people. This discourse consists of one major story and four short secondary stories. The city of the people of *Saba* is the symbol of the tangible world ('*alam mahsusat*'), and its people who are dumb, blind and naked, are the symbol of the characteristics of particular reason and exoteric knowledge, which are greed, wishfulness and desiring the material world. The prophets are the symbols of the carriers of Divine wisdom (*hikmat ilahi*) and the possessors of Divine intellect ('*aql rabbani*).

The seventh discourse explains the different dimensions of the topics covered in the sixth discourse, specially the different dimensions of the poverty of particular reason, and states that in general, the poverty of particular reason is because it is blind, dumb and destitute. For particular reason is in the chains of the tangible world and has shallow desires and greed, and desires the material world, hence it is not capable of knowing Divine realities, and the esoteric and exoteric secrets of the worlds beyond the tangible world.

In the seventh discourse Rumi also explains some of the qualities, attributes and states of the scholars of exoteric sciences as

opposed to the Divine sages (*hakiman rabbani*) or the scholars of esoteric sciences, and by referring to the holy Quran says “they do not know”, “*La ya’alamun*” and in reality they are ignorant for they do not know the reality of their own self. The scholars of exoteric sciences know the characteristics of each phenomenon, but they do not know themselves. They are well versed in ‘*Fiqh al-Jawarih*’ or the exoteric decrees, but do not know whether their own existence is acceptable to the Universal intellect (‘*aql kull*) or not; in the words of Mawlawi “*yajouz ast ya ‘ajouz*”, “is it acceptable or not acceptable”, and in the words of Mulla Sadra “the foundation of faith in the day of judgment, is knowledge of the heart.”, hence they are fools and not scholars. For the essence of all knowledge is for the human being to know his own nature from an esoteric and spiritual point of view. Amongst all sciences and knowledge it is the knowledge of *Faqr* or Divine wisdom (*hikmat rabbani*), which is the provision of the Day of Judgment (first book verse 2834).

He knows a hundred thousand superfluous matters connected with the (various) sciences, (but) that unjust man does not know his own soul.  
 He knows the special properties of every substance, (but) in elucidating his own substance (essence) he is (as ignorant) as an ass.  
 Saying “I know (what is) permissible and unpermissible.” Thou knowest not whether thou thyself are permissible or (unpermissible as) an old woman.  
 Thou knowest this licit (thing) and that illicit (thing), but art thou licit or illicit? Consider well!  
 Thou knowest what is the value of every merchandise; (if) thou knowest not the value of thyself, ‘tis folly.  
 Thou has become acquainted with the fortunate and inauspicious stars; thou does not look to see whether thou art fortunate or unwashed (spiritually foul and ill-favoured)  
 This, this, is the soul of all the sciences: that thou shouldst know who thou shalt be on the Day of Judgement.  
 Verses 2648-2654

### **Conclusion:**

The third book through ‘hermeneutics’ and ‘synoptic’ reading consists of twelve discourses and three blocks. The first block is

comprised of the first four discourses, the second block is comprised of the fifth to eighth discourse, and the third block is comprised of the ninth to twelfth discourse.

The first block generally discusses particular reason (*'aql juzei*). The second block discusses the Divine intellect (*'aql rabbani*), and compares it to particular reason (*'aql jozei*), and the third block discusses the Intellect of intellects or Universal intellect (*'aql Kulli*). It can also be said that the third book of *Mathnawi* explains how one can pass particular reason (*'aql jozei*) and reach the Universal intellect (*'aql Kulli*). The heart of the third book is Divine heart and intellect, and its destination is the Universal intellect (*'aql Kulli*).

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<sup>3</sup> Holy Qur'an, chapter 2 verse 156.

<sup>4</sup> Safavi, Seyed G. The Structure of Rumi's Mathnawi, Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> All quoted poems are from: Rumi. The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi. Ed. R A Nicholson, Cambridge 1929.

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## **Soul and its becoming in the Transcendent Philosophy**

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### **Abstract**

The reality of the soul, its levels and actions, and its relation to the body have always been (and are) among the most important philosophical issues, and evidence for this may be found even in the most ancient philosophical deliberations of the Greeks and others.

In the philosophical traditions of the Islamic world as well, serious attempts have been made to present a “science of the soul” which is in accord with the spirit of Islamic philosophical sciences. In the Transcendent Philosophy, on the other hand, a version of science of the soul has been presented which both justifies the concrete sphere of “the immaterial and material soul” and describes “the soul’s becoming and seeking for perfection”. In addition, it is fully consistent with the components and overall structure of the Transcendent Philosophy.

Based on doctrines of principiality of existence, motion in substance, bodily origination and spiritually subsistence of the soul, Mulla Sadra depicts man’s soul and its station in such a way which is free from usual inconsistencies of philosophical traditions in this regard. At the same time, based on the Book and tradition, he opens a new window to man’s existence through which the existential dimensions of man are seen in correspondence and as being similar to the whole cosmos. Though, in this way, Mulla Sadra has made uses of the Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions of his forerunners, his own innovations are unrivalled and exceptionally strong.

**Key words:** *psyche, external faculties, pneuma, internal faculties, rational soul, bodily origination, spiritual subsistence*

## **Introduction**

Though, today, terms such as “psychology” (*ilm al-nafs*), and the like suggest a especial branch of knowledge with its origins, methodologies, and goals, reflection on the main aspect of man’s life and his existential foundation, i.e. “soul” or “spirit” does not belong to a particular age. One may dare to say that no period of life and no aspect from among various aspects of life may be justified without taking into consideration this spiritual element. And even a part of human’s primary knowledge- though in an undistinguished manner- had been devoted to the soul and its state, and belief in it had been cast in myths. General and ordinary beliefs of people, their individual and social rituals, and in particular their creeds in various ages concerning life after death suggest man’s attention paid to the category of the soul and its predominance on all aspects of life and in particular determination of man’s existential level. Many religious rituals and creeds of the primary inhabitants of the South America, Africa, Asia, and in particular Far-East suggest supra-natural aspect of the soul and its role played in spiritual and even material developments of humanity; and according to them, it has been mostly regarded as a intermediate between divinity and ordinary life of human beings.

This is other than creeds and schools which concerned (and in some cases concern) states of the Dead and their destinies after death and in other words continuance of spiritual life of human beings among ancient nations and even new ones on the earth. Anyway, it may be said that the aspect shared between all these schools and creeds is desire for transcendence and permanent life which may be attained through the soul and its immaterial essence; and it should be said that no age of the human history may be found which is void of such desire. Egyptians, Babylonians, Ionians, Iranians, and Indians have mentioned this existential aspect in their own ways and presented various writings and creeds concerning its attributes, properties, and influences on this worldly life, among them are Greeks’ reflections and beliefs about “soul” and “spirit” and, generally speaking, origin of life, mentioning them is not without some profit.

## 1. Historical Grounds

In the ancient Greek, two terms “*psyche*” and “*pneuma*” which mean respectively “soul” and “spirit” (or breath, power of life) are among keywords of philosophical science of the soul. Some Greek philosophers such as Milesians, Pythagoreans, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras have used the term “*pneuma*” as an equivalent for “wind” and “origin of life<sup>1</sup>”. Aristotle regarded it as an equivalent for “formal cause”, though later this term is replaced by the term “*anima*” in Aristotelian tradition. For Stoics, the term “*pneuma*” meant “spirit”, “power”, and “creative fire”, a fire which warms and moves man’s existence. In the modern ages, the term “*pneumatica*” is used for what belongs or relates to spirit or spiritual beings.

A heroine of ancient Greek mythology, “*psyche*” is mostly depicted as a young beautiful girl with two wings like butterfly; after many sufferings, she attains freedom and permanence. In Greek myths we read that originally a beautiful mortal, Psyche was warned by the Delphi Oracle that she would love no mortal, but she would fall in love with an immortal being- Eros, boy-God of love, and would face many hardships<sup>2</sup>. The essence of respective myths is that “*psyche*” is a symbol of man’s soul purified by love and suffering which seeks for eternal happiness in love<sup>3</sup>.

In sayings of the Greek philosophers and wise men, man’s soul or spirit- *psyche*- has been mentioned as the best gift of God and nature, and it has been emphasized that one has to know it and care of it. Perhaps the great Greek philosopher, Pythagoras and his followers as well as followers of Orphicism are the first philosophers who have reflected extensively and systematically upon soul, its properties, and destiny. Their ideas concerning embodiment of the soul, necessity of asceticism, and man’s self-control to care of it as well as their belief in transmigration are among the most famous Pythagorean ideas in the science of the soul<sup>5</sup>. As is well-known, their ideas in this regard, numbers, and essence of mathematics have had extensive and long-lasting influences on many philosophical circles in the East and the

West. For Socrates, “the soul of the true philosopher thinks that she ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as she is able”<sup>6</sup>. Plato mentions soul as follows: “soul, which is the divinest part of man”<sup>7</sup>. And thus it should be cared of more than other parts. Because of the fact that the soul is divine, he regards it as being essentially good and beautiful; and thus, he thinks that kinds of vice and evil are caused by imperfections of body or miseducation or corruption of the Polis<sup>8</sup>. It is here where Plato’s educational and moral considerations are introduced and a large part of *The Republic* is devoted to them<sup>9</sup>.

Aristotle regards the soul (or “psyche”) as the form of body; and to define he says: “the first grade of actuality of a natural organized body”<sup>10</sup>. For this reason, the agent of motion which is for him “*telos*”, for man is the same as his soul which is both formal cause and *telos* and united with the body. Difference between Aristotle’s view and that of other Greek philosophers in this regard is seen in his empirical and objective look at the soul, statements concerning it, its actions, and its relation to the body.

Continuance of the Greek science of the soul may be found in Stoicism and Neo-Platonism. For Stoics, the soul is a share of divine fire; and thus its potentialities should turn into actuality; and this is possible only through practical wayfaring. Neo-Platonism, however, is based on some sort of philosophical-Illuminationist science of the soul. Teachings of those like Plotinus and Proclus are well-known in this regard. In brief, these teachings are as follows: the soul (as the third (the lowest) hypostasis) is at the greatest distance from the origin of light (existence). Thus, it should be, through piety and asceticism, brought to the path of transcendence and, finally, unity with the first hypostasis, i.e. the One. This existential unity looks like connection of a water drop to the ocean; and in this way, the drop is saved from all imperfections, finitude, corruption, and mortality<sup>11</sup>. This description of the reality of the soul and its destiny is distinct from views of Plotinus’ forerunners; and at the same time, it has been of extensive influence on his intellectual successors both in the Christian world and Islamic world.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that Muslim philosophers have reflected upon the soul, its reality, and levels and kinds, much more than their Greek forerunners. Also, concerning its origins, actions, and that how it relates to the body- which has been (and is) among the most important philosophical problems in the Western philosophical tradition- they have had great innovations, and in this regard, their guiding principles have been epistemic sources such as the Book and tradition. For example, concerning the problem of belong-ness of the soul to the body and the way that the former relates to the latter- where human mind inclines towards embodiment and transmigration-, the Holy Quran has made use of the term “breath”, and God has introduced Him as its origin<sup>12</sup>.

## **2. Sadraian Approach to Soul**

Anyway, reflection upon Divine verses has been the most important guiding principle for Muslim philosophers- and in particular Mulla Sadra- in this path. For example, while correcting and completing Aristotle’s view about the soul and based on a triple division of the soul- vegetal, animal, and rational- Ibn Sina says that the rational soul which is the most perfect from among the souls includes all perceptions and is defined as “the first grade of actuality of a natural organized body because of doing voluntary actions and perceiving universals”<sup>13</sup>. For this reason, in some other cases, he make distinctions between levels of sense faculties- whether apparent or hidden ones- as well as between levels of speculative intelligence on the one hand and “material intelligence” to the “acquired intelligence” and “angelic intelligence”, and describes their properties; and in this, he seeks help from the noble verse of “light”<sup>14</sup>. Other philosophers (both Peripatetics and Illuminationist) as well as Muslim mystics have devoted great parts of their works to the soul, its levels, and its relation to other beings.

In this regard, views of some theologians are of importance as well. For example, though influenced seriously by views of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina in the science of the soul, Ghazali mentions the faculty of

abstraction and its branches in addition to apparent and hidden faculties of the soul listed by his forerunners<sup>15</sup>.

Also, while being influenced by the views of Ibn Sina and writing critical marginal glosses on his *Isharat wa'l tanbihat*, Fakhr Razi has written an independent book called "*al-Nafs wa'l ruh wa Sharh-i quwahima*" (Soul, Spirit, and Description of Their Faculties), in which he has presented his own views.

From among all mystics, however, Ibn Arabi has paid more attention to the station of man and his spiritual and ideal aspect; and one may say that an important part of his works has been devoted to this subject. He takes the term "*ens*" as the root of the term "*insan*" (man), and we find the same in Mulla Sadra's *Mafatih al-ghayb* (Keys to Unseen). As compared to the whole universe (which is called Macrocosm by Ibn Arabi), Ibn Arabi calls man and his sphere "microcosm", and writes: "microcosm means that man is the spirit of the world, its cause and its spheres..."<sup>16</sup>.

Elsewhere he writes that though man's body and matter is very small as compared with the universe, in spiritual terms he is very great, and he is equal to the whole universe and includes all beings.

Two terms, "comprehensive being" and "perfect (universal) man" which have been repeatedly mentioned in his works and in those of his followers and commentators are allusions to the importance given to man and his station in Ibn Arabi's mysticism. And as we know, both terms have been extensively reflected in the Transcendent Philosophy as well<sup>17</sup>.

Emphasizing the importance of science of the soul and enlisting its eight virtues in his *Mafatih al-ghayb* and based on two theories of "motion in the substance" and "bodily origination and spiritually subsistence of the soul", Mulla Sadra proceeds to present a theory in science of the soul which, on the one hand, includes all strong points of the theories of previous philosophers; and on the other it is free from their weak points. The whole eighth book as well as a part of the ninth

book of *al-Asfar al-arba'ah* (Four Intellectual Journeys) have been devoted to definition of the soul, its nature, faculties, immateriality, and attributes. And by study of them one may understand how Mulla Sadra has described previous philosophers' views concerning science of the soul, and what his own innovations in this regard are. In the first five chapters of the eighth book of *al-Asfar*, various issues including quiddity, immateriality, and levels of the soul as well as statements concerning it have been introduced. From the chapter six onward, points concerning human rational soul and in particular subsistence of the soul and "immateriality of the faculty of imagination" have been studied and discussed<sup>18</sup>. In other Mulla Sadra's works such as *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah* and *Mafatih al-Ghayb* valuable points concerning science of the soul and its consequences may be found as well. For example, in the third Mashhad of his *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*, while separating man's apparent and hidden senses in the same way that Peripatetics do, he mentions some defects in their views in this regard, and goes to complete such views. From the most important items in this part of the book is the author's view concerning the fact that "the soul is bodily in origin and spiritual in subsistence" and arguments for it; and his view is in brief as follows: the soul is originated because of the origination of the body; and there are differences in genus, kind, and personification for the soul because of entrance in various modes after entrance into the body<sup>19</sup>. Also, in the fifteenth *miftah* of *Mafatih al-ghayb*, he mentions a subtle point which is, in brief, as follows:

"Breathing is of two kinds, one to extinguish fire and the other to start a burning; then both existence and subsistence of the soul and its annihilation is by Divine effusion; here, however, there is another mystery; some ancient philosophers have said that the soul is fire and wind (according to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Heraclitus and Stoics), we have not to regard these words as being stemmed from conjectures; for what has been revealed by the Legislator includes these words as well<sup>20</sup>.

Now, to make a general picture of Mulla Sadra's view concerning man's rational soul and its station, we mention some points, and in this way his innovations are introduced. Here, we do not want to

go in details of Mulla Sadra's ideas, but rather, we will have only a passing look at the foundations of his science of the soul.

In the fourth "journey" of his "Four Journeys", Mulla Sadra discusses generation of the soul and the way it attains the highest stations of perfection. At first, however, he introduces the meaning of "life" and its existential effects such as sense, motion, feeding, sleeping, and reproducing; and then he explains its relationship to the existing perfectional form<sup>21</sup>. Then quiddity of the soul and origin of actions of vegetal and animal kinds are introduced, and this is followed by a discussion about apparent and hidden faculties of the rational soul<sup>22</sup>. After these issues, one of his most original views concerning the soul i.e. the doctrine that "the soul is bodily or material in its origination and spiritual in its subsistence" (*jismaniyyat al-huduth ruhaniyyat al-baqa'*) has been studied, and arguments for it have been mentioned<sup>23</sup>. In what follows he discusses and proves motion in the psychic substances and its necessity for human perfection. Thus, motion in the psychic substances is from the station of nature, to the station of middle immateriality (*tajarrud barzakhi*), then to rational immateriality, and finally to the super-immateriality. Nevertheless, perfection of the rational soul happens not in a horizontal disconnected way, but in an internal becoming from the material body towards pure immateriality. Now, we have to find how parts and foundations of Sadrean science of the soul are related to each other.

1- According to the Transcendent Philosophy and based on the doctrine of principiality of existence (*isalat al-wujud*), existence is real and free from any plurality, and at the same time enjoys various levels and degrees, and quiddity is not other than a shadow and mental manifestation of existence. In other words, both unity and plurality are true, but not so that "plurality of things is other than unity of things", but rather in a way that unity of existence- i.e. that existence is principial and equivocal between beings and quiddity is mentally- posited- is true in spite of plurality of existence; plurality of existence as well is determined in spite of unity of existence<sup>24</sup>.

In this sense, unity is the true description of the reality of existence; and plurality is the true description of the various levels of existence graded in terms of intensity and weakness; none of all these levels, of course, are out of the reality of existence; and plurality in beings is manifestation of graded levels of existence. Thus, in Sadrean philosophy, based on principiality and simplicity of existence as well as doctrine of gradation of the reality of existence, distinctions between beings are not of the kind of distinctions stemmed from quiddity so that it may result in some contradictions between them.

To explain, it should be said that in Aristotelian philosophy as well as philosophy of Muslim Peripatetics, divisions such as those between “matter and form”, “substance and accident”, “actuality and potentiality” are among divisions stemmed from quiddity; and thus relationships between them are of the kind of oppositions; in Sadrean philosophy, however, above-mentioned divisions are existential ones. Based on the principle of gradation of levels of existence, from one of its level “form” is abstracted and from another “matter” is abstracted. For example, from the level of actuality of existence of a body, its “form” may be abstracted, and from its level of potentiality, its matter is abstracted. Other divisions employed in the Peripatetic tradition as well undergo such changes in the Sadrean philosophy.

According to Mulla Sadra, some problems and difficulties in Peripatetic tradition such as essential contradiction between genera and consequently problem of relation of them to each other or reduction of one of them to the other is stemmed from the fact that in the Peripatetic tradition statement concerning existence and quiddity have been confused; and if, according to the Peripatetic tradition, we take for granted limits and quiddal opposition between things, there will be realized infinite various quiddities between the beginning and end of beings, which is against the assumption of Peripatetics<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, we have to admit the “unique connected reality of existence” which is intensified and graded and from each and every grade of it, a limit and quiddity is abstracted. This intensified existence has all perfection of the beginning and end; and species, genera, and

differentia are, because of the one connected existence, seen in the essence of being. This appears in Sadrean science of the soul as follows: human rational soul includes all levels of existence potentially; in its becoming, it goes from a state to another; such becoming, however, does not harm the soul's simplicity and immateriality.

2- Taking into account what said in the item 1, existence of "substance and accident" may be justified in the light of true unity and graded levels of existence. And since "accident" is of, by definition, a secondary and non-independent reality, thus, in all its modes, it follows substance and statements concerning it. Thus, in Sadrean philosophy, accidents of objects are not other than aspects and levels of the existence of substance. And what makes a being individuated and distinct is not out of that being, but rather originates from within it<sup>26</sup>. Thus, what was described by the previous philosophers as motion in natural philosophy and was confined and limited to some accidental categories was described, in the Transcendent Philosophy, under the statements of existence (ontology) and metaphysics; and motion in accidents is conditioned by motion in substance while retaining the personal unity of the being<sup>27</sup>.

To explain it should be said that according to philosophers, motion is evident and undeniable; and Aristotle and majority of the Peripatetic philosophers have confined it to four accidental categories; and thus they have regarded the issue of motion as one of the natural ones. Criticizing this view, Mulla Sadra proceeds to introduce the theory of "motion in substance", whose simplest version is as follows:

"Matter is, by nature, in flux and continuous renewal; but this not means that motion intervenes matter, but rather the external mode of a material being is the same as motion. Nature is the same as motion and becoming by essence; in other words, it is an essence which is the same as renewal. The world of nature is full of motion and flux; and that is not the case that motion and the mover are independent of each other. What is in the external world is only an established being and an unstable essence; and motion and mover are other than each other only in a mental analysis. The material world has no rest even for a moment; and it will not come to a halt as long as its existential potentialities are not actualized<sup>28</sup>.

On the other hand, since existence of accidents is a secondary and non-independent one and the same as relation and belong-ness, as long as there is no motion in substance, there will be no motion in accidents. In this way, “quiddal accidental motion” in the Peripatetic tradition turns into “existential substantial motion” in the Transcendent Philosophy; and inevitably its subject goes under “metaphysics” instead of “natural philosophy”.

To explain it should be said that, as mentioned previously, in the Transcendent Philosophy, motion is of the kind of existence (and not quiddity). Motion is the mode of existence whether existence of substance or that of accident; and thus it is regarded as one of the topics of metaphysics. That the topic of motion goes from “natural philosophy” to “metaphysics” is among innovations introduced in Sadrean Philosophy, and this has changed views of forerunners to the category of motion and its statements. This concept is of great influence in the science of soul: since the soul and the body are two manifestations of the same reality, motion in the soul is the same as motion in the substance and origin of life; and change in matter and body depends upon change in the soul and its statements.

**3-** For Mulla Sadra, motion is among “secondary philosophical intelligibles” and not among quiddal concepts.

According to this view, the reality of existence has two aspects and levels; one is “flux” which is the same as becoming and the other is the level of “stability” which is the same as “being”. Being and becoming are not against each other<sup>29</sup>; but rather they are two faces of the same reality; and as said, according to Mulla Sadra opposition is laid in the divisions of quiddity (and not existence).

Thus, the reality of existence has two faces between them there are no conflict and opposition. Motion and moving thing are, in conceptual terms and in a rational analysis, two separate things; in the external world, however, they are a single identity and reality. Here, one may conclude that substantial motion does not lead to changes in

the essentials; for, firstly, motion happens in existence (and not in quiddity); and secondly, since substantial motion is a gradual and continuous one, then connective unity is co-extensive with personal unity<sup>30</sup>. Again from here, distinction between Sadrean view to motion in substance which is, in his own words, “dressing after dressing” (*labs ba’d labs*) on the one hand and mystics view which is called “dressing after undressing” (*labs ba’d khal’*) is seen. In Sadrean view, all changes are continuous, and thus personal unity does not vanish. In mystics’ view, however, changing thing loses its own personal unity. This property helps to solve the problem of distinction between the soul and body as well, which is, as is well-known, among the most important problems for ancient and modern philosophers. The soul with all its existential modes and levels is, according to the Transcendent Philosophy, a product of substantial motion of the body; and thus, the soul and the body are not regarded as two separate realities; and, as a matter of fact, the unity between the two is resolved in the substantial unity of “man”. The soul and the body are two modes and two levels of man’s all-inclusive existence; i.e. man is a multi-leveled existential reality (from the level of nature to the level of intellect, there are three main levels or modes (*mash’ar*): “sense”, “imagination”, and “intellect”); and all these modes are potentially hidden in man. Thus, man potentially enjoys all natural, imaginal, and intellectual levels and modes; other beings, however, have only one potentiality or mode: they are either intelligible or sensible. In the course of substantial motion, man passes levels of imperfections and finds levels of perfection gradually. This is the same as that journey which begins with “bodily or material origination” and ends in “spiritual subsistence”<sup>31</sup>.

Nevertheless, if substantial motion was not proved, analysis of the existential relationship between the soul and the body would not be possible. In Sadrean system, the main foundation of the issue of the soul is the principle of substantial motion in matter. According to this philosophy, man is a dynamic reality who passes its own stages of perfection one after the other in the light of substantial motion; and thus, the soul is a dynamic (not static) reality which is going from the stage of “bodily origination and alteration” to the stage of “spiritual subsistence and intellection”. That is why Mulla Sadra regards the soul

as a “traveler” and man as a continuously traveling being. In this way, in the Transcendent Philosophy, traditional opposition between the soul and the body is removed in such a way which is in agreement both with natural dualism and unity of the soul and the body. According to the principle of substantial motion, man is a single graded reality, which is the same from material stage to the stage of immateriality and beyond. A traveler which goes station to station and wears a new clothing in each station so that he may be an instance of the Revelation “Were We then worn out by the first creation? Yet they are in doubt about a new creation” (The Holy Quran, 50: 15).

4- Though Sadrean view concerning substantial motion is based on “relational existence” and the fact that “man is the same as relation” and, consequently, Divine effusion and creation is necessitated continuously, for man and his worlds, Mulla Sadra considers such an extent for man and his existential modes that a level from among the levels of “creator-ness” is proved for man; i.e. in his perfectional becoming man attains such a station that he plays, somehow, his role in creation; this creator-ness is a symbol (and not negation) of Divine Creator-ness. It may be said in brief that the soul and the body which will appear in the Resurrection Day are products of man’s reality in the world. Thus, it can be said that, according to the principles of this philosophy, the soul is the best product of the body in the world; and the other-worldly body may be the best product of the soul in the other-world; and all these are consequences of the principle of motion in the substance<sup>32</sup>. Among objections to Mulla Sadra’s view in this regard is: “what is criterion for unity and plurality of substantial motion of the soul?”. In reply, it should be said:

Firstly, according to the principles of Sadrean philosophy, “unity” is co-extensive with “existence”; thus, since existence is a graded and multi-leveled reality, unity is graded and multi-leveled as well.

Secondly, in this view man is an infinite reality from the stage of “bodily origination” to the stage of “spiritual subsistence”; the former and the latter may be distinguished mentally; but they are a

single intensive continuous reality which is permanently in changing. Thus, man is not a being for whom one can determine limits and borders; this means affirmation of the end of his previous motion and beginning of his later motion<sup>33</sup>! As a matter of fact, plurality of motions is a mental one; and as already said, there are no conflict and opposition between various levels of man's existence- including his soul and body. For, according to Mulla Sadra, there are no opposition and conflict between divisions of existence; and conflict concerns quiddities and their statements.

Thus, difference between the soul and the body- and as a matter of fact, between intellectual existence and natural existence- refers to the difference between gradual levels of existence. Mulla Sadra writes:

“It is necessary to know that man is a combination of the soul and the body; and difference between the two refers to the difference between levels of existence; and they are the same thing which has two faces; one of them is changing and it is the minor one; and the other is stable and surviving, and this is the main one. And the more perfect the existence of the soul, the more purified and subtle the body, and the more intensified its connection to the soul; and union between the two becomes so intensified and strong that the intellectual existence appears; and the two becomes a single existence without any discrepancy between the two”<sup>34</sup>.

It goes without saying that here we find one of the unrivalled innovations of Mulla Sadra concerning relation between the soul and the body in particular and changing of man's existence from the sense-natural stage to the intellectual-imaginal stage in general; with such consistency, this can be found neither in the Western philosophical tradition nor in Islamic tradition. What makes this view distinguished is, in addition to its internal consistency, the fact that it is among necessary consequences of the real unity of existence, doctrine of motion in substance, and personal unity of man's existence.

**5-** As said, one of the properties of Sadrean philosophy is that in it the science of soul is regarded, instead of as being categorized under natural philosophy, as an independent and separate part of the Transcendent Philosophy. According to Mulla Sadra, firstly man is an

“active” being not a “passive” one; secondly, the realm of man’s soul similes to the reign of the Creator- the Exalted; and thirdly, there is no halt in man’s motion and becoming. Thus, it may be maintained that man’s station in the Sadrean philosophy equals to the whole cosmos; and, in one sense, the whole cosmos focuses on man’s existence. This focus, however, does not lead to humanism prevalent in the Western philosophical traditions; for man and his soul, in all levels of existence, are “the same as relation and belong-ness”; and thus he does not forget his origin; nevertheless, he is so great that all levels of existence are reflected in his existence, and as “microcosm” he is a mirror of the “macrocosm”.

To explain, it should be said that in the embryonic stage, man’s soul is a vegetal one. Thus, in this stage, vegetal soul is actual and animal soul is potential. Upon birth, man’s soul goes up from vegetal to animal soul; and this continues until formal maturity. In this time and during spiritual maturity and internal growth, man’s soul which is potential in him is actualized. Thus, in the beginning, man’s rational soul is, in terms of sense perfection, in the lowest level of things and the lowest mode of the material world. The soul in this world is, therefore, the form of each potentiality and its actuality and perfection. For all perceptual and motivational powers as well as their effects are helped and controlled by the soul. In the other-world, this very soul is ready and apt to receive any form by which it appears in this world. Thus, the soul is a combination of two oceans, i.e. it is a locus for the ocean of corporal existence and the ocean of spiritual existence to meet each other<sup>35</sup>.

### **3. Conclusions:**

It should be noted that the greatness of man’s station in the Transcendent Philosophy in particular and in the Islamic philosophical traditions in general is not an affirmation of man’s independent and the so-called “self-established” existence which is seen in the humanist and subjective views of the Western tradition; but rather man’s greatness and infinity in the Transcendent Philosophy is a manifestation of the

greatness of the Origin of existence and the Essence of the Creator- the Exalted, who gives all possible beings- including man's existence-determination as beings related to Him. And thus, certainly this view does not lead to humanism and the like; and it does not face the problems and contradictions facing such views. To explain relation and belong-ness of man's existence to the existence of the Real, Mulla Sadra makes use of the noble verse: "He caused them to forget their souls" (the Holy Quran, 59: 19) and believes that this verse shows that the soul is the same as relation to God and the Cause of causes; and thus to neglect God- the Exalted- is the same as to neglect the soul.

The reason is that in the circle of "existence", there is no trace of "human-centeredness" and "God-centeredness", of two realities and two worlds. As a matter of fact, story is about a single reality and its manifestations. And this is among consequences of Sadrean philosophy. In this view, there is no opposition and conflict between existence and its divisions; if there is some opposition, it is between quiddal divisions. According to Mulla Sadra, there are things which are opposite to each other, and at the same time each of the two opposites includes the other as well. In this view, though man is the center of the universe, he is a mere relation and belong-ness, and this is one of the fascinations of Sadrean philosophy.

6- As already said, one of the other considerations concerning Sadrean science of the soul is that soul originates from body- and in Mulla Sadra's words, *hyle-*, which has been introduced under the title "bodily origination and spiritual subsistence". Before Mulla Sadra, like majority of Greek philosophers, Muslim philosophers regarded the soul as a part different from the body; and then, they proceeded to justify its unity with material and corporal body. In most of such views, there appeared always problems in introduction and justification of the case.

One of such problems was the problem of essential difference between the soul and the body which could not be easily justified even by Suhrawardi's Illuminationist school, doctrine of light essences, and the like. On the other hand, before Mulla Sadra, he who claimed that the soul originates from the body was regarded as materialist and one

denying immaterial things. Mulla Sadra, however, posed a different idea and said that “*hyle*” is origin of the soul. Man is a reality from the level of *hyle* to the station of immateriality and beyond; this was not, however, an affirmation of materialism.

According to Sadrean philosophy and based on the doctrine of substantial motion, we have an intensive existential reality called man which covers levels from *hyle* to pure immateriality. Such levels are divisions of existence, and therefore, there is no opposition and conflict between them. The soul is a product of matter and body; but the soul and the body are not two essentially different substances; but rather, the soul is a multi-leveled existential reality of which we abstract a name and definition. The other point is that the reality of the soul, because of its created-ness is finite and determined; and because of the extent of its existence, it is infinite and undetermined. Thus, because of its *hyle* and natural aspect, human existence is finite; and because of its immaterial and ideal aspect, it is infinite. Mulla Sadra even justifies and explains levels of human perception in correspondence to the levels of existence<sup>36</sup>. And this is one of the consequences of ontology of Sadrean philosophy.

Mulla Sadra’s deliberations and innovations concerning “resurrection”, “Resurrection Day”, and theory of “corporal resurrection” are among issues related to the science of the soul which have been discussed in details in the last part of his “fourth journey”, and include subtle points which have to be discussed independently.

#### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> . Chambers Dictionary of Etymology, New York, 2000, vol. 2, p. 809

<sup>2</sup> . This is an allusion to man’s permanent goal which cannot be found unless through sufferings and hardships

<sup>3</sup> . Kennedy, Mike-Dixon, *Encyclopedia of Greco-Roman Mythology*, p. 264, Grimal, Pierre, *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, pp. 379-80

<sup>4</sup> . Smith, Joule, *Dictionary of Greco-Roman*, Persian translation, trans. Shahla Baradaran Khosroshahi, Tehran, Farhang-e Mo’aser, 2005, p. 149

<sup>5</sup> . Jeaeger, W., *The Theology for the Early Greek Philosophers*, Oxford, 1947, p. 206

- <sup>6</sup> . Plato, *Phaedo*, Translated by Benjamin Jowett
- <sup>7</sup> . Plato, *Laws*, translated by Benjamin Jowett
- <sup>8</sup> . Plato, *Timaeus*, pp. 86-7
- <sup>9</sup> . Plato, *The Republic*, Book IX
- <sup>10</sup> . Aristotle, *De Anima* (On the Soul), trans. J. A. Smith
- <sup>11</sup> . Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6, 9, 11(771b)
- <sup>12</sup> . I ... breathed into him of My Spirit (*The Holy Quran*, 38: 72)
- <sup>13</sup> . Ibn Sina, *Al-Nijah*, Tehran, Mortezaei, 1984, p. 158
- <sup>14</sup> . *The Holy Quran*, 24: 35
- <sup>15</sup> . Al- Ghazali, *Ihya 'ulum al-din*, Cairo, 1348 AH (Lunar), vol. 1, p. 118
- <sup>16</sup> . Ibn Arabi, *Futuh al-makkiyah*, Egypt, 1392 AH (Lunar), vol. 1, p. 118
- <sup>17</sup> . Ibid., p. 379
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## **Sociological Relevance of Primordial School of Social Theory**

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### **Abstract**

In this essay we have tried to introduce a new school of social theory which has been hitherto deeply neglected by disciplinary academic discourses on social theory and philosophy. The main argument proposed in this article is that contemporary historiographical narratives are profoundly influenced by modernist epistemology as well as ontology. In order to overcome these inbuilt biases we need to deconstruct the edifice of discursive rationality as institutionalized within disciplinary imaginative frame of analysis. There are at least three main schools which have not been systematically presented within the context of global sociology, i.e. existential school of social theory; perennial school of social theory and primordial school of social theory. In this paper we have tried to unlock the issues which are at work in the systemic underrepresentation of the last school in the body of academic social theory.

### **Behind the Name**

Today around the globe we have different institutions and departments at various academic sites and research centers where people are engaged in analyses which have come to be termed under various different names that are even most of the times in contrasting positions towards each others. However it seems all of these departments, research centers, institutions and seats of knowledge in conferring degrees to the novices in the field have come to agree upon a *name* i.e. of *sociology* as the overarching epithet for what they are

engaged in. But the question is whether all these tendencies, inclinations, orientations, modes of analyses, conceptual modalities and point of references are of similar origin or have even comparatively analogous vision on *social reality* or the elementary components of the social life, i.e. *human nature* and *communal existence*. The politics of sociological institutionalization seems to be based on a grand consensus in terms of the external perception vis-à-vis sociological edifice as it has been crystallized in the *discipline of sociology* in academia. In other words, the men who have devoted their lives in establishing sociology as a discipline within the parameters of modern university system were all in the pursuit of a *collective identity* which could give them a cohesive mode of being as an *intellectual profession*. This is to suggest that the politics of identity within the parameters of sociology as a profession could and should be studied as part of the *identity crisis* within the disenchanting world of modernity and in this sense the consensus among thinkers who do research on social issues seems to be of a *constructed consensus* that could and should be *deconstructed* for the sake of rescuing the emancipative desire of man for unshackling the chains of ideological visions of reality.

To put it otherwise, the desire for having an identity in a world which lacks *permanent grounds* does create a *sense of emptiness* for the human self and professional researchers on the social issues are no exceptions in this regard. In other words, their collective attempts to establish a niche albeit very small in scope could be only understood as an attempt to give themselves, in particular, and modern man, in general, a *sense of ontological security* in a world that has lost its sense of *being* in its authentic fashion of existence. This *sense of lack*, as David Loy puts it, is an anthropological question which emerges out of the lack of theological vision of reality and within modernism has been reworked in terms of atheological reading of existence. This is to argue that the lack of ontology or what *existence* in reality is a persisting question within atheological anthropology which attempts to absolve rather than solve the question of identity based on sociodicy or politics of consensus.<sup>1</sup> The intrusion of political partisanship into epistemological contexts of research signals an important issue about the making of an institution in the constellation of a system within the

parameters of the world system in various fields of economy, politics, military, culture, society and art. By looking at the disciplinary narrative of the field of sociology we can discover at least five different streams of researches on the 'social', i.e. *Sociology*, *Social Theory*, *Social Physics*, *Social Research* and *Social Philosophy*. The mainstream narrators attempt to suggest that these various names are only of semantic nature and there is no fundamental difference between these distinct terms as all indicate a move from the premodern epistemology towards the modern episteme. The argument is based on the very notion of the social that has been singled out within the context of modernity as an independent realm unto itself as other realms which have their distinctive principles of regulations without any connection to any hierarchical vision of reality or the *great chain of being*. Within this reading then we have to distinguish between *social thought*, *social lore*, *philosophy* and modern forms of knowledge which have been crystallized in sociology and its siblings such as social research, social physics, social theory and so on and so forth. But a critical reading, for instance, of the preoccupations of Quetelet and Comte on social analysis would reveal that either we have many sociologies or if one is considered as true sociological analysis then others should be either false or incomplete forms of sociological reasoning. The contrasts between various forms of social analyses within the European context of research and the immense efforts at the institutional level in presenting all these diverse forms of analyses as *sociology* suggest that the issue is of deeper complexity and there is more than a *semantischstreit*. In other words, one could speak of a *methodenstreit* which has metaphysical roots that are related to grand issues of *Crisis of Identity*, *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung* i.e. irreducible to semantic or etymological niceties. In sum, the historical differences between various trends within the context of disciplinary social research which manifested themselves as semantic wars create an intellectual space for considering other forms of knowledge within the context of social analysis that happen to exist without the *orbit of disciplinary knowledge*.

### **Sociology without the disciplinary confines of sociology**

If you are a sociologist trained in the disciplinary paradigm the very question seems odd let alone inquiring about the sociological relevance of two eccentric figures (Morteza Muttahari and S. M. H. Beheshti) whom are totally unknown by professional sociologists who happen to live *en masse* in core of world system rather than periphery. It is odd due to the fact that sociology has been defined by great many practitioners in the craft as a science with clear materialistic tendencies and it seems this definition be very compatible with the state of sociologists who seem to be 'secular' in terms of their faith. The oddity of our inquiry in the eyes of mainstream sociologists has other dimensions as well which go unnoticed by many students of social theory who acquire their primary 'sociological worldview' from paradigms which are derived mainly from 'received wisdom-paradigms' that are generally inspired by ideas rooted in the soil of Enlightenment Tradition. The students who are equipped by sociological lenses provided by this tradition seem to be blindfolded vis-à-vis other traditions who due to geopolitical supremacy of Europeanization/Americanization/Westernization have little chance to globalize themselves to the level that of local subjectivity of Europe which has been successful in internationalizing itself to the degree that spiritually illiterate scholars tend to equate it with the universal ethos of being.

In other words, the seemingly inaccessibility of considering the sociological relevance of both Muttahari and Beheshti before being an internal problem in terms of the structures of their respective theories it seems to be due to the inherent disciplinary structures of sociological discipline which have come to be methodologically blind towards any trends or forms of thought which are not compatible to the broad outlines of modernist epistemology, ontology and existentiality. But before assessing the sociological relevance of both Beheshti and Muttahari it would be more constructive to clarify the current definitions on sociology and sociological as it seems there is always a distinction between sociology and sociological due to the fact that we have had many thinkers who lived before the era of sociological

discipline but later on by sociologists have been reappropriated as sociologists such as Montesquieu, Vico, Marx, Adam Smith and W. E. B. Du Bois.

### **Sociology and Sociologicality**

The current definitions on sociology and Sociologicality seem to follow two broad trends within the discipline which could be summarized as

1. The institutional approach to the discipline
2. The metatheoretical approach to the discipline

#### ***The institutional approach***

Within the parameters of this definition we are faced with an image of sociology which is deeply interconnected with the institutionalization of academic subjects that finally resulted in the emergence of sociology as an academic field of research with clear-cut boundaries of programmes as well as professorial seats of teaching in various universities around the globe. In this approach, whatever that is not considered to be of sociological significance it seems to be deeply intertwined with the general mode of philosophy of science based on schools such as Positivism, Logical Positivism, Empiricism and Vienna School of Philosophy of Science, i.e. the debates on science versus pseudo-science. In other words, the disciplinarization or compartmentalization of knowledge with its various epistemological consequences as well as academic departmentalization which is deeply connected to the emergence of modern nation-state system are considered as the emblematic signs of what sociology is and how it could be demarcated from either proto-sociology or social lore.

### ***The metatheoretical approach***

In this approach the question of sociology is not viewed in terms of structural transformations of society, institutions, political system or sub-systems within the larger society. Although all of these trends are considered to be of significance but they are not treated as the *prima facie*. In other words, the emergence of sociology is treated in terms of mentality or mindset which seems to be of ethereal dimension, i.e. of imaginative nature. This is to say, one does not need to study at the departments of sociology or acquire sociological degree in order to be equipped with the sociological imagination. This approach is very deeply indebted to the approach endorsed by C. Wright Mills who spoke of a kind of mental inclination or attitude which is of sociological nature and he did not confine its emergence to any academic contexts of teachings. On the contrary, he argued that sometimes there are poets, writers or politicians who are very well versed in the application of sociological imagination without being trained as a sociologist. Based on this approach which I have termed as the metatheoretical approach we can speak of a 'sociological eye' in contrast or in addition to sociology which seems to follow an academic classification. In other words, we can divide the debates on sociology into two broad classes of disciplinarily and imaginal, where the former refers to institutional approach and the latter seems to include broader civilizational concerns that are of social significance.

### **Enlightenment Tradition and Metatheoretical Approach**

As we mentioned earlier to view sociology in terms of metatheoretical approach it could entail that sociology is an aspect of human inquiring mind that is not necessarily of modernist or postmodernist origin but it is an attitudinal problematique which is far subtler to be contextualized in a reductionist fashion that is current within contemporary historiographical accounts of social theory or sociology. To be honest, the metatheoretical approach should have resulted in such a deconstructive fashion of analysis but the matter of fact has been otherwise as this perspective been recasted in terms set by

Enlightenment Tradition which has been the background assumption of Modernism which divides the epistemological dimensions of being in a dichotomized manner of an *either-or* paradigm. To put it differently; although the metatheoretical approach could be of an emancipative significance in re-writing the history of epistemological concerns within the context of social research nevertheless the actual practice is far from such a transformative spirit which could have resulted in an intercivilizational historiography in terms of sociological inquiry. In other words, if this approach which is far more complex than the primary approach would have been operationalized in terms other than those set by the modernist tradition then we could have been able to witness a pluralistic approach to the question of sociological theories. But due to the hegemonic state of institutional mode of doing sociology even the birth of metatheoretical approach has not been able to yield into a new state of affairs on a grand scale. Of course this is not to suggest that no significant research has been carried out but this is certainly to imply the overarching role of Modernism in adjudicating between, so to speak, those who are 'in' and 'out' of sociological paradigm.

### **Metatheoretical approach and sociological imagination**

If 'Sociological Imagination' is an attitude or mindset then 'metatheoretical approach' needs to be applied widely without any geographical/political/ideological discrimination. In other words, it should be admitted that the metatheoretical approach is a step forward in terms of historiography of social research when it is compared to institutional approach but the problem is the very institution of sociological departmentalization at the academic level of analysis which systematically disallows any 'substantial significance' to discourses without the orbit of occidental context of research. But a close look at the sociological imagination as a universal attitude which is context-independent would readily reveal that such treatments are unsociological when sociology is understood in broader terms of imaginary perception. Additionally it should be emphasized that this does not only harm the possibility of dialogue among civilizations with

different sense of 'sociability' but it inhibits the growth of dialogical global sociology which is still at its embryonic state of being. By imagination we don't intend illusory state of mind but a mindset which is creative and able to connect the details to the whole and out of such an interaction build up an integral picture of reality that makes the social life a comprehensible whole to be grasped in a cosmic (orderly) manner rather than chaotic (disorderly) fashion. However one must pause and ask about the fundamental reasons behind the dysfunctionality of metatheoretical approach in terms of unoccidental paradigms of social analysis which have resulted in confining the orbits of sociological imagination along the lines drawn by institutional forms of sociological episteme. This question is of great significance as to find out the boundaries of both 'sociability' and 'imagination' within the parameters of Enlightenment Tradition would assist us to unearth the reasons for not considering thinkers such as Muttahari and Beheshti as part of global sociological traditions. In other words, the issue at hand is the manners within sociology social theorists conceptualize and reconstruct 'schools of social theory'. To put it differently, what and how a school is fathomed within the contexts of social research is one of those key questions which need to be debunked and reconceptualized as this would lead to a more novel understanding of unoccidental forms of 'sociological analysis'. This lack of debunking has even paralyzed the state of sociology in Islamic World, in general, and Iran, in particular, as students of social research have been unable to realize the presence of 'imagination' of sociological nature within the works of theorists such as Beheshti or Muttahari. We have become accustomed to view sociology in terms of modernist historiography which reduces reflections upon sociability into an aspect of Industrialization in conjunction to Enlightenment Tradition and hence whoever does not adhere to the articles of faith codified within the book of Modernism we tend to eschew from the list of social theory as we tend to think of sociology in terms of institutional approach without taking into consideration the metatheoretical approach or even reflect upon sociology in terms of sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) which in the works of Muttahari and Beheshti we are able to discern a systematic reflection of such a mindset.

### **Sociological imagination and Imaginal historiography of social theory**

Due to the fact that both approaches to the question of sociological impulse, i.e. institutional and metatheoretical approaches have proved ineffective for different reasons in conceptualizing the historiography of social theory in a truly global sense, we need to approach what C. Wright Mills calls 'sociological imagination' from a different point of departure as in our understanding the current historiographies of social research are deeply intertwined with the disciplinary notion of knowledge, which, in turn, is directed at modes of knowledge which are either occidentalist in character or modernist in ontology. The approach which could prove constructive in unearthing the matter of issue at hand we have termed 'Imaginal' in contrast to disciplinary notion of knowledge in terms of social analysis. By that we simply mean a form of epistemology that is integral in principle and holistic in essence. This is to suggest that man qua human being is creative by nature and his creativity is of spiritual character but shaped within the parameters of temporality and spatiality. However this spatio-temporal quality is not of deterministic nature as we consider these as aspects of being a human self and like many other dimensions of nature prone to expansion and contraction in the manner of ebb and flow in ocean. This is to imply that sociological imagination is born within the parameters of society and dependent on indices of history and levels of complexities which distinct societies may be undergoing but imaginal dimension of human power of imagination is of ethereal nature and could not be reduced to forms as this forms human life as a comprehensible image in the mind of subject. Seen through this perspective we are able to move beyond the institutional reading of social research and additionally would not stop at the threshold of metatheoretical reading which was initially an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of institutional conceptualization of social theory but due to its occidental forms of reasoning ended up in another misreading of sociological imagination. This is to argue that imaginal reading of social theory is an attempt to open up enough space for substantial intellectual engagements at the level of 'schools' of social theory, i.e.

paradigms of theoretical significance which may not share any epistemological, ontological and existential commonalities with occidental schools of social theory or share some aspects but differ on fundamental issues such as historiography, eschatology, theodicy, sociodicy and gnosisology. We have divided for the sake of argument the schools of social theory at the level of metaphysics into two broad schools of disciplinary episteme and imaginal episteme and believe that the story of social theory has been told, retold and re-written entirely on the basis of disciplinary narrative and this is one of the main reasons why Muttahari or Beheshti has never been considered as a sociologist as this epithet has been colonized for those thinkers who have written and thought in terms of disciplinary frame of reference rather than imaginal point of reference that results in a school of social theory that we have termed as Primordial School of Social Theory. (Miri, 2007)

### **Primordial school of social theory**

Within contemporary philosophy of science and social sciences the theories are classified in terms of individualism versus collectivism or admixture of both in an unharmonious fashion which is open to critique due to inherent inconsistencies which critics discern in such a combination. However we can speak of theories within social theory that incline towards the primacy of the individual over against the collective or approaches that neglect the significance of the individual by insisting on the importance of the collectivity in terms of analysis. In addition to these two schools the third approach which is based on an attempt to merge the desires of both the individual and the collectivity seems to be not qualified due to the internal inconsistencies to be considered as a school within contemporary philosophies of science and social sciences. In other words, the contemporary field of social theory has been the playground of these two gigantic perspectives which are termed respectively as individualism and collectivism and the rest are either influenced by the former or the latter. This is a concise account of the state of art which clearly shows at the most abstract level of analysis why thinkers such as Beheshti, Sadr, Muttahari, Tabatabai, Jafari, al-Attas and the host of transcendental

theorists are not considered as sociologists in the current textbooks of contemporary sociological theories. This is to imply that the absence of imaginal narratives within the context of sociology is the inherent contrast which exists between disciplinary forms of epistemological conceptualizations of sociability and imaginal forms of social analysis that create a sense of incommensurability between different paradigms. But the matter of the problem is that we don't read about this incommensurability in current historiographies as the narrative is written in a monological fashion and the battle is not even drawn let alone debated on.

The battle exists between disciplinary and non-disciplinary forms of social analysis and the proponents of non-disciplinary sociological theory could truly be qualified as sociologists due to the fact that they have presented systematic forms of analyses on issues such as human self, God, religion, society, sociability, knowledge, authenticity, sacred, secular and more importantly the interconnection between various aspects of human existence which make up what we call social life. Besides we should move on to the metaphysical dimension of social theory which is of great significance within the context of philosophy of social sciences where the issues of 'schools' of sociological traditions are conceptualized and debated on. At this level we can think of a school of social theory which belongs neither to the camp of individualism nor collectivism and it is surely not an unharmonious admixture of these two schools and more importantly its historical genealogy is not of occidental nature. Within this school which we have termed as Primordial School of Social Theory the primacy is neither of individualism nor of collectivism but this is not to deny the role of community or the individual. On the contrary, here the crucial role belongs to the primordial nature or *Esalate Fitrat*. In contemporary analysis within the context of social theory we cannot find any mentioning of this school and those who studied sociology in Islamic World have never considered thinkers such as Beheshti or Muttahari in terms of a sociological school who did not share the parameters of disciplinary epistemology but did embody, on the other hand, the *sociological impulse* within their body of knowledge respectively. In other words, as soon as a thinker did not share the

paradigms of Enlightenment Tradition he automatically has been considered 'traditional' and sociology by implication has been treated as a modernist form of science and by inference tradition has been conceptualized in contradistinction to modernity and by deduction Muttaharian paradigm, for instance, been treated as unsociological. This unsociologicality by some have been hailed as a sense of traditional authenticity and by others have been taken as vindication for the impracticality of traditional worldview in a modern world and illiteracy of thinkers such as Muttahari in terms of modernity and whatever that represents progress of human civilization. But in our reading these debates and these kinds of dichotomizations are deeply flawed and invalid as well as infeasible as to read sociology in terms of disciplinarization is to miss the best part of sociology as an imagination which is to create modes that are not historically present now and modalities which are absent currently but deeply needed for overcoming tensions and extreme situations. The primordial school of social theory is the paradigm that theories of Muttahari, Beheshti and many others of transcendental thinkers need to be contextualized and conceptualized.

### **Muttahari and Beheshti in the balance of sociological theory**

Before venturing into this question whether Muttahari or Beheshti could be considered as sociologists it would be more effective to lay bare the current understandings on what a sociological theory is or could be and afterwards move on to the School of Primordial Social Theory in the works of Beheshti and Muttahari.

### ***Sociological Theory***

Within the disciplinary paradigms of social theory there are many theoretical approaches which could be summarized in the following fashion:

- The classical theories of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, Parsons, and Mead and their followers.
- There are also various schools of sociological thought that are not so much associated with one individual, but represent contributions from a variety of sociologists - for example, symbolic interaction approaches, ethnomethodology, structuralism, and critical theory.
- Recent approaches have often combined aspects of these different classical writers or sociological approaches. Much theoretical writing in the 1960s through 1980s appears to use various mixtures of these.
- More recently, sociological thought has felt the influence of a variety of new approaches - feminism, postmodernism, cultural studies, new ethnic and multicultural approaches, along with new subject areas such as technology, science, sexuality, and the media. Each of these approaches provides a way of looking at the social world, but as a theoretical approach may constitute more than this. (Miri, 2006)

Within the contemporary discourses on the social research it seems that there is a tendency to consider **Sociological theory** as synonymous to **social theory** and either of them is usually thought of as a **systematic** set of ideas and statements about the social world that aim to **make sense** of the social world. To be sociologically valuable, these ideas and statements should be such that they can be subjected to empirical observation and testing. In addition, there should be a set of procedures to decide which ideas and statements are considered valid and which ones are not. If a theory is to be useful in the social world, it should also provide some conclusions which help us **understand** or **explain** the social world. It would also be useful for the theory to be able to make **predictions** which can be used that will assist in making **policies** that concern the social world. Hopefully this social theory can help individuals and society as we all attempt to improve the nature of the social world. However it seems this tendency is build upon the disciplinary view of social theory which seems to neglect the importance of 'imagination' in the construction of sociological theories.

In other words, we need to be clear about the importance of distinguishing between the 'sociologicality' and 'sociology' as within the disciplinary paradigm this distinction seems to lose its appeal and the loss of such a differentiation has grave civilizational consequences. This issue leads us to look at the nature of contemporary social theory as this would sensitize us about the nature of theory within the parameters of school of primordial social theory as it has been expressed within the discourses of Beheshti and Muttahari.

### ***The Nature of Contemporary Social Theory***

It is argued that the contemporary social theory is rooted in real social issues and problems that emerge in society and it is connected with changes in society. The exponents of contemporary sociology argue that social movements, social conflict, political problems, personal problems lead to new issues that need to be investigated and theorized. Evolution of theories are of great significance as it is argued that earlier theories (i) provide useful models and approaches but are (ii) inadequate to deal with all of the issues that emerge. One could mention revision of earlier models such as Neo-Marxian or neo-Weberian, for example, in the works of Anthony Giddens and Erik Olin Wright. But there are others who argue that we need to abandon earlier models as the revisionist approaches would not yield into any substantial results. Postmodern theorists argue, for instance, that grand, overall models that attempt to explain most of society are no longer applicable or useful. There is, in addition, within contemporary social theory a tendency towards cross-fertilization of disciplines, which is especially important for growth of sociological reasoning. One could mention the contributions from various social sciences and from humanities e.g. structuralism, postmodernism, cultural studies and so on and so forth. Moreover it is argued that empirical investigation is required for consolidating the foundations of sociological analysis. The examination of society through quantitative and qualitative investigation forms the basis for the revisions to or changes in social theory. Sociological theory should include description, explanation, understanding, prediction and control. (Miri, 2004)

### ***Reconstructing Beheshti and Muttahari***

Once we argued that the historiography of sociology could be rewritten in terms of imaginal narrative then a question could be posed in terms of the social images of Beheshti and Muttahari in the global context which need to be reconstructed as these reconstructive images would enable us to see the sociological impulses in the discourses of Muttahari and Beheshti along the lines of Primordial School of Social Theory. (Miri, 2003)

Here one may level a critique at such a reconstructive project by arguing that the nature of social theory as we defined in the previous section which would make difficult for us to perceive either Muttahari or Beheshti as a social theorist or even a sociologist. To this critique we can reply in three different fashions which are somehow interrelated. The first is of historiographical nature which we explained above in relation to disciplinary and institutional reading of history of social research. The second is related to the narcissistically cherished view that sociology is an empirical discourse and sociologists are those who conduct empirical social research along the lines of natural science paradigms. This view belies the very practice of contemporary sociologists who, for instance, consider Walter Benjamin<sup>2</sup>, Theodore Adorno<sup>3</sup> or Gregor McLennan<sup>4</sup> as sociologists without realizing that they have never undertaken any 'empirical'<sup>5</sup> social research in the fashion endorsed by the Chicago School. The third critique is related to the narratology of social theory which we have termed as 'imaginal historiography' which has been neglected within contemporary social research and this, as we argued earlier, has been due to the lack of conceptualization of 'Primordial Social Theory' as a distinct sociological school. To add to the complexity of the issue we could state that the very question of origin within disciplinary sociology in modernist tradition is not as clear as one may assume due to the fact that there are various approaches to the founding problematique within institutional narrative of sociology. To put it in more concrete terms one could discern views that are in favor of assuming the birth of

sociology with Comte but there are others who argue otherwise and put forward Adolphe Quetelet<sup>6</sup> as the founding father of sociology. In other words, the question of who is a sociologist is itself a hermeneutic problematique which needs metatheoretical approach that seems not to be appreciated by disciplinary historiography within modernist tradition of narrating the story of social theory. Seen through the imaginal perspective we can easily establish that both Muttaharian and Beheshtian discourses respectively could be reconstructed as sociological within the school of primordial social theory.

### ***Making Sense of the Social World***

It is argued within the disciplinary sociology that a theory could be qualified as sociological if it could make sense of the social world. In other words, the ability to establish connections between seemingly diverse dimensions and aspects of human community is one of the best criteria of being considered as sociologically qualified. Because it is believed that this could assist us in attempting to change the undesirable situation of *X* to the desirable situation of *Y*. Even based on this criterion we can consider both of Beheshti and Muttahari as social theorists who respectively attempted in making sense of Iranian society (Islamic World, European and Global contexts) and additionally employ the results of their respective analyses for transformation of the actual state of affairs into an ideal form of communal life that could lack the flaws of the current situation.

### **Sociology, Sociologies and Intellectual Cultures**

In reading the history of civilizations in terms of ideas and the systems which have generated grand philosophies and overarching ideologies we can find three broad positions that have caused three grand cultures of intellectual perspectives respectively. These three distinct positions have produced three different notions of 'intellect', 'intellectual' and 'intellectuality' which, in turn, have given rise to different anthropologies<sup>7</sup>, theologies<sup>8</sup>, politologies<sup>9</sup>, sociologies<sup>10</sup> and

cosmologies<sup>11</sup>. These three cultures of intellectuality demonstrate their differences in relation to the specific interpretation each offer on what constitutes the backbone of 'Intellect'. In the first culture we can discern the position that reduces 'intellect' to *Reason* by arguing that there is no hierarchy of being. In the second position one could see the perspective which takes intellect as an instrument at the disposal of *Tradition*. In the last but not least culture of intellectual tradition we can recognize the conception which distinguishes between reason and intellect by arguing that the former is of analytical nature and the latter of intuitional character. These distinctions in turn have produced three grand narratives which we can label them as Modernism, Traditionalism and Primordialism. At the bottom of these debates which have intimate relation with our concern on sociological imagination and the school of primordial social theory as expressed in the works of Muttahari<sup>12</sup> and Beheshti<sup>13</sup> there is what in the Islamic parlance one calls the problematique of 'Islam and Contemporary Exigencies'. But this is not only an Islamic question and not even a specifically religious issue. On the contrary, the question is of universal character and has been expressed in various contexts in different fashions. For instance, within the universal parlance of religion this problematique has been formulated as the problem of 'Reason versus Revelation' or 'Aql and Naql'. But this has been expressed in metaphysical language as the problem of 'Contingency versus Permanence' which is similar to the pervious discourse with the exception of idioms employed in stating the complexities in question. Last but not least this question has been formulated in the philosophical context as the problem of 'Temporal and Eternal'.

In other words, we can analyze the contents of systems of intellectual inquiries in relation to the presence or absence of dialog between these two poles, i.e. temporal (contingency-Reason) versus eternal (permanence-revelation). Within modernism the dialog has been neglected by eschewing the permanent dimension, on the one hand, and overemphasizing the importance of *contingent aspect*, on the other hand. The *disciplinary sociology* has been born in the matrix of this culture. By looking at the history of ideas we can find another strong position which denies the decisive role of reason in adjudicating

intellectual issues and instead overstating the role of tradition or revelation, i.e. *permanent dimension*. The lack of sociological imagination or the presence of *asociological perspective* is the result of such an one-sidedly inclination on revelation which results in the destruction of the dialog between distinct aspects of human soul. The third position which is the breeding ground of the School of Primordial Social Theory is when human existence, social life, political institutions, scientific enterprise, industrial culture and all other aspects of civilization are interpreted in terms of the dialog between the *contingent dimension* and *permanent element* of reality as expressed in the human life. This has been expressed by Muttahari and Beheshti as the interaction between 'Islam and Contemporary Exigencies'. These three outlooks have generated three different sociologies and social theories which one need to bear in mind when writing or reading the historiography of sociology in a global context as the current histories of sociology (and all apparent accounts on various schools of sociology and sociological theories as well as social theory) are constructed in terms of the first position.

In other words, all schools of sociology at the disciplinary level which have been able to enter the pantheon of academia are all part and parcel of one *intellectual culture* that overemphasizes the *contingent dimension* of human existence without realizing that human life is worth living when it is conceived in terms of the interactive dialog between the contingent and permanent or temporal and eternal as well as reason and revelation. To put it differently it is futile to assess the sociologicality of Beheshti or Muttahari in terms set by disciplinary historiography as these terms are set to explain other issues than those existent within the parameters of Primordial School of Social Theory, i.e. this is the secret why we have not any sociologists in Iran or Islamic World or have been bugged down with various unfinished projects such as 'Native Sociology', 'Islamic Sociology', 'Alavite Sociology', 'Sacred Sociology' and so on and so forth.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Anthropology here is taken in its generic sense and not in its institutional form of knowledge as a field of inquiry at university.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Bendix Schönflies Benjamin (July 15, 1892 – September 27, 1940) was a German-Jewish Marxist literary critic, essayist, translator, and philosopher. He was at times associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory and was also greatly inspired by the Marxism of Bertolt Brecht and Jewish mysticism as presented by Gershom Scholem. As a sociological and cultural critic, Benjamin combined ideas drawn from historical materialism, German idealism, and Jewish mysticism in a body of work which was a novel contribution to western philosophy, Marxism, and aesthetic theory. As a literary scholar, he translated Charles Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens and Marcel Proust's famous novel, In Search of Lost Time. His work is widely cited in academic and literary studies, in particular his essays *The Task of the Translator* and *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility*. Influenced by Bachofen, Benjamin gave the name "auratic perception" to the aesthetic faculty through which civilization would recover a lost appreciation of myth.

<sup>3</sup> Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno (September 11, 1903 – August 6, 1969) was a German sociologist, philosopher, pianist, musicologist, and composer. He was a member of the Frankfurt School along with Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, and others. He was also the Music Director of the Radio Project. Already as a young music critic and amateur sociologist, Theodor W. Adorno was primarily a philosophical thinker. The label *social philosopher* emphasizes the socially critical aspect of his philosophical thinking, which from 1945 onwards took an intellectually prominent position in the critical theory of the

Frankfurt School.

<sup>4</sup> Gregor McLennan (b. 1948) is a Scottish sociologist at Bristol University in England. His intellectual background is deeply intertwined with Marxism and European post-Marxist Left and currently working on issues related to social theory, politics and ideology and philosophy of social sciences based on a postpositivist positivity position.

<sup>5</sup> If empirical means facts as understood within natural sciences none of the aforementioned thinkers are empirical social researchers despite of what they may claim but if by data which could be empirically assessed we include ideas and ideals into the realm of analysis then the context of sociology becomes much wider and broader.

<sup>6</sup> Lambert Adolphe Jacques Quételet (22 February 1796 – 17 February 1874) was a Belgian astronomer, mathematician, statistician and sociologist. He founded and directed the Brussels Observatory and was influential in introducing statistical methods to the social sciences. The new science of probability and statistics was mainly used in astronomy at the time, to get a handle on measurement errors with the method of least squares. Quetelet was among the first who attempted to apply it to social science, planning what he called a "social physics". He was keenly aware of the overwhelming complexity of social phenomena, and the many variables that needed measurement. His goal was to understand the statistical laws underlying such phenomena as crime rates, marriage rates or suicide rates. He wanted to explain the values of these variables by other social factors. These ideas were rather controversial among other scientists at the time who, held that it contradicted a concept of freedom of choice. His most influential book was *Sur l'homme et le développement de ses facultés, ou Essai de physique sociale*, published in 1835 (In English translation, entitled *Treatise on Man*). In it, he outlines the project of a social physics and describes his concept of the "average man" (*l'homme moyen*) who is characterized by the mean values of measured variables that follow a normal distribution. He collected data about many such variables.

<sup>7</sup> By anthropology we mean the view on human self or the perspective on what a human being is or could be.

<sup>8</sup> By theology we don't intend the academic definition of the term but the view on God or the Ultimate Reality is what we have in mind.

<sup>9</sup> By politology we refer to the conception of a city and how to make an ideal city or manage the Polis.

<sup>10</sup> By sociology we mean the views or conceptions on communal life and not the disciplinary view of sociological discipline.

<sup>11</sup> By cosmology we don't mean the current academic conception of the term but the grand idea on what life is in the grand scheme of things.

<sup>12</sup> Morteza Muttahari was born in 1920 in Khorasan Province in northeast of Iran and was assassinated in 1979 few months after revolution in Iran. He was a social theorist of grand stature but mostly unknown by sociologists around the globe. He wrote

extensively on various issues related to Occidentalism, Orientalism, Social Theory, History and Religious Intellectual Problematiques. His books have been translated into different languages including English, German and Spanish.

<sup>13</sup> Seyed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti was born in 1928 in Isfahan and was assassinated in 1981 in Tehran two years after the establishment of Islamic Republic in Iran. He has written extensively on various social, cultural and religious issues. His books have not been translated into any languages yet but he wrote few short articles in German while he was residing in Hamburg during late 60s and early 70s.



## Defining Mysticism, A Survey of Main Definitions

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### Abstract:

Since the beginning of the modern studies about mysticism in the second half of the nineteenth century, defining the term “mysticism” has remained one of the controversial issues in this field, and different authors has been using the term to refer to different subjects. Studying some major effective sources in the field of mysticism, this article surveys the modern definitions of mysticism and evaluates them according to their comprehensiveness. It also tries to clarify the different classifications of mysticism by using the dimensional definition of the term.

*“No word in our language – not even ‘Socialism’ – has been employed more loosely than ‘Mysticism.’ Sometimes it is used as an equivalent for symbolism or allegorism, sometimes for theosophy or occult science; and sometimes it merely suggests the mental state of a dreamer, or vague and fantastic opinions about God and the world.”<sup>1</sup> (William Ralph Inge, 1899)*

*“There are almost as many definitions of the term [mysticism] as there are writers on the subject.”<sup>2</sup> (Gershom G. Scholem, 1941)*

*“Mysticism continues to elude easy definition, and its nature and significance remain the subject of intense debate. The terms ‘mystic’, ‘mystical’ and ‘mysticism’ have been used in an astonishing variety of ways by different authors in different eras.”<sup>3</sup> (Steven Payne, 1998)*

Even if we suppose Scholem’s statement about the quantity of definitions of “mysticism” as an exaggeration, we can’t disagree with the fact that mysticism continues to escape a definition unanimously accepted by at least the majority of scholars. It has almost become a

tradition to write about the difficulty of defining the term and mention the reasons and causes of such a hardship at the beginning of writings dealing with this subject.<sup>4</sup> In fact, after creating the noun “*la mystique*” (mysticism) from the adjective “*mystique*” (mystical) in 17th century French<sup>5</sup> and later use of this new category in other languages like German (*Mystik*) and English<sup>6</sup> – partly as a result of the modern love of *-ism*'s – the problem of defining this phenomenon didn't dwindle, and besides the alteration in the meaning and connotation of the adjective “mystical” (originally Greek *mystikos*),<sup>7</sup> the problem of ambiguity added to the trouble of definition. Prior to coming this noun into use, there were some phenomena called mystical like “mystical theology”, “mystical experience”, and “mystical union” that their realm and the thing to which they referred were clear. For example, mystical theology referred to a kind of theology, and mystical experience indicated a kind of experience, and nobody used the qualifier “mystical” without a substantive which determined its scope. But, after the appearance of “mysticism” as a substantive, different authors used – and are still using – it to refer to different areas. This article surveys a number of major books written by prominent scholars in the field of mysticism as well as some authoritative encyclopedias in the fields of religion and philosophy<sup>8</sup> to figure out how they define the term “mysticism,” and evaluates their definitions according to their comprehensiveness. This survey focuses on the sources written by the scholars who lived – and some are still living - after the second half of the nineteenth century, which is the period of modern studies about mysticism<sup>9</sup>, and though it concentrates on English sources, the selected texts are undoubtedly among the most effective writings which have shaped the modern understanding of this term.

## **I- Definition of Mysticism in Books**

To survey the books written in the field of mysticism in chronological order, *Christian Mysticism* of W. R. Inge (1860-1954) – the British divine and the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London – seems to be an appropriate starting point.<sup>10</sup> In this book, which was

firstly published in 1899, he considers the inmost being of mysticism as the “consciousness of the beyond” which appears as an independent active principle. However, he believes, since every active principle must find its appropriate instrument, mysticism has developed a “speculative and practical system” of its own, which does not belong to its inmost being. In this way, it is possible to consider mysticism as a type of religion.<sup>11</sup> He also assumes “the unitive or contemplative life, in which man beholds God face to face, and is joined to him” as the final step or the goal of mystical path.<sup>12</sup>

Three years after the publication of Inge’s book, the pioneering American psychologist and philosopher, William James (1842-1910) published his classic book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* – as a result of his twenty Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh. In chapters 16 and 17 of this book that are related to mysticism, instead of directly defining mysticism, James explains what he means by “mystical states of consciousness.” Here, he proposes four marks which, when an experience has them, may justify us in calling it “mystical:” The first two marks, namely “ineffability” and “noetic quality,” entitle any state to be called mystical, and the other two characteristics, i.e. “transiency” and “passivity,” are less sharply marked, but are usually found.<sup>13</sup>

The British Roman Catholic philosopher and author of Austrian descent, Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925), in his two-volume book firstly published in 1908, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends*, uses Christianity to present the three elements found in all religions, i.e. historical-institutional element, analytic-speculative element, and intuitive-emotional element.<sup>14</sup> Identifying mysticism with the third element, he explains that “here religion is rather felt than seen or reasoned about, is loved and lived rather than analyzed, is action and power, rather than either external fact or intellectual verification.”<sup>15</sup> He also relates these elements to three great forces and faculties in soul, namely sense and memory, reason, and will and action, and connects the third faculty to mysticism, by which we could have an immediate experience of Objective Reality.<sup>16</sup>

The English Anglo-Catholic popular writer on mysticism, Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), in her famous book, *Mysticism: the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, which firstly published in 1911, criticizes the four characteristics of mystical experience stated by William James, and assigns four other characteristics for mysticism opposing to his characteristics: “1. True mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical. It is an organic life-process ... 2. Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual. It is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, re-arranging, or improving anything in the visible universe. The mystic[’s] ... heart is always set upon the changeless One. 3. This One is for the mystic, not merely the Reality of all that is, but also a living and personal Object of Love ... 4. Living union with this One ... is a definite state or form of enhanced life.”<sup>17</sup> She also adds, as a corollary to these characteristics, that true mysticism is never self-seeking.<sup>18</sup> She stresses that the mystical experience of union with One is a continuous active process, and not merely a sudden admission to overwhelming vision of Truth which takes place occasionally.<sup>19</sup> However, her definition of mysticism is not so clear, and she considers mysticism as “the name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God”,<sup>20</sup> “the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order”,<sup>21</sup> and “the direct intuition or experience of God.”<sup>22</sup>

The German theologian, philosopher, and historian of religion, Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) published his *West-Östliche Mystik*, in 1926 which soon translated as *Mysticism East and West* in English in 1932.<sup>23</sup> In this book, though speaking about many forms of mysticism,<sup>24</sup> he concentrates on “two types of mystical experience originally separate,” namely “mysticism of introspection” and “mysticism of unifying vision.” The first type “means sinking down into the self in order to reach intuition, and here in the inmost depth of the self to find the Infinite, or God, or Brahman,” while the second “looks upon the world of things in its multiplicity, and in contrast to this leaps to an ‘intuition’ or a ‘knowledge’ of its own most peculiar kind, which we, according to our scale of values, may consider either a strange fantasy or a glimpse

into the eternal relationships of things.”<sup>25</sup> For Otto, there is one general kind of religious experience, i.e. numinous experience, which covers both mystical and theistic experiences.<sup>26</sup>

In 1957, the British historian of religion and professor of Eastern religions and ethics, Robert Charles Zaehner (1913-1974) published his book, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*. Excluding those experiences which are sometimes associated with mysticism like clairvoyance, telepathy, and levitation from his definition of mysticism, he states that under the general heading of mysticism he confines himself to “praeternatural experiences in which sense perception and discursive thought are transcended in an immediate apperception of a unity or union which is apprehended as lying beyond and transcending the multiplicity of the world as we know it.”<sup>27</sup> He also speaks about three distinct mystical states, i.e. “the pan-en-henic where all creaturely existence is experienced as one and one as all; the state of pure isolation of what we may now call the uncreated soul or spirit from all that is other than itself; and thirdly the simultaneous loss of the purely human personality, the ‘ego’, and the absorption of the uncreate spirit, the ‘self’, into the essence of God, in Whom both the individual personality and the whole objective world are or seem to be entirely obliterated.”<sup>28</sup>

The English-born philosopher, Walter Terence Stace (1886-1967), published his classic *Mysticism and Philosophy* in 1960. In this book, though he writes that he uses the word “mysticism” to mean the whole subject discussed in the book, and therefore it includes both mystical experience and its interpretation<sup>29</sup>, he concentrates on mystical experience and its definition, types, characteristics, and relationship to some other phenomena, and even claims that the words “enlightenment” and “illumination” are better to use than “mysticism.”<sup>30</sup> He identifies two main types of mysticism (mystical consciousness)<sup>31</sup>, extrovertive and introvertive, which involving an apprehension of the oneness of all things and unitary consciousness from which all the multiplicity are excluded respectively, and lists seven characteristics for each types to find the essence of all mystical experiences.<sup>32</sup>

Bernard McGinn (1937-), the American Professor of historical theology and history of Christianity, In his general introduction to the five-volume history of Christian mysticism in the West under the general title “The Presence of God”<sup>33</sup> – first published in 1991– mentions that though the essential note or goal of mysticism may be conceived of as an special kind of God-human encounter, everything which leads up to and prepares for this encounter and all that flows from it or is supposed to flow from it for the life of the individual in the belief community is also mystical, even if in a secondary sense.<sup>34</sup> Taking into consideration the relationship between the goal, process, and effect of mysticism, he states that “mystical element in Christianity is that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God.”<sup>35</sup> In this broad definition, he agrees with the use of “consciousness” instead of “experience” suggested especially by some of the followers of the Catholic theologian, Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) to exclude such states as visions, locutions, and raptures from the essence of the encounter with God.<sup>36</sup> In addition, inspired partly by the works of the philosopher and psychologist, Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944), he argues that “presence” is more useful category for understanding mysticism than “union,” which is only one of the models, metaphors, or symbols that mystics have employed in their accounts.<sup>37</sup>

## II- Definition of Mysticism in Encyclopedias

To survey the definition of mysticism in some encyclopedias in order of time, we could start from the effective *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* edited by James Hastings. In the article “Mysticism,” firstly published in 1924<sup>38</sup>, Rufus M. Jones writes that mysticism covers “both (1) the first hand experience of direct intercourse with God and (2) the theologico-metaphysical doctrine of the soul’s possible union with Absolute Reality, i.e. with God.” He believes that it would be conducive to clarity to restrict the word “mysticism” to the latter significance, which is “the historic doctrine of the relationship and and potential union of the human soul with

Ultimate Reality,” and to use the term “mystical experience” for direct intercourse with God.<sup>39</sup> Distinguishing also between the German words *Mystizismus* and *Mystik*, Jones considers “mysticism” as equivalent for the latter.<sup>40</sup>

In the article “Mysticism, History of” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, firstly published in 1967, Ninian Smart identifies mysticism with mystical experience and holds that “it is thus best to indicate what is meant by ‘mysticism’ by referring to examples, such as Eckhart ... and by sketching some of the important features of the type of experience in question without interpreting it doctrinally.”<sup>41</sup> He also distinguishes various “aspects” of mysticism, namely “the experiences themselves, the paths or systems of contemplative techniques often associated with them, and the doctrines that arise from mysticism or are affected by it.”<sup>42</sup> Another aspect of mysticism, he thinks, is such paranormal phenomena as levitation, although they are usually regarded as of secondary significance.<sup>43</sup>

In the entry “Mysticism” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, firstly published in 1987, emphasizing on the fact that no definition could be both meaningful and sufficiently comprehensive to include all experiences that have been described as “mystical,” Louis Dupré implicitly identifies mysticism with mystical experience and considers the four characteristics mentioned in William James’s *The Variety of Religious Experience* among the most commonly accepted characteristics of mystical experience. To improve these four characteristics, he proposes to speak of the “rhythmic” – rather than the “transient” – quality of mystical experience and adds “integration” to them as the fifth characteristic.<sup>44</sup>

In the article “Mysticism, History of” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, published in 1998, Steven Payne, instead of presenting his own definition of the term, mentions that “contemporary authors generally associate mysticism with a form of consciousness involving an apparent encounter or union with an ultimate order of reality, however this is understood.”<sup>45</sup> He also adds

that especially modern philosophical discussions have tended to focus on mystical experience.<sup>46</sup>

In the article “Mysticism [Further Consideration],” in the second edition of *Encyclopedia of Religion* published in 2005, Peter Moore by way of broad definition writes that “the term mysticism relates to traditions affirming direct knowledge of or communion with the source or ground of ultimate reality, as variously experienced in visionary, ecstatic, contemplative, or unitive states of consciousness and as diversely embodied in doctrines and practices expressing a unity and compassionate view of the cosmos and human existence.”<sup>47</sup> He also emphasizes that any modern treatment of mysticism must take into account the four “dimensions” of mysticism, i.e. the experiential, the theoretical, the practical, and the social. That is, “the varieties of mystical experience are intimately linked with a body of disciplines and techniques, which in turn are informed by a body of ideas expressed in doctrine and philosophy, symbolism and speculation, all of which have social embodiment within particular historical communities and traditions.”<sup>48</sup> He also speaks about the “ontological” dimension which could be added to these four dimensions and covers the transcendental causes or realities implicit in mystical experience.<sup>49</sup>

In the entry “Mysticism” in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, published in 2006, Annette Wilke defines mysticism as an umbrella concept for “experiences in which boundaries are dissolved – those of the subject, such as in a vacuum of thought, or in ecstasy; those of the object, so that dualities are removed; those of space, to experience the infinite in the finite; those of time, when the ‘timeless, everlasting now’ replaces successive time,” as well as “the concepts, teachings, and literary genres that contemplate, recount, or describe this immanent transcendence, or transcendent immanence.”<sup>50</sup>

### **III- Analysis and evaluation**

Among the above scholars, some (William James, Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Rudolf Otto, R. C. Zaehner, W. T. Stace, Louis

Dupré, and Steven Payne) have explicitly or implicitly identified mysticism with mystical experience – no matter how they understand and define this experience – and neglected other dimensions of mysticism or excluded them from their definition. On the contrary, Rufus M. Jones prefers to keep mystical experience out from the definition of “mysticism,” and defines it as a historic doctrine. Both these scholars present one-dimensional definitions of mysticism, though the former scholars consider this dimension as mystical experience and the latter considers it as a doctrine. Other scholars, nevertheless, maintain more than one dimension for mysticism: Annette Wilke mentions two dimensions of experience and doctrine, W. R. Inge speaks about the consciousness of the beyond which develops speculative and practical system of its own (experience, doctrine, practice), Ninian Smart mentions four aspects of mysticism, that is experiences, paths or systems of contemplative techniques, doctrines, and paranormal phenomena as levitation, and Peter Moore considers five dimensions for mysticism, i.e. the experiential, the theoretical, the practical, the social, and the ontological. Also, Bernard McGinn presents a broad definition of the term and puts the special kind of God-human encounter in the heart of his definition of mysticism, and brings “everything” which leads up to and prepares for this encounter as well as “all” that flows from it under the umbrella of mysticism. In the case of Evelyn Underhill, though she emphasizes on the practical nature of mysticism, her exact definition of mysticism is not clear, and she considers it sometimes as “an organic process,” sometimes as “the innate tendency of the human spirit,” and sometimes as “the direct intuition or experience of God.”

Among these definitions, those which indentify mysticism only with mystical experience don't pay due attention to other dimensions and aspects of mysticism and the intimate relationship between them and mystical experience, and consider these aspects as something outside mysticism. These definitions could be, in fact, considered as the definitions of “mystical experience” rather than “mysticism” itself. But, do other scholars who have tried to enumerate the dimensions of mysticism succeed in presenting a comprehensive definition?

It seems that the dimensions they have mentioned do not cover all aspects of mysticism under their umbrella. From the aforesaid dimensions, if we take into consideration those mentioned by Ninian Smart and Peter Moore as the most complete sets of dimensions, it would not be unjustified to add some other dimensions to them. Especially, if we agree with some authors who believe that mysticism is as a general term as religion, and one could consider every dimension assigned for religion as a dimension of mysticism,<sup>51</sup> why couldn't we speak about – for example – mythic dimension of mysticism?

Another important point is that even one could list all dimensions of mysticism and make a comprehensive definition of it, he or she should pay attention to the fact that these dimensions are not of the same level. Whether we accept the essentialists' claim that there is a common core in all mystical experiences which is not the product of mystic's framework or we agree with the constructivist scholars who insist on the role of historical, cultural, and religious context in shaping or constructing mystical experience<sup>52</sup>, or – in other words – whether we believe in the independency of experiential dimension from other dimensions or we suppose the intimate relationship between them, experiential dimension is the basis or source of mysticism and plays a central role in its definition. This means that, experiential aspect of mysticism is not actually a "dimension" of mysticism parallel to other dimensions, but a basis due to which other dimensions could be called "mystical." So, any definition of mysticism should take into consideration the centrality of experience in comparison with other aspects of mysticism.

Consequently, it seems that the most comprehensive definition of mysticism which includes all dimensions of mysticism and puts the mystical experience in its center is that of Bernard McGinn, which defines mysticism as the God-human encounter, everything which leads up to and prepares for it, and everything which flows from it. However, since this definition suffers from the lack of exactness – which is the characteristic of every broad definition – Smart's and Moore's sets of mysticism's dimensions – which could be improved by adding some other dimensions – can be utilized as an assistant means for clarifying and narrowing the scope of specific studies which use McGinn's definition.

Taking into account the difference between mysticism and mystical experience as well as the dimensional characteristic of mysticism, helps us understand better the categorizations of mysticism made by different authors<sup>53</sup>. For instance, it would be more clear that when Otto speaks about two main types of mysticism, i.e. “mysticism of introspection” and “mysticism of unifying vision,” and distinguished between these two types of “the mysticism of the spirit” and “nature mysticism,”<sup>54</sup> he explains the different types of “mystical experience,” not theoretical, practical, historical, and the like dimensions of mysticism. Likewise, Zaehner’s three fundamentally distinct kinds of mysticism, namely pan-en-henic, monistic, and theistic mysticism<sup>55</sup> and the Stace’s famous two types of extrovertive and introvertive mysticism are also types of mystical experience. But, in categorizing mysticism into practical and theoretical (or speculative)<sup>56</sup>, these two types refer to two dimensions of mysticism, not to mystical experience itself, or, those who speak about apophatic and kataphatic mysticism<sup>57</sup> don’t categorize mystical experience, but theoretical dimension of mysticism. But, what could we say about the frequent classification of mysticism according to religions and traditions? For instance, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* classifies mysticism into six “strands,” i.e. mysticism of ancient and indigenous communities, Indian mysticism, mysticism in China and Japan, Jewish mysticism, Christian mysticism, and Islamic mysticism<sup>58</sup> or *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* explains about mysticism by confining attention to the “main literate religious traditions,” namely Indian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism), Chinese and Japanese religions, and the Semitic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).<sup>59</sup> Do they classify mystical experience, or other dimensions of mysticism, or both? The answer of this question, in fact, depends on our standpoint about the relationship between mystical experience and other dimensions of mysticism. If we – like essentialists – maintain that there is a common core in all mystical experiences which does not depend on the mystics’ historical traditions and religions, this kind of classification is not the classification of mystical experience – which is one and the same thing in all traditions – but rather the classification of other dimensions of mysticism, like theoretical and social dimensions. On the contrary, if we agree with constructivist scholars in their belief that mystical

experience is not independent from the mystics' traditions and environments, and their backgrounds play an important role in shaping their mystical experiences, such a classification categorizes both mystical experience and other dimensions of mysticism, or in other words, categorizes their whole mysticism. It is worthy to mention that though both essentialists and constructivists have presented several reasons and proofs to prove their theories, their discussion has not resulted in any decisive conclusion until now.

### Endnotes:

1. Inge, William Ralph, *Christian Mysticism*, New York: Meridian Books, 1956, p. 3.
2. Scholem, Gershom G., *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1954, pp. 3-4.
3. Payne, Steven, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, general editor Edward Carig, London; New York: Routledge, vol. 6, 1998, p. 627.
4. For example, see Wilke, Annette, "Mysticism," *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, edited by Kocku von Stuckard, Leiden, Boston: Brill, vol. III, 2006, p. 1279 and Smart, Ninian, "Mysticism, History of," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2nd edition)*, Donald M. Borchert editor in chief, Detroit: MacMillan Reference USA, vol. 6, 2006, p. 441. Most of the authors who have written about the difficulty of defining mysticism have explained, in fact, the difficulty of defining mystical experience.
5. For the creation of "mysticism" as a noun see de Certeau, Michel, "'Mystique' au XVIIe siècle; le problème du langage 'mystique'," in *L'Homme Devant Dieu: Mélanges offerts au Père Henri de Lubac*, Paris: Aubier, vol. 2 1964, pp. 267-91.
6. Modern academic discussion of mysticism began seriously in English-speaking world in the end of and in Germanic world in the first half of the 19th century (McGinn, Bernard, *The Presence of God: a History of Western Christian Mysticism*, New York: Crossroad, vol. I, 1991, pp. 267,421).
7. See Bouyer, Louis, "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word," in *Understanding Mysticism*, edited by Richard Woods, O.P., Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1980, pp. 42-55. For a brief history of the word "mysticism" see Wilke, Annette, op. cit., pp. 1279-80.
8. I don't claim that this list of major books and encyclopedias are the best list of the books related to mysticism. Needless to say, one can add some other books or encyclopedias to the list to make it more complete. However, it seems that every complete list should include all the sources mentioned here.
9. Bernard McGinn characterizes the modern studies of mysticism under three general

headings, i.e. theoretical, philosophical, and comparative and psychological approaches to mysticism, which began from Albert Ritschl (1822-1899), William James (1842-1910), and some historians of religion like Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931) respectively (McGinn, Bernard, op. cit., pp. 265-343).

10. Among modern studies of mysticism, some authors believe that Inge's *Christian Mysticism* caused an English revival of interest in Christian mysticism (Crook, Paul, "W. R. Inge and Cultural Crisis, 1899-1920," in *Journal of Religious History*, Oxford: Blackwell, vol. 16, 1977, p. 413).

11. Inge, William Ralph, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

12. Ibid, p. 12.

13. James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, edited with an introduction by Martin E. Marty, New York: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 379-82. He calls the group of states of consciousness marked out by these characteristics "mystical group."

14. von Hügel, Baron Friedrich, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, London: J.M. Dent & Co.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., vol. I, 1923, pp. 50-53. He believes that these three elements are necessary to the complete building of the religious consciousness, and, consequently, each one should be checked and supplemented by the other two to prevent the monopolization of one element.

15. Ibid, p. 53.

16. von Hügel, Baron Friedrich, op. cit., vol. II, p. 390.

17. Underhill, Evelyn, *Mysticism: the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, 12th edition, Oxford: Oneworld, 1994, p. 81.

18. Ibid, p. 92.

19. Ibid, p. 81. In other place she uses the expression of "permanent union with the Absolute." (ibid, p. 91).

20. Ibid, p. 81.

21. Ibid, p. xiv.

22. Underhill, Evelyn, *The Mystics of the Church*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 1998, p. 9.

23. Otto wrote this book nine years after his most famous book, *Das Heilige*.

24. Otto, Rudolf, *Mysticism East and West*, translated by Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne, New York: MacMillan, 1932, p. 76.

25. Ibid, pp. 40, 42. He names these two forms of mysticism "two ways" and explains them in the chapter IV and V of this book.

26. Almond, Philip C., *Mystical Experience and Religions Doctrine*, Berlin: Mouton,

1982, p. 113.

27. Zaehner, R.C., *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, pp. 198-99.

28. *Ibid*, p. 168.

29. Stace, W.T., *Mysticism and Philosophy*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 36.

30. Though Stace believes that it would be better to use “enlightenment” or “illumination” – which are commonly used in India – instead of “mysticism,” he writes that for historical reasons westerners must settle for “mysticism.” (*ibid*, pp. 15-16)

31. Stace declares that although the extrovertive and introvertive experiences are recognized as distinct types, the former is actually on a lower level of the latter and finds its completion and fulfillment in it (*ibid*, p. 132).

32. This very inner essence, Stace states, is the general experience of a unity which the mystic believes to be in some sense ultimate and basic to the world (*ibid*, p. 132). He emphasizes on this central characteristic of mystical experience in other works such as: Stace, W.T., *The Teachings of the Mystics*, New York: The New American Library, 1960, pp. 14-15.

33. Until now, four volumes of this series have appeared: *The Origins of Mysticism* (1991), *The Growth of Mysticism* (1994), *The Flowering of Mysticism* (1998), and *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (2005).

34. McGinn, Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

35. *Ibid*, p. xvii. Although here McGinn uses this definition for defining mystical element in Christianity, in other writings applies it for other religions, especially Islam and Judaism, too. See “Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion (second edition)*, Lindsay Jones, ed. in chief, Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, p. 6334.

36. McGinn, Bernard, *The Presence of God*, *op. cit.*, pp. xvii, xviii, 345.

37. *Ibid*, p. xvii. See also his aforesaid article in *Encyclopedia of Religion (second edition)*, p. 6334. The fact that all mystics have not represented their mystical experience as a union with God is also emphasized by some other scholars like Gershom G. Scholem (*Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 5). However, some writers have doubted whether McGinn is simply replacing what is too narrow with one too broad (Payne, Steven, “Mysticism, Nature of,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 628).

38. The dates mentioned in this part as the date of publishing articles are the dates of publishing the volumes of the encyclopedias which involve the article.

39. Jones, Rufus M., “Mysticism,” *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings, New York: Scribner’s, vol. IX, 1924, p. 83. He explains that

mysticism – in this narrow significance – implies both a certain metaphysical conception of God and soul and a “mystical way” of attaining union with the Absolute (ibid, p. 84).

40. *Mystizismus*, he writes, stands for the cult of the supernatural, for theosophical pursuits, and for a spiritualistic exploitation of psychical research, while *Mystik* stands for immediate experience of a divine-human intercourse and relationship (ibid, p. 83).

41. Smart, Ninian, “Mysticism, History of,” op. cit., p. 441. The first edition of this encyclopedia was edited by Paul Edwards.

42. Ibid, p. 442.

43. In the next entry, “Mysticism, Nature and Assessment,” which is among the new entries of the second edition of this encyclopedia, Kai-man Kwan makes no difference between “mysticism” and “mystical experience.” (ibid, 453-60)

44. Dupré, Louis, “Mysticism,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, New York: MacMillan Pub. Co, vol. 10, 1993, pp. 245-46.

45. Payne, Steven, “Mysticism, History of,” op. cit., p. 620.

46. Ibid, p. 627.

47. Moore, Peter, “Mysticism [Further Consideration],” *Encyclopedia of Religion (second edition)*, op. cit., p. 6355.

48. Ibid, p. 6356.

49. Ibid.

50. Wilke, Annette, op. cit., p. 1279. This four-volume dictionary (encyclopedia) is a revised version of the German *Metzler Lexikon Religion: Gegenwart, Alltag, Medien* which published in 1999-2002.

51. For example, see Inge, William Ralph, op. cit., p. 6, and Antoon Geels & Jacob A. Belzen, “A Vast Domain and Numerous Perspectives – Introduction to the Volume,” in *Mysticis: a Variety of Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Jacob A. Belzen and Antoon Geels, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003, p. 9. Also, Otto states that religion and mysticism are similar in their manifold character (Otto, Rudolf, op. cit., p. 76).

Concerning the dimensions of religion, several writers have proposed different sets of dimensions. For example, Ninian Smart mentions seven dimensions, namely doctrinal and philosophical, ritual, narrative and mythic, experiential and emotional, ethical and legal, social and institutional, and material (Smart, Ninian, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*, London: HarperCollins, 1996).

52. There are several scholars – especially in the second half of the twentieth century – who have defended the theory of constructivism. The most important source about this theory is: *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, edited by Steven T. Katz, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

53. This taking into account is also useful to understand better other categorizations in

which mysticism is considered as an element of a more general category. For instance, those scholars who consider mysticism as an element of religion (like Friedrich von Hügel in his *The Mystical Element of Religion*) mean that mystical experience – not theoretical or social dimension of mysticism – is an element of religion.

<sup>54</sup>. Otto focuses on the two higher forms of “mysticism of introspection” and “mysticism of unifying vision” and compares them with three lower forms of mysticism of illuminists, mysticism of emotional experimentalism, and nature mysticism. See *Mysticism East and West*, chapters IV, V, and VI.

<sup>55</sup>. “there appear to be at least three distinct mystical states which can not be identical, – the pan-en-henic where all creaturely existence is experienced as one and one as all; the state of pure isolation of what we may now call the uncreated soul or spirit from all that is other than itself; and thirdly the simultaneous loss of the purely human personality, the ‘ego’, and the absorption of the uncreate spirit, the ‘self’, into the essence of God, in Whom both the individual personality and the whole objective world are or seem to be entirely obliterated.” (Zaehner, R.C., op. cit., p. 168)

<sup>56</sup>. This categorization is used by a number of writers. For example, see Martensen, Hans Lassen, *Jacob Boehme: his life and teaching. Or Studies in theosophy*, translated by T. Rhys Evans, London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp. 19-20. Also, while such scholars as Underhill lay emphasis on practical mysticism, others like Inge like to work on speculative mysticism.

<sup>57</sup>. Apophatic mysticism claims that nothing can be said of objects or states which the mystic experiences while Kataphatic mysticism makes claims about what the mystic experiences. Several writers have used this categorization of mysticism. For instance see Johnston, William, *Arise, My Love: Mysticism for a New Era*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000, pp. 116-19.

<sup>58</sup>. Payne, Steven, “Mysticism, History of,” op. cit., pp. 621-26. Here, Payne – though makes no claim that this kind of classification is the best or most complete one – holds that even the most unorthodox of the great mystics generally have their roots in a specific religious tradition.

<sup>59</sup>. Smart, Ninian, “Mysticism, History of,” op. cit., pp. 442-52. Categorizing mysticism according to religions and regions is common in encyclopedias. For example, see *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* which discusses about mysticism in nine categories: primitive religions, Buddhist, Chinese, Christian (New Testament, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Russian), Greek, Hebrew and Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Persian, and Roman (*Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 85-117).

## **The Unity (*al-ittihad*) of the Knower (*al-'aqil*) and the Known (*al-ma'qul*) in Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy (*al-hikmah al-muta'aliyyah*)**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses one of the fundamental principles operative in Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy, that of the unity (*al-ittihad*) of the knower (*al-'aqil*) and the known (*al-ma'qul*). This paper highlights some of the salient points in Mulla Sadra's discussion of it. His view on the unity of the knower and the known is based on the unity of knowledge and being. Metaphysics and epistemology are profoundly inter-related, and their inter-relation is founded upon the unity or identity of knowledge and being in God.

### **Introduction**

The principle of the unity of the knower and the known has a long history in Islamic philosophical thought. This principle which came to be known to the Islamic philosophers through Porphyry, a student of Plotinus, was rejected by the early Islamic philosophers, notably Ibn Sina and by many philosophers after him. For Mulla Sadra those who criticized and rejected this principle did not grasp it properly because they failed to understand the root of the matter.<sup>1</sup> This paper seeks to outline in a comprehensive manner some of the salient points in Mulla Sadra's understanding of the principle.

### **The Unity (*al-ittihad*) of the Knower (*al-'aqil*) and the Known (*al-ma'qul*)**

In Mulla Sadra's perspective, the numerous views on and definitions of knowledge put forth by the Greek and Islamic philosophers before him are mostly unsatisfactory since they do not explain in an adequate manner, many of the epistemological issues involved in knowledge and the human act of knowing. In his *magnum opus*, the *Asfar*, before expounding his own definition and views on knowledge, Mulla Sadra examines in a critical manner the various existing definitions of knowledge, such as the Aristotelian definition of knowledge as an abstraction of forms from matter and the definition provided by certain Islamic thinkers such as Fakr al-Din al-Razi that knowledge is a relation (*idafa*) between the subject who knows and the object that is known.

In the *Asfar* Mulla Sadra states that 'knowledge is neither a privation like abstraction from matter nor a relation but a being or a mode of existence (*wujud*)'.<sup>2</sup> In Mulla Sadra's view, the act of knowing involves a transformation of the being of the soul of the knower when it comes into contact with a mode of existence. Knowledge of something is the creation of the intelligible form (*surah 'ilmiyyah*) of that thing by the knower. The soul as a cognizing element cannot receive a form that is not of a similar nature or mode of existence as itself.<sup>3</sup> Mulla Sadra uses the example of sense perception to demonstrate his contention.

In sense perception, the object of knowledge is not the quality which comes to inhere in the sense organ through the external object to produce a qualitative change in the sense organ that perceives it.<sup>4</sup> If this was the case, then the quality that comes to inhere in the sense organ could be observed or experienced by another perceiver. For Mulla Sadra, perceptible forms are not externally existent forms but are emanations or creations of the human soul. Objective material objects cannot be presented to the mind as they are and therefore become known by the perceiver. The human soul has to create a form which is of a similar nature to itself and which corresponds to the perceived

object. Perception is only a preparatory stage which provides the occasion for the soul to create a form of the perceptible object. For Mulla Sadra, all intelligible forms are produced by the soul in this way. If in the case of sense perception the senses mediate between the external object and the act of perception, in relation to imagination and intellection, there are no sense organs that are employed in the creation of their intelligible forms. Since the nature of the soul is existence, the knowledge it receives or acquires must also be existence (*al-'ilm nahw min al-wujud*). The knower and the known must be identical and knowledge must arise from self-identity or direct intuition.<sup>5</sup>

In his article on 'The Unity of *'Aqil* (the knower) and *Ma'qul* (the known)', Ayatullah Abu al-Hasan al-Qazwini, an important philosopher and commentator of Mulla Sadra's Philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, explains that in order for the rational soul to know and cognise realities which are external to itself, the soul requires or needs forms (*suwar*) and images (*muthul*) of the realities concerned which correspond to their quiddities but are different from their existences.<sup>6</sup> In other words, in order for a subject to know an object, it must possess the intelligible form of the object concerned which corresponds to the quiddity of the object but the existence of the form must belong to the same mode of existence as the soul. The form of the known object is transformed from the level of material or external existence to that of mental existence (*al-wujud al-dhihni*) by the soul of the knower. Therefore, the soul must create a form which not only corresponds to the quiddity of the known object but also to its own mode of existence. The external object cannot be known directly by the soul but the intelligible form (*surah 'ilmiyyah*) of the object which is of a mental existence can be known directly by the subject. The rational soul cannot be united with external objects but it can be united with the intelligible forms which are incorporeal and insensible and like itself are independent of matter.<sup>7</sup>

When the soul creates an intelligible form within itself, that which is known (*ma'qul*) becomes transformed from the state of potentiality (*quwwah*) to actuality (*fi'l*) and the soul too becomes transformed from a knower (*'aqil*) in potentiality to a knower in

actuality.<sup>8</sup> Correspondingly, knowledge has emerged from potentiality to actuality. It is through the intellected form that the knower in potentiality becomes a knower in actuality. The intellected form becomes the 'eye' of the soul by which it sees the object of its knowledge, as well as the image of that which it sees.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the perceiving subject or the knower and the perceived object or the known are identical.

Mulla Sadra's view that knowledge requires a new status of being for the known object raises the question of the existence of 'mental existence' (*al-wujud al-dhihni*) and its relation to the known object.<sup>10</sup> Mulla Sadra proves the existence of 'mental existence' by demonstrating that in sense perception, the external material objects cannot be presented to the rational soul as external existents and become known; instead the soul has to create a corresponding form of its own nature or mode of existence. The relation of the intelligible forms created by the soul and which exist in it must not be conceived of as inhering in the soul as the form of a horse for example, is imprinted or engraved on a piece of wax. The forms are related to the soul as acts are related to the actor or as creation to the creator.<sup>11</sup> Mulla Sadra emphasizes that the soul should not be viewed as a container in which the forms inhere or are present but as a faculty which possesses a set of properties or powers which it is able to apply to the external world. The rational soul looks at the world and operates upon it with notions, concepts and quiddities (*ma'ani*, *mafahim* and *mahiyyat*).<sup>12</sup> It is through them that the soul knows existents and acquires knowledge.

According to Mulla Sadra there are concepts which do not correspond to external reality and there are some notions or concepts which do not exist at all or are non-existent. An example of the latter is the concept of the square-circle. However, as notions or concepts they exist since they possess connotations and meanings. Mulla Sadra makes a distinction between a notion or concept that is real in the sense of possessing mental existence and a real quiddity which corresponds to an external existent.<sup>13</sup> The area of the conceivable is larger than that of the real and the possible. Not all that is logically impossible is absurd in the sense that it is without meaning or connotations. The impossible has

no instance in reality; therefore, it is not a determination or mode of being. The real however, has both a quiddity and an instance in reality. The non-existent such as the mythical bird (*'anqa*) has no existence but can be logically conceived and therefore it possesses a quiddity or a mental mode of existence. The logically impossible which do not have real instances and therefore, also do not possess quiddities are nevertheless conceivable by the mind and exist as concepts or notions.<sup>14</sup>

The Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*) which is the philosophical term for God is defined as one whose Essence (*mahiyyah*) is inseparable from or identical with its Being (*wujud*). The Being of God is conceived of as identical to Its Essence and Its Essence is identified with Its Being.<sup>15</sup> Thus, to conceive of the Necessary Being is also to postulate Its being. The Necessary Being or God is considered to be self-subsistent and metaphysically necessary and all the possible beings of the universe are regarded as metaphysically contingent upon It.<sup>16</sup>

According to Mulla Sadra, God or the Necessary Being knows of His Essence and since He is the Necessary Being whose Essence is identical with His Being; knowledge in God implies a unity between the Subject who knows, the Object that is known and the Act of knowing.<sup>17</sup> In other words, God is at once the Knower (*al-'alim*), the Known (*al-ma'lum*) and Knowledge (*al-'ilm*).

Creation or the existentialization of existents by the Necessary Being is the result of God's contemplation of His Essence. It is God's contemplation (*ta'aqqul*) or knowledge (*'ilm*) of His own Essence that brings forth all things into existence. Since being and knowledge are identical in God, God's knowledge existentially creates beings or existents. In God, to know of a thing is also to existentially create or confer existence to that thing which is known by Him. Therefore, the beings of things are identified as God's very knowledge of them<sup>18</sup> and God's knowledge constitutes the substance of cosmic manifestation. God's knowledge of the essence or form of a thing leads to the objective existence (*al-wujud al-'ayni*) of that particular form. God's contemplation of His Essence is

infinite and the manifestation of the universe constitutes God's eternal knowledge of Himself.

Mulla Sadra considers man as a microcosm who is composed of all the various degrees or levels of cosmic existence. A prophetic *hadith* states that 'Adam is created in the image of God'. For Mulla Sadra, man like God knows of things through the contemplation or intellection (*ta'qqul*) of the intelligible forms (*surah 'ilmiyyah*) of things in his soul. If God's knowledge or contemplation of the form of a thing leads to its objective existence, then man's knowledge or intellection of the form of a thing leads to its mental existence (*al-wujud al-dhihni*). When man knows of the form of a thing, that form is present or existentiated in his soul. When God knows of the form of a thing that form is given existence or presence in the external world. Therefore, God's knowledge of the forms of things existentiates them in the external world and they are bestowed with objective existence and man's knowledge of the forms of things existentiates them in his soul and are given mental existence. Both God and man possess the creative power of existentiating forms; however, since God is Pure Being, His existentiating involves real existence and since man is a contingent being he can only existentiate forms within the limits of the reality or intensity of his being. Therefore, for Mulla Sadra the relation of the intelligible forms to the human soul is analogous to the relation of the contingent beings to the Necessary Being.<sup>19</sup> Human knowledge and man's act of knowing are founded on the divine model.

## Conclusion

The principle of the unity of the knower and the known is one of the most important principles underlying Mulla Sadra's philosophy. It is upon this principle that he bases his view of the possibility of knowledge transforming the being of the knower and conversely of the being of the knower determining his knowledge. In Mulla Sadra's perspective, an individual is what he knows and what he knows is determined by or dependent on his being. Thus, there is a profound relation between knowledge and being. The unity between knowledge

and being provides the metaphysical foundation of his views on spiritual development or transformation of being through knowledge and the eschatological doctrine of the possibility of the human soul to existentiate beautiful and unpleasant forms in conformity with its condition of being and consequently, to experience paradise and hell respectively.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *al-Hikmat al-'arshiyah*, trans. James Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. Princeton: The University Press, 1981, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *Asfar* (ed.) Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar. Tehran: Shirkah Dar al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyyah, 1958, I, 3, 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>6</sup> Ayatullah Abu al-Hassan al-Qazwini, 'The Unity of 'Aqil and Ma'qul', *al-Tawhid* (Tehran) Vol. 9, No. 1: 87.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>10</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1975, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> *Asfar*, I, 3, 287.

<sup>12</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>13</sup> *Asfar*, I, 1, 312.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* See also Rahman, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-8.

<sup>15</sup> Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *Kitab al-Masha'ir*, trans. Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysics of Mulla Sadra*. New York: SSIPS, 1992, pp. 182-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Asfar*, I, 3, 277.

<sup>18</sup> James Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup> *Asfar*, I, I, 290.

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## **Seal of prophet hood, Religion and Pluralism from Mulla Sadra and Tillich's viewpoints**

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### **Abstract**

This articles sets out to investigate the historical and modern meaning of pluralism, its functions, and its limitations. In the first section, there is a historical and etymological study of pluralism and its various kinds comprising religious, philosophical, political, cultural, and social. The second section deals with lexical and expressional meaning of religion seal of prophet hood, and history from the viewpoints of Islam with reference to the verses of the Holy Qur'an along with Mulla Sadra ideas. Finally, in the third section, there is an investigation of the lexical meaning of parallelism and its difference with pluralism and a clarification of the misunderstandings existing between these two.

Types of pluralism and their meaning:

1. Philosophical pluralism in which there is the belief is the belief in the multiplicity of the sources of the word.
2. Religious pluralism which deals with the parallel truth of all Divine and non-divine religions.
3. Political pluralism which takes into account the participation of all political groups in determining their destiny and their collaboration in government.
4. Cultural and social pluralism which puts its focus on establishing institutions independent from government and institutionalization of these organizations. The result of this is that in a civil society a simple and fast mechanism in relation to the activities of the government and people is produced so that power will not be the monopoly of a certain individual.

## **Introduction**

Religion means "path", reward, and "inclination"<sup>(1)</sup>. Any divine religion bearing various teachings was revealed to complete the one prior to it for guiding mankind. The essence of divine religions is guidance and in their attempts to achieve this goal, there is no difference among them but they vary in the degree of their teachings. Now it is almost four centuries that GOD, religion, and divine prophets have been treated unkindly in the West. Man has been placed in the position of GOD<sup>(2)</sup>, intellectuals and the genius instead of the prophets<sup>(3)</sup>, and social and philosophical schools in the place of religions. Moreover, in order to diminish the differences existing between divine religions and man – made schools some measures have been taken the last of which is "a form of pluralism". Descartes believed that reality exists in everybody and no particular group has the right to think it is its monopoly; all people are equal in understanding the reality. This viewpoint undermines the referential aspect of religions. Kant also believed that in analytical propositions, our speculative intellect can not understand a-priori knowledge and issue judgments before experimenting. The result of this has been a complete dissatisfaction of religion and GOD. Although these thoughts can, in turn, be analyzed critically, one common result is drawn from them and that is in modern era some people have come to believe that existence has risen from essence (Dewey and Espinoza)<sup>(4)</sup>. Some others have also said essence is the base and self-evident (e. g. Foerbach and Sartre). The outcome of all of these is plurality in the origin of the world and philosophical pluralism.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965), the Christian theologian, has analyzed the above-mentioned points under Religion and History in his book entitled Systematic Theology. The present paper is an attempt to pose this discussion and analyze all aspects of pluralism with reference to Islamic source.

## **Religion and history**

The questions are whether there is any relationship between religion and history and whether religions improve with the evolution of history. In this case what the concept "seal of prophecy" means.

Can true and spiritual concept evolve through a transient phenomenon such as history? Do truth and illusion have history?

What is the determining evolution in religion? Can history clarify this factor? Are revelation and truth determined in religion by history?

Finally, can we say in order to understand the concept God thoroughly people should pay their attention to history?

In response to the last question, it should be said that although the theologian should extract his ideas about God from religion and not from history, some philosophers such as Hegel have accepted the innate necessity between history and revelation while others such as Paul Tillich do not consider this relationship essential. Although revelation is received within history, it can not derived from history. Another philosopher called Pane berg believes that the relationship between revelation and history is necessary<sup>(5)</sup>.

The Islamic philosopher, Mulla Sadra, believes that the above words about the relationship between revelation and history are to some extent right and to some degree wrong. If we consider prophecy as an absolute phenomenon, precedence and coming next do not prove any priority. For example although Jacob (peace be on him) followed Abraham (peace be upon him), this is not a reason for his being more complete. However, while there is certain degree to be considered here, no priority should be taken into account. This is true in prophet hood and massengership and there is no difference between them. Revelation does not take its righteousness from history and being historical. Therefore, its position is beyond oldness and newness. If a theologian speaks of development or retrogression in the history of religion, he has

to refer to specific and final elements in the concepts of religion and revelation.

### **Factors Involved in the Expansion of the Concept of Religion**

There are two interrelated reasons for the expansion of the concept of religion.

1. Tension in the concept of religion.
2. General factors which determine and specify the development of history such as political, economic and cultural factors

The concept of religion can not be understood according to social and cultural factors apart from its ultimate structure, which precedes any concept of religion. These sentences can indicate the amount of historical effect on religion. The reason is that materialist philosophers and those relying on history generally justify historical aspects.

Historical forces can determine the existence of religion but not its essence. Here we should distinguish between the concept of religion and the nature of religion. These historical factors do not have any effect on the nature of the concept of religion while they affect its existence. (The social conditions of a particular era affect the concept of religion but do not produce it.)<sup>(6)</sup>

For example a feudalistic viewpoint of society affects the theoretical experience of religion as far as its hierarchical status is concerned while the concept of religion exist all throughout history and both before and after the feudalistic period. The essence of religion is beyond history is another version of "time and eternity" discussed in "Transcendent Theosophy". Moreover, it should be said that in traditions and the verses of the Holy Quran the philosophy of the mission of prophets and sending down of the Book have been stated as general rules in that each prophets has come for a specific era. But Islam is for all humanity. This s a meaning well beyond history which exists in Islam. Islam accepts what Paul Tillich said that each religion

has a specific historical period for other religions but considers itself beyond history.

### **Mulla Sadra's Opinion about Totality of Islam**

Mulla Sadra believes that Islam, which is the seal of religions, is superior and more complete than any other religion. This is clearly manifested in the meaning of "seal", because it incorporates the teachings of all religions. It is all of them without being one of them. It consists all the perfections of other religions and is free from their shortcomings. Islam falls within the rule of "the comprehensiveness of all things while not being one of them". This rule <sup>(7)</sup> also applies to revelation in Islam and there is no room for any doubt. In the Holy Quran the word "Al-Din" is used for Islam in which "Al" is used and has the meaning of comprehensiveness in Arabic while in the case of other religions the word "Din" meaning "religion" is used. "And whose seeks as (Din) religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him..." 3: 85<sup>(8)</sup>. It can become clear from this verse that religions other than Islam are "Din" while Islam is "Al-Din" which means comprising all religions. Imagining the concept of religion is necessary for the discussion of the concept religion.

Tillich says that to know how the concept of religion has expanded, we need the concept of religion, but it should be considered whether the concept of religion is comprehensive or not. If our concept of religion is general, religion is comprehensive. If we consider the concept of religion restricted, it deems necessary to consider all religions restricted. The fact that religion exists is beyond history, but the fact that it is in one form or the other is historical. If religion is understood as something which is the ultimate goal of mankind, in that case the ethical and logical components of religion are valid because they simply express an ultimate goal.

"Both Christianity and non-Christian religions should surrender to the criterion of the ultimate revelation" (Tillich) <sup>(9)</sup>. In our opinion, the ultimate revelation is Islam. The followers of other religions should

not interpret this claim according to their own interest. Our reason why the comprehensive religion and the ultimate revelation is Islam is as follows:

1. Islam presents a general and comprehensive view of religion which is not offered in other religions. It was stated earlier that Islam is Al-Din and not Din. Mulla Sadra defends this theory in his discussion of religion. By referring to the verses of the Holy Quran which talk about religion such as 3: 85 and "Surely the true religion which Allah is Islam ... " (3:19) and the tradition "Islam is high and there is no other religion higher than that" He discusses that Islam comprise all religion.

2. The Holy Quran clearly expresses that what it says had already in previous book. Torah and the Gospel. This can be taken as a proof of the comprehensiveness of Islam <sup>(10)</sup>. According to this reasoning it can be said that Islam is beyond history and comprises all other religions. This has been emphasized in the Holy Quran several times to the extent that it has become an ultimate Quranic principle.

3. The interpreters of the holy Quran have inferred from a series of the verses that a last religion must be the most comprehensive one. They refer to "Thus we have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witness (*Shahid*) against mankind ... "(2:13). (*Shahid*) means having an overview of the surroundings and of the people like the center of a circle.

4. From another verse: "The faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He has named you Muslims of old times and in this (Scripture) (22: 78), it can be inferred that the reality of Islam existed in previous religions. Any way, the totality of Islam in comparison to other religions, is self-evident. Therefore, the principle of "Expansion of Reality" can also be applied to revelation. This feature is peculiar to Islam in that in its principle and truth is beyond history.

What was said above can be taken as a full stop to the common meaning of pluralism which necessitated the divine religions to be side

by side with non-divine religions and considered no priority of one religion over the other. Therefore, seal of prophethood on which emphasis is made some of the verses of the Holy Quran is necessary accompanied with the meaning of perfection. Verse 3 of chapter 5 of the Holy Quran "This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed my favor unto you and have chosen for you Islam as religion is a reason for the fact that a religion can, in the course of the evolution of religions, have a higher position both in its rules and ordinances.

### **Monotheism and Pluralism**

In this section, after discussing religious pluralism, an account will be given on the incompatibility of this theory with absolute monotheism and divine unity.

#### **A- Religious Pluralism**

The origin of religious pluralism in the Christian world in the history of Christianity when some mediators were accepted between absolute existence and nature and these mediators were realized and embodied along with the absolute existence. An annexed subject found and independent existence and identity. The first group of mediators or intercessors is those attributes of God which took the form of 'these essences': Sophia, Word, and Grandeur. The second group in Trinity is the Angels each of which is a manifestation of certain independent actions. The third group in the Trinity who is a mediator between the divine essence and nature and things is a person. God has decided to finalize the word by him and he is no one but Jesus Christ<sup>(1)</sup>. In order for the Divine Decree to get from His essence to a particular commandment some media are needed and these media can realize through Trinity. In all the three groups of pluralism, the Almighty God who was exempt from the word and was out of the reach of human beings is now personified.

The impotence of the mediators between the divine essence and the things in the world is ever increasing and the more important they get more serious pluralism becomes. Jesus Christ is known as a Christian and he is addressed as exactly the divine word. Therefore, Trinity is an important religious issue in Christianity.

### **B. Negation of Absolute God (Philosophical Pluralism)**

Philosophical pluralism stems from a kind of understanding and interpretation of the origin of the world and the forces involved in it. As it was stated above, it refers to Trinity in one way or another. In this kind of theology one leads to three and three refers back to one. This, in turn, produces a kind of paradox.

In order to clarify this point, it should be said that there are three kinds of interpretation of monotheism. Firstly, there is "mystical monotheism" the ultimate goal of which is "the station of dying to self" and no trivial annexed thing will remain. Secondly, "the absolute monotheism" in which the adjective 'absolute' is used while it is not bounded absolute. There is a relationship between "absolute" and "bounded" such as that in "being servant to God" which is both absolute and bounded while the absolute does not become bounded and vice versa.

Concerning the third type of Christian Unity, i. e., "Trinity Unity", it should be said that it is non-mystical and non-monotheistic and most of the modern and old Christian theologians have accepted this three – sides division. According to Tillich, religion discusses existence per se, while philosophy talks about the structure of existence theoretically. This is only religion which can really talk about itself through the categorical elements related to recognition of existence which are in the domain of philosophy.

The judgments issued by philosophy about the nature of existence are made through categories. If an upper category, the way it is discussed in Islamic philosophy, is not taken into consideration,

human mind will confuse the Divine status, while is above all specifications and out of the limits of human imagination, with the status of the limited creatures. Therefore, judgments coercing nature are applied to Almighty God. If pluralism is taken in its philosophical meaning, there should happen a negation of the absolute Necessary forms of religious belief, as some people have suspected, Jesus or Ezra are taken as sons of God and it is while God is God, He is a man called Jesus who possesses human life.

If we want to explicitly state the reason why religion has become earthly in the history of Christianity, we have to firstly get back to philosophical pluralism and the problems of dividing philosophy in the Greek era. In that era, philosophy was divided into two levels, practical and theoretical. Ethics, political and economics used to fall within the domain of practical level, which gradually overcame the theoretical level. According to Plato, God was manifested in theoretical aspect of philosophy in which God as an abstract almighty being was discussed was gradually forgotten. Consequently we observe that in this period Jesus, who according to both Muslims and Christians has ascended, is considered as the son of God and these two have become one. What is specifically worth of noting is that pluralism in its philosophical meaning has come to accept the multiplicity of source and this is exactly what is known as duality or pluralism in the origin of the word.

Below a discussion will be presented of the meaning of pluralism and its difference with parallelism. Furthermore, the role of religion in rubbing off the spiritual crises of mankind will be elaborated.

It has been experienced that divine religions, regardless of their differences and commonalities, can calm human beings and frees them from crisis. Divine religions, if not altered, are essentially compatible with one another. The followers of divine religions came to realize that it was necessary for them to live in peace and mutual understanding as well as ris against atheism in two periods of history, i.e., the Crusade, and the beginning of the Renaissance. Accordingly, this coexistence of

religions, called parallelism, was produced<sup>(12)</sup>. Parallelism means that all religions are parallel and each one of them are to some extent right. This is a topic usually discussed in the philosophy of religion. During Renaissance, after the Crusade, in which Islam and Christianity came closer to each other and many of the Islamic teaching were translated into Latin, scholars started to think about the similarities existing between Islam and Christianity. Despite what is known now of Judaism and Christianity, these two religions have always been in war with each other and the present peace and compromise is more political. After the Renaissance, Christians have been cruller than anyone else towards Jews. An example of this is the genocide committed by Hitler.

The discussion of the relationship between religions arose after the Renaissance. Scholars studied the common points between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Christians believe that Jesus is the spiritual Son of God and the belief in his being the natural Son of God appeared later when the religions practical in India were known. Parallelism was developed to see what the relationships between Islam and Christianity and Judaism, and Hinduism are. As far as their responses to this question are concerned, historians were divided into two groups. Positives and histories said that because Hinduism is very old, it merely has some disciplines and rites and does without any spirit and meaning. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, phenomenologist said that we should not look at religions from a historical point of view, but rather we should seek the common truth in religions. They said that they should find the nature of religion and then should investigate the manifestations of this in various religions.

### **Rudolf Otto's Theory**

Rudolf Otto, the Christian theologian, says that "religion is a truth which human beings feel that the greatness and majesty of and absolute and peculiar being cause human beings to prostrate before him. This prostration takes a special form in any religion. "In history of interpretations, historians of religion take the Christianity as the base and interpret other religions according to it. In phenomenological

studies, however, scholars take religions as facts and study their manifestations without considering any priority for any one of them. In this investigation, Islam finds its own position. Mircha Iliadeh<sup>(13)</sup> introduces a complete framework of this interpretation in his encyclopedia. Now we have to understand the nature of the religion.

It was stated earlier that the history of parallelism goes back to the Renaissance when Christians became familiar with the teaching of Islam and there were no radical political discussions. The Swiss Islam cist called Fredrik Shuon in his book entitled *The Supreme Unity of religions* presents the common spiritual nature of religions. Moreover, Rene Guenon believes that there is relationship between the Divine Laws of religions as each religion has its own set of Divine Laws but there is unity among religions at higher levels. Guenon says, "The essence of religions is the same. The importance of this discussion is that those who are concerned about the critical conditions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which spiritual values and religious facts are being questioned, should know that they have to refer to the common essence of religions" Guenon and Shuon are extremely religious but, along with their belief in the coexistence of religions, they say that we should not focus on divine laws and surface structure of religions and ponder upon the differences existing among them. The basic fact is that spirituality is facing a crisis and while there is no doubt about the seal of prophet hood and the Divine Laws of Islam.

### **Final Notes and Conclusion**

Religion means surrender, path and reward. Divine religions have been sent down for guiding mankind and are hierarchically completing each other. As far as their essence is concerned, there is no difference among religions but, based on their time and space conditions, they differ in their programs. Islam is the last Divine religion and the most complete of them and the prophet of Islam is the seal of prophet hood. Pluralism, however, does not agree with these meanings of religion, seal of prophet hood, and truth.

There were discussions on the meaning of pluralism and its various political, social, and philosophical kinds and Mulla Sadra's viewpoints with reference to Quranic verses were presented. Moreover, the contraction between religious and philosophical pluralism with firm principles of religion and philosophy of monotheism and unity of existence were elaborated on. A conceptual confusion existing between parallelism and pluralism was also discussed. Additionally, the argument of coexistence and assimilation of Divine religions was presented. Finally, the ultimate function of religion to eradicate the spiritual crisis, which is common among all divine religions, was proved.

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## **Science and Religion in the thought of Imam Musa Sadr**

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### **Abstract**

In this essay the discourse of Sadr on the relation between Science and Religion within the parameters of Sacred Paradigm is discussed. Although it is not argued that Sadr is a scientist or even a disciplinary philosopher of science (a la Feyerband, Lakatos, Popper, Carnap, Steve Fuller, Ernst Mach, Bas Van Fraassen and Yoichiro Murakami) but it is firmly assumed that it would not be very farfetched to argue that he is surely a thinker that based on his weltanschung, which is deeply immersed within the soil of Muslim intellectual tradition, approached the issues which are at the crossroads of science and religion.

Keywords: Religion, Science, Relevance, Dialog, Modes of Being and Integral Philosop

### **Introduction** **Debates in Philosophy of Science discourses**

There are two broad definitions in regard to philosophy of science which may not always coincide with each other. In the first instance, we have the disciplinary definition of the subject which is aimed at a particular field of knowledge which has come to the academia as a specific institutionalized form of knowledge since early decades of the previous (in Christian calendar) century by introducing around the globe professorial seats, specific textbooks, research problems and professional journals which are dedicated in furthering

the frontiers of this particular discipline. In the second fashion, one could argue that philosophy of science has been around as long as reflection on 'reality' has been with us as human species. That is to say, in the second approach both terms of 'science' and 'philosophy' are conceptualized in a broad manner which could be defined in their primordial sense, i.e. as modes of reflections and ways of knowledge in regard to labyrinth nature of reality (sensual, rational and intellectual). In this sense, when one speaks of science, the term is not defined in terms of any modernist or postmodernist schools of metatheory or metaphysics. On the contrary, the term science is more taken as part of 'scientia' and redefined in the context of 'Sapientia'. Moreover, the term philosophy is not understood in its institutionalized and disciplinary fashion but in terms of *Philo* and *Sophia*. In other words, in the second approach we assume a transcendental anthropology of human self and a sacral ontology of knowledge.

It should be admitted that the field of philosophy of science in both fashions is a very complex field of knowledge and the participants are coming from different points of departures in terms of epistemology, ontology, metatheory, metaphysics and what Jeffrey C. Alexander terms as 'background assumptions'. In order to simplify the complexity of the issue - for the purpose of this essay which is primarily about Sadr's approach to the debates on 'science and religion'- we could divide the field into two broad camps of intellectuals, i.e. sacred school of philosophy of science and secular school of philosophy of science. Of course it should be noted that disciplinary philosophers of science don't call themselves in this manner as they divide various positions within the field into 'ontological', 'epistemological' or 'sociological' positions such as realism, instrumentalism, logical positivism, post-positivism, critical realism, structural realism, naïve realism, constructive empiricism and post-positive positivity. Although<sup>1</sup> it is true that each of these aforementioned positions differ on various issues among themselves but it is also accurate to assume that all of them agree upon 'unique nature of science as the only valid mode of knowledge', which has nothing to do with the *Transcendence* or *Das Heilige* in its cosmological and anthropological sense of the concept. In this sense,

Philosophy of science is the study of assumptions, foundations, and implications of science. In this fashion, the seemingly differing views in the field is defined by an interest in one of a set of 'conventional' problems or an interest in central or foundational concerns in science as divorced from transcendence. In addition to these central problems for science as a whole, many philosophers of science consider these problems as they apply to particular sciences (e.g. philosophy of biology or philosophy of physics). The main proponents of philosophy of science in this disciplinary fashions since 1900 up to this very day are people such as Henri Poincaré, Pierre Duhem, Niels Bohr, Bertrand Russell, Frank P. Ramsey, Alfred North Whitehead, Alfred Ayer, Hans Reichenbach, Alexandre Koyré , Rudolph Carnap, Michael Polanyi, Otto Neurath, Carl Gustav Hempel, Paul Oppenheim, Gaston Bachelard, R. B. Braithwaite, Werner Heisenberg, Paul Feyerabend, Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Ernest Nagel, Hilary Putnam, W.V. Quine, Patrick Suppes, Bas van Fraassen, Nancy Cartwright, Larry Laudan, Adolf Grünbaum, Wesley C. Salmon, Ronald Giere, Ian Hacking and Daniel Dennett.

Of course the list could be even longer but the point was not to catalogue all the participants within the disciplinary field of philosophy of science. On the contrary, the aim was to pinpoint that the various positions within the field which are represented by these different philosophers are in terms of metaphysical grounds deeply convergent as all of them either neglect the transcendental dimensions of reality in studying science or assume next to nil any position for the importance of 'transcendence' as a 'cognitive category' in fathoming our frame of reference on reality. Two central questions about science i.e. (1) what are the aims of science and (2) how ought one interpret the results of science? within the secular paradigm have been conceptualized without reference to the dialectics between 'intellect' and 'revelation' which is of great significance in the constitution of self and society and of profound importance for eschatology of humanity as a species on earth.

As for the practitioners of the sacred philosophy of science the list could be as long as the other one but in terms of institutional networking within modern academia they are deeply under-funded and

ill-represented as the global institutional fields of research are more favourable to the findings of the former position due to various reasons such as military industry, economic machinery of profiting and technological domination of planetary resources (which are all part of the modernist politics of world hegemony). However, we can mention people like Guenon, Schuon, Lings, Titus Burckhardt, Nasr, Al-Attas, Achickenc, Golshani, Muzaffar Iqbal and Ananda Coomaraswamy, Seyyed Muhammad Bagher Sadr, Marco Pallis, Charles Le Gai Eaton, Rama Coomraswamy, C. Jean Cooper, Whitall Perry, Ranjit Fernando, Joseph Epes Brown, Lord Northbourne, Philip Sherrard, Wolfgang Smith, Huston Smith, Michel Valsan, Tage Lindbom, Ivan Aguéli, Kurt Almqvist, Leo Schaya and James Custinger.

In locating the Sadrian approach within the debates on philosophy of science, in general, and in response to the two abovementioned questions, in particular, it would not be very far off to assume that his position falls within the parameters of the sacred paradigm where questions of value and knowledge are not divorced from each other and neither unrelated to the pursuit of human life as a cosmic being with an eschatological telos. In other words, the very notion of 'aim' in relation to science as a branch of human knowledge is not, firstly, divorced from the human quest as an image of the Holy within the theophany of the sacred. It is within these parameters that Sadrian position of philosophy of science or his view on science from a religious point of departure is constructed and we shall return on it later on in this essay.

### **Debates in History of Science discourse**

Within the modernist historiography there is a strong thesis that science has come to the intellectual stage of human quest after Europe discovered herself through Renaissance and what came to be known as the 'Scientific Revolution'. Of course this is not to contend that man prior to this revolution was unfamiliar with the scope of reality as appeared in the realm of 'Nature' or what has been customarily termed as 'Material Reality' but the proponents of this 'narrative' assume surely

that the story of knowledge is divided into the periods of 'proto-science' and 'science'. In other words, as the human history is constructed in terms of 'western world' versus 'restern world', the story of science is a reflection of this 'strong thesis', which presupposes such a deep abyss between occidental reason and the rest of the world. To read the history of science in this fashion, the researcher is supposed to follow the contours of western history of ideas since 16<sup>th</sup> century on as the 'factual' history of science while prior to this whatever and wherever one finds any trace of 'scientific spirit' should automatically classify it as 'proto-science' or 'magic' as the criteria of scientificity is what has come to be known as 'scientific model' after the emergence of scientific revolution.

However, it should be realized that despite the importance of science within modernist frame of mind the history of science as a discipline is not very old as there have been great many criticisms against studying the history of science as those who craft, so to speak, the scientific enterprise don't see any profit in studying the past incidents of scientific work. Their reason for such an opposition is based on a realistic approach to the scientific enterprise by arguing that whatever has been done in the past if it was 'correct' then it is already incorporated within the body of scientific knowledge in terms of 'methodologies', 'theories', 'strategies', 'models', 'paradigms' and 'programmes' and if 'incorrect' then discarded and removed from the very context of science. In other words, this approach was inspired by the accumulationist theory of science which was very popular among philosophers of science during the supreme reign of Logical Positivism and various schools of verification and falsification theories of scientific knowledge. But by the collapse of this school and disintegration of positivist unity we started to witness the emergence of new approaches to science and the very idea of science and how it should be viewed undergone various metamorphoses. It may come as a surprise to notice that for a long time social and human sciences were under the influence of natural sciences and the models which were employed within these circles and one important criterion for being considered as a worthy member of scientific family was to adopt these natural scientific models in studying of human societies and beings. But by the collapse of Logical Positivism and Vienna School there emerged

new approaches which were somehow inspired by human sciences and interpretative models laboured within social sciences and history. Maybe the Kuhnian approach to science and his adoption of 'Gestalt Psychology Model' could be qualified as a significant case in this regard which gave a strong kick to the establishment of various seats of history of science as a separate discipline within the institutionalized frame of academic system around the globe.

Of course, this is not to argue that prior to this there was no scholarly work<sup>2</sup> on history of science but this is to contend that the disciplinary form of history of science emerged when the hegemony of Logical Positivism ended within the academic circles and among intellectuals and that was around the same time as Otto Neurath's death in 1945.

However it should be realized that this notion of history of science is an extension of what we termed as secular notion of philosophy of science as within this discourse what is considered as 'science' is deeply interrelated to the modernist notion of 'knowledge' which is an aspect of either rationalist or empiricist approaches to the realm of reality. Seen in this fashion, then we could re-read the history of science without the parameters of Modernism by reconstructing the story of science as a sub-section of knowledge quest in the context of human inquiry that conceptualizes both terms of 'history' and 'science' broader than secular definitions of these terms which are understood within the modernist frame of reference. In other words, when we say 'history' it is not based on a modernist distinction of 'science' into proto-science and science or models which are based on the contradiction between **science**-model versus magic-fantasy.

In approaching the Sadrian discourse we should bear in mind these precautionary notes as it seems he does not read the history of science in terms of modernist narrative as the constitutive elements of this debate, i.e. 'science' and 'history' are fathomed within other conceptual frameworks than the disciplinary secular paradigm.

### **Debates in Sociology of Science discourses**

Before entering the very debate on 'sociology of science' and assess the main questions in this context it would be interesting to note that the very possibility of inquiring the scientific enterprise of Science through sociological perspectives is in itself a perplexing phenomenon to all of those who dreamed that either sociology may become naturalized (and join the rank of Science) or marginalized (and kicked out from academia due to its lack of scientificity). In other words, after the collapse of Comtian dream (and some may argue nightmare) in terms of philosophy of scientific hierarchy there were many sociologists who aspired to adopt more of natural scientific models within the parameters of their craft by hoping that these projects would elevate the rank of their craft in the eyes of other practitioners of scientific community such as physicists, biologists, behavioural psychologists, chemists and so on and so forth. This line of argument was based on the belief that science is an intellectual engagement with the aspects of reality or reality in all its aspects and in this fashion extra-cultural and extra-social and the laws of science are corresponding deeply to the structures of Nature and Reality. By assuming in this manner, the sociologists who favoured positivism aspired to adopt the models (and even ontology of naturalism) of positivistic natural sciences in the body of their sociological theories and hoped that this will qualify them to join the club of sciences. But this did not happen as the critics pointed at various discourses and models as well as theories within sociological field of inquiry which seemed at time to be at war with each other. For instance, one could mention the existence of heated debates between the proponents of the functionalist theories versus conflict theories or the contradictions of both of them with behavioural theories or Weberian schools of social theory. Moreover what was always intact in these debates was the notion of science as a transcultural activity without realizing its institutionalized dimensions which have come gradually to cripple the idealist notion of scientist as a pure ideal-type in search of Truth.

In other words, the collapse of positivist theories and emergence of postpositivism within various schools of philosophy and history of

science emboldened sociologists to consider the lack of theoretical centrality as an asset and even encourage them to take on science as a paradigm by arguing that the very 'objective enterprise of science' is a social production and hence a sociological question which needs like other aspects of the 'Social' (such as culture, education, family and state) to be sociologically studied. That is to say, the concepts such as 'objectivity' and 'verification' or 'falsification' which were tied to the machinery of science as an enterprise of fact-finding and truth-unearthing came to be viewed by suspicion and hence matters of 'consensus' or politics of truth rather than revealing of Objective Truth.

To put it otherwise, Sociology of science deals with the social conditions and effects of science, and with the social structures and processes of scientific activity. In this approach, 'Science' is considered as a cultural tradition, preserved and transmitted from generation to generation partly because it is valued in its own right, and partly because of its wide technological applications. Its most distinguishing characteristic is that the primary purpose of its cultivators, the scientists, is to change the tradition through discoveries. This bears some similarity to the purpose of modern artists and writers. But innovations in art and literature are accompanied by dissension and conflict, because there are no explicit criteria and accepted procedures to determine whether an innovation is an improvement or deterioration of existing tradition. Although it is believed that scientific criteria and procedures are neither perfectly unequivocal nor entirely stable, they are conceived to be far superior to criteria used in the evaluation of other cultural products. The relatively objective, consensual evaluation of discoveries makes science an extreme case of institutionally regulated cultural change. Sociologists of science have concentrated on this characteristic of science as a tradition and as an institution.

In other words, the very concern which deeply characterizes 'ilm' (within sacred tradition), i.e. 'awareness' seems to be lost by not being anchored in the frame of 'cosmic awareness' (namely, the ideal of Truth which is deeply connected to Truth and in dialogue with awareness as the essence of knowledge).

To put it otherwise, the questions sociologists of science deal with are: How did this unique tradition of modern science emerge and become institutionalized? How is it maintained and controlled? How is scientific

research organized? What determines changes in scientific organization, and how are these changes related to research? (Joseph Ben-David & Teresa A. Sullivan, 1975. p 204))

Looking at these questions we could establish an assumption that the frame of inquiry within this field is different than philosophy of science (in both its guises) as the priority is not in finding Truth but how things are constructed within the context of society. In other words, science is not considered in its form as a perennial quest of humanity for truth and reality but as a social product which follows the logic of the 'Social' like all other social 'things' in its Durkheimian sense. Of course it would be really a stretch to consider Sadr as a sociologist of science in its disciplinary form but when it comes to reflections upon science and its relation to technology and military industry there issues which could be deducted from Sadrian paradigm in a novel fashion. But putting it in a brief, one could argue that 'science' in Sadrian frame of reference is more of a 'cosmic awareness-nature' rather than a matter of 'social consensus' without any concern towards ideals of truth, light, illumination and enlightenment.

### **Debates in History of Religions discourses**

#### ***Natural history of religion***

Since the emergence of modernist paradigm under the tutelage of Enlightenment Tradition, the transcendental dimension of the sacred came under severe attack under the pretext of superstition or inaccessibility of noumena to the power of human reason as the post-Renaissance history of world system has come to be dominated by Empiricism in philosophical debates. Of course this was only a marginal European incident but due to the spread of colonial forces around the globe this provincial event came to have global consequences. These tendencies within meta-theoretical debates came to be known as the reign of Naturalism without any reference to metaphysics while it should be admitted that the contours of 'natural machinery' is a lame practice in metaphysical contemplation. After the full-fledged establishment of paradigm of Modernism and reductionism

as its handmaiden we started to have a novel approach to religion which by distorting the uplifting dimensions of religion succeeded in reducing making a naturalized thing of an inner reality and later on by the entrance of sociologism everything intelligible came to be an extension of the 'Social'. In other words, we came to have a metaphysical interpretation of religion which was based on 'Naturalism' – on the plane of ontology- and later on came to be under the influence of 'Sociologism' – on the plane of epistemology.

### ***Religionengeschichteschule***

Within the academic field of studying religion, this is an approach which considers religion not as a revealed tradition of the Holy but as a socio-cultural phenomenon, i.e. religion as an evolving entity within the context of human society and finally shall become a non-entity due to the evolution of human community. The History of religions was a 19th century German school of thought which was the first to systematically study religion as a socio-cultural phenomenon. It depicted religion as evolving with human culture, from primitive polytheism to ethical monotheism, a view that is now considered ethnocentric. This field of inquiry is deeply influenced by the ideology of secularism which aims at distinguishing between the realm of the sacred from the domain of the secular and additionally pushing for the reign of secularity in socialization processes. The underlying assumption within the study of religions is the reduction of revelation into a 'social thing' which should be studied by scientific methodologies and this came to be known as 'Religionswissenschaften'.

But the Sadrian approach to both of these tendencies is to contend the supremacy of Naturalism in matters of ontology and to belittle the significance of reductionism in matters of epistemology by arguing that there should be a clear distinction between 'science' (as a cosmic consciousness) and 'scientism' (as a secular ideology). Although it should be noted that when Sadr held this position it was not very popular to argue in this fashion as we were still living under the

hegemony of Positivism both as an ontology and epistemology- not mentioning atheism (as an a-theology).

## **Debates in Science and Religion discourses**

The debates on science and religion are very complex and multifarious. There are those who argue that there is no debate between proponents of these two poles as the fields of inquiries under investigation have nothing in common. The argument runs like this: In regard to science we are dealing with the natural order and in terms of religion we are focused on a supernatural realm. While the methodology of approaching the natural domain is of empiricism-rationalism the domain of supernatural is accessible through 'intuition', 'inspiration', 'dream' and 'fantasy'. That is to say, to approach the religious realm we are dealing with an entity that is not prone to 'methodic conceptualization'. But this is only a view among many contrasting views that have flourished among intellectuals of various disciplinary backgrounds. In other words, the eighteenth naturalism engrained in this view is somehow outdated and replaced by more finessed views in regard to science and religion as well as the possible dialogical/dialectical relationships between these two domains.

A common modern view, described by Stephen Jay Gould as *non-overlapping magisteria* (NOMA), is that science and religion deal with fundamentally separate aspects of human experience and so, when each stays within its own domain, they co-exist peacefully. (1999) Another view known as the conflict thesis, which has fallen from favor amongst historians but retains popular appeal, holds that science and religion inevitably compete for authority over the nature of reality, so that religion has been gradually losing a war with science as scientific explanations become more powerful and widespread. (Ferngren, 2002. p 29) This view was popularized in the 19th century by John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White. However, neither of these views adequately accounts for the variety of interactions between science and

religion (both historically and synchronically), ranging from antagonism to separation to close collaboration. (Ferngre, 2002. p 4)

John Polkinghorne argues (1998. p 22) that the interactions between science and religion could be classified into the following fashions

1. **Conflict** when either discipline threatens to take over the legitimate concerns of the other
2. **Independence** treating each as quite separate realms of enquiry.
3. **Dialogue** suggesting that each field has things to say to each other about phenomena in which their interests overlap.
4. **Integration** aiming to unify both fields into a single discourse.

Since the era of logical positivism, the philosophy of science has shifted away from scientific realism towards instrumentalism and confirmation holism, both of which weigh in significantly on the relationship of science and religion. Scientific realism tends to rely on the hypothetico-deductive method. This requires that evidence inconsistent with a theory's initial predictions be taken as falsification of it. For instance, Neptune was discovered when Uranus deviated from its path as predicted by Newton's theory of gravity. Had Neptune been unobservable by telescope, the theory that an undiscovered planet had caused the deviation would have been falsified. Central religious claims are often held to be unfalsifiable (or at least exceedingly hard to falsify to the point of being practically unfalsifiable), and hence adverse to science, or at least outside the domain of science; the coupling of religion and science is often described as pseudoscience. Instrumentalism postulates that concepts and theories are merely useful instruments whose worth is measured not by whether the concepts and theories are true or false (or correctly depict reality), but by how effective they are in explaining and predicting phenomena. As such, it may accept some methods of inquiry and sources of information, those of a religious variety in particular, which are seen as taboo by the majority of logical positivist and realist scientists. For example, as long

as the theory that praying cures diseases can sufficiently explain and predict the phenomenon, it would be taken as a useful theory by instrumentalist scientists, without considering its truth value. Paul Feyerabend's "scientific anarchy" posits a similar view on the nature of scientific inquiry. Under this view, religion is not seen as being, in principle, incompatible with science. Confirmation holism postulates that no concept or theory stands by itself. In other words, a concept or theory only makes sense, and can only be proven or falsified, in terms of the system of which it is a part. For example, a medical doctor may hypothesize as to why a patient has developed a rash, but this theory may in turn depend upon the patient having been in contact with poison ivy, which may in turn depend upon poison ivy being present in the locale or the person having recently traveled to a region where it was present, and so forth. Some concepts and theories may rest on other proven concepts and theories, while others may require proving (or assuming) the underlying concepts and theories first. This view has primarily developed out of the work of philosopher and logician W. V. Quine, and philosopher of math and science Imre Lakatos (a student of Karl Popper) who was influenced by Quine as well as by Thomas Samuel Kuhn. Lakatos taught that scientists work within an organic system of concepts and theories (Kuhn referred to it as a paradigm, Lakatos called it a research program, Quine called it a conceptual scheme), that the core concepts and theories of this system are held with personal commitment, and that they will resist falsification by *ad hoc* modification or the addition and deletion of peripheral concepts and theories (a weakness in naïve falsificationism which Popper himself acknowledged). In this view, religion is likewise not seen as being, in principle, incompatible with science.

To understand the Sadrian position in this debate it would be better first look at the issues concerning religion and science in the context of Islam and Science and afterwards we would be in a better position in assessing his views on science and religion and the consequences of such a view for us in the Muslim world, in particular, and the global context, in general.

## **Debates in Science and Islam discourses**

There is hardly any subject as vexed and vital due to its technological consequences, military domineering ability and subsequent economic prowess for the contemporary Islamic world as the question of modern science. Since its first encounter with modern Western science in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Islamic world has had to deal with science for practical and intellectual reasons.

It would not be a stretch to say that the contemporary Islamic world is gripped by the challenges of divergent yet related points of view, which shape its perception of science in a number of essential ways. On the one hand, the governments and ruling elite of Islamic countries consider it to be of the highest priority to keep up with the global race of technological innovation from communications and medical engineering to weapon industry and satellite technology. Arguments to the contrary are seen as a call for resisting the irreversible process of modernization, or for backwardness, to say the least. On the other hand, it has become common wisdom that the consequences of the application of modern natural sciences to fields that have never been encroached upon before pose serious threats to the environment and human life. This is coupled with the threat of modern science becoming the pseudo-religion of the age, forcing religion to the margins of modern society, or at least making it a matter of personal choice and social ethics. This creates a bitter conflict of consciousness in the Muslim mind, a conflict between the sacred and the worldly power, between belief and scientific precision, and between seeing nature as the cosmic book of God and as a source of exploitation and domination.

As Ibrahim Kalin argues when

... we look at the current discourse on science in the Islamic world, we see a number of competing trends and positions, each with its own claims and solutions. (Kalin, 2008)

To simplify the issue for the sake of our purpose we can argue that

... they can be classified under three headings as ethical, epistemological and ontological/metaphysical views of science. (Kalin, 2008)

### ***The ethical/puritanical view of science***

The ethical/puritanical view of science is the most common attitude in the Islamic world, considers modern science as essentially neutral and objective, dealing with the book of nature as it is, with no philosophical or ideological components attached to it. Such problems as the environmental crisis, positivism, materialism, etc., all of which are related to modern science in one way or another, can be solved by adding an ethical dimension to the practice and teaching of science.

The most common attitude towards science in the Islamic world is to see it as an objective study of the world of nature, namely as a way of deciphering the signs of God in the cosmic book of the universe. Natural sciences discover the Divine codes built into the cosmos by its Creator, and in doing so, help the believer marvel at the wonders of God's creation. Seen under this light, science functions within a religious, albeit overtly simplistic, framework. The image of science as the decoder of the sacred language of the cosmos is certainly an old one, going back to the traditional Islamic sciences whose purpose was not just to find the direction of the *qiblah* or the times of the prayers but also to understand the reality of things as they are. Construed as such, science is surely a noble enterprise, and it was within this framework that the Muslim intellectuals, when they encountered the edifice of modern science in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not hesitate to translate the word *'ilm* (and its plural *'ulum*) for science in the sense of modern physical sciences.

This attitude can best be seen among the forerunners of Islamic modernism, especially among those who addressed the question of science as the most urgent problem of the Islamic world.

For this generation of Muslim thinkers, Western science was clearly and categorically distinguishable from Western values, the underlying assumption being that the secular worldview of modern West had no inroads into the structure and operation of the natural sciences. The task is therefore not to unearth the philosophical underpinnings of modern science but to import it without the ethical component that comes from Western culture, which is alien to the Islamic ethos. The best example of this attitude was given by Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the famous intellectual of the Ottoman Empire and the poet of the national anthem of Turkey. Akif, who lived at a time when the Ottoman empire and parts of the Islamic world were being divided and fiercely attacked by European powers, made a clear-cut distinction between Western science and European life-style, calling for the full-fledged adoption of Western science while totally rejecting the manners and mores of European civilization.

The idea of locating modern science within the framework of Islamic ethics is an attitude that is still with us today. Most of the practitioners of science in the Islamic world, namely engineers, doctors, chemists, physicists believe in the inherent neutrality of physical sciences, and the questions of justification, domination, control, etc., simply do not arise for them. Since science is a value-free enterprise, the differences between various scientific traditions, if such a thing is allowed at all, come about at the level of justification, not experimentation and operation. This has certainly important policy implications for scientific research funded by federal governments and business corporations in many parts of the world. The point that is inevitably obscured, however, is much more crucial than having an influence on policy decisions. To limit ethics to policy implementations is to make it a matter of personal preference for the scientific community whose political and financial freedom against governments and giant corporations is highly questionable. The fact that the scientists who approve human cloning and genetic alteration believe in theistic evolution does not change the course of modern science. The conflict of consciousness to which we referred above resurfaces here in the form of people whose hearts and emotions are attached to the

mandates of their respective religion but whose minds are empty of the religious view of the universe.

### *The epistemological view of science*

The second position, which we may call the epistemological view, is concerned primarily with the epistemic status of modern physical sciences, their truth claims, and methods of achieving sound knowledge, and function for the society at large. Taking science as a social construction, the epistemic school puts special emphasis on the history and sociology of science.

An important channel through which the contemporary Islamic world, especially in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has come to terms with modern science is philosophy of science as developed in the West. The impact of the deconstruction of the epistemological hegemony of 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism together with the critique of Newtonian physics and scientific objectivism and realism on the Islamic world has been stupendous and caused a torrential release of intellectual energy among students and intellectuals. Needless to say, the influx of ideas associated with such names as Kuhn, Feyerabend and Popper and their current students continues almost unabated in spite of the fact that the post-antirealist thinking on science seems to have come to a serious stalemate. Being on the receiving end of this debate, many Muslim students and intellectuals are still experimenting with these ideas with little effort, as we shall see shortly, to extrapolate their full implications. Before doing that, however, a few words of clarification on the scope of contemporary philosophy of science are in order.

What I have called here the epistemic view of science, which has taken the form of an extremely common tendency rather than a single school of thought, has certainly raised the consciousness of the Islamic world about modern science, and contributed to the ongoing discussion of the possibility of having a scientific study of nature based on an Islamic ethos. We can, however, hardly fail to see the contradictions in this point of view especially when it is most

vulnerable to the temptations of modern epistemology. The emphasis put on epistemology to the point of excluding ontology and metaphysics has grave consequences for any notion of science, and it is for this reason that we do not see any serious study of philosophy, metaphysics or cosmology among the followers of this point of view. Furthermore there is a deliberate resistance to these disciplines in spite of the fact traditional Islamic philosophy and metaphysics had functioned as a gateway between scientific knowledge and religious faith. At any rate, it remains to be seen if the adherents of the epistemic view of science will be able to overcome the subjectivist fallacy of modern philosophy, i.e., building an epistemology without articulating an adequate metaphysics and ontology.

### ***The ontological/metaphysical view of science***

Finally, the ontological/metaphysical view of science marks an interesting shift from the philosophy to the metaphysics of science, and its most important claim lies in its insistence on the analysis of the metaphysical and ontological foundations of modern physical sciences. This school is represented, *inter alia*, by such Muslim thinkers as Seyyid Hossein Nasr and Naquib al-Attas, that the concept of Islamic science goes back, a concept which has caused a great deal of discussion as well as confusion in Islamic intellectual circles.

The last major position on science of which we can give here only a brief summary is marked off from the other two positions by its emphasis on metaphysics and the philosophical critique of modern science. Represented chiefly, *inter alia*, by such thinkers as Rene Guenon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Naquib al-Attas, Osman Bakar, Mahdi Golshani and Alparslan Acikgenc, the metaphysical view of science considers every scientific activity operating within a framework of metaphysics whose principles are derived from the immutable teachings of the Divine revelation. In contrast to philosophy and sociology of science, metaphysics of science provides sciences with a sacred concept of nature and cosmology within which to function. At this point, the sacred view of nature taught by religions and ancient

traditions takes on a prime importance in the formation and operation of physical sciences, and all of the traditional sciences, regardless of the historical and geographic setting they were cultivated in, were based on such principles which had enabled them to produce highly advanced sciences and techniques while maintaining the sacredness of nature and the cosmos. The traditional natural sciences, Nasr and others argue, derived not only their work-ethics and methodology but also metaphysical and ontological *raison d'etre* from the principles of Divine revelation because they were rooted in a conception of knowledge according to which the knowledge of the world acquired by man and the sacred knowledge revealed by God were seen as a single unity. As a result, the epistemological crisis of the natural and human sciences that we try to overcome today did not arise for the traditional scientist who did not have to sacrifice his religious beliefs in order to carry out a scientific experiment, and vice versa.

The traditional metaphysics envisages reality as a multi-layered structure with different levels and degrees of meaning. The polarity between the Principle and Its manifestation, which is translated into the language of theology as God and His creation, gives rise to a hierarchic view of the universe because manifestation already implies a domain of reality lower than its sustaining origin. Moreover, since reality is what it is due to the Divine nature, it cannot be seen as a play-thing or the product of a series of fortuitous events. On the contrary, the cosmos, as the traditional scientists firmly believed, is teleological throughout, displaying a remarkable order and purposiveness. Nature, depicted by modern science as a ceaseless flow of change and contingency, never fails to restore itself into an abode of permanence and continuity with the preservation of species and self-generation. Seen under this light, nature, which is the subject matter of physical sciences, cannot be reduced to any one of these levels. With reductionism out, the traditional metaphysics of science uses a language built upon such key terms as hierarchy, *telos*, interconnectedness, isomorphism, unity and complexity. These qualities are built into the very structure and methodology of traditional sciences of nature, which can be taken to be one of the demarcation lines between the sacred and modern secular views of science. It is therefore impossible, the proponents of this view

would insist, to create or resuscitate the traditional Islamic sciences of nature without first articulating its metaphysical framework. Any attempt to graft Islamic ethics and epistemology to the metaphysically blind outlook of modern science is bound to be a failure.

By the same token, the function of philosophy cannot be confined to being a mere interpreter of the data produced by natural sciences. In sharp contrast to the Kantian notion of philosophy, which has turned philosophy into a handmaid of Newtonian physics, perennial philosophers assign to philosophy an important role in establishing a harmonious relation between the givens of religion and the demands of scientific investigation. In the post-Kantian period, philosophy was gradually reduced to a second-order analysis of the first-order facts of physical sciences, and this has assigned to philosophical pursuit a completely different task. In contrast to this new mission, the proponents of sacred science insist on the traditional meaning and function of philosophy.

The metaphysical view of science, which points to an interesting shift from the philosophy to the metaphysics of science, takes aim at the intellectual foundations of modern science and, unlike the other two views of science, proposes a well-defined philosophy of nature and cosmology based on the principles of traditional Islamic sciences. Its critique of modern science is not confined to ethical considerations or methodological amendments as it claims to restore the religious view of the universe. In this regard, the metaphysical view of science, as formulated by Nasr and others, is part of the larger project of deconstructing the modernist worldview, of which science is considered to be only an offshoot.

The three views of science presented here testify to the vibrancy of the ongoing debate on science in the present world of Islam. But what is of great significance for us in this context is the position of Sadr vis-à-vis science as he qua a philosopher approached the question of 'knowledge', in general, and 'science', in particular, from a philosophical position which is rooted deeply within the soil of Islamic Intellectual Tradition and seems not to fit very squarely within the

position outlined by Kalin's superb intellectual cataloguing. However we should realize that the very position of 'religious perspective' is not an uncontested concept but a very controversial one which needs to be deconstructed. In Kalin's words, there are three positions within Islamic context in regard to science and we need to delve into the position upheld by Sadr as Kalin has not paid any attention to his project and unfortunately the positions and works of other intellectuals such as Dr. Beheshti, Ustad Muttahari, Shaheed S. M. Bagher Sadr and other revolutionary thinkers of 20<sup>th</sup> century have been completely disregarded in Kalin's reading. Of course to analyze all these works would be of great significance as this line of argument seems to be metaphysically close to the third position of Kalinian model but sociologically, metatheoretically and politically dissimilar to the works of Nasr, Schuon and Lings.

### **Sadr on Science and Religion**

In the history of religious thought within the bosom of Islamic intellectual context there has been a longstanding debate on the relation, contrast, contradiction, incommensurability and harmony between Revelation and Reason, Religion and Intellect, Permanence and Contingency, Islam and Temporal Contingencies and finally Tradition and Modernity. We have had many who opted for the assumed path laid solely by Revelation at the expense of Reason or those who attempted to ignore the revelatory dimension of reality by unduly emphasizing the towering role of reasoning ability of human self or finally those who tried to put us at the crossroads of either tradition or modernity. This type of mentality has been caught between 'either-or-logic' and to great extent has been able to paralyze the discernible power of religious mindset, in general, and Islamic Umma, in particular through dichotomizing undichotomizable poles of being.

However the question of science and religion in Sadr's approach is not divorced from this larger debate on 'intellect and revelation' and to my reckoning it seems Kalin has been oblivious about as there is, firstly, no mentioning of this debate in his treatment of

science and religion within the context of Islamic World and secondly there is no allusion to thinkers such as Sadr, Beheshti, Shaheed Sadr, Muttahari despite his fluency in Persian and Arabic. In other words, his point of departure seems to be on 'science' as has been defined in the context of modernity (or the encounter of science and Muslim mindset) while what is of greater significance is the idea of 'contingency' which has been always an intellectual matter in the context of religious contemplation in dealing with impermanent issues within the frame of revelatory experience of *Deen*.

Now let's take a closer look at the Sadrian discourse in relation to science and religion.

The first significant issue which one could extract from the Sadrian discourse on science and religion is the integral approach which is employed by Sadr vis-à-vis the whole issue of dialogue between science and religion and this is epitomized in the notion of 'narrative' (*Hekayat*). Sadr believes that the relation between science and religion is an expression of anthropology of human self in its primordial fashion as self is a creature and qua a created being the human self is of dual nature, i.e. a permanent nature and an impermanent dimension. In other words, what we see as a relation between 'science' and 'religion' is in a more metaphysical sense a dialogue between celestial and terrestrial aspects of human being or what has been fashioned in the context of Islamic intellectual tradition as the dialogue between revelation and reason or eternal and temporal. To put it in a metaphysical language, science is an expression of human reason and religion is a manifestation of human intellect. The reason of human being is focused on the temporal while his intellect due to its prophetic nature (i.e. intellect as inner prophet) is interlocked with the realm of the permanence. In other words, this is the story of creation and Sadr views this

**... as a marvellous story ... which has commenced from the beginning of human life ... . (Sadr, 1383. p 151)**

One may pause and wonder how did Sadr view science and its development? In other words, in comparison to other competing views on science how did Sadr approach the scientific enterprise? For Sadr, science is not solely a **techne** or **techné** but

... awareness ... a light that enables us to unveil ... and re-cognizing the truth ... as truth is the act and command of God. (Sadr, 1383. p 152)

In other words, science is '*Ilm*' for him and it could be accumulated as it is related to the experiential dimension of human self and as such is possible to be transmitted to the others.

While he sees the relation between them in a dialogical sense however he does not consider their roles different and anyone who wishes to slaughter one for the sake of the other is simply making a grave mistake as

...Religion designs the destination while Science puts at the disposal of humanity the boat to navigate through the sea of unknown in order to find the destination ... . (1383. Pp 153-159)

There is a more interesting dimension within the Sadrian paradigm which goes beyond the 'normal' dichotomization of secular versus sacred discourses by viewing religion as a desacralizing force in the history of humanity. But the point which is different than the Weberian notion of 'desacralizing role of religion' and here it should be noted is the distinction which Sadr makes between 'superstition' and 'religion' and argues that

... superstitions and idols chained us down to the point that humanity could not see the wonder of the creation and unable of employing the forces of nature for its own benefits ... . But religion unchained us and in so doing established the elementary bases of scientific spirit ... . (Sadr, 1383. p 154)

In other words, Religion desacralized superstitiously woven sacrality and hence enabled science to unearth the essence of reality which is, in fact, the act of God. This is in opposition to the view that argues that science secularizes reality by rightly arguing that before

deciding the effects of secularization or the shrinking scopes of respective realms of sacred or profane or notions of sacrality and profanity we need to know what *is* 'Sacred' and what is 'Superstition'. In Sadrian view, religion rather consecrates science without leaving intact the superstitious dimensions which wrongly have been identified by disciplinary thinkers as 'religion' in the course of human history.

Although Sadr was aware of the alleged was between science and religion which was described in history of science discourses and popularized in 19<sup>th</sup> century nevertheless he did not agree with the principles of this historiography by arguing that this is a prime example of not seeing the dialogical character between Revelation and Reason or *Hades* and *Qadeem*. (sadr, 1383. p 156)

What is of great interest to note is the difference between the landscape of thought in both disciplinary (as an extension of Modernism) and integral (as an extension of Religionism) approaches respectively as in the former the human self interacts with Reason while in the latter the conscience is in interaction with Reason and Revelation or there is a triangle where three poles are in work to manage and situate the human soul in the vicissitudes of the time with reference to the Imaginal World.

Now the questions are a) what kind of notion is embedded within Sadrian paradigm in terms of Science? b) what kind of theory of scientific development one could reconstruct based on Sadrian episteme? c) how could we posit the Sadrian approach vis-à-vis the aforementioned discourses which are of disciplinary nature?

As abovementioned, Sadr considers science, regardless of the field where this awareness is applied, as a form of 'awareness'. Additionally the essence of knowledge is 'illuminative', i.e. is related to the world as the act of God. Sadr believes that human knowledge is of accumulative nature and that is to say we can increase the scope of our understanding both vertically and horizontally and this is of great civilisational significance. In terms of disciplinary approaches it seems Sadr works within a different paradigm of background assumptions as he does not share a view of history of human self which is based on the contingent approach to permanent questions. That is to say, in Sadrian approach, all disciplines of sociology of science, philosophy of science, history of religions seem to view human self in contingent fashion

without taking into consideration the permanent dimensions. To put it in theological parlance the dialogue between Reason and Revelation is not only a matter of faith but it is to embrace the human being in its whole without disregarding one dimension at the expense of the other. In this sense, when Sadr approaches the question of science he does not view the question in disciplinary fashion, i.e. in terms of reason against revelation or exclusion of revelation from the equation of dialogue. But this is not the position Kalin categorizes as ethical in his reading as this goes beyond the dichotomizing ideology of modernity versus tradition or even fundamentalist reading of tradition which puts contingency in opposition of the permanence. On the contrary, this is based on the parameters of the 'Principle School' (i.e. Usuli Tradition) which relies on the principle of '*Ijtihad*' in the sense explained by Dr. Beheshti (Qasemi, 1385. p 323).

What is of great theoretical significance and as a matter of fact it is the distinguishing point between disciplinary approaches to both science and religion (and the relation or lack of relation between these two dimensions of human being) and the transcendental approach of Sadr is the paradigm which these issues are located within. That is to say, Sadr does not consider science or scientific spirit or religious quest as haphazard incidents which are related to contingent accidents. In other words, he presents both of aspirations

... as modes of being [and these modes are all] derived from Providence ... .  
(Sadr, 1383. p 153)

Another decisive point within Sadrian approach to the problematique at hand is what he terms as the uniqueness capability of religion which is of dual nature, i.e. 'consecrative power' and 'discriminative ability' of religion. Sadr presents these two very useful concepts in the following fashion:

Then religion, removed idols and superstitions which put hindrances before science and re-endowed vitality upon [the man who was in search of knowledge]. (Sadr, 1383. p 154)

This is what I have called based on my reading of Sadr the 'discriminative ability' which enables us to distinguish between the

reality of sacred and superstitions which are based on apparent sacred images but in fact are emptied of any truthful essences and only based on religious sensibility one can distinguish the realm of sacred from the realm of superstition and idolatrous domains. However, this is not the only function of religious intelligence as Sadr puts forward another important proficiency of religion vis-à-vis the scientific quest of human self and that is

... [by removing the obstacles religion] ... consecrated the acquisition of knowledge by inducing in the [hearts of human beings] ... the notion that to acquire knowledge [one is not in pursuit of profane] ... [but this very act of pursuing knowledge is equivalent] to [what in religion is considered the reason of being, i.e.] prayer. (Sadr, 1383. p 154)

This is the second dimension of Sadrian approach which I have called the 'consecrative power' of religion, which Sadr notes vis-à-vis science and the disciplinary approaches have been neglectful about and as a matter of fact by mixing up between 'sacred', 'superstition' and 'secular' the proponents of disciplinary paradigm have not been able to shed light on very sensitive existential issues which are deeply related to what Sadr calls 'modes of being' in correlation with the sacred scheme of leben. (Sadr, 1383. p 153)

As I mentioned earlier despite the usefulness of the Kalinian scheme of analysis it fails to bring to light one of the most significant models of 'science-religion-discourse' within the Islamic World, which seems not to fit in any of the above paradigms as the proponents of what I call the revolutionary parameter of the Principle School are locating the quest of science or the desire of religiosity within the Primordial Nature of Human Self and related to the modes of being within the scheme of the Divine. Apart from this general designation, it should be remarked that for the students of social sciences and science studies as well as philosophy of science and history of religion the dual concepts of Sadr, i.e. 'consecrative power' and 'discriminative ability' of religion are of great intellectual significance in analyzing questions of self, society, religion, culture, science, civilization, history, existence, theology and the relations which may arise from the multi-interactions between these various poles that are all presented within the soul of human being.

However there is a very important dimension within the Kalinian classificatory scheme which needs to be addressed in relation to the model presented by Sadr and that is the role of natural sciences. In other words, how does Sadr pose before this challenge or if he, at all, realizes the issue of modern science as critiqued by metaphysical school of Nasr, Schuon and Lings?

Sadr believes that we need to distinguish between the 'theoretical dimensions' and 'experimental debates'. (Sadr, 1383. p 172) That is to argue that

...Koran attempts to lay the grounds for the making of Ideal Person, which is the Alpha and Omega of all sciences ... and for the realization of this goal ... the principles of various aspects (individual, social and ...) have been mentioned in the sacred book. However, for the sake of awakening of the human soul for the higher realities there are mentioning of various historical or natural instances which are not contradicting the solid foundations of knowledge ... but it would be a great remiss to consider the sacred book of Koran ... as a scientific book ... which is aiming to coin new analytical concepts or laying new scientific foundations by designing scientific laws ... . To approach the issue from this angle is ... to muddle up domains of theoretical debates with experimental researches (Sadr, 1383. Pp 171-2)

This brings us to the final question of difference in dealing with a science which is materialistic in foundation, detrimental in environmental sense and inhumane in existential sense between metaphysical school (represented by Nasr, Schuon and et. al.) and the principle school vis-à-vis a science. This issue lies in the heart of what Dr. Beheshti terms as 'governmentality principle' and 'scholarly research'<sup>3</sup> in relation to the question of Islamic Governance. In other words, Sadr, like many other revolutionary thinkers such as Imam Khomeini, Ayatullah Taleghani, Ustad Muttahari, Shaheed Bagher Sadr and Dr. Beheshti did not analyze the question of science as a problem unto itself but had the Ummatic Reality within the paradigm of Islamic Governance vis-à-vis other states or forms of governmentalities which could use – as they do today- as a weapon against the very existence of Muslims as a civilization.<sup>4</sup> This is an issue that shall be

discussed in our forthcoming article on the role of 'scholarly re-search' vis-à-vis contingent issues within the paradigm of 'Principle School'.<sup>5</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> On this last one see for instance, Bristol School of Philosophy of Science which is best represented by Gregor McLennan.

<sup>2</sup> One could mention, for instance, the work of George Sarton, i.e. *Introduction to the History of Science* (published in 1927) and the *Isis* journal (founded in 1912).

<sup>3</sup> I chose this term, i.e. re-search as an English equivalence to the Arabic word of 'Ijtihad' as in this the scholar attempts to discover the truth within the paradigms of temporality and spatiality in reference to a question and this discovery entails the very act of searching through anew based on eternal principles vis-à-vis transitory events.

<sup>4</sup> For a better understanding of these thinkers and their works one would be better off to look at the works done by Esposito where he introduces each of these figures in a lucid manner to English audience.

<sup>5</sup> By scholarly re-search I refer to the revolutionary school of Jurisprudence or Principle School which puts forward the idea and ideal of 'Fiqh Pooya'.

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## **Outlines of a Universal Theodicy: Perennialist Dis(solution) of the Problem of Evil**

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### **Abstract**

Modern man's turning away from traditional religion and belief in God is attributable, among other things, to supposed failure of theism in the face of evil. All the traditional theistic responses including certain new ingenious ones are vulnerable to serious criticism. In the face of all this the claim of the perennialist school that there is hardly any problem of evil and if at all there is one we have a quite satisfactory solution to it in principle is worth reckoning. The present paper attempts to present brief outline of what might be called as perennialist theodicy touching some important issues in the traditional debate on the problem of evil. The perennialist claim of reconciling/ integrating as diverse approaches to the problem as those of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam is certainly very intriguing for many a modern theologians and philosophers of religion but can't be dismissed without a sympathetic hearing.

On the jacket of Abraham J Heschel's book *Who is Man* a significant question is posed thus:

Is it not conceivable that our entire civilization is built upon a misinterpretation of man? Or that the tragedy of man is due to the fact that he is a being who has forgotten the question: Who is Man? The failure to identify himself, to know what is authentic human existence leads him assume a false identity to pretend to be what he is unable to be or to not accept what is at the root of his being. Ignorance about man isn't lack of knowledge but false knowledge.

Perennialists answer this question in the affirmative and argue that indeed modern man has erred in his understanding of the metaphysical status of man, his destiny and thus his response to the fundamental issue of suffering. The thesis of this book that is informed by the perennialist perspective is that philosophical thought structures of modern man are guilty of a fundamental misinterpretation of man. The traditional picture of man, which holds good despite the advent of modernity that is largely ignorant of or chooses to be ignorant of metaphysics that grounds the traditional civilizations according to perennialists, doesn't allow modern pessimistic nihilistic absurdist response to the existence of evil. In this paper the central theses of perennialist understanding of the problem of evil are foregrounded and the traditional man's response to the question of suffering presented. It doesn't focus on the technical question raised in the famous Epicurean formulation of the problem of evil. The traditional man isn't interested in theodicy and doesn't presume to be an advocate of God. The problem in this format doesn't interest him. He has more important task to do and that is, given the existence of evil and suffering how he is going to behave, what lessons it may teach and how to transcend it or make use of it in saving himself. The existence of personal God too isn't a fundamental issue for him but his relationship to the Reality, the Absolute that will lead him to a land of no sorrow, to the Kingdom where Good alone is. He is not a speculative man who constructs hypotheses about the whither and whence of the arrow that has pierced his heart but a practical man interested in removing it. He is not a philosopher of religion who seeks to exonerate God or to convict him for creating such a "messy" universe but the one who seriously sees to realign himself in the direction of the Absolute, to awaken from the dream of separate autonomous personality, to redress the inheritance of the Fall, the illusion of ego who sees things outside God. He is ever busy in negating himself to be worthy of receiving God who alone is perfect in goodness and grounds goodness. He sees himself as a sinner in need of grace rather than an innocent and just philosopher who could stand as a judge on the character of God.

There are fundamental differences between modern and traditional approaches to the problem of evil. According to perennialists modern man has failed to understand the traditional position on evil and he has, as a result, grossly erred in understanding evil and comprehending the issue in relation to God. Modern West, as the perennialists argue, lacks complete metaphysics and fails to transcend the plane of reason and individual domain, the domain of theology and rational philosophy. Philosophical and theological approaches are not able to make sense of the existence of evil in the universe of good God. These approaches lead to various divergent positions which can't claim absolute conviction as counter critiques of all these positions could be easily developed. The enormous amount of literature on theodicy is bedeviled by great confusions and weaknesses of standard defenses of theistic thesis against the evidence from evil are quite evident. This is not to condone the position of critics of theism who fail to see metaphysical core of theological formulations. Modern philosophy of religion generally ignores detailed negotiation with the traditional metaphysical and mystical position on the issue. That is why we see big claims on either side of the debate on theodicy and thus only criticize that which doesn't represent the real position of different religions. It is lamentable that modern academies have made a mess of religion by ignoring the metaphysical approach to it. It is claimed that theodicy is fraud and all defences of theism against the evidence from evil mere sophistry. The problem of evil is a death knell to theism. Against it the counter claims of certain theistic philosophers and theologians are equally grand but hollow. Ordinary believers, generally speaking, avoid the issue seeing it as insoluble problem and take recourse to faith and mystery. Most theologians are indeed embarrassed by it and rudely taken to task by their more witty adversaries. One may recall here Ivan versus his brother in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Father Panleux's confrontation with Dr. Rieux in Camus' *The Plague*, Pangloss of Voltaire's *Candide*. Many acclaimed works of modern literature argue against the religious belief in goodness and wisdom of God. Thomas Mann, Andre Gide, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, Eugene O Niel, Ernst Hemmingway, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham – to name only a few literary personalities across Europe – all find fault in the creation to accuse the Creator.

Modern philosophers of almost all hues agree in seeing something wrong with the standard theistic thesis and refer to the Epicurean formulation of the problem. McTaggart, Russell, Flew and many other big names in twentieth century philosophy have sought to problematize the case of theodicy. Many modern theologians have joined in this crusade against the “wicked” God of theology. After the holocaust it became fashionable to declare that God has gone on holiday and many cases of apostasy were recorded. Common man or ordinary believers have always found it hard to understand the wisdom of divine governance in history. Faith has suffered many a shipwreck on encountering the storm of apparently needless suffering. Modern scholarship, from various quarters, has succeeded in further strengthening the arguments against theodicy. Positivists find the statements regarding God’s goodness or love as non-sensical. Despite all these critics traditional theologians and a few philosophers of religion have not stopped practicing theodicy and rebutting the critics. Never ending discussions in philosophical and theological circles show that something is fundamentally wrong in approaches. The perennialists shift the whole debate on a different plane altogether where the traditional formulations of the problem appear unwarranted and thus their critiques uncalled for. The perennialist reading of theology, if granted, has indeed the great merit of dissolving the problem. We will not elaborate the complex arguments of perennialists here but make certain remarks on a related problem, which indeed is the more genuine issue, viz. response to the evil and suffering advocated in different religions rather than rational solution to the abstract problem of evil or speculations on theodicy.

The vantage point of religions sharply differs from the humanistic philosophies and that leads to diametrically opposite approach vis-à-vis evil. Onus doesn’t fall on God but on man. It is not God’s problem but man’s. Man and his salvation is at stake rather than God and His goodness. There is hardly any need to justify or exonerate God in the face of evil. Traditional man can’t even imagine to put God on trial, to question His governance and wisdom. It is unwarranted pretension for him to take the charge of advocate of God. He is also too busy minding his own business, guarding himself and saving himself to

scan God, Most High. Theodicy in the modern sense of the term that supposes that man can indeed stand judge over Existence, can acquit or convict God in the trial where judge is human reason, is a misadventure for the traditional man. The Absolute, Tao, Existence, *Tathata*, The Unconditioned, Brahman, One, *Ahad*, are not questioned or personified. So it is absurd to question the Supreme Reality. It is the Supreme Reality that gives the norm, that grounds all justice and goodness. It is in the name of that alone that human conceptions of justice and goodness could be meaningful. Humanism reverses this position and puts man at the citadel of God. It is man – not the theomorphic man, man the microcosmos or image of God but as an ego – with all his illusory desires, wishes fantasies, and passions and the limited discursive reason which is distant reflection of Intellect who is the measure of everything. In the traditional perspective, represented in traditional religions, mysticism and traditional metaphysics, man apart from Reality or God doesn't exist at all. The ego, the desiring self, the comfort seeking self, has to be surrendered. It is only God, the Reality in its transpersonal mode, which alone exists. Man as far as he claims to exist as an autonomous and separate entity, has to be noughted. Suffering does this work of naughting. The traditional man values truth above all things and for him God is truth. The truth apart from and independent of human sentiments counts. It is the objective scheme of things that has the final word. Man has no option but to accept the given, the impersonal and transpersonal order or scheme of things. His salvation lies in recognizing this. The image of Lucifer is the image of rebel. The traditional man is not a rebel. He doesn't judge the scheme of things at all. He has transcended the realm of affections and sentiments to think of accepting or non-accepting a scheme of things. He has no hesitation in accepting any scheme of things willed by God even if it puts all innocents to eternal torture. Simon Weil's remarks on Dostoevsky's Ivan quoted previously succinctly put the traditional man's position. Eckhart's (the great metaphysician and sage lauded by the perennialists) observations in his remarkable work *The Book of Divine Comfort* (that presents the essence of all traditional religious positions, the position of mystics and traditional metaphysics on the response to evil and suffering), approached from metaphysical perspective that dispenses with theological language or transcends it

could be seen as a fair representation of traditional position and therefore referred here in presenting the traditionalist or perennialist view.

Primarily there is only one evil, but it has numerous forms. “Fundamentally, it is the self-centred desire which runs counter to the spiritual laws of the universe. Physically evil is a disease and privation, psychologically it is insanity or abnormality, ethically it is badness, ill-will or wrong, religiously it is a sin and spiritually it is ignorance.” Evil is opposition of the finite to the Infinite. Problems of existence in both Hinduism and Islam are mainly problems of harmony and synthesis. Disharmony occurs when a creaturely selfish will is asserted against the universal will. This is “violation of one’s true nature which is of a piece with Ultimate Reality.” Promethean and Faustian spirit is the rebellious spirit against which Islam substitutes a submissive attitude. A fragment can’t stand against the whole. Only the whole exists according to all the religious traditions. Islamic *kalmia* is metaphysically rendered as ‘only God is.’ Islam agrees with the Buddhist diagnosis that it is “the egoism accompanied with craving and clinging, infatuation and attachment as ‘self-ness’, appetites of greed and resentment etc. which strongly binds the man.” The Prophet of Islam repeatedly warned against the world or desire oriented life. The Sufis have best understood and implemented these sayings. Craving for individuality and looking for a separate identity from the All-Encompassing Reality is the beginning of all misery. The Quran complains that “man is given to injustice and ingratitude.” It warns unjust and ignorant men against wronging their souls. It is thanklessness to God when man is lost in the pursuit of momentary pleasures.

The sage, who is *the* man, the normal man, the man true to his theomorphic image, in traditional civilizations, “stands above all the individualities of existence.” He has transcended the mind that is moved by the temporal events. Resting in perfect detachment or tranquility of the Self, the witnessing rather than the desiring consciousness, he is unmoved by the vicissitudes of life, the plane of dualities, of pleasure and pain, of good and evil. He having become a pure reflector of truth rests with perfect contentment. The

sentimentalist represented especially by existentialists in our age are quite far from this Husserl and Sartre don't allow the existence of objectless consciousness while as the beatific vision in Indian perspective is precisely this pure objectless consciousness. Modern man has left behind the ascetic man of Christianity who doesn't identify himself with the desiring ego and its countless illusions. Modern man is not ready for the ordeal of fire through which the initiate goes and the baptism of senses that burns the object directed consciousness or self. He doesn't wish to see for himself the other shore where reportedly sorrow is no more. He approaches the cases of Buddha and Christ who claim to have cut the umbilical cord of *tanha* or attachment and as a result transcendence of sorrow and alienation and thus attaining the Bliss Unspeakable in a skeptical spirit. He rationally analyzes such claims as if there is a non-experiential test to judge these claims. The sages of all ages have unanimously witnessed the truth of good news that there is a domain where suffering is no more, where God's goodness is experientially realized and thus refuted the pessimism that characterizes modern thought. Everything that happens under the sun has a prior warrant, a sort of divine approval. *Aarif*, the sage who has known, is at the other pole of sentimentalism. Nothing can move him to condemn the vagaries of life. As Abu Hafis reports that from the moment he was granted gnosis, neither truth, nor falsehood has entered his heart. The *aarif's* heart rests on God and God stands above all distinctions and judgments. As God isn't grieved so is not the gnostic who knows Him, the one who has cultivated Divine morality.

There is no contradiction between the Indian perspective that seeks deliverance from suffering and the other perspectives that seem to assign a positive function to it and see it as mystery and trial, as God's lasso for errant souls and as goad to perfection. This follows because in the latter perspective suffering leads to weakening of self-will and lets God come in. The trial consists in the fact that nothingness at the heart of life be acknowledged, that self's creaturely status, and thus its state of imperfection be acknowledged. The trial allows man to know himself, to judge himself, to see himself from the viewpoint of God. From the perspective of Absolute everything in disequilibrium and suffering makes us acutely conscious of this fact. All have sinned

from the perspective of Absolute. "Not me, but my Father in Heaven is perfect." The trial is to separate the gold from the dross of passions and assertions of will. The trial destroys the willing ego. It lacerates it and humiliates it so that it may repent in dust and ashes. It is God's whip against the devil, against the self that wishes to be left untried, to do its business, to proceed unaware of the king's treasures that lie at the other shore. Eschatological suffering too is there only to burn self will. The self left to its own wouldn't consent to let God in. For His mercy and grace to rain God needs to prepare the ground, to deweed the garden, to break all resistances of a weak soul. God needs to "forsake" man so that all the vestiges of a self that strengthens itself by such anchors as hope and consolation are destroyed. The trial is not completed until the servant cries 'Where is God?' and feels God abandoned as the Quran says and Simone Weil dramatically explains. This is the significance of the night of Golghata and the great agonizing cry to silent heavens, to the "absent God." The kingdom of God is only for the poor, thoroughly poor in spirit.

The Islamic tradition states that there is suffering because otherwise man will not remember God. This point is emphasized in their own ways by Buddhism and Christianity. Simone Weil seems to combine the insights of Buddhism and Christianity in her views on the spiritual significance of suffering. It is only under the unnerving shock of suffering that man becomes conscious of his other supramundane destiny. Hardly would he think of the otherworld, of ascension of Spirit or of the need of beatific vision or returning to Origin. It is suffering that exposes the vanity of all things and staleness of all the uses of the world.

The Christian tradition has explicitly and in detail recorded the functional value of suffering. Man learns, his utter displeasure notwithstanding, his most important lesson is soul-making in the school of suffering. And if we cannot (as St. Paul saith we cannot) come to heaven but by many tribulations, how shall they come thither who never have none at all? There is a consensus of the saints on the point that we shall not have continual wealth both in this world and in the other too. And therefore those who in this world without any tribulation

enjoy their long continual course of never-interrupted prosperity have a great cause of fear and discomfort lest they be far fallen out of God's favour, and stand deep in his indignation and displeasure. For he never sendeth them tribulation, which he is ever wont to send them whom he loveth. But they that are in tribulation, I say, have on the other hand a great cause to take in their grief great inward comfort and spiritual consolation.

The author of the *Ecclesiastes* said, "Better is it to go to the house of weeping and wailing for some man's death, than to the house of a feast; for in that house of heaviness is a man put in remembrance of the end of every man, and while he liveth he thinketh what shall come after." And he further said, "The heart of wise men is where heaviness is, and the heart of fools is where there is mirth and gladness." "Laughter," said he, "shall be mingled with sorrow, and the end of mirth is taken up with heaviness." And Jesus further said that "Blessed are they that weep and wail, for they shall be comforted." And that "The world shall rejoice and you shall be sorry, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Nietzsche has made some pertinent observations on the question of value of suffering and comes close to, though through a different trajectory, to mystical understanding of it. His central idea of going beyond the dualism of good and evil is essentially mystical. He didn't consider the existence of evil and suffering a matter of reproach. Here is a quote from his *Beyond Good and Evil*.

You want, if possible - and there is no more insane "if possible" - to abolish suffering. And we? It really seems that we would rather have it higher and worse than ever. Well-being as you understand it - that is no goal, that seems to us an end, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible - that makes his destruction desirable. The discipline of suffering, of great suffering - do you not know that only this discipline has created all enhancements of man so far?

The only way man can find peace and happiness, his equilibrium, is by realizing his oneness with the totality in all respects

and playing his part with a spirit of detachment as if he is an actor on the stage. He should have no sense of agency as the *Bhagwat Gita* emphasizes. Actionless action (*wu wei*), action done with an awareness of God, relinquishing of result and reward for our action, conceding God as the only Agent as *Tawhid-i-faeli* aims to realize. He should let nature do whatever fate has in store for him. *Wu wei* and harmony with the Tao is what is the purport of Islam's supposed fatalism. The only way to live in Spirit or eternity is not to resist becoming, to step out of the net of time by transcending the resisting and desiring ego. When everything is left to God and one is no longer attached to the fruits of actions time can't stifle or corrode one. Death loses its sting as time's dominion is no more. To live in time is to live in bondage. When one attains the station of *raza* or detachment karma can longer bind. If God is the only transmigrant as Shankara maintains and everything is God's play, or God alone is the real agent of action as the Quran maintains there is no karma, no bondage. Karma is operative only for the one who has yet to realize his identity with the Self. Swami Muni Prasad has observed in his penetrating study on karma and incarnation

...strictly according to Vedanta karma isn't of any individual, but of the Total Reality. That means to claim that an individual has his own karma is simply due to *avidya* (ignorance) and is against the teaching of Vedanta. When an individual has no karma at all, how can there be *sancita karma*, *agami karma* and *pravbdha karma*? Even the soul to which the karmas supposedly cling; is merely a superimposition caused by *avidya*. What really exists is one Reality alone which is Existence, Consciousness and Value Experience (*sat*, *chit* and *ananda*). One has to have the awareness that his existence is not different from this one Existence. Such is the final teaching of Vedanta.<sup>1</sup>

There is in reality no bondage, no *karma*, no rebirth as God can't be subject to these things and there is, in reality, nothing but God. This is the final assertion of all Unitarian worldviews.

The key to this unitarian vision is what is called *fakr* in Sufism. Guenon has explicated it in a paper that appeared in *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Winter 1973, pp. 16-20):

The contingent being may be defined as one that is not self-sufficient, not containing in himself the point of his existence; it follows that such a being is nothing by himself and he owns nothing of what goes to make him up. Such is the case of the human being in so far as he is individual, just as it is the case of all manifested beings, in whatever state they may be for, however great the difference may be between the degrees of Universal Existence, it is always as nothing in relation to the Principle. These beings, human or others, are therefore, in all that they are, in a state of complete dependence with regard to the Principle “apart from which there is nothing, absolutely nothing that exists”; it is the consciousness of this dependence which makes what several traditions call “spiritual poverty.”

This “poverty” (in Arabic *al-faqr*) leads, according to Islamic esotericism, to *al-fanaa*, that is, to the extinction of the “ego”; (footnote: This “extinction” is not without analogy, even as to the literal meaning of the term which is used for it, with the *Nirvana* of the Hindu doctrine; beyond *al-fanaa* there is *fanaa’ al-fanaa’* the *extinction* of the extinction, which corresponds similarly to *Parinirvana*.) and, by this “extinction” the “divine station” is reached (*al-maaqam al-ilaahii*), which is the central point where all the distinctions inherent in the more outward points of view are surpassed and where all the oppositions have disappeared and are resolved in a perfect equilibrium. “In the primordial state, these oppositions did not exist. They all spring from the diversification of the beings (inherent in manifestation and, like it, contingent), and from their contacts caused by the Universal gyration (that is by the rotation of the “cosmic wheel” around its axis). They cease then and there to affect the being that has reduced its distinct ego and its particular movement to almost nothing (Choang-Tseu, ch. XIX.).

Guenon further explains, in the same paper, how the sage transcends the world of multiplicity and sees things from the God’s perspective or without self and attachment. This liberates him from samsara.

The “simplicity” referred to above corresponds to the unity “without dimensions” of the primordial point, which marks the end of

the movement back to the origin. “The man who is absolutely simple sways by his *simplicity* all beings, so effectively that nothing sets itself against him in the six regions of space, nothing is hostile to him, and fire and water do not injure him” (Lie-Tseu, ch. II.). In fact, he remains at the *centre*, which the six directions have issued from by radiation, and where, in the movement that takes them back, they come to be neutralized two by two, so that, in this *single point* their *threefold opposition* ceases entirely, and nothing that results from them or that is situated in them can reach the being who dwells in immutable unity.

Through his not setting himself against anything, nothing can set itself against him, for opposition is necessarily a reciprocal relation, which calls for the presence of two terms, and which is therefore incompatible with principal unity ; and hostility which is only a result or an outward manifestation of opposition, cannot exist in connection with a being that is outside and beyond all opposition. Fire and water, which are the type of opposites in the “elemental world”, cannot injure him, for, in actual truth, they no longer even exist for him as opposites, having returned, by balancing and neutralizing each other through reunion of their qualities, which, though apparently opposed to each other, are really complementary, into the indifferenciation of primordial ether.

None of the traditional religions is basically interested in the metaphysical cause of suffering but in removing it, in liberating man from its dominion. This effectively dissolves the problem of evil, not through some attempt of reason to make sense of suffering but, through dissolving the consolation seeking self, the self that is disturbed by suffering. The question, from the traditional perspective, is not theodicy in the sense modern philosophers of religion would have it as an intellectual puzzle but escape from suffering at practical or realizational plane. There is also what has been called as the distinction between suffering as problem and suffering as mystery. Ultimately nothing is Theodicy in the sense discussed by modern philosophers of religion is not an issue. Theism/atheism is not an issue. What is at stake is man’s salvation or damnation. Eternal life, the life where sorrow is no more is

to be pursued and not the idle inquiry regarding the rationality of suffering and the supposed responsibility of God in the process.

The problems of life, death, rebirth and justification of appearances on a purely rational plane are all problems for *ajnani*; they are the products of *avidya*. The sage is not worried about anything whatsoever. He knows that nothing in the phenomenal world has any reality apart from God, who is the ground and the essence of everything. As Naraynan Guru in his *Atmopdesa Satakem* observes:

There is no death or birth nor duration of life  
Neither man, gods nor other beings, being mere names and forms;  
What seems existing is a phenomenon resembling the water of a mirage  
It has no existence; be aware of it.<sup>2</sup>

They see in everything the countenance of their Beloved. Philosophers who have not been vouchsafed the vision of the One can hardly imagine the state of the saint. It is fact that none of the sages have been troubled by the problem of evil and all of them have a deep conviction based on personal experience that God is in the heavens and all is well with the world. Concentrating their vision on the Face of their Lord they are transported out of time, out of Maya, out of the world of shadows and distinctions. They are too busy in loving God to worry about hating the devil (unreal or *batil*). For them life is a mystery to be lived rather than a puzzle to be solved as Osho says. They have no time for idle inquiries that have so much troubled many a philosopher. If at all they have discussed the issue that is not because their faith – their faith in life's or God's goodness – hinged on certain rational demonstrations. They possess an intuitive conviction of goodness of God, a taste of *ananda*, (*ananda* could be understood, as Swami Muni Prasad has observed, in the context of the Good of Western philosophy as a supreme value).<sup>3</sup>

A Muslim is one who surrenders the ego and lives under the light of eternity. The Prophet's life shows how the belief in fate and faith in divine goodness informs Muslim response to tragic exigencies of life. When the son of the Prophet died his response of shedding tears

was quite human and all-too-human but he said that he will say nothing that will displease God. When a Muslim hears the news of anyone's death he says "*inna lliillah-i-wa inna ilaehi rajiuoon* (We are for God and we return to God). The following observation made on hearing the news of the son's death represents typical Muslim response: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord." History has recorded the statements of the kith and ken of the martyrs of Badr. Many statements of Sufis on the eve of their death or the death of their near and dear ones exemplify Iqbal's observation that a believer welcomes death with a smile.

Man's first duty, as the Buddha said, is to work out his own salvation – from himself rather than assume the charge of advocate of God.

Religions have not introduced any additional suffering in the name of hell or punishment for sin as has been alleged from certain quarters. "Man is punished by his sins, not for them." Religions have only alerted men to this painful fact. Religions, in the last analysis, only describe the world – both the visible and the invisible – rather than prescribe or impose any perspective of their own. They just alert man to the imminent dangers that he is exposed to in his heedlessness. They are just objective descriptions of different realms of existence. It has been aptly observed that "Man is punished by his sins, not for them." Schuon has well emphasized that God knows us better than we know ourselves. So it is absurd to rebel. It is the illusory ego and passions that rebel and inevitably suffer. Our refusal to be true to the theomorphic image in which we have been created doesn't alter the status of facts and hell is one of those facts.

In contrast to the pessimistic responses asserted in modern literature that supposes God has died and is bowled over by the existence of suffering, the Sufis, like other mystics, have, with great force, celebrated life and its goodness and dealt with the question of suffering. A Persian mystic has sung:

He on whom Life bestows its sweetly radiant smile,  
Has nothing to fear from man's scowls!

He on whose eyes Life impresses a kiss  
Will never be affected by Time and the anger of merciless Time.

Hafiz says:

Passing beyond Life's pains and pleasures, I have reached a spot,  
Where there is neither heaven nor hell!  
Don't expect those who possess *dils*(hearts) to know of the joys of those  
without the :  
Only he can understand the (joyful) pain of the *be-dil* (without a heart) who  
passes beyond the heart!<sup>4</sup>

At another place he says: "How long wilt thou perplex thyself with the  
problems of the worthless world? Drink wine!"<sup>5</sup>

Nyaz says:

Look Ob Saqui! Give me a glassful of wine,  
.....  
Make me completely insensible; rid me of the chains of life,  
For in the bondage of the ego I have brought all my troubles on myself  
.....  
When Nyaz forgot himself and was freed from location and space,  
He uttered a shout: I, the intoxicated, am myself He, and I dance (with  
glee).<sup>6</sup>

The mystics don't demand any compensation in some other  
world; here and now he sees the face of the Beloved and unties all the  
knots and is liberated from all the fetters:

Thy glory is manifest without a veil even today:  
I am wondering why there is the promise of tomorrow.

It is not from the dualistic perspective of pleasure-pain principle  
that the mystic evaluates reality but from the perspective of truth, the  
truth of the One beyond contraries. To him has been vouchsafed the  
knowledge of reality, the truth and he has transcended the world of self  
and its cares, its pleasures and pains.

Those who see hidden mysteries only seek his being

They have no interest in anything other than Truth.

Nyaz elaborates a similar theme:

O Nyaz! I have nothing to do with the good or evil of the affairs of the world:  
He, who has passed beyond the self cares for nothing, come what may!<sup>7</sup>

The Quran declares that “the friends of God have no fear and don’t sorrow.” The world is an enchanted garden for the mystic. He doesn’t see it as indifferent or alien or hostile. It is his very home – nay his own creation. He is neither a stranger to it, nor does he feel imprisoned. He has not been thrown into the world. It is not something before which he feels anxious and to which he is opposed with all his might to save his dignity like Camus. To quote Saadi:

I am joyful and content in the world,  
For the world is joyful and content from Him.  
I am in love with all of the universe, for all of the universe belongs to Him

St. Paul has described God as “the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations.” St. Augustine says: “God isn’t far off nor is he long in coming.” The Quran similarly declares that “God is nearer to you than your jugular vein” and he answers the prayers of His servants, the cry of the distressed. Providence and God’s absolute control and His mercy are the themes that are constantly reiterated in the Quran. And in God there is no sorrow. But we see all around a sea of troubles, an ocean of sorrow. Then, surely, it is man who doesn’t seek God; it is he who is to be blamed for not being comforted, for not receiving the grace that is ever flowing, ever ready. As Schuon has remarked in a slightly different context: It is not God but man who is absent when it comes to grace. If we suffer it is because we have not turned to God – to God alone. As Eckhart remarked: “Surely suffering is due to our failure to aim at him and him alone; for if you are reborn and clothed in justice, then truly nothing could hurt you any more than God’s own justice would.”<sup>8</sup> The stringent condition is that we love God and God alone and not any created thing, the loss of which may result in sorrow. “Whatever is not God bears in itself a native bitterness,

discomfort, and sorrow and it can never make for good, the good which is only in God.”<sup>9</sup> “It is impossible to find true comfort when one looks to a creature for it, “but those who love only God in the creature and the creature only in God shall discover real, true, and apposite comfort on all sides.”<sup>10</sup> Eckhart maintains that “sorrow comes from loving what I can’t have. If I am sad about my losses, that is a sure sign that I love external things and really enjoy my sorrow and dis-ease. If one is sad about any thing, the created entities that are not God, it means one is not pure in love, truly just and still has the devil, the self there.”<sup>11</sup> The Buddha’s argument is exactly similar that sorrow comes from desire, from affection for things earthly, things transitory. God or the Void is loved by only those who are not, who have sold their souls and realized the truth of *annata*. To love created things, things made or compounded, to long for pleasure and solace in outward things is to associate partners with God in the Quranic vocabulary. “A good man can never complain of his misfortunes and distresses; he may only complain of his complaining – that he should be aware of it at all.”<sup>12</sup> Those who trust everything to God are not eager for anything under the sun. To quote Eckhart again: “...if I am sad for passing things, not loving God with all my heart nor even giving him the love he might justly expect to meet in me,, what wonder if God ordained that I should still suffer loss and pain.”<sup>13</sup> Eckhart’s argument is simple and straight forward that if one is good and believes God to be good and in control there is absolutely no ground for getting sad and troubled. By definition there can be no good man who doesn’t want what God wants, “because it is not possible that God should not want anything but goodness, and just because of this, when God does want something, it must be not only for the good but for the best.”<sup>14</sup> We have been taught to pray that God’s will be done. From this it follows that we have no ground for complaint for whatever happens by the will of God. Seneca when asked what comfort might be best for those in misery has expressed this Christian-Islamic insight thus: “It is for man to take everything that comes as if he had asked for it, nay, as if he had prayed for it.” Those who have truly surrendered or submitted to the will of Allah (or are true Muslims) seek only to glorify, to please God. Their prayer is ‘God!

Grant us the will to will whatsoever You will.” This is a corollary of the station of *raza* that believers seek. Eckhart has quoted a prayer from a non-Christian authority in this connection: “Lord, supreme Father and only Master of high heaven, I am ready for anything you will; only give me the will to want what you will.” One can quote dozens of sayings of the Sufis in this connection. Just one will suffice from Ba Yazid: “I only will not to will.” Hell is nothing but self will procured by sin which is a form of self-love. William Law has expressed this point succinctly. “See here the whole truth in short. All sin, death, damnation, and hell is nothing else but this kingdom of self, or the various operations of self-love, self esteem, and self seeking which separate the soul from God, and end in eternal death and hell.”<sup>16</sup>

Our analysis of traditional religious response to evil clearly reveals that the Marxist critique of religion on the assumption that it offers supernatural compensations for the natural catastrophes of men is unwarranted. It has been a puzzle for many scholars of religion that there is little, if any, evidence of after death compensations for earthly catastrophes in the Old Testament. In fact the thesis of afterlife, as ordinarily understood, compensations is not subscribed by any religion. Religions describe an open ended experience of what it was like to live with God as real here and now. Mystics especially have not appealed to this thesis. Religions don't offer hope of compensation in other world. Suffering is generally seen either as trial or punishment rather than something for which gifts await in heaven as a compensation. Buddhism and Taoism, for instance, have no room for such a thesis. Buddhism, like other religions, invites everyone to end the suffering seeing it as punishment for the sin of desire, the sin of assertion of the desiring self or ego. Suffering exists as long as things are valued in opposition to God or for their own sake, as long as we refuse to be nothing. The thesis of afterlife compensations is based on bad theology and bad metaphysics that evaluates everything from the perspective of the seeking self, the self that seeks itself. What is hell for except to burn the self will. Man's ultimate salvation is in seeing through the illusion of the ego and disidentifying with every phenomenal or transitory or compounded thing, recognizing the emptiness of everything under the sun. For salvation one has to cease seeking compensations both here

and hereafter and renounce everything and that culprit that wishes to mould everything according to its desire, that wills this or that, that refuses to submit to dominion of the Other or non-self or God or Reality.

Religions don't advocate an abstract ideal of salvation and don't say that all kinds of suffering are overcome in enlightenment. The Buddha didn't cease to suffer the pain that flesh is heir to after his nirvana. As long as one continues to live in space and time, with a body, God is not revealed in His fullness. Parinirvana, the vision of God in its full glory, the Garden of Essence – all are not possible on earth. Indeed it is not possible to say final no to time in all respects and live permanently under the gaze of eternity as that will destroy all traces of body and senses or destroy this very world. To completely conquer suffering demands being traceless in the real sense of the term needs the experience of death. The mystics return from the empyreal realms to the humdrum as long as they are supposed to be live in the world. The world is *Maya* or *Hijab* (veil). As long as we are clothed in flesh we can have only brief glimpses of the Supreme Good. Moses felt unconscious on seeing only a glimpse of the countenance of Almighty. God is not an object, therefore can't be seen. For realizing Him one must be extinguished, annihilated. He alone is. He is the real witness when one utters *shahadah*. He is the Light of the world, the light with which we see and the light that illumines everything. Only our Father in heaven is perfect, we all fall short of the glory of God. Man remains man and God remains God as Islam categorically maintains. The greatest exponent of Unitarianism or *tawhid-i-wujoodi* in Islam, Ibn Arabi, also emphasized this point. Islam rejects the possibility of deification of man. Body is corruptible, soul is corruptible. Only the Spirit, which is from the breath of Almighty, which is in us but not ours, is incorruptible. That Spirit, the uncreated substance of which Eckhart spoke, is one with God. And it is supra-individual supra-personal or impersonal entity. It ever remains transcendent. It is of the order of eternity and thus not subject to the bondage of time. It is by virtue of it alone that man reaches the other shore. Islam takes *uboodiyat*, the station of slavehood, to be the highest station that could be granted to man. Though, at certain moments when it could be said that one has

stepped outside the servant-Lord polarity (this is what metaphysical realization is), the fact remains that the signs of servanthood in the domain of Relativity that the world is by definition, continue to characterize man. It is absurd to speak that man becomes one with God; the language of mystics should not be interpreted too literally. The unitive experience doesn't annihilate human (*nasuti*) dimension altogether. One can speak of a sort of union with God only when one has utterly noughted himself. There was greater humility in Mansoor's famous assertion "I am the Truth" as Rumi says as here only God was speaking; Mansoor had disappeared altogether from the scene. When man has gone and become untraceable in *fana*, God alone remains. There are not two – man and God – but only God who alone is in reality existent. From man's side only servanthood is possible; he is poor and God is rich as the Quran puts it. Monotheistic religion's emphasis on duality and gulf between man and God is based on this fact. Duality can't be transcended in every sense of the term in the world of Relativity or Maya. Man as long as he remains a man, an entity describable by space time coordinates, can't unqualifying speak of becoming God and thus total victory over all kinds of suffering. The world remains the stage of dualities, a place of trial, a thing that must be subject to dissolution. Only the Face of God escapes dissolution and that which is oriented towards the Face of God. Pain and suffering are here to stay as long as there is the world of hue and colour, the world of forms. The tragic sense of life can't be wished away. All is indeed vanity. Life as ordinarily lived is a poor joke. One can however assert that this is true only at a certain plane and one can transcend that plane. Suffering can't have the final word. The Beloved is not far away. The Supreme Good is realizable. Pessimism and nihilism are warranted only if we focus on the self and the world and ignore the non-self, the Unconditioned, the Unmanifest Consciousness which is of the nature of *Ananda*. All religions promise deliverance and declare life to be good. God and His goodness have the final word even if man realizes that at the cost of hell. We have to submit and surrender our ego, die to the self and then we attain that peace that passeth all understanding and reach the land where sorrow is not. This is the sum and substance, the kernel of all religious and wisdom traditions. There is no reality but the Reality, there is no self but the Self, there is no permanency but in The

Permanent, there is no beatitude but the Beatitude. One must experience death; it is only death that can completely tear the veil that separates man from God.

The crux of the problem of suffering is not whether there is a God or not, whether He is benevolent or malevolent; omnipotent or impotent rather it is that man is born free and alone and he dies more alone, as Robert Frost said. So, man has to justify himself his own ways by understanding his limits and by knowing himself. The title of Philip Yancey's book *Where is God when it hurts?* provocatively puts the question and the realistic answer is that God is there where it hurts. The pain reminds everybody that everyone is in trouble in this world. It speaks aloud that this world can not be an end in itself. It forces one to transcend one's painful state. The prince Buddha was set on the search for truth when he encountered an old diseased suffering man. Suffering shatters the 'facile optimism' of complacent theological and scientific mind. It uproots our sense of being and cultivates in us the desire to seek truth as it is.

For any believer evil is not a problem to be analyzed in a detached manner as if from outside. The problematic approach is not acceptable to any religion. Only when one enters into the heart of it, only from within, in the attitude of an actor can one approach at a solution of this problem. All religions untie the knot of evil through some sort of submission, acceptance and 'reconciliation and harmony.' Religions are not interested in abstract theoretical considerations of the problem of evil versus divine omnipotence and goodness, but in practical response to the concrete experience of evil and ultimately in noughting it. And it is their most fundamental premises that there is a cessation of suffering and religions themselves could be approached as manuals for showing how this is to be achieved. Religion is the art of happiness (more precisely the art of bliss as happiness seems to be a much limiting category to express the nature or reward of the final good that religions seek. Ghazali's famous mystical treatise is titled *Alchemy of Happiness*). All religions emphasize in their own ways the fallen nature of life lived in forgetfulness of God, lived in discord and disharmony outside or in defiance of the Tao, the life of ego lived

outside the Divine Infinitude, the life condemned to finitude and time without being grounded in Infinity and Eternity, the life of earthly immanence that doesn't look heavenward to the sky of transcendence, the life lived on merely human plane on anthropocentric premises outside the Divine Centre, the life lost in just living, the life of earthly passions and desires, the inauthentic life devoid of care for the Being,, the life closed to and nonreceptive to Being, to its mystery and wonder, the life bereft of self-denying love and the life not suffused in the preternatural Beauty. All religions are united in declaring that we have lost something that is ours by right and inheritance and that lies so close at hand, that we are in exile in the world of things or finitude, that we are in disharmony and need reorientating our life towards the Principle of Harmony and Good, that we are not fully attentive or conscious to the Reality, that we need to be saved/delivered/enlightened. All religions have more or less a tragic or pessimistic estimate of life as ordinarily lived and because they see the difficulty in traveling on the straight path, in conquering the alienating principle of lower self or ego and thus attaining the beatific vision or salvation. However what distinguishes religious vision is that it is ultimately optimistic. It is good news. Messengers give glad tidings. Satan has no say ultimately. Thus it is a sort of tragic optimism that Nietzsche also advocated.

All religions are unanimous in positing the realm where the dominion of sorrow is no more, where one is finally at peace as he finally comes home. All religions also declare that there is no escape from facing the reality or truth or what theology describes as facing the trial at the Day of Judgment. We have no option of annihilation or suicide. We must attain the Light and conquer *avidya*. We must rise to the perfection of our heavenly father or face the hell of alienation. The cost of being lax on the heavenly journey is suffering, both here and hereafter. This means that suffering and evil must remain the samsaric world, in the world of ignorance, passions and desires. But all religions are unanimous in positing the realm where the dominion of sorrow is no more, where one is finally at peace as he finally comes home. And all religions state that the last word is for goodness, that evil is noughted in the end or it is relative, and as untruth it can't last ("Verily the untruth has to disappear" the Quran says). All separation is in a way

a separation from God, all experience of alienation and exile the expression of alienation and exile from God. All experiences of beauty, goodness and truth the experiences of God. All misery is in separation or forgetfulness of God. All bliss in union with him. All endeavours are finally directed at attaining the proximity of God who is the Inward and the Outward, the First and the Last. God (the Reality, the Truth, the Beatitude, the Bliss) is the axis around which all our activities revolve. We are always and everywhere and in every form seeking God though we may not recognize this. Ibn Arabi, the great Moroccan sage, has made this point so convincingly. If God is the name of Reality, both transcendent and immanent and there is indeed nothing but God and we live and move and have our being in God and God signifies Life, larger and fuller life, all this becomes understandable. Misery consists in our separation from Reality and sticking to the illusory self and its illusory objects, in mistaking *maya* for Brahman. Thus the famous Buddhist formula which states that we are bedeviled by suffering and there is a cessation of suffering is subscribed to by all religions and in fact is their very *raison detr'e*. Metaphysics and theologies are all finally geared at emphasizing this point. The perennialist thesis of transcendent unity of religions is brilliantly corroborated in their understanding and response to evil. There is fundamental convergence between different religions in their respective approaches to evil.. All, in their own ways, emphasize strongly the universal and undeniable fact of human suffering. All are united in offering a way out of this suffering. Salvation or *najat* is their common concern. The Buddha's four noble truths are shared by all the religions in their own ways. Metaphysical and theological doctrines if read from the perspective of salvation or their bearing on the question of suffering aren't fundamentally irreconcilable. The perennialists offer us an interesting and convincing esoteric/metaphysical hermeneutics that needs to be seriously taken by modern scholars. It foregrounds otherwise obliterated or obscure unity of religions at metaphysical plane. Differing theologies are reread and transcended at the plane of metaphysics. If we grant that it is esotericism and metaphysical plane that provides the closest approximation of truth of religions differing exoteric theologies can't be a matter of much worry and contention for comparative studies. Instead we can appreciate a deeper beauty of apparently divergent

theologies. Semitic theological notions of God's love and goodness are perfectly understandable for a perennialist. Even many nonperennialist thinkers such as Simone Weil can be at home in both Buddhism and Christianity, and seem to easily appropriate apparently divergent views on evil. Weil seems to read Christian notions of God's love and goodness on more or less Buddhist lines. A symbolic view of religion in general can make such a translation of theologies possible. Perennialists have meticulously developed the symbolic view and quite admirably and convincingly develop a theodicy that appropriates fundamental dogmas of different religions and that can be equally acceptable to different theologians. We can even assert that we can have a theodicy that could be subscribed by Muslims and Christians alike and if we can sensibly speak of theodicy in Buddhist or Hindu contexts it applies to them as well. Anthropomorphic exoteric theology doesn't exhaust metaphysical or philosophical content of religions. Perennialists offer us an outline of theodicy based on their view of the Absolute, All-Possibility, Divine Relativity etc. that is shared by major traditions. Theologians of different persuasions could profitably appropriate their perspective on God as Reality and hierarchy of existence in their formulations of theodicy. In fact perennialism appropriates the views of all great traditions and traditional philosophies/metaphysics and thus assimilates the best that has ever been thought in the world. Perennialism is avowedly the unitarian perspective upheld by all the sages and the prophets. If we grant that prophets and sages have spoken of the same supraformal truth we need to seriously take the perennialists who have provided a hermeneutics to decode this truth hidden in various guises and forms. If perennialism provides a consistent and orthodox view of the Ultimate Reality as seems to be the case if we grant the veracity of any major religion we have ample warrant for asserting that we have an outline of common religious/metaphysical theodicy. Countless debates and confusions in the debate on theodicy are brilliantly resolved by the perennialists. All the great contributors to debate on theodicy from Plato and Plotinus through Augustine and Aquinas to Leibniz and certain other major Christian theologians and philosophers of the West are appropriated in the perennialist perspective. All the major critiques of theodicy that presupposes a quite literal, non-symbolic and anthropomorphic view of

religious truths are bypassed in the perennialist perspective. Major currents of Muslim thought on theodicy from the philosophers, Sufis and theologians could also be appropriated and “synthesized” in the perennialist perspective. Approaches of orthodox Hinduism and Buddhism to the problem of evil also fall in tune in the perennialist view. The problem of evil far from being a death knell to theism ceases to be an embarrassing problem at all in the perennialist framework. Instead of a problem we see a mystery in the presence of suffering that ultimately refuses to be a subject of cold philosophical analysis. It calls for an existential response rather than a cool speculative exercise. Onus lies primarily on man. God can’t be made a party against whom a case could be filed on account of the existence of evil. Suffering far from being a hurdle for faith kindles it; it proves a most effective lasso of God to reclaim His servants to Him, their Origin and End.

It is preposterous and vain to seek an explanation from God for creating suffering. The Infinite can’t be censured at all by the finite minds; our understanding can’t be but limited. The Absolute is beyond reproach; It is transcendent to all logical or rational inquiries. To grasp the nature of all pervasive supreme reality or God from our relative position is impossible as one encounters antinomies. It is impossible to formulate a rationale for existence as such as the Absolute transcends all rationalizations. That is why it is vain to formulate a theodicy that accounts for every concrete manifestation of evil. God or Existence is inscrutable. There is no reason that it should be amenable to the tools of analytical reasoning. Transcendence by its very definition is inscrutable, sublime. It precedes all justification. Who can give a finite creature who is caught up in the temporal and spatial coordinated and limited to reason only a mandate for scrutinizing the Infinite, the Eternity, that belongs to an entirely different order or domain. Nothing can be predicated of the Beyond-Being, the Supraformal Essence. The personal God of theism isn’t the Absolute. At the plane of the Absolute, the undifferentiated divinity, the First Principle, there can be no question of evil. However the Real is also All-Possibility. the Divine Names and thus the world are *in potentio* in the Absolute. Manifestation can’t but be and by virtue of separation from the Principle can’t be absolutely perfect or free from the possibility of evil.

It is not that some extracosmic person wills or decides to create for a certain purpose. The world in itself, and thus the whole world of suffering exists is not real, it is essentially *a'dm* or possesses only a derived reality. It is not to be identified with the Supreme Principle itself. The Supraformal Essence is attributeless and still hidden or unmanifested and by definition unknowable. The Absolute in itself can't manifest; It is a hidden treasure. The domain of relativity or *maya* is not or does not encompass the domain of the Real. Personal God and the whole axis of Creator and created or Lord and servant are situated in the plane of Divine Relativity. The problem of evil arises only if we accept the Epicurean formulation at its face value but the logical and philosophical warrant of this formulation and its presuppositions regarding the Divinity and its character that it questions have been strongly questioned by such perennialists as Schuon. The very question regarding the existence of evil is wrongly put. Religion's response is thus wrongly construed as theological rather than the metaphysical understanding of religion is taken to be the standard or normative understanding of the religious position. The logic of the Infinite transcends all merely rational finitistic speculations and need not be commensurate with what the finite merely human understanding can fathom. We need not justify God's ways to men; the Real is above all justification. Existence or Reality is not an objective entity out there or it doesn't stand as an object to us and thus any question of its justification or justification of its works in human terms is out of question. The Divine Names or attributes are human ways of perceiving the Real or Absolute. All discourse about God's attributes and relation to the world is necessarily biased as in the last analysis it is anthropomorphic. The Transcendent in itself has no attributes. From the perspective of the Absolute and thus at the plane of pure truth that transcends all representations there is no problem of evil. No question can be asked regarding the Absolute Itself as al-Jili has said. Theism as ordinarily understood needs to be translated in metaphysical terms to see the problem of evil like many other theological and philosophical problems of the West dissolved or more accurately transcended. Metaphysics doesn't approach the problem through discursive rational enquiry or analytical tools of profane philosophy but takes us to a plane from where it looks as a mystery to be lived and existentially

appropriated and ultimately unreal rather than a stubborn fact that needs to be justified in relation to a personal God and becomes a hurdle to faith. We are challenged to respond to the summons from heaven and promised a “ceaseless reward” in the form of *liqa-allah* (meeting with God, the Bliss Everlasting). There is no point in raising the problem of evil in the form Epicurus or Hume raise it. Religion has nothing at stake. It is not God’s problem but man’s. Man can’t and needn’t justify the Reality or ‘what is.’ It is vain and futile enquiry. Evil and suffering (*dukkha*) are there. What is needed is to strive for removal of *dukkha*. And religion ensures that we can win in this adventure of the conquest of suffering. And there is no option of suicide or annihilation or escape the burden of striving for soul winning. We can’t choose not to be but are condemned to win perfection even at the cost of hell. Eschatological suffering is there to goad us to ascend higher and higher until we reach the mansion of our heavenly father. Infinite ascension is our destiny and there is no possibility of turning back. Our return ticket cannot be accepted. We have to suffer and suffer in this trial of life, this vale of soul-making and move on. The tragic element is there to stay of course and we are indeed created in trouble as the Quran says but really there is no tragedy as we are not as flies to gods but theomorphic beings who are willy nilly ever led, stage by stage, to higher planes until we return to the One from where we came and where sorrow is no more. To live in the present, in the timeless Moment where time is not, where memory is not and to die every moment as the Sufis say, to let go of the self and live by virtue of love, to consent to surrender to the cosmic will or the will of the Whole is the way to permanently escape the consciousness of suffering and this is the way that all religions have suggested. All religions speak of some sort of fall or human sin or forgetfulness and transgression and thus the fact of disharmony, disequilibrium, *fasad*, *dukkha* though the incorruptibility of the Spirit, the essential perfection and innocence of our real/original state is also maintained, and the need and possibility of redemption or salvation with the onus on man’s self effort and faith though it is grace that finally actualizes the immanent possibility of salvation. Islam as a primordial religion suggests existential, practical and realistic response to evil and offers a way out of evil and suffering.

The Spirit in man, the uncreated substance of which Eckhart spoke, transcends his personality and its components as well as all the phenomena or the objects of the world. The Quran attests to the Buddhist standpoint that passing away is the true nature of the conditioned existence in these words: "Everything on earth will perish. Only the Face of the Lord will abide." The limiting distinctions cannot exhaust the reality of the Self, the Real which is free from all empirical predicates and relations. Though all finite or temporal existence entails misery it is possible to vanquish it by appropriating the Infinite that Spirit is, that the very nature of the Self is. Evil and suffering is an extraneous outcome of the worldly conditioning, the Spirit remains its witness and in no way susceptible to corruption of any kind. Whisperings of the devil can have no influence on it. Mara can't approach our inmost self. The Spirit stands above all the dualistic tendencies of earthly conditions. Our origin and end is the transcendent unborn, unbecoming, unmade and unmanifest Consciousness and it stands above all pairs of opposites including the binary of good and evil. The emancipated one reaches the other shore, that rest "that knows no change nor ending- a passionless and ineffable peace." Islam like Buddhism strongly asserts that "no conditional existence can ever imply permanence and eternity, absolute unity or supreme authority in any sense whatsoever."

A legend about Meister Eckhart puts in the form of a simple dialogue the essence of traditional response which is the response of pontifical rather than promethean, rebellious or despairing man. Eckhart spoke to a poor man. God give you good morning, brother! "The same to you, sir, but I have never yet had a bad one." How is that, brother? "Because whatever God has sent me, I have borne gladly for his sake, considering myself unworthy of him. That is why I have never been sad or troubled."<sup>16</sup>

The traditional metaphysics has no room for sentimentalism, for the clouding of judgment on account of emotions and affectations. It is also not moralistic. Sentimentalism and moralism are Western heresies as Guenon has noted in his *An Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines* and colour (and thus distort) Western understanding of evil. I

will not elaborate this point here but only quote Eckhart's remarks on how to love God to illustrate the difference in perspectives.

Love God whether he is loving or not, and certainly not because he is loving, for he is nonloving, being above love and affection... true love is union. Your soul ought to be deghosted, void of ghosts, and be kept so. For if you love God as a god, a ghost, a person, or as if he were something with a form- you must get rid of all that.

How then, shall, I love him as he is, a not-god, a not-ghost, apersonal, formless. Love him as he is the One, pure, sheer and limpid, in whom there is no duality; for we have to sink eternally from negation to negation in the One.

He who lives lovingly lives by what is good in his nature and within the love of God – a love that asks no questions. If I have a friend and love him so that he may benefit me and do what I wish, then I don't love my friend at all but rather myself. I am to love my friend for his own sake, for the goodness and virtue of him, for all that he himself is and then I shall truly love him, in the real sense of the word. This is how it is with the person who lives in God's love, who doesn't seek his own welfare, either in God or himself or any other, who loves God only for his goodness, for the sake of the goodness of his nature and all that He himself is. That is true love.<sup>18</sup>

In fact this explains the statement God is love. When one truly loves, all questions disappear, all judgments are gone. To love God truly implies one is lifted above the humdrum, the fret and fever of life. It means one no longer seeks his interests, no longer wills his will be done but the will of the Father in heaven, who "holds all goodness in his hands" and from whom only good flows, who measures out every thing, every good and evil, who is good and radiates goodness. One who has found love has triumphed over suffering. In the kingdom of love there is no time, no ego, no mind, no thought, no distinction and no duality and thus no alienation, no anguish, no nausea. Saints don't argue for the existence of God, but they live God by living lovingly. They see and experience for themselves the goodness of God by living

lovingly. And he who loves has reached the other shore. He has no need of argument. If we could truly love death will lose its sting and evil its dominion. Sufism answers the problem of evil not by rational argument but by the argument of heart. *Ishq*, divine love cures all diseases. "It is Plato and Galen, the panacea for all ills" as Rumi says. By being true to their Beloved, they transcend the world in which otherwise one sees no help for pain, no joy, no peace. The secular man doesn't know what celestial love is. He pins all his hope in interpersonal love which is only a distant and poor reflection of celestial or divine love and no wonder he is disillusioned and despairs. This notion of love can't overcome the feeling of absurdity. If Camus knew this love that if revealed to kings would make them renounce their kingdoms for good, he would not have despaired. If Hemingway had an inkling of it *nada* which drove Hemmingway to suicide wouldn't have led him to suicide. The question of suicide doesn't arise for the true lovers. Far from being the only important philosophical question it is hardly an issue at all. Love lets one glimpse the founts of larger life, Life that knows no death. This is the report of the mystics and we have no warrant for disbelieving them, especially their experience of joy though there might be some warrant for debating their interpretations, the cognitive claims and metaphysical structures erected on the basis of their experience. Those who have not fallen in love are not good judges of what it really is all about. Nonmystics can't pass on judgments on the experience itself, which is, by universal agreement, the experience of joy unspeakable.

Another tragic note in religions is the fact that few are chosen. Most people are heedless and God in turn forgets them. Very few travel to the end of the road. The road to God is studded with thorns. However the fact remains that it is man who is responsible. The error of judgment occurs from his side on account of *avidya*, ignorance. The onus falls on man. God is always in control, always merciful, always present though it is man who is usually absent and therefore delays the operation of grace. It is not that God out of His capricious will withholds grace from the majority of people. Few are chosen but here onus falls on man. It is few who are prepared to part with everything, to deny themselves for the sake of love. Few choose to be nothing and

thus qualify as true lovers. Love saves all and God is love but few make themselves worthy of this love. Sin and pride block the rays of the sun of mercy and grace. God asks man to take the first step, to leave space empty for Him to take dwelling in his heart. Truth is One; it can't tolerate duality. Clouds of passion and pride must part to let the sun of the Spirit shine which is ever shining, ever burning in the secret recesses of our being. It is not every body's cup of tea to offer himself as an offering for the sake of love, to die as a witness for the glory of the Beloved, i.e., to love truly though in the end, one day or the other day all have to pass through this narrow gate of love. "Perfection depends only on accepting poverty, misery, hardship, disappointment, and whatever comes in course, and accepting it willingly, gladly, freely, eagerly until death, as if one were prepared for it and therefore unmoved by it and not asking why."<sup>19</sup> This is the station of *raza*, and obviously not every one's cup of tea. However, despite man's stubborn refusal of grace, his proclivity to sin, his heedlessness, God arranges everyone's return to Him, the source of all goodness and perfection. Whatever happens to man, the sweet and sour of every experience does contribute to our return journey home. There is a providence that shapes our ends even if we are unconscious of its ways and forms, even if we do everything to avoid that fateful encounter with nothingness but beyond which and by virtue of which we are transported out of the order of time to the order of eternity, out of the visible world, the world of scent and colour to the formless world of Spirit, the eternal fount of joy and bliss. Stage by stage, slowly but surely and inexorably the world moves to meet that far off event, that Omega point where there is transcended all phenomenality, all accidentality, all sorrow and pain. The traditions ensure that everyone is saved in the end even though it envisages for some the ordeal of fire, the painful realization of the pangs of separation from God in hell. The ordeal of suffering on earth substitutes eschatological fire and that is why God in His mercy has imposed it here. Suffering is indeed God's lasso. The doctrine of universal salvation, found in all traditions that exotericists may not recognize this, is based on the preponderance of Mercy that God has imposed on himself. God is the Merciful, as the Quran repeatedly affirms.

We find much hue and cry raised in various quarters regarding the great intensity of pain and suffering that creatures suffer. It is sometimes asserted that nothing can match the experience of intense suffering, that nothing can erase its memory, that it makes meaningless all arguments for justifying the wisdom and goodness of God. These wounds, it is claimed, are eternally green and can't be healed. Maugham asserts that an experience of innocent child's suffering is enough to make one deaf to all theodicy. Holocaust turned to ashes the burning faith of many victims. It is argued that there is no cure for pain, no justification for it and no. There are also critics of theodicy who argue that the sum total of pain and sorrow exceeds that of happiness, that experience of joy is only an insignificant interruption in the general drama of pain. This is based on evaluating the things from the limited sensualist empiricist perspective. If there were a way of quantifying the joy that mystics experience and if it were taken into consideration our evaluation would drastically change. From the cosmic perspective evil is quite limited as Schuon has argued. Eckhart, on the basis of his own experience that he shares with the world fraternity of mystics, that there is an agent in the soul, untouched by time and flesh and the thorns of pain, which proceeds out of the Spirit and which remains forever in the Spirit. "In this agent, God is perpetually verdant and flowering with a joy and glory that is in him. Here is joy so hearty, such inconceivable great joy that no one can ever fully tell it."<sup>20</sup> Eckhart further elaborates:

For this reason, if a person had a whole kingdom or all this world's goods and left it solely for God's sake, to become the poorest man who ever lived on earth, and if then God gave him as much to suffer as he ever gave any man, and if this person suffered it out until he was dead, and if then, even for the space of a moment, God once let him see what he is in this agent of the soul, all his suffering and poverty would seem like a very little thing beside the joy of it, so great in that moment.<sup>21</sup>

Eckhart talks of another agent which though not incarnate but which proceeds out of the Spirit where

God glows and burns without ceasing, in all his fulness, sweetness and rapture. Truly, it holds joy so great and rapture so unmeasured that no one can tell it or reveal it. Yet I say that if there were one person who could look into it for a moment and keep his right mind, all he had ever suffered or that God wished him to suffer would be a very little thing indeed, nothing at all. Nay- I go even further- suffering would be to him always a joy and pleasure.<sup>22</sup>

One is thereby transported out of this earthly plane. The puzzle of the suffering of good man, which appears even scandalous to certain men of feeble imagination, is easily understandable according to Eckhart. He criticizes those who are astonished to see good man suffer and attribute it to obscure sins. To quote him again "...if it were pain and misery and only these that the man felt, he would not be good or without sin; but if a person is good, his suffering doesn't mean pain, unhappiness, or misery to him but rather a great delight and blessing. The Lord says:

Blessed are they that suffer for God and righteousness."<sup>23</sup>

From the perennialists perspective there can be no absolute evil and all evil is subservient to or integrated in or contributes to good even though it may not be possible for us to imagine how in every case. Though suffering is plainly something that expresses a lack, a sign of imperfection, misjudgment or ignorance, it in turn may function to take us to perfection. It is not mere punishment for the sake of punishment but can prove often a blessing in disguise. Semitic traditions have especially pointed out the purifying, ennobling, and other functions of suffering. In the divine economy suffering has its own place. There is no such thing as pure blank or mere waste in the world of God. The light of God shines everywhere, even in seemingly impenetrable darkness. Even hell is not totally opaque to it. Divine Mercy envelops everything. Here a brief note on positive value of suffering follows.

According to Eckhart, there is nothing nobler than suffering. Schuon comments: This is the teaching of ascetics and martyrs because it is the teaching of Christ. "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Schuon further says that for

man suffering is like a crack in his existential illusion. Man draws nearer to God through suffering - that is to say, through sacrifice, renunciation, poverty, extinction and loss of self. Many spiritual paths capitalize on the soul-lifting function of voluntary sacrifice and suffering. As Schuon notes, even simple mental concentration implies sacrifice. Suffering affirms the Principle by denying the manifestation. However one must distinguish, as Schuon cautions, between the cult of suffering from the spiritualizing of suffering. "Clearly, what matters is not that man should suffer, but that he should think of God. Suffering has no value except in so far as it provokes, makes deeper and perpetuates this thought." There is a test to determine whether our suffering is ours or of God. Here all those who have no burning faith, who have not denied themselves, who are not thoroughly poor in spirit, who are humanists with a closely guarded sense of the self and don't understand the night of Golgatha, the humiliation of the cross will not pass the test. "If you wish to know rightly whether your suffering is yours or of God, you can tell in the following way. If you are suffering because of yourself, whatever the manner, that suffering hurts and is hard to bear. If you suffer for God's sake and for God alone, that suffering doesn't hurt and is not hard to bear, for God takes the burden of it... what one suffers through God and for God alone is made sweet and easy."<sup>24</sup>

"Without sorrow no one is ennobled" records a German proverb. A quote from Tanhuma Shemoth runs:

Holy one, blessed be he,  
Gave Israel three precious gifts,  
Torah, the land of Israel and the world to come, but none of them were given  
except through suffering.

The ceaseless discontent and dissatisfaction felt by man in his finite nature leads him to search for the Infinite. The evil and sinful aspects of the world of finitude and time trigger man to look for transcending this profane existence. The felt bondage and felt suffering necessarily call for remedial measures. Herein lies the alchemy of suffering. All pervasive and inescapable fact of suffering ensures that

one sees the vanity of attachment to everything created. There is no consolation for the self who wishes to be spared annihilation in the ocean of Reality. The ego has to go. The shattering and painful experience of suffering is there to challenge its vanity, its illusions and its very reality as an independent entity. It thus is a whip of God that puts errant souls on the right track. In the remembrance of God alone one finds contentment. Nothing short of the Infinite can be our final refuge or anchor. There is no bliss in the things finite as one of the Upanisads says. It is evil that makes quite plain the fact that there can be no contentment and peace in the things finite, that shows the real value of the world divested of transcendence. It brings home the point that men must strive even at the pain of hell towards God, their Origin and End. Man's real quest for God becomes most urgent only in the darkest experience. Pain is the megaphone of God as John Donne has said. Only in the Unborn, Unconditioned and Uncompounded can be found the eternal good and bliss. All else is touched by sorrow. Nothing in this world or the otherworld can satisfy that hunger of which God is the food. It is the Garden of Essence and not the paradise of popular imagination in which alone is negated the existentiating dimension that constitutes our deliverance. So long as the soul is not merged in its source, the Absolute, it has to go through the unpleasant situations as the *samsara* is constituted by dualities and contrasts. When the knowledge of the Self dawns one transcends all the dualities in that self annihilating vision. As the Unitarian consciousness dawns one transcends the dichotomies and contradictions of life, the life lived from a dualistic point of view and comes to see that the ideas of ideas of good and evil, heaven and hell, *maya* and attachment, doubt and I-am-ness, joy and sorrow are all man-made.

However religions have no use for suffering as such; it is valued only if it humiliates and lacerates the ego and the destroys the presumption of self sufficiency. The cult of suffering is something foreign to religious consciousness. Religions aim at celebrating life and making life an experience of boundless joy, *ananda*. Even Buddhism, the supposedly pessimistic religion is geared towards maximizing happiness. To quote the *Dhammapada*: "Let us live happily then, we who possess nothing. Let us dwell feeding on happiness like the

shining gods... Health is the greatest of gifts, contentment is the greatest wealth; trust is the best of relationships. Nirvana is the highest happiness.” It is more often than not true that suffering degrades rather than ennoble as Maugham observed. Maugham’s following observations from his *Summing Up* based on his experience as a doctor are true about those who don’t see God’s hand in letting them suffer, who have no faith. “I knew that suffering didn’t ennoble: it degraded. It made men selfish, mean, petty and suspicious. It absorbed them in small things. It didn’t make men more than men; it made them less than men.” Auswitchz made more apostates than believers. Indian religions have not glorified suffering. The Western tradition has sometimes done so but it has also noted the other side of the picture. The purifying function of suffering is a well attested fact. However it all depends on who suffers and how he takes it.

The perennialists ask for no crucifixion of reason, no recourse to mystery mongering and rely on no *ad hoc* or arbitrary theses that have to be swallowed. They feel hardly any warrant for keeping mum in the face of inexplicable; they rely on no silencing strategy. They concede much of the modern philosophical critiques of theodicy as practiced in exoteric theological circles. Hick’s recourse to a sort of verificationist principle is not needed in the perennialists perspective. Certain profound critical observation one finds here and there in modern literature are appropriated. They are not apologists for the “misdeeds” of capricious God but apply logical rational analytical tools to the data in hand. Their genius lies in synthesizing quite divergent data and including so much and conceding much to the critics of theodicy and yet formulating a quite strong and consistent “theodicy.”

The distinctive features and strengths of the perennialists position on evil may be summarized in the following points.

- It reconciles as diverse positions on evil as those of Buddhism and Islam.
- It doesn’t posit the notion of personal God as Absolute or Supreme Reality and thus on its position Epicurean formulation of the problem is inapplicable.

- It employs metaphysical notions which are not reducible to traditional theological counterparts but subsume the latter; it appropriates and transcends theological perspective.
- Theological data is appropriated and not ignored or bypassed. All the canonical sacred scriptures are kept in the background and not criticized as is fashionable in many modern circles but approached and interpreted metaphysically.
- Certain key distinctions are emphasized and maintained which are ignored in philosophical and theological perspectives.
- Certain key notions such as Maya (translated by them as Divine Relativity) are read in different traditions which dissolve the problem of evil. The familiar personal God of theology is placed in this realm of Maya and those who reduce Godhead to personal God and then fulminate against his governance are therefore easily catered and dismissed as not knowing what they are taking about.
- A metaphysical/symbolist reading of key theological notions disarms the critics who employ purely logical and philosophical tools in dismissing theodicy.
- Certain influential critiques of theodicy made by certain philosophers of religion in modern times are easily bypassed in their perspective as the key terms in the debate such as God, creation, freedom and predestination, afterlife, omnipotence, goodness are differently understood. Philosophical and theological understanding of these terms differs in important respects from the metaphysical understanding.
- Responses to suffering and the ways and means of conquering it are essentially similar in all religions as all are directed to take us to the other shore. Different theologies have not resulted in fundamentally different responses to evil.
- Transcendence of good-evil binary in the nondualistic approach to Reality dissolves the force of many traditional criticisms and exposes their poverty in dealing with the issue. Moralistic appropriation of the key notions of good and evil is done away with or kept at its proper plane rather than absolutized. Metaphysical perspective sharply distinguishes itself from moralistic and sentimentalist orientations that color modern discussions of the issue of evil. Both are seen as Western heresies.

- Metaphysical perspective distinguishes itself from religious position that is formulated keeping in view the salvation of men rather than logical coherence. Elliptical and even seemingly contradictory and scandalous use of language in scriptures is not quite respectful of logic and rationality. However a metaphysical exegesis of scriptures is enough to distil a metaphysical core of scriptural statements that makes perfect sense. Religions are interested in saving people rather than satisfying their philosophical queries. In the interests of salvation certain aspects of truth may go into the background and others overemphasized. Goethe has well expressed the vocation of man in the world: “Man is not born to solve the problems of the universe, but to find out what he has to do and to restrain himself within the limits of his comprehension.”

- Responses of different traditions to the question of suffering are seen to converge. The methods and ways of conquering suffering are strikingly similar. Religious commandments and ethics are geared towards making conquest of suffering possible.

- None of the religions is concerned with the issue of theodicy; it is at best a secondary or subsidiary concern in them. Justification of man's actions before God rather than the converse is the issue in them. Thus onus lies on man rather than God for the presence of suffering and emphasis is on his sin rather than on some supposed flaw in God.

- Religions are primarily concerned with the existential problems of man rather than providing the solution to certain rational philosophical problems. God and His scheme of things are not to be fathomed; what is important is that man knows his proper relation to God or Reality. This alone really matters. Things are as they are, not the other things; the object of religion is to orient man to this objective order. Reality or Existence is the mystery of all mysteries; it resists logical rational approach. Religion asks us to celebrate this mystery. The Essence is not knowable and the tradition of negative divine expresses this irreducible primordial mystery. Man can't scan God; it is his vain presumption that he can lift the face of the mystery. Religion proposes that man should dissolve into the Reality, the Mystery. Heart doesn't ask questions; the questions are asked by the mind, the dualistic mind and thought. Heart knows by love and lives by it and in fact the dichotomy of knowing and being is transcended in the Unitarian

perspective. Love unties all knots; all the distance to God or Truth is covered in a flash by means of love. Love is.

- All religions are more or less interested in removing suffering and prescribing the means for achieving the same rather than the metaphysical inquiry into the origin of suffering and responsibility of some cosmic being for the same. Practical rather than theoretical approach that characterizes Buddhism *par excellence* and to a great extent Islam as well is seen to be the hallmark of other traditional positions as well.

- Neither God's omnipotence, nor goodness nor wisdom of God need to be qualified or compromised in the metaphysical perspective. This makes the perennialists theodicy quite orthodox. Many modern versions are unorthodox and thus unacceptable for traditional people.

- Perennialists vehemently reject increasingly proliferating heterodoxical perspectives such as that of panentheism.

- Quite forceful critique of such typically modern responses as absurdism is made possible from the perennialist perspective. The whole edifice of such influential modern works as *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Plague* and *The Rebel* falls to pieces from their perspective. The oft quoted argument of Ivan in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is easily deconstructed. Pessimism that largely colours modern sensibility and which in fact expresses nothing but modern man's ignorance of the issue and his failure to achieve any viable solution to the problem is put in proper perspective and transcended in the traditionalist approach

- The entire Western philosophical tradition and exoteric theology that inform Western understanding of evil are subject to a critical appraisal. Traditional metaphysics is quite foreign to the Western worldview and that accounts for certain important limitations of its understanding of evil. Theodicy in the precise sense in which modern philosophers of religion understand it has been such a significant issue only for the Western man. The other traditions have managed to contain the problem and there seems to have been little warrant for the problem of evil in their world-views.

- The metaphysical perspective dissolves rather than solves the problem. It is seen that it is not an issue at all; it arises from the

misuse of language and misreading of the key terms in the debate. The problem gets redefined, its venom neutralized and its significance shifted to a different plane where it contributes to fueling the fire of faith rather than the opposite. The consciousness of suffering leads the traditional man to introspect and ultimately he strives to purify himself to transcend it rather than to question God and doubt His power and wisdom and absurd response of despair, revolt and nihilism.

· The sage transcends all dualities as he transcends the dualistic mind which raises such issues. The problem of evil is the problem for a dualistic philosophy and theology. The Unitarian perspective dissolves all conceptual logical philosophical problems. It is *avidya* or ignorance or sticking to the lower knowledge or knowledge of appearances that breeds such problems. The solution lies in knowledge. Metaphysical perspective is more a training of perception, a purification of faculties of higher knowledge so that one sees for oneself the goodness of God and the bliss which puts end to suffering than a set of logical or philosophical propositions or analyses. It is not merely one more theoretical perspective among other perspectives but a realizational path, the path championed by mystical traditions and traditional philosophers or philosopher-mystics. One can test the truth of its claims not merely by rational or philosophical analysis of its premises and arguments but empirically or experientially. The sage answers the problem of evil by realizing or experiencing the overflowing love and goodness of God; he is a witness of the bliss that God is. He travels to the other shore where sorrow is not, where suffering is not, where only God, the perfection of love and goodness is. Suffering is only a problem so long as it appears to be inescapable truth. But when it is realized (not merely argued or rationally demonstrated) that the self is not bound for ever to the transient world of suffering, but rather that it is Brahman, then suffering can no longer occur. The existential problem of suffering stands overcome by the mystic. Rational metaphysical problems don't concern him and inability of rational metaphysics to solve it doesn't affect his position based on intellectual intuition rather than rational philosophical analysis. The sage is a priori convinced of the goodness of God and later he may indulge in theodicy for the heart's satisfaction only.

· The perennialists don't argue, unlike many theologians and philosophers, that for God evil doesn't exist but maintain a reasonable view that "God sees the privative manifestations only in connection with the positive manifestations that compensate for them; thus evil is a provisional factor in view of a greater good."

· The Buddhist realist assessment of suffering is conceded in their own ways by other traditions. The four noble truths of Buddhism figure in other traditions as well. The first noble truth is almost universally believed, believers and nonbelievers alike. It is a matter of experience and not a mere assertion or judgment; most of us would consider it reasonable. We are all brothers in suffering. It has been aptly remarked that the Buddha based his world-view on a more universal proposition than the Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. To be is to suffer. Nothing describes better our existential predicament than the suffering being. The birth of self consciousness, which is the birth of man, is concomitant with the birth of suffering. The realm of manifestation, of existence is by definition the realm of contrasts, of imperfection, of separation from the Principle and thus suffering. Other traditions though not directly based on the perspective of suffering nonetheless appropriate this fundamental fact. Christianity is quite akin to Buddhism in this regard; its whole theology revolves around this consciousness of suffering. The theology of original sin fall, and redemption is obviously tailored to the question of suffering and its cessation. Man's first sin is to be born. This is almost universally affirmed by folk literatures and wisdom traditions. Wherever tragedy has been written this fact figures. Sophocles, the greatest tragedian of the Greeks, made this point. Wherever the notion of rebirth is foregrounded, as in the religions of India (though in their own ways Semitic religions also appropriate this notion despite the fact the popular belief in reincarnation is not a part of orthodox belief in any major religions according to the perennialists), human birth is equated with sin. The birth of self consciousness is the birth of suffering. The second noble truth that traces the origin of suffering to desire or attachment is affirmed by other religious/mystical traditions in their own way. The equivalent expressions that describe the cause of suffering in other traditions are, object oriented consciousness, love of the world, to value things in themselves apart from God, to live outside

God, to attribute reality to non-Self, to posit an abiding or permanent entity other than the Only Permanent Reality, to resist innocence of becoming, to have a sense of agency, to will one's own will in defiance of the Cosmic Will etc. The third noble truth that affirms the possibility of the cessation of suffering is common to all religions, in fact the very *raison d'être* of all religions. All religions describe themselves as paths to liberation/deliverance/salvation/ the kingdom of God, the states which are defined by absence of suffering that characterizes the state of separation from God or *avidya* or fall the redressal of which is the concern of religion. All religions are based on the vision that suffering/alienation/finitude don't describe our final destiny, that we do willy nilly recognize or know the truth or return to God/ Reality. In fact, paradoxically, there is no suffering, no evil, no rebirth, no sin really according to the traditions. It is only ignorance that makes us see otherwise. Really only God exists, the Lord is the only transmigrant. Enlightenment is the real nature of all existents; it is our birth right. In fact we have never been expelled from the Garden of paradise though we may not know it and that makes the samsaric wheel run. The illusion that we are egos, separate from God, remains nevertheless an illusion only though it costs the subject of illusion quite direly, even hell. God remains unaminifest, unaffected, pure, ever resplendent in his transcendent glory. The Essence is never known; it remains hidden as ever. The Truth, the Reality in itself is ever perfect as it has ever been. The undifferentiated Absolute alone "exists" and it is beyond being. It is Void, *Sunyata*. The final teaching of esoterisms is that of nonduality - that only God exists. There is no partner to God. Man's salvation lies in recognizing his nothingness, his *fana* and subsist in the only Reality that there is. All things will perish and in fact stand already perished in the face of eternity. Only the Face of God abides. The fourth noble truth that prescribes a path for liberation or cessation of suffering makes the ethical or practical dimension of all religions. Prayer, meditation, *zikr* or *japa* and other spiritual disciplines are all finally geared towards this end of cessation of sorrow. Doctrinal dimension impresses upon the believers the voidness of self and everything besides the Only Existent and practical dimension makes this theoretical truth a realization.

· The perennialists don't deny the reality of evil but they do deny the supposed absoluteness of it. Theirs is not a naïve version of *privatio boni* thesis. They have no illusion that evil is at all levels a mere illusion. Religions presuppose the hard reality of evil and suffering; its practice is directed towards abolishing it though it must be emphasized also that from the perspective of Absolute one can well say that evil is not. However man is not God. Absoluteness belongs only to the Absolute. Duality is not negated at its own plane. To be in space and time, to be clothed in flesh, necessarily means to be subject to suffering. Only God, the immortal Spirit, is never born and never dies. Man, to begin with, caught in space and time, subject to limitations of finitude, is indeed created in trouble as the Quran says.

· Voluntaristic anthropomorphist theology is critiqued on traditional metaphysical grounds but. The recourse to the inscrutable will of God doesn't solve the problem and in fact it is not needed. Schuon rejects as implausible the view that evil exists only "from the standpoint of the Law" because the Law exists on account of evil and not conversely. Criticizing the view that claims that nothing is bad since everything which happens is "willed by God," he observes that that one should instead say that "evil is integrated into the universal Good, not as evil but as an ontological necessity, as we have pointed out above; this necessity underlies evil, it is metaphysically inherent in it, without however transforming it into a good."<sup>25</sup>

· The law of karma, properly read, figures in different ways in different traditions. God is nowhere incriminated as the author of evil. "Whatever of misfortune striketh you, it is what your right hands have earned." "Whatever of good befalleth a man it is from God, whatever of evil; befalleth a man it is from himself" the Quran categorically asserts. The notion that man is himself responsible for suffering figures even in those religions which have not made use of the notion of many rebirths. Islam's concept of fate is its translation of the notion of karma though its author is popularly taken to be God rather than man. However the theological notion of *iktisab* or acquisition and the metaphysical concept of archetypes actualizing their own essences makes clear who is responsible for fate. However the role of grace in salvation is also universally emphasized in their own ways by different

tradition. As long as the sense of agency is there, as long as man has a notion of self doing good deeds, a self that acts and deserves reward for the action, enlightenment is far away. It is God's *fazl* that saves rather than man's deeds in Islam. The role of grace is too evident in the Christian scheme of salvation to need mention. In Indian traditions Saivism is essentially a perspective of grace. One can easily read this notion in Vedanta. Marco Pallis has convincingly argued how it figures in Buddhism.

· The perennialist offer no elaborate theses to account for the existence of world and the presence of evil in it. Their account is quite straight forward and clear, no 'perhaps,' no fumbling, no ambiguity. To quote Schuon on this issue:

Infinitude engenders Possibility, and Possibility engenders Relativity; now Relativity contains by definition what we could term the principle of contrast. Insofar as a quality is relative – or is reflected in Relativity – it has ontological need of a contrast, not intrinsically or in virtue of its content, but extrinsically and in virtue of its mode, thus because of its contingency. Indeed, it is the relative or contingent character of a quality that requires or brings about the existence of the corresponding privative manifestation, with all its possible gradations and as a result, its defect, vice, evil.<sup>26</sup>

The assertion that metaphysically speaking, there is no "evil" properly so called and that all is simply a question of function or aspect, is defended on the basis of following related propositions: "an evil being is a necessary fragment of a good – or an equilibrium – which exceeds that being incommensurably, whereas a good being is a good in itself, so that any evil in the latter is but fragmentary. Evil, then, is the fragment of a good and the good is a totality including some evil and neutralizing it by its very quality of totality." The key assumption is that "the good is the very being of things – manifested by the categories precisely – such that they, the things, are all "modes of the good"; whereas evil indicates paradoxically the absence of this being, while annexing certain things or certain characteristics at the level at which they are accessible and by virtue of predispositions allowing it."

A few remarks, from a perennialist viewpoint, on John Bawker's much cited work *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* referred earlier in this work. Bawker concludes that the search for common ground in different religions on the issue of evil is illusory though he grants that the various answers are not so divergent as once it appeared to be the case. He rightly glimpses the area of common ground to be nondualistic understanding of suffering though he wrongly makes an exception for Zoroastrianism. Manicheism is of course dualistic but that is not recognized as orthodox formulation of the Tradition or Perennial philosophy. Manicheism is heterodoxy plain and simple. Bawker rightly notes that suffering occurs as a problem differently in different religions. However answers converge though different theological perspectives approached without a corresponding understanding of esoteric and metaphysical dimensions may seem to give irreconcilable answers. Bawker's work, by focusing primarily on theological reading of religion, leads to problematic conclusions. The key metaphysical distinctions foregrounded by the perennialists which are indispensable for making sense of vast traditional literature and put them in a perspective are ignored by Bawker. He reads scriptures more or less literally, ignores mystical traditions and esoteric exegesis and fails to see underlying similarity between key concepts of self in Hinduism and Buddhism, and confounds the vital distinction between soul and spirit. It is exoteric understanding of eschatological data that creates great confusion. It is only esotericism that makes sense of eschatological data and easily reconciles "reincarnationist" perspective with Semitic eschatology.

Perennialism combines the best of Augustinian, Irenean and even process theodicies. Process theodicy's claim that evil is genuine could be granted from the perennialist perspective but it is not thereby made an absolute. Who denies in practice, in appearance at least, genuineness of evil? Who denies that evil need not be fought against with all the efforts that we could muster? But if our experience of evil is a primordial truth (in a it is and this is granted by our perennialists as otherwise there is no meaning in talking about sin, hell, *dukkha* and enlightenment/deliverance /salvation) our experience of goodness and Divine Goodness is equally a fact of experience. Sages experience

Divine Goodness and for them it is needless to argue for it. Theodicy has only a secondary significance for them. Unlike process theodicians, perennialists deny evil ultimacy. For them the Devil is not almighty and all encompassing. He is quite real for the world that is not God, for the man who chooses to see with his eyes rather than God's eyes, who measures everything according to his own measure from the perspective of the finite self for the soul that is yet to reach the other shore. The perennialist's God is smart enough to transmute every evil into good or to use it for the perfection and goodness. Nothing is unaccounted for, nothing is left to chance, nothing is ultimately wasted in the mystical-metaphysical perennialist scheme. God is all-encompassing. God is not a distant spectator of evil as process theologians would have us believe. The perennialist in his own way grants the essential truth in this proposition. As nothing is outside the Infinite, the finitude and consequent suffering are contained in the inclusive idea of God as Infinite, as Reality. The bipolar God of process theology, though admittedly an inadequate approximation of the perennialist view of Godhead and All-Possibility, posited to accommodate evil easily isn't better adapted than the perennialist view of God as Reality, Infinite and All-Possibility to account for evil. When we go to the logical end of the perennialist nondualist view of God as Reality evil/good binary loses its usual meaning and God's goodness is understood quite differently that makes it invulnerable to usual critiques. Divine goodness is ontological rather than moral notion. God is not a person who encounters the world as the "Other." Though the world nevertheless does keep its distance from the only Good and thus retain its otherness (though this is illusory ultimately as there is no existent save the Only Existent). God as Absolute is everything, all the grades of existence combined.

Nondualism solves the problems of theology quite easily though the theologians would argue that it thereby sacrifices theology's very *raison d'être*. But theology can't renounce its dualism and thus it must stop short at the outer frontier of pure truth that is the prerogative of metaphysics. Epicurean-Humean paradigm presupposes the validity of theology's claim to truth, truth literal, pure, simple, undiluted and absolute. Now the perennialists put theology in proper place by seeing

it as an inadequate translation of metaphysical truths. Perennialist theodicy could be contested by disputing its metaphysical first principles. For the perennialists the Beyond-Being, the Ultimate Reality in itself ( from it downwards all determinations or grades of existence including *Ishwara* all are, strictly speaking, constructions of the mind (though not fictions pure and simple but not truth pure and simple either), is not the familiar God who creates and saves and cares for the destiny of men. Man knows, at the rational plane ( which is the domain of theology), only appearances or reality filtered through the perceiver's or thinker's categorical frameworks. Without understanding the crucial notion of *Maya* or Divine Relativity such problems as the problem of evil aren't dissolved. The perennialist God isn't the God of dualistic theology, His goodness is not understandable in moralistic framework and though characterizable as Good is nevertheless beyond good and evil as these categories are ordinarily understood. He is not omnipotent in the sense some theologians would construe the notion as power to do anything we fancy but He is All-Possibility. He as Beyond-Being is not concerned with the vagaries of existence, with the fortune of every Dick, Tom and Harry. For Him the world is not. As Supraformal Essence God is unmanifest consciousness. The metaphysical questions and such problems as the problem of evil arise only for a categorical framework, for a ratiocinating intellect that imposes its own categories on reality. The world of manifestation can't contain the Principle within it; it can't be explained except with reference to that which radically transcends it. It is appearance as thought can't see the essences as long as it is committed to its laws and binaries that define it and that make possible for its conceptualizations. Man can't stand as judge over God because he isn't God and he isn't in a position to encompass and measure Him. We are seeking for the justification of existence but we are part of existence. We need an Archimedean point to see/evaluate objectively but there is no Archimedean point in thus no possibility of evaluating God. We are part of the problem ourselves. The riddle of existence can be solved only by the one who can transcend it. We must repent in dust and ashes before the wonder, the mystery, the grandeur, the sublimity of Existence that defies our reason and its categories and imagination. The universe is queerer than we can imagine. It is vanity and intellectual

pride that demands that God be reducible to human, all-too-human rational terms. Truth need not be consoling. Truth is what it is. Mysticism is an attempt to catch hold of this truth and mystics are ready to sacrifice everything for this prize. Traditional metaphysics is an attempt (of course a human attempt nonetheless) to describe these truths of supraindividual and suprarational order. No explanatory categorical or conceptual framework, no sentimentalism, no humanism, no appeal to the court of reason that limits itself to phenomena and thinkable/conceivable is entertainable when we wish to philosophize truly, to speak of the truth and truth alone. Most of the critics of theodicy make appeal to these things. When Camus echoing Dostoevsky's Ivan says that he can't accept any scheme of things which includes in it a tear of an innocent child it is sentimentalism and not philosophy or hard thinking that he is indulging in.

The greatest strength of the perennialist approach is that it is able to do justice to all the dimensions of religions – theological, mystical, metaphysical. Traditional authorities are well respected. All scriptural data is kept in consideration. The detractors or critics of theodicy are forcefully met on their own terms.

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## **Zamakhsharī's Hermeneutical Approach to the Qur'an**

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### **Abstract:**

Benefiting from certain concepts of contemporary Western hermeneutics, this paper reviews Zamakhsharī's hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an as he expounds it in his magnum opus, *Kashshāf*. Criticizing the later Wittgensteinian model of language as a monadically opaque structure of rules, Habermas defines the notion of ordinary language as a porous sphere whose rules are not precise and unequivocal. I have found both of these models fruitful while interpreting Zamakhsharī's linguistic-scholastic approach to Qur'anic hermeneutics. In the nexus of the Wittgenstein-Habermas contrast regarding the concept of ordinary language, I interpret how Zamakhsharī, being a Persian Mu'tazilite, gets interested in the linguistic exploration of the meaning of the Qur'anic text as an outcome of the process of his Arabicization. Furthermore, I show how the technicality of Zamakhsharī's linguistic approach to the Qur'an gives to his interpretation the colour of objectivism. Finally, I explore that it is not only the linguistic objectivism which one can find in Zamakhsharī's Qur'an exegesis rather there is an equally bright colour of the scholastic subjectivism in it. For, at times Zamakhsharī's interpretation appears to be characterized by the imposition of meaning on the Qur'anic text as per the Mu'tazilite creeds he is convinced with.

Abū 'l-Qāsim Jār Allāh Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Zamakhsharī (1074/467-1143/538) is considered to be one of the greatest linguists (philologists) ever in the history of Islam. Although he was a non-Arab by origin (borne in Zamakhshar, Central Asia), his

expertise in Arabic language has been unmatched throughout the history of Islamic world. Owing to his vast knowledge of Arabic linguistics, he wrote an exegesis of the Qur'ān, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wajūh al-Tā'wīl* (*The Searchlight on Realities of the Obscured Revelations and Essences of the Words in the Expressions of Interpretation*), which is a stylized model of the linguistic (philological) interpretation of the Qur'ān. That is how Ibn Khuldūn categorizes *Kashshāf* as one of the best of the Qur'ān exegeses wherein the linguistic technique of interpretation is applied (*wa min aḥsan ma ishtamala 'alayhi hadha 'l-fann* [the art of linguistics] *min al-tafāsīr*). But at the same time Ibn Khuldūn mentions Zamakhsharī's affiliation with the Mu'tazilites (*ahl al-i'tizāl*) and his prejudiced attempts of abusing the linguistic styles (*turuq al-balāghah*) in the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses in order that the verses may appear in accordance with the Mu'tazilite doctrines.<sup>1</sup>

## I. The Arabicization of a Persian Mu'tazilite

It is not Ibn Khuldūn only who points to Zamakhsharī's being a Mu'tazilite, but he is generally recognized to be so by virtue of his extremist Mu'tazilite image. He is reported by several writers to go to meet one of his friends and when he reached at his place, the door was closed. He knocked at the door. Someone asked him from inside to introduce himself. At that moment he introduced himself as *Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Mu'tazilī*. Furthermore, when he wrote his exegesis, *Kashshāf*, in the preface he wrote: "*al-ḥamd li Allāh al-ladhī khalaq al-Qur'ān* (praise be to Allāh who created the Qur'an)." The notion of the createdness of the Qur'ān was essentially associated with the Mu'tazilites. So someone told him that his readers might turn their back on and not aspire to his exegesis due to that expression. Therefore he changed the expression and wrote: "*al-ḥamd li Allāh al-ladhī ja'al al-Qur'ān*." However, one should not forget that for Zamakhsharī "*ja'ala*" was synonym of "*khalaqa*."<sup>2</sup> Despite his being a hardliner Mu'tazilite, Muslim scholars all over the world have been referring to *Kashshāf* as

the best of its kind for the last thousand years<sup>3</sup> and simultaneously they have been developing critiques of the instrumentality of linguistics in his Qur'an exegesis.<sup>4</sup>

Zamakhsharī is not a prototype language oriented interpreter of the Qur'an, for Muslims long before him were conscious of the view that the expertise in Arabic language is a precondition of Qur'an exegesis as Mālik ibn Anas said:

“None was brought to me as one who, without being a scholar of Arabic language, interpreted the Book of Allāh except those whom I made an exemplary deterrent for the others.”<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless he is an archetype linguist-exegete of the Qur'an in the sense that he, without grounding his exegesis upon the life-language historical continuum of the Islamic-Arab tradition, focuses specially on the grammatical side of Arabic language<sup>6</sup> in order to interpret the Qur'an as a piece of Arabic literature as a whole. Yet he does not neglect the divine originality of the Qur'an. We shall see in what follows how his focus on Arabic language mainly by the way of grammatical rules rather than the cultural life-world of the Arabs can be understandable for us.

Zamakhsharī was an Arabicized Persian Mu'tazilite. He had lived for some time in Mecca on account of which he was called *Jār Allāh* (the neighbor of Allāh). He might nevertheless have found himself a foreigner in relation to the Arab culture and Arabic language. The mode of his learning Arabic language as a foreigner would certainly be different from that of a native Arab who learns the same as his mother tongue. Drawing upon the later Wittgenstein's concept of language, Jürgen Habermas (1929-) has already appropriated the difference between the modes of learning native and foreign languages in his work, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften*. Owing to Habermas's analysis of the difference between the modes of learning native and foreign languages, we shall interpret in what follows Zamakhsharī's attempt of Arabicizing himself being a foreigner.

According to the later Wittgenstein (1889-1951), a child is to learn his native or 'primary language' by 'the ostensive teaching of words' with their meanings. In the ostensive teaching of words, the teacher utters a word and simultaneously points to some object which corresponds to the word as its meaning or as symbol of its meaning. The pupil, on the one hand, is to follow the teacher by repeating the utterance of the word, and on the other, he cognizes the association between the word and its meaning by way of the ostensive action of the teacher. This whole activity 'consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven' is what Wittgenstein calls 'the language-game,' which is to say, 'the speaking of language' in a life situation is tantamount to playing a specific language-game wherein the meanings of words are determined in the context of the situation as 'a part of a form of life.'<sup>7</sup>

So the learning of language does not lead one only to the speaking of language rather to the cognizing of objects as well by giving names to them through the symbols of language.

Following the model of the ostensive teaching of language, according to Habermas, one cannot learn a foreign language, as in that case one has already got a native or primary language at one's disposal. Habermas demarcates between 'learning to speak' and 'learning a language.' The ostensive teaching of language may be helpful for one who tries to learn to speak one's primary language in relation to the particular life-form one lives in. But the case of learning a foreign language is different, as 'it presupposes the mastery of at least one language.'<sup>8</sup> The mastery of primary language makes one learn rules of grammar which make it possible for one not only to obtain 'understanding within the framework of this one grammar, but also to make foreign languages understandable.'<sup>9</sup> It implies that the mutual communication or dialogue between two languages takes place through the rules of grammar. That is the reason why Zamakhsharī, as a Qur'ān exegete, lopsidedly emphasizes on the technicalities of Arabic linguistics rather than Arabic language as a plane of traditional development. Zamakhsharī, being a Persian, Arabicizes himself mainly by mastering the grammar of Arabic as a foreign language. Owing to

his way of Arabicization he seems to get into the fold of Qur'ānic hermeneutics through the technicality of Arabic linguistics rather than the historicity of Islamic-Arab tradition. The technical-linguistic mold of his intellect makes him not only diverge from traditional Islam but be in opposition with it. So he identifies himself as a deliberate Mu'tazilite rather than an orthodox Muslim.

Zamakhsharī puts Qur'ānic hermeneutics (*'Ilm al-Tafsīr*) on a very high pedestal in the sense that he sets a grand scheme of qualifications predominantly linguistic and complemented with scholastic commitment as an intellectual criterion for a Qur'ān exegete. The expertise of the highest level in the areas of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *'ilm al-Kalām* (scholasticism), *wā'z* (sermonizing) and general rules of grammar is not enough to be a Qur'ān exegete. He exclusively relates to the interpretation of the *Qur'ān* two linguistic sciences namely *'ilm al-ma'ānī* and *'ilm al-bayān*.<sup>10</sup> *'Ilm al-ma'ānī*, as Sakkākī (d.1229/626) defines it, 'is the study (tatabbu') concerning specific composition of statements (*kalām*) in use and how to avoid mistakes in their application (*taṭbīq*) to what they state. While *'ilm al-bayān* as a branch (*shu'bah*) of *'ilm al-ma'ānī* is defined by Sakkākī as 'the knowledge (*ma'rafah*) of stating (*īrād*) the single meaning (*al-ma'nī al-wāḥidah*) in different ways along with an interpretational account of its connotation (*dalālah*)' avoiding mistakes in application of meaning in fullness.<sup>11</sup> To have simply a know-how of these two sciences is, for Zamakhsharī, not enough for one to become a Qur'ān exegete rather one should be

“...deliberate in frequently referring to these two sciences and exhausted in their excavation (*tanqīr*) for long. One's spirit (*himmah*) of cognizing delicacies of Allāh's demonstration (*ḥujjat Allāh*) [should] prompt one to be most likely pursuing these two sciences as well as aspired to the inquiry (*istīdāh*) concerning the miracle of the Prophet of Allāh.”<sup>12</sup>

Apart from having mastery in the two linguistic sciences a Qur'ān exegete, according to Zamakhsharī, is

“comprehensive in both research and memorization as well as studious and expert reviewer ...He is an expert in *'ilm al-i'rāb* [art of knowing words' ending in Arabic language] as well as forerunner in exploration of the Book.

Besides, he is rightly guided being free in nature and innately aspired [to attain knowledge]...He is distinctly characterized as an expert of [literary] styles (*uslūb*) both of poetry (*nazm*) and prose (*nathr*)...He certainly knows how to dispose and compose a literary expression as well as how to make it coherent and compact.”<sup>13</sup>

## II. Zamakhsharī's Qur'ān Exegesis: Between Linguistic Objectivism and Scholastic Subjectivism

Language is a societal phenomenon intersubjectively practiced by the inhabitants of a social order. This intersubjective practice of language is a precondition for every act of saying, reading, writing, understanding and interpretation took place in the society. To practice language is to follow the rules of grammar. If one attempts to formulate the rules of grammar, one does not construe them subjectively. Instead, the formulation of grammar is an objectivation of the intersubjective practice of language in terms of linguistic rules. As regards the Qur'ān, one's focus on conventional Arabic language as a precondition for the understanding of the Qur'ān does not lead one to the intersubjective connotation of the revelation instead to the objective meaning of the divine discourse, for the Qur'ān itself directs its addressees to focus on the conventional language for its appropriate understanding:

“We sent each apostle in the language of his own public in order that he (could properly) make them understand (the divine message).” (*Ibrāhīm* 14:4)

If one wishes to interpret the Qur'ān by the help of linguistic sciences, one contends to attain the objective meaning of a Qur'ānic verse by following the rules of Arabic linguistics intersubjectively practiced in the society. The same is the case of Zamakhsharī who, in order to interpret the Qur'ānic verses, lopsidedly focuses on two linguistic sciences namely *'ilm al-ma'ānī* and *'ilm al-bayān*. In view of the nature of these two linguistic sciences particularly the former one, Zamakhsharī intends to take the text of the Qur'ān as a composite literary expression wherein different verses are integrally related to each other. Therefore the linguisticity of his hermeneutic approach

leads him towards the notion of coherence between the Qur'ānic verses. The linguisticity and the coherence (being derived from the linguisticity) between the verses seem to guarantee an objective interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses. For, it seems difficult for Zamakhsharī to impose his own subjective trend on the text if he tends to interpret the verses under the yoke of the twofold determinant of the linguistic rules and the integral relationship between the verses. The degree of probability of the subjectivist imposition of meaning becomes lower by the complementarity of *'ilm al-bayān* which helps Zamakhsharī single the meaning of a verse in fullness out of many plausible statements of it. That is, the orientation of the linguistic determinant remains objectivist even if the third element of *'ilm al-bayān* is also added to its twofoldness of linguisticity and coherence.

So far Zamakhsharī's scheme of interpreting the Qur'anic verses seems to preoccupy a concept of language which is very close to that of the later Wittgensteinian picture of language. "Witgenstein," said Habermas, "linked the intersubjectivity of ordinary language communication to the intersubjective validity of grammatical rules: following a rule means applying it in an identical way."<sup>14</sup> But ordinary language, according to Habermas, is not a 'monadically sealed' system whose grammar has a 'rigid pattern of application' like the formalized language of calculus or mathematics. Instead, the sphere of ordinary language is 'open' wherein

"He who has learned to apply its rules has learned not only to express himself in a language but also to interpret expressions in this language...Along with their possible application, grammatical rules also imply the necessity of an interpretation. Wittgenstein did not see this."<sup>15</sup>

In order to understand Zamakhsharī's hermeneutical scheme in full-blown, instead of the Wittgensteinian model of language as a monadically sealed structure more appropriate will be the Habermasian view of language as an open sphere whose rules are not precise and unequivocal. Due to this imprecision and equivocality of the rules of grammar there is always a possibility of 'interruption' in 'the intersubjective communication in ordinary language.' This gape in

communication can be compensated by ‘hermeneutic understanding...at the points of interruption.’<sup>16</sup>

The hermeneutic character of an ordinary language explains how a highly committed linguist, who lopsidedly relies on linguistic rules in his interpretation of a text, can be unable to avoid his subjective trends in the interpretation. And this very case is of Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf* which is predominantly a linguistic exegesis of the Qur’ān but still he inevitably imposes his Mu‘tazilite belief on the meaning of the Qur’ānic verses. That is to say, the pendulum of Zamakhsharī’s mind-set at times seems to swing through the amplitude in between the two extremes of linguistic objectivism and scholastic subjectivism. He basically attempts to interpret a Qur’ānic verse linguistically without having any subjectivist imposition of meaning on the verse and so his interpretation is objectivist. However, if the verse is concerned with a Mu‘tazilite doctrine he tries to interpret the meaning of the verse as per that doctrine. This deliberate mold of meaning of the verse concerned makes his interpretation subjectivist, as this deliberation is determined by his diehard commitment with the Mu‘tazilite mind-set. Zamakhsharī’s scholastic commitment is so strong that in order to justify his Mu‘tazilite belief by the Qur’ānic testimony he even instrumentalizes the linguistic rules which are the basis of his interpretation. This is what Marzūqī, one of Zamakhsharī’s commentators, has pointed out:

“Therefore you see him [Zamakhsharī] in those issues (*masā’il*) in which there is a difference of opinions between the Mu‘tazilites and the orthodox Muslims (*ahl al-sunnah*) that he opines as per the Mu‘tazilite mind-set. If the apparent meaning of the verse (*ẓāhir al-āyah*) suits them he adopts it as it is, but if it is different from their belief then he molds it as per what suits them.”<sup>17</sup>

While interpreting *Sūrat al-Ikhlās*, Zamakhsharī seems to take it as an organic whole wherein all of the four verses are integrally related to each other giving rise to its coherent meaning concerning the principles of faith (*uṣūl al-dīn*) which is the notion of *tawhīd*. For this reason, according to Zamakhsharī, the *sūrah* is also named as *Sūrat al-Asās* (Sūrah of the Foundation). He further substantiates his view by

citing an *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: 'The seven heavens and the seven earths are founded on "qul huwa Allāhu aḥad"' (i.e. *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* which says: *Qul huwa Allāhu aḥad, Allāhu 'l-ṣamad, lam yalid wa lam yūlad, wa lam kun lahu kufuw<sup>an</sup> aḥad*). Interpreting the first verse, *Qul huwa Allāhu aḥad*, Zamakhsharī explains that *huwa* is used here as a pronoun of consideration (*ḍamīr al-shā'n*) so that *Allāhu aḥad* is its consideration (*shā'n*) to mean that 'He unquestionably Allāh is absolute one to whom there is no match (*thānī*).' He, then, himself poses a question<sup>18</sup>: 'How can *huwa* be grammatically placed here (as a pronoun)?' Then he himself responds to the question by saying that *huwa* can be justified here as a pronoun of *Allāhu aḥad*, as 'the case is nominative (*ar-raf'*) of all, the subject, the predicate and the sentence.' He relates the first verse to the second, *Allāhu 'l-ṣamad* by explaining that 'Allāh is one Whom you all know and be satisfied with that He is the Creator of the heaven, the earth, and all of you. He is one Who, being Reclusively Divine, does not share (His Divinity) with anyone else. His every creature holds Him firmly (*yaṣmad ilayhi*), as it cannot dispense with Him but He dispenses with all.' Furthermore, the expression *lam yūlad*, according to Zamakhsharī, depicts the eternity (*al-qidam*) and the primacy (*al-awwalīyyah*) of Allāh whereas the expression, *lam yalid* negates every possibility of His resembling (*shabah*) and homogeneity (*mujānasah*). While the final verse, *wa lam yakun lahu kufuw<sup>an</sup> aḥad* is the fixation and confirmation of what precedes it namely the description of *tawḥīd*.<sup>19</sup>

So far Zamakhsharī's interpretation remains linguistic-objectivist, as he construes the meaning in the context of the overall theme of the *sūrah* with the help of the mutual relationship between the verses and the instrumental of the linguistic rules. Meanwhile the overall theme of the *sūrah* namely the conception of *tawḥīd* prompts him to swing from the linguistic objectivism to the scholastic subjectivism, as the conception of *tawḥīd* is the major trait of the Mu'tazilite faith. In the midst of his discussion while elaborating the meanings of *aḥad* and *ṣamad* he claims that Allāh 'is Indispensable (*Ghanī*) in His Being (*fī Kawnihī*) as well as Knower (*'Ālim*) in His Being (*fī Kawnihī*). He is indeed Just (*'Adil*) being not an author of the vices.'<sup>20</sup> Both of these claims state the defining features of the

Mu‘tazilism. As far as the first claim is concerned it is well known that the Mu‘tazilites believe that Allāh’s attributes (*sifāt*) are identical with His essence (*dhāt*). Therefore they claim just like Zamakhsharī that:

“He [Allāh] is knower in His Being, Powerful in His Being, Living in His Being; not by having knowledge, power and life respectively. These attributes are eternal in the sense that they exist as His Essence, because if the attributes were to share with Him eternity which exclusively His character then they would share Him in the divinity [and that would be the corruption of *tawhīd*].”<sup>21</sup>

Zamakhsharī’s second claim about Allāh’s authorship of the vices is also a Mu‘tazilite blend in his interpretation of the *sūrah*. Marzūqī clearly states that Zamakhsharī’s claim that ‘Allāh is Just being not an author of the vices’ is a Mu‘tazilite creed (*madhhab al-Mu‘tazilah*).<sup>22</sup>

The deliberate blending of these two Mu‘tazilite creeds with the meanings of the Qur’ānic verses, which Zamakhsharī construes linguistically and contextually, guarantees the imposition of his subjective trends on the objective meanings of the verses. One, therefore, can justifiably argue that Zamakhsharī’s interpretation of the Qur’ānic verses oscillates between the linguistic objectivism and the scholastic subjectivism.

## Conclusion

The subjective-objective distinction of hermeneutical approaches to a text is a perspective in which Zamakhsharī’s scholastic-linguistic interpretation of the Qur’ānic text is analyzed. The superstructure of this analysis is erected upon the ground of the Habermasian view of language as an open sphere whose rules are not precise and unequivocal contrasting it with the later Wittgensteinian model of language as a monadically sealed structure of grammatical rules. The argument developed in this paper establishes that Zamakhsharī’s hermeneutical approach to the Qur’ān is neither

subjectivist nor objectivist rather it is to oscillate in between linguistic objectivism and scholastic subjectivism. Regarding the interpretation of the Qur'ān as a literary text, Zamakhsharī lays emphasis on two linguistic sciences namely *'ilm al-ma'ānī* and *'ilm al-bayān*. The emphasis on the former leads him to the syntactical coherence of the Qur'ān while the emphasis on the latter makes it viable to single the meaning of the Qur'ānic text from amongst the manifoldness of connotations. Owing to the twofold emphasis on linguisticity, Zamakhsharī construes the objective meaning of the text. But as regards the scholastic side of his interpretation, one finds the subjectivist imposition rather than the objectivist construing of meanings on the text, as he deliberates to interpret the meaning of the text under the yoke of his wholehearted commitment with the Mu'tazilite creeds.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Ibn Khuldūn, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muḥammad, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khuldūn (Ibn Khuldūn's Preface to History)* (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 2001/1422), p.407
- <sup>2</sup> Imīl Badī'Ya'qūb's introduction for the latest edition of Zamakhsharī, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Ṣan'at al-I'rāb* (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub 'Ilmīyyah, 1999/1420), 10. For these two factual evidences of Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite attachment, the author gives various references like *Wafyāt al-A'yān*, Volume V, p.170, *Shadhrāt al-Dhahab*, Volume IV, p.120 etc.
- <sup>3</sup> Al-Zarqānī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm, *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān (The Fountains of Cognition in the Qur'ānic Studies)*, Volumes II (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1988/1408), p.70
- <sup>4</sup> Ibn Khuldūn mentions the name of an 'Irāqī linguist, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Taybī who developed a critique of both of the two aspects of the Qur'ān exegesis (*Muqaddimah*, p.408). Aḥmad ibn al-Munīr al-Iskandarī and Muḥammad 'Alyān al-Marzūqī critically investigated both linguistic and scholastic aspects of *Kashshāf* whereas Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, following Abū Muḥammad al-Zayla'ī's works, developed an exposition of the *aḥādīth* cited in *Kashshāf*. See the latest edition of *Kashshāf* arranged and corrected, along with the last three criticisms, by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Shāhīn and published by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, Beirut in 2003/1424. My study of Zamakhsharī is based upon the same.
- <sup>5</sup> Al-Zarkashī, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh, *Al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān (The Demonstration in the Qur'ānic Studies)*, Volume II (Beirut, Dār al-

Kutub ‘Ilmīyyah, 2001/1422), p.177

- <sup>6</sup> This twofold role of Arabic language is determined by its twofold use: first, the use of Arabic as a conventional language as it was spoken, read and written by the Arabs following the rules of grammar given to them historically-conventionally. Second, the use of Arabic as a set of rules and laws as it was learned to be practiced mostly by the non-Arabs by cognizing the technicalities of the rules of grammar again grounded upon the cultural life-form of the Arabs. The latter is the sense of language in which it is to be taken as a set of philological principles and grammatical rules explored on the symbolic plane of linguistic signs though the relevance of these signs with the Arab life-form cannot entirely be omitted. However, the network of grammatical rules becomes hard enough to lessen the historic-hermeneutic concern of language in the exegesis. These two uses of Arabic language are the two different ways of practicing it regarding its users’ specific interest of understanding the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah*. Ibn Khuldūn also throws light on this twofold hermeneutic role of Arabic language in his *Muqaddimah*. On the one hand, he applies the condition that the linguistic exegesis of the Qur’ān was developed ‘only after the language and the related sciences (linguistics) had become crafts,’ and on the other hand he discusses the linguistic exegesis with respect to the Arabic language as something traditionally practiced by the Prophet, his companions and the generations thereafter. See Ibn Khuldūn, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muḥammad, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khuldūn (Ibn Khuldūn’s Preface to History)* (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, 2001/1422), pp.406-7
- <sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1953), pp.2-38
- <sup>8</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften (On the Logic of the Social Sciences)*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen & Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988), p.145
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, Abū ‘l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad, *Al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa ‘Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wajūh al-Tā’wīl (The Searchlight on Realities of the Obscured Revelations and Essences of the Words in the Expressions of Interpretation)*, Volume I, 3<sup>rd</sup> Reprint, arranged, verified & corrected by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām Shāhīn, (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub ‘Ilmīyyah, 2003/1424), p.7
- <sup>11</sup> Al-Sakkākī, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, *Miftāḥ al-‘Ulūm*, verified, presented & indexed by Dr. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Handāwī (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub ‘Ilmīyyah, 2000/1420), pp.247-9
- <sup>12</sup> *Al-Kashshāf*, p.7
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp.7-8
- <sup>14</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften (On the Logic of the Social Sciences)*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen & Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988), p.149

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.150

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Kashshāf*, p.8. See n.2

<sup>18</sup> *Al-Kashshāf* is written in the form of a dialogue in which the author himself puts what one may ask regarding the Qur'ānic text and then he, owing to his vast knowledge of linguistics, responds to that question in detail.

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Kashshāf*, pp.812-814

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.813

<sup>21</sup> Al-Shahristānī, Abū 'l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm, *al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, exposition by Muḥammad ibn Faṭḥ Allāh Badrān, Volume I (Cairo, Maktabat al-Injlo 'l-Miṣrīyyah, 1956), p.49

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Kashshāf*, p.813



## **Sufism: A Syncretic Path For Peace**

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### **Abstract:**

The quest of truth is the pursuit for a goal, a quest pursued no matter how difficult the path and for the most important truth, the way may be long and arduous one. God uses many different ways of awakening people from deep slumber of this world and attracting them to him. Upon awakening, people begin searching and became travelers of the path of truth. As they began their journey towards God, their feelings and thoughts change, they behave differently. The shift is necessary for a person to be considered a traveler of the true path.

There are various spiritual path that attract people to travel on the true path, one must break down the self, removing the egoism and inculcating the humbleness. All the mystical path are in agreement on this aspects. In Buddhism, they speak of suffering and killing of ego; In Sufism, they speak of servant hood of the self to God.

Sufi is a term derived from the Arabic word suf means wool. It is the esoteric school of Islam, founded on the pursuit of spiritual truth as a definite goal to attain : the truth of understanding reality as it truly is, as knowledge and making peace in the world. In Sufism we speak of understanding this very principle is on a typically succinct saying Prophet Mohammed "whoever knows one self, knows one's Lord". The origin of Sufism can be traced in the time of Prophet whose teaching attracted scholars who engaged in discussion on the reality of being.

The Sufis, a mystical movement found allover the world. Sufism searches for mystical knowledge of God and his Love. Goal was to progress beyond intellectual knowledge to mystical experienced that submerged man in the infinity of God. It used Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Hellenistic, Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Hindu tradition that were brought into Islam by new converts.

During this period of war and ravage, faithlessness and gross materialism Sufism would be the syncretic path for world peace. To be

precise, Sufism is a principle and practices that ends in the understanding of the self. The Central truth is the foundation of peace and non-violence in the World.

Religions are understood and practiced in different ways by different people depending on their material and spiritual circumstances and intellectual backgrounds. No religion in the world can be understood only by the behavior of one section of the community following that religion. No religion has ever been practiced in a homogeneous manner rather it finds different expression in different cultures. A religion which spreads out of the cage of its genesis gets modified into new creative and productive forms.

Several trends have created under the umbrella of Islam, which are extremely rich and variegated. No unparalleled sift can be equated with the only acceptable trend of Islam, much less with its complex universe. Thus Islam is also followed by people of different countries with different spiritual, intellectual and philosophical bents of mind. Islam, since its commencing stages spread to all over world and produced rich material in the area including Gnostic tradition and Mysticism. Islam had developed deep insights into Mystical aspects of life in the form of the Quran and the Hadith. But these could not expand in the desert habitat of Arabia, which have inadequate tradition of spiritual and intellectual life. The main struggle in the desert was for survival resulted aggression being the part of life. All this left a deep mark of violence on Islamic history, which is implored by those who are predisposed to it. But this was indeed, neither the message of Islam nor its heritage.

### **Sufism in Islam**

Islam is a universal faith with liberal teaching and wide tolerance it has a feature that has been viewed with considerable understanding in the whole world that is Sufism. Conventionally the word *Sufi* is considered synonymous with the word Mystic. But the

word *Sufi*, as used in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu has a religious connotation. According to *Sufi* themselves, the word is derived from an Arabic root *Safa* (purity). They opinioned the Sufi who keeps his heart pure with God. Another connotation used for the word *Sufi* is apparently derived from an Arabic word *Suf* meaning coarse wool and was originally applied to those Muslim mystics who wore coarse woolen garments as a sign of self renunciation and penitence. <sup>(1)</sup> A second opinion is that some of the Prophet's companions, who were great supporters of the Holy Prophet of Islam, used to sit on a piece of rock outside the Prophet's Mosque, which was known as *Suffa* or people of the rock, and so they are called Sufis. A third opinion is that it is derived from the Greek word *Sophia* (wisdom or knowledge) and they were known as Sufis because their main belief was the Cognition of God. <sup>(2)</sup> There are various views of scholars' world over on Sufism, but generally it is categorized that the word is derived from the Arabic Suf or Wool.

A majority of scholars believe that the word Tasawwuf derives from the word *Suf*, which means wool. This assumption is based on a story told regarding the reason for wearing woolen garment by the pious people of the first century Islam. It has been narrated that the Prophet and faithful Muslims wore garments of wool to denote their detachment from the world and simplicity in living. The word Sufism, according to Arab grammer, is not a derivative of the word Suf, and not whoever wears Suf is a Sufi, for which, a great sage and Persian poet Sheikh Sadi said: <sup>(3)</sup>

The goal of the people of the inner path is not their outer garments.  
Serve the king yet remain Sufi.

A group of other scholars believe that the word *Sufi* is derived from the word *Sufateh*, the name of a thia plant. Sufis wear usually this because of extreme mortification and fasting. Thus, they were likened to *Sufateh* as symbol for their emancipation. But, as in the proceeding theory, his assumption is not linguistically or grammatically accurate. Benjamin Walker <sup>(4)</sup> in his book *Foundation of Islam* has referred that, "The origin of the term Sufi has been traced by some authorities to the

Greek word for wisdom (*Sophia*), but it is more generally agreed that it is derived from the Arabic word for wool (*Suf*), and was originally applied to those Muslim ascetics who, in imitation of Christian hermits, clad themselves in coarse undyed woolen garb as a sign of penitence and renunciation. The Sufis patched cloak (*khirka*) was likewise taken from the mantle of the Syrian monks, which consisted of rags of many colours”.

It can be noted here that the members of the Sufi used to wear cloths made of wool. It was a coarse woolen sock cloth called *Suf* more particular in Arabian Gulf area. Accordingly they were termed as Sufis, so, the Benjamin Walker connotation that they imitate it from Christian monk is totally untrue and unacceptable logically. Muslim mystic or saints choose to wear *Suf* which was symbolic of that renunciation of worldly values and abhorrence for physical comforts.

According to M.A. Khan and S. Ram<sup>(5)</sup> in their edited book *Sufism in India* state that Sufism can best be said the Islamic Mysticism. The theologians have traced its origin to a sect of pious people called Darveshs or Faqirs who formed themselves into a community. Simultaneously the connotation of the word Sufi, Safa, Sofi or Sof has wider implication. Derived from the Arabic and Persian sources. It has a deeper inner meaning, Sufi implies a wise person, pious or pure. Sufi Darveshs were the men of wisdom, who devoted their lives in pursuit of knowledge and attained acclaimed status in the world of Islam, with the passage of time, the tiny group developed into larger groups and established their school called *Rabats* and *Khanqahs*, all over Arabia and Persia. Later on they spread out to Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Maghrib (the expression used for Morocco).

Another scholar Farida Khanam<sup>(6)</sup> in her article *The Sufi* concept of *meditation* published in a magazine *Islam and the modern Age* has referred the following words for the connotation Sufi or Mysticism “there exist a number of propositions for the derivation of the term Sufi as the followers of Tasawwuf or Sufism are called. Some say that it comes from the Arabic word *Safa*, which means pure, others think that it refers to *Sufa* (a raised floor or a bench in the Prophet’s

mosque (Maszid-e-Nababi) in Madina, where some virtuous individuals used to sit and spend there time in pious devotion) or even *suff* (a row, like the rows formed by the believers gathered for a congregational prayer in a mosque). But the most commonly accepted definition refers to the word *Suff*, which means wool. This seems to point to coarse woolen garments worn by the mystics and symbolizing their voluntary poverty and renunciation of the world and all its pleasures. Gradually, the term Sufi came to designate a group, who differentiated itself from the others in the community of believers by putting emphasis on certain specific teachings and practices of the Quran and the Sunna. By the ninth century, representatives of this group adopted the term Tasawwuf or Sufism as a designation of their world view and ideology”.

There is certain other assumption regarding the word Sufism. Before the time of Prophet Mohammed, it seems that there was a group of very pious people who worked as the servants of the Kaaba. These people were called *Sufe*. Their practices included mortification and avoidance of any physical pleasures. Some assume that the word *Sufism* is a derivative from the word *Sufe*, but this assumption does not bear close examination, as the Arabic grammar rules and the notion, as the Arabic grammar rules and the different styles of the practice make its fallacy evident.<sup>(7)</sup>

Despite the best efforts have been made to discover the origin of the word, they do not give us a clear understanding about the word tasawwuf. It is still as mysterious as the whole practice of the Sufis. With humble submission I find it worthwhile to mention some of the explanation as follows: ‘Sufism is piety and the purifying of the heart’; ‘it is avoiding bad temper and base qualities’; ‘it is remembering God’; ‘it is essence without form’; ‘it is secret and inner purity’; ‘it is eternal life’. ‘The Sufi is a person of principles’. ‘He is absent from himself and present with God’. Each one of these description refer to a discipline and practice performed by Sufis.

From the above references it can be viewed that, a variety of opinions exist among the scholars as to the meaning and derivation of

the word Sufi, Sufism is that mode of the religious life in Islam in which the emphasis is placed, not so much on the performances of external ritual as on the activities of the inner self, in other words it signifies Islamic Mysticism. The one common word used for Sufi is Mystic. Infact, Sufism was an attitude rather than a doctrine, its personal, imaginative and experiential character meant that, it contrast to theology, it could not remain one the same thing, finding expression at all times and in all places in the same formulas. On the contrary it was bound to differ even from individual to individual, and to express the widest variety of reactions to stimuli of widely differing kinds. It can also be said here that, *Sufism* is only a method of approach to reality. This is obtained by training emotional and spiritual faculties. Like the images in a mirror. God exists in man but the veil of ego always keeps him hidden.

### **Genesis of Sufism**

The Sufis trace the origin of Sufism to the saying and practice of the Prophet Mohammad himself. Even before receiving the Divine revelation, the Prophet used to spend days and nights in solitary meditation in the cave of Hira near Mecca. It was on one such occasion that he saw an apparition on the form of a angel who asked him to recite a verse. The prophet said he could not read, that he was unlettered (*ummi*) but after the insistence of the angel he recited after him a sentence, which was the first revelation of the Quran. That is why Sufis attach such a great importance to meditation and *dhikr* (remembrances) recollection and in Islamic context denotes the activity of repeating God's names).<sup>(8)</sup> The Sufis claim to have inherited their doctrines direct from the teaching of the holy Prophet, who strictly speaking, has given no dogmatic or mystical theology. The Holy Quran of course supplies raw material for both when it say. "Allah is the highest of the heaven and the earth, he is the first and the last, the outward and the inward; There is no God but He; everything is to perish except He; I breathed into man, my spirit etc".<sup>(9)</sup> Mohammed, the Prophet preached the supremacy of God and the man's absolute submission to his will. He is not only to be feared as the tyrant majesty,

but he is also in possession of compassionate qualities. He is more than kind, considerate, benevolent and generous.<sup>(10)</sup> The Sufis emphasize Prophet's self-imposed poverty, contempt of wealth and a luxurious life, as well as fasts, night vigils and additional prayers. The companions of the Prophet faithfully followed his footsteps and lived simple lives. It is said that Prophet Mohammed's knowledge in popular language is described as being *ilm-i-safina*, book knowledge, and *ilm-i-sina*, heart knowledge. The former is incorporated in the doctrinal teaching of the *Ulema* the latter is strictly esoteric, the mystical teaching of Sufis.<sup>(11)</sup> Sufism, as a matter of fact passed through several phases in the process of its development. Undoubtedly the origin of the Sufism is found in certain passages of the Quran itself. Mystical tendencies so strongly manifested by some of Prophets companions and friends, tendencies which inevitably resulted in a life of detachment, poverty and mortification. So that one may say that the companions of Prophet Mohammed and their successors were in a sense, forerunners of the Sufis. The classical Sufism of the early brotherhood was strong and simple. Straight forward faith in Islamic theology personal devotion to God and trust (*tawakkul*) in Him under all condition, personal loyalty to the Prophet of Islam and allegiance to the Quran and the Shariat. The faith was accompanied by the practice of a well controlled ascetic life and in many cases meant renunciation off the world. It thus becomes evident that the earliest phase of Sufism was a form of asceticism and this was a product of Islam itself, since it rose as one of the direct consequences of the Islamic conception of Allah. One reason can be cited for the adoption of a life of asceticism is to be found in the political condition of the period immediately following the reigns of the first four *Khalifas*. For there were many pious Muslims who, becoming disgusted with the tyrannical rule of the Ummayyad khalifas withdrew from the world to seek peace of soul in a life of seclusion.<sup>(12)</sup>

An examination of the verses of the Quran which is the testimony to Prophet Mohammed's early experiences led some to conclude that he was in a trance-like state, perhaps similar to mystical trances and ecstasies, at the time that the Quranic text came to him. Prophet Mohammed came thus to be seen as the first Sufi by many

mystics and he was to serve as a model for subsequent generation of spiritual seekers.<sup>(13)</sup>

Islam has produced some of the most lovable men and women of God, the Sufis. The Prophet's teaching contained inspiration for this Godward direction of human life and mystics began to appear in Islam within a century of his demise. The earliest outstanding Sufi mystic was a woman, Rabia of Basra (717-801 A.D.)<sup>(14)</sup> Who has inspired most of the later Sufis. She was born in a poor family; she was the fourth child of her parents, lost her mother during childhood. In course of time she was kidnapped by a gang of dacoits and sold her to a munib only for six dirhams. The munib tortured Rabia, but child Rabia never cursed the munib rather praised him for his sparing of her life for God's prayer. One day in a deep night, the Munib found himself in wonder when he heard the prayer of Rabia, Praying for goodness of Munib instead of asking for relieve from the cruel Munib. By hearing praise from the mouth of Rabia, Munib became humiliated and asked for her blessing. Rabia forgave the Munib and led a saintly life at the Munib's house<sup>(15)</sup>. It can also be said that, Rabia-Al-Basra was one of the earliest Sufi poets who introduced sensuous imagery to her expression of love, which could be interpreted by both ways– the love for a human lover/beloved or the real love (dedication) for God. She has been described as Mira of Sufism and her poetry is the finest example of dedication, love and piety. In one of her poems she defines the selfless love<sup>(16)</sup> as cited below:

“If I love thee for the fear of Hell  
Condemn me to the fines of Hell.  
If I love thee for the sake of Heaven  
Deprive one of this bliss for all times,  
But my love for thee is for thine sake alone.  
I crave for thy communion  
Withhold not thine everlasting beauty”.

This is the height of dedication, when one is prepared to sacrifice all the comforts available in this life or in the other world, only for the sake of love.

Another outstanding figure in this early ascetic movement was Hasan of Basra (728 A.D.). It is said that the fear of God seized him so mightily that in the words of his biographer, “It seemed as though hell-fire had been created for him alone”. It is said that one day a friend saw him weeping and asked him the cause. “I weep”, he replied” for fear that I have done something unintentionally or committed some fault, or spoken some word which is displeasing to God, then He might have said, ‘Began for thou hast no more favour with me’.<sup>(17)</sup> Towards the end of 8<sup>th</sup> century there arose a class of people who were not merely ascetics but something more. In them the life of seclusion led on to contemplation and contemplation to vision and ecstasy. Ascetics were express of one’s selfless devotion to God. The ascetics of the later period the ideal of poverty meant not merely lack of wealth, but also lack of the very desire for it, it signified the empty heart as well as the empty hand.

### **Meditation and Stages in Sufism**

Meditation, the word is one of those common words, which we encounter very often in every day speech and rarely think of all the nuances of meaning. In all the religion of the world, where meditation is an accepted practice, it might be described as monotheistic for Islam and other Western religion or polytheistic for Hinduism or non-theistic for Jainism. Therefore it is necessary to construct such a definition of meditation that would do justice to a whole range of experience taking place in different religions of the world.

An extremely broad range of practices connected with meditation to many of the world’s religious and philosophical traditions. It generally includes refraining from random, disturbing thoughts and fantasias, and aim at calming and focusing of the mind on some specific objects. It requires sometimes an effortless activity experienced as just happening while at sometimes it require a strenuous effort. Different practices involve focusing one’s attention differently. A different variety of postures and position might be involved for example sitting cross legged, standing, lying down, kneeling and

walking. At certain times devices like prayer beads (*tasbih* in Islam and *rosary* in Roman catholic for example), symbolic representations of deity, singing and dancing or even consumption of narcotic substances might be used to induce the right frame of mind. The purpose and practices of meditation varies in conception. It has been seen as a means of gaining experiential (practical) insight into the nature of reality both in the case of religious and spiritually inclined persons as well as those who profess to follow no religion at all. It is perceived as a very effective way of drawing closer to the God irrespective of what one might think it to be. Meditation thus requires and therefore develops power of concentration, greater awareness, self-discipline and calmness of mind. Through the concentrative techniques of meditation the mind is kept closely focused on a particular word, image, sound, person or idea. This form of meditation is found in Buddhist and Hindu tradition including Yoga as well as in medieval Christianity. Jewish Kabala (Mystical trend in Judaism) and some practices of Sufis, related to this method is a silent repetition in the mind of a memorized passage from the scripture or a particular word. *Dhikr* or remembrance of God would fall into this category so would *simran* and *nam japna* of Sikhism.<sup>(18)</sup>

In *Vipassana* type of meditation the mind is trained to notice each perception or thought that passes through it, but without stopping on any one here *Vipassana* means seeing things as they are. This is a characteristic form of meditation in Buddhism especially Theravada and Zen but does not seem to play much role in Islam. Here it is important to know that, the Rosary or Beads is one of the objects that the Muslims have inherited from the Buddhists. The Sufi doctrine of *fana* is the *nirvan* of the Buddhist. The whole Sufi system of spiritual *muqamat*' (stations) or chakras that the seeker after illumination realizes on his way to extinction is Buddhist.<sup>(19)</sup> In this way a good number of thinkers amongst Muslims, especially in the Abbasid reign, where more or less directly influenced by Buddhism.<sup>(20)</sup> One another type of meditation is *Annapurna* which stresses attention on breath. The Sufis also used this practice and it is often alleged that it was adopted under the influence of the Indian, both Hindu and Buddhist tradition.

Meditation and Mysticism is very often interlinked. Mysticism is a unique experience, taking place in a religious context. The person experiencing it interprets this experience as an encounter with the ultimate divine reality. This experience brings about a deep sense of unity and of living on a level of being. This experience seems to be direct. For some people this experience can be gained in a natural and effortless way without any special endeavor or one's side. But the human mind longs to belong to the ultimate and experience it at close quarters. From there arises the need for a mentor, a teacher Muslim *pir* or *murshid*. A Charismatic leader gathers around himself his followers and mediate their access to salvation. Sometimes the tomb of the saint becomes the place of pilgrimage and the saint performs the same functions after death as were ascribed to him during his lifetime—mediates and acts as a bridge between the believer and God.

The Sufi who set out to seek God calls himself a traveller (*salik*). He advances by slow stages (*muqamat*) along a path (*tariqa*) towards union with reality (*Fana fil Haqq*). The process of training in devotion implied worship for adorable one, sorrow for one's sins, doubt of all objects other than he, celebration of his praise, living for this sake, assigning to Him, seeking him in all things, renouncing anger, envy, greed and impure thoughts.

The states of emotions and processes bear comparison with what the Muslim Sufis taught in regard to *Hal* and *Muqam* (states of rapture and states of ecstasy). For instance, Abu Nasr al-siraj, the author of the oldest treatise on Sufism, recounts the seven stages.<sup>(21)</sup> Farida Khanam<sup>(22)</sup> referred the states of Sufism from the book *Kitab al-Luma fi-Tasawwuf of Al-siraj* the oldest comprehensive treatise on Sufi teaching, consists of the following seven stages:

- (1) Repentance (*tawabah*)
- (2) Fear of the Lord (*wara*)
- (3) Renunciation (*zuhd*)
- (4) Poverty (*faqr*)
- (5) Patient or endurance (*sabr*)
- (6) Trust in God (*tawakkal*)

(7) Satisfaction or contentment (*rida*)

Farida Khanam<sup>(23)</sup> further refers that Al-Siraj wrote the above book in tenth century A.D. in Iran, much before Al-Ghazzali, during the period when Sufism was first being consolidated as a coherent body of spiritual teaching, and thus gives one a comprehensive picture of how the mystical path was in harmony with all aspects of Islamic religious law and doctrine. The stages are inherent part of the path and define the ascetic and ethical discipline of the Sufi. By strictly adhering to the above seven stages, the salik is blessed with ten states (*sing, hal, ahwal*) meditation (*muraqaba*), nearness (*gurb*), love (*muhabba*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*rija*) longing (*shauq*), intimacy (*uns*), tranquility (*itminan*), contemplation (*mushahada*), and certainty (*yaqin*), all with God as a referent (object), while the stages themselves can be arrived at and achieved through one's own effort, under the guidance of a mentor, the states are spiritual feelings and dispositions over which a man has no control and are a gift from God.

Repentance (*tawabah*) occupies the first list of stages. It is described as the awakening of the soul from the slumber of heedlessness, so that one feels contrition for past disobedience. To be truly pertinent, one must at once abandon sin and firmly resolve that he will never return to wrong doing in the future. In order to achieve salvation one has to seek out a teacher, Pir-o-Murshid, to guide him on the way to perfection.

The second stage is called *wara*, it can be attained by the aspirant, the *wara* can be translated as 'fear of the Lord' for God detests whatever hinders the heart from giving attention to him.

The third stage is, *Zuhd* or detachment.

The fourth stage is *faqr* or poverty, voluntary poverty is the Sufi's pride as it was the pride of the prophet (*Faqr fakhiri*—poverty is my pride' states Hadith). It can be said that Sufis neither choose poverty nor wealth.

Patient comes to the fifth stage. Patient is virtue without which the depths of poverty could not be borne.

The sixth number of stage is 'trust or self-surrender' one's attitude who entrusted himself completely to God. It forms a fundamental Islamic position (*aqida*), its roots are in *tawhid* or belief in one God.

The last state is *rida* denotes a condition in which the spiritual traveler is always pleased with whatever providence sends his way.

Emphasize on aim and end of Sufism and its way is to reach God, the Truth (*Al-Haqq*) and not merely to pass through so many stages and experience. So, it might be said that spiritual practice is the core of Sufism and Sufi writers have certainly elaborated upon theories and metaphysical points of view, but it is in meditation, prayer, fasting, and day to day practices that we find the life of mystical path. This is particularly true of the meditative practices associated with the recollection of the names of God.

### **Silsila or Order in Sufism**

Several Sufi orders were established on monastic principles and some of the eminent Sufis wrote in praise of poverty and extolled the ideal of beggar (*Faqir*) or religious mendicant (*Darvish*). A great number of them voluntarily giving up the delights of the world-wealth, fame, feast and companionship and seeking instead penury, hunger, celibacy and solitude. Sometime Sufis made the widest possible use of music and musical instruments and the development of the Muslims poetry and Ghazal is closely linked with the work of the Sufis. Sufi adopts a variety of technique to enhance the religious experience so as to attain the supreme state of ecstasy (*Hal*). Some of them called the name of God in loud ululation, in course of time Sufi were organized in several silsila or order. Each order or silsila headed by a prominent mystic who lived in *Khanqah* along with his disciple (*murid*). The

relation between the teacher called *Pir* and disciple called *Murshid* was a vital part of Sufism.

The origin of the silsila or order in Sufism is said by certain scholars, to date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Such a statement may be accepted as correct in the sense that at the period these orders were fully organized, and that each was marked by distinguishing features in its teaching and practice. Otherwise the Sufi fraternities ought to be traced back to a much earlier date. The wandering companies (Sufi) in course of time came to be called *Al-Tariqa*, the path or *Khanwada*. The teaching imparted in the orders is supposed to have been handed down through more or less continuous chains of succession originating with the founders. Such a chain is called silsila or Sufi order. The centre of every order at any given time is a shaykh or pir (an elder), who is considered to be a spiritual heir of the original founder, and as such received his authority through his immediate predecessor.

Some of the major orders of Sufism which got prominence has been referred in the book *Sufism in India*, edited by M.A. Khan and S.Ram<sup>(24)</sup> are as follows:

(1) Habibiya order, (2) Zaidiya order, (3) Ahamiya order, (4) Iyaziya order, (5) Karkhiya order, (6) Sagatiya order, (7) Taifuriya order, (8) Habairiya order, (9) Junaidiya order, (10) Chistiya order, (11) Kaziruin order, (12) Suhrawardiya order, (13) Firdousiya order, (14) Tusiya order, (15) Shattariya order, (16) Qadiriya order, (17) Qalandariya order, (18) Naqshbandiya order, (19) Uwasiya order.

Of above orders only four viz., the Chistiyya, the Qadariya, the Suhrawardiyya and the Naqshbandiyya, exist in India as orders of sufficient importance.<sup>(25)</sup> Some of the great Sufis of the above four important silsila or order were most remarkable personalities. Saints in the true sense with great spiritual powers who could cast a spell on all those who came even casually into contact with them. Mention may particularly be made of Khwaja Mohin-uddin Chisti of Ajmer. Baba Farid of Punjab, Shaikh Ismail of Punjab, Nizam-ud-din Awlia of Delhi, Makhdoom Sarfuddin of Bihar, Shah Jalal of Sylhat and Abbul

Sakur of Tarabha, Orissa, Muzahid-e-millat of Dhamnagar, Orissa several others Sufis of Orissa too numerous to mention. Their main contribution was to bridge, the gulf among the different communities to develop a common heritage.

### **Sufism and Hindu Mysticism**

To throw light on Sufism in Islam and Mysticism in Hinduism is indeed like entering into the domains of Shaikh Mohin-ud-din Chisti and Shankaracharya. For a layman and a commoner, it is not easy to obtain a visa to enter into this hallowed region. The popular westernized term Sufism and Hindu Mysticism are not capable of explicating Islamic *tasawwuf* and Hindu spiritual philosophy even in a limited sense (of the words) through which these are generally explained and understood.

To define Islamic *tasawwuf* as Sufism is, infact, restricting the phenomenon to personalities. This is a kind of fallacy which is often committed in calling a Momin and a Muslim as a Mohammadan. The Muslims hold the saints in high esteem. They are regarded as friends to God (*Awaliya*, Singular: *Wali*). This view seems to have gained currency from the Quranic sanctions bearing on the position of the saints in the eyes of God. For example “verily on the *Awaliya* (friends) no fear shall befall them, and they shall never grieve” (10: 63) and a tradition refers to the Prophet as saying, ‘one who hurts a saint wages war against me’.<sup>(26)</sup> So, it can be said that Muslim holds Sufis in high esteem.

Where as the term ‘Hindu Mysticism’ can neither circumscribe nor comprehend the vast panorama of Hindu spiritual legacy. Where else have the different religions held together negation and affirmation, materialism and spirituality. Where in the outward so dazzling and luminous. Where is renunciation a state towards salvation, and living a full life also an aspect of spirituality. To limit such limitless and varied states of mind and soul by defining at merely as ‘Mysticism’ is indeed unjust as there are many forms of an object, and every form has got

various shades. Even if one does not use the term Mysticism and Sufism to define and differentiate Hindu-Muslim spirituality. The problem still remains as one does not know what to compare or contrast against. Agreement and disagreement, and variety and lack of it, are not the distinguishing features of Hinduism alone. The followers of Islamic *tasawwuf* are also divided on the ideologies of *Wahadatul Wujood* and *Wahadatush Shuhud*. The night draws to an end but the fate remains untold.<sup>(27)</sup>

### **Some Early Sufis**

Prophet Mohammed is regarded as the first Sufi master who passed his esoteric teaching orally to his successors who also received his special grace (*barakah*). An unbroken chain of transmission of divine authority is supposed to exist from Prophet Mohammed to his successor ‘Ali and from him down to the generations of Sufi masters (Sheikhs, Pirs). Each order has its silsilah (chain) that links with Prophet Mohammed and ‘Ali.

The first Sufis were ascetics who meditated on the date of judgment. They were called “those who always weep” and “those who see this world as a hut of sorrows”. They kept the external rules of Sharia, but at the same time developed their own mystical ideas and techniques. “Little food, little talk, little sleep”, was a popular proverb amongst them. Mortification of the flesh, self denial, poverty and abstinence were seen as the means of drawing near God, and this included fasting and long nights of prayer. Some of the early Sufis were as follows.<sup>(28)</sup>

**Hasan of Basrah** (d.728) was one of the first Sufi ascetics. He exhorted his followers against attachment to this evil world and encouraged them to reject it and to follow a path of poverty and abstinence.

**Ibrahim b. Adham** (d.777) of Balkh in Khorasan taught his disciples the importance of meditation and of silence in worship.

**Shaqiq of Balkh** (d. 810) taught that only a rigid system of self-discipline could lead to absolute trust in God (*tawakkul*) and to the mystical state (*hal*).

**Al-Muhasibi** (d. 837 in Baghdad) taught that self-discipline and self-examination were the needed preparation for fellowship and union with God.

**Dhu-an-Nun of Egypt** (d. 859) taught that Marifah (inner knowledge, *Gnosis*) was necessary to attain real union with God.

**Abu-Yazid al-Bistami** (d. 874) taught that union with God is achieved through the annihilation of self (*Fana*). This is done by a total stripping away of a person's attributes and personality and by rigorous mortification of the flesh. He was the first intoxicated Sufi who in his ecstatic state felt that God had replaced his own ego and now dwelt in his soul. This caused him to exclaim! "Glory to me: How great is my majesty".

**Junaid of Baghdad** (d. 910) stresses the importance of wisdom and sobriety in achieving both *fana* (dying to self, extinction of self) and *baqa* (abiding in God).

The first great Sufi martyr was Hallaj who was crucified in 922 in Baghdad for blasphemy. His offence was the statement "I am the truth" which signified that he had attained union with God who dwelt in his body instead of his own self.

There is a basic difference between Sufi Islam and general Islam. Sufis emphasize *Tariqat*. Meaning spiritual path, whereas general Islam stress on *Shariat* i.e., the legal path of Islam, which is rigidly followed by the orthodox Muslims. So, naturally those who emphasize spiritual path to reach God are open and unorthodox. As a result of reports by the world media on a few dreaded fundamentalist group among the Muslims, Islam has been associated with terrorism. Indeed, the world opinion is formed through these media and not by in-

depth learned studies. We hold many opinions that will prove to be false on investigation. The world media encourage stereotypes about communities.

Sufism indebted its evolution to orthodox Islam and its spiritual tradition on the one hand, and also to certain aspects of Gnostic (Greek) tradition. Sufism cannot be homogenized rather it is intertwined with several schools of thought and *Silsilas*. There are noticeable differences among these *Silsilas*, but they all stress on spirituality. Sufism deeply differs from political Islam as it detests power struggle. The Sufis are different from other Mystics in as much as they do not renounce the world, following the tradition of Prophet that there is no renunciation of the world in Islam. Sufis marry, raise families, live and struggle in this world however, free from materialistic gain and fight against one's own desire. According to The Sufis, the real *Jihad* or holy war as per the Prophet Mohammed is to fight against one's own desire for more and more.<sup>(29)</sup> Terrorism and bloodshed are caused by the uncontrolled desire.

A person who enriches himself spiritually and restrains from the temptation of the World lives with mental peace. The Quran lays emphasis on inner peace. Sufism creates conditions for outer and inner peace. This is equally true of other religions like, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism are equally involved with violence. Politicized religions promote violence. Radical and right-wing Christian, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists are identical in their approach to religion. Religion for them is not a source of inner peace but an appliance to realize their goal for political power and hegemony. All this naturally leads to violence. When political Islam led to power struggle resulted in bloodshed, Sufism was born. Revulsion was caused among a section of committed Muslims who knew the value of peace and spiritual development of the human. The Sufis imbibed from the Prophet, the concept The Prophet was *insane-e-kamil* and they were inspired by him. He was a blend of this and worldly concern. He did his worldly duties and accomplished spiritual perfection. His goal was inner peace and perfection. So, the fundamental doctrine of the Sufis is 'total peace and peace with all' (*Sulh-I-Kul*).<sup>(30)</sup>

Thus, the fundamental doctrine of Sufism is peace and peace is possible only when one avoids conflict. To establish peace we need compassion, which is very basic to the Quran. Whatever Muslims do, they start with the invocation 'I begin in the name of Allah, who is benevolent and compassionate'. So, mercy are as fundamental in Islam as in Buddhism. The Buddha also laid great stress on compassion and the removal of suffering from the world. Islam do teaches that 'where there is mercy, there is sensitive to suffering'. If we are not sensitive to other's suffering, we can never be spiritual or religious. Sufis never discriminate against the followers of other religions. They acknowledge that the spiritual path to God can vary from one tradition to another. Sufism always believed in having dialogues with followers of other faith. Sufism encourage interfaith dialogues among the different faith. Sufism rejected religious dogmatism and narrow mindedness and adopted the all-inclusive syncretic path for peace.

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## **Ibn Sina's Views on Ethics**

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### **Abstract:**

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) is the greatest Muslim Iranian philosopher in 980-1037. He had many valuable views concerning ontology, anthropology, epistemology, and axiology, which are the branches of philosophy. Ethics is one of the subdivisions of axiology. The goal of this article is to describe the viewpoint of Ibn Sina on ethics and morality. To achieve this goal, such topics as virtues and vices, pleasure, happiness, and pain have been investigated and explained from Ibn Sina's viewpoint.

Keywords: Ibn Sina (Avicenna), ethics, morality, virtue, vice, pleasure, happiness, pain.

### **Introduction**

Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (980-1037), Persian (Iranian) philosopher and Physician, regarded as the greatest of the medieval Islamic philosophers, served as court physician for the Sultan of Bukhara. He was deeply influenced by Aristotle and still maintained a Muslim faith. He is best known for his distinction between essence and existence, in which the essences of existing thing must be explained by their existing cause(s), whose reality is higher than the sophical and theological perspective. (*Pojman, 2003*)

Avicenna as a Persian philosopher, scientist, and physician, widely called 'The Supreme Master'; he held an unsurpassed position in Islamic philosophy. His works, including the Canon of

Medicine, are cited throughout most medieval Latin philosophical and medical texts. The subject of more commentaries, glosses, and super glosses than any other Islamic philosopher, they have inspired generations of thinkers, including Persian poets. His philosophical works\_ especially *Healing: Directives and Remarks* and *Deliverance*\_ define Islamic Peripatetic philosophy, one of the three dominant schools of Islamic philosophy. His contributions to science and philosophy are extraordinary in scope. He is thought to be the first logician to clearly define temporal modalities in prepositions, to diagnose and identify many diseases, and to identify specific number of pulse beats in diagnosis. (*Honderich, 2005*)

His autobiography describes him as an intuitive student of philosophy and other Greek Sciences who could not see the point of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, until he read a tiny essay by al-Farabi (870-950), who showed him what it means to seek the nature of being as such. It was in *metaphysics* that Avicenna made his greatest contributions to philosophy, brilliantly synthesizing the rival approaches of the Aristotelian-Neo-Platonism tradition with the creationist monotheism of Islamic dialectical theology (*kalām*). Where Aristotle sought and found being in its fullest sense in what was changeless in its nature (above all, in the cosmos as a whole), *kalām* understood being as the immediately given, allowing no inference beyond a single contingent datum to any necessary properties, correlatives, continuators, or successor. The result was a stringent atomist occasionalism resting ultimately on an early version of logical atomism. Avicenna preserved an Aristotelian naturalism alongside the Scriptural idea of the contingency of the world by arguing that any finite being is contingent in itself but necessary in relation to its causes. He adapted al-Farabi's Neoplatonic emanationism to this schematization and naturalized in philosophy his own distinctive version of the *kalām* argument from contingency: any being must be either necessary Being, which is therefore simple, the ultimate cause of all other things. Avicenna found refuge at the court of one 'Alāal-Dawla, who bravely resisted

the military pressures of Mahmūd against his lands around Isfahan and made the philosopher and savant his vizier. Here Avicenna completed his famous philosophic work the *Shifā'* (known in Latin as the *Sufficientia*) and his *Qānūn fī Tibb*, the Galenic Canon, which remained in use as a medical textbook until finally brought down by the weight of criticisms during the Renaissance. Avicenna's philosophy was the central target of the polemical critique of the Muslim theologian al-Ghazālī (1058-111) in his *Incoherence of the philosophers*, mainly on the ground that the philosopher's retention of the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world was inconsistent with his claim that God was the author of the world. Avicenna's related affirmations of the necessity of causation and universality of God's knowledge, al-Ghazālī argued, made miracles impossible and divine governance too impersonal to deserve the name. Yet Avicenna's philosophic works (numbering over a hundred in their Arabic and sometimes Persian originals) continued to exercise a major influence on Muslim and Jewish philosophers and (through Latin translations) on philosophers in the West. (*Audi, 2001*)

One of his arguments concerning the nature of the soul postulates a full-grown man suddenly coming into existence although suspended in empty space, with eyes covered and limbs separated. This 'flying man' would have no sensation, but nevertheless be aware of his being and his self. The argument anticipates the *cogito* of Descartes. Avicenna believed that being was an accident of essence, and that contingent beings require necessary causes sustaining their existence. This version of the cosmological argument was the accepted by Aquinas. It is in the theological substances as kinds of intelligence, that Neo-Platonism Surfaces in his work. (*Blackburn, 2005*)

Considering his knowledge regarding man and belief that man's properties and habits can be changed, Avicenna put forward some ideas about ethics. He stated some issues of ethics and

morality in his philosophical and social discussions, through which he perhaps wanted to show that morality is the virtue that should be considered in all of these affairs and discussions. He appointed religion's foundation as one of his theory's bases, and he tried to ensure the individual's perfection and happiness in this world and in the hereafter through his or her moral education in society.

### **Changeability of Morality**

Moral dispositions, good or bad, are all acquired, and one can acquire a disposition not yet obtained, or he can change his disposition through his free will and create its opposite in his soul<sup>1</sup>. Ibn Sina (1404, A.H.) defined morality as "a permanent disposition through which, some deeds are easily and undoubtedly done from man's soul." Avicenna, like previous thinkers, deemed "habit" as the origin of creation of a disposition in the soul. He defined "habit" as a frequent repetition of an action over a long period and in equal conditions<sup>2</sup>.

### **Standard of Virtue, and Principle of Virtues and Vices**

According to Ibn Sina (1404, A.H.), the standard of virtue and vice for one's dispositions is "moderation." This word is applied to a disposition that is between two opposite dispositions, i.e. immoderation (the two extremes). Simply doing an action with due attention to moderation is not considered virtue or vice; rather, it should become a permanent disposition in one's soul. The permanent disposition of "moderation" exists in both animal faculties and the faculty of speech (rational faculty).

Avicenna believed that the principles of morality virtues are: chastity, wisdom, courage, and justice. Chastity is moderation in appetitive faculties such as the pleasure of marriage, food, and

clothes. Courage is moderation in irascible faculties such as fear, anger, grief, animosity, and jealousy. Wisdom is moderation in discernment faculty, i.e. practical wisdom. Justice is the perfection in each of these three faculties and achieving moderation in them. Therefore, it can be said that man's faculties are appetitive, irascible, discernment, and they correspond with three virtues: chastity, courage, and wisdom. The comprehensive faculty of these three virtues is a fourth virtue called "justice"<sup>3</sup>.

The subdivisions of virtues are types of these principles or combinations of them; for example, generosity, contentment, loyalty, ambitiousness, and humility are related to chastity and moderation in the appetitive faculty; endurance, patience, and grace are related to courage and moderation in irascible faculty; and prudence, truthfulness, modesty, and perspicacity are related to wisdom and moderation in the discernment faculty<sup>4</sup>.

### **Pleasure and Pain**

Pleasure is achieving what is perfection and virtue for a person, and pain is achieving what is vice<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, the mere achieving a pleasurable thing cannot be considered pleasure or pain if the person experiencing it does not consider it perfection or vice. The standard of perfection and virtue is in the person, not in the related thing. This virtue (goodness) or vice (badness) is related to a person and differs from real virtue and vice.

### **Superiority of Inner Pleasures to Sensory Pleasures**

According to Avicenna (1403 A.H.) humans, and even animals, desist from sensory pleasures even if they are not intellectual, and this is the reason for the superiority of intrinsic pleasures to sensory pleasures for him.

### **Intellectual and Sensory Pleasures**

Avicenna (1403 A.H.) asserted that an intellectual soul has its own particular perfection: the manifestation of the first truth in it so far as it is possible, followed by the manifestation of the certain ordered effects of the exalted God, i.e. all existence as it is, in that intellectual soul. Ibn Sina referred to two points regarding the comparison of the intellectual and sensory pleasures; intellectual perception is much higher than sensory perception from a quality and quality point of view. Considering quality in intellectual perception, the bottom of intellect is comprehended, while in sensory perception, only the surface and appearances of things are comprehended; the more powerful and the purer the perception is, the more powerful its related pleasure will be. Considering quantity, details of intelligibilia contrary to sensory perceptual data are infinite, and there is a great difference between intellectual and sensory perception from the “percept” point of view, and since the difference between pleasures from a quality point of view is related to the difference of perception and percept is beyond sensory perception and percept, intellectual perception is the highest perceptions.

Sensory pleasures and worldly chairmanships are not pure, perfect, and pain-free pleasure. All sensory pleasures are mixed with adversities, deficiencies, pain, and disasters, while the intellectual pleasures are pure from deficiencies and sorrows. According to Ibn Sina (1400 A.H.), these deficiencies and sorrows are as follows:

1. Sensory pleasure is accomplished whenever annoyance is afflicted with human before that pleasure; e.g. the pleasure of eating and drinking comes after a painful desire.
2. None of the sensory pleasures are pure; rather, they are accompanied by pain and adversity.

3. All sensory pleasures are fleeting and are not durable for more than a moment.
4. Involvement in sensory pleasures causes discontinuance of divine bounty because such a person is unable to receive spiritual bounty.
5. Relinquishing sensory pleasures does not cause a defect in one's humanity and does not bar one from otherworldly happiness.

### **Suffering of the Soul from Ignorance**

Each faculty is interested in reaching its inherent perfection and suffers from creation of the opposite of those perfections in itself; e.g., faculty of sight is aspirant in light and hated of darkness. Intelligibilia are the perfections of intellective soul, but lack of enthusiasm and suffering due to ignorance is related to ourselves, not to intelligibilia. The reason for lack of enthusiasm in acquisition of intelligibilia is the involvement of the soul in sensible that prevents it from paying attention to intelligibilia; no enthusiasm will be created for it, and evidentially no eagerness will be obtained. The reason for lack of suffering due to the opposite of intelligibilia, i.e. ignorance, is that it is always in some people's souls and is not changed so that a man who is involved in other things comprehends it and suffers from it<sup>6</sup>.

After separation of the soul from body, the obstacles of comprehension and enthusiasm for reaching perfection are removed. It is when the soul pays attention to its distance from perfection and suffers from being hindered from acquisition of happiness<sup>7</sup>.

## **Happiness**

According to Avicenna (1953), some people think that happiness is achieved through sensory pleasures and worldly chairmanships, but a real researcher knows that none of sensory pleasures is considered to be happiness because all of them are accompanied by different deficiencies and adversities.

Ibn Sina believed that real happiness is a thing that is desirable in itself and chosen for its own privileges. It is evident that a thing that is desirable in itself and makes other things desirable will be more supreme than another thing that is sought for other things<sup>8</sup>.

Happiness is the highest thing that human beings search for, and guiding people to happiness is also the highest kind of guidance because the superiority of guidance is dependent upon the kind of aims toward which they lead<sup>9</sup>.

The great happiness is “nearness to the First Truth, i.e. God,” other desired things are worthless compared to it, and the interests of the divine to attain such a happiness involves more than reaching bodily and physical happiness<sup>10</sup>.

## **The Way of Acquisition of Happiness**

Real happiness occurs when one achieves the perfection of the speculative and practical faculties. The one who observes moderation in the appetitive, irascible, and discernment faculties and as a result possess the virtues of chastity, courage, and wisdom (which are inclusive of other virtues) will be adorned with justice, which is the comprehensive faculty of these three virtues, and this is the perfection of practical faculty. The perfection of speculative faculty is when the complete and perfect form and the intellectual

system manifest in a human and he or she changes into a rational world<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, the way to acquire happiness is to attain perfection in the two speculative and practical faculties. Avicenna (1400 A.H.) recommended that all people try to acquire real happiness.

### **Rank of Those who Have Attained Happiness**

Happiness is reaching intellectual happiness, and since intellectual pleasure has different ranks from quality and quantity points of view, happiness will also have different ranks. These ranks indicate that those who have attained happiness do not all have the same rank. Ibn Sina (1403 A.H., p. 350, 354, 355) divided them into the following groups:

1. Exonerated mystics: Ibn Sina referred to the perfection of the speculative faculty using the word “mystics,” and he referred to the perfection of practical faculty, i.e. purification from physical or bodily interests, using the word “exonerated.” He believed that this group has the highest pleasure and that happiness is not restricted to the hereafter; rather, they also possess a high rank of pleasure and happiness in this world.

2. Sound souls: this group relies on their innate nature; Truth (divine knowledge and sciences) has not been imprinted in their souls, nor they have been involved with beliefs against truth. They show enthusiasm and spiritual pleasure, and astonishment is created in them when hearing a divine word because of the harmony of their souls with the world of abstractions.

3. The dumb: these are those souls that are free from both perfection and the opposite of perfection. These souls might reach finally happiness.

### **Rank of the Atrocious**

The soul may not achieve perfection due to two factors: deficiency of reason and the existence of affairs opposite to perfection in the soul<sup>12</sup>.

Avicenna called those souls that cannot reach perfection due to deficiency of the “dumb” aptitude, and he believed that these souls will not be tormented because doom will be for a soul that has enthusiasm for reaching performance, and this enthusiasm occurs when one becomes aware of his perfections. The dumb ones are unable to acquire awareness of these perfections<sup>13</sup>. The second group includes those ones who will be tormented because of lack of acquisition of the perfection towards which they have enthusiasm<sup>14</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

It can be concluded from this article that Ibn Sina had many valuable views regarding ethics, many of which were new compared to those of other philosophers. “Moderation” in different humans’ faculties is the standard for identification of the virtues and vices. Real pleasure and happiness is in obtaining such virtues, and one’s pain or sorrow is in vices, though they might have superficial pleasure; but it is impossible that vices can bring humans to happiness. Intellectual and inner pleasures are ranked much higher than sensory pleasures, and man’s soul does suffer from ignorance, which can be considered one of the greatest vices. Real happiness is in achieving perfection in the speculative and practical faculties. This perfection is accomplished when one observes moderation in his different faculties and he changes into a rational or intellectual world. It is up to all people to reach such perfection such that their happiness in this world and in the hereafter surely will be attained.

## Endnotes

- 1- Abd, al-Amir, 1998, p. 373
- 2- ibid
- 3- ibid, p. 455
- 4- ibid
- 5- Ibn Sina, 1403 A.H.
- 6- ibid
- 7- Ibn Sina, 1404 A.H.
- 8- ibid, p. 260-261
- 9- ibid
- 10- Ibn Sina, 1404 A.H.
- 11- ibid. p. 423, 455 & 1985, p. 328
- 12- Ibn Sina, 1403 A.H. p. 350
- 13- ibid, p. 352
- 14- ibid, p. 350

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## **Derrida's Philosophical Deconstruction**

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### **Abstract**

Jacques Derrida is the poststructuralist who undertakes the challenge of articulating the metaphysical implications of structuralism. Structuralism, as narrowly defined, never rendered explicit the metaphysical framework upon which it relied. While deconstruction inherits from structuralism a holistic approach to language, it twists around its commitment to the 'principle of immanence;' namely, the belief in functioning 'linguistic states' as the necessary condition for the existence of a structured and intelligible totality. Derrida's kind of holism is transcendental insofar as its conception of a structured totality does not depend on functioning states but rather is the sufficient condition for the very idea of totality. At the level of two different justifications of what a structure is and does for a language. In line with its commitment to an immanent kind of holism, structuralism defends an externalist justification, where externalism to indicate, in barren terms, that meaning depends on factors external to the mind. By contrast, in line with his own version of transcendental holism, Derrida deconstructs the externalism characterizing the structuralist understanding of structure, for the first time exposing the concept of structure in its ontological implications.

### **Introduction**

The magnitude of the effect of *structuralism* on *Continental philosophy* has never been the object of dispute. Everyone recognizes that structuralism, between the late 50s and early 60s, literally revolutionized the French scene until then dominated by phenomenological, existentialist, and Marxist orientations. For Jacques Derrida, structure is just another name for presence. Structure is not

taken to be constituted and constructed externally to the individual mind, as it is true for the structuralists but rather genealogically, that is, internally to the history of the concept of presence.

### **Idea-I Deconstruction**

One way to understand the <sup>1</sup>"*idea*" of **Deconstruction** is to see it in relation to the critique of philosophical foundationalism. Derrida sees the history of Western philosophy as a continuous attempt to locate a fundamental ground, a fixed center, and Archimedean point, which serves both as an absolute beginning and as a center from which everything originating from it can be, mastered a controlled. But as one tries to pin down the set of structuralist assumptions responsible for such an effect the picture becomes quite confused; particularly because, whenever put under philosophical pressure, the historical classification of structuralism tends to give way to that of post structuralism. From the mid to the late 60s, Jacques Derrida is the poststructuralist who undertakes the challenge of articulating the metaphysical implications of structuralism. Structuralism, as narrowly defined, never rendered explicit the metaphysical framework upon which it relied; Derrida's work on structuralism is one of unfolding what is implicated, or folded together. Derrida's relation to structuralism cannot be properly explained in terms of either continuity or discontinuity, inside or outside, as most Derrida scholars as well as structuralist critics attempt to do. While deconstruction inherits from structuralism a holistic approach to language, it twists around its commitment to the 'principle of immanence;' namely, the belief in functioning <sup>2</sup>'linguistic states' as the necessary condition for the existence of a structured and intelligible totality. Derrida's kind of holism is transcendental insofar as its conception of a structured totality does not depend on functioning states but rather is the sufficient condition for the very idea of totality. At the level of two different justifications of what a structure is and does for a language. In line with its commitment to an immanent kind of holism, structuralism defends an externalist justification, where externalism to indicate, in barren terms, that meaning depends on factors external to the mind. For structuralism, crucial amongst such

factors is social usage. The structuralists call structure the explanatory model for the relations binding together a specific set of existing linguistic states, such as those constituting a natural language or a culture. Structure is therefore descriptive of an occurrence which is external to the individual mind. This externalist element is indispensable for the kind of comparativist strategy at the heart of the structuralist method, particularly in the versions promulgated by Derrida's two main interlocutors: Saussure and Claude Lévy-Strauss. By contrast, in line with his own version of transcendental holism, Derrida deconstructs the externalism characterizing the structuralist understanding of structure, for the first time exposing the concept of structure in its ontological implications. In so doing, Derrida shifts from the pragmatic plane, where structure is the explanatory model for an already existing set of relations, to a plane which is genealogical; because, in it, structure is defined in terms of its conditions of historical emergence in Western thought. Friedrich Nietzsche was the first to name this type of conditions as 'genealogical.' To Derrida, structuralism's justification of structure-externalistic seems to be a genealogical justification. Having reasons for being happy about certain of John Austin's major contributions to philosophy and being also rather happy on the whole with Jacques Derrida's contributions. Derrida's study of Austin occurs in a paper given at Montreal in a symposium on <sup>3</sup>"Communication." Derrida considers himself obliged to begin by resisting a certain temptation which represents a proclivity of contemporary common sense. A tremor, a shock, can be physically "communicated" from place to place, and one can also say that in underground labyrinths one cavern "communicates" with another by means of a passage or opening. The temptation is to say that the *literal* meaning of "communicate" is found in such physical applications of the word, while the application of the term "communication" to meaningful human speech is a *metaphor* derived from primary and literal physical applications. Derrida's has two interesting reasons for not thus distinguishing between the "literal" and the "metaphoric" meaning of the word "communication":

*First*, because the whole notion of distinguishing the true, literal, meaning of a word from its metaphoric meanings is nowadays

problematic. If this first reason is valid, it levels not just this proposed conceptual hierarchy, through which the "primary" physical significance of "communicate" is ascribed a higher rank (as, perhaps, "hard data") than the merely metaphorical significance of the same word. It levels every conceptual hierarchy which depends on a literal/metaphorical distinction. In particular, the distinction St. Thomas encountered and worked with, between the literal spiritual truth (the baptism) and the physical image (the water) is leveled. And in particular Ayer's distinction between sentences with literal meaning (those which refer to sense-contents, directly or indirectly), and nonsense (all other sentences except tautologies) is leveled.

*The second reason* Derrida gives for not construing its application to physical objects as the "literal" meaning of "communicate," and its semiotic use as the "metaphoric" meaning of "communicate;" is that the very idea of "metaphor" already presupposes a notion of "displacement," or "transport." "Displacement" is the more general notion, which is constitutive for the idea that a tremor "is communicated" when motion is *displaced* from one place to another; and also constitutive for the idea that the meaning of the word "communicate" has been *displaced* from its allegedly literal application to the communication of tremors from the epicenters of earthquakes, to its allegedly metaphorical application to the communication of ideas from mind to mind.

Hence according to Derrida what we really need is not a decision about which sense of a word is to be regarded as the literal one, but rather an account of how "sense" begins in the first place through "displacement," and through that which is indexed by other terms which Derrida presses into service in order to characterize the primary process through which meaning gets started: "mark," "trace," "the structure of locution," "spacing," <sup>4</sup> *differance*, "écriture," "the graphematic in general," "iterability." Derrida introduces the neologism "iterable" as a synonym for "repeatable." A few lines later "iterable" serve as a synonym for "readable." A writing that is not structurally readable - iterable - beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing. At the same place Derrida suggests that the Latin root *iter*

probably is derived from the Sanskrit *itara*, which means "other." Then, in a remarkable *precis* of the complex and subtle remarks on "communication" which contain his critique of Austin, Derrida writes as - everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity.

### **Literal Deconstruction**

What Derrida has worked out as consequences of iterability is all to the good from the point of view of those of us who want to work with a nature/culture distinction, and to reconstruct culture in order, as Gramsci says, to adjust it to physical functions, all to the good. The transformation of the global economy into a humane and sustainable mosaic of ways of life can only benefit from realizing that even the <sup>5</sup>"ordinary" and "serious" language-games have a ritual character, and from realizing that even such categories as "intention" and "person" are socially constructed and can be reconstructed. A consequence of Derrida's deconstruction of Austin is that speech acts depend even more radically on socially constructed contexts than Austin supposed, or at least more radically than Austin worked out and demonstrated. Derrida's work is consciousness-raising, in Freire's sense, because it pushes back the perceived boundary between nature and culture, diminishing the realm of what is taken to be natural, and augmenting the realm of that which depends for its existence on human symbolic interaction. It implies that those of us who deliberately set out to reconstruct social reality have more scope; and it implies the same for everyone else too, since everyone is always recreating and being recreated by social reality, guided or misguided by varying degrees and kinds of deliberation. After Derrida, more is action; less is inevitable. Austin showed that to speak is in many ways a performance; it depends on conventions as does acting on a stage. Derrida breaks down the distinction between the "real" performance and the "stage" performance, and helps us to see that in all our performances we participate in social processes which construct the stage we act on, assign us our parts, and write the script. Many philosophers in history, from Plato onwards, have favoured speech over writing. Writing, it has

been assumed, represents speech (although often imperfectly) and is subsequently further away from thought, which is the primary locus of meaning. Writing is often viewed as something that is parasitic upon, or supplemental to, speech. Whereas speech involves one or more subjects, the reading of writing is characterised by the absence of a subject. As it is closer to thought, speech is better able to express meaning than writing. Writing is not viewed as an essential or reliable means for the production and transmission of meaning. Derrida questions these “phonocentric” sets of assumptions and argues that writing has a more important role in the production of meaning than the western philosophical tradition has acknowledged. To Derrida, writing is at least as important as speech with regards to the production of meaning and in fact writing is viewed as a necessary precondition for speech itself. Derrida’s deconstructive readings of thinkers such as Plato and Rousseau have shown that these thinkers actually require a concept of writing in the first place in order to get their “pro-speech” views articulated. More recently, philosophers such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his later works at least) have offered theories of meaning that differ significantly from Locke’s and Ayer’s. Developing a structuralist theory, de Saussure argued that language could be viewed as a closed system, in which individual words within narratives or texts only had meaning in relation to other words (through opposition and combination). De Saussure argued that it was difference and not reference that secured the meaning of a word. To Wittgenstein, meaning was essentially <sup>6</sup>“inter-subjective” and social in nature. Wittgenstein argued that the meaning of a word could only be found by its use within a social practice or “*language game*”.

### **Derrida’s Effort**

Elsewhere Derrida develops his views on how to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate authority and thus recognizes what in any event would be obvious even if he had not felt called upon to say so himself, that there is nothing in the concept of <sup>7</sup>“iterability” nor in the project of deconstructing the history of western philosophy, conceived as several millennia of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence,

which implies that human groups should not have standards for their conduct. Nevertheless, Derrida's results do put certain restrictions on the reasons one can give for justifying laws, or, for that matter, for justifying social conventions of any kind. One can no longer use arguments which presuppose the validity of what Derrida has called a *metaphysics of presence* as philosophical trump cards for justifying *a priori* the merit everywhere and everywhen of, for example, an ethic of<sup>8</sup> "respect for persons." This does not imply that "respect for persons," to continue the example, is an ideal human societies should not have, although it does imply that Kant's rationale for respect for persons is invalid. Austin may have been naive when he said "Actions are performed by persons;" but then again he might not have been; he might have meant that attributing actions to persons is a practice widely followed, deeply rooted, and it is a good thing, which he recommends to continue. He might also have meant that in some respects, although certainly not in all, the idea of "person" as and<sup>9</sup> "individual human being" is so basic to any conceivable conceptual scheme that it is plausible to say that it must be a feature of any possible culture - drawing on P. F. Strawson's idea that we could hardly get by if we never referred to individuals. In any event, the whole series of discourses and practices around the term "person," could be separated from its certain supposed philosophical underpinnings, revised, improved, and expanded, and quite likely to good effect. To take another example, it does not follow from Derrida's finding that metaphysical concepts have universally been used to justify orders of dominance and subordination, that there should never be any dominance or any subordination. This conclusion might follow, however, without any help from Derrida, simply from analysis of the word "Dominance," since analysis might show that "dominance" can only be used pejoratively; in that case the argument would have to be recast with a different term, "Leadership." For example, it does not follow from Derrida's finding that metaphysical distinctions always imply hierarchy that sex play which takes the form of dominance and subordination is a nasty vice. Perhaps dominance and subordination in bed is a vice; or perhaps social reality ought to be constructed so that it would be a true English sentence to say that it is. Perhaps society would be well served by bringing up the young to shun it, or perhaps not to

know about it; it may even be that its public depiction is a form of pornography which should be censored. But no particular conclusion follows one way or the other from Derrida's expose of the term<sup>10</sup> "*metaphysics of presence*". Dominating and subordinating may have all sorts of merits and demerits in all sorts of contexts, and there may be all sorts of reasons for subordinating (e.g. to give a child security through a firm sense of parental authority) and on the other hand all sorts of reasons for not dominating (e.g. to help a child learn self-worth) but neither the merits nor the demerits follow, in general, from Derrida's lifelong deconstruction of the history of philosophy.

## Conclusion

The 1966 paper, in addition to establishing Derrida's international reputation, marked the start of Derrida's most significant and generally least-understood concept, *deconstruction*. Much of the mystique and confusion surrounding deconstruction stems from Derrida's insistence on not allowing the concept to be immune to critique. That is, Derrida took pains to make deconstruction as impossible to essentialize as deconstruction made everything else. At its core, if it can be said to have one, deconstruction is an attempt to open a text (literary, philosophical, or otherwise) to several meanings and interpretations. Its method is usually to take binary oppositions within a text — inside and outside or subject and object or male and female, which he argues are culturally and historically defined, even reliant upon one another — and show that they are not as clear-cut or as stable as it would at first seem, that the two opposed concepts are fluid, then to use this ambiguity to show that the text's meaning is fluid as well. This fluidity stands as a legacy of traditional (that is, Platonist) metaphysics founded on oppositions that seek to establish a stability of meaning through conceptual absolutes where one term, for example "good", is elevated to a status that designates its opposite, in this case "evil", as its perversion, lack or inferior. However, these "violent hierarchies", as Derrida termed it, are structurally instable within the texts themselves, where the meaning strictly depends on this contradiction or antinomy. This is why Derrida insisted that

deconstruction was never performed or executed but "took place" through "memory work": in this way, the task of the "deconstructed" was to show where this oppositional or dialectical stability was ultimately subverted by the text's internal logic. The result is to find often strikingly new interpretations of texts, to the point where Derrida's supporters claim his work consists of meticulous readings that find philosophy anew. No "meaning" is stable: rather, the only thing that keeps the sense of unity within a text is what Derrida called the "metaphysics of presence", where presence was granted the privilege of truth and at the same time *deconstructs the presence of truth* above all.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Derrida, J. (1967), *De la Grammatologie*. Paris: Edition de Minuit.

<sup>2</sup> Derrida, J. (1967), *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. David B. Allison (trans). Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Derrida, J. (1967); pp.279-288.

<sup>4</sup> Derrida, J. (1978), *Writing and Difference*. Alan Bass (Trans). London: Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida. "Signature, Event, Context," in *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988. pp.1-5.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Cavell. "On the Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in George Pitcher [ed.] - *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, Newton Garver & David B. Allison. *Speech and Phenomena: and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (SPEP).

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## **The Structure and Hermeneutics of the Sixth Book of Rumi's *Mathnawi* as a Whole**

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### **Abstract**

In this article the structure of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* as a whole will be analysed, through analysing each section of the sixth book and determining whether it is thematic or narrative. Sections that are related to one another will be identified as discourses, in order to create larger units. The sixth book of *Mathnawi* is comprised of twelve long discourses, in which narrative unity is weak. After identifying these larger units, the relationship between the sections of a discourse and their thematic relationship with one another will be analysed, and this will result in the significant discovery of this research, which is the discovery of the whole structure of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*. The sections of each discourse from a sequential perspective lack structure and appear as random, however by reading the text synoptically the author has discovered a unique and immaculate structure based on the two principles of parallelism and chiasmus, which is unexpected, and hitherto had not been discovered. On one hand through the sequential approach, the text seems to be accidental, lacking any form of structure, but on the other hand through the synoptic approach, it is ordered and organised, and has a unique and beautiful structure. A synoptic structure is not only satisfying from an aesthetic perspective, but also creates the possibility for discovering new meanings and designs with emphasis on the importance of the structure, both of which are equally important. The sixth book has been discussed and analysed as a whole, and based on this the stories are structured and organised. Through sequential reading the sixth book is comprised of 141 sections and 47 long and short stories, but based on the synoptic approach and hermeneutic methodology it includes 12 discourses, which have a parallel relationship with one another. By analysing the sixth book through the synoptic approach and hermeneutic methodology, the gradual evolution and transcendence of “annihilation in *Tawhid*” on the spiritual path is revealed.

**Keywords:** Mathnawi, Rumi, Sixth book, structure, parallelism, synoptic, annihilation, Unity of Divine acts, unity of Divine attributes, unity of Divine essence, Love.

## **The Synoptic View of Book Six in Rumi's Mathnawi**

**Introduction:** Verses: 1-128

**Discourse 1.** Verses: 129-434, *How an inquirer asked about a bird...*

**Discourse 2.** Verses: 435-592, *Story about Fowler who had wrapped himself in grass.*

**Discourse 3.** Verses: 593-887, *Story of the Lover who, in hope of the of the tryst promised him by his beloved...*

**Discourse 4.** Verses: 888-1110, *The story of Bilal's crying "One! One" in the heat of the Hijaz...*

**Discourse 5.** Verses: 1111-1221, *Story of Hilal, who was a devoted servant to God.*

**Discourse 6.** Verses: 1222- 1292, *Story of the old woman who used to depilate and rouge her ugly face...*

**Discourse 7.** Verses: 1293-1833, *Story of the sick man of whose recovery the physician despaired.*

**Discourse 8.** Verses: 1834-2375, *The remainder of the Story of the fakir who desire his daily bread without work as a means.*

**Discourse 9.** Verses: 2376-2509, *Story of the three travellers-a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew...*

**Discourse 10.** Verses: 2510-2973, *How the Sayyid, the king of Termid, proclaimed that he would give robes of honour and horses and slave...*

**Link Section:** Verses: 2974-3013, *Story of 'Abdu'l-Ghawth*

**Discourse 11.** Verses: 3014-3582, *Story of the man had an allowance from the Police Inspector of Tabriz...*

**Discourse 12.** Verses: 3583-4915, *Story of the king who enjoined his three sons...*

## **The Structure of the Sixth Book of Mathnawi as a Whole**

The main subject of this article is analysing the thematic and narrative structure of the sixth book of Rumi's *Mathnawi*. *Mathnawi*, which is one of the greatest Persian classical mystical texts, was composed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE in six books and approximately twenty six thousand verses. The opinion of the scholars of Mathnawi, from the east and the west, has been that the *Mathnawi* has no structure or design, however the present research proves the existence of a unique and precise structure in the *Mathnawi*.

Structure is the frame which determines the relationship between the elements or sections of a story, work or creation and which shows the organic relationship between the different elements or sections of the work. In the philosophical approach of analysing and understanding a text, discovering the structure of the text for understanding it is of utter importance.

Rumi has divided each book into sections with varying number of verses and has given a title to each section. In this article the whole structure of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*, will be analysed, through analysing each section and determining whether it is thematic or narrative. Sections that are related to one another will be identified as discourses, in order to create larger units. The sixth book of *Mathnawi* is comprised of twelve long discourses, in which narrative unity is weak. After identifying these larger units, the relationship between the sections of a discourse and their thematic relationship with one another will be analysed, and will result in the significant discovery of this research, which is the discovery of the whole structure of the sixth book. The sections of each discourse from a sequential perspective lack structure and appear as random, however by reading the text synoptically the author has discovered a unique and immaculate structure based on the two principles of parallelism and chiasmus, which is unexpected, and hitherto had not been discovered. On one hand through the sequential approach, the text seems to be accidental lacking any form of structure, but on the other hand through the synoptic

approach, it is ordered and organised, and has a unique and beautiful structure. A synoptic structure is not only satisfying from an aesthetic perspective, but also creates the possibility for discovering new meanings and designs with emphasis on the importance of the structure, both of which are equally important. The sixth book has been discussed and analysed as a whole, and based on this the stories are structured and organised. Through sequential reading the sixth is comprised of 141 sections and 47 long and short stories, but based on synoptic approach and hermeneutic methodology it includes 12 discourses, which have a parallel relationship with one another.

By analysing the sixth book through the synoptic approach and hermeneutic methodology, the gradual evolution and transcendence of “annihilation in *Tawhid*” on the spiritual path is revealed and based upon this the sequential design of the sixth book has been formed. It seems that based on chiasmus the first book of the *Mathnawi* is parallel to the sixth book, and the *Mathnawi* is more verdant than previously thought. In the structure of his *Mathnawi*, Rumi has presented his eternal message, which is the existence of an exquisitely beautiful and united esoteric world, which is above the tangible and sensible world, through an accidental outward composition with sequential ordering, and a complex esoteric structure with the use of parallelism and chiasmus. Hence not only does the *Mathnawi* not lack a structure, but it has been carefully structured and designed and has combined the dual sequential and synoptic structures with the general message of the work.

Hence the present article will not deal with verses which are present in a section sequentially and without parallelism or chiasmus, but will show how Rumi by using an unexpected form of structure has been able to create a masterpiece which is a reflection of his understanding of the world. Rumi beneath a structure, which in appearance is sequential, accidental, and lacking design or structure, has hidden a world which is ordered with a beautiful, rational and clever structure.

Our method of structural analysis is based on the synoptic approach, parallelism, chiasmus and Hermeneutic cycle and not

sequential or verse by versereading. Based on this method, verse by verse interpretation and analysis is useful but is not sufficient, for by reading the text verse by verse, the interpretation of the whole work or story is not achieved. As short and long stories and none narrativesections which present mystical principles and teachings are in a wide and strong relationship with another, in the first instance the beginning and end of each discourse has been identified and then the sections of each discourse have been divided into paragraphs. After the mentioned studies, the verses of each story and section have been discovered. After discovering the structure of the twelve discourses, the structure of the sixth book as a whole has been discovered. Based on the sequential approach, the sixth book of the *Mathnawi* is comprised of 141 sections, and 47 long and short stories, but based on the synoptic approach it is comprised of 12 discourses, which are parallel to one another. The technical term 'Discourse' specifies a group of sections, which have thematic unity between their stories or the narrative and teaching sections.

The structural analysis of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* is in continuation of research I carried out on the first, and third book of the Mathnawi, and Dr Mahvash al-Sadat Alavi, carried out on the second book with the help of Simon Weigtman, during the years 1997 to 2005 (Books one and two) in the University of London<sup>1</sup>.

Based on the sequential approach the sixth book of the Mathnawi is comprised of a prose Persian introduction and 4916 verses and 141 sections which have been composed in the form of poems, stories and mystical teachings. Based on the synoptic approach the main theme of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* is "*Tawhid* and Love"

If there are a hundred (religious) books, (yet) they are but one chapter: a hundred (different) regions choose but one place of worship.<sup>2</sup>

In twelve discourses the numerous themes and different dimensions and aspects of issues related to *Tawhid* and love have been discussed analysed and presented through using symbolism in the

general framework of the journey of the soul from the station of separation to the station of annihilation.

Love has naught to do with the five (senses) and the six (directions): its goal is only (to experience) the attraction exerted by the beloved.

The strife of the mote that has been effaced in the sun is beyond description and calculation.

Since the (individual) soul and breath have been effaced from the mote, its strife now is only the strife of the sun,

(Its) natural movement and rest have gone from it – by what (means)? By means of *verily unto him we are returning*.

We have returned from ourselves to thy sea and have sucked the source that suckled us.

Every plant that turns its face towards the (animal) spirit drinks, like Khizr, from the fountain of life.

Once more, when the (animal) spirit sets its face towards the (Divine) beloved, it lays down its baggage (and passes) into the life without end.<sup>3</sup>

The *tawhid* presented in the sixth is not the *tawhid* of the masses or the *tawhid* of the theologians and philosopher, but it is the “intuitive monotheism” of the mystics, which in technical terminology is referred to as *tawhid shohoudias* opposed to *tawhid olouhi*. *Tawhid* is dividable into ‘Unity of Divine Acts’ (*Tawhid af’al*), ‘Unity of Divine Attributes’ (*Tawhid sifat*) and ‘Unity of Divine Essence’ (*Tawhid dhat*). ‘Unity of Divine acts’ means that all actions return to a unified beginning which is Allah (station of *Mahw*). And hence Rumi has said, “in this bazaar he does what he wills” (Verse 29, Book VI), ‘Unity of Divine Attributes’ means referring all the perfect attributes of the human being to Divine Attributes, and their annihilation in divine attributes (station of *tamas*), “to Him belongs the creation and to Him the command” (Verse 78, Book VI). ‘Unity of the Divine Essence’ means referring the essence of the word, to the Divine Essence of Allah, and the annihilation of all creations in him (station of *moheq*) “Surely you shall die and they (too) shall die” (Quran, 39:30). And “all perishes but his face” (Quran, 28:88), “everyone on it must pass away. And there will endure forever the person of your Lord, the Lord of Glory and honour.” (Quran 55:26-27).

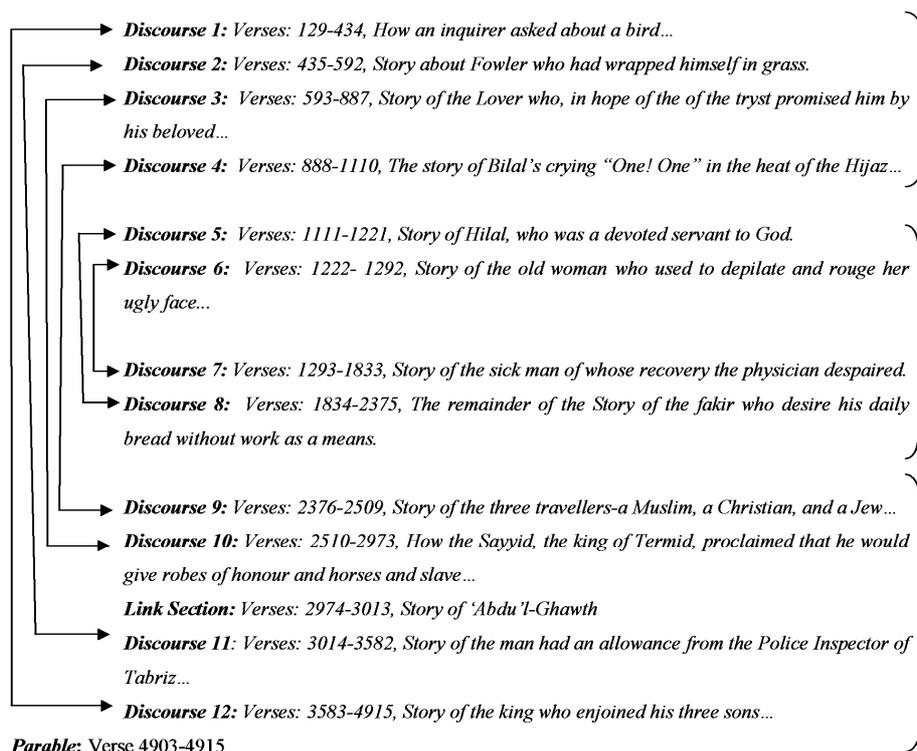
It is the spirit and we all are (mere) colour and designs: the star (spark) of every thought in it is the soul of the (material) stars.

Where is thought (in relation to it)? There all is pure light: this word "thought" is (used only) for thy sake, O thinker.  
Every (material) star hath its house on high: our star is not contained in any house.  
How should that which burns (transcends) place (spatial relations) enter into space? How should there be a limit for the limitable light?  
But they (the mystics) use a comparison and illustration, in order that a loving feeble-minded man may apprehend (the truth).  
'tis not a simile, but tis a parable for the purpose of releasing (melting) the frozen intellect.<sup>4</sup>

### **Prose introduction**

"The sixth volume of the Books of rhymed couplets (*Mathnawi*) and spiritual evidences, which are a lamp in darkness of imagination and perplexity and phantasies, and doubt and suspicion. And this lamp cannot be perceived by the animal sense, because the state of animality is the lowest of the low, since they (the animals) to kept in good order the outward form of the lower world; and about their senses and perspective faculties there has been drawn a circle beyond which they may not pass: that is the measurement of the Mighty, the Wise, i.e. he hath made manifest the limited measure of their action and the range of their speculation, just as every star has a certain measure and sphere of work to which its action reaches in the sky; or as the ruler of a city whose authority is effective within that city, but beyond the cities dependencies he does no rule. May God preserve us from His Imprisoning and sealing and from that where with he has veiled those who are veiled!"<sup>5</sup>

### The Structure of the Sixth Book of Mathnawi as a Whole



### General parallelism between the twelve discourses of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*:

#### The parallelism of the first discourse and the twelfth discourse

The first discourse is parallel to the twelfth discourse through opposed and hierarchically shared concepts. The first discourse is the beginning of annihilation in 'Unity of Divine Acts' (*tawhidaf'al*) and the twelfth discourse is the end of annihilation in 'Unity of Divine Essence' (*tawhiddhat*) in the journey towards Allah (*seiri ila Allah*) and the beginning of the journey within Allah (*seiri fi Allah*).

### The first discourse of the sixth book

One day an inquirer said to a preacher, "O thou who art the pulpit's most eminent expounder,  
I have a question to ask. Answer my question in this assembly-place, O possessor of the marrow (of wisdom)  
A bird has settled on the city-wall" which is better – its head or its tale?"  
He replied "if its face is to the town and its tail to the country, know that its face is better than its tail;  
But if its face is towards the town and its face to the country, be the dust on the tail and spring away from the face"  
A bird flies to its tale by means of wings: the wings of man are aspiration, O people.  
(In the case of) the lover who is soiled with good and evil, do not regard the good and evil; (only) regard the aspiration.<sup>6</sup>

The title of the main story of the first discourse of the sixth book is "How an enquirer asked about a bird..." The first discourse begins from verse 129 and ends at verse 434. It is comprised of 305 verses, ten sections and six short complimentary stories, which have thematic unity. In the first story 'the bird's face' is the symbol of 'the appearance of the human being', and 'the bird's tale' symbolises 'the inner aspiration of human beings', the 'village' symbolises the 'material world' while the 'city' symbolises the 'divine world', 'ayaz' is the symbol of 'the spiritual wayfarer who is in love' and 'sultan Mahmud' is the symbol of 'God', the 'daughter of khaje' is the symbol of worldly attractions and the 'Hindu servant' is the symbol of the consequences of desiring the material world.

The general context of the story is based on how the individual will of the spiritual wayfarer becomes annihilated in the Divine will, so that the wayfarer reaches a stage where he desires naught but that which the Beloved desires. The spiritual wayfarer reaches a station where he sees all good acts annihilating in the actions of the Divine Universal Agent, and in this station he sees the whole universe dominated by the Lord of the universe.

Let the ill balanced load drop from me, that I may behold the meadow of the pious.

(Then), like the fellows of the Cave, I shall browse on the orchard of Bounty – not awake, nay, they are asleep.  
I shall recline on the right or on the left, I shall not roll save involuntary, like a ball,  
Just as Thou, O lord of the Judgement, turnest me over either to the right or to the left.<sup>7</sup>

This station is not achieved, but through the negation of the self, which leads to the loving ascension of the spiritual wayfarer.

There is no way (admittance) for any one, till he become naughted, into the audience chamber of (Divine) Majesty.  
What is the means of ascension to heaven? This not being. This not being is the creed and religion of the Lovers (of God).<sup>8</sup>

The secret of the transcendence of some souls is their knowledge.

Since consciousness is the inmost nature and essence of the soul, the more aware one is the more spiritual he is.  
Awareness is the effect of the spirit: any one who has this in excess is a man of God.<sup>9</sup>

In this story Rumi stresses the great inner potential of the human being, which contrary to its small appearance is greater than the skies and the heavens.

Man no bigger than a kneading-through (scooped in a log), has surpassed (in glory) the heavens and the aether (the empyrean).  
Did this heaven ever hear (the words) *we have honoured* which this sorrowful man heard (from God)?  
Did anyone offer to earth and sky (his) beauty and reason and eloquence and fond affection?  
Didst thou ever display to heaven thy beauty of countenance and thy sureness of judgement in (matters of) opinion?<sup>10</sup>

The human being has been created out of Divine generosity and love, and if he is purified in the material world, he becomes the personification of Divine Truth. The hidden secrets of spiritual wayfaring and the complete and perfect method of the purification of spirit in Islam have been described by Allah. Prophet Mohammad is the

intercessor of humans in this world and the other. He and his vicegerents are the true 'shepherds' and leaders of humanity. Worldly desires and dependencies and 'knowledge which lacks love' are barriers to spiritual wayfaring.

The wealth and riches and silk of this travellers' halt are a chain on the light-footed spirit.

O ye deficient (in understanding), beware of this rose-cheeked one who at the time of intercourse becomes (like) a hell.

He (Iblis) had knowledge, (but) since he had no religious love, he beheld in Adam nothing but a figure of clay.<sup>11</sup>

The foundation of religion is God-consciousness (*taqwa*), religiosity and good ethical conduct, through which salvation is achieved in both worlds.

The (only) thing that matters is fear of God and religion and piety, of which the result is happiness in both worlds.<sup>12</sup>

### **The twelfth discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi***

The title of the main story of the twelfth discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* is "The story of the king who enjoined his three sons..." or "the mind stealing Fortress"

This discourse, which is the last discourse of the sixth book, begins from verse 3583 and ends at verse 4916/4902. The twelfth discourse is comprised of 524 verses and 40 sections. It includes one primary long story and 18 secondary short stories. The main characters of the story are: 'The king' who symbolises the Universal beloved, 'Allah', 'the three sons/princes' who symbolise the soul (*Nafs*), intellect ('*aql*) and spirit (*Ruh*) or intellect ('*aql*), Spirit (*Ruh*) and Heart (*qalb*), 'the daughter of the emperor of China' who symbolises beautiful and lovable existence (*wujudjamalimohebi*) in the material world which contains many beautiful and compassionate forms (*Sowarzbayiwamehri*), 'the mind stealing fortress' which symbolises the material or natural world, '*pir*' who symbolises the sheikh who has

been appointed by the spiritual pole (*qutb*) to help spiritual wayfarers, and 'the emperor of China' who is the symbol of the Great spiritual pole (*qutba'azam*). The five doors of the fortress which face the shore symbolise the five outward senses and the five doors which face the sea, symbolise the five inner senses. The Chinese empire symbolises the stations, wonders, mysteries, inspirations and ideals of spiritual wayfaring.

The main story of the twelfth discourse from a synoptic perspective, is the sorrowful story of the decent of the human spirit to the material world and later its ascent on the ladder of love by passing various stages and stations under the supervision and guidance of the great spiritual pole/the perfect man, to the Divine world, and the human beings annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Essence' of the Universal Beloved. The main theme of the twelfth discourse is 'Unity of Divine Essence'.

The story of "the mind-stealing fortress" is the end of both the sixth book and the *Mathnawi* as a whole. In this story Rumi undertakes a journey through the important teachings, themes and concepts of the Six books, such as the tale of the ascent and descent of the human spirit (*Ruh*), 'the soul' (*Nafs*), and the barriers, conditions and conclusion of spiritual wayfaring, the necessity of existence and the role of the perfect human being or the Divine saints, stages of friendship and certainty (*yaqin*), the degrees and forms of knowledge and intellect, *faqr*, *tawhid* and love.

As the story of 'the King and the hand-maiden' which is the first story of the first book is a general introduction to the six books, the last story of the sixth book is the general conclusion and end of the six books (the end of 'the journey towards Allah' (*seiri ila Allah*) which is annihilation (*fana*), and the beginning of 'the journey in Allah' which is subsistence with Allah (*baqa bi Allah*) and has no end). Hence the twelfth discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* is parallel with both the first discourse of the sixth book and the first discourse of the first book of *Mathnawi*.

The main theme of both the first and twelfth discourse of the sixth book is how the spiritual wayfarer is annihilated in *tawhid*. The first discourse of the sixth book discusses annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Acts', which is the first stage of annihilation in *tawhid*, and the twelfth discourse discusses annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Essence', which is the last stage of annihilation in *tawhid*.

Since all has been lost, they have gained all: through dwindling away (to naught) they have sped towards the Whole.  
The home of the Simurghs is beyond (Mt) Qaf: it is not like a hand-loom (easily accessible) to any imagination.<sup>13</sup>

The concepts and themes presented in the first discourse have been evolved and perfected in the twelfth discourse. In both discourses Prophet Mohammad is the most exalted example of one who has reached annihilation in *tawhid*, however in the twelfth discourse Imam *zein al-'abidin* is introduced as a perfect leader and vicegerent of Allah, whom others try to emulate and liken themselves to (verse 4091), and Rumi stresses on the temporal and spiritual leadership of Imam Ali of the Muslim Ummah, and on Imam Ali being the rightfully appointed vicegerent and leader of the Muslim Ummah after Prophet Mohammad by Allah.

Because of this the Prophet who strived, named himself and Ali Maula(guardian/protector)  
He said "to whomever I am the Guardian and friend: The son of my uncle, Ali is guardian to"  
Who is the guardian? The one who frees you: removing the chains of servitude from you feet.<sup>14</sup>

In the twelfth discourse more saints have been referred to, such as Prophet Joseph, Abraham, Ishmael, Solomon, Jesus, Jacob, Moses, Adam, Eve, Noah, Mary, *Hud and Ayyub*, and in order for the reader to gain a better understanding, Rumi, by using comparative studies refers to the states, actions and conditions of those contradicting them and opposed to them. The concept of love has been further discussed and stressed upon in the twelfth discourse.

I have become careless, I can endure no more: this endurance has set me on fire.  
My strength is exhausted by this fortitude: my plight is a warning to all (lovers).  
I am weary of my life in separation (from the beloved): 'tis hypocrisy to be alive in separation.  
How long will the anguish of separation be killing me? Cut off my head, in order that love may give me a (new) head.  
My religion is, to be (kept) alive by love: life (derived) from this (animal) soul and head is a disgrace to me.  
The sword (of love) sweeps the dust away from the lover's soul, because the sword is a wiper-out of sins.  
When the bodily dust is gone, my moon shines: my spirit's moon finds a clear sky.<sup>15</sup>

Patience is the necessary condition and 'voluntary death' the compulsory condition, of annihilation.

He (the Sadr) replied, "(yes) but until you died, O obstinate man, you got no bounty from me."  
The mystery of "Die before death" is this, that the prize come after dying (and not before).  
Except dying no other skill avails with God, O artful schemer.  
One (Divine) favour is better than a hundred kind of (personal) effort. (Such) exertion is in danger from a thousand kinds of mischief.  
And the (Divine) favour depends on dying: the trustworthy (authorities) have put this way (doctrine) to test.  
Nay, not even his (the mystic's) death is (possible) without the (Divine) favour: hark, hark, do not tarry anywhere, without the (Divine) favour!<sup>16</sup>

Hence the first discourse is the narration of annihilation in the Divine Will, and the twelfth discourse is the tale of ascent by the ladder of Divine Love to the exalted position of 'Divine Sainthood' by annihilating in the Essence of 'Divine Guardianship' (*wilayatAllah*). Themes and concepts such as, 'Allah', 'Human Spirit', 'Purification', 'Mirage of the world', 'barriers', 'Ascension', 'Love', 'Patience', 'Servitude', 'supplication and prayer', 'Divine saints', 'Intellect', 'knowledge and awareness' and 'the station of annihilation' etc. which have been presented and discussed in the first discourse are evolved, developed and completed in the twelfth discourse.

### **The parallelism of the second discourse and the eleventh discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*:**

The second discourse is parallel to the eleventh discourse through shared hierarchical concepts, and opposed and contradicting outward conclusions.

#### **Second discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*:**

A bird went into a meadow: there was a trap (set) for the purpose of fowling.  
Some grain had been placed on the ground, and the fowler was ensconced there in ambush  
He had wrapped himself in leaves and grass, that the wretched prey might slip off from the path (of safety).  
A little bird approached him in ignorance (of his disguise): then it hopped round and ran to the man,  
And said to him, "who are you, clad in green in the desert amidst (all) these wild animals?"  
He replied, "I am an ascetic severed (from mankind): I have become content (to live) here with some grass.  
I adopted asceticism and piety as my religion and practice because I saw before me the appointed end of my life.  
My neighbour's death had given men warning and upset my (worldly) business and shop."<sup>17</sup>

The main story of the second discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* is titled "Story about Fowler who had wrapped himself in grass..." This discourse starts from verse 435 and ends at verse 592; it is comprised of 158 verses, five sections, and one long main story and two short complimentary stories. The main characters of the story are: 'The bird' which symbolises the spiritual wayfarer who is of 'the people of companionship' (*ahli sohbat*), 'the meadow', which symbolises the material world ('*alami nasut*), and 'the fowler/hunter' who symbolises the 'people of solitude' (*ahli khlawat*). In this story the concepts of solitude (*khlawat*) and companionship and their relationship with 'Unity of Divine Acts' is discussed. The concept of solitude in *Mathnawi* has been first introduced in the second discourse of the first book. Without doubt solitude is better from companionship with people of misconduct and sin, and companionship with the people

of the heart and love is praiseworthy and companionship with those lacking purity and engulfed in sin is disagreeable. However is absolute solitude, which means even solitude from the people of the heart and love praiseworthy? It seems that as solitude is one of the stations of spiritual wayfaring and sitting with the people of the light causes the joy and strengthening of the spirit of the spiritual wayfarer, periodic solitude is recommended and necessary but constant solitude is not.

I have chosen a (place of) seclusion in the desert: I have perceived that mankind are stealers of clothes.  
Half of life (is lost) in desire for a charming friend; (the other) half of life (is lost) in anxieties caused by foes.  
That (desire) has carried off (our) cloak, this (anxiety) has carried off our cap, (while) we have become absorbed in play like a little child.  
Lo, the night-time of death is near. Leave this play: you have (played) enough, do not return (to it).<sup>18</sup>

In this story it is stressed that the rank of the beloved is higher than the rank of the lover. And all except Allah perish.

(Do not associate with him), for all except God crumbles away, (and) everything that is coming after a time will (inevitably) come.<sup>19</sup>

Annihilation in Allah has certain condition, some of which have been referred to in this story. Spiritual wayfaring is not for any neutral person, 'sincerity of the heart', walking on 'the straight path', and following the guidelines and companionship with the Divine prophets and saints who have walked the path of spiritual wayfaring, and have submitted to the Divine will, are of the mentioned conditions of spiritual wayfaring in the second discourse. Desire of the material world is the plague of spiritual wayfaring and the destroyer of spiritual states.

It (the bird) replied, "Firmness of heart is needed for achievement, but a (firm) friend does not lack friends."  
Be a (firm) friend, that you may find friends innumerable; for without friends you will be left helpless.  
The road of religion is full of trouble and bale for the reason that is not the road for any whose nature is effeminate.

On this road (men's) souls are tried by terror as a sieve (is used) for sifting bran.  
What is the road? Full of footprints. What is the comrade? The ladder whereby minds ascend.<sup>20</sup>

The spiritual wayfarer sees the 'Divine Grace' and 'Divine Bounty' upon reaching the station of annihilation in 'Unity of Divine Acts'. He understands that 'non-being' ('*adam*') has no qualifications yet 'Divine Grace' opens the doors of existence and being (*Wujud*) for him. If potential and merit were the conditions of receiving blessing and mercy, the world had not been created yet when the blessing of existence and being was given to him. Hence in this station the spiritual wayfarer sees that God's gift is not based on merit, for if merit was the condition of receiving blessing and mercy the universe would not have been created, for merit and potential is dependent upon existing. The spiritual wayfarer passes the 'stage of intellect' and chooses madness over the intellect. After annihilation he sees the visage of the companion.

Do not take away Thy shadow (protection) from my head: I a restless,  
restless, restless.  
(All) sorts of sleet have quitted mine eye in my passion for Thee, O thou  
who art envied by the cypress and the jasmine.  
Though I am not deserving (of thy favour), what matters if for a moment,  
thou ask after an unworthy one (who is) in a (great) anguish?  
What right (to Thy favour), forsooth, had Not-being, to which Thy grace  
opened such doors?  
(Thy) bounty touched (embraced) the mangy earth and put in its bosom ten  
pearls of the light of sensation-  
Five outward senses and five inward senses – whereby the dead semen was  
made Man.  
Repentance without Thy blessing, O sublime Light, what is it but to laugh at  
the beard of repentance?  
Thou dost tear the moustaches of repentance piecemeal: repentance is the  
shadow and Thou art the shining moon.  
O Thou by whom my shop and dwelling is ruined, how shall not I wail when  
Thou rackest my heart?  
How shall I flee (from thee), since without Thee none liveth, and without  
Thy lordship no slave hath existence?  
Take my life, O source of my life, for without thee I have become weary of  
my life.

I am in love with the art of madness, I am surfeited with wisdom and sagacity/  
When (the veil of) shame is rent asunder, I will publicly declare the mystery: how much (more) of this self-restraint and gripping pain and tremor?  
I have become concealed in shame, like the fringe (sewn on the inside of a garment): I will spring forth of a sudden from beneath this coverlet.  
O comrades, the Beloved has barred the ways: we are lame deer and he is a hunting lion.  
(For one who is) in the clutch of a fierce bloodthirsty lion where is any resource except resignation and acquiescence?  
He, like the sun, hath neither sleep nor food: He makes the spirits (also) to be without food and sleep,  
Saying “coming, be Me or one with Me in nature, that thou mayest behold My face when I unveil Myself”<sup>21</sup>

### **Eleventh discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*:**

A certain dervish, who was in debt, came from the outlying provinces of Tabriz.  
His debts amounted to nine thousand pieces of gold. It happened that in Tabriz was (a man named) Barru'ddin 'Umar.  
He was the Police Inspector, (but) at heart he was an ocean (of bounty): every hair's tip of him was a dwelling place (worthy) of Hatim.  
Hatim had he been (alive), would have become a beggar to him and laid his head (before him) and himself (as) the dust of his feat.  
If he had given an ocean of limpid water to a thirsty man, such was his generosity that he would be ashamed of (bestowing) that gift;  
And if he had made a mote (as full of splendour as) a place of sunrise, (even) that would (seem) to his lofty aspiration (to) be an unworthy action.  
That poor stranger came (to Tabriz) in hope of him, for to poor strangers he was always (like) a kinsman and relative.  
That poor stranger was familiar with his door and had paid innumerable debts from his bounty.  
In reliance upon that generous (patron) he ran into debt, for the (poor) man was confident of (receiving) his donations  
He had been made reckless by him (the Inspector) and eager to incur debts in hope of (being enriched by) that munificent sea.<sup>22</sup>

The eleventh discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* begins from verse 3014 and ends at verse 3582. This discourse is comprised of 569 verses and eleven sections. The title of the main story of the eleventh discourse is “Story of the man who had an allowance from the

Police Inspector of Tabriz...” four short stories are within the main story. The main characters of the main story are the ‘*Darwish*’ and ‘*Mohtaseb*’ and ‘*Tabriz*’ which symbolises the beautiful rose garden of hope.

In this discourse the spiritual ranks of the prophets and saints such as “The Sun of Arab”, The companion of the prophet Hazrat Ja’afar, Prophet Yusuf, Prophet Musa, Prophet Mohammad, the Divine Names (King of the Domain, Light of Allah, The Giver of life and death, The Creator and The Possessor of Glory), the station of fear from the greatness of Allah, Love and the Universal Beloved have been cited. Allah shows himself to the spiritual wayfarers through the contradicting states and actions of the Divine Will. The perfect human being, after being annihilated in the essence of Allah, becomes the manifestation of Divine Light in the world. Fear and Divine kindness cause the destruction of the desires of the ego (“I”) of the spiritual wayfarer.

One of the essential attributes of Allah is “Power”, the annihilated spiritual wayfarer by the blessing of the power of Allah becomes illuminated by the Divine light, in this stage the body of the annihilated wayfarer is the similitude of the light holder, and his heart is the similitude of glass, the light of his existence shines at the heavens.

Through the (Divine) omnipotence the bodies of (holy) men have gained the ability to support the unconditioned Light.

His (God’s) power makes a glass vessel the dwelling place of that (Light) of which Sinai cannot bear (even) a mote.

A lamp niche and a lamp glass have become the dwelling place of the Light by which Mt Qaf and Mt Sinai are torn to pieces.

Know that their (the holy men’s) bodies are the lamp niche and their hearts the glass: this lamp illumines the empyrean and the heavens.

Their (the heavens’) light is dazzled by this Light and vanished like the stars in the radiance of the morning.

Hence the seal of prophets has related (the saying) of the everlasting and eternal Lord-

“I am not contained in the heavens or in the void or in the exalted intelligences and souls;

(But) I am contained, as a guest, in the true believer's heart, without qualification or definition or description.  
To the end that by the mediation of the heart (all) above and below may win from Me sovereignties and fortune.  
Without such a mirror neither Earth nor Time could bear the vision of My beauty.  
I caused the steed of (My) mercy to gallop over the two worlds: I fashioned a very spacious mirror.  
From this mirror (appear) at every moment fifty (spiritual) wedding feasts: hearken to the mirror, but do not ask (Me) to describe it.<sup>23</sup>

The spiritual wayfarer reaches unity with "HU", and he becomes the "astrolabe" of Divine attributes, and the manifestation of the "Companion" in the universe.

Adam is the astrolabe of the attributes of (Divine) Sublimity: the nature of Adam is the theatre for His revelations.  
Whatever appears in him (Adam) is the reflexion of Him, just as the moon is reflected in the water of the river.<sup>24</sup>

Rumi discusses "*Tawhid* of worship and devotion" (*Tawhid ibadi*) in the story of Joseph and says the highest form of "*Tawhid* of worship and devotion" is realised in the station of annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Essence'.

The connecting ring of the stories of the eleventh discourse is their thematic unity. The axis of their thematic unity is reaching the Beloved.

In both discourses the station of annihilation is discussed. However, in the second discourse annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Acts' and in the eleventh discourse annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Essence' is discussed. In both discourses reaching the Beloved and some of the Divine attributes are discussed. In the second discourse the following Divine attributes which are the attributes of 'Unity of Divine Acts' are referred to: "Creator" (Verses 565-568), "Divine Guardianship" (Verses 571, 576-577) and 'The provider' (Verses 581, 589). . In the eleventh discourse the following Divine attributes which are the attributes of the 'Unity of Divine Essence' are referred to:

'Power' (Verses 3066-3077), "Life" (Verses 3165-3171) and "Knowledge" (Verses 3174 and 3332). The attribute 'Truth' (*Haqq*) which is the attribute of both the 'Unity of Divine Acts' and 'Unity of Divine Essence' is referred to in both discourses. The concepts of love and light are amongst the shared concepts of the two discourses. As the station of annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Essence' is higher than the station of annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Acts' the level of the concepts discussed in the eleventh discourse is also of higher than those of the second discourse. In both discourses a warning is issued in regards to bad greed, also in both discourses the main character of the story realises the truth. Rumi in verse 3494 in the eleventh discourse clearly refers to the story of the bird, which is in the second discourse; this further highlights the evident relationship between the two discourses.

'Tis from self will that folk are sitting in gaol, 'tis from self will that the (trapped) bird's wings are tied.<sup>25</sup>

### **The parallelism of the third discourse and the tenth discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*:**

In the days of old there was a lover, one who kept troth in his time.  
For years (he had been) checkmated (irretrievably caught) in the toils of  
(seeking) his fair one's favour and mated by his king.  
In the end the seeker is a finder, for from patience joy is born.<sup>26</sup>

The third discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*, which begins at verse 593 and ends at verse 887, is comprised of 10 sections, which have thematic and conceptual unity. The third discourse is parallel to the tenth discourse through shared concepts and contradicting conclusions.

The main story of the third discourse is titled "Story of the Lover who, in hope of the tryst promised him by his beloved..." In this discourse Rumi says the spiritual wayfarer must avoid the sleep of ignorance and must strive in order to find true love as Allah is True. The material desires of true lovers have been broken in the Divine millstone.

In 'love wayfaring' (*seiri mohibbi*) anything but madness leads to separation from and strangeness with the Beloved. It is clear that by this madness it is meant the madness which is above the threshold of the Intellect not beneath it. Imam Hussein (peace be upon him) is the exalted example of the truthful lover who has reached union with the Beloved. He is the king of religion and the king of the lovers who have been freed from the cage of this world and have reached the next.

Don't you know that the Day of 'Ashura is (a day of) mourning for a single soul that is more excellent than a (whole) generation?

How should this anguish (tragedy) be lightly esteemed by the true believer? Love for the ear-ring (Imam Hussein) is in proportion to love for the ear (the prophet).

In the true believers view the mourning for that pure spirit is more celebrated than a hundred floods of Noah.

A royal spirit escaped from a prison: why should we rend our garments and how should we gnaw our hands?

Since they (Imam Hussein and his family) were monarchs of the (true) religion, 'twas the hour of joy (for them) when they broke their bonds.

They sped towards the pavilion of empire, they cast off their fetters and chains.

'This day of (their) kingship and pride and sovereignty, if thou has (even) an atom of knowledge of them.<sup>27</sup>

The twelfth discourse begins from verse 2510 and ends at verse 2973, it is comprised of 8 sections. The title of the main story is "How the Sayyid, the king of Termid, proclaimed that he would give robes of honour and horses and slave..."

The sagacious Dalqak was the buffoon (court jester) of the Sayyid of Tirmid, who reigned in that palace city.

He (the king) had an urgent affair in Samarcand, and wanted a courier in order that he might conclude it.

(therefore) he proclaimed that he would bestow (his) treasures on anyone who should bring him news from there in five days.

Dalqak was in the country and heard of that (proclamation): he mounted (a horse) and galloped to Tirmid.

Two horses dropped (dead) on the way because of his galloping in that (furious) manner.

Then (fresh) from the dust of the road, he ran into the council-chamber and demanded admission to the king at an untimely hour.<sup>28</sup>

The spiritual wayfarer must journey the earth to find The Guide (*Murshid*) of his time, and he must consult the good doers to find a Divine intellectual who is the manifestation of the “Mustafawi Guardianship” and the inheritor of Mohammadan Knowledge. For it is this divine intellect which knows the realities of spiritual wayfaring. Among the pious and virtuous there is one who has been appointed by Allah to be The Guardian, he is the axis of the world of existence, and no one matches him in perfection.

He hath said “travel”: always be seeking in the world and trying your fortune and (destined) lot.

In (all) assembly-places always be seeking amidst the intellects such an intellect as is (found) in the Prophet,

For the only heritage from the Prophet is that (intellect) which perceives the unseen things before and behind (future and past).

Amidst the (inward) eyes, too, always be seeking that (inward) eye which this epitome has not the power to describe.

Hence the majestic (Prophet) has forbidden monkery and going to live as a hermit in the mountains.

In order that this kind of meeting (with saints) should not be lost; for to be looked on by them is fortune and an elixir of immortality.

Amongst the righteous there is one (who is) the most righteous: on his diploma (is inscribed) by the Sultan's hand a shah.<sup>29</sup>

In both discourses prophet Mohammad is the axis of the story. In both discourses the concepts of ascetism (*Riyazat*), esoteric and exoteric knowledge and the differences and degrees of Love have been presented. In the tenth discourse the deep relation between ascetism, will, freedom and the internalisation of Love in the heart of the lover is further evolved and the separation of Lover from the beloved becomes none-existence.

In the lover's heart there is naught but the Beloved: there is nothing to separate and to divide them.

### **The parallelism of the fourth discourse and the ninth discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi***

The fourth discourse is parallel to the ninth discourse through similitude and evolution of joint concepts. The fourth discourse begins from verse 888 and ends at verse 1110 and is comprised of five sections

The Bilal was devoting his body to the (scourge of) thorns: his master was flogging him by the way of correction,  
Saying, “why dost thou celebrate Ahmad (Mohammad)? Wicked slave, thou disbelievest in my religion!”  
He was beating him in the sun with thorns (while) he (Bilal) cried vauntingly “One”.<sup>30</sup>

“The story of Bilal’s crying “One! One” in the heat of the Hijaz from his love for Mustafa” is the only story of the fourth discourse, and in this way is distinguished from the other discourses of the sixth book.

The fourth discourse is the end of the first block of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*. The first block discusses annihilation in ‘HU’ with the help of Love.

Love is the All-subduer, and I am subdued by Love: by Love’s bitterness I have been made sweet as sugar.  
O fierce Wind, before Thee I am (but) a straw: how can I know where I shall fall?  
Whether I am (stout as) Bilal or (thin as) the new moon (hilal), I am running on and following the course of Thy sun.  
What has the moon to do with stoutness and thinness? She runs at the heels of the sun, like a shadow.  
Anyone who offers to make a settlement with (the Divine) destiny is mocking at his own moustache.  
A straw in the face of the wind and then (the idea of) a settlement! A Resurrection (going on) and then the resolve to act (independently)!  
In the hand of Love I am like a cat in a bag, now lifted high and now flung low by Love.  
He is whirling me round His head: I have no rest either below or aloft.  
The lover (of God) have fallen into a fierce torrent: they have set their hears on (resigned themselves to) the ordinance of Love.

They are like the milestone turning, day and night, in (continual) revolution and moaning incessantly.

Its turning is evidence for those who seek the River, lest anyone should say that the River is motionless.

If thou seest not the hidden River, see the (perpetual) turning of the celestial water-wheel.

Since the heavens have no rest from (being moved by) Him (Love), (be) thou, O Heart like a star, (and) seek no rest.

If thou lay hold of a branch, how should he let (thee clinging to it)? Wherever thou makest an attachment, He will break it.

If thou sees no the revolutionary action of the (Divine) decree, look at the surging and whirling (that appears) in the (four) elements;

For the whirling of the sticks and straws and foam are caused by the boiling of the noble sea (of Love).

See the giddy wind howling: see the widows surging at His command.

The sun and moon are two mill-oxen, going round and round and keeping watch (over the world)<sup>31</sup>

Love by its dominance over the being of the spiritual wayfarer, subdues him to its beauty, and makes him drunk. It is at this point that the wayfarer by the joy and eagerness of Love reaches the sweetness of the rank of Union (*wisal*) and the station of annihilation in the Beloved. At this station the wayfarer has let go of himself and has surrendered to Love. The reason for the constant evolution of Lovers is that at every instance they experience the manifestations of the Universal Beloved.

The mystic who is annihilated in the Beloved's Will, has no will of his own, and is at the disposal of the Will of Allah. What he does and says is by the Beloved's Will, and his good deeds are from the *Baraka* of Allah. It is the power of Allah which manages him, as the love journey of all other creations is also from and towards Allah. (*Waila Allah al-masir*)

Prophet Mohammad is referred to by the name Ahmad, and his illuminated and blessed being, which is the role model and the best of all creations, has been referred to as the sun.

The ninth discourse begins from verse 2376 and ends at verse 2509. It is comprised of four sections, which have thematic unity.

Here listen to a story, O son, in order that you may not suffer affliction in (relying upon) talent.

As it happened, a Jew and a true believer and Christian travelled together on a journey.

A true believer travelled along with two miscreants, like reason (associated) with a carnal soul and Devil.

In travel the man of Merv and the man of Rayy meet one another as companions on the road and at table.

Crow and owl and falcon come (as captives) into the (same) cage: the holy and the irreligious become mates in prison.

At night Easterners and Westerners and Transoxanians make their abode in the small caravanserai.<sup>32</sup>

“Story of the three travellers-a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew...” is the title of the main story of the ninth discourse and the “story of the camel and the ox and the ram” and the “parable” are the secondary stories of the ninth discourse.

The ninth discourse is the beginning of the third block of the sixth book of the *Mathnawi*, which discusses concepts related to the annihilation of the soul in the ‘Unity of Divine essence’. The perfect human being who has become annihilated in the ‘Unity of Divine Essence’ in terms of his spiritual statues and perfection is better than everyone, and as he has reached the station of subsistence with Allah the world also remains. The prophets who have reached perfection, descend from the world of unity to the world of diversity (*tanazolaz ‘alami wahdat be ‘alami Kathrat*) so that they can guide and reform people, and it is their good moral conduct and high spiritual statues which is the cure to the spiritual illnesses of people.

His luminous spirit is supreme: ‘tis enough for the rest of them to tend (cherish) him.

He who mounts highest in (the scale of) reason- his eating is (equivalent to) the eating of all (his inferiors)

Since those endows with (perfect) reason endure for ever, in reality this world is enduring forever,<sup>33</sup>

Allah is referred to as the “Sun of Justice” (*khoshidi dad*), “Allah”, “Sun of Omnipotence” (*khoshidi qahr*), “theOne who is near”,

“the Compassionate” (*al-Rahman*) and “the Saviour” (*moqith*). ‘Arif or mystic is referred to as Lion (*asad*).

Both discourses refer to Prophet Mohammad however in the ninth discourse a higher level of concepts is discussed. The journey towards Allah (*seiri illaAllah*) and the praise of the beings is discussed in both discourses.

### **The parallelism of the fifth discourse and the eighth discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi***

The fifth Discourse is parallel to the eighth discourse through the evolution and development of the concept of annihilation in the ‘Unity of Divine attributes’.

The fifth discourse is comprised of verses 1111-1221, in the form of five sections, which have thematic and narrative unity. “Story of Hilal, who was a devoted servant to God...” is the main story of the fifth discourse, and it contains one short story and a parable in its midst to further clarify the main story.

Since you have heard some of the (excellent) qualities of Bilal, now hear the story of the emaciation of Hilal.

He was more advanced than Bilal in the way (to God): he had mortified his evil nature more.<sup>34</sup>

In the fifth discourse Rumi discusses how Divine Love sets fire to the nature and attributes of the spiritual wayfarer and makes him annihilated within the Truth (*al-Haqq*).

In the fifth discourse the prophet is described as a kind and compassionate person and Hilal is the symbol of a kind mystic who is in love, and who in his external and spiritual journey through the concentration of his heart becomes submerged in seeing the visage of *Haqq*.

The heart only reaches the exalted station of manifesting the *Haqq* and becoming the spring of Divine knowledge that like a part, which moves towards its whole, if it moves towards its whole which is Allah.

Every human being is created with a Divine essence, thus moving away from *tawhid* is considered as one of the accidental attributes of humans.

That fierce (spiritual) lion scented the prophet just as the scent of Joseph was perceived by his father (Jacob).

Miracles are not the cause of religious faith; 'tis the scent of homogeneity that attracts (to itself) qualities of the same kind.

Miracles are (wrought) for the purpose of subjugating the for the scent of homogeneity is (only) for the winning of hearts

A foe is subjugated, but not a friend: how should a friend have his neck bound?<sup>35</sup>

Prophets Mohammad, Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) are referred to as the symbols of Divine attributes. It is the Prophet and the Guardian (*wali*) who turn the attributes and being of the mystic into Divine attributes. Allah is referred to as "Haqq" (Truth) who is capable of doing anything, and "King" (*Shah*). The journey of the mystic to perfection and gaining Divine attributes is gradual in the same way that the creation of the heavens and the creations were gradual.

The new moon and the full moon have oneness (with each other): they are far from duality and from imperfection and corruption.

The new moon is inwardly free from imperfection: its apparent imperfection is (due to its) increasing gradually.

Night by night it gives a lesson in gradualness, and with deliberation it produces relief (for itself).

With deliberation it says, "O hasty fool, (only) step by step can one mount to the roof"

Let the cooking pot boil gradually as a skilful (cook) does: the stew boiled in a mad hurry is of no use.

Was not God able to create heaven in one moment by (the word) "Be"? Without any doubt (He was).

Why, then, O seeker of instruction, did he extend (the time) for it to six days, every day (being as long as) a thousand years?

Wherefore is the creation of a child (completed) in nine months? Because gradualness is a characteristic of (the action of) the King.<sup>36</sup>

The eighth discourse is comprised of verses 1834 to 2375, in the form of 16 sections, which have thematic and narrative unity. "The remainder of the Story of the *fakir* who desire his daily bread without work as a means." Is the title of the main story of the eighth discourse. This story contains 6 short stories in its midst, which are a continuation of the theme of the main story. The main story of the eighth discourse is similar to "the story of the man who sought to receive (from God), lawful means of livelihood without working or taking trouble, in the time of Prophet David" in the sixth discourse of the third book, and therefore is a sign of the parallelism between the third and sixth book of Mathnawi which we will discuss in another section.

In the eighth discourse, continuity in seeking annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine attributes' and overcoming 'being of a hundred colours' and becoming of 'one colour' are stressed. By following the spiritual attributes of prophet Mohammad the darkness of the wayfarer's being turns into light.

'Tis (even) as by the polishing action of the Light of Mustafa (Mohammad) a hundred thousand sorts of darkness became radiant.

Jew and polytheist and Christian and Magian – all were made of one colour by that Alp Ulugh (great hero).

A hundred thousand shadows short and long became on in the light of that Sun of mystery.

Neither a long (shadow) remained nor a short nor a wide: shadow of every kind were given in pawn to (absorbed in) the Sun.

But the unicolority that is (everywhere) at the resurrection is (then) revealed and (made) manifest to the evil and the good (alike);

For in the world ideas are endued with form, and our (visible) shapes become congruous with our (moral and spiritual) qualities.<sup>37</sup>

Rumi says the treasure of the Truth is within the human being not outside it. Read "whoever knows his soul (*nafs*) knows his lord" (*man 'arafa nafsi, faqad 'arafa rabbuhu*) and act by contemplation and deliberation. The treasure of Truth becomes realised by "those who

have striven in us (*jahidufina*) and not by “those who have striven away from us” (*jahidu ‘ana*). The perfect human being is the circumference of the whole universe.

That which is real is nearer than the neck-artery: you have shot the arrow of though far afield.

O you who have provided yourself with bow and arrows, the prey is near and you have shot far.

The farther one shoots, the farther away and more separated is he from a treasure like this.

The philosopher killed (exhausted) himself with thinking: let him run on (in vain), for his back is turned towards the treasure.

Let him run on: the more he runs, the more remote does he become from the object of his heart’s desires.

That (Divine) king said, “(those who) have striven in (for) us” he did not say “(those who) have striven away from) us,” O restless one.<sup>38</sup>

The mystics illuminate their heart by the Divine light and fight their soul (*nafs*), thus they are the most exalted in the after life. Till annihilation in the ‘Unity of Divine Attributes’ has not been completed, the mystic is in a state of fear and hope.

The ka’aba of the spirit and the (celestial) spirits is a Lotus tree; the *qibla* of the belly-slave is a table cloth.

The *qibla* of the Gnostic is the light of union (with God); the *qibla* of the philosopher’s intellect is the phantasy.

The *qibla* of the ascetic is the Gracious God; the *qibla* of the flatterer is a purse of gold.

The *qibla* of the spiritual is patience and long suffering; the *qibla* of form worshippers is the image of stone.

The *qibla* of those who dwell on the inward is the Bounteous One; the *qibla* of those who worship the outward is a woman’s face.<sup>39</sup>

Allah has been referred to as “The Generous” (*Karim*), “The Abaser” (*Khafez*) and “The Exalted” (*Rafi*) which are fitting with the theme of annihilation in the ‘Unity of Divine attributes’

The fifth discourse is the beginning of the second block of the sixth book of *Mathnawi*, which analyses annihilation in the ‘unity of Divine attributes’ and the eighth discourse is the end of the second block. In both discourses Prophet Mohammad is introduced as the most

exalted individual to have reached annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Attributes', and by his Divine breath turns the attributes of the wayfarers on the path of the Beloved into the Divine attributes.

### **The parallelism of the sixth discourse and the seventh discourse of the sixth book of *Mathnawi***

The sixth discourse is in evolutionary and detailed parallelism with the seventh discourse.

The sixth discourse is comprised of verse 1222-1292, in the form of 5 sections which have thematic and narrative unity.

There was a decrepit old woman aged ninety years, her face covered with wrinkles and her complexion (yellow as) saffron.  
Her face was in folds like the surface of a traveller's food-wallet, but there remained in her the passionate desire for a husband.  
Her teeth had dropped out and her hair had become (white) as milk; her figure was (bent) like a bow, and every sense in her was decayed.  
Her passion for a husband and her lust and desire were (there) in full (force): the passion for snaring (was there), though the trap had fallen to pieces.  
(She was like) a cock that crows at the wrong time, a road that leads nowhere, a big fire beneath an empty kettle;  
(Like one who is) exceedingly fond of the race course, but has no means of running; or exceedingly fond of pipping, but having neither lip nor pipe.<sup>40</sup>

"Story of the old woman who used to depilate and rouge her ugly face..." is the title of the main story of the sixth discourse and the two stories titled "Story of the darvish who blessed a man from Gilan..." and "story of the darvish to whom, whenever he begged anything from a certain house, he (the owner) used to say, "it is not (to be had here)" are the supporting stories of the main story which help in gaining a deeper understanding of the message of the main story. The 'old ugly woman' is the symbol of those who have an ugly interior, but strive to make a beautiful exterior for themselves.

In the sixth discourse, the necessity of the transformation of the wayfarer's attributes to Divine attributes is explained. The heart of the wayfarer must be polished in order for the transformation and adoption of attributes to take place.

Polish you breast (heart) for a day or two: make that mirror your book (of meditation).

For from (seeing) the reflexion of the imperial Joseph old Zalikha became old anew.

The chilly temperature of "the old woman's cold spell" is changed (into heat) by the sun of Tamuz (July).

A dry-lipped bough is turned into a flourishing palm tree by the burning (anguish) of a Mary.<sup>41</sup>

Annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine attributes is possible for everyone, for no heart is rejected by Him. In the sixth discourse Rumi likens the mystics to: "Falcon", "Peacock", "Parrot", "Nightingale", "Hoopoe" and "Stork". Rumi refers to Prophet Joseph and Lady Mary, as examples of Divine saints who after transforming their own attributes to Divine attributes through annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Attributes" with the permission of Allah become capable of transforming the attributes of others. Allah's "Generosity" has been referred to in this verse. This story also describes those who possess an ugly esoteric dimension yet try to create a beautiful outward appearance for themselves. Furthermore Rumi has gives a warning in regards to lustful sexual desires and material greed (verse 1232) in the days of old age.

Since that (crone who was faded as) autumn desired to be wed, that lustful one plucked out the hair of her eyebrow.

Since you are not a falcon so as to (be able to) catch the prey, (a falcon) hand trained for the King's hunting;

Nor a peacock painted with a hundred (beautiful) designs, so that (all) eyes should be illuminated by the picture which you present.

Nor a parrot, so that when sugar is given to you, (all) ears should bend to (listen to) your sweet talk;

Nor a nightingale to sing, like a lover, sweetly and plaintively in the meadow or the tulip garden;

Nor a hoopoe to bring messages, nor are you like a stork to make your nest on high  
In what work are you (employed), and for what (purpose) are you bought?  
What (sort of) bird are you, and with what (digestive) are you eaten?  
Mount beyond this shop of hagglers to the shop of Bounty where *God is the purchaser*  
(There) that gracious one has purchased a piece of goods that no people would look at on the count of shabbiness.  
With Him no base coin is rejected, for His object in buying is not (to make a) profit.<sup>42</sup>

The seventh discourse is comprised of verses 1293 to 1833, in the form of 20 sections, which have thematic and narrative unity.

A certain sick man went to a physician and said "Feel my pulse, O Sagacious one,  
That by (feeling) the pulse you may diagnose the state of my heart, for the hand vein is connected with the heart."  
Since the heart is invisible, if you want a symbol of it, seek (it) from him who hath connexion with the heart.<sup>43</sup>

The title of the main story of the seventh discourse is the "Story of the sick man of whose recovery the physician despaired." however for better clarifying the message and concepts of the story, two other stories namely, the "Story of Sultan Mahmud and the Hindu boy" and the "Turk and the thief" are found within the main story. In relation to the issue of the people of material world seeing everything upside down which is discussed in the main story, Rumi has brought the story of Sultan Mahmud which is taken from the *Musibat Name* of Attar. In relation to the issue of wickedness which is presented in the main story the story of the Turk and Thieft is used as an example. This discourse is one of the richest discourses of *Mathnawi*, in terms of the wealth of concept discussed. The 'plaintiff' is the symbol of a novice mystic, 'the judge' is the symbol of the *pir* and Sultan Mahmud is the symbol of the station of annihilation in the Unity of Divine attributes.

In Discourse seven Rumi says that annihilation in 'Unity of Divine Attributes' is achieved by following the prophets and the Divine saints and not by following 'particular reason' and exoteric sciences.

Seeing and being aware of the end and the outcome and the necessary initial attributes needed for annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Attributes'. The true spring of the Graces of Allah are only revealed at the station of Annihilation

Because the mine and treasury of God's doing is not other than non-existence in (process of) being brought into manifestation.<sup>44</sup>

Voluntary death leads to mystic gaining high status near Allah. *Faqr* (destitution) is the beginning of annihilation. When the mystic becomes absolutely dependant on Allah, no longer needs from others, and his mystical *faqr* (destitution) reaches perfection then he is annihilated in Allah, and hence reaches the station of annihilation. The one who is nearer to the reality of *Faqr* and annihilation is more worthy of becoming the reflection of Allah, hence the darawish have advanced more than others. Mystical *faqr* is one of the key concepts of the seventh discourse.

(And inasmuch as) all master craftsmen seek none existence and a place of breakage for the purpose of exhibiting their skill,  
Necessarily the lord (who is) the master of (all) masters - his workshop is none existence and naught.  
Wherever this none existence is greater, (the more manifest) in that quarter is the work and workshop of God.  
Since the highest stage is none existence, the darvishes have outstripped all others.<sup>45</sup>

In the seventh discourse Allah is referred to as "the King of East and West", "Sea" (*bahr*), "King", "Master of masters" and "The Generous" (*jawad*), and Prophet Mohammad is referred to as "The general of humanity". In spiritual wayfaring patience is one of the conditions of reaching annihilation. Patience is both a mystical attribute and a mystical station. The essence of the existence of the human being is the perception (*nazar*) of Allah who is the absolute Reality.

Come perceive (it), for insight (is the only thing) in you (that) avails; the rest of you is a piece of fat and flesh, a weft and warp (of bones muscles, etc)  
Your fat never increases the light in candles, your flesh never became roast beef for anyone drunken with (spiritual) wine.

Dissolve the whole of this body of yours in vision: pass into sight, pass into sight, into sight!

One sight perceives (only) two yards of the road: another sight has beheld the two worlds and the Face of the King

Between these twain there is an incalculable difference: seek the collyrium – and God best knoweth the things occult.<sup>46</sup>

When the mystic sees the eternal Sun of Truth by perception and clairvoyance, then in a drop he sees the whole sea. It means that he is able to refer diversities (*kasarat*) to unity (*wahid*), and it is then that he becomes of the 'affirmers of Allah's unity' (*muwahiddin*), for those who cannot refer diversities to unity are polytheists. The philosophers know, while the mystics see diversity within unity and unity within diversity and this is the secret of the superiority of the mystics over philosophers and Jurists. For the nature of the mystics' knowledge is intuitive, while that of the none mystics is exoteric knowledge.

When the eyes have become piercing, 'tis its (the dawn's) light (that illuminates them): in the very husk it (the illuminated eye) beholds the kernel. In the mote it beholds the everlasting Sun, in the drop (of water) it beholds the entire Sea.<sup>47</sup>

The seventh discourse contains Rumi's most important poem, which explains the primary essence of his book. Rumi says that none of the poems, the parables, metaphors, satires or practical and theoretical teachings which are contained in the *Mathnawi* are its primary objective, for the *Mathnawi* is the book of "none Existence" (*nisti*) and "Existence" (*hasti*), "*Mathnawi* is the book of *Tawhid*" and nothing else. Hence it is only just for us to name Rumi's *Mathnawi* "the book of *Tawhid*" (*Tawhid name*).

Every shop has a different (kind of) merchandise: the Mathnawi is the shop for (spiritual) poverty, O son.

Our Mathnawi is the shop for unity: anything that you see (there) except the one (God) is (only) and idol.<sup>48</sup>

One of the many evidences of Rumi's Shi'ism, is found in this discourse. For Rumi refers to the prophet as infallible (*Ma'asum*), and the infallibility of the prophet is specific to Shi'ism (verses 1601-

16102). The mystic reaches the station of annihilation by love, and loves consecutive deaths on the path of love, which is also known as annihilation after annihilation.

(I swear) by God, from love for the existence that fosters the spirit, the killed one longs (still) more passionately to be killed a second time.<sup>49</sup>

Rumi in mystical terms explains how multiplicity arises out of unity, and his explanation is different to the explanation of the philosophers and theologians. Rumi says that the restlessness of the lovers is caused by the calmness and stability of the Beloved. Rumi in the framework of the theory of the Names and the manifestation of the Names of Allah in the creations and the theory of the flow of love in existence, and referring the various attributes to a unified essence clarifies the issue. Allah's love for himself is the source of the manifestation of multiplicity. However there is no opposition or similitude in the essence and attributes of God, for all existence gains existence from him.

(‘Tis) just as the disquiet of lovers is the result of the tranquillity of the one who captivates their hearts.  
He stands immovable, like a mountain, in his disdain, while his lovers are quivering like thieves.  
His laughter stirs (them to) tears, His glory causes their glories to fade.  
All this conditionality is tossing like foam on the surface of the unconditioned Sea.  
In It's (the Sea's) essence and action there is neither opposite nor like: by it (alone) are (all) existence clothed in robes (of existence).  
How should an opposite bestow being and existence on its opposite? Nay, it flees and escapes from it.<sup>50</sup>

Gaining the Divine attributes is possible, however finding the Essence of Allah is impossible. The spiritual states and attributes of the mystics are from the manifestations of Allah. Rumi names some of the attributes and names of the purified from the Qur'an such as: Patient, knowledgeable and the truthful.

Both discourses are in the second block of the sixth book, which deals with annihilation in the 'Unity of Divine Attributes'

In both discourses two characters with bad deeds are introduced, and the concept of transformation of attributes is discussed with reference to Lady Mary. However the concept of transformation is discussed much more extensively and in a more complete and clear form in the seventh discourse. It refers the mystic to the path of the prophets and their miracles in order for them to comprehend the attributes of Allah. In discourse seven Lady Mary is an individual manifestation while in seven she is the spiritual concept, which refers to spiritual sustenance. In discourse seven, spiritual greed which is recommended is presented, while in the sixth discourse worldly and material greed, which should be avoided, is presented. In the sixth discourse prophet Joseph and Lady Mary are referred to, however in discourse seven, Prophets who are more exalted than the aforementioned, such as Adam, Ibrahim, Musa, Ismaeil, and Prophet Mohammad are referred to.

Since you are far from (knowing) the essence of God, you may recognise the description of the Essence in the Prophet and (his) evidentiary miracles<sup>51</sup>

### **The relationship and parallelism of the first and sixth book of *Mathnawi***

The Sixth book of *Mathnawi* is part of a greater whole, which has an intricate structure of its own. What are the evidence in defence of this Theory? Firstly The *Mathnawi* is divided into six books, each of which has a theme of its own, which symbolises one of the six sons in the *ilahi name* of Attar, and gives a general outline of the work. Secondly: A love story is continued from the third book to the fourth book of the *Mathnawi* which from a practical point of view is like a pivot or an intermediary between the first half and the second half of the *Mathnawi*. Hence if we consider the *Mathnawi* as a pivoted mirror, the first, second and third books are reflected in the sixth, fifth and fourth books respectively. This order is correct based on Chiasmus, because it is the mirror reflection.

Soul (*nafs*) is the subject of the first book. As the presence of the soul (*nafs*) in this world, is in order for it to live and work in this world; the soul's perspective of this world is empirical and lustful. The soul intrinsically desires to see the part and not the whole. Using aliterary method for the preservation and reflection of this perspective is one of the causes for the separation of the part from the whole; in a way that the parts are completely separated and identifiable from each other. Furthermore the parts are also distinct from one another in terms of their theme and narration. Our research and analysis has shown this to be true, for although Rumi did not desire the discourses to be easily identifiable from one another, they are. The subject of the sixth Book is *Tawhid* and is very different from the subject of the first book which is *Nafs* (soul), hence a different literary method is needed in which everything is interrelated. The sixth book has this condition, it seems the discourses are submerged into one another and there are no visible boundaries between the discourses. In the first book a world with a specific form and design has been introduced as a model, whereas in the sixth book a world without form has been presented. However, we can find cases which have thematic unity with one another. In this research evidence of inter-textual parallelism between the first and sixth book of *Mathnawi* will be presented.

The first discourse of the first book is the story of the “king and the handmaiden”. The spirit (*ruh*) is the essence of the human being, which has come from the formless spiritual world and is never related to the soul (*nafs*) which is connected to the material world. The first story of the last discourse of the sixth book is the “story of the king who enjoined his three sons...” which is not dissimilar to the story of the “King and the handmaiden”, in his commentary on the *Mathnawi*, Nicholson says that the theme of both stories is the descent to the world of forms and the experiences of the wayfarer who is seeking the Truth. Rumi didn't intend to simply have these two discourses parallel to one another, but actually points to the parallelism in verse 3666 of the sixth book of *Mathnawi* by referring to the story of the “king and the handmaiden” in the first discourse of the *Mathnawi* and the first story of the last discourse of the sixth book, in order to make the reader aware of this parallelism.

Mention of the saving clause and (of the need for) manifold precaution was made at the beginning of the *Mathnawi*.<sup>52</sup>

As in the first discourse of the first book, the physicians were unable to cure the handmaiden because they did not say "God Willing" (*InshaAllah*), the defeat of the princes in the first story of the last discourse of the sixth book was also because they did not say "God willing". Rumi has dedicated some of the verses of this story to the wrong method and mistake of the physicians who failed to say "God Willing". However the parallelism does not end here: Imam Ali (peace be upon him) the symbol of the "Perfect man", is the shared subject in the parallelism between the first discourse and twelfth discourse of the first book. In the sixth book a part of the last story is dedicated to the prophetic Hadith: "Whoever I am guardian (*wali*) and Lord (*maula*) to, Ali is guardian (*wali*) and Lord (*maula*) to" in addition to this both discourses contain numerous examples of the role of the *wali* (guardian). However even more important is the role of Love, which creates an essential relationship between the two discourses. In the first discourse of the *Mathnawi* it is said: "Metaphorical Love and Divine Love, both guide us to the spiritual world", the last discourse of the sixth book also has similar examples. In the first book, love is a great physician and purifier of the soul (*nafs*) and in the last discourse of the sixth book it is a great Universal power that even Hell is afraid of:

For this reason, O sincere man, hell is enfeebled and extinguished by the fire of love.<sup>53</sup>

Some of the commentators of the *Mathnawi* such as Jalal al-Din Homayid and 'AbdolHussainZarrinkub have also referred to this parallelism.

The second discourse of the first book (verses 324-738) and the eleventh discourse of the sixth book (verses 3014-3582) are also parallel to each other. The main primary themes of the second discourse of the first book are, double vision, seeing only one dimension, jealousy, deceit, trickery, diversity, disunity, prophets Jesus,

Moses and Mohammad, a king and a vizier. It has been pointed that the autobiographical element is strong in this story, and most likely it is related to the jealousy of the followers of Rumi towards Shams, and the Attention Rumi paid to him; the jealousy which resulted in the destruction of the outward and inward unity of the followers of Rumi. The eleventh discourse of the sixth book is about a destitute *Darwish*, who has a large debt but is not worried, for he is hopeful of the generosity of a *khajah* in *Tabriz*. He travels to *Tabriz*, and is informed of the death of the *Khajah*. This news greatly saddens him. A chivalrous man starts gathering the help of the inhabitants of the city, but due to their lack of support, the needed amount is not gathered. The *Darwish* and the chivalrous man go to the grave of the *Khajah*, and spend the night at the house of the chivalrous man. The *khajah* tells the chivalrous man in his dream, that he has put aside some jewellery for the *Darwish*, and informed him of their hiding place. It can easily be recognised that this is the continuation of the autobiographical section which started in the second discourse of the first book. For it is very likely, that Rumi, had such an experience after the disappearance and likely death of *Shams*. If this is true, we can even find other parallelisms between the two discourses. The second section of the eleventh discourse of the sixth book is about a king who was attacked by *Ja'afar*, and after consulting the Vizier, he asks the king to surrender, for *Ja'afar* was assisted by Divine assistance, and due to Divine Grace his soul had strong submission and *jam'iyate khatir*. The fifth section contains a parable about a man who had double vision, the seventh and eighth sections are about jealousy because of a horse which at the end the vizier of *Kharazmshah* returns to its owner. Then Divine zeal in the case of a servant paying attention to other than the Divine is discussed. Allah is the source of all Zeal and goodness. Hence all the main themes of the second discourse of the first book are evolved in the eleventh discourse of the sixth book.

The parallelism between the third discourse of the first book and the tenth discourse of the sixth book is on genders (in terms of different types). This is the primary theme of both discourses. Although the seventh tenth discourse of the sixth book portrays the end result of the acquaintance of two unalikes in the “story of the frog and the rat”.

This end result has been predicted in the third discourse of the third book. The parallelism of the fourth discourse of the first book and the ninth discourse of the sixth book is on the theme of whether one should or should not share food, and who must eat what? In the sixth book, there is a about a Muslim a Christian and a Jew eating *halwa*, and the fifth section with the title “clown” has been attached to it, with the ethical message that before sharing, one must think for a moment. By making use of the messages of the sixth book in the first book, the proud and narcissistic lion must eat the rabbit upon its entrance, or must think before it jumps in the well. Of course, there is even a deeper parallelism between the two discourses which is seeing conditions directly and without assistance and what prohibits this form of seeing:

Know that (true) knowledge consists in seeing fire plainly; not in prating that smoke is evidence of fire.

(All this) noise and pompous talk and assumption of authority, “I cannot see: (kindly) excuse me.”

(*Mathnawi*, Book 6, verse: 2505, 2509).

خود هنر آن دان که دید آتش عیان  
نه کب دَلْ عَلَى النَّارِ الدُّخَانِ  
(دفتر ششم \_ بیت ۲۵۰۵)

غُلْغُلْ و طاق و طُرُوب و گیر و دار  
که نمی بینم , مرا معذور دار  
(دفتر ششم \_ بیت ۲۵۰۹)

In this way the inter-textual chiasmus parallelism between the first and sixth books can be seen as a form of commentary on the themes and conditions of the sixth book, from the new perspective of *tawhid*. The verses of the sixth book have been analysed and the parallelism between them and the verses of the first book have been revealed. This analysis, preliminary affirms and proves that there is a greater level of organisation that the organisation which is visible in each of the book, which is the organisation of the *Mathnawi* as a whole.

## Conclusion

In the sixth book of *Mathnawi* Rumi discusses the “Guardianship of Allah” (*Wilayat Allah*) and becoming the “Guardian/friend of Allah”. He sees the true perfection of the human being in annihilation in the essence of the Beloved and subsistence within the being of The Subsistent. Reaching this most exalted station is possible by the ladder of love. The meaning of *Wilayat* (Guardianship/sainthood/authority) is that the human being reaches an intuitive and existential station so that he sees the universe and humanity under the design and governance of Allah. The human being who has annihilated from himself is under the guardianship of *Tawhid*. The human being reaches this station when he annihilates his will and ad existence in Allah. And this is the same as not seeing himself or his own state. And it is at this station that he can say “Indeed my Guardian is Allah, and He sent down the Book, and He guards the righteous” (Quran 7:196) this form of *wilayat* in which the human being is under the guardianship and authority of Allah and his attributes essence and actions are designed and governed by Allah is not specific to the prophets but rather it is a general guardianship whose door is open to all humans for eternity.

The sixth book of the *Mathnawi* from the synoptic view is composed of 12 discourses and three blocks. The first block is comprised of the first four discourses, the second block is comprised of discourse five to eight, and the third and last block is comprised of discourse nine to twelve. The first block mainly analyses annihilation within the ‘Unity of Divine acts’. The second block discusses Annihilation within the ‘unity of Divine essence’ and the third block annihilation within the ‘Unity of Divine Essence’ which is when the mystic sees all essences and existence as annihilated with in that absolute essence, and sees know essence but the essence of Allah. In essence the sixth book discusses the path to passing the different stations of annihilation (*fana*) and reaching the station of divine sainthood and guardianship. “Whoever expects to meet Allah, indeed Allah’s time is coming; He is the All-Hearing Omniscient” (Qur’an 29:5)

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Note: With the exception of Verses 4538-4540 all verses have taken from Nicholson's translation of the Mathnawi.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Transcendent Philosophy Journal, Sep.2003 and Dec.2005, Safavi, 2006, London

Book 6:

<sup>2</sup> Verses 5, 40-43, 127-128

<sup>3</sup> Verses 5, 40-43, 127-128

<sup>4</sup> Verses 113-118

<sup>5</sup> Nicholson, 257

<sup>6</sup> Verses 129-135

<sup>7</sup> Verses 216-219

<sup>8</sup> Verses 232-233

<sup>9</sup> Verse 149-150

<sup>10</sup> Verses 138-141

<sup>11</sup> Verses 243, 248, 260

<sup>12</sup> Verse 264

<sup>13</sup> Verses 3759, 4016

<sup>14</sup> Verse 4538-4540

<sup>15</sup> Verses: 4055-4062

- <sup>16</sup> Verses 3836-3841
- <sup>17</sup> Poem Verses 435-443
- <sup>18</sup> Poem Verses 459-462
- <sup>19</sup> Poem Verse 486
- <sup>20</sup> Poem Verses 497-498, 508-510
- <sup>21</sup> Poem Verses 562-567, 570-579
- <sup>22</sup> Verses 3014 -3023
- <sup>23</sup> Verses 3066-3077
- <sup>24</sup> Verses 3138-3139
- <sup>25</sup> Verse 3494
- <sup>26</sup> Verses 593-595
- <sup>27</sup> Verses 790-793, 797-800
- <sup>28</sup> Verses 2510-2515
- <sup>29</sup> Verses 2616-2623
- <sup>30</sup> Verse 888-890
- <sup>31</sup> Verses 902-919
- <sup>32</sup> Verses 2376-2381
- <sup>33</sup> Verses 2424-2426
- <sup>34</sup> Verse 1111-1112
- <sup>35</sup> Verses 1175-1178
- <sup>36</sup> Verses 1208-1215
- <sup>37</sup> Verses 1861-1864
- <sup>38</sup> Verses 2333-2335
- <sup>39</sup> Verses 1896-1900
- <sup>40</sup> Verses 1222-1227
- <sup>41</sup> Verses 1287-1290
- <sup>42</sup> Verses 1268, 1259-1267
- <sup>43</sup> Verses 1293-1295
- <sup>44</sup> Verse 1367
- <sup>45</sup> Verses 1468-1471
- <sup>46</sup> Verses 1461-1465
- <sup>47</sup> Verse 1481-1482
- <sup>48</sup> Verses 1525 & 1528
- <sup>49</sup> Verse 1543
- <sup>50</sup> Verses 16140-1618
- <sup>51</sup> Verse 1299
- <sup>52</sup> Verses 3666
- <sup>53</sup> Verse 4608

## **Existential Theory of knowledge**

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### **Abstract**

Existential theory of knowledge is based on the identity of the intellect and the intelligibles and on the identity of knowledge and existence. Mulla Sadra's theory of substantial motion, in which existence is a dynamic process constantly moving towards greater intensity and perfection, had provided a good field to prove that new forms, or modes of existence do not replace prior forms but on the contrary subsume them. Knowledge, being identical with existence, replicates this process, and by acquiring successive intelligible forms - which are in reality modes of being and not essential forms, and are thus successive intensifications of existence - gradually moves the human intellect towards identity with the Active Intellect. The intellect thus becomes identified with the intelligibles which inform it.

In this paper, we are to examine the success of this theory in solving the problem of the possibility of knowledge and cognition and achieving reality. Its basic thesis is that, for Mulla Sadra, metaphysics as an acclimatized science of being qua being is possible, primary and necessary for knowledge to be certain. The central implication is that only through this method can science be taught properly and a proper classification of knowledge is undertaken, and only through this method can meaningful statements about reality be enunciated.

**Keywords:** *Existential Theory of knowledge, Unity of the intellect and the intelligible, knowledge by presence, acquired knowledge, Mulla Sadra*

The nature of knowledge and the pursuit of truth are perennial questions of philosophy. Yet, the problem of knowledge remains an elusive enigma. This issue is one of the most complicated philosophical problems and perhaps there is no philosophical issue as important. In Islamic philosophy, the epistemological question primarily concerns

the possibility of knowledge, which provides the principles of all scientific inquiry and the ground for postulating true propositions about reality. This issue is considered to be the most significant philosophical issue which could be both, studied comparatively and analyzed historically. The Aristotelian/Avicennan account of knowledge as the 'illustration' of the reality of the perceived object in the soul, or the presence of its essence in the soul, lead to category confusion between substance and accident. This is necessary in order to construct complete syllogisms whose necessary inferences provide the basis for knowledge about the totality of existence.

The importance of the issue is firstly due to the fact that man is always trying to know the external world, but what he obtains of it is only an image, and secondly, because the first perfection which man expects from receiving those images is the achievement the external world and a reflection of reality. Thus, Muslim philosophers discussed, along with the issue of existence, whether images correspond with reality, or in other words, whether knowledge is attainable.

The Post-Avicennan traditions of philosophy in Islam focus upon the issues of mental existence, immediate eidetic vision and intentionality in their pursuit of epistemology. Before this shift of emphasis, the Aristotelian account of knowledge as the impression of the reality of the perceived object or the presence of the quiddity of the thing in the percept was dominant with its concomitant problem of how one obtains these accidental forms from their substances. Thus one had faced a major category mistake or confusion: how could one classify an object under two different categories, one a substance, and another accident given the mutual exclusivity of Aristotelian categoriology

Furthermore, for Mulla Sadra actual intelligibles are self-intelligent and self-intellected, since an actual intelligible cannot be deemed to have ceased to be intelligible once it is considered outside its relation to intellect. As the human intellect acquires more intelligibles, it gradually moves upwards in terms of the intensification and perfection of existence, losing its dependence on quiddities, until it

becomes one with the world of Intellect and enters the realm of pure existence.

Mulla Sadra's radical ontology enabled him to offer original contributions to epistemology, combining aspects of Ibn Sina's theory of knowledge (in which the Active Intellect, while remaining utterly transcendent, actualizes the human mind by instilling it with intellectual forms in accordance with its state of preparation to receive these forms) with the theory of self-knowledge through knowledge by presence developed by al-Suhrawardi.

### **Historical background**

The importance of the issue of knowledge and perception is firstly due to the fact that man is always trying to know the external world, but what he obtains of it is only an image, and secondly, because the first perfection which man expects from receiving those images is the achievement of the external world and a reflection of reality. Thus, Muslim philosophers discussed, along with the issue of existence, whether images correspond with reality, or in other words, whether knowledge is attainable.

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In his account of the category of quality (*kayf*) and its divisions, al-Farabi (d. 950) classifies knowledge within the category of psychic

quality (*kayfiyya nafsaniyya*).<sup>2</sup> Thus he considers knowledge to be an accident that inheres in the human soul. Ibn Sina regards knowledge on the one hand as occurring in man's soul, and on the other as the presence of the idea of the reality of thing for the perceiving one.<sup>3</sup> Thus, he encounters the problem of the accidentality of forms obtained from substances.<sup>4</sup> He considers that the definition of substance, as a quiddity, which, if it is realized in extra-mental existence, is independent of a substrate, applied to intelligible substances.<sup>5</sup> In this way, Ibn Sina tackles the problem. He attempts to retain the quidditative relation between perception and the perceived object. This reveals his assumption of the correspondence between perception and the external world, and the possibility of the recognition of the essential properties of things. The validity of his theory, thus, is a function of the validity of these assumptions. His theory introduces the theory of quiddity, in which the correspondence of the mind with the objective world is justified through the notion of quiddity.

Ibn Sina and his Peripatetic followers hold that the active intellect or the Giver of forms (*wahib al-suwar*) gives the same form to the rational faculty, which was given to matter, and, as a result, all sorts of material quiddities obtain.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Sina's theory of knowledge is consistent with his psychology and cosmology. Concerning the completeness of his theory, it should be admitted that the field of Ibn Sina's analysis at the first step is the field of the primary *intelligibilia*, and at the second step his definition for knowledge covers the field of the philosophical and logical secondary *intelligibilia*.

The problem of existence and the way to knowledge of existence, from the primary stages of the history of philosophy in the Islam world, has provoked the most important metaphysical problem for Islamic philosophers. This problem was first directly discussed by al-Farabi and when Ibn-Sina posed existence as a metaphysical element distinct from quiddity, it found an extreme importance as the foundation of his rational-philosophical analysis.

Ibn-Sina through this goes beyond Aristotle and has developed the concept of existence beyond the extent of "substance", meaning he

has developed this to the extent of “actual existence (de facto)”. Ibn-Sina like al-Farabi places distinct between the knowledge of quiddity of things and their existence, and shows that attaching the universal quiddity which is lack of identification to another unidentified and universal quiddity, can not be the cause of their identifications. The criterion for identification, in his idea, can not be looked for in the attaching and union of the quiddies. Identification is the essential implications of existence and quiddity only under existence is determined. This word of al-Farabi is considered as a turn point in the history of philosophy and thought, because the philosophical discussions up to this point, were based on this idea that objective existents should only be recognized through quiddities and in fact quiddity was the core of all philosophical discussions, while exactly after al-Farabi and Ibn-Sina philosopher’s attention was attracted towards existence and they became to understand that objective existence has it own specific judgments which can not be recognized through the essential judgments.

Aristotle also recognizes metaphysics as the knowledge of “existence”, but his interpretation of “existence” is “substance”. In his idea knowledge of existence is nothing but knowledge of the real essence of things, which can be found in their forms, not in their matters. He alike other Greek thinkers believed that the world has a rational order and rational thought can only understand the “form” and due to this belief, was trying to develop and progress science through defining the quiddity of things. In fact, the Aristotelian science was after discovering the intelligible and final causes of things through rational reasoning in God’s knowledge; causes which have necessarily determined all the phenomena in the world and these phenomena can be in no other way but the way they are.

Ibn-Sina does not accept this word. He in contrary to Aristotle believed that the objective existence of a material thing could not be interpreted and explained in philosophy through only its form and matter. What are gained through this are only essential and accidental qualities of an object which can only provide us with the understanding

of quiddity of an object. He has comprehensively explained and analyzed the relation between form and matter in his book, *Shifa*, and has reached this conclusion that both form and matter regarding their existence are dependent on God or the active intellect and can not be understood in any other way. Avicenna directly shows that the finite being which is composed of the quiddity and existence can not be the cause of its own creation. Its existence should be sourced in some were else and that is the creator. For this, he applies efficient creational causes for rational knowledge of the existence of objects and after proving the existence of God, he emphasizes on this key point that through the consideration of the existence of God it is possible to recognize the world.

It is on this basis that Ibn-Sina in his rational analysis talks about existence as one of the accidents of quiddity. Ibn-Sina was well aware of the danger that his thesis might be misinterpreted in this way. He emphasized that we should not confuse "existence" as an accident with ordinary accidents, like "white", etc.. He emphasized that existence is a very peculiar and unique kind of accident, for the objective reality which is referred to by a proposition like "The table is existent" presents a completely different picture from what is naturally suggested by the propositional form of the expression. However, Ibn-Sina himself did not clarify the structure of the extra-mental, objective reality which is found beyond what is meant by the logical proposition. The problem was left to posterity. In the periods subsequent to Ibn-Sina, this problem assumed supreme importance, and a number of divergent opinions were put forward. What separates Ibn-Sina's philosophical thought from his descendents, is his philosophical method and his interpretation of reality. His philosophical method is different from the philosophical methods of Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra and his interpretation of reality is different from theirs.

Suhrawardi, perhaps more than Ibn Sina, emphasizes that everything that has an essence that is conscious, is non-material because it is present to itself. It can not be a corporeal accident or accidental darkness to any thing other than itself; because accidental light is not light for itself rather than accidental body. So it is pure,

unmixed and separable light.<sup>7</sup> So in Suhrawardi's view, like that of Aristotle, non-materiality presupposes consciousness and knowability. Mulla Sadra, later, invokes this position as a fundamental basis for explaining certainty.

Suhrawardi regards intellection as the presence of the immaterial, or the presence of the thing in an essence, which is free of matter.<sup>8</sup> He considers perceptual form as an ideal ipseity (*huwiyya*), and considers it to be the 'shadowy' appearance of extra-mental thing. He insists that the idea of the thing is not similar to the thing in all aspects. In this way, he proceeds to solve the well-known problem of the association between accident and substance. According to him, the mental object is the idea of the extra-mental thing, and thus it is not similar to the extra-mental thing in all aspects. The extra-mental thing is clearly extrinsic to the mind. If the object known in the mind is similar to the extra-mental thing even in this aspect, this would obviate the realization of the mental form in mind.<sup>9</sup>

By basing his philosophy on light, al-Suhrawardi was able to introduce two important notions: that of intensity and gradation, and that of presence and self-manifestation. It is possible to see his philosophy as experiential, although his notion of experience was not confined to that obtained through the senses but embraced other forms including that of mystical experience.

Ibn Sina's explanation of knowledge is based on the inhering of the form of the thing known in the mind of the knower, but for al-Suhrawardi such knowledge only guarantees certainty and the correspondence of knowledge with reality, because there exists a more fundamental kind of knowledge that does not depend on form and which is, like the experience of pain, unmediated and undeniable. The prime mode of this presential knowledge (*al-'ilm al-huduri*) is self-awareness, and every being existing in itself which is capable of self-awareness is a pure and simple light, as evinced by the pellucid clarity with which it is manifest to itself. In fact, being a pure and simple light is precisely the same as having self-awareness, and this is true of all

self-aware entities up to and including God, the Light of Lights, the intensity of whose illumination and self-awareness encompasses everything else.

At this point the Illuminationist must employ discursive philosophy to analyze the experience and systematize it, in the same way as with sensory experience. The relation between this direct intuitive knowledge and the philosophy of Illumination is compared to that between observation of the heavens and astronomy. The major portion of al-Suhrawardi's writings is devoted to this last stage of rational analysis and systematization, although he sometimes relates his visions.

Suhrawardi is significant in that he is the first philosopher to use the term 'mental existence' in works that are predominantly Peripatetic in nature.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that in his later work on knowledge, Suhrawardi accepts the theory of the illumination of the soul, which is completely opposed to the theory of mental existence.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is not consistent.

Concerning the completeness of Suhrawardi's definition, his definition cannot be restricted to the field of primary *intelligibilia*, for the shadowy appearance of the extra-mental object is a universal concept, whose application in the field of secondary *intelligibilia* is not meaningless, even though its application in the former field is more conventional. It should be noted that perhaps it was the use of the term 'illustration' (*tamaththul*) made by Ibn Sina to define knowledge that led Suhrawardi to assume an ideal identity for perception.

With Suhrawardi we enter not only a new period but also another realm of Islamic philosophy: *hikmat al-ishraq*. Suhrawardi saw this *hikmah* as being present also in ancient Greece before the advent of Aristotelian rationalism and identifies *hikmah* with coming out of one's body and ascending to the world of lights, as did Plato.<sup>12</sup> Similar ideas are to be found throughout his works, and he insisted that the highest level of *hikmah* requires both the perfection of the theoretical faculty and the purification of the soul.<sup>13</sup>

The *hikmat* is structurally a peculiar combination of rational thinking and gnostic intuition, or, we might say, rationalist philosophy and mystical experience. It is a special type of scholastic philosophy based on existential intuition of Reality, a result of philosophizing the gnostic ideas and visions obtained through intellectual contemplation. With regard to the second aspect of the *hikmat* as distinguished above, namely the fact that a mystical or gnostic experience underlies the whole structure of its philosophization, we may remark that the *hikmat* is not an outcome of mere intellectual labor on the level of reason. It is rather an original product of the activity of keen analytic reason combined with, and backed by, a profound intuitive grasp of reality, or even of something beyond that kind of reality which is accessible to human consciousness.

In this regard Suhrawardi establishes, in place of "existence," as something really "real" the spiritual and metaphysical Lights (*Anwar*) which is multiple reality having an infinite number referents in terms of intensity and weakness, the highest one being the Light of all lights (*nur al-anwar*) and the lowest being Darkness (*zulmah*). But the Suhrawardian *anwar* have nothing essentially contradictory to, or incongruous with, "existence" as conceived by Mulla Sadra who conceive of "existence" as the ultimate reality, as being something of a "luminous" (*nuri*) nature. The reality of "existence" is the light, the very nature of "light" being to be "self-manifesting in it and bringing others into manifestation." It is, in brief, the "presence" (*hudur*) of itself and of others. All this, however, cannot be grasped by rational demonstration. It is a truth that can be realized only through something completely different from thinking and reasoning, i.e., inner vision and inner illumination.

Ibn 'Arabi, another great master of gnosis of roughly the same period as Suhrawardi, took exactly the same position regarding the reciprocal essential relationship between philosophy and mysticism. We may note that Ibn 'Arabi, while still a young man in Spain, was personally acquainted with Averroes; moreover, Ibn 'Arabi himself, was familiar with the philosophical concepts of Aristotle and Plato.

Fully equipped with this Greek analytical tradition, he was able in a most logical way to analyze his inner visions of Reality and elaborate them into a remarkable metaphysical world-view. The latter is thus a coherently structured system of metaphysical concepts based directly upon his theophanic visions.

In the view of Ibn 'Arabi, there are two clearly distinguishable aspects to the absolute reality of "existence". In the first aspect, "existence" is sheer undifferentiation, pure "unity". In this capacity it is the metaphysical Mystery, the unknown-unknowable. It is not even God as theologically understood as the creator of the world or as the object of adoration and worship. The second of the two aspects is that of *tajalli*; Divine self-manifestation or theophany. It is a metaphysical stage at which the absolute Reality turns toward the world of contingent being. Theologically speaking, it is the Face of God, God as He manifests Himself as "God" to others.

### **Unification of the knower and the known (ittihad al-'alim wa-al-ma'lum)**

This principle is traditionally attributed to Porphyry but is already alluded to by Aristotle in the *Metaphysica*<sup>14</sup> and held by the neo-Platonic philosophers. In the Islamic world also adherence to this principle is seen before Mulla Sadra in the writings of Abu' hasan al-'Amiri (fourth century A.H.) and Afdal al-Din Kashani (eighth century), although most of the Peripatetics like Ibn Sina<sup>15</sup> attacked this view.<sup>16</sup> But it was resurrected by Mulla Sadra and given a new meaning in the context of the unity of *wujud* and trans-substantial motion.

Perception is for him a movement from potentiality to actuality and an elevation in the degree of being in which the perceiver or knower rises from his own level of existence to the level of existence of that which is perceived through the union between the knower and the known which characterizes all intellection. According to him at the moment of intellection the form of the intelligible (*ma'qul*), the possessor of intellect (*aqil*), and even the intellect itself (*'aql*) become

united in such a way than one *is* the other as long as the act of intellection lasts.<sup>17</sup>

The goal of Sadra's doctrine of the intellect is to show that the human mind ultimately unites itself with the Active Intelligence or the Universal Intellect. Since, according to Sadra, the end of all substantive movement is to achieve a new level of being, knowledge represents, for him, such substantive movement (*Harkat-e jauhariya*) whose end is the union of the human intellect with the transcendent Intellect and hence the achievement of a new level of existence—that of pure, simple intellect. Further, since this evolutionary movement is cumulative, it represents something positive, inclusive of the lower levels of being and not excluding or negating them. This means that which exists at the lower levels with separate or mutually exclusive parts, exists at the higher levels as mutually inclusive and unitary.

For Mulla Sadra, *knowledge is a form of existence (al-'ilm nahw min al-wujud)*, as he reiterates throughout his writing. The doctrine of Illumination as propounded by al-Suhrawardi and his commentators and the Sufi gnosis, as it found its classic and monumental formulation at the hands of Ibn 'Arabi, taught a real and literal identity of the human intellect with Light or the Active Intellect. But this illuminationist-gnostic doctrine did not formulate the idea of a systematic substantive change as the fundamental process of nature. Sadra's performance essentially consists in taking over this gnostic goal and grounding it philosophically in his doctrine of substantive change, supported in turn by his theory of the priority of existence over essence.

According to Mulla Sadra, the Aristotelian-Ibn Sinaian theory of abstraction holds that, whereas the objects of knowledge change from the sensibles, through the imaginables to the intelligibles - the cognizing subject, the soul, remains the same. The soul, that is to say, simply receives forms of different degrees of abstraction, without its own substance being affected. This is not the case. The soul itself undergoes an evolution and from its initial being of the material order, it becomes, at the intellectual plane, a being of the intelligible order.<sup>18</sup>

This evolution of the soul itself-the successive levels of its existence (*nasha'at*)-is an important proof, for Sadra, of the law of substantive change to which the entire field of natural existence is subject, a law from whose operation only God and the transcendent intelligences (which are parts or attributes of God) are exempt. The soul, therefore, not merely "receives" forms but creates and *becomes* them, i.e., becomes literally identical with them. For Sadra, the soul "becoming" its objects is not a temporary affair lasting only during the act of knowledge, but denotes a new level of existence which the soul achieves; particularly at the level of "acquired" or absolute intellectual power, the soul becomes "pure act" (*al-fi'l al-sarf*), i.e., pure knowledge without any trace of potentiality.

While subscribing to the general Peripatetic doctrine that the soul receives and becomes the forms of its objects of knowledge, Ibn Sina had assailed the doctrine that the soul literally becomes its objects, a doctrine he attributed to Porphyry.<sup>19</sup> Mulla Sadra vigorously attacks Ibn Sina on this issue and accuses him both of inconsistency and failure to grasp the nature of knowledge, particularly intellectual knowledge. His refutation of Ibn Sina's arguments against the identity of the intellect and the intelligible is squarely based on his doctrine of the substantive change or evolution and the reality of existence to the exclusion of essence. In this change, or development, previous forms are not discarded or simply replaced by new forms but are consummated and perfected. This demonstrates the absolute reality of existence over against essence, for whereas essences are multiple, static and mutually repellent, existence is unitary and inclusive: *conceptually*, growth, nourishment, locomotion, and knowledge may be all different, but they all come together in concrete human existence. Evolution consists in carrying over, not negating, the previous grades of perfection and yet transcending them.<sup>20</sup>

Since Ibn Sina did not concede the principle of evolutionary change and did not clearly, affirm the unique reality of existence over against essence, which alone can supply the principle of identity-in-difference, and difference in-identity-he could not solve the riddle of knowledge, for knowledge and existence are the same. Just like

existence, the scale of knowledge moves from the rudimentary, the multiple, the mutually exclusive, to the higher, more complex, more inclusive and simpler forms,<sup>21</sup> This scale ends in a simple, intuitive kind of intellective cognition where the human soul becomes identical with the transcendent Active Intelligence.

Knowledge in this opinion is a motion from potential to actual and the ascendance of the mode of existence during which the Knower will surpass his mode of existence and reaches to the level where a union of the Knower and known, and the intellect and intelligible will take place. According to this view, all knowledge implies ultimately the union of the knower and the known. In fact, our knowledge of something does not mean the presence of the form or idea of that thing in our mind, the two being separate, like the container and what is contained in it. Rather, at the moment when we are conscious of the knowledge of something our mind *is* the idea of that thing and the two are united as one reality.

This view is reiterated by Sadra in his discussion of the two orders of knowledge the one existing in the natural world, i.e., the human soul, and the other in the transcendent intelligence. Sadra tells us that knowledge in the human soul starts with the more general and less valuable primary truths and advances to more concrete, definite, and existential knowledge whereas in the case of the separate Intelligences, this order is reversed. When the soul perfects its knowledge and becomes "acquired intellect" and achieves an existential status analogous to that of the Active Intelligence, its knowledge-order also becomes like that of the Active Intelligence.<sup>22</sup> In view of this, it becomes difficult to hold that primary and general truths, like the law of contradiction, have a status in the realm of knowledge analogous to the status of God in the realm of being.

Like all other gnostics, Mulla Sadra considers knowledge and being, or, from another point of view, the knower and the known, to be essentially the same and identifies the being of things with God's knowledge of them. God knows His own essence and His essence is

none other than His Being, and since His Being and essence are the same, He is at once the knower, the knowledge, and the known. In the case of the pure intellects or forms that are completely divorced from matter also, the intellect and the intelligible are the same, the difference in the two instances being that, although knowledge of the intellects is identical with their being, it is not identical with their quiddities, since their being surpasses their quiddities, whereas in the case of God knowledge is identical both with Being and quiddity, since God's quiddity is the same as His Being.

Hence, he sees the existence of objects as the very God's knowledge. Based on the principality of "being," as well as the significant principle of "simple Truth is everything (*basitul haqiqat kulul ashia*)", Mulla Sadra considers the essence of the Truth as a mirror in which God sees the forms or essence of objects. Furthermore, since the forms of the creatures, both universals and particulars are reflected in the essence of the Truth, God has knowledge of every particular.<sup>23</sup>

Mulla Sadra rejects the Peripatetic notion that God's knowledge of things is the projection of their forms upon His essence as well as the idea followed by many Illuminationists that God's knowledge is the presence of the very forms of things in His essence. Rather, he uses the gnostic symbol of a mirror and considers the divine essence a mirror in which God sees the forms or essences of all things and in fact, through the contemplation of these forms or archetypes in the mirror of His own essence, He brings all things into being. Moreover, since the forms of all creatures, universal as well as particular, are reflected in His essence, God has knowledge of every particle of the universe.<sup>24</sup>

As for acquired knowledge or the knowledge of the human soul of things other than itself, it is not a reflection of the forms of things upon the soul and the soul does not have a passive role in the act of knowing. Rather, since man is a microcosm composed of all degrees of existence, his knowledge of things comes from the contemplation of these forms in the mirror of his own being much like divine knowledge with the difference that God's knowledge leads to objective existence

(*al-wujud al-'ayni*) of forms, while man's knowledge leads only to their mental existence (*al-wujud al-dhihni*). Otherwise, man's soul has a creative power similar to that of God; its knowledge implies the creation of forms in the soul-forms the subsistence of which depends upon the soul as the subsistence of the objective universe depends upon God.<sup>25</sup>

According to Mulls, Sadra, mental existence or the presence in the mind of forms that yield knowledge of things as well as knowledge of itself is above the categories of substance and accidents and is identical with Being Itself, The knowledge that the soul has of things is just like the illumination of the light of Being. This knowledge establishes the form of that which is perceived in the mind, as Being establishes and manifests the forms and quiddities of things externally. Moreover, it repeats in an inverted order the degrees of cosmic manifestation. Just as cosmic existence originates from the divine essence through the world of the intelligences and consists of the degrees of cosmic souls, bodies, forms, and matter, so knowledge begins from the senses, then rises to the level of the imagination, apprehension, and finally intellection ascending the scale of Being to the summit from which the whole of universal manifestation has descended.

This doctrine is not only important for Mulla Sadra's theory of knowledge, but is also of great significance for the understanding of the role of knowledge in human perfection. Through trans-substantial motion the act of knowing elevates the very existence of the knower. According to a *hadith* of the Prophet, "knowledge is light" (*al-ilm nurun*), a principle which is also foundational to Mulla Sadra's thought.<sup>26</sup> The unity of the knower and the known implies ultimately the unity of knowing and being. The being of man is transformed through the light of knowing and being. The being of man is transformed through the light of knowledge and also our mode of being determines our mode of knowledge. This principle has great bearing on the meaning of knowledge, because it implies ultimately that man is what he knows, that is to say that his being is determined by his

knowledge; just as, conversely, what he knows depends upon his being, upon 'who' he is and 'what' he is. In this profound reciprocity is to be found the key to the significance of knowledge for Mulla Sadra and of the idea that knowledge transforms our being even in the posthumous state. The writings of Mulla Sadra are replete with various applications of this doctrine and he returns again and again to the principle of the ultimate unity of being and knowing.

Mulla Sadra's account of the Prophetic Revelation also differs materially from those of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, although it has certain general resemblances with them as well. His differences from these two philosophers result from his doctrine of knowledge and being. Whereas in al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, the Prophet receives the Intellectual Truth as a totality which is then transformed by *his* power of imagination into a symbolic form and a verbal mode; according to Sadra, the Prophet's mind becomes totally identified with the Active Intelligence *both at the intellectual level and the imaginative level*-that is to say, it is not the Prophet's mind which creates-although the Prophet has an inner psychological and unconscious compulsion-the symbolic or imaginative truth but his mind "perceives" or rather "becomes" that truth as well as the intellectual truth. The difference between a prophet and a saint (or a sage) is that whereas the prophet is identified with both the inner spiritual (intellectual) and external (i.e., in terms of images, etc.) aspects of the Active Intelligence (the Angel), and, therefore, can identify the source of the Revelation, the saint is confined to the inner aspect and cannot identify the source of his knowledge, which, therefore, does not constitute Revelation but inspiration.<sup>27</sup> Finally, this doctrine of the Simple Intellect-with its principle of identity-is used by Sadra to explain God's knowledge of the particulars, a problem around which has centered a great deal of controversy between the philosophers and the orthodox for centuries.

Humans can, of course, normally only attain at best a partial identification with the world of Intellect as long as they remain with their physical bodies; only in the case of prophets can there be complete identification, allowing them to have direct access to knowledge for themselves without the need for instruction. Indeed,

only very few human minds attain identification with the world of Intellect even after death. Even this brief account of Mulla Sadra's main doctrines will have given some idea of the role that is played in his philosophy by the experience of the reality which it describes. Indeed he conceived of *hikma* (wisdom) as 'coming to know the essence of beings as they really are' or as 'a man's becoming an intellectual world corresponding to the objective world'.

### **The relationship of mental form to the external reality**

Islamic philosophers have an idea regarding the object of knowledge and its relation to subject. This idea in its highest form belongs to Mulla Sadra. According to his idea the highest stages of knowledge is achieved when the subject of knowledge is perfectly united with the object and their identities become one. Mulla Sadra who places "unity of the reality of existence" as the foundation of his "metaphysical system of thought" recognizes "existence" (*wujud*) as the highest object of knowledge. In his opinion, real knowledge of "existence" is achieved only through a special form of intuition, but because he concerns in his philosophy with both "existent" (*mujud*) and "existence". He constantly emphasizes on this idea that knowledge of "existence" is either acquired through presential knowledge or attained by reasoning for it through its implications.

At the first glance, what he says about the recognition of "existence" through rational analysis, might be bold and strange, because he does not accept Ibn Sina and al-Farabi's ideas on "accidentality of existence" and claims that the reality which is the content and denotation of the "man exists" is completely different from the content of other propositions. In his opinion, the "man" which in this proposition is the logical and grammatical subject of proposition, objectively is not subject, but is a predicate. The real subject is "the truth of existence" and all quiddities are only accidents which limit and constrain a single reality as innumerable objects. To intuit this reality until human consciousness remains based on daily experiences is not

achievable. Humanity should be woken up by a completely other consciousness so to be able to understand this world under these conditions.

Mulla Sadra in his metaphysical explanation of this idea, applies the substantial movement, and with believe in the "unification of the knower and the known" (*ittihad al-'alim wa-al-ma'lum*), he considers the growth and transcendence of the human knowledge depending on the existential intensification and evolution, the innate and internal growth, and subject through it goes beyond its existential stance and attains to existential stance of object. Therefore, he can prove a reality which has a main role in the relation between subject and object and elimination of distinction between them. The philosophers belonging to this school of thought chose to take a position which might look at first sight very strange. They asserted that, in the sphere of external reality, the proposition: "The table is existent" as understood in the sense of substance-accident relationship turns out to be meaningless. For in the realm of external reality there is, to begin with, no self-subsistent substance called table, nor is there a real "accident" called "existence" to come to inhere in the substance.

Mulla Sadra do not mean to say simply that the world of reality as we perceive it in our experience is in itself unreal. Nor do they want to assert that the proposition: "The table is existent" does not refer to any kind of external reality. The only point they want to make is that the structure of external reality which corresponds to this proposition is totally different from what is normally suggested by the form of the proposition. "Table" is but an inner modification of this reality, one of its self-determinations. Thus in the realm of external reality, the subject and the predicate must exchange their places. The "table" which is the logical or grammatical subject of the proposition: "The table is existent", is in this domain not a subject; rather, it is a predicate. The real subject is "existence", while "table" is but an "accident" determining the subject into a particular thing. In fact all the so-called "essences", like being-a-table, being-a-flower, etc. are in external reality nothing but "accidents" that modify and delimit the one single reality called "existence" into innumerable things."

Such a vision of reality, however, is not accessible to human consciousness as long as it remains at the level of ordinary everyday experience. In order to have access to it, according to Mulla Sadra the mind must experience a total transformation of itself. The consciousness must transcend the dimension of ordinary cognition where the world of being is experienced as consisting of solid, self-subsistent things, each having as its ontological core what is called essence. There must arise in the mind a totally different kind of awareness in which the world is revealed in an entirely different light. It is at this point that this kind of philosophy turns conspicuously toward mysticism. So much so that a philosopher like Mulla Sadra comes to declare that any philosophy which is not based upon the mystical vision of reality is but a vain intellectual pastime. In more concrete terms, the basic idea here is that an integral metaphysical worldview is possible only on the basis of a unique form of subject-object relationship. It is to be remarked in this connection that, in this variety of Islamic philosophy as well as in other major philosophies of the East, metaphysics or ontology is inseparably connected with the subjective state of man, so that the selfsame Reality is said to be perceived differently in accordance with the different degrees of consciousness.

In this problem i.e. the "unification of the knower and the known", whatever may happen to be the object of knowledge, the highest degree of knowledge is always achieved when the knower, the human subject, becomes completely unified and identified with the object so much so that there remains no differentiation between the two. For differentiation or distinction means distance, and distance in cognitive relationship means ignorance. To this we must add another observation, namely that the highest object of cognition for Mulla Sadra is "existence".<sup>28</sup> And according to Him the real knowledge of "existence" is obtainable not by rational reasoning but only through a very peculiar kind of intuition. This latter mode of cognition, in the view of Mulla Sadra, consists precisely in knowing "existence" through the "unification of the knower and the known", i.e. knowing "existence"

not from the outside as an "object" of knowledge, but from the inside, by man's *becoming* or rather *being* "existence" itself, that is, by man's self-realization.

It is evident that such "unification of the knower and the known" cannot be realized at the level of everyday human experience where the subject stands eternally opposed to the object. The subject in such a state grasps "existence" only as an object. It objectifies "existence" as it objectifies all other things, while "existence" in its reality as *actus essendi* definitely and persistently refuses to be an "object". An objectified "existence" is but a distortion of the reality of "existence".

Mulla Sadra says:<sup>29</sup> when man attempts to approach "existence" through his weak intellect (*'aql za'if*) and feeble thinking (*afkar rakikah*), his natural blindness and perplexity go on but increasing. The common people who have no access to the transcendental experience of Reality are compared to a blind man who cannot walk safely without the help of a stick in his hand. The stick giving guidance to the blind man here symbolizes the rational faculty of the mind. The strange thing about this is that the stick upon which the blind man relies happens to be the very cause of his blindness. Only when Moses threw down his stick were the veils of the phenomenal forms removed from his sight. Only then did he witness, beyond the veils, beyond the phenomenal forms, the splendid beauty of absolute Reality.

Reason trying to see the absolute Reality, says Mulla Sadra in *Asfar and shawahid*, is just like the eye trying to gaze at the sun. Even from afar, the overwhelming effulgence of the sun blinds the eye of reason. And as the eye of reason goes up to higher stages of Reality, gradually approaching the metaphysical region of the Absolute, the darkness becomes ever deeper until everything in the end turns black. Like the men sitting in the cave in the celebrated Platonic myth, they remain satisfied with looking at the shadows cast by the sun. They see the faint reflections of the light on the screen of the so-called external world and are convinced that these reflections are the sole reality.

Mulla Sadra divides "existence" in this connection into pure, absolute "existence" as pure light and Shadowy and draw "existence": light (*nur*) and shadow (*zill*). Seen through the eye of a real metaphysician, shadow also is "existence". But it is not the pure reality of "existence". The ontological status of the shadowy figures, i.e. the objectified forms of "existence", at the level of normal everyday experience, appear to the human consciousness as solid, self-subsistent things.<sup>30</sup> However, these phenomenal things, although they are of a shadowy nature in themselves, are not wholly devoid of reality either. On the contrary, they are real if they are considered in relation to their metaphysical source. In fact even in the empirical world, nothing is wholly unreal.

This Islamic approach of Mulla Sadra to the problem of the reality and unreality of the phenomenal world will rightly remind us of this position that the phenomenal world is real in so far as it is the absolute truth or Reality as perceived by the relative human mind in accordance with its natural structure. But it is false and unreal if taken as something ultimate and self-subsistent. A true metaphysician worthy of the name is one who is capable of witnessing in every single thing in the world the underlying Reality of which the phenomenal form is but a self-manifestation and self-determination. But the problem now is: How can such a vision of Reality be obtainable as a matter of actual experience? To this crucial question the Islamic philosophy of "existence" answers by saying that it is obtainable only through an "inner witnessing" (*shuhud*), "tasting" (*dhawq*), "presence" (*hudur*), or "illumination" (*ishraq*).

Whatever these technical terms exactly mean, and to whatever degree they may differ from one another, it will be evident in any case that such an experience of Reality is not actualize-able as long as there remains the subject of cognition as a "subject", that is to say, as long as there remains in man the ego-consciousness. The empirical ego is the most serious hindrance in the way of the experience of "seeing by self-realization". For the reality of existence is immediately grasped only when the empirical selfhood is annihilated, when the ego-consciousness

is completely dissolved into the Consciousness of Reality, or rather, Consciousness which *is* Reality. Hence the supreme importance attached in this type of philosophy to the experience called *fana'*, meaning literally annihilation, that is, the total nullification of the ego-consciousness.

The phenomenal world is the world of Multiplicity. Although Multiplicity is ultimately nothing other than the self-revealing aspect of the absolute Reality itself, he who knows Reality only in the form of Multiplicity knows Reality only through its variously articulated forms, and fails to perceive the underlying Unity of Reality. The immediate experience of Reality through "self-realization" consists precisely in the immediate cognition of absolute Reality before it is articulated into different things. In order to see Reality in its absolute indetermination, the ego also must go beyond its own essential determination.

After having passed through above crucial principle i.e. "*Unification of the knower and the known*" Mulla Sadra affirms this principle, in all knowledge. But the nature of this identity must be defined carefully. It is not the case that external objects, as they are, become objects of knowledge. Indeed, the forms of external objects cannot move into the mind and become known, since mental forms and external forms are different in several essential respects.<sup>31</sup> It will be shown presently that the status of mental existence is radically different from the status of external existence. When something becomes an object of knowledge, therefore, it acquires an altogether new *genre* of existence (*nash'a 'ilmiya*) where several of its characteristics of external existence are removed and it acquires certain new characteristics.<sup>32</sup>

This position is supported by a consideration of sense perception. It is not true that in sense perception the object of knowledge is the quality coming to inhere in the sense organ and producing a qualitative change in that organ.<sup>33</sup> This consideration shows that perceptible forms are not externally existent forms; nor are they form present in the sense organs at the time of perception. Perceptible forms are, therefore, operations of or emanations from the soul itself and the presentation of an object to a sense organ only pro-

vides the occasion for the projection of the form from the soul. All forms in knowledge are produced by the soul in this way and Sadra says that the relationship of cognitive forms to the soul is analogous to the relationship of the contingent to the Necessary Being, God.

As for the reality of knowledge, philosophers have given several views about it. The first view to be considered is that which defines knowledge in terms of abstraction or separation from matter. Abstraction is taken to mean abstraction from matter and elimination of material attachments. That is to say, abstraction is taken as something negative.<sup>34</sup> The second approach to the reality of knowledge is to say that knowledge consists in the imprinting of the form of the object in the subject. It is obvious that this is not true of self-knowledge, since it is admitted by all that self-knowledge does not come about by the imprinting of one's form into oneself. Secondly, the imprinting of forms in matter does not become knowledge for material bodies. Nor is it true to say that, in matter, the presence of quantity, space, position, etc. prevents it from knowing, for when the soul knows things, it knows them along with quantity, quality, position, etc.

Apart from the fact that this view still does not cover the phenomenon of self-knowledge, it necessitates the conclusion that those things, which do not actually exist, cannot be known in any sense, for there can be no relationship between the mind and the non-existent. It is also difficult on this view to explain ignorance in the sense of misknowledge, since, if this relationship is present, there is true knowledge; and if it is absent, there is no knowledge at all. If one holds that knowledge is not a mere relation but a relational quality (*kaifiya dhat idafa*), one is vulnerable to similar objections. It would also follow that God's knowledge is an extrinsic quality to His being and not essential to Him.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the view that knowledge is an accidental quality of the mind; was also held by Ibn Sina in certain contexts. But Ibn Sina notes the well-known difficulty as to how, if the mental form is to correspond to the external reality, a substance in external reality can become an

accident in the mind. Ibn Sina's answer is that this mental form, which is an accident to the mind, is of such a nature that, if it were to exist externally, it would be a substance and not an accident. That this is not a genuine solution of the difficulty is obvious. For it is meaningless to say that something, which is a substance in-itself, turns into an accident, in the mind.<sup>36</sup> Al-Suhrawardi sought to translate the phenomenon of cognition into the terminology of Light. He posited the categories of Light as that which is Light to itself, and that which is Light to something else. The first is the self-existing, self-knowing substance, which is correct insofar as it identifies true being with knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

Mulla Sadra then proceeds to state his own view of knowledge: Knowledge is neither a privation like abstraction from matter, nor a relation but a being (*wujud*). (It is) not every being but that which is an actual being, not potential. (It is) not even every actual being, but a pure being, unmixed with non-being. It becomes determinate by receiving a bodily form. But body itself cannot become knowledge, since it is not pure being: parts of a body, being mutually exclusive, are never present to each other and hence body can never attain a real unity which is requisite for true being and knowledge. Now "attainment and possession" (*al-nayl wa'l-dark*) are of the essence of knowledge. Therefore, body and its physical relations can never be a proper object of knowledge, except through a form other than this bodily form. This other form is an altogether new form having a spiritual character, a form arising from within the soul.

Knowledge, then, is pure existence, free from matter.<sup>38</sup> Such existence is the soul when it has fully developed into an acquired intellect. The soul then does not need forms inhering in it as its accidents but creates forms from within itself or, rather, *is* these forms. This is the meaning of the identity of thought and being. This also explains the dictum referred to previously, viz., that all knowledge is related to the soul as the contingent world is related to God. For just as God is Pure and Simple Existence, the Absolute Mind and all other existents are related to Him, thanks to the "unfolding existence (*wujud munbasit*)," at different levels-which constitute a systematically ambiguous world of existence of identity-in-differences, at the same

time generating a semi-real realm of essences-so the soul gives rise, thanks to the unfolding knowledge (which is a perfect analogue of the "unfolding existence" of God) to different levels of knowables-of perception, imagination, estimation, and intellection-as systematically ambiguous knowables which are, in a sense, different and in a sense identical.

It is important to note clearly the sense in which the phrase "pure existence free from matter" has been used; otherwise, it is liable to be gravely misunderstood. Something, which is free from matter, is also called a form or pure and abstract form. Form, in this sense, can also mean essence. This is precisely what is *not* meant here, else we will revert to the doctrine of abstraction of forms whose relationship to the soul will again become one of accidental quality. On the contrary, when a form is free from matter, it becomes a pure existent, not an essence, and an existent cannot be known through a form but through an intuitive self-identity or direct knowledge. Without this existential dimension to the form and the consequent identity of knowledge and existence, it would, indeed, be possible to object that from the *concept* "form free from matter," it is not possible to deduce "knowledge," for the two are not the same. That is why even when we know that God, for example, is free from matter; we have still to *prove* His self-knowledge by a further argument. The answer is that we are not here talking of an *abstract concept* "form free from matter," but of the *fact* that existence cannot be known except through self-identity and direct intuition, and this is possible only in a being free from matter.<sup>39</sup>

Mulla Sadra's statements that knowledge requires a new status of being for the known object, raises the question of the nature of mental existence *al-wujud al-dhihni*, and the relationship of this existence to the known object. The first task is to *prove* that there is such a thing as "mental existence" as distinguished from real existence; this Sadra claims to have accomplished by showing that since, in sense-perception, the external material object in itself cannot be presented to the mind and hence known, the soul must create a corresponding form, of its own nature. This is much truer in the case of images which the

soul creates from within itself. As for the intellectual form, Sadra's position is that these forms exist in their own right in a Platonic sense and that when the soul fully knows them, it does so by an Illuminationist direct knowledge whereby it becomes identical with them.<sup>40</sup>

Because of its vision of the form, the mind is then enabled to form "essences," which come to behave as "universals" applicable to different species. In doing so, the mind necessarily does violence to the nature of reality, since reality is not essence but a spectrum of existences. Hence all forms, whether sensible, imaginative, or intellectual, exist in the mind. They are rather attached to the mind as acts or creations are attached or present to their actor or creator.<sup>41</sup> The use of the particle "in" differs with different types of existents. When something is said to be "*in* the mind," the mind cannot in this use be conceived of as a "container," but it simply means that the mind has a set of properties or essences which it is able to apply to the external reality and to classify things. Of course, the mind, as an external existent and as a piece of the furniture of objective reality, is qualified (*muttasif*) by the known essences which can, in this sense, be said to qualify the mind (*kaif nafsani*). However, intrinsically speaking, the mind looks upon the external world and operates upon it with notions, concepts, or essences (*ma'ani, mafahim, mahiyyat*).

The question of the relationship of this mental form to the external reality has troubled most Muslim philosophers since Ibn Sina, and has produced elaborate discussions. At the root of these discussions is the consideration that if the mental form is to reflect the reality faithfully, then the former must preserve the latter's characteristics. From this arises the demand that if something is a substance in the external reality, the mental form must be a substance as well. But Ibn Sina has described the mental form as a quality or accident of the soul. For an idea or form in the mind does not move out of itself and exist externally so that when it is outside the mind, it has certain characteristics while, when in the mind, it has certain other characteristics.

Others, in order to escape these difficulties, invoked the doctrine of abstraction and asserted that what the mind knows is not the outside reality itself but a picture or copy of it and that such a mental image need not possess what the outside reality possesses. According to Mulla Sadra the mental form or image and the external forms are two levels of the reality of existence. This point best clarifies the relation of Mulla Sadra's view on "quiddity" (*mâhiyyah*) and "existence" (*wujûd*). "Quiddities" have been described as "intelligible qualities" (*kayfiyyât-e ma'qûl*), meaning those subjective qualities that intellect grasps in certain "existences" and serves to separate quiddities from these existences. These existences possess the degrees of the "reality of existence" (*haqîqat-e wujûd*) and are essentially and internally determined. And thus they can abandon the absolute stage and become particular. Mulla Sadra explains this point in some of his works:

Beware that the existence of quiddities (*mâhiyyat*) is not dependent on the existence of a "characteristic" (*sifat*); it is rather dependent on the intellect's grasp of quiddity in certain existences that are externally united with quiddity. The thing that can be understood by intuition (*shuhûd*) is existence and the thing that can be understood in the form of intelligible qualities is quiddity, to which I have referred in the past. The opinion of Mulla Sadra on the relation of "quiddity" to "existence" is different from that of Ibn Sina. Mulla Sadra, who believes in the principiality of existence (*asâlat-e wujûd*), does not accept the accidentality of existence over quiddities. On the contrary, existence is something real and all quiddities are nothing but determined and limited forms of a unified true existence. In its absoluteness it is unlimited and undetermined. Only when it descends from the highest stages of absolute metaphysical simplicity does it take metaphysical form in various limited and determined things that one of them is mental existences. In a few of his works, Mulla Sadra compares the relation between the reality of existence and its limitations (*mahdûdiyyat*) to a shadow (*dhil*) and the actual shadow (*dhi-dhil*) or an image (*shabah*) and the actual thing (*dhi-shabah*).

Mulla Sadra believes that existence or the ultimate reality is luminous in nature and that it shines upon other things and, as something that transcends the faculties of mind or logic, it can only be understood and proven through inner illumination and intuitive knowledge. This is a kind of knowledge which is known directly of the essence (*dhāt*) of the known object, in which the real and genuine existence of the object of knowledge is disclosed to the knowing subject or the percipient. According to what is understood from the sayings of Muslim philosophers, knowledge in the general sense of the term as the presence of the known for the knower, is divided into two kinds: acquired and by presence. The first kind is called ‘acquired knowledge’ (*‘ilm husūlī*), that is, knowledge acquired by conceptual representation in which the external existence of its object is not observed and witnessed by the knower; rather he becomes aware of it by the mediation of something which represents it, which is termed its ‘form’ (*sūrat*) or ‘mental concept’ (*mafhūm dhihnī*), and the second kind is called ‘presentational knowledge’ or ‘knowledge by presence’ (*‘ilm hudūrī*).

### **Acquired Knowledge and the Possibility of Knowledge**

Mulla Sadra divides knowledge (*‘ilm*) into acquired (*husuli*) knowledge and innate (*huduri*) knowledge and, like the Illuminationists, divides the latter category into the knowledge of a thing of itself, of a cause of its effect, and of an effect of its cause. Mulla Sadra, like Suhrawardi, classifies knowledge into acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence. Like illuminationists, he categorizes the knowledge by presence into three classes: knowledge of soul to itself, knowledge of cause to its effect, and knowledge of effect to its cause. The acquired knowledge or the knowledge of human soul of something other than itself, is not the mere reflection of the forms of objects in the soul. Rather, the human soul has a creative power similar to that of Divine creative power and can create the forms in the soul. These forms depend upon the soul as the external world depends upon the essence of the Truth.<sup>42</sup>

The division of knowledge into these two kinds is rational, comprehensive and exclusive, and in this regard no third state can be supposed besides these two. There is an intermediary between the person who knows and the essence of the known object, by means of which the awareness is obtained, in which case the knowledge is called 'acquired or such an intermediary does not exist, and in that case there will be 'knowledge by presence.' However, the existence of these two kinds of knowledge in man needs to be explained. Knowledge by presence is the direct perception of objective reality, which is restricted to (a) immaterial beings' knowledge of their own essences and states, (b) the sufficient cause's knowledge of its own effect, and (c) the mortal being's knowledge of what happens within it. Acquired knowledge, however, is the reception of the image of objective reality and not that reality itself.

Acquired perception, which is knowledge of the mental image and concept, has no guarantee in it for its truth. If the essential known in it corresponds with the accidental known, one can maintain that knowledge of the external being has been realized, but if correspondence between the two is not certain, then the mental image is imagination devoid of reality. Thus, it can be concluded that correspondence between cognitive form and objective reality is the main element of acquired knowledge which ascertains its truth. It is here where the main problem of acquired knowledge arises: how one can be certain of the realization of correspondence between cognitive form and objective reality?

With the topic of mental existence, while defining knowledge as the representation of the reality of an object or the presence of its quiddity to the perceiver, Muslim philosophers have tried to explain the relation between perception and the object of perception and the mechanism of correspondence between the two. According to Mullā Sadrā's innovative view on the knowing of an object, it is the concept of the object and not its individual instance, essence or reality, which is realized in the mind. It is the sensuous, imaginal, or intellectual form which is acquired by the soul. This perceptual form, which is the

same as the essentially known, is through the primary predication of the external being and by the common technical predication of a quality of the soul. This theory has been interpreted in various ways. Thus, it should be discussed taking the various interpretations into account.

Mullā Sadrā regarded the presence of the form of the object for the knower to be necessary for the realization of knowledge. If by this form, the essence of the object and its quiddity (consisting of the object's essentials) are intended, thus it can be maintained that the quiddity of the object is present in the mind in the same way that it is in the external world. Such a relation is a unificatory relation between the mind and the external world (the object) which is even superior to the relation of correspondence, for a phenomenon realized in the mind is the same as the phenomenon realized in the external world. And this means that the same quiddity has two kinds of existence: objective and mental; in short, the two-fold-ness of objective existence and mental existence has no impact on the one-fold-ness of quiddity.<sup>43</sup>

According to this view in which objective existence and mental existence have been regarded as separate and their quiddities have been deemed as the same, the principality of existence, according to which the quiddity of an object is the limitation of its existence and thus a function of it, is neglected; and for the two kinds of existence, the same quiddity has been assumed for both, despite the differences between them in terms of degree and effect. According to this view, taking into account that what we acquire through the senses or through reason are mental concepts and forms which we conceive in our selves and these forms are intermediate between the soul of the perceiver and the known external reality, though these forms mirror the external world, and the view of the perceiver is directed at the object itself in the external world without stopping at the form through common technical predication which is of a quality of the soul, it should be seen how their correspondence with external reality can be proved.

In this way, the unique quiddity is a permanent one, which has various manifestations in the different worlds of existence, and particularly in human world, so that it manifests in every domain of

being in proportion to the ontological quality of that domain. While this quiddity has various manifestations in the modes of being, it is, at the same time, a unique essence and reality. This unique reality comes into being in the external world through extra-mental existence and in the mind through mental existence. If we compare Mulla Sadra's theory concerning mental existence with this interpretation, we can conclude that Mulla Sadra's theory of quiddity is a reasonable one, inspired by mystical intuition. This theory assumes the correspondence of perception with reality and the possibility of recognizing the essence and reality of things.

Mulla Sadra defines philosophy as the knowledge of the realities of things, as they are in fact, so that through knowing these realities and the objective order of the world, man may realize in himself a microcosmic rational order, which corresponds to the objective world.<sup>44</sup> This definition is reasonable only if we recognize three assumptions: the correspondence of perception with the external world, that perception represents the external world, and the possibility of recognition of the essence and the reality of things. The assumption of a quidditative relation between perception and perceived object results from the belief in perception's representation and mirroring of external reality. Concerning the issue of mental existence, Mulla Sadra posited two claims. First, in the process of learning, a phenomenon comes into being in man's mind, and it is not the case that knowledge is merely a correlative relation between the knowing subject and object known. Second, what comes into being in the mind is, in terms of essence and quiddity, the same as what comes into being in the extra-mental world. After the appearance of the form of a certain thing, it is this fact that leads us to pay attention to the external world. In this way, it can be explained in a rational way that knowledge unveils the known and explains the essential correspondence between knowledge and known.

The analysis of the completeness or incompleteness of the theories of Muslim philosophers also depends on the extent of the scope of each one of them. Man's perception is not restricted to the

realm of primary *intelligibilia* (*ma'qulat awwaliyya*) and quidditative concepts. Thus, if one of the above definitions can only explain man's perceptions in the field of primary *intelligibilia*, and if it is not able to account for man's perception in the field of secondary *intelligibilia* (*ma'qulat thaniyya*) whether philosophical or logical- it is not sufficiently complete.<sup>45</sup> If it is able to account for the whole field of human perception -whether primary or secondary *intelligibilia* it is sufficiently complete.

### **The Concomitance of Acquired Knowledge with Presentational Knowledge**

We saw that knowledge by presence is the finding of reality itself, and that therefore there is no way to have doubt or scruple about it. But we know that the range of presentational knowledge is limited and by itself it cannot provide a solution to the problems of epistemology. If there were no way to ascertain facts by means of acquired knowledge, we would not logically be able to accept definite theories in any science, and even self-evident first principles would lose their definiteness and necessity, and only the name of self-evidence and necessity would remain with them. Therefore, it is necessary that we continue our endeavor to evaluate acquired knowledge and to obtain a criterion of truth for it.

The knowledge that every one has of him as a perceiving existent is a knowledge which cannot be denied. This means that man himself, his very ego, is a perceiver, a thinker, who by internal witnessing (*shuhūd*) is aware of himself, neither by means of sensation or experience nor by forms or mental concepts. In other words, he himself is the knowledge, and in this knowledge there is no plurality or otherness between knowledge, the knower, and the known object. However, awareness of man by color, shape, and other characteristics of the body are not like this, but is acquired through sight, touch, and the other senses, and by means of mental forms. Within the body there are numerous internal organs of which we are not aware, unless we come to know of them by means of their signs and

effects, or we become aware of them by learning anatomy, physiology, and other biological sciences.

Likewise, this means that such knowledge is simple and un-analyzable, not such as the propositions, "I am," or "I exist," which are composed of several concepts. Thus, the meaning of 'self-knowledge' is this very intuitive, simple and direct awareness of our own souls. This knowledge and awareness is an essential characteristic of this 'self-knowledge'. Our awareness of our psychological states, sentiments and passions are cases of direct presentational knowledge. When we make a decision to do something, we are aware of our decision and will. No one can claim that he is unaware of his own doubt, and that he doubts the existence of his doubt.

Another instance of knowledge by presence is the knowledge the self has of its perceptive and motor faculties. Mental forms can also be independently attended to by the self, and in this case we say that they are perceived by presentational knowledge. They can also be a means by which external things or persons may be known, and in this case we say that they are cases of acquired knowledge. In this case the question arises as to whether this form or concept which mediates between the perceiving subject and the perceived object and plays the role of reflecting the perceived object represents the perceived object precisely and corresponds to it perfectly or not. Unless it is proved that this form and concept corresponds precisely to the perceived object certainty will not be acquired with respect to the validity of the perception. However, in the case that the thing or person perceived is present before the perceiver without any intermediary with its own very existence, or is united with it, no error can be supposed, and one cannot ask whether the knowledge corresponds with what is known or not, for in this case the knowledge is the known itself.

Here we should mention an important point, namely that the mind always takes a picture of what is present to it like an automatic machine. From these it gets specific forms and concepts and then analyzes and interprets them. For example, when one becomes afraid

his mind takes a photo of the state of fear which it can remember after the state has left. Furthermore, it apprehends its universal concept and by appending other concepts projects it as a proposition such as 'I am afraid,' or 'I have fear,' or 'Fear exists in me.' It interprets the appearance of this psychological state with a marvelous alacrity on the basis of its previous knowledge and identifies its cause.

Another noteworthy point is that all cases of presentational knowledge are not equal with respect to intensity or weakness. Rather, sometimes knowledge by presence is adequately powerful and intense to come to one's consciousness, while at other times it is so weak and pale that one is only semiconscious or even unconscious of it. Differences in the degrees of presentational knowledge may effect the mental interpretations associated with the degrees of intensity and weakness. For example, although a self at the lowest levels has presentational knowledge of itself, it is possible that due to the weakness of this knowledge it may imagine that the relation between the self and the body is the relation of identity, concluding that the reality of the self is this very material body or the phenomena related to it, but when a more perfect degree of knowledge by presence is achieved, and in other words, when the substance of the self is perfected, such a mistake will no longer occur.

Likewise, in its proper place it is proved that man has presentational knowledge of his Creator, but due to weakness of the degree of existence and also due to the attention given to the body and material things, this knowledge becomes unconscious. However, with the perfection of the self and decrease in attention to the body and material things and the strengthening of attention of the heart to God, the Exalted, this same knowledge will reach the stage of clarity and consciousness, until one says: "Is there any manifestation of something other than you and not of you?"

According to his viewpoint, there is no doubt admitted in knowledge-by-presence, in which the known is present with its external reality for the knower and the knower perceives the reality of the known through his own reality. This knowledge is contained neither in

the realm of concepts and assents nor in the scope of thought and reason. But if the soul makes an acquired image of its own presentational perception, since it encompasses both objective reality and mental image, it will be able to compare the two with each other and understand the correspondence between them; or if the soul makes, through examining two intuitive realities and the relation between them, an acquired assent, since it encompasses both of those two intuitive realities and the relation between them, as well as the acquired assent, it will be able to compare the them and understand, and believe in, the correspondence between the two.

As has been mentioned, taking this characteristic into account, some Muslim philosophers<sup>46</sup> believe that if we assume that philosophical concepts are acquired through presentational contemplation on events of the soul and the relations between them, the correspondence between the former and their objective realities becomes evident. And if the formation of these concepts leads to the formation of primary propositions, this guarantees the truth of the primary propositions, and a window will open for the acquisition of certainty in acquired knowledge, and the certainty of knowledge-by-presence will be generalized to acquired knowledge as well. Thus the truth of this theory is a function of the truth of knowledge by presence, an explication offered by Muslim philosophers concerning the abstraction of philosophical concepts, and their explication for the formation of primary propositions and their truth.

## **Conclusion**

The most important conclusion to be drawn from a careful consideration of the above mention points is that there is the independence of some epistemological theories and their efficacy has been compromised by their assumptions. Such assumptions include the possibility of the recognition of the essential properties of things, quidditative correspondence between subject and object, and so forth. Concerning the knowledge of the reality of things, no independent

argument is provided for the definition of knowledge as the realization of a thing or as the presence of the quiddity of a thing for the knowing subject.

Mulla Sadra based on the identity of the intellect and the intelligible, had explained that new forms, or modes of existence do not replace prior forms but on the contrary subsume them. Knowledge, being identical with existence, replicates this process, and by acquiring successive intelligible forms - which are in reality modes of being and not essential forms, and are thus successive intensifications of existence - gradually moves the human intellect towards identity with the Active Intellect. The intellect thus becomes identified with the intelligibles which inform it. In this paper, also we had examined the success of Mulla Sadra in solving the problem of the possibility of knowledge and cognition and achieving reality.

According to his solution, Perception is not restricted to what we have perceived, and it is not limited either. True knowledge is not restricted to what I have 'defined' through description. The truth is so extensive that no reason is able to grasp it and not limit can be put on it. Such is the position generally known as "oneness of existence" (*wahdat al-wujud*) which exercised a tremendous influence on the formative process of the philosophic mentality of Him. The "oneness of existence" is neither monism nor dualism. As a metaphysical vision of Reality based on a peculiar existential experience which consists in seeing Unity in Multiplicity and Multiplicity in Unity, it is something far more subtle and dynamic than philosophical monism or dualism.

### ***Endnotes:***

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the different positions on the definition of knowledge, see Mulla Sadra, *al-hikma al-muta'aliya fi l-Asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a*, eds. R. Lutfi *et al*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edit., Beirut: Dar ihya' al-turath al-'arabi 1981, vol. III, pp. 284ff.

<sup>2</sup> al-Farabi, *Al-mantiqiyat*, ed. M.T. Danishpazhuh, Qum: Maktabat Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi 1408 qamari, vol. I, p. 51. Cf. Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. I, p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Isharat wal-tanbihat*, ed. M. Shihabi, rpt., Qum: Daftar-i nashr-i kitab 1403 qamari, vol. II, p. 308.

- <sup>4</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa': al-ilahiyyat*, ed. I. Madkur *et al*, rpt. Tehran: Nasir-i Khusraw 1363 shamsi, p. 140.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Mabda' wa l-ma'ad*, Tehran: Tehran University Press in association with the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies 1363 shamsi, p. 105.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ad*, pp. 98, 102-3.
- <sup>7</sup> Suhrawardi, *hikmat al-Ishraq*, eds. trs. H. Ziai & J. Walbridge, Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press 1998, pp. 79.
- <sup>8</sup> Suhrawardi, *al-Talwihat* in *Opera metaphysica et mystica tome I*, ed. H. Corbin, Istanbul: Maarif matbaasi 1945, rpt., Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi mutalihat va tahqiqat-i farhangi 1373 shamsi, vol. I, p. 72.
- <sup>9</sup> Suhrawardi, *hikmat al-ishraq* in *Opera metaphysica et mystica tome II*, ed. H. Corbin: Tehran: Institut Franco-Iranien 1951, rpt., Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi mutalihat va tahqiqat-i farhangi 1373 shamsi, vol. II, pp. 256-57.
- <sup>10</sup> Suhrawardi, *al-Muqawamat* in *Opera*, vol. I, p. 163.
- <sup>11</sup> Suhrawardi, *hikmat al-Ishraq* in *Opera*, vol. II, p. 15.
- <sup>12</sup> See his *Talwihat*, in H. Corbin (ed.) *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 1(Tehran, 1976): 112-13
- <sup>13</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Delmar, 1975): 63--4
- <sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, XII 9, 1075-a, 3-4.
- <sup>15</sup> *al-Shifa': al-ilahiyyat*, Fas1 6, *Maqalah 5*, of the *Psychology of the Shifa'*, pp. 23-6.
- <sup>16</sup> See Isharat, Haydari Press, Teheran, 1379/1959, Vol. III, pp. 292-93 and other Peripatetics. For a discussion of the principle of the union of the intellect and the intelligible, see Asfar, pp. 277ff
- <sup>17</sup> Mulla Sadra, the *Asfar*, 3: 278ff. See also Fazlur Rahman, "Mulla Sadra's Theory of Knowledge", *Philosophical Forum*, 4(1) (fall 1972): 141-52.
- <sup>18</sup> *al-Asfar*, vol. I, 3, p. 366
- <sup>19</sup> *ibid.* I, 3, p. 322-324.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 324-325.
- <sup>21</sup> *ibid.* IV, 2, p. 116
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* I, 3, p. 464
- <sup>23</sup> Mulla Sadra, *Sharh al-Hidayat al-Athiriyyah*, Tehran, Lithography, Qum, Bydar edition, 1936, pp. 308, 309
- <sup>24</sup> "God's knowledge of things is identical with their being" (Mulla Sadra, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1236/1820, p. 36); See Mulla Sadra, *Sharh al-Hidyyah al-Athiriyyah*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1315/1899, pp. 308-09
- <sup>25</sup> See his *Rasa'il*, p. 240, where he quotes the Qur'anic statement that "not a particle of dust in the heavens and earth is hidden from God's knowledge" as a support and consequence of his conception of divine knowledge
- <sup>26</sup> For a most profound discussion, according to the School of Mulla Sadra, of the truth that knowledge (*'ilm*) is being and light and not merely the imprint of forms

upon the tablet of the soul see Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Asar, *ilm alhadith* (Tehran, 1352 (AH Solar)/1973) chapter 1: 1ff.

<sup>27</sup> *al-Asfar*, vol. I, 3, p. 384; and al-Sabzawari's note on the same page: *Shawahid*, p. 348

<sup>28</sup> Mulla Sadra: *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, ed. Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, Mashhad, 1967, p. 14

<sup>29</sup> *Risalah Nadq al-Nuqud*, ed. Henry Corbin and Osman Yahya, Teheran-Paris, 1969, p. 625

<sup>30</sup> *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah*, op. cit., p. 448

<sup>31</sup> *al-Asfar*, I, 3, pp. 300-304

<sup>32</sup> In this regard a mental form ceases to be material and becomes a universal—a genus or a species, etc. Sadra, therefore, declares absolutely that neither of the external and mental existences can change into each other and thereby moves away from the position of naive realism adopted by Aristotle into a form of idealism with Plotinus. C.f. *al-Asfar*, I, 3, p. 281

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282

<sup>34</sup> *al-Asfar*, I, 3, 306.

<sup>35</sup> Knowledge as form is discussed in *ibid.*, p. 288; knowledge as relation, p. 290.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 305-8

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291-292

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292; *ibid.* p. 294

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 3, p. 294

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 289; *al-Asfar*, I, 2, p. 68

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 287

<sup>42</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Rasa'il*, Qum, al-Mostafavi School, p. 240

<sup>43</sup> Ha'irī Yazdī, Mahdi, 1367, p. 11, footnote 12

<sup>44</sup> Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. I, p. 21

<sup>45</sup> A primary intelligible refers to a primary substance such as 'man' referring to Zayd. A secondary intelligible is an abstract concept of a higher order that may have generic reference. Thus 'existence' or 'substance' refers to a wider class of possible objects. Thus if one considers Zayd, in the first instance one might notice that he is human, thus one associates a primary intelligible in the mind with him, and in the second instance one notices that he exists, assigning a secondary intelligible 'existence' to him. Logical secondary *intelligibilia* are pure concepts of use in logic such as 'logical necessity'.

<sup>46</sup> In his *Usul falsafah wa rawish-i ri'alism* (Principles of Philosophy and Methodology of Realism), 'Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī has offered this view, which can be understood from his words

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## **Book Reviews**

**Anthony J. Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, 309 pp, \$44.95.**

Descriptions of lived human experience gleaned from the writings of three Abrahamic mystics – one each from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – exemplify both investigative method and crucial experiential content in Anthony Steinbock's exploration of disciplinary methodologies and problems of evidence at the intersections of phenomenology and mysticism. His concerns include recognizing self-oriented bias in interpretation, as well as encouraging certain modes of inter-subjective relation. Some similarities of the three mystics' beliefs emerge wherein continuities and commonalities of concepts and ideals around mystical experience – and its description – dominate; however, comparison is not Steinbock's main interest.

At 309 pages, the book is divided into eight chapters, with a dense but prophetic introduction and a short summary epilogue, followed by a brief glossary of Arabic and Hebrew terms. After a first chapter that puts the reader firmly on Steinbock's investigative path, come chapters on the three mystics. Given questions around the genesis, or source of, for example, mystical visions or apparent revelations, Chapter 5 explores "Matters of Evidence in Religious Experience". Here, in attempting to conceptualize legitimately confirmed instances of personal religious and mystical experiences, Steinbock draws further upon insights from the mystics' writing. The last three chapters

explore and explicate a nicely focused set of related theoretical notions , including epiphany, withdrawal, individuation, and idolatry.

Steinbock, recalling Husserl, points out that both mysticism and phenomenology manifest rigorous exercises to “liberate the phenomena and to mitigate the intrusion of the self on the phenomenal field” (p.5). Written mystical description by St. Teresa of Avila, Rabbi Dov Baer, and Ruzbihan Baqli elaborates notions of prayer, ecstasy, and unveiling, respectively, revealing struggles to experience phenomena beyond the bias and interest of an interpreting self. Thus, mystics serve as “personal witnesses to a radical kind of experiencing” (p. 115).

Steinbock’s argument attempts to ground “religious, moral, and ecological dimensions” of human experience in *verticality* – an expanded realm of experience and evidence that nevertheless can be “susceptible to critical, philosophical thinking” (p. 1). Steinbock marks a concern “not merely with what is there in experience”, but with *givenness*, or “*how* this ‘what’ appears to us” (p. 2). Verticality’s expanded realms emerge “by taking a phenomenological approach to these different kinds of givenness” (p. 1). In other words, Steinbock argues that philosophical phenomenology offers modes of engaging these expanded realms.

A method of inquiry that allows phenomena to appear in their “own manner” may well be favored by those concerned with religious experience. After all, much ‘evidence’ provided by religious mystics and other faithful is dismissed by broader cultural criteria guided by science-based versions of evidence, proof, and falsifiability. If experiences of phenomena that evade typical modes of philosophical investigation, description, or scientific rigor – and, moreover, experiences of phenomena that others simply do not believe exist – are to be valued in their own terms, and are to have a chance to emerge and stand tests of credibility, agreed to be appropriate in kind, then phenomenology broadly conceived as the study of the flow of consciousness through time, including what appears to us, may promise a fruitful disciplinary approach.

Whereas aspects of lived human experience may be agreed to consist in perception of phenomena, and more specifically perception of epistemic objects, understanding the relation of God to phenomena and appearance requires reconfiguring certain assumptions. To put this another way, if some apparently perceived phenomena consist in experiences of God, and God-given experiences, then the status of God as ‘giver’ and as an appearance – and moreover of God, potentially and problematically, interpreted as an epistemic object like any other – may provoke an expanded investigation of phenomenology’s potential to avoid kinds of theological contradictions and, moreover, misunderstandings that degrade human experience in the world.

Steinbock differentiates between presentation’s provocation of objects’ meaning “relative to my field of possibilities” (p.7), and evocation as the process involved in modes of vertical givenness. *Presentation* dominates philosophical “ways of seeing”, in relation to so-called sensible and intellectual objects, instigated and accomplished by me in the encounter with such objects. In contrast, *evocation*, as Steinbock writes, is not ‘induced or produced’, rather the experience comes “in its own terms” (p.10). Furthermore, the experiences themselves as lived by human beings may require this expanded vertical and evocative mode, allowing those who engage such experiences to ground and describe them, and also to recognize possibilities and opportunities for further engagement.

Steinbock notes in Chapter Four, “Ruzbihan Baqli and the Mysticism of the Unveiling”, that witnessing is the ‘first pillar of Islam’. The ‘witnessing’ of the three mystics exemplifies human lived experience that maintains an openness to verticality, or an attitude toward the way in which meaning is given. Whereas notions of Muhammad as the ‘perfect witness’ – one who testifies to God without self-imposition – comes to mind here, Steinbock’s work does not pursue discussion of the Prophet.

In Chapter 7, “On Individuation,” Steinbock argues for the necessary interconnection between an absolute irreducibility of the

person and the possibility of moral action. Dimensions of verticality and idolatry enable a consideration of human history that expresses ‘the fullness of what it means to be persons’ (p. 211), including issues of ‘interpersonal goodness’ and disasters. In Chapter 8, Steinbock contrasts ‘idolatry’, or ‘despiritualization’, with verticality – what we have come to understand as a ‘a sphere of evidential experience’ that falls outside ‘the presentation of perceptual or epistemic objects’ (p. 211). Taking ‘something relative as if it were absolute’ gives rise to idolatry, in short, a de-spiritualizing inversion – finding that a thing ‘occupies us with the tenor of absoluteness and takes on the unconditionality of the supremely valuable’ (p. 219). Indeed, he writes, ‘idolatry can only be detected as a problem within the possibility of verticality. Whereas, for example, *epiphantic givenness* pinpoints epiphany as a given dimension of human experience in which meaning takes on ‘religious, Personal significance’, idolatry – as typically articulated – qualifies vertical orientation. According to Steinbock, epiphany – discussed most fully in Chapter 6 – provides a mode of givenness with its own kind of evidence: distinct from presentation, epiphany has “an internal coherence”, an intrinsic “lived rigor” (p.115).

Steinbock calls upon the experiential foundation of the mystics’ ecstatic expressions to trouble idolatry’s boundaries. Thus, he opens conceptualizations of idolatry as ‘a lived movement, a uniquely personal orientation that arises within the context of vertical givenness’ (p. 212). Within this religious sphere of experience, then, ‘idolatry illuminates what is taking place in vertical experience’ (212). Three main ‘interrelated moments of idolatry’ within this sphere are explored in the sections that follow, including concerns around Self and pride; worldly attachments; and a ‘delimiting’ of experience that blocks verticality. Here contrasted with pride and self-interest, ‘self-love’ is defined as ‘oriented toward the emergence or realization of who I am called to be as placed before God with others.’ (p. 213). Such notions have much to offer future discussions. Moreover, Steinbock notes early on that epiphany and “its countervailing movements of idolatry” do not exhaust the kinds of vertical givenness, listing in addition “revelation, manifestation, disclosure, and display” (p. 15). Whereas Steinbock wisely refrains from elaborating all of these in the present text, “disclosure,” in particular, opens paths for researching the way in

which the Earth is 'given', offering interesting intersections with recent work in environmental ethics, for example. Broader contributions from *Phenomenology and Mysticism* rest in careful engagement with philosophical phenomenology, not simply as a descriptive method, but as a coherent disciplinary field with potential theoretical resources to address ranges of phenomena beyond those that are typically evoked.

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**Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the Making of State Power*, Oxford University Press, 2001; ISBN-13: 978-0-19-514426-0, cloth, £27.50**

Vali Nasr's book on Islam and the making of state power is an interesting and important text from a renowned scholar in the field of Islamic studies and political science. Nasr's book examines state power in Pakistan and Malaysia and its relationship to Islamism in each of these cases. However, in describing the relationship of Islam to state power in both these cases, his drawing of general observations about Islamism from the examples of Pakistan and Malaysia should also be interesting for scholars in the field. In this work Nasr argues that the state itself has played a key role in embedding Islam in the politics of Muslim countries, it is not just the role of the Islamists. The state has relied upon Islam in the case of Pakistan and Malaysia at a time in post-colonial history when it served the interests of an ideologically weak state to appropriate Islamic ideology; Islamism was an opportunity and not just a threat. The turn to Islam has been part of the state's strategy to establish hegemony over society and expand state powers and control. Using Pakistan and Malaysia as case studies, Nasr presents a thesis that essentially says that two aspects of Islamist ideology were useful: first, Islamists had mobilized Islamic symbols, formulated Islamic political concepts and convinced the masses that these must be implemented; second, Islamism was opposed only to the secular

ideology of the state and not to state hegemony or extensive state intervention in the economy and society. State leaders in Pakistan and Malaysia concluded that if the state were construed as Islamic, it could harness the energies of Islamism to subdue political opposition and to expand state power. This came at a critical juncture in Pakistan and Malaysia's quest for development.

Nasr's book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the origins of the state in Malaysia and Pakistan and early state formation in the two countries. The first chapter describes how the essential characteristics of the state in general in Pakistan and Malaysia were formed during the colonial period, along with the relation to Islam and society. The second chapter examines the manner in which relations within early state formation shaped politics and set the stage for the encounter of Islam and the state in the 1980s. The second part of the book discusses the critical juncture of the late 1970s through the early 1980s. The third chapter examines the crisis that confronted the secular state in Malaysia and Pakistan between 1969 (Riots in Malaysia and the fall of the Ayub Khan regime in Pakistan) and the 1977-80 period of Islamist challenge to the ruling order in Malaysia and the fall of the Bhutto regime in Pakistan. The fourth chapter presents a broad account of the nature and scope of the Islamist challenge to ruling regimes in both countries. The third part of the book analyzes the responses of the state in Malaysia and Pakistan to the challenges before them. The fifth chapter elaborates on the Islamization initiative, the policies that this entailed and the ends that this served in Malaysia and Pakistan. The sixth chapter discusses the consequences of Islamization for Malaysia and Pakistan.

To say that the state in Pakistan and Malaysia was forced or coerced by Islamists into Islamizing the society would be inaccurate. The post-colonial state at times worked closely with Islamists to mobilize support for weak post-colonial states. The end of this long interaction between the states and Islamist forces is that Islamists do not have a monopoly for speaking on behalf of Islam. Although ruling regimes and disparate social and political actors alike have been pushed

in the direction of Islamic politics by Islamist forces, the pattern of Islamist activism and revolutionary and utopian rhetoric only partly explain the trend. To fully understand the expanded role of Islam in the politics of Muslim societies, the action of the state must be considered. It is the state which has utilized momentum provided by Islamists for its own purposes.

One must ask, "What was the impact of this strategy of Islamization on state-society relations, the attainment of state objectives, and the long-run prospects for development, stability, growth, and democracy?" The Islamization period in Malaysia and Pakistan lasted some two decades from 1979-81 through until 1997. Islamization during that time became entwined with state leaders' project of power and deeply influenced the working of the state, affecting the scope of state powers, policy making and reach into society. Islamization redefined state-society relations and changed the balance of power between the two. Islamization had its roots in the Islamist challenge to state power of the 1970s but in time it became the ideology of choice for state leaders in these weak post-colonial societies that otherwise lacked strong ideological tools and enjoyed only precarious hegemony over society. It was a phase in the lifespan of the post-colonial state in Malaysia and Pakistan. Islamization was not so much a reinvention of the state but a tool to allow the post-colonial state to rise above the limitations before it. The state remained as before with its institutional design, trappings of power, and view of the role of the state in its relation with society intact, but, according to Vali Nasr, masquerading behind an Islamic veneer. Although the cultural directives of Islamization were real, they did not amount to creating the state *de novo* with its impact on state institutions, law, and policy making. Nasr concludes that, in the final analysis, Islamization was not so much about Islam as it was about the state.

Despite ideological and religious trappings, Islamization was a strategy of state formation. Its success or failure was determined in the political arena and then as a measure of the extent to which it served

the interests of the state. Islamization succeeded in fulfilling the interests of the state. It was useful in the hands of state leaders in both dealing with crises before the state at a critical juncture and strengthening the state and expanding its reach. Islamization allowed secular post-colonial states to survive the tidal wave of Islamist activism. In Malaysia, it served the state's goal of economic growth and development and in Pakistan it was used first and foremost to restore state authority.<sup>1</sup>

The Islamizing state in Malaysia and Pakistan used Islam to establish hegemony and legitimacy, and to generate wealth, economic growth and extract revenue from society. The post-colonial state was open to Islamist activism and the 1970s and 1980s were a critical juncture when the new leadership was more open to Islam in the political process. Islamization benefited and co-opted the middle and lower middle classes. The co-optation of these classes precluded their alliance against the ruling classes as had happened in Iran. Islamization also co-opted Islamist thinkers, activists, and movements, which weakened opposition to the state and made state institutions the arena for struggles of power. Islam ceased to be an important axis of conflict between state and society but precipitated new conflicts between state actors and leaders. Islamization meant a larger state that was more domineering over society but the state became open to conflict.

Islamization removed ideology as a main axis of conflict in the political arena but this did not stop Islamist opposition to the state. Islamist parties displayed their political and organizational interests more openly with ideology out of the way but the Islamists were kept away from state power. Ideological demands were fulfilled but not political and organizational interests of Islamists. This led to tensions between the state and Islamist parties and later a breach between the two in Pakistan in the 1990s. Islamist parties came to the conclusion that they would fare better in opposition to secular states and are likely to be marginalized by state-led Islamization. Although Islamization has had different outcomes in Malaysia and Pakistan, it failed in Pakistan

with the erosion of state power and in Malaysia it dissipated after having obtained its objectives. Nasr concludes that the end of Islamization had to do with the financial crises and IMF prescriptions. Both Malaysia and Pakistan faced economic downturns from 1997 onwards which changed the political equation underpinning the Islamization regimes. Nasr describes therefore how these two states and Islamism cannot exist in isolation; they are part of the international economic system which has impacted the success of Islamization and its continuation. In the end, Nasr states that Islamization failed to ensure either the long-run viability of the state or to produce a stable social base to support the state's domination of society. It helped restore authority to the state in the 1980s but failed to stop the erosion of authority in the 1990s. Islamization provided a base for military rule in Pakistan but not a seamless source of support for state power. It came undone during the democratic period and as a consequence of financial crises.

Nasr concludes that Islamization was successful as a tool for state leaders serving state interests and was a successful strategy allowing the states to survive challenges to authority. However, the costs have been bad laws, discrimination against women and minorities, and ideologization of the public arena political discourse. Islamization allowed states to avoid fundamental reforms to their economies, political structures, and policy making as it facilitated expansion of state power through successful manipulation of ideology rather than rationalization of the structure and working of state institutions. It also allowed the state to regulate more and spread its tentacles into the civil society and the private lives of citizens.

Nasr's book provides a very credible analysis of the interaction of Islamist parties with an Islamizing state and outcomes of this in two major Muslim countries. This is relevant for understanding the current workings of the state where this has been done to bolster state authority at a critical juncture in the post-colonial history. Understanding that Islamization served a useful purpose but has been stopped and is

crumbling in the face of international economic and political pressures provides a good background for understanding the workings of the state and different powerful actors in these countries.

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**Stan W. Wallace ed., *Does God Exist? The Craig–Flew Debate*, Burlington, Ashgate Publishing, ISBN: 0754631893, 2003, 242 pp., paper \$29.95, cloth \$99.95**

When I was a schoolboy in 1987, there was a public debate held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong between a Canadian Christian preacher and a Lecturer of Philosophy of the University. The topic is “Is it more reasonable to believe in God’s existence?” and the preacher represented the affirmative side while the Lecturer represented the negative. The winner was determined by the voting of the audience and the Lecturer won. Although I was not there, the debate was published as an appendix in one of the Lecturer’s books, which underwent 56 editions up to 2006.

Similarly, this book includes an edited transcript of a debate on the question of God’s existence between two leading contemporary philosophers, William Lane Craig and Antony Flew, for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of a similar debate between Fredrick Copleston and Bertrand Russell held in 1948 on BBC radio. This debate was held at the University of Wisconsin in February 1998. The existence of God seems to be an enduring topic to be debated by elites, whether in the East or West, in the past or present. Craig, a Christian theologian, represented the affirmative side while Flew, a professed atheist, the negative. However, it is interesting to know that Flew has later become a theist in 2004.

Apart from the debate, the introductory chapter and the replies of Craig and Flew, there are eight follow-up chapters in which other significant philosophers— Paul Draper, R. Douglas Geivett, Michael Martin, Keith Parsons, William Rowe, William Wainwright, Keith Yandell and David Yandell—criticize the debate and address the issues raised. As commentators, in a mixture of theists and atheists (or agnostics), the commentators believe that Craig won the debate.

Dr William L. Craig is currently research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, USA. Even though both his research interests and teaching positions are theological oriented, his publications are not. His articles are published in refereed philosophical journals such as *Analysis*, *British Journal for Philosophy of Science*, *American Philosophical Quarterly* and *International Philosophical Quarterly*. Therefore, he has a lot of experience in using the language of philosophy to defense theism. Dr Antony Flew is now Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Reading, UK. He was an influential atheist and is a world-class philosopher. He has been a regular member of the faculty at the Universities in the UK and Canada and visiting professor in the Universities of the United States and Australia. His publications include both general philosophical books like *An Introduction To Western Philosophy* and professional books like *God and Philosophy*, *The Presumption of Atheism* and *Atheistic Humanism*. No doubt, both of them are well qualified to conduct this debate.

Craig offers five approaches to affirm the existence of God, namely, the origin of the Universe, the complex order in the Universe, objective moral values in the world, the immediate experience of God and finally the historical facts concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (this sequence is mine). The obligation of Flew is, of course, to decline their validities. In the following, I will briefly summarize the first four arguments of Craig and the replies of Flew, and as a student of Islamic Studies, I am particularly interested in using the argument of Jesus' resurrection to defend God's existence, so I will comment the last one in depth.

Craig argues that whatever begins to exist has a cause, the Universe began to exist and so it has a cause. For Craig, the cause is God, the creator of the Universe and this is the basic argument for God's existence in relation to the origin of the Universe. Whether there is a beginning of the Universe or not needs scientific evidence, the above argument of Craig means that if there is a beginning of the Universe, God's existence is the best explanation of that beginning. Flew accepts that there is a beginning of the Universe, but he refuses the request for explanation. For Flew, causality applies only to entities *within* the Universe, not the Universe as a whole. He takes the whole Universe as a brute fact, fact that does not need any explanation. Therefore, there is no need to place God's existence as the explanation of the origin of the Universe.

For the second argument, Craig argues that the Universe is so complex on the one hand, its initial conditions, however, allow humans to survive and flourish on the other. Therefore, the fine-tuning of these conditions of the Universe is therefore not due to either law or chance but design and the concept of design is pointed to the existence of designer and so the existence of God. For Flew, following the same reasoning of the first argument, he argues that the design within the Universe is not the same kind of design of the Universe as a whole. Borrowing from Flew's terms, "it is *wholly* arbitrary and prejudicial to think" (p. 31) in the way of Craig.

For Craig, if God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist, but now objective values do exist and so God exists. Flew does not give a very clear refusal to this argument, he admits that there are some objective moral values exist but they are founded on the evolution of norms in society rather than the existence of God (p.36-37, 55). For the immediate experience of God, Craig admits explicitly that it is *not* an argument for God's existence; it is only a claim that humans can experience God. For Flew, since experience is personal, be it religious or not, it does not have authority to affirm the existence of God.

For the above four arguments, I appreciate Flew's arguments as he points out the difference between *within* and *outside* the Universe, human knowledge can never be applied in the realm outside the Universe and so there is somewhere existed beyond human imagination and control, whether it is a brute fact, a room of God or simply meaningless. This area still remains unknown and debatable. Flew failed the debate, in my opinion, because he did not present as many arguments as Craig did and so it gives an impression that he did not take the debate seriously.

The final argument iconcerns historical facts about Jesus. For Craig, there are three events mentioned in the Christian Bible, which are recognised by the majority of New Testament scholars as historical facts, they are: Jesus' tomb was found empty after his crucifixion; after his death, different people saw appearances of Jesus alive; and, finally, the disciples suddenly came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Based on these facts, Craig says, "[T]herefore, it seems to me, the Christian is amply justified in believing that Jesus rose from the dead and was who (*sic*) he claimed to be. But that entails that God exists (p.23)." Can Jesus' resurrection lead to God's existence? I do not think so.

Again, I think Flew does not take Craig's argument seriously and the commentators discuss mainly the validity of the biblical evidences. Both of them therefore do not consider seriously the argument epistemologically. For me, it is quite surprising that no one in the book mentions the name of a German playwright and philosopher who wrote the play *Nathan the Wise*, Gotthold E. Lessing. Lessing argues convincingly, "Accidental truths of history (e.g. Jesus' resurrection) can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason (e.g. God's existence)." (Here I cannot discuss Lessing's argument in details. For details, see, G.E Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, pp.53-55). Therefore, even Jesus' resurrection does exist, it does not mean that Jesus is God and so God exists. In the Gospel of John, there was a man called Lazarus who was also raised from the dead by Jesus, can we say that Lazarus is God as well? Definitely not! Jesus' divinity

was recognised by his disciples and later Christian councils based on their interpretations of the Bible, not merely his historical facts or narratives recorded in the Bible.

In short, whether Jesus is God or not is a matter of faith and it is so for God's existence as well. I recommend this book, due to not only the debate itself, but also the follow-up chapters which are also worth reading, to those who are interested in philosophy of religion and definitely they will find some inspiration from it.

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**Mark Andrew Evans ed., *Just War Theory: A Reappraisal*,  
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005, 256 pp., paper  
£17.99, cloth £55**

I have always believed that unlike the twentieth century, when millions of civilians were killed between the first and second world wars, humans are now living in a more peaceful environment. The word "war" seems to have been gradually removed from the memory of the young generation born during and after the 1970s. However, the present reality totally destroys my conviction. After 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, regional and civil wars and terrorism have become growing trend. As war and conflict continue to occur, the topics of "why war" and "what should we do during and after war" are therefore never dated. This book is a timely collection edited particularly for reappraising the Just War theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The book consists of eight chapters and the editor divides it into three parts, namely, just cause (*jus ad bellum*), justice in the conduct of war (*jus in bello*) and justice and the end of war (*jus post bellum*). Apart from the editor, seven scholars of political science and international studies – Neta C. Crawford, Anthony F. Lang Jr, Kateri Carmola, Helen Brocklehurst, Brian Orend, Patrick Hayden, Andrew

Rigby – are invited to address the criticisms and to explore new angles to just war thinking in different divisions. The editor of this book, Mark Andrew Evans, is responsible for the introduction, conclusion and one of the chapters in the division of just cause. Evans is a Senior Lecturer in Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Wales Swansea.

The first three chapters examine the issues of just cause in the traditions of Just War theory (traditional theory). As the context of this book is closely related to 9/11, Crawford examines the concepts of preemption and preventive war in the first chapter in order to reflect and critique the “preemptive defense” argument proposed by George W. Bush. Crawford argues that the purpose of preemptive defense is to eliminate an *immediate* and *credible* threat of serious harm, while a preventive war is undertaken when a state believes that war with a potential opponent is likely to happen at some future date, and that if action is not taken immediately, the state will lose its military superiority. Based on this distinction, in general, preemption is therefore legal, legitimate and prudent – which is why Bush tried to justify his invasion of Iraq in this way, while preventive war is not necessary. For example, the rise of China can be a threat, but not an immediate threat, to the superiority of the U.S. at all levels, therefore if the U.S. government wages war with China, then it is definitely a preventive war, rather than preemption. This war is, however, unnecessary and reckless as there are many ways to reduce the threat that the Americans perceive like political negotiation and economic cooperation between the U.S. and China. But in a real world situation, the distinctions of preemptive defense and preventive war is vague as politician and media can always exaggerate the degree and immediacy of threat and so Crawford advises, “there is a great temptation to slide over the line from preemption to preventive war (p.47).”

In chapter two, Lang analyzes whether it is morally appropriate to see humanitarian intervention as punishment for the wrongdoing of states or groups and as one of the just causes in war, when he examines international law and the traditional theory. In chapter three, Evans

examines the state-centric problem in the traditional theory and then re-considers the authority of political personnel and institutions, those who are responsible for waging war, in the context of a democratic state.

The next three chapters are concerned with the justice in the conduct of war. In chapter four, Carmola examines the practical difficulty of using the concept of proportionality, which is the use of force required in war in order to secure just objectives. In chapter five, Brocklehurst considers the difficulty in drawing a clear distinction between the innocents or non-combatants such as children and those who are participated in the war in the traditional theory. In chapter six, Orend examines whether the government can give up the principle of discrimination in the conduct of war, as in the discrimination of selecting the right targets, i.e. to distinguish non-participants or civilians, when facing attacks from weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

The final two chapters articulate the ideas of justice and peace after war, which are seldom discussed in the traditional theory. Both chapters 7 (Hayden) and 8 (Rigby) are focused on the ways of having peace, forgiveness and reconciliation after wars and conflicts. But what interests me is that why these virtues are not to be promoted before the war, but after it.

This book is indeed very comprehensive in discussing every significant aspect of the Just War theory so as to modify it for the coming new century. It accepts that there is incompetence in the traditional theory but it does not recommend abandoning it altogether. To a certain extent, it accepts that there is a “just” war in the real world and so just war is a lesser but necessary evil when facing terrorism. I cannot agree with this. I do not believe that when two parties are waging war, one party is clearly right and another party is clearly wrong in all aspects of the problem; in a real world, there is wrongdoing by both, and the difference is only the degree of obligation of wrongdoing borne by each party. For this reason, I cannot use the word “just” to describe the word “war”.

In the case of 9/11, terrorists are no doubt wrong in killing the innocents but they are not simply crazy, insane or mentally disabled. They are people who think and perceive that they are oppressed by the U.S. or the West in terms of the foreign policy and military actions in Muslim countries and they may also have other reasons that we may not know. The authors are concerned more with the modifications of the Just War theory in order to fight against terrorism legally and prudently in the present situation, but not eager to think about another way of dealing with terrorism. Instead of waging just war, which will only exacerbate the effect of terrorism, I think it would be better to stress promoting the peaceful political ways to understand, address and resolve the issues of social, economical and cultural injustices and oppressions that terrorists think that they are experiencing. I do think it is more constructive than waging war and more in line with the spirit of democratic liberal society in the West. But unfortunately, in my opinion, this kind of suggestion is not well received in the West. By contrast, the idea of just war is more popular among western readers, especially those in the U.S.

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**William Stoddart, *Remembering in a World of Forgetting: Thoughts on Tradition and Postmodernism*, Edited by Mateus Soares de Azevedo and Alberto Vasconcellos Queiroz. World Wisdom, 2008, 184 pp., ISBN 978-1-933316-46-8, \$21.95**

“The only antidote to the relative and the subjective is the absolute and the objective, and it is precisely they that are the contents of traditional metaphysics or the *philosophia perennis*.” – William Stoddart

In his new book *Remembering in a World of Forgetting: Thoughts on Tradition and Postmodernism* perennialist author William Stoddart synthesizes the vast depth and breadth of the traditionalist

perspective that he discovered in 1945, at the age of 20, through the writings of the metaphysician Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, curator of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; a seminal spokesman of the perennial philosophy that led the author to the writings of René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon. Schuon later came to be his spiritual mentor. It might be of interest to the reader to note that Aldous Huxley who published his anthology, *The Perennial Philosophy*\* in 1945 became from that time forward the central figure attributed to the perennial philosophy. Yet the three writers mentioned above, who are relatively unknown outside certain circles, have dedicated their lives to its doctrinal exposition and living in accordance with its spiritual methods. Readers who have never encountered their writings will be very surprised to see that what they presumed the perennial philosophy to be, from both a theoretical and practical outlook, is quite the contrary.

Dr. Stoddart makes the traditional perspective accessible to those who have never been exposed to the perennial philosophy providing an excellent introduction and topographic in scope, and yet his book offers countless pointers for those who are more familiar or established in the traditional perspective. He conveys this perspective, as disclosed in the preface of the book, with three key characteristics: “precision, simplicity, and essentiality” as he coherently outlines what has been lost and forgotten in the modern and postmodern worlds, preceding to the essence of theory (doctrine) and then practice (method), which are all indispensable in understanding the perennial philosophy.

The book is divided into a triadic discourse, the first part is: *Forgetting DECLINE or what we have forgotten*. It is in these seven chapters where Dr. Stoddart contrasts the traditional world to that of the modern and postmodern decisively underscoring the “progress” that has led to our current impasse—shedding light on the terminal polarity of our times—survival or destruction? He points out the “shadow” or

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\* “One comment, concerning Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*: the least one can say is that his comments are not at the same high level of the quotes he selected. His approach is more "literary" than really spiritual.” Mateus Soares de Azevedo, also the editor of *Ye Shall Know the Truth: Christianity and the Perennial Philosophy*.

“unconscious” implications of evolutionism, progressivism, scientism, psychologism and democracy itself as the pseudo-religion of contemporary man, which is rarely perceived, understood or questioned in the current era. In chapter four: *Ideological Obstacles to the Spiritual Life* Dr. Stoddart makes it clear that the “evils” committed in the name of religion (i.e. terrorism and that of fundamentalism in whatever shape or form) should not be confused nor identified with true religion itself. In chapter five: *Religious and Ethnic Conflict in the Light of the Writings of the Perennialist School* he explains how the increase of “atheism” in the modern and postmodern eras have led to further disarray of the Western World. He clarifies that the universal principles of the perennial philosophy are not “syncretism”, but rather a synthesis—testifying that all religions are one in the transcendent Unity. This does not however mean that one must discard religion altogether thinking that because they are all one, *ipso facto* it being unnecessary to practice a religion. This has also been one of the many unfortunate misunderstandings of those who have interpreted Huxley’s *The Perennial Philosophy* to be almost anything that the human imagination could derive from its own directives. Including the idea that it is somehow enough to acknowledge the transcendent Unity—the perennial philosophy—without practicing a specific and genuine spiritual form. Dr. Stoddart clarifies—that one must practice a religious form if one is to align oneself with the perennial philosophy. It is through the metaphysical principles of the perennial philosophy that a true universal understanding of diverse ethnicities and races (i.e. many of the popularized terms of our current era such as “cultural competencies”, “cultural diversity” and “multiculturalism”) can be established. It is for this reason that Dr. Stoddart points out that the perennial philosophy is not “syncretism” but rather a synthesis—where each of the traditions remains integrally its own, each one affirming, beyond its relative distinctions and differences, the primacy of truth. What is of the human or individual (relative) order and at the same time Universal (Absolute) order—or what is of immanence and Transcendence. It is here that the voice and outlook of the traditionalists can offer guidance in resolving the conflict and violence that plagues our current epoch by testifying to the validity of all

revelations that were disclosed to the different ethnicities and races of the world, without creating a monopoly on truth or speaking of “oneness” without any substance behind the words which is sadly enough often the case.

Part two of the book is entitled: *Remembering (theory) TRUTH or what we have to know* is composed of six chapters. In chapter eight he examines what religion is according to the perennial philosophy. In chapter nine he clarifies the misconceptions that are commonly attributed to the idea of “orthodoxy” which is similar to the first item of the Buddhist Eightfold Path “right view” or “right thinking” also connoting doctrinal purity. In chapter ten he identifies what is commonly misunderstood by the term “intellect” and how, as it relates to the perennial philosophy, is synonymous with Spirit, seated in the heart and not the brain—having nothing to do with discursive thought or subjectivity. In chapter eleven he briefly outlines the perennialist school and the key figures who were involved: René Guénon (1886-1951), Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) and Titus Burckhardt (1908-1984) and provides their biographical information. In chapter thirteen he describes what education is from a perennial perspective.

The final portion of the book, part three: *Remembering (practice) SPIRITUALITY or what we have to do*. He clarifies the many misconceptions of the term “mysticism” which has been marked by individualistic subjectivity. The author gives an overview of the different religious traditions, some from a first hand account, reading like a spiritual travel log—where he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain of Mount Athos, a remote monastic community where Christian spirituality has been practiced in its purity since the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The author also writes about receiving *darshan* (“divine sighting”) with the 68th Jagadguru of Kanchi (1894-1994) who traces his spiritual lineage to the original Ādi Śankarācārya who is known for his metaphysical doctrine of *advaita* or “non-dualism”. There is also an appendix with excerpts of his previously unpublished letters including a brief biography of the author and a glossary of terms.

In each chapter of *Remembering in a World of Forgetting* Dr. Stoddart condenses potent kernels of traditional knowledge and wisdom without compromising these doctrines and methods and yet he imparts to the reader the essentials of what is needed to be known by any seeker of truth. Although this work is not devoted to any specific religious revelation, the author remains true to the ‘transcendent unity of religions’ by providing the metaphysical principles that underlie these traditions so that the reader may understand each *qua* their unique revelation and simultaneously in their universality. It is these metaphysical principles that will assist the seeker in the post-modern era beyond the psychological imbalance and spiritual confusion that has become a “norm” and in fact plagues the current epoch. This new work by Dr. Stoddart will provide an astute reference and contribution to other perennialist or traditionalist works as it offers *de facto* a grand synthesis of many ideas found in other traditionalist works and also contributes novel and insightful pointers that are not found in other traditionalist works. The only shortcoming if we could imagine one is that the work could have been longer in length but perhaps this tendency is also part of a larger systemic quandary that places *quantity* above quality. We will conclude this review with a few fitting words from the authors *Excerpts from Letters*: “Religion is a *form* of Truth (it is ‘colored’), and as such it is accessible to the whole community. The ‘*pure* Truth’ (‘uncolored’) is for the very few.”

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**Renaissance and Reformation: The Intellectual Genesis, Anthony Levi, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, ISBN: 9780300093339, 2002, 496 pp., paper \$26, cloth \$55**

For general readers, the Renaissance denotes a historical or intellectual period of “the rebirth” or rediscovery of the classical or Greek texts which started originally in Italy in around the fifteenth

century. Therefore it was historically posterior to the period of Reformation led by Martin Luther and others in the sixteenth century. But Levi reminds us that real history does not have discontinuities (p.1). The purpose of periodization is only for the sake of convenience. In this study of European intellectual culture between the High Middle Ages and 1550, Levi sees the Renaissance and the Reformation as a single event, rather than two independent incidents, in order to examine the tensions and transformations between them from various perspectives, including politics, religion and ideology.

Anthony Herbert Tigar Levi (1929-2004) was an emeritus professor of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He was an ordained in the Society of Jesus in 1962 but resigned on theological grounds in 1971. He held a Readership in French at the Warwick University (1967-1970) and later became a professor (1970 –1971). He then moved to St. Andrews to take up the chair of Buchanan Professor of French (1971- 87) after his resignation from the priesthood. He retired from St. Andrews in 1987.

This book consists of three parts, fourteen chapters in total. Levi considers the issues relating to the progress of the Renaissance and Reformation at all levels. For example, the political and social changes since the emergence of nation states, then the following change of attitudes toward the authority of papacy, tension on redrawing the boundary between sacred and secular sovereign powers and finally the reforms of Europe's educational, legal and religious systems and thoughts. Part one, "The Intellectual Problem of the Middle Ages," has two chapters, the author contours the context of intellectual problems in Western Christendom and analyses the intellectual disputes such as the nature of God and human beings, original sin, grace and salvation, life after death, and clashes between philosophy, sciences and theology, which finally constituted the crisis of scholasticism in the Middle Ages. Part two, "Towards a Resolution," is the main body of the book. It has eight chapters. Following the problems discussed in part one, part two investigates the new intellectual, political and social values (such as human perfection) emerged in Renaissance and its ongoing tensions and clashes with Christian theology and the Catholic Church, which

finally led to general secularization in the late fifteenth century. Part three, “Schismatic Solutions,” has four chapters. The author focuses on the development and abiding influences of the Renaissance on the disputes of jurisdictional primacy of the Roman papacy during the period of protestant movements led by Martin Luther in Germany, and other movements in France, England and Switzerland.

This book is highly readable and useful. First, it makes judicious use of historical materials and figures – including well-known figures such as Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Erasmus, Martin Luther, Thomas More, William Ockham and John Duns Scotus as well as the ‘less’ well-known such as Marsilio Ficino, Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples, Francesco Petrarch, Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin, Valla, among many others. Second, without any reservation, I strongly agree with his perspective that history, whether intellectual or societal, is ongoing without any discontinuity. The Renaissance and Reformation are therefore connected and “very little occurred which could be regarded as marking any great historical discontinuity between the ‘middle ages’ and the ‘early modern era’ (p.367).” Third, this study is not simply a work for historians but also a work for theologians, including church historians, and scholars of classical studies and medieval philosophy as Levi emphasizes so much on theology and classics in his book. It gives a thorough examination of historical context of Martin Luther’s Protestantism and the development of study of the classical texts, including the Christian Bible; it therefore supplements the theological and medieval philosophical thoughts with a wider historical, political and social dimensions.

Fourth, the idea that religious thought will be transformed in order to adapt to the new intellectual, political and social values in history is no doubt correct and also the tensions and clashes between religion and philosophy or science assist to generate the “intellectual genesis” of European culture as the book title implies. However, I still think that Levi stresses less on the reverse direction, that is, the transformation of society by religion in a more positive or constructive sense. To a certain extent, Levi portrays religion or Catholicism in a

negative way. Today, scholars are increasingly concerned about the public role of religion in moving the constructive transformations of society. I have always thought that the dialectic of religion – its destructive and at the same time constructive power in society - is not simply a fashionable idea found in the present academic circle and modern history but is also historically demonstrable. However, the study of this “reverse direction” is lacking in this book. In my opinion, it is still waiting to be done by other historians of the Middle Ages.

Nevertheless, this book is still no doubt a masterpiece, which combines intellectual clarity and profundity and I would therefore like to recommend this book as a reference book to people who are interested in the European history, theology, philosophy and classical studies.

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**Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, xi, 400 pp., ISBN 10: 0-19-926639-5, £25.00**

Richard Sorabji is a philosopher deeply engaged with the history of the discipline. For those familiar with his work, this volume is another excursus into the history of the concept of the self in ancient, mediaeval and modern philosophy, taking in arguments from the Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist traditions as well. In contrast to earlier volumes, he engages more extensively with philosophical traditions beyond the Western canon. But this is not merely a collation of textual commentaries but rather a careful scrutiny of texts and arguments deployed in favour of his position on the nature of the self. For Sorabji, the concept of the self is of critical importance to attitudes to perception, knowledge, moral agency and death. He argues that the self is a fundamental reality that owns the body, its states, experiences and acts, in contrast to the Lockean, Epicurean position defended by Parfit

in which the self is defended as a stream of psychological continuity. We need to know who we are and have a notion of our individual selves before we can grasp the world.

After the introduction, the main argument of the book is divided into seven parts, beginning with a formulation of his position defending the existence of an individual self that owns psychological states, moving through discussions of unified personhood over time, examining the ethical implications of personhood, shifting to arguments about knowledge, especially self-knowledge, rejecting psychological duration as a definition of the self found in Parfit among others, and ending with a slightly unsatisfactory discussion (at least one which offers little solace) on the afterlife of the self. In this way, his examination of the self begins and ends with the sense of his own mortality. His concern lies with the metaphysics of the person and not merely with the individual as a bundle of properties united by a psychological unity of consciousness.

Part I entitled 'Existence of Self and philosophical development of the idea', comprises chapters 1 and 2. In the first, Sorabji briefly surveys and criticises some analytic arguments against the existence of a self and states that the concept of the self and debates around it stretch back into ancient thought. The self is an embodied subject that owns its body, characteristics, acts and psychological states. The second chapter affirms that the ancients had a concept of self, albeit some Platonists among others insisted that this self could exist in a purely noetic disembodied form, a position that is different to Sorabji's embodied self. The rational soul/self whose true abode is the noetic realm is therefore not his prime concern. He discusses sixteen different textual instances and notions of self in ancient literature and defends Foucault's contention that the ancients were as concerned with the 'souci du soi' as moderns are, *pace* Charles Taylor and Pierre Hadot among others.

Part II examines 'Personal identity over time' and comprises chapters 3-5 analysing the nature of individuality over time. Chapter 3

examines ancient accounts of persistence, while chapter 4 focuses upon a critique of Parfit's views, reinforced by his critique of the Epicurean-Lockean conception of the self in chapter 5. This last chapter continues a certain tendency in areas of philosophy to discern continuities between the ancient, mediaeval and early modern philosophers acknowledging Locke's debt to the Epicureans. Chapter 4 discusses the opposition between a notion of personhood as fission, where the individual splits into many, and fusion where many individuals merge into one, drawing upon Williams' principle that survival is non-relative, that is, unconnected with what happens to others.

Part III, 'Platonism', comprising chapters 6 and 7, examines two well known alternatives to his views: the Platonic impersonal self, and the self as a subject-less bundle. The latter chapter in particular examines differentiation of individuals by qualities, place and matter, and juxtaposes Aristotle and Aquinas' defence of personal immortality against Averroes' rejection. Sorabji does not examine why these alternative fail or are inadequate accounts.

Part IV on 'Identity and persona in ethics', comprises chapters 8-10 and traces the development of the concept of identities and individual personae in ancient philosophy and its implications for practical reasoning, drawing on the views of Stoics such as Cicero and Epictetus, Platonists such as Plutarch, and Aristotle, and examines the relationship between these views and contemporary accounts of the 'practical self' in the works of Charles Taylor and others concerned also with narrativity. Central to this section is the discussion of the Aristotelian concept of *proairesis*, which is fundamental to the account of moral agency of a subject.

Part V on 'Self-awareness', comprising chapter 11-14. Sorabji argues that the unity of self-awareness is a function of a single owner and not of a single faculty. He analyses and questions various ancient arguments for the claim that self-awareness is indubitable, focusing on Plotinus, Augustine, and Avicenna (the *homo volans* argument). It is unclear why these arguments are somewhat inferior to his assertion of the unitary subject that is the embodied self. Taking Avicenna, and

other arguments in Islamic philosophy, the self that is the rational soul possesses a faculty that is a unity-in-diversity and also remains a subject that is a unity-in-diversity with respect to its ontological status within the pyramid of being. What is perhaps missing from this account is the argument in Porphyry and later Islamic traditions of self-knowledge and by extrapolation knowledge of others as a unitive process that both retains and dissolves subjectivity.

Part VI entitled ‘Ownerless streams of consciousness rejected’, comprises chapters 15 and 16 and is the core of the critique of Parfit's account of persons in terms of psychological continuity, placed alongside Indian debates on personhood, drawing upon Nyaya's affirmation of a subject for consciousness in opposition to Buddhist ‘psychological streams’ and the ‘empty self’. Here, Sorabji deploys Vātsyāyana's concept of ‘I touch what I see’ against Nāgārjuna's emptiness and abandonment of persons.

The final part ‘Mortality and the loss of self’, comprising chapters 17-19, examines whether or not the fear of personal annihilation is irrational and how we might survive in three modes: resurrection, reincarnation and disembodied survival. The last option he finds particularly problematic because of his rejection of differentiation and individuality in absence of the body, and yet this is the position that many mediaeval philosophers, especially in the Islamic tradition defended rigorously on Aristotelian grounds. The first option is merely unscientific. But what do we make of the fear of non-existence in the future? He argues that the horror of annihilation is irrational (which will be of little consolation), while allowing for the possibility of circular time and backward causation (drawing on Dummett for this point). Philosophy cannot eliminate horror but it could stem it from growing. He puts forward an old argument: since we do not feel horror at a prior non-existence, we should not feel horror at our posterior non-existence. But this assumes that we believe that we had no previous existence prior to our embodied self, a point outright rejected by the Platonic tradition and by philosophers in the Islamic tradition such as Suhrawardī and Mullā adrā.

At times, Sorabji is rather uneven in his judgements and he does not address two key questions: what exactly does it mean to 'own' psychological states, and why is the concept of the self as 'me and me again' (as he points out early on) not a case of what the mediaevals called mental existence? It seems that there is some conflation of metaphysics and psychology involved. Furthermore, while he states at the outset that the existence of the self does not require proof but disproof, one wonders whether this would really satisfy the analytic thinkers whom he criticises. The two alternatives to his account of the self, namely the self as a stream of ownerless consciousness and the self as a disembodied and immortal rational being, are never conclusively refuted. Despite these reservations, this is quite an excellent volume from which one will no doubt learn much, and the juxtaposition of ancient thinkers to mediaevals and moderns, Islamic thinkers along with Buddhists demonstrates an awesome mastery of different philosophical traditions and a deep learning. The argument is clear, coherent and precise and the presence of a few gaps and assumptions left unexplained does not detract from the achievement.

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**Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*,  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 341+x pp, £60 cloth**

In an age when emotionally disturbed people are routinely referred to psychiatrists, psychologists, or professional counselors it may be surprising to learn that western philosophers have long cultivated the study of human emotions. Ancient rhetoric taught about emotions and trained speakers how to influence them. Medieval medicine included therapeutic methods for healing emotional illness, and spiritual counselors sought to nurture emotional health in their charges. Just what theories did philosophers propose about the nature and kinds of emotion? What might they contribute to modern

discussions of emotion? By presenting historical theories of emotion in the context of contemporary debate the Finnish scholar Simo Knuuttila offers answers these questions. Well versed in both Analytic and Continental philosophy, he offers the scholarly community much needed background on the rich historical resources that might inform future investigations.

This book has four chapters. The first treats emotions in Ancient Philosophy beginning with Plato's *Republic*, continuing with Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Platonists and ending with Nemesius of Emesa. Chapter Two studies the place of emotions in the pursuit of Christian perfection. It offers important background on the views of the early Fathers—Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the Cappadocians, and the Egyptian heritage—leading up to a treatment of Augustine. Lastly, it explores the role of religious feelings in early monasticism. Chapter Three covers the medieval period from Abelard to Aquinas. After reviewing emotion in relation to the logic of willing, to spiritual experience, to self-awareness and to medicine, discussions of Avicenna, Albert the Great and early 13<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers, lead into the central presentation of Aquinas's theories. Chapter Four examines emotions in the context of 14<sup>th</sup> century theories including those of Scotus, Ockham and Adam Wodeham. Selecting from the many topics treated, we will now comment on a few points of interest.

Plato's views on emotions underwent important shifts in emphasis from *Republic* through the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus* to the *Philebus* and *Laws*. At best Plato's attitude toward emotions was ambivalent; at worst, he sought to confine emotions to the lower part of the soul and, in any case, to strictly limit their role in rational life. Aristotle, on the other hand, tries to show how emotions can contribute to the good life. Knuuttila believes that "Aristotle's theory is similar to modern cognitive compositional views and has influenced many of them." (71) A "compositional" theory of emotion includes: 1) an evaluation that states that something positive or negative is happening in, or relating to, a person, 2) A pleasant or unpleasant feeling about the content of the evaluation, 3) a behavioral

suggestion or positive impulse toward action and 4) bodily changes. Although each of these factors figures into Aristotle's analyses of particular emotions (12 are examined in *Rhetoric*), there is no clear definition of causal connections between them. Nonetheless, Knuuttila discusses issues that have been raised by D. Charles, P. Greenspan, M. Nussbaum, W.W. Fortenbaugh, A. Rorty and J. Lear.

One theme in particular runs throughout this study: that is the relation of emotion to judgment. The author confirms Nussbaum's view of the "cognitivity of Aristotelian emotions" and that emotions are individuated by "the characteristic beliefs and thoughts which cause them and form their cognitive content." (40) Later, he seems to agree with D. Charles's view that an emotion involves accepting a propositional content: "In so far as an emotion involves a belief, its cognitive part is first assented to in an epistemic sense and then accepted in an emotional sense—this involves a pleasant or unpleasant feeling and a behavioral suggestion." (45, emphasis added) Aside from its circularity, this description of emotion hardly defines the relationship of emotion to judgment. Despite his strong support for these theories, Knuuttila concludes quite modestly that "the theories of Plato and Aristotle were cognitive in the sense that emotions are associated with beliefs...." (70 emphasis added) Just what is meant here by "associated with" is unclear. Are emotions caused by beliefs? Or are emotions *simpliciter* beliefs "assented to" and "accepted"?

Stoics held that emotions are judgments; indeed they are mistaken judgments that must be expunged from the souls of the wise. For that reason Stoics offered various therapies to rid oneself of passions. Chrysippus advocated a therapeutic method that describes the situations in which emotions are aroused and shows that they are neither necessary, nor natural nor useful and that they cause bad or ineffective behavior.

The idea that emotions are judgments that can be removed by changing one's beliefs was not universally accepted in the ancient world. Epicurus's naturalism founded emotions on the instincts of pleasure and pain that he thought should be controlled by reason. He

recognized emotions in children whose beliefs were not developed. To the extent that emotions involve belief, he saw that our reasons for having them are not always available to our consciousness. (86) The strongest objection to the idea that emotions are judgments came from the middle Platonist Alcinous. “There are times, after all, even when we recognize that the sensations presented to us are neither unpleasant, nor pleasant, nor yet worthy of fear, when we are nevertheless driven by them which would not be the case had they been of the same nature as judgments; for judgments, when once we have condemned them (whether rightly or wrongly), we reject.” (89, n. 218) As Knuuttila says, “Emotions do not always vanish when we have convinced ourselves that the evaluations on which they are based are false.” (*Ibid.*) But does not this admission argue against a cognitivist reduction of emotions to judgments? Finally, Plotinus asserts that judgments can cause an emotion but are not necessary for emotion and are not identical with it. (101)

Chapter One concludes with a discussion of Nemesius of Emesa, a late fourth century bishop of Emesa in Syria. He followed Galen in thinking that emotions are motions in the systems of the humours and vital pneuma, but his larger theory resembles the compositional model. His treatment of particular emotions follows the dominant theory in the ancient world, viz. that of the Stoics. Although Knuuttila makes a strong case for the compositional model in several ancient thinkers, the issue of whether emotions are reducible to judgments, or are merely caused by judgments, remains debatable.

Early Christian teachings on emotions were influenced by Stoicism and Platonism. Thus Clement of Alexandria describes emotions as “unnatural, excessive, and runaway impulses that are disobedient to reason.” (117) Not surprisingly, he found Stoic ethics and emotion therapy particularly useful for the pursuit of Christian virtue. In Origen the love of God requires elimination all emotions related to contingent things before mystical union with the divine. This *apatheia* transforms a person so that other things are loved only insofar as they depend on God. The Cappadocian Fathers (Basil, Gregory of

Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus) were influenced by Origen as they sought spiritual perfection through meditation and asceticism. Negative emotions such as fear and dread of torments were used to awaken the spirit and motivate it toward God. “Moderating and extirpating [emotions] formed the main topic of the preparatory part of the ascent, and the mature spiritual life was described with the help of conceptions derived from emotional contexts, though the higher feelings were sharply separated from the ordinary emotions.” (151)

Knuuttila explores the sources of Augustine’s ideas on emotion. He finds the general view of emotions in *Confessions* and *City of God* to be substantially the same. (153) Augustine believed that all the philosophical schools held that emotions are unconsidered responsive movements of the soul and that reason should dominate them. Augustine thought erroneously that the differences between the Platonic, Peripatetic and Stoic views on emotion were merely verbal; but he argued that the Stoic claim that the wise person was devoid of emotion was “an impossible ideal” and “morally misguided”, and he held that emotions could serve valuable motivational and moral purposes. He thought that emotions include an assessment related to the person and an inducement to act in some way. Although an initial emotion is not voluntary; acquiescing in it and acting or not acting on it are voluntary. (*Ibid.*)

Augustine’s central contribution is the idea that emotions are related to volition. Augustine sometimes called all occurrent emotions ‘volitions’. (168) “Even if emotions in their initial state are uncontrolled movements [the “pre-passions” of the Stoics], the superior will can react to them either by consenting to them or by refusing them....the emotional movements are voluntary as soon as they can in principle be defeated or consented to. (*Ibid.*) As A. Dihle has argued, what is new in Augustine is “his attempt to relate all impulses and inclinations of the soul to the will as a dynamic centre of personality.” (*Ibid.*) Knuuttila disagrees with R. Sorabji who says that Augustine was blind to the Stoic division between involuntary first movements (so-called prepassions) and willed emotions. (172) If the relation of emotion to volition is important for Augustine’s general theory of

emotion, his effort to show how several emotions (appetite, joy, fear, distress) are related to love is crucial for his accounts of those emotions. (e.g. 159) Chapter Two concludes with reflections on Augustine's influence on Western monasticism.

Chapter Three explores several topics related to emotion – first movements toward sin, feeling in spiritual experience, the logic of willing, medical practice—as well as the theories of Avicenna, Albert the Great and other early 13<sup>th</sup> century thinkers. These lead up to Aquinas's study of emotion, the most extensive medieval treatise on the subject. This is very rich material and shows how earlier thinkers such as the Stoics, Nemesius of Emesa, Augustine and others came to influence Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh of St. Victor, Abelard, Anselm of Canterbury and, through them, Aquinas. Avicenna's theory is said to be similar to Aristotle's compositional theory. This chapter contains the fullest discussion of taxonomies of the emotions. (summarized at 232-5) After John of la Rochelle the Platonic division into concupiscible and irascible appetite dominates, and this is the one that Aquinas follows. (230) Normally, the irascible power is directed toward things regarded as arduous and difficult, and this power takes on the qualities of strength or weakness in relation to his object. In this context, it is not clear what it means to say that “magnanimity (*magnanimitas*) is insurrection.” (235) Albert the Great inherits the confusion caused by Aristotle's statements in *Categories* that emotions are qualities but are not called so; and he deals with the problem of whether they are passions or actions. He concludes that “Emotions are passions, in being causally dependent qualities, and actions, in being motive acts.” (239)

I shall not say much about Aquinas's theory here but only underscore some of Knuuttila's claims about it. Aquinas innovates not by adopting the standard division of emotions into concupiscible and irascible but rather by explaining the principles behind this division and by systematizing various emotions. He accepts the definition of the irascible as pertaining to the arduous or the difficult; but he maintains that an act of the irascible faculty presupposes an act of the

concupiscible faculty. In general Aquinas treats emotions as motive acts and classifies them from the point of view of behavioral changes. (252) As Knuuttila observes, Aquinas's work on particular emotions "includes a great number of terminological, doxographical, psychological and ethical remarks..." (253) Ethical dimensions of emotion call into play reason, judgment and intention that evaluate and moderate emotional responses. Chapter Three traces Aquinas's influence on later thinkers. Giles of Rome, for example, amended Aquinas's denial that anger has a contrary by stating that mansuetude, i.e. tameness or gentleness, is its contrary.

Chapter Four is less than half the length of the others; but it offers important background on major topics of 14<sup>th</sup> century philosophy including intuitive cognition, reflexive acts and free volitions as prelude to discussion of Scotus and Ockham's theories of emotion. Given a strong Augustinian emphasis on voluntarism, Franciscan approaches to emotion tended to transpose emotional phenomena to the actions and passions of the will. Knuuttila states that Scotus's views about the nature of emotions of the sensitive soul were not original: he regarded them as involuntary reactions that are associated with bodily changes. (265) Scotus rejects Aquinas's view that emotions are "movements" in favor of Albert's view that they are qualities. He divided the emotions into concupiscible and irascible; however, he defined the object of the latter not as "the arduous" but rather "the offensive". More radically, Scotus viewed emotions as "affective non-voluntary changes in the experiencer [that are] phenomena not merely of the sensitive level of the soul, but to some extent of the intellectual level as well." (268) This bi-level view of emotions entails that names of emotions will have a systematic ambiguity depending on whether they refer to an emotion of the sensitive appetite or of the will. Knuuttila seems to regard variations in treatment of the emotions in the respective domains of sensitive appetite and will as primarily a matter of terminology. Of course, it goes beyond terminology. I explored the substantial differences in my article "Scotus on Human Emotions", in *Franciscan Studies*, 56 (1998), 325-45. Scotus's distinction between the actions and passions of the will became very important later when it was adopted by Ockham and

John Buridan. (273-4) Chapter Three concludes with a survey of late medieval compendia on emotions.

Simo Knuuttila has provided contemporary scholars with an invaluable resource for further research on the theory of emotion. If the history of philosophy is a laboratory where one may explore theoretical alternatives on a particular topic, the present volume is essential to that history. Nor is it mere history; at every turn Knuuttila uses his rare philosophical talents and analytical expertise to show the implications of past views for present theory. His tendency to compare theories to a “compositional model” does not compromise his sense of detail and fairness with respect to each of the theories that he examines. The volume emphasizes the theory of emotion rather than the analysis of particular emotions; but the latter is included where appropriate. It has an up-to-date bibliography and useful indices of names and subjects. In short, this book is indispensable for anyone engaged in serious research on emotions in the western philosophical tradition.

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**Simon Swain (ed.), *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul. Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). x + 699 pp; ISBN 978-0-19-929153-3; £100, hardback**

Polemon of Laodicea's *Physiognomy*, an early second-century CE text concerning the art of deducing the character of an individual from his physical features, is no longer extant. There is a later, fourth-century CE Greek epitome by Adamantius, which is thought to be very much abridged, and a fourth-century anonymous Latin physiognomic text that is heavily reliant on Polemon. Fragments of a (probably sixth-century CE) Syriac translation are preserved in the encyclopaedic *Cream of Wisdom* of the thirteenth-century bishop Bar Hebraeus.

Polemon's *Physiognomy* was also translated into Arabic, probably during the early Abbasid period. Again, the Arabic translation is lost, but there remain two subsequent Arabic recensions.

About half of the volume under review is devoted to providing essential primary sources. In the largest chapter, Robert Hoyland presents a much-needed new edition, and the first modern translation, of one of the Arabic recensions – a fourteenth-century manuscript now housed in Leiden (pp. 329-463). This section by itself makes the book a worthwhile and welcome publication. Because of its similarity to the Greek epitome of Adamantius, the Leiden text is considered to be a more accurate textual witness to the original Polemon than the other Arabic recension – represented chiefly by two manuscripts housed in Istanbul – which are thought to have been extensively rewritten. For this reason, Antonella Ghersetti edits and translates only the introduction from one of these manuscripts in this volume (pp. 465-485). This is followed by Ian Repath's editions and translations of Adamantius' *Physiognomy* (pp. 487-547) and the anonymous Latin physiognomic treatise (pp. 549-635). Finally, Simon Swain provides the text and translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomy* (pp. 637-661).

The rest of the book is devoted to textual and historical studies, and is divided into two parts, the first given the title "Antiquity" and the second "Islam". For reasons that shall be discussed below, this is rather unfortunate. The first part, on "Antiquity", contains three chapters: George Boys-Stones on "Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory" (pp. 19-124); Simon Swain on "Polemon's *Physiognomy*" (pp. 125-201); and Jaś Elsner on "Physiognomics: Art and Text" (pp. 203-224). The second part, on "Islam", also contains three chapters: Robert Hoyland on "The Islamic Background to Polemon's Treatise" (pp. 227-280); Antonella Ghersetti on "The Semiotic Paradigm: Physiognomy and Medicine in Islamic Culture" (pp. 281-308); and Ghersetti and Swain on "Polemon's *Physiognomy* in the Arabic Tradition" (pp. 309-325). These chapters are full of useful information and should prove to be essential reading for many years to come.

A detailed review of each chapter, therefore, is not necessary. Instead, I would like to make one observation concerning what is perhaps the one weakness in this volume as a whole. The following comments, however, are not intended to detract from this excellent collection of essays and resources. Indeed, this volume should serve as a paradigm for future studies on other texts that experienced a similar chain of transmission.

As stated above, the first two parts of this book are given the titles “Antiquity” and “Islam”, which perhaps signals in a subtle way the major shortcoming with this volume. The editor introduces the volume stating, “The *Physiognomy*’s double existence in *two cultures* led to this project, which has the aim of considering both the Graeco-Roman origins of Polemon’s book and its reception in one of the most exciting of all cultural adaptations, the translation of Greek thought into Arabic *for an Islamic readership*” (p. 1, emphasis mine).

The problems here are very simple – was there nothing in between those “two cultures”? Did the text simply jump straight from the Greco-Roman world into a later Islamic context? Was there nothing in between? And why the final clause emphasising an intended Islamic readership?

As the editor acknowledges, the translation of Polemon’s *Physiognomy* into Arabic was probably inspired by the appearance of the Arabic version of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomy*, which was first translated into Arabic by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (p. 4), a Christian scholar who was the most prominent and celebrated translator in the early Abbasid period. Attempts by modern scholars to label the translation activity of Ḥunayn and his generation as “Islamic” flounder not just on the Christian identity of most of the translators but also on the fact that much of their translation work was done for Christian clients and patrons. Thus, for example, Ḥunayn’s *Epistle concerning the Translations of Galen’s Works* lists his clients on a book-by-book basis, and they can in no way be described as an “Islamic readership” –

see the edition by G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq: Über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen* (1925); G. Bergsträsser, *Neue Materialien zu Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq's Galen-Bibliographie* (1932). Thus Meyerhof, as long ago as 1926, pointed out that the various clients for whom Ḥunayn made his translations fell into three categories – well-educated and prominent Islamic statesmen; older prominent Christian physicians; and, finally, prominent contemporary Christian officials – M. Meyerhof, “New Light on Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq and His Period”, *Isis* 8 (1926), pp. 685-724, especially pp. 714-720.

The approach of this volume, and in particular that of Hoyland, seems to be very much informed by the work of Dimitri Gutas (see, e.g., pp. 227-235), who has long sought to diminish the role of Syriac science and relegate the Syriac output to being simply the by-product of the process of the so-called “Greco-Arabic” translation movement – see, for example, D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (1998), p. 22. On the other extreme, of course, we have R. Le Coz, *Les médecins Nestoriens au moyen âge. Les maîtres des Arabes* (2004), who, as the title suggests, argues that the Nestorian Christians are responsible for the advent of science under the Abbasids. While this is unlikely, it is also unlikely that, had the Abbasids not promoted the sciences as they did, the Nestorians would have sat around doing nothing. The true picture is, as is often the case, probably located somewhere between the two extremes.

We can be sure, however, that the concept of a “Greco-Arabic” translation movement as an Islamic project is an artificial construct that both ignores the identity of the translators and forgets that the same translators who were producing Arabic translations were at the same time producing Syriac ones for different clients. In other words, the choice of target language was not related to its stage in the translation process, but rather to the identity of the person for whom the translation was made (i.e. Arabic translations for Islamic patrons; Syriac translations for Christian patrons).

This may seem like a small point, but it is indicative of a wider malaise that pervades so-called “Greco-Arabic” studies – compare, for example, the unfortunate title of Pormann and Savage-Smith’s otherwise excellent book *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (2007), much of which is concerned with the work of Nestorians and other eastern Christian groups. Such misnomers reflect an underlying erroneous trend in modern scholarship that, for a number of reasons and often without justification, attempt to establish the “Islamic” nature of the texts, and consequently chooses to erase or diminish the Christian contribution to the sciences in the Abbasid Near East. Similarly, the Iranian contribution, as something distinct from the Arab contribution, also often gets lost in discussions of “Islamic” science. Thus Hoyland states “one should not regard the (Arabic) texts as simply distorted versions of Polemon’s original treatise, but rather as examples of Muslim Arabic literature in their own right” (p. 332). Either way, the use of the term “Muslim” here is too specific (i.e. excluding Christians) and too broad (i.e. subsuming Iranian) and is most unsatisfactory.

It is probably of no coincidence, therefore, that this volume not only lacks a treatment of the Syriac fragments but also casts doubt on the likely role of the Syriac translation as an intermediary between the Greek and Arabic versions (e.g. pp. 3-4). It is worth recalling, at this point, the observation of Sebastian Brock in his review of Zonta’s study of Bar Hebraeus’ *Cream of Science*. Noting how Zonta provides some good analyses of corresponding Greek, Syriac and Arabic passages, Brock states, “Since it emerges from these that the Arabic must derive from the Syriac, and not directly from the Greek, the significance of Zonta’s discovery becomes all the greater” – see *JSS* 40 (1995), pp. 164-165 (p. 165). Neither Brock nor Zonta are sufficiently answered in this book, so we are still left with no doubt as to the dependency of the Arabic version on the Syriac. The relevant Syriac fragments have been edited – see N.P. Joosse, *Syriac Encyclopaedia of Aristotelian Philosophy &c.* (2004) – but this edition appears not to have been consulted in the preparation of this volume. Another paper that should have been consulted is G. Furlani, “A Short Physiognomic Treatise in the Syriac Language” in *JAOS* 39 (1919), pp. 289-294.

The volume as a whole could probably have benefitted from another careful read through (e.g. the inside title page reads “Physignomy”), but removing every tiny error from such a large multi-authored book is nigh on impossible. We are, therefore, greatly indebted to the editor for producing a very stimulating volume that contains some essential resources, notwithstanding the one basic problematic assumption that seems to underlie its structure.

Siam Bhayro  
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## Transliteration Table

### Arabic Characters

#### Consonants

ء	ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ	د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص	ض
'	b	t	th	j	ḥ	kh	d	dh	r	z	s	sh	ṣ	ḍ

ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق	ك	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ي	ة	ال
ṭ	ẓ	'	gh	f	q	k	l	m	n	h	w	y	ah;at	al; 'l

#### Long Vowels

اى	و	ي
ā	ū	ī

#### Short Vowels

َ	ُ	ِ
a	u	i

#### Diphtongs

وَ	يَ	يَ	وُ
aw	ai	iy (final form ī)	uww (final form ū)

#### Persian Letters

پ	چ	ژ	گ
p	ch	zh	g



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