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## **The Safavid order and the importance of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili in Shi'a thought and modern history of Iran**

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### **Abstract**

The *Sheikh* Sayyed Safi al-Din Ardabili (1252–1334), through inspiration from the divine teachings of the doctrine of *thaqalain* which is the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the 14 infallibles, founded the Safavieh *tariqah* (Safaviah Sufi order) which has had an important constructive and continuous role in the history of Islamic civilisation and Shi'ism. Sheikh Safi is the spiritual father of the Safavid dynasty. The Safavid movement was a Sufi order, the centre of which was the *khaniqah* of Sheikh Safi al-Din. This Sufi order, gradually, after becoming widespread in society and gaining influence transformed into a social movement, which rose in *jihad* for justice, the realisation of the rights of the oppressed and the defence of Islam. The spiritual-social jihad of the Safavid movement resulted in the consolidation of Shi'a Islam and the revival of Iran as an independent country after the Islamic conquests, and in this way resulted in the renewal of the golden era of the Islamic-Iranian culture. This was a feat that no other Islamic or Iranian school of thought had been able to perform.

**Keywords:** The Safavid order, Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili, Shi'a thought, Iran

## Introduction

Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili was born in 650 After Hijra. He is considered as one of the greatest masters of 'Irfan (Islamic Spirituality) and civilization builders of the Islamic world. Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili is the 19<sup>th</sup> descendant of the 7<sup>th</sup> Shi'a Imam, Imam Musa al-Kadhim(745 AD-799AD). He is the founder of the Safaviya Tariqah, which later established the Safavid dynasty in Iran. In *Mukatibat al-Rashidi* Sheikh Safi al-Din is referred to by titles such as "The revealer of the secrets of the Qur'an", "the pole of the heaven of guardianship" and many other titles. Many *Kiramats* (miracles) have been attributed to Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili both in popular culture and literature. Amongst the important books, which details the life, teachings and miracles of Sheikh Safi al-Din we can refer to the *Safwat al-Safa* of Ibn Bazzaz Ardabili written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century After Hijra. Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili and Imam Khomeini are two great civilization building mystics that have had a great role and influence in the formation of contemporary Shi'a culture and civilization. In regards to the *Safaviya tariqah* and Sheikh Safi al-Din, Professor Nasr has written: "The Safaviya Tariqah is of considerable importance in regards to the recent centuries of Iranian history. In the sense, that not only did it completely transform the social and political history of Iran and for the first time after the collapse of the Sassanid's, gave political unity to Iran, but because from the beginning it was a *Shi'a Tariqah* and had a great role in converting Iran into a twelver Shi'a country. In all Islamic history, no other instance can be seen in which a Sufi Tariqah has had such a continuous political influence in a vast country such as Iran. The *Safaviyah Tariqah* established the Safavid Dynasty, directly by the Safavi family, unified Iran, and placed the Ja'fari sect as the official sect of one the largest Islamic countries."<sup>1</sup>

## **The intellectual importance of Sheikh Safi al-Din**

To discuss the intellectual importance of Sheikh Safi al-Din we can refer to his commentary on the Qur'an, commentary on the narrations of the Prophet and the Imams and commentary on Sufi literature. One of the important characteristics of the Sheikh is his commentary on the Sufi poetry of poets such as Attar Naishaburi, Sanai, Rumi, Kermani, Ruzbahan Baqli and Araqi, which portrays the continuation of the intellectual and spiritual tradition of Islamic spirituality.

The Sheikh, in a commentary of *Qazal* 1726 of the Kulliat of Shams Tabrizi of Rumi, which reads:

بیار باده که دیری است در خمار توام اگرچه دلچ کشانم نه یار غار توام

*Bring the wine for I have been intoxicated by you for an eternity. Although I am wearing the cassock, I am not your companion of the cave.*

Says: because on that day we have drunk from the Divine wine of of of this existence, we are still intoxicated by that Divine wine. By cassock, it is meant the corporeal form, which now desires the Divine wine of life, and seeks that Divine wine which will purify the impurities of the body.<sup>3</sup>

In the commentary of a verse from 'Attar Naishaburi which reads:

از بشری رسته بود باز برای بشر تا به کمال آورد خانه نقصان گرفت

*He was freed from humanity, but once more he returned for the sake of humanity. So that he can bring perfection, he came to the house of imperfection.*

The Sheikh says: the spiritual wayfarer is only freed from the human world when Divine attraction attracts him. Therefore, as long as he is in the world of humanity and intellect he is veiled from the Divine attractions. He is at loss and is bound to the world of humanity and intellect. When he becomes attracted and becomes freed from the world of humanity through the Divine attractions, the fear of worldly interests is removed from him and though gaining wisdom he will gain knowledge of Divine secrets and will reach the station of Knowing Allah. However, If he stays in that world and they do not return him to the world of humanity, he will neither guide nor develop others, therefore, they send him back to the human world, which is the world of deficiency so that he may guide, educate and perfect other wayfarers and seekers.<sup>4</sup>

In a commentary of a verse from the *Divan* of Ohadi Maraqhei which reads:

مردم نشسته فارغ و من در بلای دل دردمند شد، ز که جویم دواى دل

*The people are sitting disengaged and I am in the misery of the heart, My heart hurts, from whom should I find the cure of the heart.*

Says: “the people of appearance are forgetful, and this is the secret. The people of manifestation are the people of the heart and are in the world of Divine discovery, witnessing and examining. The people of the world of secrets, are forgetful and are not aware of the dealings of the people of manifestation. The Divine secrets become revealed to the People of divine discovery, although if a particle of these secrets is revealed to a mountain it will explode and disappear, for as the Qur’an says: *الرَّأْيَةُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ* / “If We had sent down this Qur’an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from fear of Allah .” (Hashr 21). “My

**heart hurts, from whom should I find the cure of the heart.”** Shows that the people of appearance are not aware of this state and the creations of God are not able to cure that which reaches the heart from God, unless the cure of the heart is also given by God.”<sup>5</sup>

The other importance of the intellectual contributions of Sheikh Safi al-Din is his method of hermeneutical interpretation and commentary on the Qur'an. He has very deep sayings about the interpretation of some of the most important verses of the Qur'an. In his interpretation of the Qur'an the Sheikh uses the Qur'an by Qur'an method along with *Hermeneutic Ijtihad*, he makes reference to prophetic narrations, and has also made use of Divine inspiration, intellect, narrations, the heart and art for the interpretation of the Qur'an.

For example they asked the sheikh, do the following Qur'anic verse:

”أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“Unquestionably, [for] the allies of Allah there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they be sad. “ (Yunus 62) and the prophetic narration *المخلصون على خطر عظيم* “the sincere are in great danger” contradict each other?

In answer the Sheikh says that the prophetic narration “The sincere are in a great danger” is about those who have overcome their carnal desires and are freed from them, however, they are still in danger of the trickery of the self, or their life time is not enough for them to reach the ultimate goal. For example one who intends to go to Hajj but worldly desires such as money, family and children prevent him from going, if he gives in to these desires he will not reach his destination, but if he overcomes these obstacles, and turns to the destination and takes the first step, he will be freed from these desires. However, until he reaches the Ka'ba in Mecca, he is danger from bandits, shortage of food, illness and death. It is by reaching the Ka'ba that he becomes safe from these dangers. This state of

being in great danger that was mentioned in the hadith is about the beginner spiritual wayfarer and is an exoteric appearance. In the spiritual state, when the wayfarer becomes free from the chains of the self and the characteristics and desires of the self and becomes liberated from sensual and satanic desires, and walks on the straight path heeding to the Qur'anic command *وَ أَنْ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا* "This is My path, which is straight, so follow it"<sup>6</sup>, he is in danger of other satanic paths, as the mentioned Qur'anic verse continues *وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ*. "and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way."<sup>7</sup>

As long as the spiritual wayfarer is travelling on the path he is in danger. However, by reaching the destination of union with the divine, and walking in the safety of this union the Qur'anic promise *وَ أَنْ إِلَى رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَى* "And that to your Lord is the finality"<sup>8</sup> becomes true, for by walking in the safety of the Ka'ba the hearts becomes safe, because as the Qur'anic verse states *وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا* (آل عمران: ٩٧) "And whoever enters it shall be safe"<sup>9</sup>. In this state the spiritual wayfarer becomes free from fear and the dangers of satanic paths, for as the Qur'an promises: *أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ* (يونس: ٦٢) "now surely for the friends of Allah there will be no fear and nor shall they grieve"<sup>10</sup>. Although the fear and danger that leaves the spiritual wayfarer is specific to the world and what resides in it and the afterlife, but the fear of God becomes dominant in him and as his knowledge increases his fear also increases for as the prophetic hadith says "I am the most knowing of Allah and the most fearful of Him among you" for if one does not fear the greatness of Allah he will become a wrongdoer, as the Qur'an says:

"*فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ*". (اعراف: ٩٩)

"What! Do they then feel secure from Allah's plan? But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who shall perish."<sup>11</sup>

The other importance of Sheikh Safi al-Din is his spiritual commentary on narrations of the Prophet and the Imams in which he has made remarkably deep and precise statements in regards to the stations of spiritual wayfaring. At times, from a short hadith of no more than six words he has extracted fundamental principles of spiritual wayfaring.

For example they asked him “Imam Ali says: *مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ*” “He who knows himself knows his Lord” can we understand from these words that when we know ourselves we have come to know God through research?”

In answer the Sheikh replied: the phrase “He Who knows himself” means that the spiritual wayfarer gains knowledge of his self and after seeing the deficiencies of his self comes to reform them. To become purified from defects is *Tazkiyah* or purification. Whoever becomes purified from his self, by creating distance from the self, reaches salvation and safety from Divine torment. He becomes aware of Allah. After gaining knowledge of the self he comes to know himself, and by leaving the selfness of the self, his eyes become open to Allah. The knowledge of Allah is attained after knowledge of one’s self. The created is the evidence of the existence of the creator, therefore the purpose is nearness not research.”<sup>12</sup>

From this Hadith the Sheikh has derived a number of principles of Islamic spirituality such as: Yaqzeh (vigilance), desire and devotion, purification, abandonment, adornment, wisdom, certainty which is divided into knowledge of certainty, essence of certainty and truth of certainty, and nearness.<sup>13</sup>

### **The importance of the Practical aspect of spiritual wayfaring in the Safaviya Tariqah**

Sheikh Safi al-Din has placed great emphasis on *dhikr*, which is Divine invocation and remembrance, solitude and watchfulness by the heart.<sup>14</sup> He has placed *Shari’ah* or Islamic religious law as the

foundation of Irfan. The Qur'an plays a central and important role in the theoretical and practical teachings of the *tariqah* of Sheikh Safi al-Din. Sheikh Safi al-Din contributed to the further development of spiritual self-knowledge and spiritual psychology. Some mystics such as the school of Baghdad were of the opinion that through severe mortification one can reach deep spiritual knowledge. However, sheikh Safi al-din placed emphasis on constant "watchfulness of the heart" and believed that watchfulness of the heart is a better method for attaining the truth. The sheikh has stressed on two types of watchfulness, which are "behavioral" and of "the heart".

From a theoretical and practical perspective he was able to establish the moderate path of constructive cooperation between Sufi *tariqah* and the establishment of religious scholars and political organs. This constructive cooperation resulted in the formation of the Safavid dynasty and the consolidation of Shi'ism in Iran, and also the independence and unification of Iran. He is one of the flag carriers of the theory of proximity of Islamic sects and both he and his successors took great steps in supporting and deepening this theory. Unfortunately, when the Ottomans became the enemies of the Safavids, through their propaganda they were able to destroy this aspect of the Safaviyah movement in the mind of Sunni masses, and falsely entered the killing of Sunnis by the command of Safavids in their history. However, in reality the Sheikh and his successors actively wanted proximity between the Islamic sects and in the Safavid government numerous high ranking Sunni military and political officials were present.

Moderation in 'Irfan is one of the other important characteristics of the *tariqah* of Sheikh Safi al-Din. The sheikh says. "For us there is discovery, miracles, taking steps and effort. Discovery is that the wayfarer comes to know his defects and his talents. Miracles is that from within himself he overcomes and removes his desires and turn his heart to solitude. Taking steps, is that he goes on a journey

outside of himself so that he may reach the destination. Effort is that he does not bow his head to anyone other than Allah.”<sup>15</sup>

In regards to open invocation and secret invocation which is the subject of debate between different mystical orders the Sheikh has a holistic approach. He says that “in the initial stages of spiritual wayfaring, when the illness of the self is severe and corporeal dependence is strong, open invocation is good. When the spiritual wayfarer comes closer to the heart, he is trained by secret invocation.”<sup>16</sup>

Qiyath al-Din Muhammad Vazir, asked the sheikh about the invocation “la ilaha illa Allah” (there Is no deity but Allah) said in a four percussion manner. The Sheikh answered “the beautiful invocation of “la ilaha illa Allah” is the word of sincerity and as such must be said with sincerity.”<sup>17</sup>

In the opinion of Sheikh Safi al-Din true Irfan is the Irfan which results in the manifestation of good states and behavior and not simply behavior which is correct in appearance even if it is sitting in the *mosque*.

The spiritual *Tariqah* of Sheikh Safi al-Din which is referred to as the Safaviyah tariqah is the collection of *Shariah* (religious law), *tariqah* (spiritual wayfaring) and *haqiqah* (reaching the truth), with the purpose of reaching Allah. In his commentary on the Qur’anic verse **وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا** “And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.”<sup>18</sup> The sheikh says: "by ‘ways’ Allah means *shariah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*. He means that when an individual strives for My pleasure I will show him all three ways. The path of *shari’ah* can be journeyed by appearance and that is the path of Hajj, holy war, esoteric and exoteric devotion and traveling in order to gain rightful living. The path of *tariqah* can be journeyed by reaching an attribute. When the self follows the *shari’ah*, the attribute of selfhood is removed from it, and replaced by divine attributes, through these attributes the path of *tariqat* is journeyed.

The path of *haqiqat* can be travelled by the heart, and it is a path from the heart to Allah, when the desires of the self are overcome this road becomes open to the heart.”<sup>19</sup>

In the opinion of Sheikh Safi al-Din the best path of spiritual wayfaring is the path of love, which is the path of Prophet Abraham. The sources of the teachings of the spiritual tariqah of safaviyah are the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the 14 infallibles and the spiritual experience and tradition of اولياء الله the Friends of Allah. Spiritual wayfaring without absolute obedience to religious law is impossible, and the spiritual wayfarer must unconditionally follow Islamic religious law until the end of his life. Wisdom, servitude to Allah, kindness, trust in Allah, the greater jihad, propagating and honoring the teachings and sayings of the fourteen infallible, awaiting for the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam, good behavior, social cooperation, chivalry, bravery, helping the innocent, the oppressed and the poor and serving the creations of God are the main principles of the Safaviyah tariqah.<sup>20</sup>

Another one of the most important contributions of Sheikh Safi al-Din was making Sufism socially active and responsible. Good behavior, generosity, forgiveness and hospitality are of the pillars of the social Sufism of Sheikh Safi al-Din. The sheikh was successful in bringing Sufism out of the *khaniqah* and into social life and by combining invocation, thought and action, combine individual spiritual life and social life and manifest them in society. Expanding the station and function of the *khaniqah* was one of the other important contributions of the Sheikh. Over time, The *khaniqah* of Sheikh Safi al-Din became the aggregation of spirituality, art and politics.

From an architectural perspective, the shrine of Sheikh Safi al-Din is the most beautiful *khaniqah* in the world. It is the perfect manifestation of the philosophy of Islamic art and its inscriptions are comprised of Qur'anic verses prophetic narrations.<sup>21</sup> Its courtyard is the burial place of the martyrs of the battle of Chaldoran who for the love of Imam Hussain in defense of the

capital of the Shi'a government of Safavids against the attack of the Ottomans on Tabriz, became martyred and connected the Karbala of Iraq to the Karbala of Iran. From the perspective of identity the shrine of Sheikh Safi al-Din is the symbol of the spirituality and resistance of Shi'ism and the source and beginning of the independence of the political geography of twelver Shi'ism.

The grave of Sheikh Safi al-Din who is the spiritual father of modern Iran and Shah Isma'il the architect of Shi'a Iran are located in the shrine complex of Sheikh Safi al-Din, which is until today visited by the lovers of the household of Prophet Muhammad from all over the world. The *Khaniqah* and shrine complex of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili has been registered as a world heritage site by UNESCO.

### **The civilization building importance of the Safaviyah Tariqah**

Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili is the spiritual founder of the Safavid dynasty and modern Iran as the center of Shi'ism in the world. From a civilization building perspective the Safavid Tariqah has done a number of important things. Firstly it forever freed Iran from being a prisoner of the theory of Caliphate, and separated Iran's path from the Sunni theory of caliphate which manifested itself in the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman caliphates.

Secondly it established an independent Iran. The Safavid era is considered the most important historical period of Islamic Iran. Because, for the first time, 900 years after the collapse of the Sassanids, a central government ruled over the entire Iran of that time. After Islam a number of Iranian governments such as the Saffarian, Samanian, Ale Buye and Sarbedaran were formed, but none of them were able to take control of all of Iran, and create unity between the Iranian people.

Thirdly, it revived and consolidated twelver Shi'ism in Iran and created a focal point for Shi'as across the world, a focal point which had a vast land and a great power. After the Safavids, Twelver

Shi'a's were not only freed from practicing *taqiyyah*, and being without a home and prosecuted, but gained an independent political and religious geography and achieved power. They gained a protector wherever they were in the world.

Fourthly the Safaviyah Tariqah was the most important Sufi order in the history of Islamic Iran, which had a constructive, unique and lasting influence. Other than resulting in the establishment of a Shi'a government and society in Iran, the Safaviyah Tariqah, resulted in a great Shi'a cultural and artistic movement the valuable works of which continue until today. For example, in the Safavid era Transcendental Philosophy was established by Mulla Sadra and Muhammad Taqi Mjlesi and Mulla Muhsin Feiz Kashani wrote *Bahar al-Anwar* and *Wafi* respectively, which are two important encyclopedia's of Shi'a hadith.

In the field of Islamic Art, The arts of the Safavid period called by many scholars like Sheila Canby "*The Golden Age of Persian Art*". The architecture and decoration of Shi'ism in mosques, Khaniqahs and Hussainiyah's became manifest. three prominent internationally recognized examples of this are the Shrine complex of Sheikh Safi al-Din in Ardabil and the Sheikh Lutfallah mosque and The Shah Mosque in Isfahan. The golden age of Islamic-Iranian art is comprehensive in covering not just architecture but also Persian miniature painting, ceramics, books and manuscripts, calligraphy, tiles, metalworking and textiles.<sup>22</sup>

In the field of literature, Shi'a poetry underwent an important evolution, the *Marthiyah* of Muhatasham Kashani and Saqi namih of Mir Razi Artimani are examples of this. The cultural movement of Shi'ism which the Safaviyah directed in Iran, continued even after the Safavid dynasty. The contemporary poetry of Shahriar, Musawi Garmarudi and Qazweh about the household of the Prophet is a continuation of the movement of literature of the Safavid era.

The Islamic revolution of contemporary Iran is a continuation of the path of the Safavids, and the respect of top officials of the Iranian

government, such as Iran's leader, Ayatullah Khamenei to Sheikh Safi al-Din,<sup>23</sup> portrays the unique importance of the movement of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili and the Safavi family who have given countless martyrs for the consolidation and continuation of Shi'ism in Iran as the refuge of Shi'as across the world.

### **The comprehensive character of Sheikh Safi al-Din:**

In *Safwat al-Safa* Sheikh Safi al-Din has been introduced as a mystic who had strict adherence to religious law, a man of moderation, a high-minded leader, compassionate, sociable, and with influence between different social groups and classes, including poor and wealthy, those in political power and citizens, men of knowledge and the masses.

Sheikh safi al-Din invited his followers to obey and follow the *Shair'ah* (religious law), *Tariqah* (spiritual path)<sup>24</sup>, sincerity, observance of good behavior, good work, respecting people and social cooperation. The great fame and popularity of the Sheikh which continued and expanded during the time of his successors, led to the establishment of the powerful Safavid dynasty and the independence of Iran based on the three principles of Shi'ism, 'Irfan and Iranian identity. No book written by Sheikh Safi al-Din himself has remained with us, but reading the fourth chapter of the **Safwat al-Safa**, which comprised of the sheikh's sayings on spiritual commentary of Qur'anic verses, narrations of the Prophet and Imams, sayings of masters Irfan and the sheikh's spiritual poetry, shows that other than being a spiritual guide and a political leader, the sheikh was a man of great miracles, a commentator of the Qur'an and the narrations of the Prophet and the Imams, a Jurist of the highest order and a poet. In his commentary on Qur'anic verses the Sheikh has made reference to the poetry of Sana'i, 'Attar, Rumi and 'Araqi.

## Conclusion

The movement of Sheikh Safi al-Din is a continuation of the movement of the Shi'a Imams, which has reached great successes. The movement of Sheikh Safi al-din has had a constructive and long lasting influence in Islamic mysticism, art, civilization, political geography, and international relation of Shi'ism, which is not comparable to any of the other school of jurisprudence, theology and philosophy, or military, political or cultural figures.

The most important heritage of the spiritual movement of Sheikh Safi al-Din is the independence of the political geography of Shi'ism and creating a center of power in Iran for Shi'as across the world as a unified people. In Iran, it is famously said amongst the scholars of Islam that if it was not for the Safavids, today we would pray with our arms closed. Dhul Faqar the two headed sword of Imam Ali became manifest in the spirituality of sheikh Safi al-Din and in the sword of Shah Isma'il, and created a unique effect in the history, culture and civilization of Shi'ism, the cultural and political effects of which continue until today in international relations.

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- <sup>2</sup> A'raf 172
- <sup>3</sup> Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p535.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p540.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p542-543.
- <sup>6</sup> An'am 153
- <sup>7</sup> An'am 153
- <sup>8</sup> Najm 42
- <sup>9</sup> Al-Imran 97
- <sup>10</sup> Yunus:62
- <sup>11</sup> A'raf 99, Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p534-536.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p478.
- <sup>13</sup> By comparing the commentary of the sheikh with the commentary offered in Qoro al-hikam wa doro al-kalam, for this hadith the intellectual superiority of the sheikh becomes evident. The author of the mentioned book Jamal al-Din Muhaqiq Khansari in his commentary on this hadith says: it is meant that whoever knows himself knows his lord. For by knowing one's self one comes to know the existence knowledge and power of God. For as they have mentioned in the books of the theologians, the existence of god is in a state of manifestation so that when one comes to know himself he also comes know god. God knows best.”
- <sup>14</sup> Safavi, Salman, *'Irfan-I Thaqaalain*, London, 2013, p296-297.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p484.
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- <sup>18</sup> Ankabut 69
- <sup>19</sup> Ibn Bazaz, Tawakkul ibn Ismail, *Safwat al-Safa*, Tehran, 1376, p460.
- <sup>20</sup> See Safavi, Salman, *'Irfan-I Thaqaalain*, London, 2013, p149-298.
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- <sup>22</sup> See Canby, Sheila, *The Golden Age of Persian Art: 1501-1722*, London, British Museum Press, 2002.
- <sup>23</sup> Safavi, Salman, *'Irfan-I Thaqaalain*, London, 2013, p21-24.
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## **What is traditionalism?**

Brian Welter

### **Abstract**

From its origins with René Guénon to current thinkers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, traditionalism has sharply critiqued western modernity and its misuse of reason, its materialism, and its alienation from nature. Calling for a renewal of metaphysics and religion by, often, looking to the past's riches and to revelation, its adherents have mostly turned to Islamic spirituality, especially Sufism, in its search for a healthy sense of art, beauty, and symbol. Traditionalists differ from Islamic fundamentalists by, for instance, seeking out parallels across religions.

**Keywords:** Sufism, Islam, Christianity, René Guénon, metaphysics, philosophy, mysticism, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Titus Burckhardt, modernity, revelation, symbol, Thomas Aquinas.

## **I. The traditionalist analysis of the current age**

### **Introduction**

Frenchman René Guénon attracted many early twentieth-century intellectuals who opposed the ideology of progress and sought in its place a perennial philosophy, an unchanging metaphysics at the

core of the world's great religions. These writers have reminded the western world that religion founded on revelation and traditional metaphysics addresses many of our ongoing problems. Guénon and his European followers have tended to look to Islam and its rivers of spirituality instead of seeking a solution from the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches. They reject first of all the assumption of progress's inherent goodness and its place as the central ordering "paradigm" or metaphysics and, secondly, the need to overcome religion for humans to flourish. Traditionalists' pessimism about the present age stems from their experience of the loss of the sacred. Attributing this decline to recurring inclinations in western philosophy, religious history, and science, they have tended to retrace movements in history much like detectives at a crime scene, identifying when things went in the wrong direction, such as with Thomas Aquinas or René Descartes. Much perennialist literature revolves around the transformation that took place between the eleventh century, which held solidly to a traditionalist worldview, and the era of Francis Bacon (died 1626), whose "knowledge is power" has been the western world's fixation for centuries. Much less ink is devoted to figures after the Protestant Reformation, with a few exceptions, such as Jakob Boehme.

Guénon (1886-1951) in *Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps* (1945) notes his time's chaos and confusion, so total that it has even corrupted the word "tradition" itself. Many contemporaries misuse this word to denote movements, ideas, and customs, such as "the Protestant tradition," which oppose the age-old truths expressed in orthodoxy. Guénon notes that the reference to something higher than humanity opens us to harmony and unity, whereas a this-world horizon of forced equality and individualism generates chaos and confusion.

By asserting the universality of orthodox religions, these writers seem to parallel the Jungian mythologist Joseph Campbell. However, traditionalism's universalism rests on the divinely-inspired *philosophia perennis*, or perennial wisdom, instead of on

what they would see as the whimsical fancies of the founders of psychoanalysis. Guénon in *La crise du monde moderne* (1927) defines perennial philosophy by noting, “The authentic traditional spirit, in whatever form it is, is everywhere and always the same in its essentials; various forms, specially adapted to certain mental conditions, eras, and locations, are the expressions of one basic truth. Only from the vantage point of pure intellectuality can one discover this fundamental unity underlying the multiplicity.”<sup>1</sup> The underlying unity implies universalism, he notes in the same passage: “The knowledge of the principles, which is knowledge par excellence, metaphysical knowledge in the true sense of this word, is as universal as the principles themselves, which is to say totally free from individual contingencies which express themselves when these principles are applied” in time, space, and culture. This perspective has come down severely against twentieth-century psychotherapy, seeing in it the exploitation of symbols and simply another face of the era's mindset.

### **Modern Philosophy and Reason**

Traditionalists often focus on the profaning of modern philosophy. Rather than the love of wisdom, *philo-sophia*, philosophy now represents our age's narcissism, as it has become an exercise in self-expression and a way to further undermine any attempts at an awakening. It curtails the spiritual work of the human intellect. Its will to power supports western economic, military, political, and cultural goals at the expense of spiritual development. Guénon identifies the Renaissance as a fatal break, highlighting humanism, which “reduced” everything to the human perspective, degraded the hierarchical order to simple “abstraction,” and turned its back on Heaven in order to conquer the Earth. He regards humanism as an early form of twentieth-century French *laïcité*, which aims to exclude the Church and all religious authority from the public arena.<sup>2</sup> Modern philosophy, often dominated by reason, supports epistemology, empiricism, and the materialist and utilitarian application of reason to problems of industrial and financial

process. This type of rationalism, differing greatly from its traditional version, complements power in defining modernity. Yet like modernity itself, it is a shadow of the real good offered by a traditional metaphysics; “indirect and imperfect,” it is “a knowledge via reflection” of the authentic thing, according to Guénon.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the Swiss Titus Burckhardt (1908-84) notes in his essay “The Traditional Sciences in Fes” (1977) that while the north African legal tradition might seem rationalistic to the contemporary observer, it respects its vocation by serving a higher, spiritual endeavor:

It is a provisional reason that stays at the surface because none of the *‘Ulamā* who argued according to this method would have thought that human reason is the measure of all things, as modern science contends. ... For the former, reason does not encompass all of reality, far from it, but it brings out meaning in its way and to the extent that it is open to divine revelation; for the latter, which refers to both philosophical and scientific reason, everything must be explained by reason and by reason alone even though we do not know precisely what this reason is nor why it has this quasi-absolute right in the face of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Modern philosophy, including reason, constitutes a spiritual problem. The Swiss Frithjof Schuon (1907-98) in *Du Divin a l'humain* (1981) sees in modern reason the result of an initial great fall followed by later degeneration, leading to a break with divine Intellection. This orphaning of the western intellect damaged reason, generating a luciferian rationalism “which turns against God and thereby stands opposed to our nature, or firstly opposes our nature and thereby stands opposed to God.”<sup>5</sup> Westerners inflated reason, handing it a mission beyond its worthiness and capabilities.

Schuon accords to reason a great dignity, but only when it adheres to its boundaries. Detached from these, it brings about “thinking and a form of life which are both contrary to the human.” Much as with our rites, symbols, and “our subjectivity itself,” reason must accept

hierarchy and ultimate reference to God.<sup>6</sup> Schuon blames *superbia*, resulting from the split of human intelligence from the Intellect: “Pride prevents intelligence which has become rationalism from returning to its source; it can only deny the Spirit and replace it by matter.”<sup>7</sup> This division, a religious fall, remakes reason into a shadow, and a sinful, misguided one at that, of the original intelligence that connected man to the divine Intellect. As Burckhardt shows in his analysis of the culture of mid-twentieth-century Fes, the traditionalist practice of art, symbol, alchemy, and education all require humility. Marked by modesty, artisans and teachers may even do their work anonymously and with minimal or no pay. Modernity lacks this sense of vocation and service, replacing these with the rational utilitarianism which has spread into every area of life.

Granting politics as important a spiritual vocation as philosophy, traditionalists contrast modern democracy and its emphasis on equality and individualism with hierarchy and the focus on unity, harmony, and community. The leveling of society and all culture has invited anarchy and mob rule. Indifference to God stems from the inability to think hierarchically. The mob has sentimentalized God, if it bothers with any theological reflection. The notions that only select individuals hold religious power and authority and that the spiritual life offers struggle rather than therapeutic relief from the stresses of modern careerism and consumerism no longer inspire people. Mid-twentieth-century American historian Richard M. Weaver (1910-63) in *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948) notes the harmful effects of equality, which he calls “a disorganizing concept in so far as human relationships mean order. It is order without a design; it attempts a meaningless and profitless regimentation of what has been ordered from time immemorial by the scheme of things.”<sup>8</sup> These words encapsulate modernity itself.

## **Materialism**

The loss of hierarchy has turned people towards the belief in evolution and its assertion that the lower creates or causes the higher. Among other things, this perspective accords to matter an unheard-of primacy. Schuon notes that the theory of evolution stems from fallen, proud reason which has turned away from God and the universe's hierarchical ordering.<sup>9</sup> Ennobling things from below grants nature and matter a spiritual essence with no reference to God. For the Jungians, this “*chthonic*” spirituality magically rises up from below of its own accord. Not by accident, they endeavor to put people in touch with the more primitive instincts and imagination at the expense of the higher person. The Zurich School of psychoanalysis represents in many ways the spiritualization of matter from the sub-level, encouraging its adherents to embrace all manner of inner impulses, however lower-order or immoral, as exemplified in Jung's repeated adulterous affairs and justification for these via his own psychological theories.<sup>10</sup> Guénon finds striking how psychoanalysts speak of the “sub”-conscious, as if it emerges from below or from an inferior state, and wonders at the “strange illusion whereby psychologists arrive at considering states of being that are supposedly more 'profound' simply because they are more inferior.”<sup>11</sup> These words highlight how much perennialists clash with the modern view.

Schuon regards the corrupted view of nature, specifically scientism and its favorite child, evolution, as a perversion of the imagination and a loss of common sense.<sup>12</sup> The hierarchical view of centuries ago envisions the lower's derivation from the higher. All ultimately comes from God, including the human intellect. Science, echoing today's individual, has divorced itself from this notion of dependence on the higher. Traditionalists regard technological society's reduction of nature to its material components as the result of the spiritual decline of the human intellect and the rejection of traditionalist science, technology, and social arrangements. Money and power determine right from wrong in capitalistic society. This

has opened the way to profiting from the Earth, something that the Iranian-American Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) discusses at length in *Man and Nature* (1968): “Nature has become desacralized for modern man ... nature has come to be regarded as something to be used and enjoyed to the fullest extent possible. ... [F]or modern man nature has become like a prostitute.”<sup>13</sup> The above words discuss the outer symptoms, but in the same discussion he turns to the inner, spiritual issue:

Man wants to dominate nature not only for economic motives but also for a 'mystique' which is a direct residue of a one-time spiritual relation *vis-à-vis* nature. Men no longer climb spiritual mountains—or at least rarely do so. They now want to conquer all mountain peaks. They wish to deprive the mountain of all its majesty by overcoming it.... When the experience of flight to the heavens, symbolized in Christianity by the spiritual experience of the *Divine Comedy* and in Islam by the nocturnal ascension (*al-mi‘rāj*) of the Prophet Muḥammad (upon whom be peace) is no longer available to men, there remains the urge to fly into space and conquer the heavens.<sup>14</sup>

The human destruction of nature substantiates and deepens the modern individual's spiritual sickness. Nasr warns in the same passage that by conquering and destroying ecology, the individual commits the same to himself. We cannot live peacefully with the environment without inner transformation.

### **Corruption of the symbol**

Moderns and traditionalists do not see the same world, as the former reject a symbolic understanding of nature and promote a utilitarian relationship with the created order. Blindness to symbols, whether nature- or religion-based, devalues the symbol into analogy or allegory. The modern world therefore despises the Catholic Church, above all the traditional wing, in the confusion about symbols. The Church cannot even understand itself anymore, as witnessed by the degradation of liturgy and the downgrading of Latin's status.

Authentic symbols from a traditionalist culture no longer speak to us, and can even take on a diabolical aspect when they are mishandled. Arthur Revel in *Comment entrer dans une église?* (2010) notes that those who play with symbols yet lack authenticity remain at a superficial religious level, and in fact care about their public status or power over others instead of seeking true transformation.<sup>15</sup> Very few bother to understand and open themselves to those symbols.

Modern psychoanalysis has attempted to treat the spiritual and psychological pain and disorientation resulting from modernization. This process adopts age-old symbols, already emptied of their revelation-based ontological meaning, to represent the lower order, as reflected in Jungian spirituality. The corruption of the symbol opens the way to anarchy and nihilism. Burckhardt notes the importance that traditionalist religion gives to certain forms. Not just anything can convey religious belief. Baroque religious art, as one example, lacks religious authenticity by failing to conform to the spirit and form of the perennial philosophy. It does not follow that spirituality, independent from form, can be expressed in any manner. This observation reflects the *qualitative* essence of traditional spirituality, which prevents freedom from turning into nihilism. Authentic religious art discloses the higher truths.<sup>16</sup> Without a sense of hierarchy, freedom quickly becomes nihilism and anarchy. Hence the ugliness and randomness of twentieth-century art, behind which, it often seems, lies the diabolical need to corrupt.

## **II. Traditionalist Metaphysics**

### **Introduction**

One can see the importance of a hierarchical metaphysics in Weaver's plain words in *Ideas Have Consequences*, where he

underscores the spiritual aspect of due order and its importance to family and community:

The comity of peoples in groups large or small rests not upon this chimerical notion of equality but upon fraternity, a concept which long antedates it in history because it goes immeasurably deeper in human sentiment. The ancient feeling of brotherhood carries obligations of which equality knows nothing. It calls for respect and protection, for brotherhood is status in family, and family is by nature hierarchical ... It places people in a network of sentiment, not of rights – that *hortus siccus* of modern vainglory.<sup>17</sup>

We have given up brotherhood, family, and community for the utopia of equality and individualism. Weaver saw in the traditional culture of the American South, which was quickly passing into history by his mid-twentieth century, the birthplace of an American traditional culture. Much of his writing lamented its disappearance. Like Nasr and other Islamically-oriented traditionalists, the Christian Weaver located much of what went wrong within the later Middle Ages and thereafter with nominalism's ascendance. This American voice shows some potential in the traditionalist movement because Weaver never felt the need to minimize or reject American culture and history, and found much good in its traditions.

### **The Spiritual Nature of Philosophy and Knowledge**

The spiritual calling of knowledge extends to the study of nature. Perhaps nowhere else has modernity done more damage than in its utilitarian treatment of the Earth, which traditionalists would identify as foremost a spiritual problem. They regard the study of the created order as a spiritual exercise. God as Artisan (rather than the Deistic watchmaker who sets everything in motion and then abandons it) evokes an intimate connection between God and creation. It also prompts us to see our physical surroundings in symbolic terms. Asserting that nature provides knowledge of God grants to the environment a sacramental importance that prevents us

from reducing the created order to mere economic development. Nasr in *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1964) notes that one scientific tradition, the Brethren of Purity, united math and science, the Scriptures, Platonic Ideas as the archetypes of Nature, and angelic or “intellectual intuition”:

This intertwining of domains, now considered as quite separate and distinct ... is one more consequence of the existence of the one Truth which according to the Ikhwān underlies all things. And if Scripture or angelic vision can be here a source of the knowledge of the cosmos, it is because as yet the distinction between Nature and Supernature has not been made absolute. One may say that for the Ikhwān the supernatural has a 'natural' aspect, just as the natural has a 'supernatural' aspect.<sup>18</sup>

Just as western fragmentation and deconstruction manifests a spiritual disposition, alas luciferian, so the approach to knowledge and science adopted by the Ikhwān reflects a higher-order spirituality, as Nasr points out: “The use of Revelation and intellectual intuition, in addition to the observation of Nature and the reading of more ancient books about Nature, stems from the ultimate purpose of the Ikhwān, which is to 'see' and realize the unicity of Nature.”<sup>19</sup> Our deconstructive treatment of nature expresses the rejection of God and hierarchy, whereas that of the Ikhwān evinces faith in the divine Artisan and a hierarchical ordering that never objectifies nature in the way modernity does.

Nasr in the Conclusion to this book points out the important theme that each element of the tradition has by necessity an intimate relation to each other element: “The Ikhwān al-Safâ’ ... present the study of Nature as a part of a more general program for the education of mankind. Through considerations of a metaphysical order they relate their vision of the cosmos to its Divine Origin and consider the study of the Universe and its parts as a valid and necessary step toward the knowledge of Divine realities.”<sup>20</sup> This view regards each aspect of an orthodox religion, such as its art,

philosophy, or way of viewing economics, as offering a full articulation of that tradition.

### **Traditionalist Art**

The modern world affronts beauty by denying it. Instead of being a matter of opinion, traditionalists argue that aesthetics comprises part of the spiritual sciences and therefore reveals truth. Titus Burckhardt's description of the correct disposition towards art and teaching conveys the importance of beauty and art in general for the spiritual life. Artistic freedom does not require renouncing tradition any more than authorial liberty necessitates rejecting grammar. While the novelist enjoys creative freedom, that work can only make sense when it acknowledges syntax. An age-old, faithful religious vision provides the artist, the teacher, and the craftsman with a specified way of doing things as well as an underlying spiritual vision without harming freedom and creativity: "If the expression is correct [*juste*] and adequate to the work's goal, it is nourished by a sort of inspiration that comes from the depth of that tradition that goes beyond the individual; just as Islamic science is rooted in the Qu'ran, ... so the typical forms of Islamic art are rooted in the Islamic spirit, of which this art is the visible expression."<sup>21</sup> Burckhardt concludes this with words that would fit under any aspect of the tradition: "Now, Islam, like all the great spiritual traditions of humanity, was not 'invented' by man."<sup>22</sup> This amounts to a rejection of a sacred-secular split.

Islamic art and architecture develop the religion's Islamic spirituality, and offer insights into rationalism's proper role. They promote the notion of the Greek *kosmos*, an orderly, beautiful, and harmonious integration of all things: "The arches of a courtyard of Al-hambra, for example, or those of some north African mosques, rest in a perfect calm; at the same time they appear to be woven from the vibration of light. They are like the light that has become crystallized."<sup>23</sup> Burckhardt goes on to note how the "objectivity" of Islamic art "has nothing to do with rationalism," as he suspects his

modern readers would assume. “Moreover,” he adds, “what is rationalism if not the limitation of intelligence to human measurements?” The intelligence to which Islamic art and architecture refer is divine Light, or divine illumination, which Burckhardt terms “creative intelligence.”<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, Burckhardt mentions technique in an essay which encompasses art, alchemy, and education, highlighting the artistic side of technique, or the technical side of art: “Savoir-faire in traditional art concerns at once technical and esthetic solutions for a given problem.”<sup>25</sup> The artistic aspect of traditionalist architecture and construction which envisions craftsmen as artists contrasts with modern technology's soullessness. “Utility and beauty go together in traditional art; they are two inseparable aspects of perfection as envisaged by tradition,” as the *hadith* states: “God prescribes perfection to all things.”<sup>26</sup> This requirement for beauty limits the temptation towards utilitarianism, one of modernity's greatest sins that reduces both humans and nature to the useful and profitable at the expense of greater things. Those in search of the perennialist philosophy esteem the higher purpose of both creation and the human. Utilitarianism can never take root in this hierarchical imagination which derives the lower from the higher. Individualism and the horizontal, equalist view orients nothing, not even a human being, to the higher. Given how easily the human imagination misleads us into sin, art plays an important role in our redemption, as it draws us towards the higher things. Sacred art helps liberate us from our animal instincts, ephemeral emotions, and lower-order imagination.

## **Symbol**

The hierarchical quality of traditionalist metaphysics means that like art, symbol never represents or points to arbitrary or subjective matters. The laity need guidance in taking in a symbol, and this implies due order within the religious community. The symbol itself refers to something higher than both itself and the person to whom

it speaks. Given this all, a fraudulent perspective can lead many astray. The decades-long Jungian domination of alchemy freely and forcefully introduced New Age distortions into western consciousness and the Catholic Church itself, presenting traditionalists with a great challenge.<sup>27</sup> When people no longer follow or even understand traditional metaphysics, Nasr warns, alchemy and other traditional sciences “become opaque and, in fact, dangerous channels for spreading chaos.”<sup>28</sup> He identifies the potential that the West ignores, at once a spiritual vision of the human individual and the person's place in creation: “Traditional alchemy is, in fact, a complete way of looking at things. It is at the same time a science of the cosmos and a science of the soul and is related to art and metallurgy on the one hand and spiritual psychotherapy on the other. The alchemical point of view is based on the principle that 'everything is in everything', that everything penetrates everything.”<sup>29</sup> This approach to nature, knowledge, and science envisions a harmonious, integrated view of cosmology and traditional psychotherapy. It seeks integration by asserting that physical nature impacts one's psychological state and vice versa, and implies hierarchy since only some can approach alchemy's secrets.

Burckhardt in his essay “Thoughts on Alchemy” shows how the science in fact outlines a psychology. Alchemy and cosmology both gave traditional man a sense of himself, the former science mostly inwardly and the second outwardly. Burckhardt emphasizes alchemy's centrality to traditional science, particularly psychology, seeing in it the essence of traditionalist spiritual psychology. Conceiving the integration of body and soul within the person, he notes: “Such an integration nevertheless cannot transpire without a kind of grace; this presupposes a sacred predisposition as well as an attitude that excludes all Promethean or egotistical adventures.”<sup>30</sup> Modern man no longer strives for this sacred predisposition, largely because of the lack of awareness of its existence.

## Islamic spirituality

With western Christianity at the forefront of modernization, exemplified by scholasticism, the Reformation, and subsequent religious events, traditionalists look upon the religion with trepidation while seeing in Islam, conversely, a continuity with the older world. As an Abrahamic religion, Islam shares many traits with Christianity, making it attractive and somewhat familiar despite centuries of western distortion and misrepresentation which persist to the present day. Guénon notes that, as the intermediary between West and East, many qualities of Islam find parallels in the western Middle Ages.<sup>31</sup> Christianity does not enjoy the same constancy, despite the teaching of apostolic succession via the Catholic or Orthodox episcopate. Nasr identifies a cleavage in the western medieval mind between natural and religious law. This deeply affected philosophy, and philosophy's relationship to theology. The split was never healed or overcome. Western traditionalists find in Islam and Islamic spirituality and philosophy an *anamnesis*, a remembrance of their own holistic world before this inner division. Many streams of Islam avoided the ills of modernity until well into the twentieth century.

The future Benedict XVI, Cardinal Ratzinger, saw *anamnesis* as a valid formulation for traditional Catholicism. His following words from Dallas, 1991, testify to the potential metaphysical wellspring within people as part of our very nature:

The first so-called ontological level of the phenomenon conscience consists in the fact that something like an original memory of the good and true (both are identical) has been implanted in us, that there is an inner ontological tendency within man, who is created in the likeness of God, toward the divine. From its origin, man's being resonates with some things and clashes with others. This anamnesis of the origin, which results from the godlike constitution of our being is not a conceptually articulated knowing, a store of retrievable contents. It is so to speak an inner sense, a capacity to

recall, so that the one whom it addresses, if he is not turned in on himself, hears its echo from within. He sees: "That's it! That is what my nature points to and seeks."<sup>32</sup>

"Capacity to recall," of course, reminds us of the intellect's spiritual nature, which can be restated as the intellectual nature of spirituality.

### **III. The Intellect**

#### **What is the Intellect?**

Having mostly turned to Islam, and in particular to its spiritual streams, traditionalists tend to focus on the divine Intellect and its connection to and influence on the human intellect, a view which again requires a hierarchical ordering. Many traditionalists look within Sufism's orders to find revelation's unbroken lineage. Frithjof Schuon in *Comprendre Islam* (1961) describes not only the difference between exoteric and esoteric religion, but the relationship between them, a connection that, he points out, religious scholars often misunderstand:

For the 'religious sciences,' esoterism comes after dogma and is an artificial development or even something borrowed from the outside; however, in reality, the sapiential aspect comes before the exoteric formulation precisely because it is the esoteric that, from its metaphysical perspective, determines the outer form. Without a metaphysical foundation, there is no religion. Esoteric doctrine is nothing but the Revelation-based development of that which 'was prior to.'<sup>33</sup>

In the same discussion Schuon calls Sufism Islam's "marrow." Sufism did not develop decades or centuries after Islam's first generation, many traditionalists contend, but constitutes the

religion's root and cause as the manifestation of God. The earliest generations were authentically Sufi without having that name.

The essence of this spirituality, the assumption of human contingency on God and on each other, defies today's image of the independent, self-possessed individual. Our first relationship is with God, as Schuon clarifies: "The reality of God and that of our ultimate purpose determines at the same time our beliefs, happiness, activities, and virtue... Intelligence, in discerning the real, establishes conviction or certitude; sentiment, in loving the good in all its forms, enjoys happiness; and the will activates both spiritual activity and virtue, or contemplative concentration and conformity to the moral laws. This is to say that the reality of God and our ultimate purpose determines who we are."<sup>34</sup> The person exists only in reference to something greater.

While one can note the participation of art, symbol, and reason in metaphysics, intelligence and the resulting interplay between the human intellect and divine Intellect lie at the core of traditionalist metaphysics. The heart, at the center of the human body, plays the unitive role both physically and spiritually according to Sufi teaching. In his book on Sufism, the Englishman Martin Lings (1909-2005) connects the heart to the human intellect's ascendance to the divine Intellect, evoking the image of Jacob's ladder where he identifies every rung as a heart. Via this ladder the human heart receives the "divine life," serving as the focus of the soul's concentration when it "aspires to the Infinite," Lings notes.<sup>35</sup> This reorientation towards the Intellect and the human mirror of this requires philosophy, knowledge, and symbols. These elements participate in the divine Intellect. Only a vertical ordering allows one to envision things in this way. Schuon in *Le Soufisme, voile et quintessence* (1980) places reason, including its modern, degraded manifestation, alongside intellection, noting that reason faithful to its traditional vocation not only helps articulate intellection, but aids in the achievement of this, which might explain the misunderstanding of reason and its role by some Christian

theologians from the medieval scholastics onwards.<sup>36</sup> Nasr envisions reason as the junior partner to intellection, which contrasts with its present-day status and use. In any case, the relationship between reason and intellection forms a central concern for traditionalists, regarded as one key to grasping modernity's imbalance.

Schuon in *Du Divin a l'humain* notes the central position of intelligence and the imagination. Typical of traditionalists, he argues that these two words possess a metaphysical reference beyond their everyday usage. Schuon rejects evolution and a spirituality from below, writing that modern man prefers the material because “the Immaterial ... escapes from our senses.” Traditionalists tend to treat modernity harshly and at the same time to outline their own metaphysics: “When we start from the observation of the immediately tangible mystery which is subjectivity or the intelligence [by which he means human intelligence], it is nevertheless easy to conceive that the origin of the universe is not inert, unconscious matter but rather a spiritual Substance that ... in the end produces matter by bringing it out of a more subtle substance that is already quite distant from the principle Substance.”<sup>37</sup> The hierarchical nature of metaphysics considers the material world, including humans, to be a manifestation of the higher, and therefore existing in a state of contingency.

Christianity in its earlier, more orthodox forms suits this view of things, with Platonism linking together the Christian voices of traditionalist spirituality, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Scotus Erigena, and Bonaventure. Traditionalism holds Plato, as well as Pythagorus, in high esteem, and regards the ancient Greeks as more than simply western. Nevertheless, Guénon in *La crise du monde moderne* sees the Greeks as planting the seeds of later western decadence, even if the ancients still largely held to the traditionalist path.<sup>38</sup> If the Greeks failed somewhat in this endeavor, Christianity rescued them, Guénon notes in the same passage. Importantly, traditionalists

generally do not critique Aristotle for his empiricism. Rather, the medieval western understanding and use of Aristotle caused much damage, as exemplified most clearly in the scholastics. Nasr observes in *Man and Nature*:

In the Occident, however, the translation of Arabic works into Latin, which caused a major intellectual change from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, resulted gradually in the Aristotelization of Christian theology. Rationalism came to replace the earlier Augustinian theology based on illumination and the contemplative view of nature was increasingly pushed aside as the gnostic and metaphysical dimension of Christianity became ever more stifled in an increasingly rationalistic environment.<sup>39</sup>

The Latin notion of the double-truth exemplifies the ensuing philosophy-theology split, as Islamic philosophy never wrestled with this issue as deeply.

### **St. Thomas Aquinas and the Rejection of the Intellect**

Traditionalists carefully avoid blaming any one thinker, even those as influential as Aquinas or Descartes, for the West's rejection of its own tradition. Just as one cannot hold Nietzsche responsible for killing God in the West for simply naming what had already happened, so thinkers such as these two represent greater tendencies within their culture. Their genius was not in coming up with something wholly novel, but in giving shape and consciousness to heretofore unexpressed tendencies. Thus after some initial resistance, their thoughts won the day. This parallels the success of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin in upending Europe's religious world where the ninth century's Gottschalk and the twelfth century's Peter Waldo had failed. Sixteenth-century Europe welcomed revolution where those earlier centuries retained an older outlook.

Nasr in three key books on the fall of the West, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1981), *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993), and the already-mentioned *Man and Nature*, outlines the centuries-long

steps that built modernity, and particularly in the last one discusses the ensuing environmental fallout and its spiritual roots, concluding: “In order to have peace and harmony with nature one must be in harmony and equilibrium with Heaven, and ultimately with the Source and Origin of all things. He who is at peace with God is also at peace with His creation, both with nature and with man.”<sup>40</sup> The spiritual nature of our ecological destruction implies that engineering ourselves out of it, if at all possible, would amount to yet another manifestation of the objectification of nature. Nasr explains how the steps away from the tradition affected the larger religious, intellectual, and economic culture.

St. Thomas's aims to protect the Church's vocation as man's intercessor with God led to his rejection of the idea that the human intellect could connect directly to God. The human intellect, and intellectual pursuits in general, lost their sacramental aspect, as the great scholastic emphasized the Church as dispenser of the sacraments. Yet Nasr points out that Thomism contains much traditionalism alongside its modernizing tendencies: “Thomism was certainly religious philosophy at its highest level and Christian theology in a most mature and all-embracing form. But it was not the pure *sapientia* based on the direct illumination of reason by the Intellect, although even in this respect it provided a perfectly suitable language and a world view which could lead to a purely sapiential vision of things as one can in fact observe in Dante.”<sup>41</sup> However, given the West's general direction in subsequent centuries, Thomistic and, in general, scholastic philosophy played integral roles in a chain of events, including the ascendance of nominalism, that led to the fragmentation of the holistic, unitive metaphysical view, as finally confirmed in Protestantism.

Nasr outlines with his usual pithiness the medieval origins of modern man's spiritual frustration, one much more damaging and deeply-rooted than the so-called sexual frustration that early twentieth-century psychoanalysts spoke about: “Yet, these [medieval theological] syntheses, especially the Thomistic one,

tended to become overrationalistic in imprisoning intuitions of a metaphysical order in syllogistic categories which were to hide, more than reveal, their properly speaking intellectual rather than purely rational character.”<sup>42</sup> Regarding Aquinas and his era, Nasr continues: “But the excessive emphasis upon reason at the expense of the Intellect in Scholasticism combined with the destruction or disappearance of the Order of the Temple, the *fedeli d'amore*, and other depositories of Christian esoteric and gnostic teachings certainly helped to create an atmosphere more conducive to the rise of rationalism and the eclipse of a perspective of a truly intellectual nature.”<sup>43</sup> Even though some Franciscans and others such as Dante and the Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart still held onto the older perspective, nominalism's ultimate triumph meant among other things the surpassing of the neoplatonism of St. Augustine, Dionysius, and the Victorines at Chartres by Aristotle and the scholastics. The schoolmen changed the intellectual and spiritual landscape, preparing the way for the favoring of epistemology and reason over illumination, the philosophy of being, and the older metaphysics. This led to the definitive end of the harmonious, holistic medieval view with the events from 1517 onwards.

Traditionalists have much to say about the religious and philosophical changes effected by the Protestant Reformation and Cartesian philosophy. American twentieth-century academic Richard M. Weaver's description of the Puritans' spiritual shortcomings applies to much of modernity and the West. Led by Calvinist America, the West now embodies Puritanism: “Losing sight of the truth that religion is an apprehension of God and the cosmos, it centers attention upon things fragmented from this whole. Puritanical narrowness is thus literal: it substitutes for the whole vision some limited perception and in regard to this acts with an energy that is disproportionate.” One easily sees this proportionate energy in western expansionism and imperialism, as the West used its technological- and scientific-based power to assert itself and its vision of the world over traditionalist societies. “The

Puritan cut himself off from the total view, and has never been able to recover it,”<sup>44</sup> Weaver laments, something that remains true today.

#### **IV: Conclusion: Traditionalism as Religious Universalism**

Due to the importance of metaphysics as the perennial philosophy which precedes dogmatic religion, traditionalists such as Guénon, Nasr, Schuon, and Burckhardt frequently refer to the core philosophical and metaphysical teachings of other religions, including the non-Abrahamic Hinduism, and thereby assume the validity of the faiths they do mention. Burckhardt argues for an authentic kind of universalism of symbols and religious images and the importance of religious art across belief systems, all of which express in their own way the perennial philosophy. This does not suggest an interchangeability of symbols across the religions. When identifying a striking parallel in Hindu spiritual imagery with that of Islam, he highlights how religions express the same or similar truths differently:

According to the terminology of the monotheistic religions, the [Hindu] *devas* correspond to the angels in the sense where these latter represent divine aspects. The myth of the immolation of *Prajapati* by the *devas* is thus analogue to the Sufi doctrine according to which God manifests the universe as multiple in order to show His multiple Names, these latter “demanding” this diversity in the world; the analogy is more striking when it is said that God manifests Himself in the world by His Names.<sup>45</sup>

This implies that Islamically-based Sufism has parallels in other religions. Burckhardt's studies on art and symbol took him across the world. He evaluated each religion on its own terms rather than from an Islamic or Christian perspective. In other words, his universalism does not imply one-size-fits-all, but the acknowledgment that truth resides within the constellation of each orthodox religious system.

This reference to other religions reflects the authenticity in the traditionalists' search for metaphysical truth. In fact, Guénon established himself as a metaphysician with his writings on Hinduism. Additionally, in explaining the Sufi understanding of reality, instead of keeping the discussion to Islamic writers and references, Schuon, who also pursued spiritual truths by living with native Americans, turns to the Vedantic concept of *Brahma* as being the sole real.<sup>46</sup> He parallels Burckhardt and Guénon in using elements from another religion to explain a metaphysical concept important to Islam. Reflecting this perennialist assumption, Nasr in turn displays great admiration for many Christian thinkers, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, Bonaventure, and Jakob Boehme. In his books, Nasr evaluates the development of Christian theology, including its modernist deviation, from within the Christian tradition, instead of from the vantage point of Muslim authorities. This makes his analysis all the more compelling for the Christian reader. Would Islamic authorities see this reference to other religions as syncretism and therefore a manifestation of *shirk*, the lack of fidelity to the One true God? Some might accuse traditionalists of not being Islamic enough and even of offering either a *Chrislam* or a Joseph Campbell-like religious universalism. Yet one could argue that this supposed universalism differs from these because of the traditionalists' active engagement in their own religions, largely Islam, and because most of their efforts focus on various aspects of that faith. Given the location of Islamic countries, in the middle of Eurasia and Africa, the religion has lived with practically every major religion and culture. Reference to these other beliefs and cultures forms a rich part of Islam's history.

Nevertheless, this critique remains the movement's soft underbelly, and traditionalists have taken care to value religious orthodoxy. They assume that those deeply rooted in the truths and majesty of one particular religion can appreciate the metaphysical greatness of other belief systems and can identify the original metaphysical intent of creeds rooted in the perennial philosophy. Nasr can appreciate the spiritual teachings of Bonaventure or Meister Eckhart

because the Islamic scholar finds in them a parallel to many truths from his own religion. His appreciation for traditionalist Christian spirituality is so great, in fact, that when he notes the over-rationalism of the theological syntheses of Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, he critiques them for damaging Christianity's tradition.<sup>47</sup> This exemplifies true inter-religious charity, where one can lament the weak points and downfalls within another religion and hope for a return to the more faithful path within that tradition as an expression of the unchanging wisdom lying behind all legitimate traditions.

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## Endnotes:

- 1 René Guénon, *La crise du monde moderne*, Paris: Gallimard, 1973, p. 57. The following quote is from page 58 of the same discussion.
- 2 Guénon, *La crise du monde moderne*, pp. 37-38.
- 3 Guénon, *La crise du monde moderne*, pp. 70-71.
- 4 Titus Burckhardt, “Les sciences traditionnelles à Fès,” pages 61-71 in *Symboles: Recueil d'essais*, Milano: Arche, 1980, pp. 64-65.
- 5 Frithjof Schuon, *Du Divin a l'humain*, Paris: Le Courrier du Livre, 1981, p. 15.
- 6 These quotes and ideas are from Schuon's discussion on pages 14-15 of *Du Divin a l'humain*, p. 12.
- 7 Schuon, *Du Divin a l'humain*, p. 15.
- 8 Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013, p. 38.
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- 10 Ronald Hayman, *A Life of Jung*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002, pp. 184-88.
- 11 René Guénon, *Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps*, Paris: Gallimard, 2009, p. 223.
- 12 Schuon, *Du Divin a l'humain*, p. 16.
- 13 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc, 1997, p. 18.
- 14 Nasr, *Man and Nature*, p. 19.
- 15 Arthur Revel, *Comment entrer dans une église?*, Paris: Dervy, 2010, p. 27.
- 16 Titus Burckhardt, *Principes et méthodes de l'art sacré*, Paris: Dervy, 1995, p. 6.
- 17 Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, p. 38.
- 18 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 40.
- 19 Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 40.
- 20 Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 275.
- 21 Burckhardt, “Les sciences traditionnelles à Fès,” pp. 71-72.
- 22 Burckhardt, “Les sciences traditionnelles à Fès,” pp. 71-72.
- 23 Burckhardt, *Principes et méthodes de l'art sacré*, p. 142.

- 24 Burckhardt, *Principes et méthodes de l'art sacré*, p. 142.
- 25 Burckhardt, "Les sciences traditionnelles à Fès," p. 71.
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- 27 Paul Likoudis, "Jung Replaces Jesus in Catholic Spirituality" at the Global Catholic (EWTN) network:  
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- 28 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study*, World of Islam Festival Publishing Company Ltd, 1976, p. 193.
- 29 Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study*, p. 194.
- 30 Burckhardt, "Considérations sur l'Alchimie," pages 49-60 in *Symboles: Recueil d'essais*, p. 53.
- 31 Guénon, *La crise du monde moderne*, p. 45.
- 32 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Conscience and Truth," February, 1991, Dallas. <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/ratzcons.htm> (Viewed 2015/7/28).
- 33 Frithjof Schuon, *Comprendre Islam*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1976, p. 127.
- 34 Schuon, *Du Divin a l'humain*, p. 81.
- 35 Martin Lings, *Qu'est-ce que le soufisme*, Roger Du Pasquier, translator, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977, p. 61.
- 36 Frithjof Schuon, *Le Soufisme, voile et quintessence*, Paris: Dervy, 2006, p.28.
- 37 Both citations are from Schuon, *Du Divin a l'humain*, p. 12.
- 38 Guénon notes that the ancient Greeks tried to escape the superstition in which they had fallen by turning to the East. Guénon, *La crise du monde moderne*, p. 34.
- 39 Nasr, *Man and Nature*, p. 61.
- 40 Nasr, *Man and Nature*, p. 136.
- 41 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 37.
- 42 Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 22.
- 43 Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp. 37-8.
- 44 The two citations are from Richard M. Weaver, "Puritanism and Determinism," pages 128-131 in *In Defense of Tradition: Collected Shorter Writings of Richard M. Weaver 1929-1963*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000, pp. 129-130.
- 45 Burckhardt, *Principes et méthodes de l'art sacré*, p. 22.
- 46 Schuon, *Comprendre Islam*, p. 128.
- 47 Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 22.



## **The Modes of Perfection (*Kamāl*): The Concept of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Human Being) in the Thoughts of Ibn ‘Arabī and Kubrawī**

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### **Abstract**

Perfection and its modes occupy a crucial place in the worldview of Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn ‘Arabī (638 A.H. /1240 C.E.). In his view, the perfect human being (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*) as the *par exemplar* wayfarer experiencing the *tawhīd* of the Absolute becomes the most candid witness of Unity’s manifestations (*tajalliyāt*). This article discusses the concept of perfection in the view of Ibn ‘Arabī and the ways in which it has been received and/or interpreted by some of the most important Kubrawī mystics, such as Sa‘d al-Dīn Ḥamūyah (d. 650/1253), ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. 700/1300), ‘Alā’ ad-Dawlah Simnānī (d. 736/1337) and Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī (d. 786/1385). Kubrawī mystics played a significant role as the proponents and commentators of Ibn ‘Arabī’s worldview, a role which has yet to be investigated in more detail. This article is an effort to address the need for such studies.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Ibn ‘Arabī, Kubrawī order, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the unity of existence, *al-insān al-kāmil*, the perfect human being,

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, Sa‘d al-Dīn Ḥamūyah,  
‘Alā’ ad-Dawlah Simnānī, Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī

## I. Unity (*waḥdah*) and Perfection (*kamāl*)

Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabī, in his *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, as a concise commentary on his celebrated *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, refers to the term *al-ḥikmat al-fardīyya*, -Wisdom of Singularity- in describing the unique place of the Prophet Muḥammad as the perfect man *par excellence*. The reason for choosing such a title is that “he [i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad] is single [or unique] in the station of God’s comprehensiveness (*jam’*).”<sup>2</sup> In his *Futūḥāt*, while referring to the Qur’ānic event in which God taught Adam the Names (2:31), Ibn ‘Arabī in order to refer to the eminent place of the perfect man in existence, elaborates upon the correlation between the concepts of *asmā’* (“God’s Names”), the *ḥaḍra* (“Divine Presence”), and His *tajallīyāt* (“manifestations”).

God taught Adam all the names from his own essence through tasting, for He disclosed Himself to him through a universal self-disclosure. Hence, no name remained in the Divine Presence that did not become manifest to Adam from Himself. From his own essence he came to know all the names of his Creator.<sup>3</sup>

In order to expand the above reciprocation between the concepts of God’s Names and the perfect man, Ibn ‘Arabī uses this affinity to emphasize the concept of *tanzīh* (“God’s peerlessness). True *‘ubūdīyya* (“servanthood”) is the outcome of divulging the Names to the perfect man, through which he comes to know the Path of perfection, as well as his place as the *‘abd* (“servant”) of the Absolute. This perfection is possible only through fulfilling the claims of servanthood. The well-known Kubrawī mystic ‘Alā’ ad-Dawlah Simnānī has tried to criticize Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers by praising the characteristics of a group of perfect prodigies of the Path whom he called *tālibān-i kamāl-i tawḥīd wa tanzīh-i Ḥaqq-i Hamīd-i Majīd*<sup>4</sup> (“seekers of the perfect [absolute] Oneness and

incomparability of the Praiseworthy [and] Honored Real”). This group of the wayfarers seems to have been described by Simnānī as in contrast to Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers. One of the prominent characteristics of this group, as Simnānī stated, is their *practical* confession to God’s ‘*ubūdīyya* (“servanthood”). As he suggests, this characteristic (i.e., ‘*ubūdīyya*) made this group (i.e., *tālibān-i kamāl-i ...*) also unique in their “full confession to God’s *tanzīh*,” (a characteristic which Simnānī views as missing in Ibn ‘Arabī’s worldview).

Ibn ‘Arabī’s view regarding man’s attainment of perfection through perfecting his sincere servanthood makes a clear distinction between the servant and his Lord (as the outcome of *tanzīh*), and it seems to bring together what both these figures (i.e., Ibn ‘Arabī and Simnānī) delineate as the meaning of “perfection.” Ibn ‘Arabī not only stresses upon God’s *tanzīh* by referring to His unique Lordship, but he also emphasizes the “animal” aspect of the perfect man to make sure of the distinction between the Lord and His servant. He states in his *Futūḥāt*:

Creation has many levels, and the most perfect level is occupied by man. Each kind in the cosmos is a part of with regard to man’s perfection. Even animal man is a part of Perfect Man...He created Perfect Man in His form, and through the form He gave him the ability to have all of His names ascribed to him, one by one, or in groups, though all the names together are not ascribed to him in a single word-thereby the Lord is distinguished from the Perfect Servant. Hence there is none of the most beautiful names-and all of God’s names are most beautiful-by which the Perfect Servant is not called, just as he calls his Master by them.<sup>5</sup>

At the very beginning of his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Shaykh al-Akbar, elaborating upon the “Wisdom of Divinity in the Word of Adam”<sup>6</sup> (*faṣṣu ḥikmatin ilāhiyya fī kalimatīn Ādamiyyah*), clearly affirms the correlation between the Reality, His Names (*asmā’*), and the perfect human being.

The Reality wanted to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names, or, to put in another way, to see His own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the whole [divine] Command, which, qualified by existence, would reveal to Him His own mystery [so, He created Adam].<sup>7</sup>

For Simnānī, the perfect man is the most perfect manifestation of the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*), and for Ibn ‘Arabī, the most perfect *tajallī* (‘manifestation’) of *Wujūd al-Muṭlaq* (‘Absolute Existence’). In Ibn ‘Arabī’s worldview, the perfect man has the most perfect faculty to “combine the two basic perspectives of incomparability and similarity”<sup>8</sup> (i.e., *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*).

The Kubrawī master, Mir Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī, in his commentary on *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, explains the concept of *fardīyya* (‘singularity’). In his comments on the first part of the chapter dedicated to the Prophet Muḥammad in *Fuṣūṣ* which contains the phrase of *awwal al-afrād al-thalāthat-i* (‘first of the three singulars’), Hamadānī writes:

The singularity in the existence (*wujūd*) is the outcome of the three things:

one is the Essence of Oneness (*dhāt-i aḥadiyyat*), and the second is the stage of Divinity (*martaba-yi ilāhiyyat*), and the [last] one, the immutable entity belong to Muḥammad (‘*ayn-i thābita-yi Muḥammadiyyah*).’<sup>9</sup>

Hamadānī’s approach to the concept of “singularity,” in considering Prophet Muḥammad as the first creation (the first immutable entity), or the first *tajallī* of the stage of *ilāhiyyat* or *wāḥidiyyah* (‘exclusive unity’), is akin to Nasafī’s approach to the concept of the perfect man. The well-known Kubrawī master, ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī states that the perfect man is no more than “one” person.” He also rendered the notion that “all creatures” are like “one” person with their “singular heart” as the perfect man. By considering the

Prophet Muḥammad as the first creation, first kernel, and summation of all *wujūd* (“existence”), Hamadānī seems to be alluding to the well-known prophetic saying of *awwal-u mā-khalaq Allāh Nūrī* (My light was the first of God’s creation).<sup>10</sup>

Similar to Nasafī, Hamadānī has referred to *dil-i [insān -i] kāmīl* (“the perfect man’s heart”) as the kernel of creation.<sup>11</sup> In his comments on Ibn ‘Arabī’s phrase in *Fuṣūṣ*, “*wa faṣṣ-u kull-i ḥikmatin al-kalimat allatī nusibat bihā*”<sup>12</sup> (the seal of each Wisdom is the Word assigned to it<sup>13</sup>), Hamadānī considers the term *kalimah* (Word) as the heart of the perfect man.<sup>14</sup>

In harmony with Ibn ‘Arabī, Hamadānī, in his introduction to his *Sharḥ* of *Fuṣūṣ*, refers to the perfect man and particularly Prophet Muḥammad as “the manifestation of the Essential Ipseity (*mazhar-i huwiyyat-i dhātiyya*) and all [God’s] Names and Attributes.”<sup>15</sup> In a creative approach, Hamadānī immediately continues his words with some Qur’ānic verses and well-known recorded sayings (*aḥādīth*). For example, he makes a direct correlation between the concept of the perfect man, and the Prophet Mūḥammad, where he writes “[the Divine] announcement of that state [i.e. the state of the perfect man] has come evidently as “*mā ramayta idh ramayt wa lākinn Allāh-a ramā.*” (...thou (Muḥammad) threwest not when thou didst throw, but Allāh threw...”[Qur’ān 8:17]).<sup>16</sup>

Hamadānī then concludes that Qur’ānic verses such as the above verse are considered to be proofs for the perfect man by which he comes to know that “everything (*hama*) is from Him and returns towards Him, and even further that, everything is He.”<sup>17</sup> Hamadānī seems to directly connect the concept of the “perfect man” with the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (“unity of existence.”)

The founder of the Kubrawī order, Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubrā (d.618/1221), in his approach to the concept of *dhikr* (“invocation of God’s Names”), has also benefited from description of the

concepts of “affirmation and negation.”<sup>18</sup> He refers to ten *qawā'id* (“principles”) that pave the way of the seekers towards the states of perfection, or as he states, bring *athār-i sa'ādat* (“the signs of felicity”) to *sāyirān-i haḍrat-i ṣamadiyyat* (“seekers of the Presence of the Eternal Absolute”). In the sixth principle, Shaykh describes the characteristics of “invocation of God’s Names” (*dhikr*).

By utilizing a set of purposefully designated terms, Najm al-Din Kubrā manifests a correlation between the concepts of God’s Name/Presence, man’s perfection, and *aḥadiyyat* (“inclusive unity”). Kubrā, refers to *dil* (“heart”) of the seeker (in the state of perfection), as the *maḥall-i bārgāh-i kibriyā wa maṭla'-i aftāb-i fardāniyyat* (“locus of the threshold of [God’s] Splendor and dawning abode of the Sun of Unity”). Najm al-Dīn views *dhikr* as the medium that removes *ghubār-i hudūth wa kathrat-i ḡulamāt* (“dust of impurities and multiplicity of darkness”). This cleansing effect, for Kubrā, represents the content of *nafy* (“negation”), which stems from the encompassing presence of the first segment of *shahādah* formulae (*lā ilāha ill-Allāh*: there is no god but God). “There is no god” (*lā ilāha*) prepares the loci (of the heart) by removing from it any sign of *kathrat* (“multiplicity”), which exemplifies darkness and impurities. On the other hand, the second segment (*illa Allāh* “But God”), is the absolute *ithbāt* (“affirmation”) of the Absolute which defines the very being of the seeker’s heart, and testifies to its wellbeing or *ṣiḥḥat-i dil*.

This dual function of *dhikr* or *shahādah* (“confession to the unity of God”), which Kubrā calls *ma'jūn-i ma'nawī-yi murakkab az nafy wa ithbāt* (“spiritual mixture of negation and affirmation”), leads to the perfect man’s recognition of the Absolute as the only Affirmed Being. In other words, the unifying *haḍrat-i ṣamadiyyat* (“Presence of the Splendor/Richness”), in Kubrā’s terminology, converts the heart of the perfect man, through combined and perpetual progressions of both *nafy wa ithbāt* (“negation and affirmation”), into the perfect locus of the manifestation of God’s *fardāniyyat* (“unity/uniqueness”).

As seen above, Kubrā utilized the term *fardāniyyat* in his description of God's unity in the perfect man's venture towards the abode of affirmation and attaining the reality of *tawḥīd*. It might be interesting to gaze upon the concept of *tafarrud* ("singularity/uniqueness") of the Absolute, in the view of Ibn 'Arabī, who utilizes the expression of *fardiyya* ("oddness").<sup>19</sup>

Hence oddness (*fardiyya*) becomes manifest through the concept of interconnecting factor, since "three" is the first of the odd numbers..., and these go on to infinity. And evenness, which is called "two," is the first of the pairs (*zawj*) among the numbers, and these also go on to infinity. There is no even number which is not made odd by "one," and thus is found the oddness of that even number. And there is no odd number which is not made even by "one," and thus is found the evenness of that odd number. The factor which makes the odd even and the even odd is the Independent, which determines properties, but which is not determined by any properties. It has no need or poverty, and everything is poor toward It and in need of It. The two feet consist of contrariety of the divine names, such as the First and the Last, the Manifest and Nonmanifest...In the same way, through "one," every object of knowledge possesses a unity through which it is distinguished from everything else. Likewise, oddness, which is the number "three," brings about the manifestation of the property of the two sides and the middle, which is the *barzakh*, the thing between the two, like the hot, the cold, and the lukewarm. From oddness the odd numbers become manifest and from "two," the even numbers. Each number must be either even or odd, and so on ad infinitum. Through the power of the one the properties of the numbers become manifest, and the property belongs to "God, the One, All-subjugating."<sup>20</sup>

In Ibn 'Arabī's view, both evenness and oddness surrender to the encompassing embrace of the Oneness. Utilizing the number "three," as the first of the odd numbers, he finds the best position for the perfect man, between the Manifest and Nonmanifest,

between *aḥadiyyah* and *wāhidiyyah*, or between the Essence (*dhāt*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*). The *barzakh*-isthmus- (or the perfect man) experiences both the coldness of *tanzīh* and warmth of *tashbīh*, as the state of being lukewarm. This way these “three” become one in the unique (*fard*) oddness (*fardiyya*).

The Kubrawī master, Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī, in a similar approach to that of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *fardiyya*, prefers the expression of *tafrīd* (“moving towards/ or contemplating Oneness”). In his *Risālah Dhikriyyah*, Hamadānī attempts to classify the three concepts of *tawḥīd*, *tafrīd* and *waḥdat*. He recites the following poem:

You [must] become lost in Him (*to dar ū gom shaw*); this is [the description] of *tawḥīd* [but you have to go further and] Lose [the state of] being lost [in Him]; this is [the description] of *tafrīd*. It would be very difficult [impossible] to reach this abode (i.e., abode of Unity); if there still remains a hair [i.e., slightest part] of your existence. Whoever does not become lost in the sea of Unity (*daryā-yi waḥdat*), is unable to attain the merit [of reaching the abode of Unity even] if he is the envoy of all men.<sup>21</sup>

Hamadānī seems to indicate that *tafrīd* is the practical realization of *tawḥīd*. If *tawḥīd* is the realm in which the very spiritual consciousness of the perfect man confesses to or becomes absorbed in the Unity of the Absolute, *tafrīd* is the station of *fanā’ al-fanā’* (“annihilation of annihilation”). In other words, experience of *tafrīd* occurs when the perfect man renews his previous realization of *tawḥīd* at each new experience. He becomes annihilated from the previous realization of *tawḥīd*, tastes the experience of *waḥdat*, subsides (i.e., experiences *baqā*) for a moment in the sea of God’s *tajalliyāt* or Mercy, and then again becomes annihilated from his previous realization. Through *tafrīd*, the perfect man is able to experience *tawḥīd* in a constant renewal and freshness.

One might be able to interpret Hamadānī’s approach to the three concepts of *tawḥīd*, *tafrīd* and *waḥdat* based on Kubra’s

aforementioned approach to *nafy and ithbāt* (“affirmation and negation”). The negation of previous realization of *tawhīd* (or annihilation [*fanā*] of the previous realization) meets with the affirmation of the newer awareness (in the *baqā* or subsistence of a new realization of *tawhīd*), and then again experiences the *fanā’al-fanā* (“annihilation of annihilation”) of the previous realization (which was “subsistent” and now is “annihilated”). One might claim that these ceaseless forthcoming realizations of negation and affirmation safeguard the originality and newness of the perfect man’s awareness of *tawhīd*.

In his *Sharḥ* on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ*, Hamadānī after referring to the perfect man as the locus of the manifestation of the Name Allāh, states that in “the same way that all the Names are sustained by this Name [i.e., Allāh], all bounties which received by angels are through the perfect man.”<sup>22</sup> Following Ibn ‘Arabī, Hamadānī also calls the Prophet, as the *‘ayn-i awwal* or the first entity.<sup>23</sup> As shown in the above example, Hamadānī in his *Sharḥ*, sometimes using his own method, has preferred to look at the concept of human perfection and *al-insān al-kāmil* in their direct kinship and reciprocation with the concept of *waḥdat* (“unity”). Ibn ‘Arabī states at the beginning of his introduction to *Fuṣūṣ* as follows:

Praise be to God Who has sent down the [revelations] of Wisdom upon the hearts of the *logoi* in a unique and direct way from the Station of Eternity, even though the sects and communities may vary because of the variety of the nations.<sup>24</sup>

In his comments on the phrase of “*bi aḥadiyyat al-tarīq al-umam*,”<sup>25</sup> Hamadānī writes:

*bā*’ in [its affinity with the word] *‘aḥadiyyat’* (oneness) is for the causality (*sababiyyat*), which means because of the unification (*ittiḥād*) of the straight path (*tariq-i rāst*) and that [straight path] is the call towards Allāh. Then all were [on the] straight [path], but straight [path] means an elite path (*tariq-i khāṣṣ*), and that is the [unification of the] multiplicity (*kathrat*) of the path of mystics in

the unity of the Muḥammadan Path (*waḥdat-i ʿarīq-i Muḥammadī*).<sup>26</sup>

He also mentions that Ibn ‘Arabī’s views in his *Fuṣūṣ* is all based on the *ḥaḍarāt wa tanazzulāt* (“presences and descending stages”).<sup>27</sup> These descending stages in the school of Ibn ‘Arabī are described as different *ḥaḍarāt* (“presences”) of the Absolute’s manifestations.<sup>28</sup> These stages act as “mediums” through which the concept of *kathrat* (“multiplicity”) defines itself. In other words, each stage of multiplicity as a descending stage is a domain for the Presence of the Absolute with His particular Name or attribute. These descending stages in the form of *qaws-i nuzūl* (“arc of descent”) which represents *kathrat* are the manifestations of the only *Wujūd al-Muṭlaq* (“Absolute Existence”) Who represents the *Waḥdat al-Muṭlaq* (“Absolute Unity”). Therefore, all descending stages constantly return towards Him through *qaws-i šu‘ūd* (“arc of ascent”).<sup>29</sup> Thus the presences (i.e., both descending and ascending stages of *wujūd*) are the domains in which *waḥdat al-wujūd* (“unity of existence”) functions incessantly. The perfect man stands at the defining point (or the isthmus) of this unifying harmony. Recognizing the significant importance of the concept of *tanazzulāt* and *ḥaḍarāt* (“descending stages and presences”) in Ibn ‘Arabī’s view, and particularly in *Fuṣūṣ*, Hamadānī begins the introduction to his commentary on *Fuṣūṣ* with precisely this concept. He skillfully utilizes the favorite Akbarian expressions of *wujūd* (“existence”), *ḥaḍrah* (“Presence”), *zuhūr* (“appearance”) and *‘ālam* (“world”), in their particular and overlapping occurrences. He usually prefers the expression of *ahl-i kashf wa taḥqīq* (“people of unveiling and verification”) to refer to the school of Ibn ‘Arabī over Nasafī’s favorite expression of *ahl-i waḥdat* (“people of unity”). As Hamadānī states:

For the people of unveiling and verification (*ahl-i kashf wa taḥqīq*), the Absolute Existence (*Wujūd-i Muṭlaq*) is not more than One, and that is the Existence of Truth (*Wujūd-i Haqq*) and the existence of all creatures returns to that Presence (*ḥaḍrat*), and that Presence is

the returning abode (*muntahā*) for all (*hama*) [creatures], and this Existence (*Wujūd*) appears (*zuhūr*) in each world (*‘ālam*) among different worlds.<sup>30</sup>

Hamadānī then points to another important concept in the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, namely *ḥaḍarāt-i khams* (“five Divine presences”). He explains the generally accepted categories of these five presences in this school by referring to them in order. He refers to the the first Presence as *Ghayb-i Muṭlaq* (“Presence of the Absolute inaccessibility/invisibility”), which is the stage of *Aḥadiyyah* or inclusive Unity. The second presence is the world of *Jabarūt* (“the Presence of invincibility”), in which the *tanazzul* (“descent”) from *aḥadiyyah* to *wāḥidiyyah* (“exclusive unity”) or *ilāhiyyah* (“Divinity”) occurs. This presence, as Hamadānī states is the *mabda’* (“origin”) of all multiplicities and *ḥaḍarāt-i asmā’* (“presences of the Names”). The first Divine Attribute that emerges from seclusion into appearance in this realm, as Hamadānī explains, is the Attribute of *‘ilm* (“Knowledge”). Thus, in this presence the Name *‘Alīm* (“the Absolute Knower”) finds its locus of manifestation, and all *a’yān* (“entities”) come into appearance. The third presence, which is the presence of *Malakūt* (“Dominion”) or spiritual world, correlates to the world of *‘amr* (“Command”) or *mithāl* (“Image”), which leads to the fourth presence or the realm of *Mulk* (Kingdom), in which the Absolute’s *Huwiyyah* (“Ipseity”) appears in different forms from *‘arsh* (“Divine Throne”) down to the animal level, which leads to the fifth presence or realm of *insān* (“human being”) as the last descending stage.<sup>31</sup>

## II. The Strata of the Names (*asmā’*) at the Kernel of Perfection (*kamāl*)

In the first chapter (*faṣṣ*) of *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, Ibn ‘Arabī refers to one of the cardinal and favorite terms in his vast array of expressions, i.e., *tajallī* on two levels of *fayḍ muqaddas* (“sacred”) and *fayḍ aqdas* (“the most sacred”).<sup>32</sup> The most sacred manifestation is seen as the envoy of the Absolute’s *Dhāt*

(“Essence”) and the sacred manifestation signifies the plurality of His attributes and Names.<sup>33</sup> Here, Shaykh al-Akbar refers to a systematic affinity between the Unity of the Essence and multiplicity of the Names through the Absolute’s constant *tajalliyāt* (“manifestations”).

God’s Names, in every single theophany, also represent His particular *ṣifat* (“attribute”) regarding a *ḥaḍra* (“Presence”) which reciprocates with that Name.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the Essence (in Its absolute incomprehensible Being) becomes partially accessible through the undelimited theophanies that come to fashion the Names. Each Name is a unique key that opens a door to a unique and vast scene of *wujūd*. The perfect man’s attained partial knowledge of each Name becomes *renewed* upon the arrival of each new theophany. The vast arrays of *forms* in the corporeal scene, which contain both the content and the level of knowing the Names, function as the indication of Reality or Sheer Existence. These forms perform as the harmonious intercessors in knowing the secrets of the Names. Ibn ‘Arabī elaborates upon this essential process at the very beginning of his *Fuṣūṣ*, where he describes “the wisdom of divinity in the word of Adam.”<sup>35</sup>

The Reality wanted to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names or, to put it in another way, to see His own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the whole [divine] Command, which, qualified by existence, would reveal to Him His own mystery. For the seeing of a thing, itself by itself, is not the same as its seeing itself in another, as it were in a mirror; for it appears to itself in a form that is invested by the location of the vision by that which only appears to it given the existence of the location and its [the location’s] self-disclosure to it.<sup>36</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī suggests that the Names (as sacred theophanies or *fayḍ muqaddas*) in their totality become one single domain/realm through which *fayḍ aqdas* (“the most sacred manifestation”) finds the unifying ḥaḍra (“Presence”) for its appearance. Multiplicity of

the Names mirrored in one realm (of existence) finds its exemplary image in the very being of the perfect man. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s view, the perfect man possesses the most perfect faculty to recognize, contemplate, and practice the unity of the Names by pondering upon the Unity of the Source (i.e., by experiencing *ḥaḍrat al-jāmi‘* or “the Presence of Unity”). Ibn ‘Arabī refers to the unity of the Names in his *Futūḥāt*:

All the Divine Names are bound to him [man=Adam] without one single exception. Thus, Adam came out in the image of the Name Allāh because this Name comprises all the Divine Names.<sup>37</sup>

In his *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ‘Arabī, reiterates the above reciprocation of the Names and their unification in the most essential image of the Absolute (i.e., the perfect man).

For this reason, he [the Prophet] said concerning the creation of Adam, who is the exemplar (*barnāmaj*) which unites the descriptions (*nu‘ūt*) of the Divine Presence (*ḥaḍra ilāhīya*) that is, the Essence (*dhāt*), the attributes (*ṣifāt*), and the Actions (*aḥwāl*), “God created Adam in His image.” *And His image is nothing but the Divine Presence.*<sup>38</sup>

The well-known Kubrawī master, Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 654/1256) also in his celebrated *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād*, refers to the human being as “the mirror of the Beauty and Majesty (*jamāl* and *jalāl*) of the Presence of Divinity (*ḥaḍrat-i ulūhiyyat*) and the place of manifestation (*mazhar*) of all attributes (*ṣifāt*) [of the Absolute].”<sup>39</sup>

‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī also utilizes the same metaphor of “mirror” in describing the bond between the Absolute and the world. In Nasafī’s view, “God’s world is a mirror in which He can witness His beautiful Names.”<sup>40</sup> The mirror contains *insān-i kabīr* (“macrocosm/great man”) and *insān-i saghīr* (“microcosm/small man”).<sup>41</sup> Nasafī also sees the creatures as the *mazhar-ī nūr-ī khudā* (“loci of manifestation of God’s light”).<sup>42</sup>

Another well-known Kubrawī master, and one of the cardinal inspirers of ‘Alā’ ad-Dawlah Simnānī, Shaykh Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī (d.616/1219) refers to the importance of the lineage of the prophets as the source of the light of perfection. Masters of the Path, in his view, are the “mirrors” reflecting the truth of the Path by manifesting this light. Baghdādī comments on this issue as follows:

In the transmission of the science of the inward, the more numerous the intermediary transmitters, the better is the nature of transmission, because masters are the reflecting mirrors of the light of the truth from the niche of prophethood. Therefore, the more their inward light is concentrated, the more luminous the path will become for the seeker because of that light, [as the Qur’ān has said]: Light upon light, God guides unto His light whom He wills” (24:35).<sup>43</sup>

We might be able to claim that in Baghdādī’s approach, masters of the Path through their guidance as perfect men, become the interpreters of the light of the Truth which emanates from the exemplary images of perfection (i.e., the prophets). In other words, the “broader presence of the masters of the Path” (as mentioned by Baghdādī), due to their reciprocation with the luminous source of prophethood, provides the seekers with a much more purified elucidation of the science of inward. It is worth mentioning that Baghdādī interprets the term *mishkāt* (“niche”) in the same verse (24:35) as the “niche of prophethood.” One can suggest that the lineage of transmitters, in their perfection, as the lineage of perfect men, represent different *shu’ūn* (“tasks/denotations”) of the beautiful Names in their constant manifestations or transmissions.

The very “nature of transmission” of the science of the inward which as Baghdādī claims becomes “better” with the greater numbers of the “transmitters,” reminds us of the well-known Qur’ānic verse of *kulla yawmin huwa fī sha’n* (each day He is upon some task, 55:29<sup>44</sup>). This verse seems to be central to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings. Both of these verses (24:35& 55:29) convey the concept

of *tajallī* (“Absolute’s manifestation”). In order to manifest the constant transmission of the Absolute’s ‘tasks’ (*shu’ūn*), Baghdādī here prefers a much cited Qur’ānic verse (24:35), which refers to the concept of *tajallī* through the image of undying “lights.”

These lights, which based on the mystical interpretation of the verse open new horizons of the truth to the seekers, become renewed at each *yawm* (“moment”) and provide the seeker with the constant and fresh unveiling of the Truth (*nūrun ‘alā nūr/light upon light*). Baghdādī, in his utilization of the above Qur’ānic verse, makes correlations between the concepts of knowledge of *bāṭin*, light, and the perfect man. Ibn ‘Arabī has also utilized this verse (24:35) on several occasions, especially in *Futūḥāt*. Similar to Baghdādī, Ibn ‘Arabī refers to God’s messengers as the exemplary manifestations of His Name *Nūr* (“Light”) through which *bāṭin* or the inner realm of the seeker becomes colored by light.

According to the tasting of our path, it is not possible to attest to a messenger through rational proofs (*dalāla*), only through a divine self-disclosure in respect of His name “Light.” When the person’s inward dimensions (*bāṭin*) become colored by that light, then he attests to the messenger. This is the light of faith.<sup>45</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī, like Baghdādī, seems to illustrate a systematic reciprocation between the notions of “knowledge” (in its inner dimensions or as it is perceived by *bāṭin* or *‘ilm-i bāṭinī*), *nūr* (“light”), and the perfect man (i.e., prophets, and chain of spiritual masters). In Ibn ‘Arabī’s explanation, this approach begins from the source of *aḥadiyyah* (“inclusive unity”) and proceed towards *wāḥidiyyah* (“exclusive unity”). He affirms, as seen above, that “only through the Absolute’s manifestation,” one would be able to testify to the authenticity of His messengers. The Light (as His Name) will bring the color of faith to the hearts of seekers. In other words, *tajallī* of the Light (*aḥadiyyah*) is the medium through which the exemplary among perfect men become known to the seeker (in the realm of *wāḥidiyyah*). On the other hand, Baghdādī’s

description of mystical light, as quoted above, begins with the multiple theophanies of lights (i.e., chain of transmitters in the realm of exclusive unity or *wāḥidiyyah*), and ends with the affirmation of His light (on the level of *aḥadiyyah*). Therefore, we might state that these two examples (of Ibn ‘Arabī’s and Baghdādī’s approaches to the concept of light) manifest two patterns of *qaws al-nuzūl* (descending stages of manifestations/Names) and *qaws al-su‘ūd* (ascending stages of manifestations/Names), in the function of the Absolute’s Names (such as the Light) in existence.

The Kubrawī master, Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī also refers to the perfect man’s heart as the locus of God’s light and the *tawḥīd* of the Absolute. In his *Risālah al-Dhikriyyah*, Hamadānī distinguishes between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* or interior and exterior dimensions of *tawḥīd*.

Know that unity of God (*tawḥīd*) has inward and outward [dimensions], and [also] form (*ṣūrat*) and meaning (*ma‘nī*). The heart of [the perfect] man, is the loci of the meaning of inward, and [also represents] interpretive language of the form of the outward. And its (i.e, heart of the perfect man’s) inward [embodies] spiritual intuition (*ma‘rifat*) and its outward, [signifies] the invocation of “there is no god but God,” allusion (*ishārat*) of the Divine Word (*tanzīl-i rabbānī*), and subtle words of the Prophet...but [we might go further to claim that] sending all [Divine] Books upon the hearts of the most perfect men (*qulūb-i kummāl*), who were the prophets and messengers, was for describing the difficulties and subtleties of “this meaning” (i.e., the essential reciprocation between the reality of *tawḥīd* and heart of the perfect men).<sup>46</sup>

Hamadānī also reiterates the validity of an approach of a Sufi master in defining the concept of *tawḥīd*, in a manner close to the point of view of Akbarians. The place of light is also prominent in his preferred definition of *tawḥīd*.

Abū Muḥammad Ruwaim uttered that *tawḥīd* is [the state in which] lights of the Sun of the Essence shine over the desert of essence [of

the perfect man] and a drop of the rain of occurrence (*ḥudūth*) becomes lost in the sea of unity (*baḥr-i waḥdat*) in a way that it will not find itself [again].<sup>47</sup>

Using a similar terminology to that of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's aforementioned expression (i.e., *ḥaḍrat-i ṣamadiyyat*) and its correlation with the concept of light, Hamadānī reminds us of the ability of each particle in existence to carry light. This light, in Hamadānī's view has a dual function. Through this light, each entity comes into *zuhūr* ("appearance"), which at the same time manifests an aspect of the Absolute's *jamāl* ("Beauty"). For Hamadānī, Light is the preferred envoy/Name, which represents the attribute of Beauty.

The presence of Lordship's (*rubūbiyyat*) seas of Mercy and zephyr of the breaths (*naḥāḥāt*) of the Presence of Splendor's subtleties (*laṭā'if-i jināb-i ṣamadiyyat*) gave each particle (*dharrih*) of existence a [mode of] light. And that light became the reason of appearance (*zuhūr*) of its existence from behind the veiled non-existence, so through that light, it [i.e., each particle] became witness of that Beauty's (*jamāl*) Presence, and it can describe the account of that Beauty, based upon the [attained] degree of its light,...because it is not possible to see Him except through Him.<sup>48</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī also states that "the perfect man possesses light,"<sup>49</sup> and also that "the Real is sheer light, while the impossible (*muḥāl*) is sheer darkness."<sup>50</sup> He delves into the issue of the perfect man's capacity of seeing the Absolute through a creative approach to the Names.

Hence the Perfect man is the Real in his poverty, like the names, and the Real in his independence, since he does not see that which is subjected to him, only that which possesses effects. In other words, he sees the divine names, not the entities of the cosmos. Hence he is poor only toward God within the entities of the cosmos, while the cosmos knows nothing of that.<sup>51</sup>

He also explains that:

Everything manifest in the cosmos is an imaginal engendered form that conforms to a divine form. For He discloses Himself to the cosmos only in accordance with that which corresponds (*munāsaba*)-in the entity of an immutable substance just as man is immutable in respect of his substance. Thus you see the immutable through the immutable and that is “unseen” in respect to you and Him. You see the manifest through the manifest and that is the “witnessed, the witnesser, and the witnessing” in respect to you and Him.<sup>52</sup>

The comprehensive awareness of the perfect man brings all aspects of experiencing the Names in one occurrence. The *zāhir* or manifest which represents the Real through the sheer light of His manifestation resembles the same light, which is in the possession of the perfect man. Thus, he sees Him through the manifested light of His manifestation. Each manifestation corresponds to a Divine Name, and is suited to a state in which experiencing the Name and the Named occurs jointly. In this process, the perfect man finds himself as the interpreting border between the Named (i.e, the Absolute) and the Name (or manifestation of the Absolute). In other words, he realizes his position as the one who is able the most to differentiate between *aḥadiyyah* (“inclusive unity”) and *wāḥidiyyah* (“exclusive unity”), by finding himself as the *barzakh* (“isthmus”) between these two realms:

The perfect man is the Son (epitome) of the world. By knowing himself, the Perfect Man comes to know that he is a dividing line between the temporality (*ḥudūth*) of the world and eternity (*qidam*) of the Real, that is between finitude and infinity. The dividing line between finitude and infinity is the moment of creation. Creation is the human being as Ibn ‘Arabī says, meaning that the human being is the ultimate purpose or the final cause of creation. The Real created the world because He loved to be known, that is because He loved to realize Himself, and the Perfect Man assists the Real in achieving this realization. The Perfect Man comes to know the Real

by differentiating Him from the creation, that is, by differentiating the infinite from the finite. To differentiate the infinite from the finite is to know the Limit that brings them together while at the same time keeping them separate. The Limit that brings the finite and infinite together resembles the instant of time (*al-‘ān*), which is the essence of the past time, that is, the time of the manifestation of the Real that has come to be, and future time, that is, the time of the manifestation of the Real that has not come to be. As such, the present state designates the Being of the Real, since the Being of the Real is the Essence of all that has come to be and all that will ever be.<sup>53</sup>

This Limit (or *barzakh* “isthmus”), in Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding, represents the *jāmi‘iyyah* (“comprehensiveness”) of the perfect man.<sup>54</sup> This unique characteristic, in its practical realization, is seeing the existence (i.e., Names) through the both eyes of *huwa/ lā huwa* (“He/Not He”)<sup>55</sup>. In his meeting with the Names, the perfect man becomes the interpreter of their multifaceted *wujūh* (“faces”).<sup>56</sup> He is also the medium through which, these many-sided *wujūh* meet with their essence of *waḥdat*. This dual nature of the being of the perfect man enables him to earn a constant awareness of both concepts of *waḥdat* and *kathrah* in their essential mutuality. Perhaps because of this unique characteristic of the perfect man, Shaykh al-Akbar suggests that the “circular movement of the celestial spheres follows the movement of the perfect man’s heart.”<sup>57</sup>

‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, in his masterpiece *Insān al- Kāmīl*, reminds us of the ceaseless reciprocation between unity and multiplicity.

O Sufi, there is a unity before multiplicity, and [there is] a unity after multiplicity. And this last unity [i.e., unity after multiplicity] is very difficult to reach. If the seeker reaches this last [type of] unity, he will become unitarian/monist (*muwaḥḥid*) and emancipated from polytheism (*shirk*).<sup>58</sup>

Nasafī also reconfirms a vital place for the concept of multiplicity in order to approach the concept of unity. He affirms that “without

multiplicity, there is no *tawhīd* (“unity”).”<sup>59</sup> Nasafi’s description of unity and multiplicity seems to be another way of finding the perfect man as the *barzakh* between the Essence (unity) and the Names (multiplicity).

### Concluding remarks

The concept of *tawhīd*, as the cornerstone of Ibn ‘Arabi’s *weltanschauung*, finds its essential reciprocation within the concept of *al-insan al-kamil*. We might assert that in Ibn ‘Arabi’s methodology, every conceptual approach to the Absolute’s Unity needs to be viewed in its correlation with specific characteristics, standing or attainment of the perfect man as the perfect exponent of *tawhīd*. This method of approach seems to be also employed by the masters of the Kubrawī order. In this view, the different modes and stages of perfection (*kamāl*), represent the functional competent of the perfect man’s faculties in grasping the manifestations of the Absolute’s Unity as the perfect interpreter of *tawhīd*.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See also my article, “The Knowledge of Unity (*‘ilm al-wahdah*): Comparative Reflections on Ibn ‘Arabi and Persian Kubrawi Mystics in Their Approach to the Concept of Unity,” *Transcendent Philosophy: An International Journal for Comparative Philosophy and Mysticism*, Vol. 15 (December 2014), pp. 125-154.
- <sup>2</sup> Muhyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, trans., Najīb Mayīl Heravī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mowlā, 1382/2003), 50.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, II, cited in William C. Chittick, *Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: One World, 2005), 63.
- <sup>4</sup> See ‘Alā Ad-Dawlah Simnānī, *al-‘Urwah li Ahl al-Khalwah wa’l Jalwah*, ed., Najīb Māyil Heravī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mowlā, 1362/1983), 273.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III, cited in Chittick, *Heir to the Prophets*, 64.
- <sup>6</sup> See Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R.W.J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 50.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, cited in Chittick, *Ibn ‘Arabi Metaphysics of Imagination: The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 29.
- <sup>9</sup> See Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Jalīl Misgar Nijād (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1366/1987), 505, my translation. This commentary was originally written by Ḥamadānī and has been mistakenly attributed to the Naqshbandī master Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā. See William, C. Chittick, “Ebn al-‘Arabī,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.
- <sup>10</sup> See Misgar Nijād, introduction to *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* by Pārsā, 37 and 39.
- <sup>11</sup> Pārsā, *Sharḥ- Fuṣūṣ*, 17.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 42.
- <sup>13</sup> Austin, *Fuṣūṣ*, 58.
- <sup>14</sup> See Pārsā, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ*, 17.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid. For English translation of the above Qur’ānic verse (8:17), I have used M.

Pickthall's translation.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Aqrab al-Turuq il-Allāh*, trans., Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī (Tehran: Nashr-i Šafā, 1361/1983), 90-95. For a fuller elaboration on the concepts of affirmation and negation in the Kubrawī approach see my book in Persian, *Muqaddama-yī Pirāmūn-i Ravish Shināsī dar 'Irfān: An Introduction to Methodology in Islamic Mysticism* (Shiraz: International Navīd Publishers, 1385/2006), 65-86.

<sup>19</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 360.

<sup>20</sup> *Futūḥāt*, III, cited in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 360-1.

<sup>21</sup> Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī, *Risālah Dhikriyyah* (Tehran: Cultural Studies and Research Institute, 1370/1992), 18, my translation.

<sup>22</sup> Misgar Nijād, introduction to *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Austin, *Fuṣūṣ*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Pārsā, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., my translation.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>28</sup> For example see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 43, 72, 180 and 185.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 181 and 342.

<sup>30</sup> Pārsā, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ*, 6, my translation.

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*, 6-9.

<sup>32</sup> See Pārsā, *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 33-4.

<sup>35</sup> Austin, *Fuṣūṣ*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>37</sup> *Futūḥāt*, II, cited in Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Language and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1987), 67.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>39</sup> Misgar Nijād, introduction to *Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ*, 36, my translation.

<sup>40</sup> Lloyd Ridgeon, *'Azīz Nasafī* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alī Mu'adhdhin Sabzawārī Khurāsānī, *Tuḥfa-yi 'Abbāsī*, trans., Muḥammad H. Faghfoory (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008), 83.

<sup>44</sup> Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 434.

<sup>45</sup> *Futūḥāt*, II, cited in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 196.

<sup>46</sup> Hamadānī, *Risālah Dhikriyyah*, 19, my translation.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 18, my translation.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 19, my translation.

<sup>49</sup> *Futūḥāt*, II, cited in Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 366.

<sup>50</sup> *Futūḥāt*, III, cited in ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>53</sup> Bashir, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Barzakh*, 122.

<sup>54</sup> See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 30.

<sup>55</sup> See ibid., 4.

<sup>56</sup> See ibid., 30.

<sup>57</sup> See Mehdī Dahbāshī, *Sharḥ-i Rubā‘iyyāt-i Falsafī wa’ ‘Irfānī-yi ‘Allāmah Dawānī* (Tehran: Hermes, 1387/2008), 74. ‘Allāmah Dawānī (d. probably 908/1502), one of the prominent spiritual masters and distinguished advocate of Ibn ‘Arabī in a comment on one of his own *rubā‘iyyāt* states: “...*wa Shaykh [al-Akbar] ...dar ba ‘zī rasā’il farmūdah ka sayr-i dawrī-yi aflāk ṭābi-yi qalb-i insān-i kāmīl ast.*”

<sup>58</sup> ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Kitāb-i Insān al-Kāmīl*, ed., Marijan Molé (Tehran:

Intishārāt-i

Ṭahūrī, 1377/1998), 214, my translation.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

## **Nietzsche's Transvaluation of Islam: Philosophical Orientalism and its Consequences**

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The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called "historical materialism" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.

Walter Benjamin

### **Abstract**

In this article the author has looked at Nietzsche's concept of Islam based on the notion of Transvaluation. Of course, what is of great importance in this context is not Nietzsche's approach to Islam as such but the philosophical orientalism as conceptualized by Nietzsche which has been pursued in this article. It is argued that philosophical orientalism has had grave consequences for the western scholarship and these consequences have haunted the western mentality up to this very day.

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, Islam, Philosophical Orientalism, Transvaluation, Adorno.

## **Introduction**

The above quotation is the first thesis from the Critical Theorist Walter Benjamin's *Philosophy of History*. In our discussion of philosophical orientalism, I'd like to draw your attention to two aspects of Benjamin's thesis. First, the notion that theology, i.e. religion, which has become so odious and ugly in European civilization that it has to hide within its secular counterpart historical materialism, is a belief that was shared by Nietzsche, Ayn Rand, and Hitler, who saw the morality of both Christianity and Bolshevism/Marxism as being slavishly concerned for the *weak*, i.e. those who were undeserving of concern, and therefore worthy of damnation. Secondly, Benjamin puts this revolutionary theology within the appearance of a Turk. For Nietzsche and many of his orientalist compatriots, a "Turk" is synonymous with a Muslim, and there was no greater historical threat to European and Christian civilization than the aggressive expansion of the Ottoman/Islamic Empire. Theology, both Christian and Islamic, rooted in the prophetic concern for the suffering of the masses, the "herd" as Nietzsche described them, was a deep source of motivation for the constant struggle against the powerful, the merciless, and the slave masters, the feudal lords, and the bourgeois ruling class of human history. Bourgeois European civilization could feel no dire of a threat than a historical materialism infused with Islam; a specter was indeed haunting Europe, but it was even worse than secular communism.

## **Nietzsche's Islam**

Nietzsche couldn't have been more pleased by the vision of an Islamic movement that would threaten the bourgeois-Christian alliance within Europe in the 19th century. Nevertheless, his understanding of Islam was the result of his uncritical reading of Orientalist accounts of the Muslim world and the Islamic tradition

(Almond, 8). The core values of Islam and its manifestations within the particularity of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the *Sahaba* (companions), the *Khulafat al-Rashidun* (Rightly Guided Khaliphs), and the *ahl al-bayt* (Prophet Muhammad's family) was missed by Nietzsche as it had been so often misunderstood and/or distorted by the biases within orientalist literature. From reading the many verses Nietzsche penned about Muslims, "morgenland" (Orient), and Muhammad, we can easily deduce that Nietzsche constructed an essentialist concept of Islam that was devoid of any particularity; Islam, in the mind of the self-proclaimed *anti-Christ*, was a concept, a general orientation, a vision of an idealized "other," not a concrete historically bound religious tradition that is comprised of a universe of particularities. His understanding of Islam tells us more about his antagonistic relationship to Europe, Christianity, and what he called "slave morality," than it says about Islam. In essence, what Nietzsche had done to the Islamic tradition is precisely what the philosopher Theodor Adorno identifies as "identity thought"; Nietzsche had constructed an artificial conception of Islam that inflicted tremendous violence against the Islamic civilization, Islamic conceptions of self and *ummah* (community), and the historical memory of the Prophet Muhammad. Speaking about the *Shoah* (Holocaust) in his *Negative Dialectics*, Theodor Adorno professed that "Auschwitz confirmed that the philosopheme of *pure identity* as death."<sup>1</sup> In a way, Nietzsche's construction of a pure essentialist identity for the Muslims conceptualizes them within a given singularity which violently edits out every moment of particularity - the Muslims, in all their plurality, become the single *der Muselmann* - just as the Jews of Europe become conceptually *der Juden*. Death, Adorno reminds us, is the result of such conceptualization, as it subordinates all moments of individuality to the essentialist-singular conception.<sup>2</sup> All minute details of Islam, the micrological level of existence of every believer, are wiped away in a violent imposition of a false identity from the outside. Nietzsche, in his apparent appreciation for Islam, its being the reflection of Christianity in opposition, falsely constructed a vision of Islam as Christianity's illegitimate and perverse "other", and in doing so

wiped clean all the common roots of Islamic and Christian theology, beliefs, ethics, etc.

As not to commit the same intellectual sin as Nietzsche, to essentialize a complex phenomenon down to that of a simple conception, we must examine the particular characteristics he attributes to the religion of Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah. Yet before we do this, we must investigate why Nietzsche appears to give Islam such a sympathetic hearing. This will explain why he essentializes and ultimately functionalizes Islam, using a reductionistic conception of the "affirmative semitic religion" as the oppositional "other" against Christianity.

### **Nietzsche's Herald to Europe**

In Nietzsche's 1882 work *The Gay Science*, he writes of the Madman who proclaims "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" (Nietzsche, 2008: 103) Ironically, it is only the madman who is sane, as the marketeers mock him for his wild calls, not knowing that it is they, i.e. civil society, who have killed God. In this moment of theological desperation, the madman is foreseeing the crisis of faith that is brewing within European society; the secular age, with its science, modern nationalism, atheist philosophy, and free market economy, has made the existence of God, the "cosmos's duct tape", an untenable belief. For Nietzsche, the question is how can one go on believing in a compassionate, omniscient, and all-powerful being in the face of scientific knowledge as well as the constant horror and suffering of history? Modernity, if it has proven anything, is that the world is Godless, and the values and principles that rest upon religiously rooted metaphysical legitimation can no longer have absolute meaning, value, or truthfulness. To further illustrate the point, Heidegger explains Nietzsche's death of God thesis as such,

In the word "God is dead" the name "God," thought essentially, stands for the

suprasensory world of those ideals which contain the goal that exists beyond earthly life for that life and that, accordingly, determines life from above, and also in a certain way, from without. But now when unalloyed faith in God, as determined through the Church, dwindles away, when in particular the doctrine of faith, theology, in its role of serving as the normative explanation of that which is as a whole, is curtailed and thrust aside, then the fundamental structuring, in keeping with which the fixing of goals, extending into the suprasensory, rules sensory, earthly life, is in no way thereby shattered as well (Heidegger, 1977: 64).

Yet for Nietzsche, this is not a revelation that is to be lamented; the world must still find a salvation, but one that is not rooted in an eschatological or theological longing to escape this world. The human condition, with all its frailty, cruelty, weakness, and natural aggressiveness, must find its own way through the muck of history; it can no longer dwell in the hope that a cosmological being or event will rescue it from its own existence - humans have to find their own way of being-in-the-world that recognizes the absence of the *parousia* (Παρουσία, "presence of God"). Not only did Nietzsche insist that modern Europe recognize the lack of divine providence, but that it must also submit to a radical break with its Christian past and re-embrace a morality that is rooted in the "affirmation of life" that recognizes the permanence and inevitability of the *Aristocratic law of nature*.

In Nietzsche's overall project to *transvaluate all values* associated with the Christian tradition, he writes in his last work *The Anti-Christ: A Criticism of Christianity*, that

we must not deck out and adorn Christianity: it has waged a deadly war upon this higher

man, it has set a ban upon all the fundamental instincts of this type, and has distilled evil

and the devil himself out of these instincts: the strong man as the typical pariah, the villain.

Christianity has sided with everything weak, low, and botched; it has made an ideal out

of antagonism toward all the self-preservative instincts of strong life (Nietzsche, 2006: 5).

Nietzsche understood Christian morality, as it followed the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, to be *decadent*, as it perverted the nature of man, who, if left free from Christian indoctrination, would embrace his/her survival/natural instincts. In this scenario, it is the strength of the predator over the prey that would lead to a society of excellence, beauty, and power. In Nietzsche's view, nature would weed out the weak in human society as it did in the world of plants and animals. The "will to power," if not forced to be suppressed by Christianity's adoration of weakness, virtue of pity, and idolization of the victim, would find its maximal emancipation through powerful men of action and intellect. It is not God's "elect" that will be saved as in Calvin's theology, but the elect of talent, nature, and *will* that will rise above the herd in an earthly salvation. The morality of the powerful, the sadistic, the uncaring, the predator of history, is the "master morality," as it embraces the manly virtues of combat, domination, and hedonistic pleasure - social darwinism par excellence (Richardson, 2004: 133-218). Nevertheless, Nietzsche indicts Christianity for the perversion of mankind's true nature through its imposition of "slave morality," a morality that exists only to serve the interests of the *herd*, those without individualist power, prowess, and gregarious appetite for appropriation. The herd is a powerless band of "sheeple" (sheep-like people), desperate for a strong man to guide them, powerless to think as an individual, incompetent in providing for themselves, and devoid of any particular talent for life, who often turn to religion as an escape

from their miserable existence. Because of its weakness, both mental and physical, the individuals within the herd have "escaped freedom" (of the individual) and have willfully absorbed themselves into the anonymous mass (*das man*). The herd only finds power and safety in their numbers, and through religions like Christianity, political structures like democracy, and political philosophies like Marxism and Leninism, they are able to politically castrate the naturally/willfully powerful and bind them to their tyranny of mediocrity. For Nietzsche, the great crisis of European faith is the appropriate moment to inject master morality into the vein of post-Christian civilization - giving Europe a new life after the death of God. The end of Christianity, the acceptance of the death of God and the abolishment of Christian morality, sets the stage for the resurrection of a pagan moral system; natural morality. *Acta est fabula, plaudite!*<sup>3</sup>

Yet Nietzsche's ideal environment for the reintroduction of his transvalued moral system had not fully materialized; bourgeois society was still nominally Christian, on the surface it still recognized the existence of God and the legitimacy of Christian morality, even if the growing "having" way-of-being within the market economy didn't practice it. Although the anti-Christ herald celebrated the burgeoning post-Christian era, the Bourgeois did not want to relinquish religion all together, as it gave them the power to manipulate the 4th estate (proletariat) as well as legitimated their rule, as it had often legitimated the rulers of other epochs. Nevertheless, for Nietzsche, this despicable inability to find the courage to dismiss religion from the stage of history was a nagging thorn in the side of his philosophy; it was the great disappointment and source of resentment for Nietzsche that modern European society cannot forsake its Christian baggage, no matter how much that religion had scarred Europe and held it back from its natural greatness. No matter how often the Bourgeoisie made a liar of out Jesus with every word they said and everything they did, they refused to abandon the pretext that they were a "Christian" society.

Nietzsche openly said that which they refused to: that Christ and the new secular-capitalist zeitgeist were not reconcilable.

Although Heidegger saw Nietzsche as the most religious of all religious men in Europe at the time, it was a different vision of religion that often captured his imagination.<sup>4</sup> Islam, the other semantic world religion, served Nietzsche as the horrifying other by which he could invoke to terrorize Europe. If Nietzsche wished to "philosophize with a hammer," Islam became the theological malleus in which he nailed European sensibilities concerning both religion and its own history. Islam, the specter that really haunted Europe, became a tool in the philosophical arsenal of Nietzsche. But why did Nietzsche appropriate the religion of Muhammad, that shared the same theological roots and moral concerns with Judaism and Christianity, to juxtapose against Europe? What conception of Islam did Nietzsche have of the religion of "submission" (Islam) that allowed him to believe that it was eternally hostile to Christian morality?

### **Da Capo: Nietzsche's Islam and Muhammad's Islam**

As we said before, Nietzsche's sources for his understanding of Islam can be found in the cannon of orientalist literature. Orientalist scholars often understood Islam to be inherently violent, misogynistic, aggressively expansionist, lustful, and even hedonistic, all attributes that were opposed to the peaceful innocence of the Christian message. Orientalists often depicted Islam not only as a wild heretical form of Christianity, but its evil illegitimate twin: the Cain to Christianity's Abel. The rampant orientalist Islamophobia continues into the 21st century, where in America a whole industry of anti-Islam literature has flourished since the terrorist attacks against the U.S. on September 11, 2001. Once again Islam is viewed as the motivational force behind the killing of innocent American civilians. Nevertheless, when Nietzsche read the orientalist literature, he detected a condemnatory *geist* that animated the works; Islam was not only fascinating to the

orientalist, it was also dangerous, destructive, and despicable. It echoed the sentiment displayed in Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 Regensburg lecture, when he quoted the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos. The emperor said,

Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached (Pope Benedict XVI, 2006).<sup>5</sup>

However, that which the orientalist found contemptible in Islam, Nietzsche embraced and praised. Those Islamic values, principles, and norms the orientalist accused of being morally inferior to Christianity, Nietzsche thought to be their superior. Those values that they found to be in opposition to the peaceful ethic of Jesus of Nazareth, Nietzsche found to be exactly that which was needed in western society. The fear of Islam drove much of the hatred for Muslims in the mind of the orientalist, for the Muslims had not already only conquered all of Middle Eastern Christendom; it was the only existential threat to *all* of Christendom that existed prior to the secular Enlightenment. Although al-Andalus (Islamic Iberia) and Ottoman empire helped drag Europe out of its self-induced dark ages, it was still seen as the ever encroaching threat just beyond the borders. Therefore, the project of the orientalist was not only to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity, Christian theology, and Christian civilization, but also to warn the Christian world of the dangers of Islam. While it did so, it also projected its wildest sexual fantasies on the "orient" and the Muslim world in particular; in their mind, the Middle East was the world of sensual desire, sexual licentiousness, and barbaric misogyny, all values that they had to suppress due to their Christian morality. Secretly they admired this "vision of Islam," despite the fact that it had little veracity. Hatred for their own tradition (both Christian and Bourgeois), that forced them to forego their animalistic id, was transferred to those who supposedly could engage in such activities. Civilization, albeit Christian and Bourgeois civilization, was morally right, but it did not allow for the free expression of their full

humanity. Bourgeois Christianity was the hyperactive superego, and the orientalist hated the Muslims for it.

This inherent negativity within the mind of the European masses concerning Islam was precisely the source of Nietzsche's attraction to the religion. The orientalist literature of the time, that depicted Islam as a religion that embraced the powerful's right to impose their will on the weak masses, as well as engage in hedonistic debauchery, fascinated Nietzsche, and provided him the intellectual materials from which he could build his own peculiar conception of Islam.

Nietzsche constructed an ideal-type of religion that stood in opposition to the feminine weakness-worshipping herd nature of Christianity. His version of Islam, wiped clean of his prophetic similarities to Christianity, was a radical abstraction of his own making. Nietzsche's Islam was characterized by 1) an embrace of manliness, i.e. the rejection of pity and compassion, 2) an embrace of the right of the powerful to dominate the powerless, 3) an embrace of the warrior ethic, and 4) an affirmation of life - symbolized by Dionysius' (Bacchus) wine, sex, and music.

For Nietzsche, Islam inherently rejected the feminine nature of Christianity, i.e. its insistence on the nobility of the suffering individual, the preciousness of all life, and inherent worth of all human beings, no matter how wretched, weak, or diseased. Nietzsche saw this care for those who are not deserving of care to be a weakness within Christianity; it makes a value out of the valueless, and it makes a virtue out of a distorted nature - the natural world demands that the weak shall perish, while Christian eschatology perverts this imperative by insisting that the "last shall be first and the first shall be last" (Matthew 20:16). It is the weak and poor that shall inherit the earth, and the rich and powerful shall have their fill now, but that is their only reward. For Nietzsche, this is but wishful thinking by the powerless; a projection of their innermost desires for revenge against the powerful. Since they

cannot exact their revenge in this life, they wish to have it in the next life. In this light, Christianity consoles the weak and numbs their consciousness by offering them false hope about an afterlife where their hatred for the naturally gifted, talented, wealthy, and powerful will be exacted with the blessing of the most gifted, talented, wealthy, and powerful, i.e. God. God is on the side of the weak, as evident in Jesus' teaching in the Gospels, but in the context of human history, nature is on the side of the strong. For Nietzsche, Christianity's eschatological hope for redemption and deliverance from nature and history is but a self-imposed consoling dream - it gives the pitiful believer something to hope for, i.e. that the murderer, rapist, feudal lord, slave master, etc., shall ultimately not triumph over the innocent victim and will see perfect justice in the next life. Nietzsche's understanding of Islam corresponded directly to his evaluation concerning the *decadent* nature of Christian morality. He believed, in error, that Islam also embraced a masculinity that cared not for the victims of history, but instead glorified the strength and power of the victor. His notion of Islam was one of conquest, domination, and manly warfare, and not one of compassion and mercy, as the Qur'an spells out before every chapter. Yet, it is true to some extent that moments in Islamic history embrace such war-like values, but the real question is whether or not those moments can be legitimated by the Qur'an, and the *sunnah* (way) of the Prophet. Was Muhammad an man of chauvinistic power; did he have contempt for the weak; and how did he treat the orphans, widows, slaves, and powerless innocent victims of his own society? For the Islamophobia industry, Muhammad was the personification of pure evil. For the Muslim community, Muhammad is *al-insan al-kamil*, the perfect man, who showed the greatest compassion for those who found themselves in the ditch of history. For Muslims, Muhammad serves as the source of imitation, the greatest exemplar of the virtues of compassion, mercy, justice, and piety. It is clear through the generations of Islamic scholars who have pondered the bounds of *jihad*, often translated to "holy war," but more appropriately rendered "struggle" or "effort," as the definition of "holy war," is not a Qur'anic concept,

that Muhammad's military engagements were often not brought upon by his own desires, nor were they activities he reveled in. In fact, war is not something Muslims are to savor, but, according to the 15th century Islamic scholar Jalaluddin al-Sayuti, are permitted to engage in under five specific conditions: 1) as self defense, 2) to protect the freedom of speech, 3) to protect the freedom of worship, 4) at the violation of a contract, and 5) at the request of the oppressed. To be sure, many Muslims have engaged in warfare outside the bounds of legitimate Qur'anic sanctioned jihad, but that is not the issue for us here. The question is whether or not unjust violence by Muslims can find justification within the Qur'an, hadith, or *seerah* (biography) of the Prophet. Surely, Muslims were not asked to be weak in the face of the enemy, but neither were they commanded to spread the religion by the sword. It may be the case that what Nietzsche was most familiar with through his reading of Orientalist literature is the history of unIslamic aggression within the Islamic world. Indeed, what Hegel described as the "slaughter-bench of history" (*geschichte als schlachtbank*) continued within the *dar al-Islam*, but did it do so with Qur'anic justifications?

Nietzsche failed to recognize that Islam shares with Christianity its inherent negativity. At the core of both the Christian and Islamic traditions rest the desire to negate the metaphysics of what is the case: the unjust, oppressive, unequal, and vile existence of class domination, racial supremacy, and misogyny, which lie at the heart of the *aristocratic law of nature*. It's *raison d'être* is not to reconcile the believer to the unjust and cruel world, but rather to make them ill-content with the suffering and injustice of this world, to be a stranger in this world, and to reject its golgathic history. (Qur'an 42:42; Romans 12:2). One only need look at Muhammad's final sermon to taste the flavor of his radical egalitarianism and commitment to equality and social justice.

All mankind are from Adam and Eve. An Arab is not superior to a non-Arab,

nor is a non-Arab superior to an Arab; whites are not superior to blacks, nor are

blacks superior to whites; There is only superiority in piety and good action. Know

that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims are a single

brotherhood. Nothing is legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to another unless

it was given freely and willingly. Therefore, do not be unjust (Emerick, 286).<sup>6</sup>

One doesn't need to look long in the sacred scriptures of Christianity to find the prophetic, albeit "slave morality" in Nietzsche's rendering, stance.

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver

have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your

flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the

laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out

against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of

hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have

fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter (James 5:1-5).<sup>7</sup>

Both traditions began as a radical critique of the political-economic status quo - ones that were legitimated by the pagan god's of the fathers in Arabia, and the Priestly form of Judaism that collaborated with occupying empires, protected the wealth and privileges of the ruling elites, and attempted to stamp out every liberational movement in its time, just as the "princes of the church" continue to oppose liberation theology today. From the Islamic and Christian perspectives, both Muhammad and Jesus rejected "positive religion," a religious tradition that endorses and or legitimates the status quo and all its injustices. From the critical religiologists perspective, positive religion reconciles the individual to the horror and suffering that is imposed on them by the injustices of this world, i.e. class struggle, gender struggle, war, poverty, etc.; as Marx, borrowing from Hegel, who received it from Kant, made clear, that religion does not only console the damaged individual in this unjust world, but it can either sharpen the consciousness or dull it. Prophetic religion, religion that makes the individual maladjusted to the injustices of this world, is religion expressing its negativity, while the religion that teaches one to suffer peacefully at the hands of those who brutalize you is the opiate that Marx spoke of.

It is equally as obvious that the negativity of the prophetic religious traditions is not always operational, and sometimes the religions of the prophets can dialectically be turned into their opposites and become tools of oppression, suppression, and defense of unjust power. Jesus' religion of love is transformed in the Crusades, Muhammad's religion of justice and compassion turns into the terror attacks on September 11th, 2001. One can read Walter Benjamin's thesis concerning the hunchback with the Turkish puppet as suggesting that not only can theology legitimate historical

materialism, or provide it a source of motivation, but also that historical materialism can once again return religion to the side of the masses as opposed to taking the side of the slave holders, feudal lords, aristocracy, and Bourgeoisie. As Benjamin knew, the inherent negativity of the Abrahamic religions is too often transformed into positive ideologies that mask the interests of class, race, gender, and national interests. This diabolical transformation of liberational religiosity into status quo legitimation pushes more and more concerned individuals away from religion; the hypocrisy of what is preached and what is practiced depletes the potency of the meaning material of every prophetic word within the sacred text. In the opinion of the critical theorists of religion, the prophetic language must be rescued from its functionalization by the powerful elites, as they, throughout history, have done more damage to the believability of religion and philosophy than science and secularity ever have. In the existential void of meaning, civil society has introduced *homo consumens*: the world and individual as commodity, commerciality, and market - the *having-way-of-being* replaces the *being* mode of existence as a means of compensating for the diminishment of meaning within the "God is dead" secular capitalist society (Fromm, 133-167). Furthermore, religion can not abandon its social charge as it so often has. In the face of the meaningless society, meaningless age, and meaningless existence, where polity and economy are governed by naked power, a quiet withdrawal into eschatological reservations can be the norm as the pursuit of absolute justice in this world is translated into being patience for absolute justice *only* in the next. "Pie in the sky when you die, by and by." As a result, those most attuned to how the world *ought* to be, who can plainly see that the Empire of Rome is not the Kingdom of God, retreat into silence concerning the annihilation of the weak and vulnerable. To change the world, as Marx decrees in his 11th thesis on Feuerbach, is abandoned.<sup>8</sup> It becomes the sole right and duty of the messiah, and so they wait. Yet for the prophetic in religion, waiting is not enough: a form of radical theory and praxis must be developed and engaged in. Walter Benjamin rightly perceived that "like every generation that preceded

us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical Materialists are aware of that" (Benjamin, 254). The prophetic believer, as well as the Marxist, cannot resign themselves to an eschatological hope, but must engage in a robust critique and revolutionary praxis within this life - the "*weak messianic power*" that they possess must be engaged.

Like Christianity, Islam, which Nietzsche seemed to miss, is at its core a protest against his *übermensch* (superhuman) society, it denies the right of the predator to devour his prey, and orients itself toward the well-being of those whom Nietzsche deems *untermensch* (subhuman), the poor, needy, orphans, widows, sick, diseased, and oppressed. These aspects of Islam were so often ignored within orientalist literature that we can hardly blame Nietzsche for not knowing of their existence. Nevertheless, the shared common prophetic roots of both Christianity and Islam make them both the religions that are especially concerned about the plight and struggle of the *untermensch*. If there is a role for the powerful within the Islamic worldview, it is that of the protector and sustainer of the *untermensch*, just as Allah is the protector and sustainer of all mankind, including the *übermensch*. In the year 616 CE, while arguing his case for sanctuary before the King of Abyssinia, Jaafar ibn Abi Talib, and early convert to Islam, made his famous speech,

O King! We were ignorant people and we lived like wild animals. The strong among

us lived by preying upon the weak. We obeyed no law and we acknowledged no

authority save that of brute force. We worshipped idols made of stone or wood,

and we knew nothing of human dignity. And then God, in His Mercy, sent to us

His Messenger who was himself one of us. We knew about his truthfulness and his

integrity. His character was exemplary, and he was the most well-born of the Arabs.

He invited us toward the worship of One God, and he forbade us to worship idols.

He exhorted us to tell the truth, and to *protect the weak, the poor, the humble, the*

*widows and the orphans. He ordered us to show respect to women, and never to*

*slander them.* We obeyed him and followed his teachings. Most of the people in

our country are still polytheists, and they resented our conversion to the new

faith which is called Islam. They began to persecute us and it was in order to

escape from persecution by them that we sought and found sanctuary in your

kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

From the Islamic perspective, the most vulnerable in society are a trust from the divine and the powerful will be judged on how they treat them. In this line of thought, the poor, hungry, and victims of nature and society are a test for those who can intervene on their behalf. Do they follow the *imitatio Muhammadi* and interject compassion and mercy into their society, or do they contribute more to the suffering that is already omnipresent?

Despite their shared concern for the frail in human society, the proletariat and precariat, Islam does not reject the *lex talionis* (law

of retaliation, or *Qasas* in Arabic), in total, as it is rejected in Christian scripture. The Qur'an says:

O believers, you are allowed legal retribution (Qasas) for those murdered - freeman

for freeman, slave for slave, and female for female. But whoever forgives his

brother, then there must be a suitable recompense for him in good faith. This is

a mercy from Allah. Punishment will be for those who transgress these bounds.

(Qur'an, 2:178)<sup>10</sup>

The Qur'anic concept of justice is bound to the Qasas principle - that retaliation must be measured according to the harm inflicted by the perpetrator; it cannot transgress the bounds of fair punishment according to the severity of the crime as that would only create an additional crime. The punished have the right to expect to be punished within the bounds of fairness. However, in Nietzsche's view, it is the prerogative of the powerful to exact any form of punishment that he finds necessary or desired according to his own subjective taste; it is not the right of society or the individual to question the wisdom of the übermensch's punishment. He has the natural right to impose whatever punishment he desires arbitrarily, even on those who have committed no crime other than being an untermensch. It is the *aristocratic law of nature* that legitimates the übermensch's actions, not a legal conception of fairness in crime and punishment. Furthermore, it is the *will* of the powerful that provides him legitimacy in his actions, as it is his will that has allowed him to overcome his weaknesses, limitations, and frailties. But if Nietzsche's philosophy of the will is correct, the Qasas principle, which limits the powers of the powerful, would have been

interpreted by Nietzsche as an unjust restraint imposed on the powerful by the legal system that reflects the will of the weak, the herd, and the *untermensch*. Conveniently for Nietzsche, the Qisas principle was never discussed in the orientalist literature he was reading and therefore did not impede his essentialist conception of Islam.

Islamic law stipulates that Muslims are within their right to seek revenge or compensation for the wrongs committed against them. But that which is equally true is that Muslims are encouraged by Muhammad to forgive those who wrong them if they can find the ability to do so in their heart (Qur'an 2:178). Witness the story of the Jewish woman in Mecca who threw her trash at Muhammad on a daily basis: he never sought retaliation, but only prayed for her. It was his forgiving nature and his concern for her well-being, despite her hatred for him, that impelled him to visit her when she hadn't showed up to throw her garbage at him on a particular day. He found her to be ill and bedridden. She was so moved by his *qalq* (concern) for her that she converted to Islam.<sup>11</sup> Or one can see this concern for the other, even the violent opposition, when Muhammad pardons the Meccan population when the Muslims peacefully conquered in Mecca in 630CE. No revenge was taken; no retribution was exacted, and no mass slaughter of the vanquished, which was the established tradition in Arabia, ever took place. The practice of forgiving when having the full right of retaliation is not an *übermensch* quality; it is a quality of those who have rejected the aristocratic law of nature as a way-of-being-in-the-world.

When it comes to the issue of violence within the Islamic tradition, Nietzsche seemed to have made a gross error in his method of study. For Christianity, his direct experience and reading of the Christian texts constructed his vision of what Christianity entailed. It was the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and the early Church, as reflected in the New Testament, in which he grounded his conception of Christian decadence. However, when it came to

Islam, it was not the sacred text of the Qur'an and hadith that guided his conception, as we have no evidence he ever read these texts; it was a reading of Muslim history through the lenses of orientalist literature in which he grounded his ill-conceived conception of Islam. In essence, his positive remarks about Islam are really positive remarks about Islamic history, especially those episodes that are most often unIslamic. Nietzsche, having limited resources concerning Islam, especially its primary documents, was comparing the idealistic teachings of Jesus and the early church to the concrete experiences of the Muslim world; those experiences often embodying the values Nietzsche associated with the *übermensch* - the master morality of prowess in battle, strength in society, individualism, disregard for the weak and suffering, and the will's affirmation of life. Nietzsche seemed to be in awe of Islamic history, unaware that it often failed to reflect the core tenets of Islam. This methodological error contributed to Nietzsche's positive affirmation of Islam as it painted a picture of Islam as the strength of the *übermensch* against the weakness of Christianity.

### **Hitler's Appropriation of Nietzsche's Islam**

One cannot blame Nietzsche for what his sister Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche did to his philosophy; if Nietzsche was already oriented towards social darwinism, she turned his philosophy into a ready-at-hand ideology for fascism.<sup>12</sup> Next to Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche is the philosopher most identified with the political and moral philosophy of the Third Reich.<sup>13</sup> Hitler, the devotee of Arthur Schopenhauer, most likely never made a detailed study of Nietzsche's corpus, but was at least a superficial affectionado of the Nazified version of Nietzsche's philosophy of the *übermensch*, which turned it into a theory of racial superiority as opposed to the superiority of the will; in Nazi German the *übermensch* was no longer the *individual* who rose above the limitations of his own being, breaking ranks with the conventional morality that held him back from obtaining his actualization in this new godless world, but it became an ideology of Aryan and especially German *collective*

racial superiority. The individual was no longer at the center of Nietzsche's work in the Nazi version, but the *Deutsches Volk* became the *übermensch* race and nation. Nietzsche's philosophy somehow became the philosophical justification for *Nationalsozialistische Rassenpolitik* (National Socialism racial politics) despite the fact that Nietzsche's works are replete with disdain for all things German and anti-semitic, including Wagner's nationalism and his return to Teutonic mythology. Nietzsche made it publicly known that he completely rejected the rabid anti-semitism that was shared by his sister and her husband Bernhard Förster, as it had no intellectual fiber because it was based on irrational and ahistorical premises about Jews (Hayman, 1980: 267-269). Furthermore, Nietzsche rarely had anything good to say about the collective, as anything done en masse struck him as herd activity; his philosophy was geared directly towards the will of the individual who triumphed over his/her circumstances, not nations, races, or civilizations. Nevertheless, through clever editing, detracting, and creative constructions of texts, the Third Reich was able to transform his philosophy into a ideology of Jew hatred and German glorification (Safranski, 2002: 11, 13, 318).

One aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy that Hitler seemed to have borrowed wholesale was his conception of Islam as the "other" of Christianity. Hitler, like so many on the political right, saw Bolshevism as the secular translation of Jewish collectivist morality, a claim that cannot be entirely dismissed. Christianity's historical and moral ties to Judaism, despite Hitler's Catholicism, wasn't spared from his critique either, as he believed Christianity to be the Bolshevism of the Roman empire; both forced a *leveling down* of individual greatness to appease the masses, i.e. the greatness of the individual is subjugated and suppressed under the collective will of the mediocre masses. What was more important for Hitler was the realization that Christianity *leveled down* the greatness of the Germanic peoples to that of the semitic Jews via Christian morality. This *leveling down* and enslavement of the great to that of the weak is a common characteristic of Judaism,

Christianity, and Bolshevism in the mind of Hitler. To illustrate this belief, in July of 1941, he said,

The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity. Bolshevism

is Christianity's illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jew. The deliberate lie in

the matter of religion was introduced into the world by Christianity. Bolshevism practices

a lie of the same nature, when it claims to bring liberty to men, whereas in reality it seeks

only to enslave them. In the ancient world, the relations between men and gods were

found on an instinctive respect. It was a world enlightened by the idea of tolerance.

Christianity was the first creed in the world to exterminate its adversaries in the name of

love. Its key-note is intolerance (Hitler, 2000: 7).

Echoing Nietzsche's claim that Christianity distorts and perverts the natural strength of individuals for the benefit of the weak, Hitler again claimed in October of 1941 that "Christianity is a rebellion against natural law, a protest against nature. Taken to its logical extreme, Christianity would mean the systematic cultivation of the human failure" and that Bolshevism is the "mobilization by the Jew of the masses of *slaves* with the object of undermining society" (Hitler, 2000: 51-52). It is no coincidence that Hitler uses Nietzsche's famous "slave" to illuminate his position that Bolshevism. According to Nietzsche, all forms of socialism and democracy are essentially slave revolts against their superiors (Wallace, 2009: 110-137).

Contrasted against the Christian ethic of social solidarity and semitic *decadence* (which he defines as weakness and its glorification), Hitler borrows Nietzsche's claim that Islam represents a different form of religiosity, one that is more suited to the war-like and manly nature of the Aryans. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and the Reich minister of armaments and war production, relates in his memoirs a conversation he had with Hitler around 1937. Speaking about the Battle of Tours (aka Poitiers) in 732 CE, where the invading Arabs/Muslims were defeated by Charlemagne, Speer paraphrases Hitler as saying,

Had the Arabs won this battle, the world would be Mohammedan [Muslim] today. For

theirs was a religion that believed in spreading the faith by the sword and subjugating

all nations to that faith. The Germanic peoples would have become heirs to that

religion. *Such a creed was perfectly suited to the Germanic temperament.*

Hitler said that the conquering Arabs, because of their racial inferiority, would in the long

run have been unable to contend with the harsher climate and conditions of the

country. They could not have kept down the more vigorous natives, so that ultimately

not Arabs but Islamized Germans could have stood at the head of this Mohammedan

Empire (Speer, 1970: 114).

Despite the dubious claim that Islam, as a religion, was spread by the sword, Hitler appreciates the idea that a stronger group of people, in *his* sense a stronger *race*, can impose their will on another. This "will to dominate" is at the core of fascism, and Hitler sees a like-minded religion within his understanding of Islamic history. Yet, although the Arab race was inferior to the Aryan, which would therefore not allow it to rule over the Germanic tribesmen, the religious tradition they would have brought to northern Europe, had they not been defeated in Poitiers, was "perfectly suited" for the Germans. Indeed, this quote seems to suggest that Hitler fantasized about a Germanic Islam that would not only rule all of Europe, but would also rule over the entire *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam, the "Muhammedan Empire"). This thought of Germans adopting Islam (albeit Nietzsche's conception of Islam) excited Hitler's imagination, as it would have rescued Europe from the disaster of the Germanic adoption of the decadent religion of the weak masses, i.e. the faith of the half-Jew Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>14</sup> In this moment, Hitler echoes the same sentiment that Nietzsche articulated in his book *The Anti-Christ*. In section 60, Nietzsche exclaimed,

Christianity destroyed the harvest we *might* have reaped from the culture of antiquity,

*later it also destroyed our harvest of the culture of Islam. The wonderful Moorish*

*world of Spanish culture, which in its essence is more closely related to us, and which*

*appeals more to our sense and taste than Rome and Greece, was trampled to death...*,

Why? Because it owed its origin to *noble*, to *manly instincts*, because it said *yea to life*,

even that life so full of the rare and refined luxuries of the Moors! (Nietzsche, 2006: 72).<sup>15</sup>

Nietzsche, the devotee of the Greek Dionysian arts, that celebrate beauty, sensual passion, and seductive joyfulness, still believed that Islam appealed "more to our sense and taste than Rome and Greece." So distorted was Nietzsche's orientalist conception of the Islam that he believed the Islamic tradition to be even more manly, warrior-like, and driven by the "will to power," more infused with master morality, that he places it above the two seedbed society of the West that are most associated with domination, conquest, and empire, let alone hedonism and the liberation of individual's pursuit of greatness. Nietzsche's conception of Islam abstracted what he thought was the best characteristics from the Greco-Roman world and amplified it, turning Islam into a powerful *übermensch* ideology - a religion for the strong at the expense of the weak. Yet one can detect the lament that both Hitler and Nietzsche had in sight of the lost historical opportunity that Europe had when it rejected Islam and defended Christendom. For both Nietzsche and Hitler, by the sheer force of the masses, slave morality beguiled Europe and thereafter forced it to sublimate natural superiority, both individually and through the collective, in the name of Christian humility and piety; when the time came to abandon this religion for one more "suited to the Germanic temperament," they failed to realize the opportunity. The contradiction that Nietzsche failed to see here was that it was the warrior-like attributes of Christendom that defeated the Muslims; Europe never had any problem reconciling its Christian commitments to war, pillage, and conquest. This is precisely what allowed the Christians to defeat the Muslims in the battle of Poitiers. Had Christendom whole-heartedly adopted the pacifism of the early Christian community, and the *contra lex talionis* of Jesus, Europe most likely would have been conquered in its entirety by the Muslims.

Yet for Hitler, not only was the decadent weakness of Christianity's *contra lex talionis* and its inherent pacifism a mismatch for the Germanic temperament, it also brought about a vision of an afterlife that was feminine and lacking the manly vitality of the vision of *jannah* (paradise) of the Islamic tradition. In 1941 he says,

Observe, by the way, that, as a corollary, the Mussulman [Muslim] was promised a

paradise peopled with houris [Qur'anic: beautiful companion], where wine flowed

in streams - a real earthly paradise. The Christians, on the other hand, declare

themselves satisfied if after their death they are allowed to sing Hallelujahs!

(Hitler, 2000: 60)

and

I can imagine people being enthusiastic about the paradise of Mahomet, but as for the

insipid paradise of the Christians! In your lifetime, you used to hear the music of

Richard Wagner. After your death, it will be nothing but hallelujahs, the waving of

palms, children of an age for the feeding-bottle, and hoary old men (Hitler, 2000: 143).

The sensual image of the Islamic paradise appealed to Hitler's earthly sensibilities concerning the Nietzscheian "affirmation of life," as opposed to the ephemeral in the vision of a Christian heaven. Like Nietzsche, Hitler saw no benefit in a asceticism that denied the flesh its delight, denied men the thrill of conquest, or the right of the powerful to joyously devour its prey. The abstract notion of a heavenly existence in the "presence of God" was no match for the sensuousness of the Islamic paradise, with its gardens, wine, and houris. The Christian heaven was an Hitlerian nightmare, full of slavish worship of the crucified weakness of Jesus. Even if he may have practiced some forms of personal asceticism, such as

his refusal to marry his lover Eva Braun (whom he may never have really shared intimacies with), or his commitment to a vegetarian diet, he believed his sacrifices were for the benefit of the German Reich and were therefore not the same form of slavish abstinence that is practiced by Christians. As love for the *Deutsche volk* animated Hitler, hatred of this finite and miserable world animated the Christians - especially those of the fourth estate (workers, peasants, etc.), whom had to suffer the misery of the unjust world and therefore longed for its cessation, either by way of death or by way of a messianic return.

Nevertheless, the vision of an afterlife that was more akin to life in a monastery, Hitler thought, was not the image of paradise for the heroic German nation; it lacked the majesty that was befitting the status of the world's *übermensch* and rightly belongs to the wandering slave tribe of Hebrews. Heaven should be full of martyrs, but martyrs for the fatherland, not the contemptible weakness associated with Christianity. The victor of history and nature cannot retreat after death into an eschatological monastery, a sensual desert, but must have its just reward, whether it be the spoils of war in this life or the wine and houris in the next.

However, we mustn't think that Hitler's motivation as being rooted in an eschatological reward, nor was it simply the acquisition of earthly wealth, power, and prestige; at war, he was motivated by history and the future: he made war out of revenge for the Versailles Treaty in the West and *lebensraum* (living space) in the East. The motivation for both fronts of the war could not be reconciled with the Christian imperative to love the neighbor, forgive the debts and trespasses, and pray for the enemy - No, Hitler followed the philosophy of the predator: the survival of the fittest; the aristocratic law of nature, where power prevailed over the powerless. This is what steered his policies.

## **Further Consequence of Orientalism: Nietzsche's Übermensch Muslim**

Unfortunately Nietzsche's conception of Islam and Hitler's appropriation of it lent itself to one of the most disgraceful moments in Islamic history: the collaboration of the Third Reich with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Clearly, if Pope Pious XII can be described as "Hitler's Pope," then Haj Muhammad Effendi Amin al-Husseini can boast the title "Hitler's Mufti."<sup>16</sup>

Although al-Husseini in no way represented the whole of the Muslim *ummah*, he did nevertheless engage the Nazis in a very friendly way, seeing them as a common companion in the resolution of the worldwide Jewish problem. By putting his hatred for the British occupation of Palestine, and the desire to curb Jewish emigration into the Arab territories, above his commitment to Islamic principles, he failed miserably to abide by the Islamic injunction "enjoin the good (al-mar'uf) and forbid the evil (al-munkar)," which is a constitutional norm for all Muslims (Qur'an 3:104, 100; 9:71, 112). al-Husseini believed in the war goals of the Third Reich as it pertained to Palestine, i.e. 1) the undermining of the British Empire, and the 2) the removal of the Jews from the earth.<sup>17</sup> In her book chronicling the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961-1962, Hannah Arendt, the cousin of Walter Benjamin, writes,

The Grand Mufti's connections with the Nazis during the war were no secret; he had

hoped they would help him in the implementation of some "final solution" in the

Near East. Hence, newspapers in Damascus and Beirut, in Cairo and Jordan, did not

hide their sympathy for Eichmann or their regret that he "had not finished the job."

(Arendt, 1969: 13)

Despite the native anti-Judaism of some within the Muslim world, in the Qur'an, the Jews, despite all their differences with the Muslims, are considered *ahl al-kitab* (people of the book) and warrant special consideration as such, which includes protection by the Muslims when under oppression and or persecution (Qur'an 29:46; 3:113-115; 2:62; 3:64; 22:17). al-Husseini, in his nationalistic stance, turned his back on the historical practice of welcoming Jews into the Muslim territories, as it was done when they were expelled from Spain after the Catholic *Reconquista*. One could argue that the Mufti understood the Arab world to be in a weakened position as it was under colonial rule, and that the Palestinians were in no position to welcome in a massive influx of European Jews. However, this sense of threat, according to Islamic principles, does not negate the obligation to stand in solidarity with the victims of oppression. Yet al-Husseini did not only turn a blind eye to the persecution of the Jews in Europe, the historical record makes clear that he supported it and contributed what he could to see it succeed; he actively made cooperative agreements with Mussolini, Hitler, Himmler; blessed the Bosnian Muslim brigades of Waffen SS volunteers; made propaganda speeches directed towards Arabs in support of the Nazi war goals; and even took up residence in Berlin during WWII as a guest of the state. In July, 1942, al-Husseini visited Sachsenhausen concentration camp, which would be transformed into an extermination camp a year later. Strategically, Hitler had an interest in developing strong ties to anti-Jewish Muslim leadership in the Middle East. According to Christopher R. Browning, towards the end of 1941, Hitler began to make his intentions to exterminate the Jews clear to high officials including the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. He quotes Hitler,

Germany has resolved, step by step, to ask one European nation after the other to

solve its Jewish problem, and at the proper time, direct a similar appeal to non-

European nations as well... Germany's objective would then be solely the destruction

of the Jewish element residing in the Arab sphere under the protection of British

power (Browning, 2004: 406).

It was made clear to the Mufti of Jerusalem that Hitler had declared at *totalen krieg* (total war) against all Jews no matter their homeland, and the Mufti clearly knew of his intentions to *exterminate* the Jews. On November 2, 1943, al-Husseini said, "The Germans know how to get rid of the Jews. They have definitely solved the Jewish problem" (Fisk, 2007: 444). After the Jews of Europe had been destroyed, the fascist imperative to eliminate all Jews from the known world was to proceed. Had this taken place, it would have been the first time a mass extermination of a racial group/religion group would have taken place within the Islamic world. Although Islamic history is saturated with epic battles for land, power, trade routes, etc., it does not have a history of targeting a particular people due to their race, religion, nationality, etc., for extermination. Nevertheless, it was not because the Muslims and their authorities such as al-Husseini objected to the Nazi extermination plan that it didn't occur within the Muslim world, it was because fascism was defeated in Europe that prevented its implementation in the *dar al-Islam*.

Nevertheless, it is a tragic irony of history that the most anti-semitic regime actively cooperated with and courted the support of the Arabs, a semitic people themselves. In fact, it can be argued that Arabs are much more semitic ethnically, sociologically, and culturally than the Jews of Europe, who often saw themselves as Europeans and full members of their countries of residence, often having settled there centuries ago, often times engaging in intermarriage with non-Jewish Europeans (which was often rejected by both conservative Jews and Christians). Jewish assimilation in Europe, especially in central and western countries, was near

complete in some cities and areas; millions of Jews lived as Germans, French, Italians, Dutch, Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians, etc., and had very little to do with Middle Eastern or "semitic" culture. Furthermore, many of the Jewish traditions practiced in Europe had their origins in Europe, not Palestine or anywhere else in the traditional semitic lands. Nevertheless, the willingness of the Third Reich to cooperate with Arabs calls into question the Nazi *rassepolitik* (racial politics) that were practiced so brutally in Europe. Was their hatred for the Jews truly about race? If so, why then was the hostility for the "semitic blood" not also directed against the semites of the Middle East? Why were Jews targeted for their "blut" (blood) and not the Arabs? Why was biological anti-semitism of the Nazis, which differentiated itself from pre-modern religious anti-semitism of the Catholic and Protestants churches, not applicable to those whose semitic biology could not be questioned?

In a close analysis, the answer seems to be twofold; first, the Nazis were willing to overlook Arab semitism because many Arabs, i.e. as exemplified by al-Husseini and the anti-British and anti-Zionist sections of the Arab population, were willing to assist the Third Reich in its *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final solution to the Jewish question), which was the supreme war goal of the German conquest of Europe. The continual occupation of Arab lands by Britain, and the influx of Jewish refugees in Palestine were both interpreted as threats to Arab existence in the region. This geo-political fact gave credence to the dictum "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," which served to legitimate al-Husseini's collaboration with the Nazi plans to exterminate the Jews. From the Mufti's perspective, one cannot think of a more powerful motivation than self-preservation, which is partially what he believed he was fighting for by backing the Nazi plan for the extermination of the Jews. Yet, as some have recently suggested, al-Husseini may himself have truly believed in the Nazi claims about Jewish attempts to rule the world, even if he couldn't ascribe to their theory of race and racial superiority. Recent scholars have suggested that there was a certain synchronicity between anti-Jewish ideology of the Nazis and Islam itself - that

there is an inherent anti-Judaism that is an integral part of Islamic theology since the days of Prophet Muhammad. These scholars suggest that this common notion of the "treacherous Jew" allowed the Mufti to overcome any concerns he may have had about Nazism.<sup>18</sup> Many Arabs at the time, and sadly many still today, believe the Nazi propaganda that the Jews were the cause of both rampant American-style capitalism and Soviet communism, both thought to be *uneigentlichkeit/unauthentisch* (unauthentic) and dangerous to Germany, and German culture.<sup>19</sup> Like his German comrades, al-Husseini seemed to view the two socio-economic systems to be explicitly opposed the religious values of Islam and the nationalistic aspirations of the Arabs. Unfortunately, today many Arabs/Muslims downplay the severity and barbarity of the Holocaust/Shoah, even to the extent of denying it ever happened. For the enlightened Muslim, who feels no threat in recognizing the suffering of the other, even if the others appear to be the enemy now, the Holocaust/Shoah is undeniable. Although it has existed from time to time, Islamic anti-Judaism is not a strong part of the history of Islam, but due to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, which is a David vs. Goliath situation (David ironically being the Palestinians and Goliath being the state of Israel), many Muslims praise al-Husseini as a visionary who could foresee the destruction of the Palestinian Muslims and Christians through the Jewish takeover of Palestine. From the perspective of the critical religiologist, both Jewish and Islamic hatred for the other based on the mutual non-recognition of the other's suffering is unacceptable.

Returning to our main point, what is more germane to our discussion here is the question of how the Nazi leadership came to accept the "Arab religion" of Islam and the Muslims as being fellow travelers within the historical imperative to destroy the Jews. As I have demonstrated, the popular German understanding of Islam and Muslims came directly from Nietzsche and his orientalist progenitors. Nietzsche's conception of Islam as a manly and *übermensch* religion, one well suited to European sensibilities, and his sisters subsequent translation of his philosophy into a racial

ideology, allowed Hitler and the Third Reich to overlook the semitic ethnicity of the Arabs, as well as the prophetic anti-racism of Islam itself (Kaufmann, 1974: 442-445).

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Muhammad Effendi Amin al-Hussaini contributed to the mis-conceptualization of Islam that began with the orientalist. Although many Muslims throughout Islamic history displayed the authoritarian personality that allowed them to do condemnable things, Islam itself should not be blamed for the actions of individuals who claim to adhere to its principles while introducing authoritarian tendencies into its prophetic tenets. The Mufti's acceptance and support of the Nazi program of extermination only bolstered the European idea that Islam is aggressive, destructive, and warrior-like, just as the Nazis were aggressive, destructive, and warrior-like. It has not been forgotten in Europe nor among the Jews that the Mufti, a symbol of Islamic authority, bent the Islamic tradition towards fascism in his failed attempt to protect the Muslims from Zionism, Bolshevism, and the British Empire. Furthermore, his short-sighted inability to see the common bonds between the Jews and Muslims, which is clearly spelled out in the Qur'anic text, as well as the secularized prophetic morality within Marxism, which is rooted in the protest of religion against an unjust world, clouded the Mufti's eyes and hardened his heart towards the suffering of the other. The universal message of Islam, that understands all unjust human suffering as a concern for the Muslim *ummah*, was shrouded behind a wall of particularity - the Mufti believed his actions were in the service of Islam and the Muslims, but in fact he lent credence to an authoritarian and destructive anti-Islamic conception of Islam that originated with the orientalist.

In collaborating with the Nazis and fascism, the Mufti confirmed much of the orientalist's accusations against Islam. Indeed, the Mufti himself became the caricature of the orientalist vision of the Muslims; a religion that could be reconciled with the most vile of racist and power-hungry ideology that ever existed. In many ways,

the Islam of the Mufti was precisely the Islam that Hitler and Nietzsche so admired; one that abandoned the prophetic concern for the innocent victims and the suffering of the finite individual, and in its place praised power, domination, and the ethos of the predator. Sadly, this vision of Islam is far from the tradition that Muhammad "perfected."<sup>20</sup>

### **Islamisch Übermenschen für die Masse**

Walter Benjamin correctly understood that theology, whether it be Judeo-Christian or Islamic, could rightly be enlisted by fascism's opposition: historical materialism. In its struggle against bourgeois capitalism and its defender fascism, historical materialism shared the same concerns for the plight and predicament of the poor, destitute, precarious, and oppressed; they shared the same motivational force born from the concern for the suffering of the exploited workers at the hands of his masters, the slave whose humanity is denied, the serf whose freedom is withheld, the woman whose dignity is ignored, and the child whose innocence is shattered by poverty, etc. These concerns are equally expressed within the prophetic traditions of Abraham, Jesus, and Muhammad, as well as the socialist philosophy of Marx. One can see examples of this conflation of historical materialism and prophetic religion in the works of the liberation theologians in Latin America, the socialist underpinnings of Martin Luther King's and Malcolm X's work in the U.S., the life and writings of Islamic scholars such as Jalal Al-i Ahmed and Ali Shari'ati in Iran, and many others. In many ways, historical materialism is the secular translation of Abrahamic morality while taking into account Nietzsche's correct diagnosis of the "death of God" in the modern world of science and capitalism. Some chose to follow Nietzsche into secularity, but rejected his condemnation of the morality of the Abrahamic traditions, while others continued to believe that God remained alive while augmenting their religiosity with the political-economic theories of Marx, Lenin, socialism, and the international left. In the face of the increasingly desperate situation of peoples around the

world at the hands of capitalist exploitation, political theology took a left wing turn in the 20th century after decades of it being predominately a right-wing phenomenon. Although Marx was not a fan of "positive religion," religion that not only dulls the consciousness but lends itself to the rich and powerful, and therefore preserves the class divisions, he did *not* condemn religion that motivated believers to engage in struggles to liberate themselves from the slave master, feudal lords, and bourgeois ruling class. Indeed, Marx and Engels displayed great appreciation for the religious revolutionary Thomas Müntzer, the protestant leader of the German Peasants' revolt in 1524 - 1525 CE, who would eventually find himself martyred by the Roman Catholic Church in Thuringia for his absolute commitment to the belief that at the core of Christianity is the notion of *omnia sunt communia* (all things in common). He believed, and Marx agreed, that the church should reform itself in light of the Gospels and the early Christian community as expressed in the book of Acts. Marx, born Jewish but raised Protestant, was well aware of the biblical tradition concerning social justice, and even took his children to church to listen to the music. While gazing at the crucifix, Marx's daughter Eleanor asked her father who the man on the cross was; Marx replied that there once was a poor carpenter and the rich people murdered him (Fromm, 1961: 252). Even the death of Christ didn't escape Marx's penetrating analysis of class conflict, but rather understood that the murder of Jesus was not only a theological moment, but served as an example of the ruling classes' brutality against those who may challenge their right to rule; the peace of the empire (*Pax Romana*) shall not be challenged, as the crucified victims found out. This applies even today where both the religious and secular left is systematically repressed within fascistic and capitalist countries. Nevertheless, the anti-religious Marx, as the Bourgeois perversely accused him of being, said, "after all we can forgive Christianity much, because it taught us the worship of the child" (Fromm, 1961: 253). Marx recognized in Christianity its sympathy and concern for the powerless, frail, and innocent, i.e. the

symbol of the child, whom Marx loved so much (Fromm, 1961: 253).

In his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx appropriates the communistic principle of 'equitable living together' from the gospel narrative of the "five talents," i.e. "to each according to their ability" (Matthew 25: 14-30). He writes,

In a higher phrase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the

individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental

and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life

but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-

round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow

more abundantly - only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in

its entirety and society inscribe on its banner: *From each according to his ability, to*

*each according to his needs* (Marx, 1978: 531).<sup>21</sup>

For Marx, the antithesis of critical religion is positive religion, the quasi-religiosity that flourishes in the bourgeois society of the übermensch, with its idolization of power, strength, and idealistic beauty, a society that could explicitly worship the heavenly/deodorized Jesus of the sky while at the same time condemning the revolutionary earthly Jesus of the dirt and muck. Marx, like the biblical and Qur'anic prophets, understood that the society of *shirk* (idolatry), its worship of power, prestige, wealth,

status, etc., had to be overcome before the desired reconciled society, i.e. a man-made society that the messiah could endorse, could be realized. For Marx, the *übermensch* society is justified and legitimated by the *übermensch* religion that was once on the side of the *untermensch*, but was dialectically transformed into its opposite. Historically, if Christianity was to survive in Europe it had to become an ideology of the ruling class, and it did so *par-excellence* with the Constantinian trend turn and the Romanization of the religion that followed. Christianity, once the religion of the martyred revolutionary, embracing the poor, humble, and destitute, became the ideology of the *crucifier*, not the *crucified*. Marx was well aware that the outward persona of Christianity during the industrial age was only the cover for bourgeois ideology. He noted in his discussion of the production of consciousness in the book *The German Ideology*:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which

is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force

(Marx, 1978: 172).

Just as the early Christians, who practiced a religiously inspired form of communism, Marx understood that a secular modern rendering of the religiously rooted prophetic ideals had as its antithesis the bourgeois society of *having*, a society of perpetual war, violence, antagonism, and unnecessary pain and suffering. Nietzsche understood Christianity, Marxism, and democracy as all being attempts to alleviate, arrest, or abolish the rule of the *übermensch* in the name of feeble victims - the slave morality that they practiced, whether it be Christian, Marxist, or democratic, was but an unjust ideology of the weak imposed on the strong by the power of their sheer numbers (the herd). For Nietzsche, nature itself taught mankind that the weak were not meant to rule the strong, ugliness was not meant to triumph over beauty, the multitudes in the

pack were not meant to rule the alpha-male, and the lion was not supposed to "lay down with the lamb." The messianic and Marxist vision of a fully reconciled classless society was a supreme perversion of nature that would only empower the vicious rule of the mediocrity, and thus do great damage and violence against those who were naturally superior. Unfortunately, Nietzsche's understanding of Islam, which he appropriated wholesale from the anti-Islamic distortions within orientalist literature, failed to recognize the shared concern for those victims of history that Islam had with its older religious forbearers.

Yet, to some extent, Nietzsche was not entirely wrong; in praxis, the Islamic tradition is not as radically egalitarian as the early Christians were. Prophet Muhammad, being originally of the Meccan merchant class, was willing to except a larger degree of differentiation of class within his *ummah* (community) as compared to the Christian communities in the book of Acts. Private property was never abolished, although it did have constraints. Primitive capital accumulation was allowed to continue even within *Medina al-Nabi* (City of the Prophet), the first Islamic city-state, if the means by which the individual acquired the wealth could be judged morally acceptable according to Islamic law and norms. *Rib'a*, or the obscene appropriation of profit, as well as finance capitalism, i.e. lending money with interest, was however deemed immoral and therefore illegal under shari'a law (Rodinson, 1973: 12-27). The Prophet Muhammad, who was a business man, lived his life before his prophethood as a caravaner, in the business of circulation, not production, and certainly not money-lending. In Islam, *productive capital* and *circulation* are both legally and morally acceptable if, and only if, the mode of production and compensation for the workers are fair and equitable under Islamic standards, as well as the methods by which the sale of goods is honest and does not fleece the buyer. Indeed, Muhammad's reputation as an honest businessman is what led many to call him "al-Amin" (the trustworthy) even before his prophethood, as he serves as the business exemplar for the Muslim world (even if his sunnah is no

longer normative in the Muslim world when Muslims engage in global business transactions). Some have claimed the Muhammad's pre-prophetic occupation has made Islam a proto-capitalist endeavor, or at least open to modern capitalism. This is not entirely true, as the existence of primitive "capitalistic" enterprises existed within the first Islamic ummah, does not automatically make modern finance and productive capitalism, with all its exploitative and destructive practices, somehow legitimate in Islam; one has to investigate the normative claims within the Islamic tradition and the life of the Prophet in order to make that claim, and those values, principles, and norms stand in stark contrast to the modern ethos of global capitalism, i.e. profit as end goal of all human interactions. To a modern capitalist, the fact that Muhammad's business endeavors did not liberate him from his tiny mud-brick house, straw bed, and limited amount of clothes, would suggest Muhammad's business acumen to be a stark failure.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Muhammad's pre-prophetic sunnah does not negate the Islamic imperatives that were established post 610 CE, i.e. the beginning of his prophetic mission. While his life before Islam is admirable, and does often serve as an example of what a just businessman looks like, it is his life post-610 CE that is normative and binding on the Muslim community. The *having-way-of-being* that is associated with the mercantile and consumerist way of life, that is so prevalent in today's society, had no allure for Muhammad, despite his life as a businessman (Fromm, 2000: 69-107). Muhammad lived in the *being mode*, and was not attracted to earthly possessions, did not fight for possessions, nor did he fret over giving away anything he had. This can be seen most adequately in Muhammad's *seerah* (biography) when he was tempted by all the riches of this world soon after he began to publicly pronounce the revelations he was receiving. In order to get him to stop his preaching, especially those revelations that undermined the authority of the powerful over the powerless, slave master over his slaves, Arab over Abyssinian, Muhammad was offered riches, power, women, etc., if only he'd cease his constant theo-social attacks on the Meccan class structure, cultural practices, and religion; both the base and the superstructure was

morally corrupted and filled with a pernicious form of idolatry. Muhammad, being a person of *being*, refused by saying "...by God, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left and ordered me to give up this cause, I would never do it until God has vindicated me or I perish in the attempt" (Emerick, 2002: 78).

Nevertheless, within the early Islamic community, those who found themselves more rich "in this world's means," had an obligation to use that wealth for the benefit of the community, the poor, and their fellow Muslims. Wealth was taught by the Prophet to be a trust from the divine - it is not the property of the individual, but a test of their *iman* (faith). The community, especially the most vulnerable within the community, has a certain claim over their more wealthy fellow believers. The Qur'an relates, "give to your kindred their rights, and also to those in need, and to the wayfarer/beggar: Do not squander your wealth in the manner of the selfish, Verily the selfish are brothers of the evil ones; and the evil one is ungrateful to his lord" (Qur'an 17: 26 - 27).<sup>23</sup> This vision of a community, that is predicated on the belief in altruism and *'asabiyya* (solidarity), is in distinct contradiction to the atomistic and antagonistic society that orientalists, Nietzsche, and Nietzsche's followers, such as Ayn Rand, dreamt of (Ibn Khaldun, 1989: 91-122). Neither was Islam subordinated under a particular racial group; as was the notion of "nation" under National Socialism, nor did it worship the powerful as Nietzsche read in the orientalist literature. The Islamic community was united by faith in the teachings of Islam: one God, his last prophet Muhammad, and the Qur'an.<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

Since the release of Edward Said's pioneering work on orientalism, which clearly demonstrated the distorted picture of Islam, Muslims, and the Middle East that had been constructed by orientalists, scholars have almost always limited themselves the study of negative images of Muslims and Arabs in western literature, media, etc. Very rarely has any study been dedicated to the political and

economic consequences of the identity distortion that is constructed when these "scholars" conceptualize a whole civilization and religion within the confines of their own conceptual schema. Nietzsche, who had never been in the Muslim world, who had never studied the Qur'an or other sacred Islamic texts, and who had never spent any substantive time with practicing Muslims, felt confident enough to declare the Islamic religion to be the opposite of Christianity, i.e. a religion that is perfectly suited for the *übermensch* of history. The source of these extreme distortions can be found in the orientalist literature that was abundant at the time; a body of literature that made an indelible impression on the way Germans viewed the "orient," especially Islam and the Muslims. Likewise, Hitler, under Nietzsche's spell, saw in Islam a religion that was a proto-fascist ideology that would have delivered the German peoples from the scourge of Christian morality, with its inherent weakness, meekness, and feminine piety. This characterization of Islam as a religion for the victors of society constructs a vision of Islam that essentializes it into something it clearly is not: Islam cannot live within the confines of the orientalist conception of it because those conceptions do great violence to the core of Islamic values - they distort the contours of Islam which in turn deprives it of its prophetic nature. The very social heart of the Islamic tradition and the biography of the prophet, is the desire for perfect justice for the victims of history and the care for those who find themselves on the margins of society. The prophetic core of Islam was abandoned by Haj Muhammad Effendi Amin al-Husseini when he entered into friendly cooperative actions with Hitler, Mussolini, and the fascists that were threatening not only the existence of Jews in Europe, but much of the civilized world. When a voice for Islamic ideals was desperately needed, the Mufti of Jerusalem retreated into nationalism, fear, and a fascistic distortion of Islam (a bending of Islam towards fascist ends), which is anathema to the legacy of Prophet Muhammad. In his case, al-Husseini became the caricature of orientalist conceptions of Islam; he embodied all the negative qualities that Islamophobes accuse Muslims of possessing. A progressive future-oriented remembrance

of past suffering, whether they are Jewish, Christian, or Islamic, is needed among the Muslims and their western counterparts. This can serve to open up a dialogue between the Abrahamic religious traditions as well as to make common bonds with non-religious communities who also share the same prophetic concern for the plight and predicament of the poor, hungry, oppressed, and murdered. Orientalism is a form of systematic language and communication distortion that has constructed barriers between nations, religions, and civilizations. It has served to demonize Muslims, mystify their true beliefs, and dehumanize their existence. Just as Nietzsche thought of Islam as the manly "other" to Christianity's femininity, the orientalists viewed Islam as the threatening other to Christianity's superior morality and spiritual innocence. Yet from the Islamic perspective, the Qur'an states in Surah al-Hujarat (49:13), that

Mankind! We created you from a single entity, both male and female, and fashioned you

into nations and tribes so that you may come to know each other (and not despise one

another). Surely the most honored among you in the eyes of Allah is the one who is

most righteous. Allah has complete knowledge and knows all things.<sup>25</sup>

From these ecumenical lines in the Qur'an, the Muslim are invited to enter into a discourse with the "other," and come to know the other, just as Allah knows them. The walls of orientalist distortion can come crumbling down if and only if Muslims begin to adhere to their own core values, which include the concern for all mankind, and the West begins to shed their narcissistic ethos and listen to the concerns of the rest of the world. Muslims should never validate the orientalist claims concerning the so called-inherent violence and anti-semitism of Islam; as such things have never embodied the

spirit of Muhammad, the Qur'an, and the ummah. Orientalism has done a great disservice to both Occident and Orient, and it must be overcome. The one who does so is the true historical "overman" (übermensch).

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## Endnotes

- 1 My emphasis.
- 2 It is interesting to note that the "walking corpses," those Jews within the Nazi death camps who had given up on life, who were nearest to death, who had symbolically already experienced death in spirit and mind if not in body, were labeled *Muselmänner*.
- 3 "The play is over, applaud!"
- 4 See Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper Perennial, 1977.
- 5 [http://www.politicsandreligionjournal.com/images/pdf\\_files/srpski/godina5\\_broj2/martina%20ambrosini.pdf](http://www.politicsandreligionjournal.com/images/pdf_files/srpski/godina5_broj2/martina%20ambrosini.pdf)
- 6 My translation.
- 7 Holy Bible. English Standard Version
- 8 "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."
- 9 <http://www.al-islam.org/restatement/11.htm>
- 10 My translation.
- 11 Although this story is told in nearly every biography of the Prophet, it is not recorded in sahih hadith.
- 12 See Golomb, Jacob & Wistrich, Robert S. *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism?: On the Uses and Abuses of Philosophy*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002. Also see Diethe, Carol. *Nietzsche's Sister and the Will to Power: A Biography of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- 13 See Farias, Victor. *Heidegger and Nazism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.; Faye, Emmanuel. *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into*

Philosophy. Trans. Michael B. Smith. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

14 Hitler believed Jesus was only half Jewish, being the bastard son of Mary the Jew and a Roman centurian.

15 My emphasis.

16 See Cornwell, John. *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of the Pius XII*. New York: Viking, 1999; Wolf, Hubert. *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archive and the Third Reich*. Trans. Kenneth Kronenberg. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010.

17 Some have suggested the al-Husseini didn't really believe in the full extermination of the Jews, but nevertheless supported their removal from Europe and the Middle East.

18 See Gensicke, Klaus. *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007. Also see Küntzel, Matthias. *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*. New York: Telos Press, 2007.

19 Hitler also didn't think much of democracy either, as it gave the degenerate too much power over Germany.

20 According to Islam, Muhammad "perfected" the religion and therefore nothing foreign should be introduced into it.

21 "Jeder nach seinen Fähigkeiten, jedem nach seinen Bedürfnissen"

22 For an excellent discussion of Islam and capitalism, see Rodinson, Maxime. *Islam and Capitalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1973.

23 My translation.

24 And the Prophet's family for the Shi'a.

25 My translation.



## **Sufism: The Mystical Path of Islam**

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### **Abstract**

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.. Sufism is all about personal transformation, becoming a better human beings through knowing the purpose of life and learning about universal divine laws, while creating a better understanding of oneself and better adjustment to the world around oneself. The Sufis, a mystical movement found all over 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. During this period of war and ravage, faithlessness and gross human rights violation Sufism would be a 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 in the world. Though, there are several path to rediscover peace in this world, certainly Sufism is one of such a mystical path.

**Keywords:** Etymology, meditation, what is mysticism, who is mystic, silsila in sufism, early sufis and sufi pilgrimage.

*Sufism* essentially the pursuit of spiritual experience by bodily discipline and mystical intuition, it is peculiarly resistant to any kind of methodical treatment. Indeed, Sufism was influenced by the tradition of monastic asceticism and it would not be strange to find that the content of ideas of many mystical vocations were influenced by Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, all these are secondary. The chief impulse arose out of Islamic asceticism, governed by the eschatology of the Qur'an and the fear of Hell, and passing into the search of God, then into the quest of the search of mystical experience and oneness of God. The holy Qur'an emphasized that God is 'closer to man than his own neck vein' (50.15) and presents Him as saying: 'I am near to answer the call of the caller when he calls to me' (2.182).<sup>(1)</sup>

Generally *Sufism* or *tasawwuf*<sup>(2)</sup> accepted to be the inner, mystical dimension of Islam. In fact, it is the core of the Islam. A practitioner of this tradition known as a *Sufi* or *Darvish*. *Sufis* are distinctive in nurturing their spiritual dimension and being devout Muslims—they adhere to the outward observance of Islam. A *Sufi* was very often known as a person of religious learning who aspires to be close to Almighty. The aim was to reach a state of purity, through which they would be in direct relationship with God, subsist in God, and then attest to the Oneness of God. Classical *Sufi* scholars have defined Sufism as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God." In other words gnosis is the supreme subject may be said to be the Supreme Reality or Principle which is absolute and infinite and not even bound by the condition of being absolute and infinite. The Gnostic often write that it is Absolute being without even the limitation of absoluteness. It is therefore the Reality which is both Beyond-Being and Absolute being.

### **Etymology of Sufism**

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. Islam is also followed by people of different countries with different spiritual, intellectual and philosophical bend of mind. Since it's commencing stages Islam spread to allover world and produced rich material in the areas including Gnostic tradition and mysticism. Islam had developed deep insights into mystical aspects of life in the form of the Qur'an and the Hadith.

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 implication. 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 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.<sup>(3)</sup> Other view is that some of the Prophet's companions, who were great supporters of the Prophet Mohammed, 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*. Some believe that it is derived from the Greek word *Sophia* (means knowledge) and they were known as *Sufis* because their main belief was the recognition of God.<sup>(4)</sup> Of course, there are various views of scholars' on *Sufism*, but generally it is concluded that it is derived from the Arabic word wool or *suf*. The term *sufi* generally replaced in later period by *faqir*, 'poor brother' or its Persian equivalent *dervish* applied strictly to the shaikhs and their initiated disciples, further to these, however, the convents and local branches of the order served as centre for the religious instruction and spiritual exercises of the surrounding population.<sup>(5)</sup>

Mainstream scholars believe that the word *tasawwuf* derives from the word *Suf* 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 companion wore garments of wool to denote

their detachment from the worldly comfort. The word *Sufism*, according to Arab grammar, 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 <sup>(6)</sup> said as thus “The goal of the people of the inner path is not their outer garments. Serve the king yet remain *Sufi*.”

Other scholars consider that the word *Sufi* is derived from the word *Sufateh*, the name of a *thia* plant. *Sufis* wear usually this because of extreme mortification. Thus, they were likened to *Sufateh* as symbol for their liberation. But, as in the proceeding theory, his assumption is not linguistically or grammatically true. Benjamin Walker <sup>(7)</sup> refer in his work *Foundation of Islam* 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”. Hence, it can be distinguished 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. So accordingly they were term as *Sufis*, thus, Benjamin Walker suggestion that they imitate it from Christian monk is incorrect and improper rationally. Mystic or saints of Muslim prefer to wear *Suf* which was symbolic of that renunciation of worldly values and detestation for physical comforts.

M.A. Khan and S. Ram <sup>(8)</sup> in their research work *Sufism in India* state that *Sufism* can best be said as Islamic Mysticism. The theologians have traced its origin to a sect of pious people called *Darvishes* who formed themselves into a group of people. Simultaneously the connotation of the word *Sufi*, *Safa*, *Sofi* or *Sof* has wider inference, derived from the Arabic and Persian sources. It has a deeper inner sense, *Sufi* implies a wise person, pious or pure. *Sufi darvish's* 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*.

F.Khanam <sup>(9)</sup> in her article *the Sufi Concept of Meditation* has referred the following words for the connotation *Sufism* “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 in Madina, where some virtuous individuals used to sit and spend their time in pious devotion) or even *suff*. 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 Qur’an and the Sunna. By the ninth century, representatives of this group adopted the term *Tasawwuf* or *Sufism* as a designation of their world views”.

Before the time of Prophet Mohammed, it seems that there was a group of pious people who worked as the servants of the Ka’aba, these people were called *Sufe*. Their practices included mortification and evasion of any physical comforts. Some assume that the word *Sufism* is a derivative from the word *Sufe*, but this postulation does not bear close examination, as the Arabic grammar rules and the different styles of the practice make its myth. <sup>(10)</sup> Despite the best efforts have been made to determine the origin of the word, they do not give us a clear understanding about the word *Sufism*. It is still as mysterious as the whole practice of the *Sufis*.

Thus it can be viewed that, a variety opinions exist among the scholars on the meaning and source of the word *Sufi*, *Sufism* is that mode of the religious life in Islam in which the emphasis is placed on the activities of the inner self. The one common word used for *Sufi* is Mystic. In fact, *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 on 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.

### **What is Mysticism**

S G Safavi<sup>(11)</sup> in his research paper *the practice of Mysticism(Irfin-e-amali) in Islam* stated that mysticism exclusively devoted to the basic issue of manner and man's conduct of spiritual states and fight against the desire of carnal, is realization of union with the Lord and finally man cease to exist but continue to existence in Him. He further said as thus "mysticism is both theoretical and practical. The theoretical undertakes the elaboration and interpretation of God, the world and the man from a mystical viewpoint, it provides mystical answer to the three essential question of life, namely the whence, wherefore and whither. Practical mysticism is also called wayfaring or peripatetic journeying and sets forth the realizations and duties of man with himself, with the world

And with God. It denotes what a *silik* or walker, wayfarer, or peripatetic '*arif*' or mystic's initial conduct and its terminal points must be in order to become perfect Man (*insin-i-kamil*) and successor of God on earth and reach the highest position that is possible for man to attain. That exalted human status is the dissolution (*fani*) of his being in God and his substance (*baqi*) by His will to eternal life. It describe an '*arif*'s duties conduct, his means, his states and the experience he goes through on his way to join with the world. Ways to purge the self to combat the ego and

purify the soul are also included among these practices. Thus irfin is described as an intuitive knowledge of God that leads man to His presence and to the ultimate which is to witness and be in presence with God (*liqi 'Allih*)”.

### **Who is Mystic.**

A mystic is who arrives at knowledge of truth through intuition and spiritual illumination. He is engaged in divine affairs and committed to the command of *shariat*. In fact a mystic is one has passed from the stage of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqin*) and conviction of knowledge to the stage and level of conviction by perception and beyond to the certainty (*laqq al yaqin*), and of course passed from the stage of mental awakening and repentance. The mystic can gained understanding to the stage of grace in His presence. A true mystic is also performs prayer, destroy his ego, and exercise religious austere exercise not from fear of hell or not for love of paradise, rather he has love for God in his mind.<sup>(12)</sup>

S G Safavi<sup>(13)</sup> in his paper *the practice of Mysticism(Irfin-e-amali) in Islam* refer Hajrat Imam Ali's lecture 184 (*Sifa al- Mattaqin*) of *Nahj al- Balaghiah* in the following lines: “The God fearing are people of distinction. Their speech is to the point, their dress is modest, and their gait is humble. They keep their eyes closed to what Allah has made unlawful for them, and they strain their ears to gain that knowledge which is beneficial for them. They remain in the time of trial, as they remain comfort. If there had not been fixed periods of life ordained for each, their spirit would not have been remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye, because of their eagerness for the reward, and for fear of chastisement if they live a long life full of (possible) sins. The greatness of the Creator is always in their hearts, and everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus, they see, and are enjoying paradise's favors. For them, they also see, and feel the punishment of Hell”.

The mystic further protect themselves against evil, their need are limited and endure hardship for a short time in order to secure

comfort for a long period and consequently Allah, the mighty made easy for them. The world aimed at them but they kept away from worldly affairs. S. G. Safavi further defined that the “mystic upstanding on the feet during night, recite the Qur’an, creating grief through for themselves and seeking by it the cure of their ailments. The mystic see his hopes simple, utterance lenient, evils are non-existence and dignified during calamities, patient in distresses and thankful during ease. He doesn’t commit excess over him whom he hates and admits reality before evidence brought against him. He even not cause harm to his neighbor and never feel happy at others misfortune. The mystic doesnot raise voice during laughs. He endures hardship for himself for the sake of next life and makes peoples feel safe. A mystic keeping away from others is the way of asceticism.” Thus who is mystic has been defined variously by the different scholar but the view as referred by S G Safavi is found logical and appropriate.

### **Sufism in Islam**

In the Islamic tradition there is a body of knowledge which highly intellectual in the original sense of this term, is neither theology (*Kalam*) nor philosophy (*falsafah*) while dealing with many subjects of their concern though from another perspective. This body of knowledge is called doctrinal Sufism or *al-tasawwuf al-ilmi* in Arabic or theoretical gnosis in the Persian speaking world it is referred as *‘irfan-i nazari* The seeker of this body of knowledge have always considered it to be a supreme science, *al-‘ilm al-‘la*. The corpus of knowledge is implicit in the Qur’an, Hadith and the writing of early sufis

*Sufism* is a form of Islam that is embodied in the persons of representatives of the chains of spiritual power that believers ultimately trace back to the Prophet Mohammed. *Sufism*, of course, is also the short hand term used for the relation between spiritual theories and practices through which Muslims have sought personal connection with God. In fact, *Sufism* traced to the saying and

practice of the Prophet Mohammad himself. The Prophet used to spend days and nights in solitary meditation in the cave of Hira near Mecca even before receiving the Divine revelation. It was on one such occasion that he saw an apparition on the form of an Angel who asked him to recite a verse. The Prophet said he could not read, he was unlettered (*ummi*) but after the insistence of the Angel he recited after him a sentence, which was the first revelation of the Qur'an. That is why *Sufis* attach such a great importance to meditation and *dhikr* (remembrance or recollection) and in Islamic context denotes the activity of repeating God's names.<sup>(14)</sup> The *Sufis* claim to have inherited their doctrines direct from the teaching of the Prophet, who strictly speaking, has given no dogmatic or mystical theology. The Holy Qur'an, 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>(15)</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 character. He is more than kind, considerate and benevolent.<sup>(16)</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>(17)</sup> *Sufism*, as a matter of fact passed through several phases in the process of its development. Undoubtly the origin of the *Sufism* is found in certain passages of the Qur'an 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 the companions of Prophet

Mohammed and their successors were in true sense forerunners of the *Sufis*.

Sufism invites personal devotion to God and trust (*tawakkul*) in Him under all condition, personal loyalty to the Prophet of Islam and allegiance to the Qur'an and the Shariat. It is accompanied by the practice of a well controlled ascetic life and in many cases meant renunciation off the world. Thus it become 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. For there were many pious Muslims who, becoming disgusted with the tyrannical rule of the Umayyad khalifas withdrew from the world to seek peace of soul in a life of privacy.<sup>(18)</sup>

The verses of the Qur'an after thorough examination traced as the testimony to Prophet Mohammed's early experience led some to conclude that he was in a trance-like condition, perhaps similar to mystical trances and ecstasies, at the time that the Qur'anic 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 succeeding generation of spiritual *salik* or traveler.<sup>(19)</sup> According to some modern proponents, such as Idries Shah, the *Sufi* philosophy is universal in nature, its roots predating the arising of Islam and it is generally scholars of Islam contend that it is simply the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam.

Islam has produced some of the most lovable *Sufis*. The Prophet's teaching contained inspiration for this God ward 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 CE)<sup>(20)</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 the 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 of 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 dwelling <sup>(21)</sup>. It can also be said that, Rabia-al-Basra was one of the earliest *Sufi* poets who introduced sensuous metaphors to her expression of love, which could be interpreted by both ways-the love for a human lover/beloved or the real love for God. Her poetry is the finest example of dedication, love and piety. In one of her poems she defines the selfless love which are narrated in the following couplets: <sup>(22)</sup>

“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 stature of dedication, when one is ready to sacrifice all the pleasure available for the sake of love in this world or in the other life's.

In this early ascetic movement another exceptional figure was Hasan of Basra (728 CE.). It is said that the fear of God seized him so awfully 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 accidental or spoken some word which is displeasing to divinity, then He might have said, ‘Began for thou hast no more favour with me’. <sup>(23)</sup> Towards the end of 8<sup>th</sup> century CE 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.

### **Meditation in Sufism**

The word meditation is one of those common words, which we encounter most 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 various religions of the world.

Broad range of practices associated with meditation to many of the world's religious and philosophical traditions. Generally it includes refraining from arbitrary, disturbing thoughts and fantasies, and aim at focusing of the mind on some specific substance. 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. Variety of posture and position might be involved, for example sitting cross legged, standing, lying down, kneeling and walking. At certain stages plans like prayer beads (*tasbeeh* in Islam and *rosary* in Roman Catholic), symbolic representations of deity, singing and dancing or even consumption of narcotic substance might be used to induce the right frame of brains. The purpose and practices of meditation varies in conception. It has been seen as a means of gaining practical insight into the nature of reality both in the case of spiritually inclined persons as well as those who profess to follow atheism. 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 etc. This form of meditation is found in Buddhist and Hindu tradition including *Yoga* as well as in medieval Christianity, Jewish *Kabala* or mysticism and a number of practices of *Sufis*, related to this method is a silent repetition in the mind of a memorized passage from the scripture. *Dhikr* or remembrance of God would fall into this category.<sup>(24)</sup>

In meditation of *Vipassana* form the mind is trained to notice each insight that passes through it, but without stopping on any one, here *Vipassana* means seeing things as it is. This is a characteristic of meditation especially in Theravada and Zen Buddhism but does not seem to play much role in Islam. 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 enlightenment realizes on his way to extinction is Buddhistic.<sup>(25)</sup> In this way a good number of thinkers amongst Muslims, especially in the Abbasid reign, where more or less directly influenced by Buddhist spiritualism.<sup>(26)</sup> Another type of meditation is *Annapurna* which stresses concentration on breadth. The *Sufis* also used this practice and it is often supposed that it was adopted under the influence of the Indian, both Hindu and Buddhist tradition.

Most often meditation is interlinked with mysticism; Mysticism is an experience taking place in a religious circumstance. The person experiencing it interprets this knowledge as an encounter with the ultimate divinity. This experience seems to be direct which brings about a deep sense of unity and of living on a level of being. For some people this experience can be gained in a natural way. But the human mind belongs to the ultimate reality and experiences it at close quarters. From there arises the need of a mentor, a teacher known as *pir*. A *pir* gathers around himself by his followers and mediates their access for salvation. Every now and then the tomb of saints becomes the place of pilgrimage and the saint performs the same function after his demise as were attributed to him during his lifetime. He bridges the gulf between the believer and God through

meditation. Those *Sufi* who set out to search for God calls himself as traveller (*salik*). He advances by slow stages (*muqamat*) along a path (*tariqa*) towards union with reality. The process of training in devotion implied worship for adorable one, sorrow for one's sins, doubt of all objects other than He.

The emotions and processes bear association with what the *Sufis* taught in regard to *Hal* and *Muqam* (states of rapture and ecstasy). For illustration, Abu Nasr al-Siraj, has the credit of writing the oldest treatise on *Sufism*, recounts it in the seven stages.<sup>(27)</sup> I.R.Netton<sup>(28)</sup> referred the states of *Sufism* in his work *Sufi Ritual the parallel Universe* consists of the following stages:

- (1) Repentance (*tawbah*)
- (2) Fear of the Lord (*wara*)
- (3) Renunciation (*zuhd*)
- (4) Poverty (*faqr*)
- (5) Patient or endurance (*sabr*)
- (6) Trust in God (*tawakkal*)
- (7) Contentment (*rida*)

Abu Nasr al-Siraj wrote his work in tenth century CE in Iran,<sup>(29)</sup> much before Al-Ghazzali, during the period when *Sufism* was first being consolidated as a coherent body of spiritual teaching, and thus gives a comprehensive picture of how the mystical path was in agreement with all aspects of Islamic religious law and doctrine. The stages are inherent part of the path and define the *Sufis* asceticism. 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 endeavor, under the guidance of a mentor, the

states are spiritual feelings and dispositions over which a man has no control over it.

*Tawbah* or repentance occupies the first list of stages. It is described as the initiation of the soul from the nap of inattention, so that one feels penitence for past disobedience. To be truly relevant that one must at once abandon sin and firmly resolve to never return to wrong doing in the future. In order to achieve salvation one has to seek a teacher or *Pir* or *Murshid*, to steer him to the right direction or flawlessness.

*Wara* is the second stage, it can be translated as 'fear of the Lord', detests whatever hinders the heart from giving attention to reality. It can be attained by the seeker.

*Zuhd* or detachment is the third stage.

*Faqr* or poverty is the fourth stage; poverty is treated as *Sufi*'s pride as it was the pride of the prophet (*Faqr fakhiri*—poverty is my pride' states Hadith, the Sunna of the Prophet). *Sufis* neither prefer wealth nor poverty.

*Sabr* or Patient comes to the fifth stage. Patient is a virtue without which the depths of poverty could not be experience.

The sixth number of stage is *Tawakkal* or trust or one who entrusted himself completely to God. It forms a fundamental Islamic position (*aqida*), its root is in *tawhid* or belief in one God.

*Rida* is the last stage denotes a situation in which a spiritual traveler or seeker is always contented with whatever providence comes to his path.

It emphasize on aim and end of *Sufism* and how to reach God or the Truth (*Al-Haqq*) and not merely to pass through so many stages and experience. So, it is to be said that spiritual observation is the core of *Sufism* and its writers have elaborated theories and metaphysical

points of view, but in the meditation, prayer, fasting, and practices we find *Sufi* way of mysticism. Of course these meditative practices associated with the recollection of the name of God or Divinity.

### **Silsila in Sufism**

The original mystic was usually a solitary, frequently taking up his abode in the corner-chamber (*zawiya*) of a mosque. He taught his spiritual disciple *tariqa* or path who in due course initiated others. Thus there grew up a number of 'chains' of spiritual affiliation or silsila, by which, the doctrine taught to the postulant (*murid*) was authenticated by its transmission through an unbroken series of shaikhs back to the original teacher and behind him through a further series of early Muslim personalities back to one of the companion of the Prophet.<sup>(30)</sup>

*Sufi* silsila were established on monastic doctrine and some of the *Sufis* wrote in eulogize of poverty and adorned 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 experiences so as to attain the supreme state of ecstasy (*hal*). Some of them called the name of God in loud ululation, in course of the time *Sufi* were organized in several silsila or order. Each silsila headed by a prominent mystic who lived in *Khanqah* along with his *murid* or disciple. The relation between the *Pir* and *Murshid* was a key ingredient of *Sufism*.

The silsila or order in *Sufism* is said to be originated since 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. such a proclamation may be accepted in the sense that at the time these silsila were fully organized, and that each was marked by distinctive features in its teaching and practices. Otherwise it ought to be traced back to a much earlier date. These

wandering *Sufi* in course of the time came to be known as *Al-Tariqa*, the path or *Khanwada*. The teaching imparted in the silsila is supposed to have been handed down through continuous chains of succession originating with the founders. Such a chain is called *Sufi* silsila or order. The centre of every silsila is a *Pir* or teacher, who is considered to be a spiritual heir of the original founder, and received his weight through his direct predecessor.<sup>(31)</sup>

Classical Sufi text such as *Tareq al Haqayaq* categorised major orders of Sufism to the following:

(1) Bektarshi order, (2) Chisti order, (3) Khalwati order, (4) Kubrawi order, (5) Marufiyah order, (6) Noorbakshi order, (7) Naqsbandi order, (8) Ni'matullahi order, (9) Qadri order, (10) Rifai order, (11) Safavi order, (12) Shadhili order, (13) Shattari order, (14) Suhrawardi order.

In course of time as they spread more widely, most of the orders were divided into suborders founded by eminent shaikhs who modified in some respect the original rituals of their parent orders. The most widely spread was the Qadiri named after Abdal-Qadir al-Gilani of Baghdad, d.1166, followed by Ahmad Rifa-I of Iraq, d.1183, the Abul Hassan al-Shadhili of Morocco d.1258, the Suhrawardi of Baghdad d.1234, and Muin-uddin chisti of Sistan d.1236 in Persia and Iran, the Naqsbandi d. 1389 and the Mevlevi, the Persian poet and mystic Jalal al-din al-Rumi, called Mualana, d.1273, of the orders notable were the Khalwati in the Ottoman empire, the Tijani in North and west Africa, and the Safavi of Shi'ite order which established the rule of the Safavid shah in Persia in 1500 CE.<sup>(32)</sup>

Of the above orders only four viz., the Chistiya, Qadariya, Suhrawardiyya and Naqshbandiya, survive in India. Some of the great *Sufis* of the above four important silsila were most amazing personalities. Saints with great spiritual power who could impress all those who came even casually into contact with them. Mention may be made of Khwaja Mohin-ud-din Chisti of Ajmer. Baba Farid

of Punjab, Shaikh Ismail of Punjab, Nizam-ud-din Awlia of Delhi, Makhdoom Sarfuddin of Bihar and Shah Jalal of Sylhat. Their input was to bridge the hollow among the different communities.

### Early Sufis

The beginnings of Sufism can be traced from the time of Prophet, and his beloved companion the fourth Caliph, Hajarat Ali. For the *Ashab-i-Suffa*, the Prophet was a mystic and these companions themselves considered to be an esoteric group. Hajarat Ali, also known as *Khulfa-i-Rashideen*, has been recognized as the 'fountainhead of Islamic mysticism'. Prophet Mohammed is regarded as the first *Sufi* master who passed his esoteric lessons orally to his successors who too received his divine grace (*barakah*) attentively. The transmission of uninterrupted chain of divine authority is exist from Prophet Mohammed to his successor 'Ali and from him down to the generations of *Sufi Pirs*. Each has its silsila that links with Prophet Mohammed and 'Ali. The first *Sufis* were ascetics. They kept the external rules of Sharia, but at the same time developed their own mystical ideas. "Little food, little talk, little sleep", was a popular proverb amongst them. Mortification of body, self-denial, poverty, self-restraint, fasting and long night prayer was seen as the means of drawing near God.<sup>(33)</sup> Some of the early *Sufi* Shaikhs short biographies and saying narrated by K.A.U. Khan in his work *Pearls of Wisdom*<sup>(34)</sup> as thus:

**Owes Qarni-bin-Aamir** was a noble man of Yemen, he adopted Islam in absentia, as he could not come to meet the Prophet, on account of ill health of his feeble mother. He came to Medina in 17 H/838 CE with a battalion of army from Yemen and meet Umar Faruq. He took part in the battle of Azerbaijan, he also took part in the battle of Safeen along with Hajrat Imam Ali, he succumbed due to sever wound in the battle, he was a man of pious, he said:

- 1-Hold fast the book of God (The Qu'ran).
- 2-Be in the company of good people of Ummat.
- 3-Do not unmindful of death.

4-Do not abandon fellowship, otherwise you will be cast out of religion.

5-We can know the inner condition of man correctly from his exterior.

**Rabia Basri**, 95H/714 CE to 185H/801CE, born in a poor family, somebody kidnapped and sold her during childhood. On account of pious nature she was set free and in course of time attains the spiritual height. Peoples of Basra get spiritual education and blessing from her. Several miracles attributed to her, she used to pray every night on the roof of her house to see the beauty of God, not for getting paradise after death. It is said that when the last moment of her life came up she asked everybody to leave her and let the messenger of God come in, as soon as they left her she was heard uttering "*Kalma-e-Shahadat*".She said:

1-Pain is the privilege of great devotees, who cherish it with joy.

2-The gift of the world and our anguish for God cannot lodge simultaneously in one and the same heart.

3-It does not behove a friend to will contrary to the will of the friend.

4-For spiritual attainment, leave everything, worldly, and only think of lasting love of God.

5- Death is a bridge whereby the lover rejoins the Beloved.

**Hasan of Basrah** (d.728 CE) was one of the first *Sufi* ascetics. He exhorted his followers against attachment to this evil world and encouraged them to reject it and follow a path of poverty and self-discipline.

**Ibrahim-bin-Adham** (281H/894 CE) he was initially a prince of Balkh of Khorasan. He adopted the life of a mendicant and was raised to a high level,<sup>(27)</sup> he taught his disciples the importance of meditation and of silence in worship. Tow incident changed his life that once he saw that a man was on the roof of his palace. When asked as to what he was doing at the roof, he told him that he was searching his camel. when Ibrahim told him that how did he expect a

camel on the roof of a palace? He replied that “how do you expect to be a godly man when putting on royal rich clothes”? In another incident he was perturbed by the reality of life, when some one told him the reality of existence in this world for a while not for long period of time. After this incidents he turned to be a mendicant and roamed about in the jungle for a period of 40 years. He said:

- 1- Never feel proud of your praise.
- 2- Dishonestly earned food divests you of the spiritual experience.
- 3- Knowledge if not embellished with faith is of no worth.
- 4- Earn your bread by labour and do not depend on the charity of others.

**Shaqiq of Balkh** (d. 810 CE) he taught that only a inflexible system of self-discipline could lead to absolute trust in God (*tawakkul*) and to the mystical state (*hal*).

**Al-Muhasbi** (d. 837 CE in Baghdad) taught that self-discipline and self-examination were requisite thought of preparation for fellowship and union with God.

**Dhu-an-Nun of Egypt** (d. 859 CE) he taught that *Marifah* (inner knowledge) was necessary to attain real union with God.

**Abu-Yazid al-Bistami**, was born in 128H/746 CE, and demise in 261H/878CE, he is considered to be of the six bright stars in the firmament of the Prophet and a link in the golden chain of the Naqshibandi silsila. He was the first one to spread the reality of Annihilation (*fana*). He 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”. He said:

- 1-Lord dwells among the broken hearts in the world. The dwelling place of the Lord is in the meek and humble hearts.
- 2-When God loves He sends sufferings.
- 3-Depend solely not on your efforts, but on his grace.
- 4- Who is a saint? Who loves nothing besides God.

**Junaid Abul Qasim Baghdadi**, born in 298H/ 910 CE he lived in Baghdad; his teacher was Mohasbi, who gave him lesson even during the walks with him. He stresses the importance of wisdom and sobriety in achieving both *fana* (dying to self, extinction of self) and *baqa* (abiding in God), he said “A sufi is one whose heart, like that of Abraham, Is safe from love of this world; who performs Gods commands as Abraham and submits himself to His will as Abraham and Ismail; whose grief is such as David’s, whose poverty is like that of Christ, whose patience is that of job; whose enthusiasm be like that of Moses and whose sincerity be that of Mohammed, the Prophet.”<sup>(35)</sup>

- 1-If the tongue which does not keep itself busy in repeating God’s praise, it is better to be dumb.
- 2-If the ear that cannot hear the righteous thoughts better be deaf.
- 3-if the body which cannot serve God, better be dead.
- 4-Righteousness is based on charity, love, good advice and patronage.
- 5-A man who controls his ego is pious.

**Mansur al-Hallaj**, first great *Sufi* martyr is renowned for his claim *Ana-I-Haq*, who was crucified or executed in 922 CE in Baghdad for blasphemy or apostasy. 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. He is still revered by *Sufi* for his forthrightness.

**Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani** bin Saleh Abdullah bin Jangi Dost, was the founder of Qadria Sufi sect. Born in 470H/1077-78 CE and demise in 560H/1160 CE at Neef in District jeelan, for education he went to Baghdad and remained their till death. At the

age of fifty he gave his first oration on 521 H/1127 CE it was appreciated far and wide. It is said that many Christians and Jews adopted Islam after hearing his impressive religious oration. He was unconcerned with worldly needs and fearlessly speak truth from his childhood. During his life time Sufism made world wide progress. He guided how Sufism and Shariat go together hand in hand. His writings were *Algani-tul-Talibeen*, *Tareeq -ul- haq* and *Futuh-ul-Ghaib*. *Fateh-Rabbani* and *Fez-e-Rabbani* contain his oration. There are so many letters of the Sheikh which discussed the secrets of *Marfat* and *Tariqat*. His mausoleum is in Baghdad visited by lakhs of people all across the globe every year. He emphasized the adherence of Shariat, though he practiced *Tariqat* as well. He said:

1-Renunciation of this world, not out of self's desire/ego, nor by the force of one's circumstances, but just to fulfill the commandment of God, puts a man in a proper situation to establish contact with, and talk to the world.

2-Protect your heart for not leaning towards what you have renounced, your past desires, wishes and efforts in that direction.

3-Protect your heart from losing patience; establish harmony and pleasure with God, at the time when calamity befalls you.

**Maulana Jalal-uddin Rumi** (1207-1272 CE) his father name was M. Baha-ud-din, who was a learned man, in course of the time he had developed differences with Ala-ud-din Mohammed Kharjan Shah so he left the place and came to Neshapur. Maulana Rumi who was born in Balakh, was only a child at that time. His father met a *Sufi* saint Sheikh Farid-uddin Attar there, who blessed Rumi on taking him to Konia. Rumi first became a disciple of Sheikh Burhan-ud-din Terrnizi and then another saint Shams Tabrez, Hajrat Shams Tabrez left Konia on getting fed up of the sons of his disciple Maulana Rumi. Hajrat Rumi's poetry is based on his sentiments on the separation from his teacher. His poetry depicts *Tassawuf* in his *Mathnavi*, (couplets) which is called as the Holy

Qur'an in Persian language.<sup>(36)</sup> One of the Rumi's mystical poetry is such that it comes through even in translation thus:

Happy the moment when we are seated in the Palace,  
Thou and I,  
With two forms and with two figures but with one soul,  
Thou and I.  
The colours of the grove and the voice of the birds will bestow  
immortality.  
At the time when we come into the garden,  
Thou and I.  
The stars of heaven will come to gaze upon us;  
We shall show them the Moon itself,  
Thou and I.  
Thou and I, individuals no more, shall be mingled in ecstasy.<sup>(37)</sup>

Rumi's lyric is occupied with the thought of silence. In the *Divan*, silence is more powerful than speech. From the 'realm of silence' words draw strength (D.124:10.) mysteries are transformed as 'they are untenable' (D.183:7.), silence is 'immeasurable' (D.569:12.) whereas words may be counted. Celebrating the absence of speech is not a common practice in medieval Persian poetry to produce over 35,000 verses, it is typical to Rumi. His foreground silence as the repository for the unsaid. He does not speak of silence as he wishes to remain silent, for he could have done so by not composing poetry at all. He speaks of silence to explore the theme and emphasize in the *Divan* as thus:

I shall now catch that essence of all images  
A good snare I have prepared for that Kab'ah of mine  
The walls may hear, speak in lower voice;  
O my intelligence climbs up the roof; O my heart keeps the  
doors closed.  
The enemy, while in ambush, has but one concern;  
To hear a thing and to spread it around,  
Though invisible, the particles are enemies;  
Speak in the bottom of a well (if you must), keep vigil at the  
time of dawn. (D.194:1-9).<sup>(38)</sup>

In the above poem, silence as an uncharted entity lends itself to imaginative interpretation, silence is also an assistant to the intelligence that must stand guard and necessity for the heart.

**Shah Nematullah Wali** (1330-1431 CE) also spelled as Ne'mattollah, Ni'matullah and Ni'mat-allah, a *Sufi* poet and dervish of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. A descendent of 7<sup>th</sup> Ismaeli Imam Mohammed Ibn Ismael. He travelled widely through the Muslim world. He learns the philosophies of many masters. He also studied the writings of Ibn-al-Arabi. He was the disciple of Abdollah Yofe of Mecca. He intensely studied with his master until spiritually transferred.<sup>(39)</sup> Shah Ni'mattullah Wali well-known in Persia and in India. He initiated hundreds of followers in the path known by his own name. He identify three distinct kinds of contemplation of the seeker who lacks a master and a path but begins to think about the need for a spiritual guide; there is the contemplation of the initiate who has embarked on the spiritual road in which that initiate perceives the master's spiritual beauty; and finally, there is the *fikr*, the contemplation of the advances Sufi in which the soul is plunged into the divine unity and contemplation becomes wisdom, from this it is clear that according to Nematullah wali.the heart ranks above the mind, and that love is more powerful and more potent than the intellect.<sup>(40)</sup> Shah Nematullah wali based on the basic Gnostic theses such as *wahdat al-wajud*, was especially appreciated by the follower of the school of Ibn 'Arabi.<sup>(41)</sup>

**Sheikh Safi-al-Din Ardabili** (1252-1334 CE).He was the spiritual heir of Sheikh Zahed Gilani of Lahijan of Northern Iran. Most about him is known from the account of *Safavat-as-Safa* a hagiography written by one of his followers. "The *Sheikh* of mystics Sayyed Safi al-Din Ardabili (1252–1334), through inspiration from the divine teachings of the doctrine of *thaqalain* which is the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the 14 infallibles i.e. Prophet Muhammad, Fatima and the 12 Imams of Shi'a Islam, founded the Safavieh *tariqah* (Safaviah sufi order) which has had a tremendous constructive and continuous role in the history of Islamic culture and civilisation.

The sufi order and teachings of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili is alive today and has a vibrant and active role throughout the world.

Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili was a mystic in whom wisdom and practice of both Islamic law and spirituality were manifest in the highest degree. Furthermore, he was a great commentator of the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, thus, he is remembered with honour in the written sources of the three languages of Islamic culture namely Arabic, Persian and Turkish.”<sup>(42)</sup>

### **Sufi Pilgrimage**

One common practice in *Sufism* is to visit the tombs of saints, great scholars, and righteous people. In South Asia this is a widespread practice, where famous tombs include those of Khoja Afaq near Kashgar in China, Sachal Sarmat in Sindh, Pakistan; likewise in Fez, Morocco, Zaouia Moulia Idriss II a famous destination for pious visitation. In India, pilgrimages to the *Sufi* tombs are high during *Urs* ceremony. *Urs* means wedding ceremony or wedding festivity on the occasions of saint's death or death day celebration of the saint was organized with traditional gaiety, the term refers to the unitive stage attained by a saint during his life time is perfected by his demise. According to *Sufi* belief is termed *Wisal* or union with beloved. In one of his couplets Ibnul Farid says: “my spirit passed the gate which barred my going beyond union and soared where no barriers of union remain.”<sup>(43)</sup> In *Urs* celebration *Mahfil-e-Sama* was also performed. *Urs* of Hajrat Mohin-ud-din Chisti and Hajrat Nizam-ud-din Awaliya etc. are very famous in India, where visitors may invokes blessing and seek divine favour.

The fundamental difference between *Sufi* Islam and general Islam is that former emphasize on *Tariqat* means spiritual path, whereas later stress on *Shariat* i.e., the legal path, this is strictly followed by the orthodox Muslims. A person who enriches himself spiritually and restrain from the temptation of the World lives with peace. The Qur'an laid emphasis on inner peace. *Sufism* creates condition for outer and inner peace. This is equally true for other religion of the

world. Politicization of religions encourages violence, and those promote it, for them religion is not a source of inner peace but an appliance to realize their aim for political supremacy. When political Islam led to power struggle resulted in bloodshed, which ultimately led to the demand for world peace, to quench the thirst of peace *Sufism* was born. The *Sufis* did their worldly duties and accomplished spiritual perfection. Their goal was inner peace and perfection. The fundamental principle of the *Sufis* is “*total peace and peace with all*”. *Sufism* promotes interfaith dialogues for realization and maintenance of universal peace in the world. Finally I may conclude this discourse with the following soothing words of *Sufi* master Hidayat Inayat-khan<sup>(44)</sup> “*Sufism* is not a cult nor it is a school of theology. *Sufism* is an open door; an attitude of truest sympathy towards all beliefs.” From these calming words we will draw the classic meaning and intensity of *Sufism* as a mystical path of Islam for universal peace.

### **Glossary of the Important Terms used in Sufism**

Al-Hal : Spiritual realization which is fleeting or temporary

Al-Haqq : Truth

Awaliya : Friends of God

Baqa : Persistence often used in connection with Fana to refer to a sort of re-birth that follows ego death; i.e. to persists following death of the ego

Barakah : Grace

Darvish : Religious mendicant

Dhikr : Remembrance or recollection

Fana ; Ego death

Faqir : Beggar

Gurb : Nearness

Gnosis : Mystical knowledge

Hal : Ecstasy

Hadith : A saying of the Prophet outside the Qur'an through a chain of intermediaries

Hermeneutics : A method of scriptural or symbolic interpretation

Ilm-i-Safina : Book knowledge

Ilm-i-Sina : Heart knowledge

Itminan : Tranquility

Ka'aba : The Ka'aba Is a building located within the court of the Great Mosque at Mecca. Muslims all over the world face in the direction of the Ka'aba while praying. Pilgrims at Mecca are supposed to circumambulate the Ka'aba, it contains a sacred black stone.

Khawf ; Fear

Khirka : Sufis patched cloak

Muraqaba : Meditation

Murid : Disciple

Muqam : Spiritual realization which is permanent

Mushada : Contemplation

Ontological : The branch of philosophy that deals with being

Pir : Leader or Teacher

Rida : Satisfaction

Rija : Hope

Sabr : Patient

Salik : Traveller

Shauq : Longing

Silsila : Chain

Tawabah : Repentance

Tawakkal : Trust in God

Tawhid : Belief in one God

Theophany : A manifestation of some aspect of God in the material realm as mystically experienced by an individual

Ummi : Unlettered

Urs : Wedding or death day celebration

## Notes & References

1. R.C Zaehner, ed. The *Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths*, Hutchinson & co Publisher Ltd, London, 1959, pp.189-190. Salvation is main object in all religion. It is always doctrine with a view to realization, the doctrine is never mere theory,

but operative in intent, consequent upon, in religion, doctrine and method/theory/practice are indissolubly wed. Doctrine concern the mind and method concern the will, and religion always engage both mind and will equally. In order to attain salvation one must be a member of the religion which on certain condition guarantees it. Salvation is conceived as being attainable only after death. The only difference between spirituality and religion is that (in ordinary sense) spirituality envisages as its main end the attaining of sanctity even in this life, here and now. All spiritual doctrine and method are oriented towards this end. To embark on a mystical or spiritual path, a rite of initiation is indispensable. W. Stoddart & R. A. Nicholson, *Sufism the mystical doctrine and the idea of personality*, Adam Publisher, Delhi, 1998.pp36-37.

2. *Ibid*, *Tasawwuf*, the practice of the purgative way of the *Sufis*, became a doctrine or rather a group of doctrine taught in the convent and with a growing literature of their own, hardly to be reconciled with the orthodox theology.

3. (a). M. Yamin, Sufism: A Syncretic Path for Peace, S.G. Safavi, ed, *Transcendent Philosophy*, London, Vol-9, Dec.2008, p.207. *Al- 'ilm al- 'la* or the Supreme Sciences or Gnosis deals with manifestations' of the principle, with all the levels of universal existence from the archangelic to the material but the views all that exist in the cosmic order in the light of the principle. S.G.Safavi, ed, *Transcendent Philosophy*, S.H.Nasr, Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and Their Significance Today. London, Vol.1,p.22.

(b). The term *Sufi* is generally used to express Islamic Gnostic, and is used to have been derived from the Arabic word *Suf* meaning wool.Abu-Nasr-al-siraj (d.988 CE), in his treatise *Kitab-ul-Luma*, R.A.Nicholson & E.J.W.Gibb memorial series,vol.22,London,1914,reprint 1963,p.20. narrate thus "considered to be the earliest treatise on Sufism made several mention to the effect, which associate *Sufi* with wool, '.....the woolen raiment is the habit of the Prophets and the badge of the saints and elect, as appears in many traditions and narratives". Christianity has also associate the wearing of woolen garments with asceticism, as referred by Shaikh Ali ibn-Osman Hojweri, *Kashf al-mahjab*, V.A.Zhukovtsky, ed.tr.R.A.Nicholson,Leningrad,1926.

4. A. A. Engineer, "A Sufi way to World Peace-I", R. Burnier, ed, *The Theosophist*, Vol. 127, No.8, May 2006.pp.287-290.

5. L. Ridgeon, ed. *Sufism: critical concepts in Islamic studies*, Routledge, London & New York, 2008, p.20.

6. (a) N. A. Sayedeh, "The Origin of the word Tasawwuf (Sufism) Sufism: An Inquiry", [www. Ias.org/articles/origin-of-word-sufism](http://www.Ias.org/articles/origin-of-word-sufism), dt. 27.06.2006.

(b) M.Yamin, *Islam in Orissa, (A Fascinating Socio-cultural study)*, Readworthy Publication (P) Ltd, New Delhi, 2014, pp.119-120.

7. B. Walker, *Foundation of Islam*, Harper Collins Publisher India, New Delhi, 1999, p.305.

8. M. A. Khan, S. Ram, ed, *Sufism in India*, Vol-I, Anmol publication Pvt.Ltd New Delhi, 2003, Vol.I, p.3-4.

9. F. Khanam, "The Sufi Concept of Meditation", A. Wassey, ed, *Islam and the Modern World*, JMI, (New Delhi, 2003), Vol. XXXIV, No. 3-4, pp. 60-74.
10. (a) M. Yamin, *Impact of Islam on Orissan Culture*, Readworthy, New Delhi, 2009, p.176.  
 (b) *Ibid*.pp.85-116.*Sufism* meaning the mystical path of the *Sufi* saints, who spread the message of love and devotion, has long epitomized purity, high ethical values and purity of life style, thoughts and emotions have been the strength of the path. Its relevance in the present context to strengthen the path of peace, synthesis and harmony in the present and future times to come.
11. (a) S.G.Safavi, ed, *Transcendent Philosophy*, S.G. Safavi, The Practice of Mysticism ('Irfan-i- 'amali) in Islam, Vol.2, No.2. London, 2001.,  
 (b) S.G. Safavi, ed, *Sufism*, Philadelphia, 2009,pp.35-62.
12. *Ibid*. Among the classical Muslim authors there are three approaches to Islam namely narration, reason and the heart and it is the sufi only followed the way of heart. According to this way, God is not only the divine legislator, to whom one prays with fear of hell and yearning to enter paradise, but he is the Beloved. The way of heart is way of love in which the wayfarer purifies his heart until he gains union with God. In addition to this the mystic or sufis believe that in every period of time there is a divine spiritual guide or *wali* .and that one can find God through him. So after the demise of the Prophet, one cannot confine himself to the Qu'ran and tradition. but should obey the spiritual successor of the Prophet, the *awliya*. The *cycle* of Prophecy has been completed with the Prophet of Islam, but the cycle of *walayah* never ends. And the way of God is always thereby open. S. G Safavi, ed,*Transcendent Philosophy*, S. Pazouki, *Spiritual Walayah or love in the Mathnavi Mawlawi:A Shi'te View*,London,Vol.4,pp.513-514.
13. *Ibid*.
14. W. Stoddart, & R.A.Nicholson, *Sufism the mystical doctrines and the idea of Personality*, Adam Publishers & Distributors, Delhi, 1998, pp.48-49.
15. M. A. Khan, S. Ram, *op.cit.* p. VII.
16. M. Yamin, *Sufism: A Syncretic Path for Peace*, S.G.Safavi, ed, *Transcendent Philosophy*, London, 2008. Vol.9 .p.227.
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## **Farabian Legacy Revisited: House Mentality versus Field Mentality**

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### **Abstract**

In this article the author has engaged with the possibility of Farabian legacy in the context of social theory. It is argued that if we are serious about overcoming eurocentrism in reestern cultures and civilizations as well as intellectual traditions then we need to reappropriate different modes of understandings which do not share the metaphysics of disciplinary cognitions. But the question before any alternative social thinker and undisciplinary philosopher is how to achieve such a heuristic unthinking project. The author has proposed to look at the conceptual framework of the American Muslim social theorist Malcolm X who has engaged with the question of subjectivity and its importance in overcoming mental obstacles of psychological slavery. It is argued that the concepts of 'house mentality' and 'field mentality' are useful concepts for any reestern social thinker who is interested in going beyond the eurocentric visions of reality. In order to demonstrate the possibility of thinking outside the parameters of the eurocentric vision of reality, the author has attempted to look at the project of contemporary Iranian neo-Farabian philosopher Reza Davari who has been consistent in rejecting archaeological and historical strategies vis-à-vis Farabi and instead of 'captive approaches' he has created field strategies which could enable us to move beyond the parameters of captive mentalité.

**Keywords:**Field Mentality, House Mentality, Davari, Eurocentrism, Malcolm X

## **Introduction**

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad Farabi, known in the West as Alfarabius died in Damascus in 950 and is considered as the *Second Teacher*. But the burning question before us today is how to re-appropriate Farabi as a premodern thinker in the context of modernity and postmodernity? Is it possible to re-appropriate his conceptual framework without falling into a blind kind of romanticism? In the words of contemporary Iranian neo-Farabian philosopher, i.e. Reza Davari who argues that eurocentrism by enveloping the entire gamut of terrestrial existence of humanity- it has made next to impossible to think in terms of non-eurocentric categories. (Davari, 2014. 314) In other words, if we take the eurocentric vision of life as the master-narrative then one could ask whether it is possible and if that is affirmative then in what way one could overcome the ethos and episteme of eurocentric vision of reality?

To problematize this ‘unthinking project’, I think one needs to take into consideration possibilities of multiple forms of ‘subjectivities’. To put it differently, is it possible to construct alternative forms of subjectivities along or parallel to the ‘eurocentric form of subjectivity’? To answer this question, I would like to work with two key concepts provided by Malcolm X through whose conceptual framework I aspire to find a way for the project of re-appropriation of the Farabian social theory in the context of post-secularistic and post-eurocentric world order. (Malcolm X, 1966)

## **House Mentality and Field Mentality**

The American social thinker Malcolm X argued that negroes in America could be divided into two broad camps in terms of their approaches towards the White meta-narrative, i.e. House Negro and Field Negro. By ‘House Negro’ Malcolm X referred to a set of

mentality which did not have an authentic sense of subjectivity but depended on the meta-narrative construed by the White master elites. On the other hand, there existed in the context of slavery another type of Negro where the slave, in despite of his tutelage, possessed an independent sense of self or being and consciously refused to define his self as an extension of the Master. Malcolm X defines this second type of Negro as 'Field Negro', i.e. those who were working on the plantation fields rather than sharing similar space in the attic with the master. (Malcolm X, 1966) This is a very constructive frame of analysis for alternative social theorists who refuse to think within the parameters of disciplinary master narrative grounded in the soil of eurocentrism. In other words, if we re-turn towards Farabi this 'turn' should not be understood as a nationalistic or ideological re-turn. On the contrary, it is an attempt to build up the contours of an authentic sense of subjectivity based on the Malcolmian form of 'Field Mentality'. To put it differently, Farabi's legacy could enrich our sense of reality beyond the parameters of Eurocentric vision of life. But the question is how to interpret Farabi which would enrich us rather than putting us at loggerheads with others; be it the west or east; past or future.

### **Farabi Today**

Farabi belongs historically to a premodern period and in this capacity one could wonder about his importance today. In other words, today if he is going to be re-appropriated then one needs to problematize Farabi's legacy in a complex context which we find ourselves in. Otherwise we may run the risk of anachronism in a very tragic fashion which could remind us of Don Quixote's ordeal, i.e. strategically blind and reductively superficial. (Graf, 2007)

There is no doubt that Farabi has played a significant role in the history of world philosophy. However what is not very clear is the nature of Farabi's significance in the context of philosophy/social theory as it seems opinions about his contributions vary dramatically and profoundly. This is to argue that we are not faced

with one single discourse on Farabi in a homogenized fashion. In other words, how should we conceptualize different discourses on Farabi? Is his importance of archaeological nature? Is Farabi's significance of historical importance? Does he possess any contemporary meaning for alternative social theory? In answering these questions, I have come up with a classificatory scheme which may be of use in conceptualizing contradictory streams on Farabi's intellectual legacy.

There are three different but certainly interconnected discourses on Farabi which are surely important but they do not occupy similar position within the parameter which I am going to develop in relation to Farabi in the fashion which has been conceptualized by the contemporary Iranian philosopher, i.e. Reza Davari. (Davari, 2010) When looking at the literature we can discern three forms of researches on Farabi, i.e. Farabi as Alfarabius; Farabi as Al-Farabi and Farabi as Farabi without any Latinized format or any Arabized form but in an Iranic sense which could be used for what I have conceptualized as House Mentality versus Field Mentality. Let me explain my viewpoint in some details so the audience will get a better understanding on where I am heading to. In my view, there are three different interpretative strategies on Farabi's legacy, i.e. the archaeological, the historical and the alternative discourse which I would explain them in some details respectively.

### **The archaeological discourse on Alfarabius**

By archeological discourse on Farabi

I refer to a particular interpretative strategy which is based on a linear approach to history of ideas that starts in Hellas and ends in the modern West. In other words, the importance of Farabi is to play the role of a ring in a long-standing chain of ideas which should be read in an accumulative frame of analysis that stretches incessantly from Hellas to Paris and Oxford or Chicago. Within this archaeological frame of interpretation, Farabi is considered as a significant figure as far as his position

in the great chain of eurocentric historiography of philosophy is concerned. The fundamentals of archaeological discourse is based on the assumption that the West has an unbroken line of progress which for a short while it rested on a non-western category which took care of unfolding of ideas based on the activities of reason. In other words, in the eurocentric vision of the history of ideas, Farabi was solely essential in the “handing down” of Aristotle’s thought to the Christian west in the middle ages. (Hammond, 1947) In this reading, Farabi is turned into a new medium which is symbolized by the Latinized form of his name, i.e. Alfarabius. This is to argue that Farabi has no significance in the world of ideas as such but one should consider him in relation to another master-narrative which Farabi had played an intermediary role as Alfarabius. This is to argue, one needs to understand the function which Alfarabius had in the past as this would assist us in understanding where we stand today in the frame of modernist world of ideas but it would be a mistake to replace archaeological significance of Alfarabius with epistemological importance of his ideas in terms of contemporaneity. This distinction is a very pivotal in terms of philosophical reflection as it has to do with the question of authenticity and inauthenticity or the matters of possibility and impossibility (Miri, 2014. 158-159).

## **The historical discourse on Al-Farabi**

There is another discourse on

... Farabi which is, first and foremost, focused on him in a historical sense. Although it is hard to distinguish between the historical and archaeological as both seem to be concerned with the past rather than the present or future but it would be wrong to equate both of these readings as similar. Because those who are interested in Farabi within the historical discourse do not conceptualize him in relation to the west as though he is only of importance if he fulfils the intermediary function of ‘handing-down’ the wisdom of the Hellas to the modern Europe. On the contrary, in this reading, Farabi is considered as Al-Farabi, i.e. as a unique philosopher who belongs to a particular civilization

with all its complexities and peculiarities without reducing these civilizational paradoxes to fit a particular eurocentric vision of history. This is to argue that within this form of interpretation Al-Farabi is conceptualized as a political philosopher who teaches how to think anew about politics but his significance for contemporary thought, political, cultural, or social, is more intellectual than practical. (Butterworth, 2001) This is to argue that although Farabi is conceptualized on his own terms but the terms which Farabi worked through are not practical for the epoch we live in, i.e. in the world of ontological insecurity, risk society, late modernity, liquid modernity or the disenchanting world of modernity. To put it otherwise, in this reading, the master narrative is modernity and by modernity one should understand the eurocentric vision of the world and by extension it would be a mistake to think of multiple forms of modernities as European vision of reality has transcultural value if not universal significance. However, it would be a grave mistake to think in the modern context through the categories of Al-Farabi which belongs to a premodern world. But why then bother to engage with Al-Farabi? Well, the answer is that one could see the intellectual brilliance of re-stern civilizations but the limit should be always in mind that the brilliance has an expiry date which if not realized then one may fall into romantic traps of the so-called discontents of the Euro-Atlantic World Order. The architects of historical interpretative strategy are interested in Al-Farabi in a manner that one may be interested in a brilliant novel such as *The Brothers Karamazov*. (Dostoevsky, 2009) This is to argue that it would be a mistake to expect from a novel a report of reality as one expects from a 'scientific essay' things about the constitutions of reality in all its complex dimensions. Although these distinctions have become very redundant in the context of "postmodern turn" but current approaches toward non-western categories, re-stern concepts, or non-eurocentric paradigms and philosophies have not internalized the postmodern turn yet and as a consequence it is bizarre to turn to Al-Farabi to get practical directions or employ him to find practical solutions for serious political problems in the modern and postmodern world (Miri, 2014. 159-160).

## **The alternative discourse on Farabi**

I have chosen three different styles

in describing the contributions of Farabi; in the first mode, I have employed the term Alfarabius which is attempted to design a particular reading strategy of Farabi, i.e. as an intermediary medium in a linear historiography of philosophy; in the second mode, I chose the Arabic form of Farabi's name, i.e. Al-Farabi which is meant to signify the intellectual significance of Farabi without having any practical importance in the context of modernity today. Although these two prevailing strategies of interpretations are important but do not exhaust the potentials which one may be able to find in Farabi's intellectual frame of reference. In other words, what is of interest for me is the contemporary significance of Farabi as a source of concept-formation in overcoming eurocentric pitfalls of modernity by being able to craft new modes of creating forms of post-eurocentric possibilities of being in the world. For this end, I have chosen symbolically the Persian form of Farabi's name, i.e. Farabi without any reference to its Arabic or Latin styles which have been used in archaeological and historical models of conceptualizing philosophical contributions of Farabi (Miri, 2014. 160-162).

In order to expand the alternative mode of understanding Farabi, I would like to elaborate the aforementioned concepts of 'House Mentality' and 'Field Mentality' in some more details. (Malcolm X, 1966) They refer to two models of subjectivity, i.e. submissive mentalité and emancipative mentalité. Malcolm X argues that a 'house human being' is an alienated person i.e. someone who has lost his/her own sense of subjectivity and incessantly attempts to identify him/herself with the master, master-narrative or dominating mode of being. On the other hand, a 'field person' is someone who musters all her/his powers to distance from the master narrative and knows that he is not similar to the master and as long as he defines her/himself in terms of the master-narrative s/he shall remain enchained. In other words, a field person has her/his own

subjectivity and this sense of distance shall provide her/him with a possibility to emancipate her/himself from tutelage. If this argument makes sense then I would like to argue that the first two interpretative strategies would make us to settle with a ‘house approach’ while the alternative approach would be a ‘field mentalité’, namely a type of strategy which would enhance the emergence of ‘field subjectivity’. (Miri, 2015) It is in this context that I think Davari’s contributions on Farabi would come useful as he does not approach Farabi either in an archaeological or a historical fashion. One of the most important questions in social theory and philosophy is the relation between ‘religion’ and ‘philosophy’ or the locus of religion in relation to modernity. The dominant view is conceptualized as thesis of secularism which either does not recognize any substantial significance for religion as an intellectual category or consider a peripheral position for religion as a category both in terms of philosophy and society. But this is not the fashion which Davari conceptualizes the philosophical legacy of Farabi. He argues that

... one of the most pivotal aspects of Farabi’s philosophy is on the relation between religion and philosophy. In my view, Farabi has contemplated seriously on this relation and one may be able to assume that by doing so he has occupied a very important place in the history of ideas. When philosophy, in Farabi’s view which is a task for the elites, could be compatible with the religious act, then it should be realized that philosophy is not only about abstract questions ... because in Farabi’s view, the question of Polis is intertwined with revelation ... (Davari, 1982. 5).

In other words, Farabi’s concern with philosophy and religion is not only of intellectual significance but it has practical importance which is why I think neither the archaeological nor historical approaches could make justice to Farabi’s legacy. To put it differently, it seems Davari’s engagement with Farabi has a contemporary dimension which he summarizes in the following fashion,

... the eurocentric vision of reality and the twilight of sacred thought and the exile of humanity are approaching their ends and a new dawn is heralding upon us (Davari, 1982. 21).

Davari wrote these lines around the beginning of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 which promised a new interpretative strategy toward religion as an intellectual category and as a political question. This is to argue Farabi's philosophy is important for reconfiguration of a republic which is premised upon the 'religious' rather than the 'secular' or a republic which sacralizes all domains of the social world by redefining the social order within the parameters of the prophetic tradition. Mind you that Farabi discerns a very delicate similarity between the prophetic act and philosophic contemplation when he argues that both emanates from the same source but demonstrate different manifestations and distinct purposes; namely the imaginal faculty and the demonstrative reasoning power -the former uses the language of symbols and addressed to people of all walks of life and the latter employs the language of reason for philosophically-oriented minds. If this assumption is correct then reappropriation of Farabi's legacy cannot have only intellectual significance. On the contrary, if we are determined to overcome the eurocentric vision of reality then we should turn to Farabi or other non-eurocentric philosophers for empowering the paradigms of 'field subjectivity' and multiple forms of modernities which are not in enslaved positions toward eurocentrism. In other words, in the age of 're-publicity' of religion in the public square and in the context of a religious republic Farabi could be deeply instrumental in reconfiguration of the Polis in a critical fashion as

... Farabi was of the opinion that the head of the polis should be a philosopher ... who obtains his knowledge from the source of revelation ... as a matter of fact, the head of Farabi's Good City is prophet and this means that authentic religion is what philosophy truly is (Davari, 1982. 5).

In other words, in the context of religious republic, Farabi's concerns cannot be treated either in archaeological or historical fashions as the question of governmentality is a *contemporary* problem- which requires practical solutions. Needless to argue that any feasible praxis should be premised upon a clear theoretical vision of the order of things: be ethical, political, social or religious. These realms are differentiated in modern philosophy as the Great Chains of Being has been relegated to the periphery but Farabi conceptualizes them in a hierarchical fashion and as such he presents a different after-morrow rather than a bygone yester-day.

### **Field Strategy and Philosophical Paradigm of Farabi**

Having said the aforementioned one could rightly ask whether this approach towards Farabi would not result in a totalizing antagonism with other forms of governmentalities? This is to argue whether one could fathom Farabi in a dialogical fashion rather than in a confrontational manner in the context of re-publicity of religion within the parameters of Islamic Republic as fashioned since 1979 in Iran? To put it differently, if we read Farabi in an alternative fashion along the *Field Strategies* proposed by Malcolm X in terms of liberated subjectivity then is there any possibility to conceptualize Farabi as a dialogical philosopher or social theorist?

Before answering these queries, it is adequate to state that the reasons behind connecting Farabi to the contemporary Iranian philosopher Reza Davari. In other words, why is he important for understanding of Farabi today? I think Davari is not solely an individual person and in his capacity as a philosopher he is not important for my 'field strategy' either. On the contrary, he represents a living tradition of the Farabian philosophy which has existed over one thousand years in the Greater Iranian cultural continent and it is this chain of the Farabian and neo-Farabianism which is of colossal significance for me – who is concerned with different forms of subjectivities – which do not share what Malcolm X terms 'House Mentality' or what Edward Said conceptualizes as

'Orientalist Mind' (Said, 1977) or what Syed Hussain Alatas defines it as 'Captive Mind' (Alatas, 1975. 40). This is to argue by demonstrating the significance of the third interpretative strategy over against the archaeological and historical approaches we have been able to disclose the importance of 'intellectual traditions' in re-appropriating Farabi in contemporary fashion.

Today one of the serious challenges is 'clash of cultures' rather than 'dialog of cultures'. Davari is of the opinion that Farabi could be considered as the architect of cultural dialog and this is a possibility which we could employ in the context of field social theory. By recognizing the validity of alternative strategy based on a Field Mentality we can employ the strategy of Davari who considers Farabi as the dialogical philosopher of culture. In what sense could Farabi be considered as a philosopher of cultural dialog? This is a question that Davari puts before us and each one of us who is serious about overcoming the inauthenticity of 'House Mentality' or 'Captive Mind' should dwell upon, as a *captive mind* or a *house personality* is uncreative and incapable of raising original problems. Not raising original problems in the restern contexts could be tantamount to inability of distinguishing between 'trouble' and 'problem' as defined by William James. In other words, the *field social theorist* is able to problematize socio-cultural-political-philosophical-metaphysical troubles by turning them into *problems* which could set her/his existence free rather than getting stuck by troubles without any horizon. To sum up, troubles drive you towards chaos while they are appropriated by reasoning power of human self into discernible problems then one could imagine them in a cosmic fashion, i.e. in an orderly configuration. We need a type of Farabi which could release us from the tutelage of house mentality in a creative fashion.

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## **East vs. West, Orient vs. Occident: The Binary that Haunts *Orientalism* and the Clash of Civilizations**

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### **Abstract**

The simplistic binary of a superior, now secular, West vs. an inferior and religious East was a major target of Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism*. Despite Said's critique, the separation of West from East (or West from the Rest) is central to Samuel Huntington's politically influential "clash of civilization" thesis, which informs much of the current "war on terrorism" agenda. I argue that despite Said's expose of ethnocentric and racist depictions of an imagined Orient, he ultimately fails to deconstruct this binary. The rhetoric of Said's polemic demands that such a distinction be present in all previous writing from Europe and America about the so-called East. By redefining "Orientalism" to include both serious philological and historical scholarship with the worst excesses of romantic notions, Said not only misrepresents intellectual history but privileges the debate over the distinction between East and West through an essentialized construct of Orientalist discourse as latent ethnocentrism and racism. Historians need to move beyond continued debate over past misrepresentation to provide critical analysis which achieves a better fit with the reality elided in such imaginaries as East and West.

**Keywords:** East vs. West, Orient vs. Occident: The Binary that Haunts *Orientalism* and the Clash of Civilizations<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Does the Orient exist? Edward Said (1979, 1), at the start of his well-traveled *Orientalism*, suggests that the Orient "was almost a European invention." The core of his argument is that the word "Orient" as used in a European and American discourse he labels "Orientalism" should not be confused with a "real Orient." Said situates his critique of the European invention of the Orient as someone who is an "Oriental" in two senses. First, he himself is stereotyped according to the ethnocentric and racist bias that is often found both in popular media and some academic forums. In response to a later critical review, Said (1982, 45) sarcastically refers to critics like Bernard Lewis and Clifford Geertz as treating him like a "wog," a racial epithet used by the British against Arabs and North Africans. The second sense is what authorizes Said, a literary critic with little academic knowledge about the intellectual history of Oriental Studies, to be taken seriously; the author is an Arab Palestinian, whose repulsion at the stereotyping is thus not "an exclusively academic matter" (Said 1979, 27). Largely because of his public stand for Palestinian rights, Said was labeled a "Professor of Terror" and even received death threats. The Orient, as invented, may not exist, but flesh-and-blood Arabs, Palestinians and Muslims certainly do and continue to suffer far more than a discourteous discourse.

Is there some cultural entity that can viably be called the West? It is impossible to understand the range of meanings bundled together in this notion without recognizing from the start that it is also politically charged. To be a Westerner is not just to be a native of Europe or America (Europe's earlier West), but to identify as both the culmination of a lauded tradition of civilization from classical Greece and as the synecdoche of modernity. The West, in the most

chauvinistic sense, stands for the broad civilization in which enlightenment rationality has theoretically trumped religious dogmatism while modern science and technology have guaranteed economic and military superiority. By contrast, the so-called East, especially the Middle East, is seen primarily as an Islamic heartland resistant to secularism and democracy. There is also the Rest, less a geographical metaphor than an assessment of the self-perceived world order by the now dominant United States and much of Western Europe. Thus, the West becomes a EuroAmerican invention as problematic as the former "Orient" unpacked by Said. While the idea of the West may very well be as mythic as the East, but there is no question of its real economic, political and cultural impact worldwide with a concomitant (at times militant) reaction from the understandably restless Rest.

I believe that both of the preceding questions are rhetorical dead ends. It is not that they are unanswerable, but that the debate itself perpetuates the very frame that needs to be superseded. Let us agree, at least in principle, on the following truisms. All scholars, no matter how careful and sincere, carry with them assumptions and expectations from their own cultural background and individual socialization. All generalizations about people's ideas, beliefs and behavior necessarily essentialize to some extent. Representation, especially by someone writing in another language or from an outsider perspective, is never going to be an exact duplication, nor one that can effectively distill manifest difference into a single conclusion meaningful to all. If the idealized notion of Orient is an invention through discourse, it must also be capable of being reinvented through critical scholarship. The time has come to recognize that serious academic study of Middle Eastern cultures and Islam, despite the limitations and prejudices of individual scholars, is not hostage to a latent hegemonic discourse in which representation of an imagined Orient or East is condemned to be inherently racist, sexist and ideologically driven. Rather than succumb to the hubris of polemicists who make dogmatic assertions or manipulate history with Whiggish intent, the contemporary

student of Middle Eastern cultures (past and present) needs to focus on the question of fit with an assumed and irreducible reality worth studying.

In this article I examine the binary that haunts serious study of the geographical Middle East and much of Islam, whether eastward or westward in direction or misdirection: East vs. West, Orient vs. Occident. Said (1979, 28) wrote *Orientalism* with the hope that his book might eliminate the use of "Orient" and "Occident" altogether. He concluded with a sincere plea that the ideological fiction of Orientalism not be answered with an equally egregious Occidentalism (Said 1979, 328). Unfortunately, on both accounts the powerful polemic of *Orientalism* has ultimately failed. The "clash of civilization" thesis, hardly the novel creation of a Harvard scholar named Huntington or a Princeton historian named Lewis, preempts the crash of a dangerous conspiracy trope in which the politically dominant West must battle a feared East. Similarly, the rhetorical resonance among many Muslims of collective anger to "Western" cultural imperialism only fuels the politicization of global events in anti-Western apocalyptic terms. Said (1994, 331) lamented the fact that his own book was read by some as "a systematic defense of Islam and the Arabs" and beyond that as offering support for Islamism and Muslim fundamentalism. We should all lament that the binary he set out to delegitimize still drives public debate and wastes much scholarly time.

I suggest that we need to focus less on the continuing postmodern clash of political ideologies or the point/counterpoint of whether literary critic Edward Said or historian Bernard Lewis knows best. If we cannot lay to rest the ghost of Orientalism past, at least we can stop being frightened out of our critical scholarship by such a troublesome specter. A generation of students across disciplines has grown up with virtually no challenge to the polemical charge by Said that scholars who study the Middle East and Islam still do so institutionally through an interpretive sieve that divides a superior West from an inferior East. I focus here on Said's use of the binary

(East vs. West) both as a target of criticism and as a rhetorical mode of attack. My analysis begins with a critique of Said's re-defining of "Orientalism" out of the previous sense of an academic field that studied the languages and literatures of the so-called "Orient" to a pervasive and pernicious discourse that comprises even the most inflammatory and romantic texts produced around the myth of Orient. Does this "Orientalism thesis," which has been accepted as canonical by many scholars in Cultural, Literary and Post-colonial Studies, have historical justification? Can it be applied to account for all the writings, attitudes and intentions of past and contemporary scholars in the supra-geographical sense of a West? Do we not essentially validate the binary by refusing to think beyond it? I am not so naïve as to assume that the damage of an opportunistic East vs. West clash can simply be wished away, but neither do I doubt the ability to whittle away at bias and misinformation by using the methodologies of critical scholarship from established disciplines.

### **The "Orientalism" Thesis**

"It will be clear to the reader (and will become clearer still throughout the many pages that follow) that by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent." Edward Said (1979, 2).

Although Edward Said was not the first to challenge the anti-Islamic and anti-Arab bias in academic texts written by European and American scholars, it can be said that the currently cited notion of discursive Orientalism is virtually an invention of his own. As a scholarly endeavor, Orientalism had been narrowly and naively viewed as a tradition of "techniques for identifying, editing and interpreting written texts," as Albert Hourani (1991, 1) phrases it, from that philological amalgam labeled Semitic and Oriental languages. The study of languages like Arabic, the vehicle for the Quran, has a long but somewhat haphazard history in medieval Christendom. The coining of the term "Orientalisme" did not come

along until the late seventeenth century, most notably in Barthélemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*. By the middle of the nineteenth century the term "Orientalist" was routinely applied in scholarly contexts to someone who not only knew an Oriental language but who knew it well enough to go beyond mere translation and comment authoritatively on things Oriental. In characterizing Guillaume Postel as the first French Orientalist, Gustave Dugat's (1868, v. 1, xvii, note 1) reasoning is typical: "Quand je dis le premier orientaliste français, j'ai en vue le premier savant qui étudia quelque groupe de langues orientales, avec une tendance à la comparaison, à la synthèse." The sheer number of languages studied served as a mark of distinction. Bernhard Dorn, for example, in addition to German, Russian, English and French read Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, Sanskrit, Pahlavi and several Persian, Afghani and Turkish dialects (Dugat 1868, v.1, 99). In the twentieth century, however, Orientalism came more and more to refer to the philological study of "nonextant civilizations" (Binder 1976, 9). As Said's *Orientalism* took shape, a student of Egyptian hieroglyphics was as likely to define himself or herself as an Orientalist as would a student of Arabic or Sanskrit.<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on graduate training in the 1950s, Jacob Lassner (2000, vii) captures the essence of slightly pre-Saidian Oriental Studies:

"Their training, still heavily dependent on nineteenth-century models, featured a positivist outlook, a strong emphasis on philology, control of original sources, and a broad familiarity with several different cultures spanning the ancient, the medieval, and, in some cases, even the modern Near East. The focus was on the world of the ruling institution and a sophisticated literary milieu loosely defined as 'high culture.'"

In a word, professional Orientalists were being trained to participate in what literary critic Matthew Arnold, Said's favored modeler of the culture concept, would have called the "best of the best," the kind of sweetened culture that counters the impending anarchy of

the irrational illiterati.<sup>3</sup> Few language specialists and historians are still being nurtured on this premise, although the critical lack of students and specialists with appropriate language skills has long been a recurring theme in in-house assessments (*e.g.*, Binder 1976, Lewis 1979). In 1973, on the hundredth anniversary of the First International Congress of Orientalists, the academicians most identifiable as Orientalists met in Paris and voted to abandon the label altogether.

Said broadens the pre-existing sense of Orientalism beyond philological and area studies. At the very start of his text Said (1979, 2-3) presents three working definitions for “Orientalism.” The first, by virtue of its being “most readily accepted,” is seemingly academic: “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.” The gist here is that Orientalism is what Orientalists do and that whatever Orientalists do is Orientalism. Such a tautology provides the critic virtually unlimited ground for maneuvering between a wide variety of texts no one previously would have grouped together. Thus an Arabist like Edward Lane can be lumped together with a libertine novelist such as Gustave Flaubert. Also new was the idea that anthropologists and sociologists, who rarely ever looked at Oriental texts, were doing essentially the same thing as those who did. Orientalism is further assumed to permeate all corners of academe and live on “through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental.” Thus, any bad book on the shelf contaminated the whole library.

The second sense of Orientalism proposed by Said is a general, but more straightforward, reduction of Orientalism to “an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’.” The epistemological dimension is self-evident; such a division had been widely used for centuries as an imagined cultural overlay on geographical space. Said builds on

a compelling linguistic metaphor; how can we imagine an east without a west, an up not paired with a down, a self with no other? Such a seemingly semiotic yet disappointingly semantic rationale is contorted from historical context. From the standpoint of Europe there is indeed land with people to its east. Such a spatial ordering in and of itself is innocuous as a label. For someone in the region defined as east of Europe there would inevitably be an equivalent response to the west that defines it as east. Platonic idealism aside, “east” or “west” arise out of the geography that allows us to conceive of directions as orientations. The distinction between east and west is necessarily relational, not always essential. The philosophical concern with being and existence – whether in a Western or Eastern sense here – plays no role in Said’s critical assessment. In the realm of representations, the only one which Said wishes to address in his book, ontology becomes as irrelevant as theology. Even so, as Johannes Fabian (1999, 38) comments on a different author in a different context, “ontology does not get us through the day;” the point is that distinguishing Western self from Eastern other is an obvious epistemological rather than a dubious ontological issue.

It is the third meaning of Orientalism that fully engages the critical acumen of Said and most excites and incites his readers. The two generalized senses of Orientalism as whatever Orientalists do and what they always do to an Orient are situated “historically and materially” in the colonial expansion of Britain and France over the past two centuries. Orientalism is now fully exposed “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1979, 3). Style is, of course, too light a term to denote the politically charged sense of hegemonic ideology that Said’s literary imagination conjures out of Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse and Antonio Gramsci’s elaboration of hegemony. Said employs “discourse” to argue that Orientalism is an institutionalized force present in every Western author who writes about the Orient. Although differing in principle with Foucault, Said’s (1979, 23) stated belief in the “determining imprint of individual authors” does

not extend to even the most sympathetic of scholars, such as Louis Massignon. Indeed, Said (1979, 319) argues with polemical excess that Orientalism is "a dogma that not only degrades its subject matter but also blinds its practioners." If this is not clear enough, Said (1979, 307) elsewhere leaves no room for doubt: "Of itself, in itself, as a set of beliefs, as a method of analysis, Orientalism cannot develop. Indeed it is the doctrinal antithesis of development." The primary reason for this is the cultural hegemony of Europe as an imperialist and colonizing power in the real Orient.

Akbar Ahmad (1992, 185) observes that Said suggests mainly what this style is "not," so that we are told it is not what colonialist ideology says it is. It is not objective and not concerned with the real Orient. "Indeed," admits Said (1979, 12) "my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world." The fundamental corollary of Orientalism's stylistic production of the Orient is, despite Said's ontological tease, its representational function as "a sort of surrogate and underground self" to imperial Europe. Thus, it is argued that the French philologist Ernest Renan creates the Oriental in the racial image that serves both the legitimization of imperialist rhetoric and his own sense of cultural superiority. As Said (1979, 145-146) phrases it, "He [Renan] *constructs*, and the very act of construction is a sign of imperial power over recalcitrant phenomena, as well as a confirmation of the dominating culture and its 'naturalization.'" The result is that a "real" Orient is not truthfully represented, nor are Orientals allowed to represent themselves.

The appeal of Said's approach is twofold. First, he points out specific examples of past scholars, like Renan, whose writing is recognizably racist and ethnocentric. Second, here is an Oriental speaking his own truth back to the power structure that for so long has distorted and thus misrepresented his cultural heritage. I think that this is how the majority of readers interpret the power of Said's

well-crafted "Orientalism thesis" even well after a quarter of a century. Were this all that Said's polemical text was trying to do, then the main role for criticism of *Orientalism* would be if particular examples were taken out of context or historical details were missed. Most readers, however, ignore Said's introductory comment that his threefold definition "will become clearer" later in his text. The focal point of this clarification, in Said's (1979, 206) own words, occurs in his distinction between latent and manifest Orientalism:

"The distinction I am making is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity, which I shall call *latent* Orientalism, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, history, sociology, and so forth, which I shall call *manifest* Orientalism. Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant."

Before teasing out the meaning, it is important to look at the rhetorical style applied here by Said. This distinction is what he "really" means, the heart of the matter. Notice, however, how this passage sidesteps a totalizing sense by qualifying "unconscious" by "almost," "found" with "almost exclusively," and "unanimity, stability, and durability" with "more or less." This trope of the adverbial caveat dangled like catnip before the reader allows Said to speak in round numbers, so to speak, rather than giving what might be called a statistical – and thus potentially falsifiable – sense to his argument. As a result, any exceptions pointed out by a critic are rhetorically pre-mitigated. These words appear to flow from cautious scholarship, but the latent intent, I would argue, is that of an uncompromising polemicist.

My critique here of the tripartite definition of Orientalism is necessarily incomplete and would clearly remain unconvincing to Said himself for a very simple reason. The "three things" that Said

means by Orientalism are the *manifest* part of his argument. They point, I believe, to Said's reluctance to define the concept in a definitive way that could then be challenged for being too narrow, inconsistent, or idiosyncratic. By offering the reader three interdependent ways of approaching Orientalism there is no one central defining element to be dismissed up front. To argue against any one of these only whittles away at the connotations; it does not get to the *latent* heart of the matter. Thus, when Aijaz Ahmad (1992, 179) argues that Said's three definitions are "mutually incompatible," he glosses a crucial and far more critical point. It does not really matter whether Said's variant connotations are incompatible to the reader, since each contains at least a grain of truth. These are the working and negotiated word-meanings Said employs to serve the presentation of his ideological argument. Faulting the details cited through his rhetoric, certainly a valid form of criticism, will not negate Said's argument as such. The ultimate proof of the "Orientalism thesis" is not to be found in any of the manifest examples cited in his text. It is his rhetoric of persuasion, rather than the arguable details, which needs to be addressed.

Unlike his use of Foucault's "discourse" and Gramsci's "hegemony," the borrowing of "manifest" and "latent" is not itself made manifest in *Orientalism*. These are, of course, terms laden with meaning in the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams, especially in Lacan's reworking of Freudian theory.<sup>4</sup> By "manifest" Said refers to those parts of Orientalist discourse that can be negotiated, viewed differently, or even debated. The examples given, comparing a rigorous scholar like the Victorian Edward Lane to the powerful imagination of the libertine Gustave Flaubert, are differences in style and form, differences that can be attributed to genre and individual creativity. The manifest comprises the material elements of Orientalism: texts, authors, guilds, the apparatus of academic disciplines, professional societies, the publishing industry, colonial administrative structure and the like. Said draws examples from these material elements, especially texts, but his whole point is that nothing manifest makes sense without grounding the whole

complex in the latent “positivity” that ultimately defines it as hegemonic discourse. In Said’s own conceptual sense, the latent is what makes an otherwise dull and academic system worldly, what links it to the real world where people are abused and killed, not just thought to be inferior.

It is relevant that Said only uses manifest and latent in an adjectival sense; each describes an aspect of Orientalism without having to give that aspect a form or name of its own. It is easy to provide multiple examples of the manifest, because in a real sense it is only the manifest that can be documented. The latent can be elicited only by reading between the lines, but Said has a tendency to choose lines of such seemingly singular meaning that they override an alternate, even a nuanced, reading. What could be more damning than Flaubert’s (1972, 220) crass reduction of the Oriental woman to a sex object: “The oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man.”<sup>5</sup> The manifest reading of such an isolated musing shocks the reader into thinking there is no need to probe the context and intent of the author. But is this how Flaubert sees “the” Oriental woman, certain types of Oriental women, all Oriental women or is it the result of an experience with a particular Oriental woman? Is this the way Flaubert desired to look at Oriental women before he went to the Orient? Might Flaubert say this about a prostitute in his own French society? Is Flaubert expressing his true feelings or is he trying to impress the intended reader? Manifest readings, as Said so often demonstrates, always have latent possibilities.

I raise these questions because they are specifically those that Said does not consider in light of the overall context of the quote he chooses. One need not resurrect Flaubert for the modern psychoanalyst’s couch to realize the potential motivations for explaining why Flaubert made this specific comment and how it described his feelings at the time. Said chooses a private letter as though this were a published text cited throughout the manifest Orientalist corpus. His blurring of textual genres, a key part of the

first definition, allows him this luxury. How interesting that Flaubert (1972, 220) made the comment above in a letter to Louise Colet, a French married woman with whom he had been having an affair: "To go back to Kuchuk. You [Louise Colet] and I are thinking of her, but she is certainly not thinking of us. We are weaving an aesthetic around her, whereas this particular very interesting tourist who was vouchsafed the honors of her couch has vanished from her memory completely, like many others. Ah! Traveling makes one modest – you see what a tiny place you occupy in the world."<sup>6</sup> Yes, this is a fantasy of a Western man about an Oriental woman. But is it dependent on the kind of surrogate Eastern other Renan or Lane would construct in scholarly texts? Are we to assume that Renan, had he bothered to visit Egypt, would have ended up in the same prostitute's bed? Is it the case that conservative scholars with missionary zeal, such as the Islamophobic Victorian William Muir, would have manifested the same latent sexual desire? If, indeed, the "Oriental" is a surrogate other, is it not also the case that the creation of that other would reflect the differing personalities and intentions of all those Said would call Orientalists? There is no objective answer to any of the above, because the realm of the "latent" is open uncritically to the imagination.

What exactly does Said say was latent in Orientalism? His examples are primarily "latent and unchanging characteristics" that get presented as "dogmas."<sup>7</sup> The specific characteristics he mentions fall into three broad categories: racist, ethnocentric and sexist. Orientalist texts are said to reflect racial characteristics assumed to be inherent or natural, what passed for biological at the time. Thus, the essentializing of Orientals as exuding inequality and being degenerate accentuated a racist contrast to "white" Europeans. Because they were born – say as Arab or Indian – with these innately inferior racial characteristics, they were subject through a kind of manifest destiny to a racially more refined European control. A second set of characteristics overlaps with the racial, but refers more to cultural failings, such as religious and social customs.

It was European ethnocentrism that dubbed Orientals as being backward and uncivilized, having "supine malleability" – which I assume means lacking moral stamina – and appearing eccentric or exotic. The third variety of traits centers on a dual sense of sexism. On the one hand the Orient is exploitable because of its feminine penetrability; the masculine master can rape, in the extreme sense, the feminine subject at will because he has the power and will to do so. At the same time, Said notes that Western society lumps together its own "delinquents, insane, women, and poor" as the "lamentably alien elements" that best model the Orient. Moreover, manifest Orientalists – the ones writing texts and making policy – were almost exclusively men writing for men.

Exemplifying latent Orientalism, however, is complicated precisely because this is an aspect that is hidden or disguised, that is assumed to be real but can only be seen in its manifest effects. The words Said chooses to give linguistic form to such a definitively abstract concept are noticeably vague. Latent Orientalism is described as "an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity," a "group of ideas," "widely diffused notions," an "Orientalist consensus," "a far more intimate and proprietary attitude," "a Western handling," a "commonly held view," "a cumulative vision," and "an enunciative capacity." Nothing here is readily observable or concrete; the terminology refers to ideas and the generation of meaning. To the extent Said finds a smoking gun, all he really provides is smoke. Indeed, Said argues that it is all too easy to ignore the latent because the underlying meaning is not apparent. His analysis proposes a hermeneutic unveiling of what informs and compels the manifest structure of Orientalism. What results is Orientalist discourse as hermetically sealed with an authoritative, monoglot voice. Caveats aside, manifest Orientalism "built upon the prestigious authority of the pioneering scholars, travelers, and poets, whose cumulative vision had shaped a quintessential Orient; the doctrinal – or doxological – manifestation of such an Orient is what I have been calling here latent Orientalism." Said's rhetoric thus stresses what might best be called

a metaphysic by metaphor; that which is hidden is described as acting the way he thinks it would have to act if it were manifest.

The underlying dependence on a latent, hegemonic, superorganic homogeneity overrides manifest differences in Orientalist discourse. Latent and hegemonic stem from Said's own description, but his examples suggest that what is hidden and more powerful than individual intention is also superorganic in the sociological sense of transcending individual organisms or Orientalist authors. Such latent discourse becomes homogenizing when it blends all manifest differences into a pervasive mode of cultural domination. My quarrel is not with Said's contention that there is more to the manifest aspects of Orientalism than meets the eye. What I fail to find, other than Said's categorical insistence that he can see through to the latent, is a mechanism that goes beyond metaphor. As noted in an early review, Michael Beard (1979:4) suggests that the extent to which the link between the discipline and discourse of Orientalism "is a willed, conscious and homogenous connection" remains "the central unanswered question" in *Orientalism*.

By switching focus from East vs. West to latent vs. manifest Said's polemic gains force as a wider critique of bad "othering" but simultaneously loses the special focus he insists ruptures real people in the West from real people in the East. An Egyptian critic, Riḍwan al-Sayyid (2001, 6), notes that the problems latent in imperialism afflict both East and West and are not exclusive to the West. Said is right to draw attention to a latent connection to manifest discourse and behavior, but in the process what happens to the primordial binary between East and West? On the manifest level, Said is able to show numerous examples where this splitting occurs. But in the latent and causal sense this specific binary necessarily collapses, most commonly into a generic self vs. other or us vs. them. Said steadfastly ignores the vast amount of theory in philosophy, psychology, anthropology and religion on this base/superstructure problem. He explores a few parameters of the textual creation of an East, but goes no further.

### **The "Orient" and "Orientalism" in Said's *Orientalism***

"Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the 'Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" Edward Said (1979, 2).

The radical distinction between Orient and Occident or East and West is labeled by Edward Said as both ontological and epistemological, an odd philosophical pairing for a literary critic intent on challenging the assumptions of texts. As a way of knowing, explanation of the discursive construction of an "Orient" calls for an epistemology in need of a hermeneutic, not a literary metaphysic. The interpretive frame for the Orient as knowledge leads to Said's rendering of Orientalism as discourse in the Foucauldian sense, a knowledge that empowers its maker through the subterfuge of ordering reality. The value of such an approach, not unique by any means to Said, is that it can allow scholars to see problems inherent in given systems of categorization and also fix mistakes in misrepresentation of the past. There is no question that the epistemological reduction of cultural difference between two large regions of the world into a generic East and West is both simplistic and dangerous. Individual scholars may accuse each other of still following such a binary, but the vast majority of scholars who study the Middle East (all but the most rabid polemicists) do not create through their writing a surrogate Oriental or Middle Eastern other.

Critical scholars have often seen through such dangerous reductive representations all along. When writing *Orientalism*, Said appears to have been unaware of several critiques of the myth of Orient from within the ranks of those he would call Orientalists. A case in point revolves around Ernest Renan, who is posited by Said (and hardly anyone else) as the architect of modern Orientalism. After claiming that Renan established the scholarly bias that "no Semite could ever shake loose the pastoral, desert environment of his tent and tribe," Said turns to the work of Scottish theologian William

Robertson Smith as “a crucial link in the intellectual chain connecting the White-Man-as-expert to the modern Orient.”<sup>8</sup> Smith is portrayed as an extension of Renan with the twist of actual traveling to the Orient. “The crucial point is that everything one can know or learn about ‘Semites’ and ‘Orientals,’” writes Said in reference to Smith’s research, “receives immediate corroboration, not merely in the archives, but directly on the ground.” Just as Renan is the prototype of philologists in the library, Smith serves as the forerunner of Western “anthropologists” who are said to essentialize from present, unpleasant cultural realities to primitive stocks.

Although Said acknowledges parenthetically that Smith issued a “savagely attack” on Renan’s *Histoire du peuple d’Israel*, the content of Smith’s criticism is not provided. Rather than standing in awe of Renan’s philological authority, Smith castigated the French scholar for bending facts “to suit his hypotheses.” In particular, Renan is judged by Smith (1912, 613) to be guilty of the very thing Said accuses Smith of perpetuating:

“A generation ago it was fashionable to call Abraham an Arab sheikh: M. Renan is content to say that he is the type of an Arab sheikh; but in point of fact it would be difficult to specify a single feature of resemblance between the patriarchal life, as described in Genesis, and the life of the modern Bedouin, which is not either superficial or part of the general difference between eastern and western society.”

Contrary to Said’s claim, Smith does not look at the modern Bedouin and see the biblical patriarch, nor does he think that the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob line-up helps understand the modern Bedouin or Turk. Even though Smith operated within the general stereotypical frame of East and West, he was able to discredit the false analogy proposed by Renan. Unlike Renan, Smith does not reduce religion to a racial ideology; he draws attention to the social function rather than unctuously dismissing the whole category of religion as irrational. For all his faults, it is not without reason that

William Robertson Smith is regarded by many as a “founder” of the sociology of religion.

Criticism of Renan's racism and faulty scholarship comes not only from within the ranks of Orientalists, but also from the real Orientals that Said assumes were not allowed permission to narrate their own sense of who they were. In a well-known 1883 article entitled *l'Islamisme et la science* Renan asserted that the Arabs must have borrowed all of their science and philosophy from the Greeks and Persians. Oddly enough, Said excludes this text from his analysis, yet it is certainly one of Renan's works that is most concerned with the Orientalism of

Silvestre de Sacy, with whom he is repeatedly paired in *Orientalism*. Renan's “authority” did not prevent those far more knowledgeable about Islamic sources to disagree. Ironically, the most immediate “refutation” was published in the same French journal by the Islamic scholar Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Nikki Keddie (1968, 86), who translated and studied the exchange between Renan and al-Afghani, observes that the latter's ideas are “more in line” with twentieth century Orientalist thinking than Renan's original argument.<sup>9</sup> Al-Afghani's response was written in Arabic first and then translated into French. A short time later a German translation of al-Afghani's article was bound with the German version of Renan's lecture (Goldziher and Jomier 1965, 419). Not only did a noted Islamic scholar respond directly to an egregious and biased theory, but his remarks were immediately available and influential in the Orientalist network of Europe. Ironically, Bandali Jawzi, a fellow Palestinian writing in Arabic half a century before Said, also saw through the racism of Renan, but noted that since such an extreme view was at that time (1928) passé there was no benefit in refuting it.<sup>10</sup>

Although Said's *Orientalism* may be the first English-language book to draw attention across disciplines and fields to bias in Orientalist writing, it was not the first demythologizing of the “Orient”

concept. The most thorough study of the intellectual roots for the “myth” of East vs. West is Kurt Goldammer’s (1962) *Der Mythos von Ost und West: Eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Betrachtung*. Targeted in this earlier study, unknown to Said, is the tendency in the literature to ignore factual differences and posit a false uniformity, to reduce the East to a racial question, and portray the East falsely as a mirror of the West. “Das ganze Phänomen,” concludes Goldammer (1962, xx) “gehört zu der Unzahl von vorgefassten schematischen Meinungen und Begriffsfixierungen, mit denen wir leben, unter denen wir leiden, die unseren Alltag und unsere Bildung erfüllen, und deren wir selbst nach generationslanger Abnutzung nicht überdrüssig werden.”<sup>11</sup> Other penchant criticisms of such an East-West binary were available, even in English. “Many a writer on Asia treats the Orient as though it were a single entity (which it is not) – and thus postulates a unity that has no real existence outside his own imagination,” wrote John Steadman (1969, 14) a decade before *Orientalism* appeared. Arguing that there was “no objective basis for the dichotomy of East and West,” Steadman proposed in his study of the “myth” of Asia to provide “the anatomy of an illusion, the dissection of an idolon.”<sup>12</sup> At almost the same time Stephan Hay (1970, 330) goes so far as to say that among scholars the “idea of ‘the East’ is now all but extinct.” The binary Said rightly targets for deconstruction was already under indictment by scholars within the very guild Said thought incapable of such self-critique.

At the level of epistemology the East vs. West division as a problem of knowledge is capable of being addressed and mitigated. A misrepresentation can be better represented; outright errors can be corrected. The essential problem with Said’s “Orientalism thesis” is that he goes beyond the manifest play of knowledge to a latent distinction he erroneously calls ontological. With post-*Orientalism* hindsight, Said (1993, 108) asserts that there is no disagreement in modern studies of culture and imperialism on the “fundamental ontological distinction between the West and the rest of the world.” It is the faulty logic of this ontologic that compromises the author’s

goal to eradicate the very idea of East vs. West. Critics of Said's argument often observe, at times with irony, that Said essentializes his notion of Orientalist discourse to the same extent as he accuses Orientalist scholars of creating a homogenous and undifferentiated Orient. "In charging the entire tradition of European and American Oriental studies with the sins of reductionism, he commits precisely the same error" writes historian Malcolm H. Kerr (1980, 544). As Nadim al-Biṭar (1982, 8-9), an Arab scholar observes, this brings through the back door the very myth about the essentialist, innate properties of the imagined "Orient" that Said wants to demolish. "In other words," argues cultural critic Aijaz Ahmad (1992, 167), Said "duplicates, all those procedures even as he debunks the very tradition from which he has borrowed them." Or, as Robert Irwin (1981-82, 108) phrases it, "Said's vision of the Orient is in fact as monolithic and ethnocentric as that of any of the orientalists he denounces." This criticism, it must be noted, stems from scholars across disciplines, including those who are often quite sympathetic with Said's overall goals.

In his Afterword to the 1994 edition of *Orientalism*, Said (1994, 331) considers this charge of essentialism as completely without merit: "One scarcely knows what to make of these caricatured permutations of a book that to its author and in its arguments is explicitly anti-essentialist, radically skeptical about all categorical designations such as Orient and Occident, and painstakingly careful about *not* 'defending' or even discussing the Orient and Islam." However, his comments do not respond to the specific criticisms given by numerous critics. He simply assumes that *Orientalism* has not been read as he intended so that his book has become "almost in a Borgesian way" several different books. It is obvious that there are many variant readings of *Orientalism*, but in all of his subsequent work Said never concedes that the rhetoric of his polemical style can rather easily be read as a form of essentialism that detracts from his assumption of an anti-essentialist stance. Said's (1994, 330) excuse that *Orientalism* "supersedes me as its author more than I

could have expected when I wrote it" is merely deflective hubris. What author is not capable of correcting and revising earlier work?

A central problem for and with the Orientalism thesis of Said is that the East-West distinction still exists prior to all else. It is the fundamental starting point for a "large mass of writers" that includes poets as well as economists and imperial administrators. To assume, with little subsequent attention to proof, that a poet and an economist could meaningfully share such a starting point implies that anyone who writes about the Orient must be motivated by a similarly absolute distinction between themselves and the Orient. This parallels Said's earlier insistence that anyone who writes about the Orient is *ipso facto* an Orientalist. Thus, all individual, cultural, class, gender and a myriad of cross-cutting influences are rendered mute by the alleged ontological primacy of Occident vs. Orient. This is tantamount to asserting that any Christian theologian writing about his religion must be molded immutably by the textualized opposition of God and Devil or Heaven and Hell. That such binary oppositions exist, that they bedevil writers of all shades, is easily established and hardly a novel insight. But how impotent human imagination and how feeble the creative impulse if the authors of texts are condemned to be unwitting slaves to the texts of their fathers.

By subsuming all potential individual and cultural difference into the dyad of the Orientalists' West as ego contra the Orientalists' Orient as alter ego, Said implies that only one "other" is possible. This makes little sense for European and American imperialist expansion for several reasons. First, the political domination and economic exploitation inherent in this expansion was not limited to a fictional Orient. Take the Irish, for example. Before the British empire fought Napoleon in Palestine or invaded India, it expanded west to America and Ireland. The "heathen" Indians of the Americas could only be considered Oriental if Said follows the geographical blunder of Columbus. The stereotyping of the Irish as radically other also had nothing to do with an ontological distinction between

East and West. Indeed, such was the hatred of the Irish by some Englishman that they expressed a preference for Orientals. Fynes Moryson, secretary to Lord Mountjoy in 1615, had traveled to North Africa and Middle East, thus making him an Orientalist in Said's eyes. Yet it was not the Orient that he scorned, but the unruly Irish as "more barbarous and more brutish in their costomes and demeanures then in any other parte of the world that is knowne."<sup>13</sup> Ireland would fit well in Said's geographically imagined Orient, except for the fact it was in a different direction and directed at an other within the West.

It might be countered that this only shows the potential of Said's argument; what he shows for the Orient could also be done for the Irish, African slaves, American Indians, etc. In *Orientalism*, Said (1979, 7) mentions in passing "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures." Said follows up on this premise in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). But this admission causes a fundamental problem for his ontological argument. If the binary of East vs. West is prior to all else simply because it is the universal "us vs. them" variant, then the issue is the very nature of representing an other rather than any specific aspect of the manifest construction of an Orient. By this logic racism against an Arab is subject to the same latent force as racism against Jews, Blacks, Irish or women. Further, unless some specific racial or cultural variable is assumed to predominate, the very people who get othered will inevitably do the same thing to their others. If this is what Said is really saying, then it becomes a statement about human nature more than the pedigree of a specific intellectual history. It is the secular humanist equivalent, in Said's case, of saying that all writers have sinned and come short of the glory of objectivity. However, Said can be read as if he is making a more targeted ideological argument in which European construction of others is ontologically different from how any particular people views another. This, of course, is why the Islamists (and some Islamicists) view *Orientalism* as essentially anti-Western.

I suggest that Said's definition fails to liberate us from the trap of East vs. West because he insists that there is something unique in the way Europe and America have related to an imagined Orient. It may very well be that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Said 1979, 3), but Europe was also setting itself off against Irish, Africans, American Indians and numerous other Europeans. Because Said's Orientalism thesis does not suggest how construction of the myth of Orient coincided with the self-serving representation of all sorts of others, the argument privileges by default only the relation between Europe and something imagined as the Orient. Said, as a widely read scholar, obviously knows that Europe did not just dominate a real Orient, but his silence on the general process can be read as an assumption that there really is something unique about Orientalism as a unique discourse of domination.

The reason that many critics accuse Said of essentializing the binary of East vs. West goes beyond his privileging of the binary as an ontological distinction. The point that Said either misses or refuses to address is not that he believes on some level in a real East or West, but that he invents a notion of Orientalism which is itself of mythic proportions. As Said has stated on numerous occasions, he did not set out in his text to describe the real Orient. But the force of his polemic and a literal reading of his rhetoric demand two things from the reader. First, that the real Orient has not only been misrepresented but has been prevented from representing itself. Thus the Orient as a construct becomes such a powerful substitute for the manipulated reality that it can be presented as that reality. Second, just as the imagined Orient is reified as the only Orient, so Orientalism in Said's description is only capable of misrepresentation and false representation. Said argues at length that the absence of the real Orient is enforced by the presence of Orientalism as the discourse that dictates and legitimizes imperialism and colonization of a real Orient.

We have reached the point in this critical assessment of Said's Orientalism thesis to ask the question that goes to the heart of disagreement between readers of *Orientalism*. Does Said's concept of Orientalism as a discourse with manifest differences but latent positivity really exist? In other words, is Said's representation of Orientalism accurate in terms of what can be known objectively about previous Orientalists, their texts and their institutional structures? The central problem with flawed Orientalist renderings of an essentialized "East" is the privileging of sameness over difference. Said would argue that the manifest differences and even internal criticism do not override the latent propensity of racism, ethnocentrism and sexism. Yet this is also what he assumes about the discourse of Orientalism. Said's East-West binary does not provide a thorough critique of the Western epistemology that creates Orientalist discourse, but succumbs to "a repetition of its own inherent dichotomies" (Martin 1990, 517). The binary survives its critique because Said's argument assumes a historical Orientalism that is uniformly anti-Oriental at base, from Aeschylus to Bernard Lewis. Neither the Orient as stereotypically envisioned nor Orientalism as envenomed in Saidian terms can adequately represent the reality that Said and his readers care about.

Said's invention of Orientalism proposes a unified theory, a body of knowledge, an establishment structure of academics aligned with the makers of empire. The individual differences and motivations of scholars are continually reduced to the prototype of the generic Orientalist, whether an assumed founding father like Renan or a politically expedient contemporary historian like Bernard Lewis. Neither of these scholars, in Said's mind, can ever get it right and both are motivated by an intense hatred of real Orientals. Said speaks at times of "pure" Orientalists, "traditional" Orientalists and "contemporary" Orientalists, but the adjectives do not rescue the Orientalist everyman from being a pawn under the sway of an unswerving specter called "Orientalism." The problem is that Said consistently approaches the target of his critique in the same way as those scholars who essentialize a generic East or West. The

following statement, almost taken at random, illustrates this tendency: "But Orientalism has taken a further step than that: it views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West" (Said 1979, 108). Such an Orientalism, just as the false notions of Orient and West implied in the quotation, had been damned by earlier critical scholars, including several prominent Orientalists in Said's indiscriminate lists. Until the end of his book, the reader is exposed on virtually every page to the rhetorical intrusion of "Orientalist" and "Orientalism" alongside "Orient" and "West." In Said's rhetoric, a problematic Orientalism is the only available system in place for representing the Orient. Based on his own idiosyncratic tracing of this Orientalism's assumed trajectory, Said (1979, 328) eventually informs the reader that the "worldwide hegemony of Orientalism and all it stands for can now be challenged." If critics who actually know the texts and historical events cited by Said react with a bit of indignation and wonder at such a grand claim, this should not be seen as mere rejection of Said's political ideology.

### **The Continuing Clash of Civilizations**

"A Confucian-Islamic military connection has thus come into being, designed to promote acquisition by its members of the weapons and weapons technologies needed to counter the military power of the West." Samuel Huntington (1993, 47)

The questions of whether or not there really are an Orient, a West and a unified discourse called Orientalism might be relatively harmless philosophical musing were it not for the contemporary and confrontational political involvement of the United States and major European nations with governments and people in the Middle East. One of the reasons Said's book was so influential, especially among scholars in the emerging field of post-colonial studies, is that it appeared at the very moment in which the Cold War divide reached a zenith in Middle East politics. In 1979 the fall of the United

States-backed and anti-communist Shah allowed for the creation of the first modern Islamic republic in Iran, even as the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to try to prevent the same thing happening there. The ongoing crisis over Israel, certainly the main focus of Said's personal public stand as a concerned intellectual, had not abated. Indeed only a few years before the United States and the Soviet Union came to full nuclear alert during Anwar Sadat's successful 1973 attack on Israel. Three decades later the escalation of tension and violence sometimes described as "Islamic terrorism" has become the pressing global concern. In the post September 11 climate of renewed American and British political engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, the essential categories of East and West continue to dominate public debate through the widely touted "clash of civilizations."

The idea of civilizations at war with each other is probably as old as the very idea of civilization. The modern turn of phrase owes its current popularity to a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article title by Samuel Huntington; although this is quite clearly a conscious borrowing from a 1990 *Atlantic Monthly* article by Bernard Lewis.<sup>14</sup> Political historian Huntington, speculating in an influential policy forum, suggested that Arnold Toynbee's outdated list of twenty-one major civilizations had been reduced after the Cold War to six, to which he adds two more. With the exception of his own additions of Latin America and Africa, the primary rivals of the West are Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu and Slavic-Orthodox. To say, as Huntington (1993, 25) insists, that the main criterion separating these civilizations is religion, given the labels chosen, borders on the tautological. Logical order would suggest that the West be seen as Christian or at least Judaeo-Christian; it is the very rejection of the religious label for his own civilization that imbalances Huntington's civilizational breakdown. It strains credulity to imagine that religion in itself is an independent variable in the contemporary world of nation states actually making up the transnationalized mix of cultural identities outside the United States and Europe. In a sense Huntington simply echoes the separation of

the West from the Rest, since secular Western civilization is clearly the dominant system in his mind.

Following the earlier commentary of Lewis, Huntington (1993, 31) posits a real "fault line" between the West and Islamic civilization, ever since the Arabs were turned back at Tours. The fault of Islam, however, appears to be less religious than political and ideological, since the fundamental clash he describes revolves around the seeming rejection by Islam (and indeed all the rest) of "Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state..." (Huntington 1993, 40). It is hard to imagine that a scholar of Huntington's stature could be so blind to the modern history of the West in assuming that these idealized values have in fact governed policy in Europe and America or been rejected by all the rest. To assert, for example, that the rule of law is not consonant with Islam or that Islamic teaching is somehow less concerned with human rights than Western governments suggests that the real clash is between Huntington's highly subjective reading of the history of the Rest and reality.

Huntington's thesis was challenged from the start in the very next issue of *Foreign Affairs*. "But Huntington is wrong," asserted Fouad Ajami (1993, 3), ironically an ardent critic of Edward Said. Even Jeanne Kirkpatrick (1993, 22), hardly a proponent of post-colonial criticism, called Huntington's list of civilizations "strange." Being wrong in the eyes of many of his peers did not prevent Huntington from expanding the tentative proposals of a controversial essay into a book, nor from going well outside his field of expertise to write specifically on the resurgence of Islam. By late 2001, soon after the September 11 tragedy, Edward Said weighed in with a biting exposé on Huntington's "clash of ignorance." Said (2001) crushes the blatant politics and simplistic rendering of the clash thesis, explaining why labels like Islam and the West are unedifying: "They mislead and confuse the mind, which is trying to make sense of a disorderly reality that won't be pigeonholed or strapped down

as easily as all that." Exactly, but the same must therefore be true about Said's imagined discourse of Orientalism. Pigeonholing all previous scholars who wrote about Islam or Arabs into one negative category is discursively akin to Huntington pitting Westerners vs. Muslims.

If the East vs. West fault line is first defined as a generic given, it is important to ask which "East" serves as the other. Edward Said approaches European and American political policies as specifically directed against an Oriental other rather than caught up in alliances fueled by recent history. In the post-World War II political map, the West as the Free World included Turkey, the Shah's Iran and Saudi Arabia vs. the East, including half of Germany, as a communist bloc under Soviet and Chinese influence. Ironically, the two world wars did much to dispel the old notion of "Orient" as the playpen for Western imperialists. In World War II the Japanese sided with the Germans; the Chinese were forced into the arms of the British, Americans and Russians.<sup>15</sup> As the Cold War started to warm up, the epoch of European imperialism was superseded. By implying that an unbroken line linked Napoleon's entry into Cairo with the Israeli occupation of Palestine, or even the Maoist revolution, Said ignores the complexities of the intervening history. East Block-West Block politics surveyed from the Berlin Wall are a far cry from India viewed on Rudyard Kipling's colonial veranda.

Both Edward Said and Fouad Ajami, who rarely seem to agree on anything, are right to question the terms of Huntington's clash thesis. To re-label the Orient of myth as a Confucian-Islamic military complex is not only ethnocentric, but resoundingly ahistorical. No competent historian of either Islam or Confucianism recognizes such a misleading civilizational halfbreed. What linked Saddam Hussein's Iraq with Korea is not religious collusion, but a common targeting of authoritarian states assumed to have weapons of mass destruction.<sup>16</sup> This is the domain of competing political ideologies, not the result of a few short centuries of Orientalist scholarship. The binary of West vs. East is not likely to disappear in

public debate as long as it serves existing political agendas worldwide. But neither should it remain the unending nemesis of critical scholarship across disciplines. The hegemony Said sees in all Orientalist discourse has been challenged all along; subjective representations are always subject to critique. The best way to defeat simplistic ideology is not to endlessly repeat the binaries but recognize the inevitable nuance in real history. Let's put to rest the notion of an East vs a West

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this article was read at Steven Caton's graduate anthropology seminar at Harvard University in 2002. I have published an extensive critique of Said's Orientalism thesis and the debate over it in Varisco (2007).

<sup>2</sup> For historical studies of the rise of Orientalism, I suggest the reader start with Waardenburg (1992). A valuable resource, seldom examined, is Adnan-Adivar's (1953) introduction to the Turkish edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Robert Irwin (2006) provides a spirited defense of Orientalist scholars.

<sup>3</sup> For a critique of Said's view of culture building on that of Matthew Arnold, see Varisco (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Said (1975, 1983) is familiar with the work of Lacan, but nowhere to my knowledge acknowledges or explains borrowing this distinction from psychoanalytic theory. It is with the pop version of psychology that Said (1979, 72) casually drops in rhetorical tidbits like "Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia." Elsewhere Said, in a 1993 interview cited in Viswanathan (2001, 167), criticizes Lacan – alongside Althusser, Derrida and Foucault – as being "prisoners of their own language." He is, of course, free to say that. Yegenoglu (1998, 23) examines Said's failure to explore psychoanalytic usage.

<sup>5</sup> This is quoted in Said (1979, 187). Flaubert made this comment about Kuchuk

Hanem, an Egyptian woman with whom he had a tryst, in a private letter to his French lover.

<sup>6</sup> For further analysis of Flaubert's "discontent" in Egypt, see Behdad (1994, 53-72).

<sup>7</sup> My discussion here relates to Said (1979, 201-225).

<sup>8</sup> The passage analyzed here is in Said (1979, 234-239). Said (1979, 277) later reiterates his point that the same ideas get "repeated and re-repeated" from Schlegel to Renan and from Robertson Smith to Lawrence.

<sup>9</sup> Fıck (1962, 308) draws attention to al-Afghani's critique of Renan in an article Said cites. Said (1993, 263) later discovers Keddie's discussion of al-Afghani, but then wrongly assumes that al-Afghani was little more than a hand-picked elitist benefiting from the British colonial presence in Egypt.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Sonn (1996, 73).

<sup>11</sup> My translation: "The entire phenomenon belongs to a large number of preconceived, schematic ideas and fixed notions with which we live and under which we suffer, that imbue our daily life and education, and which do not disgust us even after generations of use."

<sup>12</sup> Dawson (1967) argues against the binary of East vs. West in the study of China. Similar pronouncements are not hard to find for scholars fluent in the literature.

<sup>13</sup> Discussed in Ohlmeyer (1998, 131).

<sup>14</sup> Huntington's later book and a related book entitled *The Islamic Resurgence* have received extensive reviews; for a critical assessment, see Gusterson (2005).

<sup>15</sup> This point was made by Northrop (1966:4), originally in 1946.

<sup>16</sup> Nuclear weapons, it should be noted, are in fact products of what Huntington calls Western civilization.

## ***Deus Absconditus* in Islamic Mysticism**

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### **Abstract**

This paper tries to explain the roots of a perplexity which has been faced by a number of mystics who have wholeheartedly devoted their lives to seeking the love of God. In the first part I explain the Sufi interpretation of the *hadith* of the Hidden Treasure. In the second part, I describe the problem that arises when a perfect human being passes through several steps toward becoming a lover of God and afterward encounters a deeper level of divine hiddenness in his religious experience. In the third part, I try to explain this paradox in the context of Islamic mysticism. The end of perfection, according to Sufism, is that the human being becomes the worthy object of divine love. I conclude that *Deus Absconditus* is required for mystics to reach that final point.

**Keywords:** Sufism, Divine Hiddenness, Annihilation, Islamic Mysticism

### **I. Introduction**

The problem of divine hiddenness has been discussed as a problem against God's existence in contemporary philosophy of religion.<sup>1</sup> The main debated thought in these open-ended discussions is that divine hiddenness *i.e.* the unavailability of evidence for God's

existence is a good reason for doubting His existence. The proponents of the argument claim that the perplexity of many people during the history of mankind regarding the existence of God is itself a sign for His nonexistence. One mainly neglected point in all of the contemporary discussions regarding the soundness of the argument from divine hiddenness for the nonexistence of God is the fact that this perplexity which has not been happened only for non-believers but also for believers and also for mystics, the lovers of God can be interpreted as an *invitation* from God. In This paper I shall try to give such an explanation for the perplexity and bewilderment which has been reported by mystics during their internal journey toward being true lovers of God in order to shed some light on the contemporary debate on the problem of and the argument from divine hiddenness. In order to reach such an explanation in the first part I shall explain the Sufi interpretation of the *hadith* (Prophet's Report) of the Hidden Treasure. According to that *hadith*, God created creatures in order to be known. The metaphor of the Hidden Treasure has largely been interpreted as referring to the aim of seeking and flourishing, such that humans become true worshipers and hence acquire knowledge of God. But acquiring that knowledge of God is not easy, and is not to be had 'on demand'. It requires a lifetime's effort. Sufi texts are replete with clarifications of the steps toward perfection one must take in order to reach knowledge of God. But it should be stressed that only one who truly goes up the path of perfection and reaches the point where he devotes himself completely to God, really loves Him. According to Sufism, God both desires and expects human beings to know and to love Him, and to become His servants such that God will show them His *face*.

In the second part of the paper, I discuss the perplexing problem that arises when a perfect human being passes through several steps toward becoming a lover of God, but afterward encounters a deeper level of divine hiddenness, a God who hides His face from the lover. The mystic sees God even while God remains hidden. In a beautiful interpretation of this complex situation, one can say that at

the end of his journey a perfect man will see not the face of God but only the tresses of the hidden Beauty. The theme of hiddenness of the Beloved for one who loves him is mentioned frequently in Sufi poems. It can be seen as the cause of mystical grief or of perplexity for the lover. The mystics have faced a paradox: God invites them to come, but His tresses prevent them from seeing His face!

In the third part of the paper I try to explain this paradox in the context of Islamic mysticism. It seems that the ultimate aim of the mystical journey is not to acquire knowledge of God or to be the lover of God, because in both cases the subject of love and knowledge – that is, the human being – still remains. The end of perfection, according to Sufism, is that the human being becomes the worthy object of divine love. However, this state cannot be obtained until the human being becomes annihilated in God; for God, the worthy object of divine love is the perfect being, which is Himself. *Deus Absconditus* (as it appears for mystics) is thus required for mystics to reach this ultimate point.

## **II. *Hadith* of the Hidden Treasure**

A common theme in Sufi thought, expressed in their mystical poems, is their teleological view of creation and the role of mankind in the fulfilment of the purposes of creation as the most precious creature of God. They accept the Qur'anic view that God is wise and would never create an adrift and aimless world, and thus that creation surely has a purpose. According to the Qur'an, the world has not been created for play, nor is it without purpose:

“And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play. We created them not but based on Truth, however many people do not know” (Qur'an 44:38-39).

Also according to the Qur'an, all creatures were created for the sake of human beings:

“See you not (O men) that God has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heaven and whatsoever is in the earth, and has completed and perfected His graces upon you both apparent and hidden offerings” (Qur’an 31:20).

If God’s creation has a purpose, and if God has subjected whatsoever is in heaven and whatsoever is in the earth to human beings, what then would that purpose be, and how should human beings fulfil it? The Sufi answer to this question can be found among their interpretations of the sacred *hadith* of the Hidden Treasure. According to this *hadith*, the purpose of the creation is *irfan*, knowledge of God: “I was a Hidden Treasure, then I wanted to be known, then I created the creatures to come to know me.”<sup>2</sup> This *hadith* corresponds with an important verse in the Qur’an which clearly states that the human being is created for worshipping God: “I created not the Jinn and mankind except that they worship me” (Qur’a 51:55). Allamah Tabataba’i in interpretation of this verse shows this correspondence:

“In the last verse God is talking with the prophet: ‘And remember them because the remembrance is beneficial for believers’, but in this verse He changes the style to first person speech. The reason is to notify us that while the process of creation is an action that God does via some created means such as angels and other mediatory causes, the purpose of creation is something that belongs solely to Himself. And the term ‘except that they worship me’ is a kind of exclusion from a negative sentence, which emphasizes the exclusivity of God’s purpose— that is that the creatures become worshippers of God, not for God to be worshipped, for He says ‘except that they worship me’ and does not say ‘I have created them to be worshipped by them, or be their worship-worthy object’. ... So, to become the worshipper of God is the purpose of human’s creation. It is worth mentioning that the true worshipping leads to knowledge, knowledge of God. This point can be inferred from Imam Ali’s *hadith* that worshipping in this verse means knowing. Imam Ali seems to point to the higher purpose of the action of

worshipping that is to become the knower of God [*‘arif*]. Thus the end goal of the creation is in the heart of worshipping God, which is knowledge of God and it would be acquired only when a man devotes himself to God as a slave and solely thinks and works for Him” (Tabatabaii 1363[1984], 611-616).<sup>3</sup>

So according to Allameh Tabatabaii the end goal of creation is a human being who is a real servant of God who is then His true knower and lover. Human beings, as God’s best creatures, are capable of achieving all the jewels of the Hidden Treasure, and only they can know the Treasure in its totality. Human beings can see the manifestation of God in the earth and in heaven. Suffering, pain, love, longing and relishing are the ways that human beings can experience in their relationship with divine. For the total range of divine manifestation from suffering to love, from pain to relief, from grief to happiness, can be seen and perceived by human beings as the inhabitants of the earth.

Accordingly, the degree of perfection between human beings corresponds to degree of their acquired jewels of the hidden treasure, that is knowledge of God. With regards to the purpose of the creation of human beings and the role of ‘man’ in God’s plan, the Sufis have tried to explain the human path of perfection as being to reach meritorious and virtuous *knowledge* of God (*‘irfān*). One who has tried to reach knowledge of God and has (to some degree) succeeded is a virtuous person, a mystic, and a perfect man. How can one reach this level of perfection goes beyond my present concerns. The important point for our dialectic is that acquiring knowledge of God requires lifelong effort and hard work. Sufi texts resound with explanations of the steps one must take to reach knowledge of God. For example, in his book *The Perfect Man*, Aziz Nasafi sets out many stages one must pass to reach the highpoint of being a perfect man: awakening, willing, remembering, abandoning, recalling, presence, and *love*. Each stage has many practical and theoretically complicated inner sublevels which must be traversed

by one who journeys and assays according to the instructions of a master.

Another unified theme in the Sufi tradition is that the perfect human being is one who truly *loves* God, where this love is the result of virtuous knowledge of God. Few themes play as important a role in Sufi teachings as love. When a human being sees and knows the glory and beauty of God, then he will start coming to His love. But it should be stressed that only one who truly completes the path of perfection and reaches the point where he devotes himself completely to God can really love Him. According to Sufism, God desires and expects human beings to recognize and to love Him, to become His beloveds, so that God will show them His secret (the jewels of the Hidden Treasure).

The way of perfection is an endless path through which absolutely poor and needy beings will eventually be reconciled with God, an absolute perfect being. Surprisingly, though, the human soul has the capacity to pass through this long process of purification.

Attar<sup>4</sup> named this unknown and far-off point Qāf Mountain, the summit of which is inaccessible and has never been seen.<sup>5</sup> For Attar, the soul-making process is everlasting. It includes many stations and stages. When the Sufis follow the long path back to their Beloved, they pass through numerous ‘states’ of the soul—hope and fear, joy and sorrow, expansion and contraction, intoxication and sobriety—and they acquire the ‘stations’ that are the soul’s virtues, character, traits, and perfections (Chittick 2000,117). In his famous poem *The Speech of the Birds*, Attar tells how the birds gathered together and decided to travel to their king, the *Simorgh* who lives in Qāf Mountain. Guided by the hoopoe, and undergoing many adventures on the way, they flew across seven valleys—aspiration, love, knowledge, independence, unity, bewilderment, and annihilation—before finally reaching their goal (Chittick 2000,118). It seems that Attar intends us to recall our purpose in creation and the necessity of the journey toward finding

the Beloved through analogy with the remoteness of the summit of Qāf Mountain, to which the birds must fly to reach their ultimate goal.

Of course, God could have put us at the summit of the mountain from the first moment of our creation, as he does for angels.<sup>6</sup> But the person who reaches the summit by meritorious endeavours is not the same as one who without effort settles at that point in the first moment, and our attempts to reach it are signs of our love. If we claim that we love God, we should show our desire to know Him and be with Him through the passion, desire, and perhaps pain, which accompanies our endeavours. The Qur'an asserts that God will test human beings regarding their claims about love and faith:

“Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best indeed” (Qur'an 67:2).

And:

“Do men imagine that they will be left (at ease) because they say, We believe, and will not be tested with affliction? Lo! We tested those who were before them. Thus Allah knows those who are sincere, and knows those who feign” (Qur'an 29:2-3).

In Sufi tradition, which is certainly inspired by the Qur'anic themes, the notion of the 'test' is crucial for love. God has invited us to undertake a difficult, long, and gruelling journey toward the perfection that is to acquire knowledge of God and to become God's lover. But only real lovers can traverse this path and pass the test of love. According to this Sufi theme, divine hiddenness prepares a situation in which humans must be consumed by the endeavour to seek their way towards the love of God. A man should travel the path by stages, with hope and with fear. In each step he will find the next, moving wisely so as not to fail the tests.

As Annemarie Schimmel emphasizes:

“[O]ne of the cornerstones in mystical teachings of Sufism [is that] man is, through acts of supererogatory piety, slowly lifted above his own base qualities and instead distinguished by the good qualities seen in God, until he completely lives in Him and through Him” (Schimmel 1975, 43).

Of course, this is a difficult road to stride, but the value to those who reach the hidden gemstones is to become a gem themselves.<sup>7</sup>

### III. Perplexing Invitation

According to the Sufi worldview, then, the path to the beloved's hidden treasure is by no means easy. Yet, as Attar points out in the bewilderment stage, when a *perfect* human being (who wholeheartedly adopts God's love and vigorously journeys on the long and difficult way toward Him) becomes a lover of God, she then encounters a deeper level of divine hiddenness in her perception of God. The mystic sees God, even while God remains hidden. In their most beautiful statements, Sufis describe their perceiving as seeing only the beloved's dark tresses, the last veil of the beloved face. This theme is stated repeatedly in the *Divan* of Hafez and many other Sufi poems. At the end of his journey, a perfect man will see not the face of God but the tresses of the hidden Beauty. The hearts of all lovers hang in the flowing curls of the Beloved's tresses. At this point, when a perfect human being puts the veils of darkness and light aside, he cannot explain his perception in words of ordinary language. Some choose to be silent, while others, adopting symbolic language, explain their insights through poems (or in another artistic manner).

For example, Hafez explains this perplexing situation as follows:

“My heart from me, He took; concealed from me, His face, He made. For God's sake! With whom can this sport be made? The morning of solitariness was in design upon my soul: Endless favours, the thought of Him made. Like the variegated tulip,

why am I not bloody of heart, Since with me, the heavy head,  
His eye made?" (Hafez sonnet:376)<sup>8</sup>

And

"From behind the screen of His tress, the moon, displaying the sun,  
is a great sun that in front, a cloud hath.... Toward Hafez's  
wounded heart, when a glance casts, thy intoxicated eye, that, in  
every corner, a ruined one hath" (Hafez sonnet:124).<sup>9</sup>

And Attar says:

"Till when, O 'Attar, this figurative language?  
Return to the mysteries of oneness!  
When the wayfaring man reaches this station  
The station itself rises from the road.  
It will get lost because he will be found;  
It will grow mute because he will be heard.  
In the higher school of this strange mystery  
You will find a hundred thousand intellects parch-lipped."<sup>10</sup>

The theme of hiddenness of the Beloved for one who loves him is mentioned frequently in Hafez's and Attar's poems, and can be interpreted as the cause of a mystical grief or perplexity for the lover. He had once seen God's face; but now He hides His face from the lover. This perplexing situation, which is caused by higher-order hiddenness, Attar names *remaining after annihilation*. The Mystics have faced a paradox: God invites them to come, but His tresses do not let them see His face! In Hafez's words: "To this palace they invite Hafez while they detain him" (Hafez sonnet: 194).<sup>11</sup> Our perplexity will increase in proportion to the intensity of our quest for loving God. At every step of the way the traveller meets thousands of lost souls who, like himself, are wandering in the desert where all knowledge is ignorance. "We went into the desert in the hope of discovering certainty ... We entered this world perplexed and left it completely bewildered!"<sup>12</sup> Then the lover is so perplexed that he cannot say anything but remember the glory and the beauty of the beloved by his mystical and *symbolic art*, mainly

poetry. During the mystical experience, man's ordinary language fails him, because he becomes mystified by the glimpse of divine beauty within the veils. It seems that divine hiddenness and unknowability has been the main source for the sacred arts during the history of mankind. John Bowker assents to this idea, saying:

“[In addition to poetry] many other forms of human imagination expressed in music, for example, or in art, mythology, novels, dance, architecture are equally important in the human attempt to *know the unknowable* in the case of God and universe. The explorations of spirituality are less often expressed in the form of propositions, because artists of all kinds have their own more fruitful ways of working on the boundaries of the unknowable, of that which lies hidden and inviting behind the obvious” (Bowker 2009, 14).

According to this view, *sacred art* is a creative medium for explaining the mystical experiences of hiddenness—the kind of hiddenness which is not a simple invitation to come into the way of worshiping and knowing God, but an experience of hiddenness for ones who have devoted their whole lives to worshipping God and have passed several stations of purification and soul-making.<sup>13</sup> So divine hiddenness not only makes the situation of our intellectual flourishing possible, but also in a more profound way provides a spring for our artistic creativity which is the result of our perplexity.

#### **IV. Perplexity as Guide**

There is a verse in the Qur'an that has inspired Sufis throughout the history of Islamic mysticism. This verse mentions the theme of perplexity at the higher level of hiddenness of God as experienced by a perfect human being, specifically Moses. Stories of Moses and the Israelites appear repeatedly in the Qur'an. Thus is it recorded that once Moses had reached a state of calmness and tranquillity after his long struggles with Pharaoh, and had convinced his nation to follow him in Exodus toward worshiping only God, then God invited him to come in *khalwat*—a place where lover and beloved

are and nobody else comes between—with Him in a special time and place which is named *miqaat*.

“And when Moses came at the time and place appointed by Us, and his Lord (God) spoke to him, then Moses said: ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may look upon You.’ God said: ‘You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain; if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me.’ So when his Lord manifested to the mountain, He made it collapse to dust, and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he recovered his senses he said: ‘Glory be to You, I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the believers.’ ” (Qur’an 7:143-144).

The phrase which is particularly interesting and related to our discussion is Moses’ plea to see God in *khalwat*, saying ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may look upon You.’ However, God said: ‘You cannot see Me’. It seems that God did not invite Moses to come to *khalwat* just to speak with him—He had, after all, spoken to him several times since his journey from the Median, and during his struggle with Pharaoh. The paradox of higher-order hiddenness arises again. Moses was invited to *khalwat* and came there (a metaphor for passing through the way of perfection); but God refrained from showing His face to him. This is a reported situation in which some mystics find themselves, and which makes them perplexed.

Several mystics in the Sufi tradition have pointed to this story, comparing their own experiences with that of Moses. Each has explained their inferences regarding this verse according to their level of perfection and capacity for interpretation. Attar says:

“If you say ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself)’, you will hear ‘You cannot see Me’ again because His beautiful face is hidden eternally” (Attar 1386[2007], sonnet:407).<sup>14</sup>

And also he laments:

“I say ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself)’, but I fear You tell me that ‘You cannot see Me’ so I am weeping” (*Ibid.*, sonnet:804).<sup>15</sup>

Thus, for Attar, this level of hiddenness causes us to beseech God in fear and hope. We are afraid of hearing a negative answer from God while we hope to receive His positive answer. This model of prayer is admired in the Holy Qur’an: “Invoke your Lord with humility, and in secret... invoke Him with fear and hope” (Quran 7:55-56). He is not disappointed, because he says ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself)’, but he fears that he will hear ‘You cannot see Me’.

According to the Qur’an, Moses’ imploring led to the manifestation of God’s splendour, which made Moses fall down in a swoon. God told Moses that he could not see Him, *but* that if a condition were met, then he would see Him! ‘You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain; if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me.’ But God’s condition could not be met: Moses never can see God. When Moses fell down and became annihilated, he who was saying ‘show me yourself’ would not be standing in between. It seems that the last veil between the perfect man and the Beloved is the man himself, which must be thrown out. Hafez says: “Between the lover and the beloved does no one intervene, Hafiz, remove the veil of self which has been cast between” (Hafez sonnet: 247).<sup>16</sup> The higher level of hiddenness is required to complete the perfection, which is not to see God but to be annihilated in God, to see that He is all that is. Attar says:

“He is the lover and love and the beloved.  
Who are you then, if He is all that is?  
When I look well, I see that from his part  
Attar has received nothing but nothingness!” (Attar sonnet:  
49).<sup>17</sup>

One can hear the same meaning in verses like ‘there is no god but God’, ‘there is no god but He’, ‘there is no god but You’, and, ‘there is no god but Me’.<sup>18</sup> This kind of love is what the hiddenness

of God invites us to reach. This is the love of God and not the love of perfection or the love just of seeing God. This is the kind of love that only the mystics who open their strapped hearts from the tresses of the beloved may reach. Then they may see the drowsy eyes of the beloved which invite them to come closer and closer. “Then he approached and came closer, and was at a distance of two bows’ length or even nearer, so Allah revealed to His slave (Mohammad) whatever He revealed, his heart lied not in what he saw” (Qur’an 53:8-11).

The sacred *hadith* of Nearness of Supererogatory (*qurbal-nawwafil*) confirms the idea of reconciliation: “When I love a servant, I, the Lord, am his ear so that he hears by Me, I am his eye, so that he sees by Me, and I am his tongue so that he speaks by Me, and I am his hand, so that he takes by Me.”<sup>19</sup>

One who reaches this point and becomes aware of the divine *secret* ought not to disclose it—otherwise he, like Mansour Hallaj, will lose his mundane life.<sup>20</sup> Rumi says:

“When Hallaj’s love for God reached its utmost limit, he became his own enemy and he killed himself. He said, ‘I am the Real (*haqq*)’ that is, ‘I have been annihilated; the Real remains, nothing else.’ This is extreme humility and the utmost limit of servant-hood. It means, ‘He alone *is*.’ To make a false claim and to be proud is to say, ‘You are God and I am the servant.’ In this way you are affirming your own existence, and duality is the necessary result. If you say, ‘He is the Real’, that too is duality, for there cannot be a ‘He’ without an ‘I’. Hence the Real said, ‘I am the Real’. Other than He, nothing else existed. Hallaj had been annihilated, so those were the words of the Real” (Mawlana sonnet: 442).<sup>21</sup>

## **V. Conclusion**

I have argued that not only is divine hiddenness required for human beings to become worshipers of God and to yield sincerely to the love of God, but it is also required to lead lovers of God to the

summit on their way to perfection. This end is not to acquire knowledge of God or to be the lover of God, because in both cases the subject of love and knowledge still is the human being. The end of perfection, according to those views, is that the human being becomes the object of divine love (*eros*). However, this state cannot be obtained until the human being becomes annihilated; for God loves the perfect being, which is Himself. Divine hiddenness (in its deeper form) is required also for mystics to be guided to this point, otherwise they might be prevented from advancing toward annihilation. Hafez says: “I complain not about your absence; Without absence no presence brings content” and he continues: “O Hafez why might you complain about the grief caused by absence? In absence there is presence, there is light in darkness” (Hafez sonnet: 254).<sup>22</sup>

Imam Ali ibn Abitaleb who is named by the Prophet as his successor and *wali* (spiritual leader) of all believers is admired also by Attar and many Sufi saints as the founder of Islamic mysticism. In the Invocation of Shabanyeh Imam Ali prays to God:

“I am thus having recourse to You, O my God! So, (please) do not disappoint me as regards Your having mercy upon me;

and do not divest me of Your kindness.

My Lord, I am Your powerless sinning slave and Your repentant bondman. So do not make me one of those from whom You turn away Your face, and whom his negligence has secluded from Your forgiveness.

My Lord, grant me complete severance of my relations with everything else and total submission to You. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of their looking at You to the extent that they penetrate the veils of light and reach the Source of Grandeur, and let our souls get suspended by the glory of Your sanctity. My Lord, make me one of those whom You call and they respond;

when You look at them and they are thunderstruck by Your majesty” (Imam Ali).<sup>23</sup>

Imam Ali clearly mentions the situation of higher order hiddenness and invokes God to guide him toward reconciliation with Him.

I conclude that divine hiddenness or *dues absconditus* is an invitation toward becoming annihilated in God. ‘You cannot see Me’, means to remove the veil of self to reach the stage in which there is nothing between the lover and the beloved, because the lover becomes reconciled in beloved. Of this stage Allameh Tabataba'ii says: “in the dawn I came to see you clandestinely, two thousand times You said ‘you cannot see Me’.”<sup>24</sup>

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> John Schellenberg is the first one who introduced this problem to the main debates of the contemporary analytic philosophy of religion by his book *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*. The debate continues in other essays such as Keller, (1995); Howard-Snyder and Moser (2002); Davis (2005); Howard-Snyder (2006); Maitzen (2006); Schellenberg (2010); Azadegan (2014); Adam Green and Eleonore Stump (2015); and many other journal papers and book chapters. For a good bibliography of the contemporary debates on the problem of divine hiddenness see Klaas (2010).

<sup>2</sup>This is a frequently quoted *hadith*, attributed to God; it is a sacred *hadith* (*hadith qudsi*), for which, like many traditional citations, a reference often cannot be found in canonical collections.

<sup>3</sup> English translation is mine.

<sup>4</sup> Abū Hamīd bin Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm (born 541/1145-46 in Nishapur Iran – died 618/1221), much better known by his pen-names Farīd ud-Dīn Attār (the pharmacist), was a Persian Muslim poet, theoretician of Sufism, and hagiographer from Nīshāpūr who left an everlasting influence on Persian poetry and Sufism. For details on his biography see: Mohammad Reza Shafi'i-Kadkani, *Zabur-i Parsi: Nigahi bi Zindagi wa Ghazalha-yi 'Attar*, [written in Persian].

<sup>5</sup> Attar Nishabouri, *Mantiq al-Tayr*; English translation by Peter Avery, *The Speech of the Birds*.

<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an 32:12.

<sup>7</sup> For Sufi ideas in this regard, see Nasrollah Pourjavadi, *Bu-ye Jān*, Ch. 4 [written in Persian].

<sup>8</sup> Translated by H. W. Clark.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by H. W. Clark.

<sup>10</sup> Attar Nishabouri, *Mantequ't Tair*, 3731-40; English translation by Lucian Stone in "Blessed Perplexity: The Topos of Hayrat in Attar's *Mantiq al-tayr*" in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, ed. L. Lewisohn, and C. Shackle, p.98.

<sup>11</sup> Translation is mine.

<sup>12</sup> Attar, *Mukhtar-Name*; English translation by Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, p. 318.

<sup>13</sup> For more details about the source of sacred art, see Nasr (2006).

<sup>14</sup> Translation is mine.

<sup>15</sup> Translation is mine.

<sup>16</sup> Translated by Herman Bicknell.

<sup>17</sup> Attar, *Divan*, Sonnet 49; translated by LeiliAnvar-Chenderoff, in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, 243.

<sup>18</sup> Mahmoud Amjad, *EshraghateManavi*, P.78.

<sup>19</sup> See Kulayni, *Al Kafī*, vol. 2:352; English translation by Margaret Smith, in *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> In many poets in the Sufi tradition, especially in Hafez, Hallaj's disclosure of the divine secret is ironically admired. In a famous sonnet, Hafez explains that we can see God's face by looking at our heart. It seems that this is the secret that caused Hallaj to be killed. While Hafez is disclosing the secret he says, 'And the one put on the cross by his face His crime, secrets of God would unveil' (Hafez, *Divan*, Sonnet 143; English translation by S. Shahriari).

<sup>21</sup> Mawlana Rumi, *Divan-e Shams*, Sonnet number 442, translated by William Chittick, in *Sufism*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Translation is mine.

<sup>23</sup> Imam Ali ibn Abitaleb, "Munajaat Shabanieh," in Abbas Qumi, *Mafatih al-Janan* (too many publications).

<sup>24</sup> I should express my thanks to Mahmoud Amjad one of Allameh's students for informing me of this poem. I am also thankful to Muhammad Legenhausen for his comments on the penultimate version of this paper, and to Amber Grifrioen for our discussions regarding the subject matter of this paper, and to the organizers and the participants of the international workshop on "Longing, Suffering, and Love in Mystical Theory and Practice" held in University of Konstanz, August, 2015 where I presented the main ideas of this paper.

## **Ecstatic Language of Early Daoism: A Sufi Point of View**

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### **Abstract**

Various esoteric traditions apply different modes of expression for the same Metaphysical truths. We may name the two most known esoteric languages as ecstatic and scholastic. Early Daoist use of reversal symbolism as for metaphysical truths and its critical way of viewing formalist understanding of traditional teachings, common virtues and popular beliefs show that it applies an ecstatic language, which, being called *shat̤h* in Sufi terminology, has a detailed literature and technical description in Sufism. This article tries, after a short survey of the concept of *shat̤h* in Sufism, to consider some early Daoist teachings such as *wuwei*, disparagement of moralism, and disparagement of rationality from an Eastern Sufi point of view regarding *shat̤h* to achieve a clearer insight into the gnostic aspects of the tradition, and to avoid certain possible misunderstanding of the teachings.

**Keywords:** Shat̤h, Malāmma, Eastern Sufism, Early Daoism, Reversal analogy, Paradoxical statement

## Introduction

The first encounter with Daoism creates a lot of wonders for those who are familiar with Sufism because of their substantial and formal resemblances. Most of the Eastern traditions share common metaphysical principles; above all, the concepts of Non-duality and Universal Man can be traced in all authentic traditions of the East. However, Sufism and Daoism, not only in essence, but also in form and application, have many similarities; as though, from a Sufi point of view, Daoism can be regarded as Sufism in a Chinese form; likewise, Sufism is Daoism with an Islamic cover.<sup>1</sup> Their formal similarity mostly refers to their application of the same esoteric 'language of ecstasy'.

In a comparative study of religion, one can easily differentiate between two expressive modes of esoterism either in the same or different traditions. Here, we name one as scholastic language and the other as ecstatic language. Each one of them has a specific usage of symbolism, theoretical viewpoints, and practical application. The esoteric traditions employing a scholastic language often use a confirmatory symbolism in which symbols are in direct conformity with the referent, while ecstatic language demands a reversal symbolism in which symbols have a deviated form from the principal objects. However, it is very important to note that differentiating between intellectuality and sentimentality, which can be envisaged as a vertical aspect of categorizing modes of expression, has nothing to do with the mentioned terms of the aspect which can hardly be envisaged vertically. Moreover, esoteric teachings, as those with which we are concerned here, are, by their very nature, intellectual.

Eastern Sufism, as an excellent representative of the ecstatic language of esoterism, has an extensive doctrine for its ecstatic modes of expression, commonly called '*shatḥ*'. As we do not intend to involve with the scholastic language of esoterism here,

we limit ourselves to survey only Early Daoist language of teachings from an Eastern Sufi point of view.

### **Sufi Doctrine of the Ecstatic Language**

Sufism has appeared in various forms in the Islamic history. At least we can name two main points of view in this tradition as *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (the unity of Existence) and *Wahdat ash-Shuhūd* (the unity of Witness). The latter historically has priority on the former and after the emergence of the Sufi school of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* in Western regions, the school of *Wahdat ash-Shuhūd* has played its role mostly in the Eastern regions of the Islamic world, including Iran and India. It is this school which, in a sense, has established its mode of expression on the base of *shaṭḥ*.<sup>2</sup> *Shaṭḥ*, for Sufis, is the expression of the hidden mysteries, in accordance to exact terms of knowledge, through the intellect as the eye of the soul, on the tongue of the wondered reason in ‘reversal words’.<sup>3</sup> “I am the Truth” (Hallāj), “Pure I am, how exalted is my state” (Bāyazīd) are the most famous sayings regarded as *shaṭḥ*. Behind the claiming form of these words, the ecstatic spokesmen indicate a truth contrary to what may be understood from its external form.<sup>4</sup> *Shaṭḥiāt* (pl. form of *shaṭḥ*) are included in Sufi literature as the collections of short statements. The masterpiece of these collections is the work of Rūzbihān Baqli, named “*Sharh-i Shaṭḥiāt*” (*Interpretation of shaṭḥs*).<sup>5</sup> At the outset of his book, Rūzbihān describes the meaning of *shaṭḥ*:

When something moves people call it ‘*yashṭahu*’ in Arabic [from *sha-ṭa-ḥa*, the same root from which *shaṭḥ* is derived]. *Shaṭḥ* means movement.... Then in the vocabulary of the Sufis, *shaṭḥ* is derived from the agitations of the intimate consciences of their hearts. When ecstasy becomes strong and the light of manifestation becomes elevated in the inmost part of their consciences, by the quality of the annunciation and revelation and strengthening of the spirits illuminated by the inspiration that appears in their intellects, it stirs up the fire of their longing for

the eternal Beloved. They reach the vision of the seraglio-curtain of Majesty, and they are moving in the hidden, and the secrets of the hidden of the hidden, and the mysteries of greatness—intoxication enters in upon them unasked, the soul enters into ebullience, the consciousness enters into commotion, the tongue enters into speech. Speech comes forth from the ecstatic, from his incandescent state (*hāl*) and from his spirit's exaltation, regarding the science of the stations (*maqāmāt*). The outward form of it is paradoxical (*mutashābih*). It is an expression the words of which are found to be strange. When others do not understand the inner aspect through the outward forms, and they do not see the method of it, they are led astray to denial and refutation of the speaker.<sup>6</sup>

In ecstatic modes of expression, gnostics moan about the shortage of language before the greater consciousness, hence, to them, it is inevitable to use symbolical language and reversal analogy, the best-known form of which is called *shaṭḥ*.<sup>7</sup>

Beside the metaphysical implications of the concept of *shaṭḥ*, it is a social reaction against religious formalism of Muslim jurists (*fuqahā*) and pious hypocrisy of Muslim hermits (*Zuhhād*). From this point of view, it can more closely be related to the concept of *malāma* (lit. blame) which can be regarded as the behavioral form of *shaṭḥ*.<sup>8</sup> Compared to *shaṭḥ*, a Sufi *malāmatī* (one who readily seeks after being blamed) commonly pretends to be an unorthodox Muslim standing against the restriction of jurists in concerning merely the external surface of the Islamic teachings.

### **Ecstatic Mode of Expression in Early Daoist Sources**

Similar to Sufi *shaṭḥ*, both as a way of expression of the metaphysical principles and as a disagreement with formalism, Early Daoism, through an esoteric interpretation of the primordial Chinese tradition, socially made a reaction against exteriorized morals of that time – when Confucianism tried its best to keep the ancient forms alive. In what follows, we will see how considering

the early Daoist ecstatic language as *shatḥ* can help us to have a better understanding of the teaching and to explain *raison d'être* of such methods of expression.

From a Sufi point of view, the *Daodejing* 道德經, being a collection of *shatḥiāt*, is an esoteric text which, on the one hand, is to be differentiated from the exoteric outlooks, and on the other, is to express metaphysical realities by the language of symbols and inverse analogy. Daoist *shatḥiāt* are descended from the realm of the 'greater knowledge': "The greater knowledge is wide and the lesser knowledge is narrow; the greater speech is short and the lesser speech is verbose."<sup>9</sup> The greater knowledge, first of all, is the knowledge of the Principle (the Dao) and it begins with not-knowing as "the Yellow Emperor said, 'you can get to know the Dao without thinking or contemplating. You can comply with the Dao without going in any direction or taking any approach' ... 'You and I are far from the Dao since we know what to do'" (*Zhuangzi*, Ch. 22). Knowing without knowing, doing without doing, being without being are paradoxical expressions (*mutashābihāt*) inherent everywhere in Sufi *shatḥiāt* for which a rich science of interpretation (*ta'wīl*) is established.<sup>10</sup>

### Action and Non-Action

One of the most important Daoist doctrines is *wuwei* 無為 (non-action) which, according to the *Laozi*, is an attribute of the Dao itself,<sup>11</sup> and hence that of the Daoist gnostic (*shengren* 聖人) who beyond his individuality has achieved the Dao (*dedao* 得道). Of course, *wuwei* is something more than being in a state of contemplation; in fact, it is, before everything else, a metaphysical state transcendent to action and non-action. Realizing the Dao's attributes, which can be expressed principally in negative forms, the 'transcendent man' (*shenren* 神人) acts like the Dao. Attaining *wuwei*, "the transcendent man with all his integrity can lead everything under Heaven into the One. When the people expect him to rule over the world, how can he busy himself in doing

anything about it. Nothing can harm the transcendent man. He will neither be drowned in a great flood that rises to the sky<sup>12</sup> nor feel the heat in a drought that melts the metal and the rocks and scorches the earth and the hills.”<sup>13</sup>

From a Sufi point of view, we may say, there is a spirit of *malāmma* in the notion of *wuwei*. What should one do for being righteous, learning arts, increasing knowledge, or even for reconciling the chaos of the world? While Confucians, as might be expected, dedicate themselves to find some answers, a Daoist says, “in the pursuit of learning, one increases each day. In the practice of the Dao, one decreases each day. Decreasing and again decreasing, one eventually arrives at *wuwei*. Through non-action, nothing is left undone. Do not amuse yourself with what are under heaven. If you are amused to what are under heaven, it is not you who is proper to govern what are under heaven.”<sup>14</sup> “Therefore, the [Daoist] gnostic abides in a condition of non-action, practicing a teaching that does not require words.”<sup>15</sup>

Around the center where the gnostic is placed, the wheel of actions works. The center does not interfere into the working of the wheel but all actions emerge from it. Therefore, “thirty spokes unite around the hub of wheel; using the non-being of this center arises the utility of the wheel.”<sup>16</sup> Taking the idea of *shatḥ* into consideration, one can find a connection between the reversal symbols of the *Laozi*, such as, the “hub of wheel” (*gu* 轂), “non-being” (*wu* 無), “emptiness” (*chong* 沖, *xu* 虛), “softness” (*rou* 柔), “childhood” (*hai* 孩, *er* 兒), “uncarved block” (*pu* 樸), “feminine” (*ci* 雌, *pin* 牝), and so on. In symbolism of these Daoist *shatḥiāt*, we notice when something extraordinary is going to be said, an ordinary symbol is employed, and inverting exoterists of China who thorough erudite terminology want to differentiate themselves from ordinary people, Daoists not only present themselves as all the more ordinary and common but also they pretend to be worst of all people.<sup>17</sup> While Confucians want to be well-educated, morally developed, and strong in upholding their tradition, Daoists

pursuit the way of becoming absolutely untaught like a child, completely simple like an uncarved block, and mysteriously flexible and soft like water: “Renounce learning and be free from sorrow.”<sup>18</sup> “[Daoist] gnostics are all children.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Disparagement of Humaneness, Righteousness, and Rites**

‘Humaneness’ (*ren* 仁), ‘righteousness’ (*yi* 義), and rituals (*li* 禮) are among the most important pre-Confucian virtues, and the idea is transmitted to Confucianism as constituents of the ‘five constant virtues’ (*wuchang* 五常). These concepts are in many ways disesteemed in early Daoist sources, especially because of their being transformed largely to mere conventional ethical covers in those times:

Let’s get rid of humaneness and discard righteousness, may the people return to filial piety and compassion.<sup>20</sup>

While Confucianism deals with teaching the way of benevolence (*ren* 仁), Laozi says,

Heaven and Earth are not humane;  
They regard the ten thousand beings as straw dogs.  
The [Daoist] gnostic is not humane;  
He regards the people as straw dogs.<sup>21</sup>

Heaven is the domain of the gods and it is the impersonal aspect of the ‘Celestial Godhead’ (*shangdi* 上帝), and Earth is its complementary principle. In old times, solely an emperor could offer sacrifice to Heaven and Earth. Purging humaneness from Heaven and Earth, as well as, the Daoist gnostic (who possess a high rank in the Daoist hierarchy of human development)<sup>22</sup> is a *shath*, seemingly unorthodox, essentially referral to some metaphysical truths. According to Wangbi,<sup>23</sup> “Heaven and Earth consign things to *ziran* 自然,<sup>24</sup>” that is, both leave ten thousand beings, whole of the formal manifestation, to their own selves, their innate nature, flowing spontaneously, and “neither engages in

an effort.” “Heaven and Earth do not make the grass grow for the sake of beasts, yet beasts [following *ziran*] eat grass.” And so does the gnostic, whose *de* 德 (rectitude, power, virtue, stamina) is one with that of Heaven and Earth.<sup>25</sup> Any conscious effort is an interference in the natural order of the ten thousand beings, and correspondingly, against *ziran*, but the effortless effort is an effort in conformity with the actionless activity of Heaven and Earth or with that of the Dao and *de*.<sup>26</sup>

When the *Dao* 道 (the Truth, Principle) is lost, there will be *de* 德 (‘uprightness,’ specification of the *Dao*); when *de* is lost there will be humaneness; when humaneness is lost there will be righteousness; when righteousness is lost there will be rites.<sup>27</sup>

To envisage the Daoist disparagement of moralism as *shāh*, is to be on guard against the moralist misunderstanding of this attitude: Daoism advocates to keep the innate nature intact and to flow in the natural courses of the Dao, far from advocating deprivation or wickedness through the refusal of moralism. A realized gnostic is compassionate; not everybody who is compassionate is a gnostic. The heartfelt compassion of a gnostic flows naturally from within, but a convened behavioral compassion does not make one a gnostic.

To carve the timber into vessels is the fault of an artisan; to destroy the *Dao* 道 and *de* 德 for the sake of humaneness and righteousness is the mistake of a sagely man.<sup>28</sup>

### **Disparagement of Rationality**

Another Daoist objection, expressed in a *malāmatī* tone, is against the formalist understanding of knowledge. Disparagement of rationality, however, had been always along with the praise of intellectuality. Before going any further on this point, we must take a look at the difference between rationality and intellectuality. This difference is of the same kind that one finds between *renxin*

人心 (human intelligence) and *daoxin* 道心 (*dao* intelligence) in the *Shujing*,<sup>29</sup> between *xin* 心 (the mind) and *bixin zhixin* 彼心之心 (another mind within the mind)<sup>30</sup> in the *Neiye*,<sup>31</sup> between the outward knowledge which produces at best wiseness and the inward knowledge which brings on illumination according to the *Laozi*,<sup>32</sup> between the subject of the greater and lesser knowledge in the *Zhuangzi*,<sup>33</sup> between *xin* 心 and *shen* 神 in the *Huainanzi*<sup>34</sup> and many later Daoist teachings. In short, the gradation of intelligence into the reason and the intellect had never been unknown in early Daoism. To describe the gradation of intelligence in the language of Islamic philosophy, either the human reason is material (*al-'aql al-hayūlani*), being passive and individual, in the case of most of the people who solely receive external perceptions and collect information, or at best it is actualized (*al-'aql bil-fi'l*), being active and individual, in the case of the people who have begun to think and analyzing the collected information from outside alone. When the reason is subdued, it reflects what is illumined in the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*), being passive and supra-individual, which in turn receives its objects from the Universal Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*), being active and supra-individual, as the source of all true knowledge.

Now, due to its exteriorizing character and being in the bondage of the transformation of the ten thousand beings, *xin*, refers to the reason in its lowest states, and its negative aspects are pointed when used in early Daoist sources. This state of intelligence, in the Buddhist teachings, and followingly in some later Daoist and Neo-Confucianist texts, is called the 'monkey of rationality' (*xinyuan* 心猿) and the 'horse of circumspection' (*yima* 意馬). According to the Daoist teachings, if the monkey does not become subdued and the horse tamed, they can harm the divine intellect (*shen* 神), in other words, the liberation of the *shen* and its returning to the emptiness (*xu* 虛) demands the silence of the mischievous reason (*wanxin* 頑心).

The [Daoist] gnostic is always a man without a mind—he takes the mind of the hundred clans [i.e. populace] as his mind.<sup>35</sup>

All the others have a superabundance; I alone seem to have missed out. Oh, my simpleton's mind! So confused. Ordinary men are so bright; I alone am so dull. Ordinary men are so sharp; I alone am so stupid.<sup>36</sup>

And so, the government of the [Daoist] gnostic: empty their mind, fill their bellies.<sup>37</sup>

Here, the color of *shatḥ*, again, can be seen. To refer to the higher states of intelligence and wisdom, in accordance to reversal symbolism, the intelligence itself is opposed, using the terms such as *inconstant mind* (*wuchang xin* 無常心), dull (*hun* 昏), emptying the mind (*shuxin* 虛心), etc.

Regarding the Daoist disparagement of rationality as *shatḥ* helps us to avoid two common misunderstandings about this attitude. The first is the rationalist misunderstanding, to take non-rational states simply as irrational ones. As if Daoism has propounded the people's ignorance of their inner depths, their innate nature, and their stupidly only being passive to external accidental objects and their lack of discernment of the essential. The second is the sensationalist and sentimentalist misunderstanding, to take advantage of this attitude in favor of sentimentality, to interpret the tradition in a romanticistic manner, to escape, on a non-rational basis, from rational judgment, and to reduce the cause of all non-theological knowledge to sensible perceptions.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

Early Daoism, as much as Confucianism, if not more, had been on the wisdom of the primordial Chinese tradition, but of course, in a quite different way. For Daoism, as the esoteric center of the Far East, the way of primal nature, which is placed inside all things, obviously has superiority on human conventional concepts like

humaneness, righteousness, etc. Avoidance from mundane knowledge and subduing the mischievous reason in order to let the intellect to shine wisdom and to let the soul gain *de* 德, uprightness, is much closer to the way of wisdom, as one of the five Confucian constant virtues, than seeking for accumulation of all these limitless and solely informatory knowledge in a limited lifespan. Therefore, Daoism employs a specific language that can give it the ability to denote both metaphysical principles, in a reversal mode of expression, and deficiency of formalist methods. Such a mode of expression is called *shatḥ* in eastern Sufism. To look at the Daoist teachings from a Sufi point of view regarding principles of *shatḥ*, helps one to achieve a better understanding of the teachings in many ways. Moreover, this approach prevents one from moralist, rationalist, and sentimentalist misinterpretations.

A lot more can be said about the Daoist ecstatic language and its relevance to the Sufi *shatḥiāt*. But we did not have the intention, here, to deal with all the Daoist implications of the ecstatic language. Nonetheless, further research is required to demonstrate all the causes of unfoldment of ecstatic modes of expression on the base of their essential principles.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Aguéli (for the first time in 1911), René Guénon and Toshihiko Izutsu had tried to represent some essential correspondences between these two traditions. See René Guénon, *Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism* (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004); Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (California: UC Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Among many great Sufis akin to the early eastern Sufism, one immediately reminds of Bayazid and Hallaj when the idea of *shaḥ* is under discussion. In medieval Sufism, great figures of *Wahdat ash-Shuhūd*, whose teachings are relevant to *shaḥīāt* and their interpretation, are Ahmad Qazali, Ayn al-Qudhāt Hamadāni, and Rūzbihān Baqli.

<sup>3</sup> On the theoretical meaning of *shaḥ* and its history of development in Sufi writings, see the first part of Carl Ernst's brilliant work, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (New York: Suny Press, 1985), pp. 9-24.

<sup>4</sup> In this connection, it is not without interest to quote the great Daoist master of Song dynasty, Bo Yuchan's ecstatic sayings: "Dao and Heaven and Earth and I have the same essence, ten thousand beings and I have the same substance." (道天地與我同根，萬物與我同體。) (*Haiqiong Bo Zhenren Yulu*, iii.3) "It is I who am the Saint, the ten thousand beings become one with me ... I am Heaven and Earth, Heaven and Earth are I." (Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* [Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004], vol. 2, p. 662)

<sup>5</sup> *Sharh-e Shaḥīāt* is mainly a Persian version of *Mantiq al-Asrār fī Bayān al-Anwār*.

<sup>6</sup> Rūzbihān Baqli, *Sharh-e Shaḥīyat* (Tehran: Institute of Iranology of France, 1966), pp. 56-7, based on the translation of Carl Ernst (*Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* [New York: Suny Press, 1985], p. 18).

<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, other forms of ecstatic expression in Sufism, such as *tāmāt*, *da'wī*, *ramz*, *īmā*, *kināyat*, *ishārat*, etc.

<sup>8</sup> The concept of *malāma* is mostly developed by an extinct order of Sufism in 9th century A.D. called *Malāmatiyya*, however, it is a widespread concept in later Sufism.

<sup>9</sup> 大知閑閑，小知閒閒；大言炎炎，小言詹詹。(Zhuangzi, Ch. 2) “The greater words have lesser benefits, and the lesser words have greater benefits, but the benefit of greater words is eternal and that of the lesser words is temporary.” (上言者下用也，下言者上用也，上言者常用也，下言者權用也。) (Huainanzi, xiii.15 quoted from the *Lost History of Zhou* 逸周書)

<sup>10</sup> From the very outset, the *Laozi* is concerned about paradoxical statements: “Dualities are one [in the state of *wuming* (namelessness)], they become manifested and separated in the state of *ming* (being named). Their sameness should secretly be told of, using secrets within secrets; the gate of all mysteries.” (此兩者同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，衆妙之門。) (*Daode Jing*, Ch. 1)

<sup>11</sup> “Dao never does an action, yet there is no action undone by It” (道常無為而無不為) (*Daodejing*, Ch. 37). Aristotle’s ‘Unmoved Mover’ can be a proper means to understand this notion, insofar as both at least refer to the Principle, but, of course, not insofar as the former could in any way be considered as the ultimate state of realization.

<sup>12</sup> Hafiz Shīrazī, the great Persian Sufi poet says, “If waves of the ocean of misery reach heaven, the Sufi's clothes shall not be found wet.”

<sup>13</sup> 之人也，之德也，將旁礴萬物，以為一世蕪乎亂，孰弊弊焉以天下為事！之人也，物莫之傷，大浸稽天而不溺，大旱、金石流、土山焦而不熱。(Zhuangzi, Ch. 1) Translation by Wang Rongpi (*Zhuangzi* [Beijing: Hunan People’s Publishing House, 1999], pp. 9-11)

<sup>14</sup> 為學日益，為道日損。損之又損，以至於無為。無為而無不為。取天下常以無事，及其有事，不足以取天下。(Daodejing, Ch. 48) English translation by Louis Komjathy (*Handbooks for Daoist Practice: Book of Venerable Masters* [Hong Kong: The Yuen Yuen Institute, 2008], p.71).

<sup>15</sup> 是以聖人處無為之事，行不言之教 (Daodejing, Ch. 2; see also Ch. 43) English translation by Louis Komjathy (*Handbooks for Daoist Practice: Book of Venerable Masters*, p.56).

<sup>16</sup> 三十輻，共一轂，當其無，有車之用。(Daodejing, Ch. 11)

<sup>17</sup> “The elite, by the fact that the people is its extreme opposite, truly finds therein its most direct reflection (just as in all things the highest point is directly reflected not at any intermediate point but at the lowest point). Admittedly, it is an obscure and inverse reflection.” (René Guénon, *Initiation and Spiritual Realization* [New York: Sophia Perennis 2001a], p. 143). Let us note in passing that Persian Sufi literature has borrowed a large part of its symbols from the customs of the gamblers and drinkers.

<sup>18</sup> 絕學無憂。(Daodejing, Ch. 20)

<sup>19</sup> 聖人皆孩之。(Ibid, Ch. 49)

<sup>20</sup> 絕仁棄義，民復孝慈。(Ibid, Ch. 19)

<sup>21</sup> 天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗；聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗。(Ibid, Ch. 5) — “People bound grass together to make dogs and used them as sacrificial offerings, but when they have concluded the ritual, they cast them aside and trampled on them.” Rechar Lynn, *The Classic of the Way and Virtue: A New Translation of the Tao-Te-Ching of Laozi As Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 61, cited from Wei Yuan, *Laozi benyi* [*Original meaning of the Laozi*], A:6).

<sup>22</sup> For an early view of the Daoist hierarchy of human development, see *Wenzi* (Ch. VII, quoted from *Zhonghuangzi*); Paul Van Els, *The Wénzi: Creation and Manipulation of a Chinese Philosophical Text* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) (Leiden University, Leiden, 2006); René Guénon, *The Great Triad* (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2001), and *Taipingjing* (Ch. LVI and LXI, for an English translation see Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping*

*Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism* (California: UC Press, 2006), pp. 207-210 and 268.

<sup>23</sup> Wangbi wrote the first commentary the *Laozi*. What he has done in interpretation of Laozi's teachings and authenticating them is, to a large extent, comparable to Ruzbihān Baqlī's exposition of *shāḥīāt* of *Hallāj* and other Sufis.

<sup>24</sup> *Ziran* would be quite clear to one who is familiar with Islamic tradition if one reminds *al-fītrah* (primal inner nature containing the true way of conduct, as explained so by Quran 30:30). *Ziran* 自然 can be translated as self-so, self-self, nature and so on.

<sup>25</sup> Wangbi, *Laozi Daodejing Wangbi Zhu*, Ch. 5.

<sup>26</sup> From a deeper point of view, in reality, no action can occur outside of *ziran* and the Dao, for, "the Dao fills the entire world. It is everywhere that people are, but people are unable to understand this." (道滿天下，普在民所，民不能知也) (*Neiye*, XIV) Based on the translation of Harold Roth (*Original Tao: Inward Training and the foundations of Taoist Mysticism*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1999], p. 72)

<sup>27</sup> 失道而後德，失德而後仁，失仁而後義，失義而後禮。(Daodejing, Ch. 38)

<sup>28</sup> 夫殘樸以為器，工匠之罪也；毀道德以為仁義，聖人之過也。(Zhuangzi, Ch. 9) Based on the translation of Wang Rongpi (*Zhuangzi*, pp. 137-9).

<sup>29</sup> "Human intelligence is troublemaker, *dao* intelligence is concealed, essential, and one pointed; it gives one the ability to guard the Center." (人心惟危，道心惟微惟精惟一，允執厥中。)(*Shujing*, 1.3.13).

<sup>30</sup> Here, we use the word 'mind' not in its etymological sense, according to which it cannot be higher than the reason, but, in its common meaning in modern usage, as the set of perceptual faculties in common usage.

<sup>31</sup> "[T]he calmness of the mind: when your mind is well ordered, your senses are calmed. What makes them well ordered is the mind; What makes them calm is the mind. By means of the mind you store the mind: Within the mind is yet another mind. That mind within the mind: it is an awareness that precedes the words." (心安，我心治，官乃治。我心安，官乃安。治之者心也，安之者心

也；心以藏心，心之中又有心焉。彼心之心，意以先言。）（*Neiye*, XIV）（English translation by Harold Roth [*The Original Tao*, p. 72]). — The term “‘*aql-e 'aql*” for the first time in Islamic tradition is ecstatically used by Ruzbihan Baqli (*Sharh-e Shaḥīyat*, p. 5 and 482). Afterwards, this concept became detailed in Rumi’s famous *Mathnavi*. — Rumi: “Intelligence is of two kinds: The first is acquired. You learn it like a boy at school. From books, teachers, reflection and rote, from concepts and from excellent and new sciences... The other, the intellect is a gift of God. Its fountainhead lies in the midst of the spirit.” Based on the translation of William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: Suny Press, 1983), p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> *Daodejing*, Ch. 33.

<sup>33</sup> The greater knowledge is wide and comprehensive; the lesser knowledge is partial and restricted. The great speech is exact and complete; the small speech is (merely) so much talk. (大知閑閑，小知閒閒；大言炎炎，小言詹詹。) (*Zhuangzi*, Ch. 2).

<sup>34</sup> The intellect is the lake of wisdom; let it be refined to illumine the wisdom ... To see their reflection in a mirror, people do not look at a flooded water, but at a settled one, because of its stillness ... [Therefore, let the intellect be refined and the reason be at peace, to be able to project things as such.] Therefore, their usefulness will be in their non-usage. (神者智之淵也，淵清則明矣 ... 人莫鑒於流潦而鑒於止水，以其靜也 ... [故神清意平乃能形物之情，] 故用之者必假於不用也。) (*Huainanzi*, II.17) The sentence inside the square brackets [ ] is added in the *Wenzi* (III.7).

<sup>35</sup> 聖人無常心，以百姓心為心。 (*Daodejing*, 49. Based on the translation of Michael LaFargue (*The Tao of the Tao Te Ching: A Translation and Commentary* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992], p. 130).

36 衆人皆有餘，而我獨若遺。我愚人之心也哉！沌沌兮，俗人昭昭，我獨若昏。俗人察察，我獨悶悶。 (*Daodejing*, 20) English translation by Michael LaFargue (*The Tao of the Tao Te Ching*, p. 28).

<sup>37</sup> 是以聖人之治，虛其心，實其腹。 (*Daodejing*, 3) Based on the translation of Michael LaFargue (*The Tao of the Tao Te Ching*, p. 172). — Liu Yiming comments: “‘emptying the intelligence’ denote ‘emptying the human intelligence’

and nourishing the 'essential innate nature' (*xing* 性). 'filling the bellies' denote 'filling the dao intelligence' and nourishing the 'substantial innate nature' (*ming* 命)." (Liu Yiming, *Wuzhen Zhizhi* 悟真直指 [*Straight Direction to Realization of the Truth*], II.9 in *Daoshu Shi'er Zhong* [Beijing: Shumu Wenxian Chubanshe, 1996], p. 137).

<sup>38</sup> See Frithjof Schuon, *Sufism: Veil and Quintessence* (IN, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006), pp. 90-92.

## **Zoroaster His Life and Socio-Political Teachings**

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### **Abstract**

Zoroastrianism is the religion of a tiny ethno-religious community who follows Zoroaster as the founder of their religion. These people are the members of the Indo-European family and Persia is considered their homeland. After the rise of Islam, when Iranian converted to Islam, some of the Zoroastrians sailed to India and settled there, where they are known as Parsees or Parsis. As the matter of fact, there is a hot dispute about the life and teachings of Zoroaster. According to scholars his dates vary from 8000 BC to 550 BC and they argue about his teachings if he supported monotheism or he taught pantheism. Indeed, Zoroastrianism has gone under many innovations; but, the nutshell of its teachings has been monotheism, mixed with secrecy and magic by Zoroaster's opportunistic followers. In this paper I will address innovation and change in the religion based on the incorporation of Men of Knowledge with the ruling elites as well as Zoroastrian political and social views.

**Keywords:** Zoroaster, Zarthusht, Avesta, Persia, Mazda worshiper, Aryan, Government

## INTRODUCTION

Zoroastrians (also called Mazdayasnians or Mazda worshipers) make up the religion of a tiny ethno-religious community who follows Zoroaster as the founder of their religion. The Persians (modern Iranians) were members of the Indo-European family known as the Aryans, and Persia (modern Iran) is considered the homeland of this religion. Zoroasterism had been a prominent religion in Iran until the rise of Islam around 1300 years ago, when Iranian converted to Islam. During this period, some of the Zoroastrians sailed to India and settled there, where they are known as Parsees or Parsis, that is, Persians. Today, Zoroastrians occupy several small communities in various Iranian cities, but the majority of them live in Bombay, India. The entire population of Zoroastrians in the world is about 100,000.

Since fact mixed with fiction and legends about Zoroaster, his life and teachings are disputed and though his dates vary from 8000 BC to 550 BC. Academic also argue about his teachings, questioning whether he upheld monotheism and preached only one God, Ahura Mazda, or whether he taught pantheonism, whose advocates believe in many gods who do battle between good gods and bad gods. Zoroastrians claim their religion to be the most ancient religion in the Middle East, one that therefore has influenced other major religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They assert that concepts such as heaven and hell, the resurrection and the final purification of the world, the virgin birth, the idea of a Messiah, and Jesus as savior are actually Zoroastrian in origin.

In this paper I will address innovation and change in the religion based on the incorporation of Men of Knowledge with the ruling elites as well as Zoroastrian political and social views. As Ashtiyani has suggested, however, we need to bear in mind that any discussion about Zoroastrism, should distinguish between the founder's teachings in the twilight of his life and the beliefs of later Zoroastrians influenced by innovations and misinterpretations.

Second, any interpretation of Zoroaster's teachings must be placed in the context of his time period. Only in the cultural, social, and economic context of Zoroaster's time, within an ancient nomadic community, we can grasp the clearest ideas about this religion. Finally, Zoroasterism has undergone many innovations; however, the nutshell of its teachings has been monotheism, mixed with secrecy and magic by Zoroaster's opportunistic followers.<sup>1</sup>

## **Aryans**

Iran, the homeland of Zoroasterism, is Iran that was occupied by a group of immigrants known as Aryans, a part of the Indo-Germans who migrated to various areas including Iran, India, and Europe. Those who settled in Iran and India are called Aryans. Before the separation, according to Boyce, these two groups of people shared a common culture, language, and religion; only after the emigration, based on the dominant culture in their new homeland, did the religion of each group develop separately.<sup>2</sup> In ancient Indian scripture (i.e. the Rigveda) and ancient Iranian scripture (i.e. the Avesta), Aryan means humbleness, dignity, and hospitality.<sup>3</sup>

## **Locations**

Scholars are not unanimous about the primary location of the Aryans; their opinions vary from the north of Europe to the south of Russia and the north of Iran. The varied ideas about the primary location of Aryans can be grouped accordingly as follows. First, based on the Old Testament, some scholars believe all inhabitants in the world come from Noah's generation and as offspring of his two sons, Sam and Yafith, Aryans being from the Yafith generation. A second idea, from the two Muslim historians al-Biruni and Kharazmi in the tenth century supports the south of Russia as the main location of Aryans. The third idea, the school of nineteenth century scholars points to other locations, among them Max Muller who refers to Central Asia; Issac Taylor who refers to Finland; de Jubainville who refers to Arbois; Otto Schroder and T.H. Huxley

who refer to the Oral sea, Sihun, and Jayhoon; Heine Geldern Jettmur who refers to the south of Russia and north of the Caspian Sea; and Hirt who refers to Central Europe. Finally, a number of twentieth century scholars have most often emphasized two locations, either the south of Russia, including north of Afghanistan or north of the Black Sea. Among these scholars Gordon Childe, H. Lommel, A.T. Olmstead, J.H. Moulton, L.C. Mills, Sir Percy Sykes, H.H. Schaeder, Fr. Alheim, S.H. Nyberg, Mary Boyce, and Winckler support the former and Edward Meyer, D Kumer, and Gimpera hold the second idea.<sup>4</sup>

### **The history of Aryans Emigration**

According to scholars, Most probably, the South of Russia was the homeland of the Aryans, from Oral Lake, south of the Volga to the north of Caucasus from 4000 BC until 2000 BC. From, what we have heard or read in the legends, the books of kings, and the ancient Persian history about the Pishdadian dynasty, both Jamshid and the Feravidun kingdoms, occurred during this period. According to Vendidad, one of the Zoroastrian scriptures, the golden age of the Aryans fell during the reign of King Yima Kshaeta (Yam Ray in the Indian Veda). Even later, they faced the ice age (about 20,000 years ago) when they were forced to move toward the south, southeast, and southwest.<sup>5</sup>

In archeological investigations on Luristan and Khusistan in western Iran, traces of native Iranian villages dating back to 9000 BC have been discovered. According to these findings, the inhabitants who lived in villages, made pottery, melted copper, and wrote on clay tables, moreover, these people used some form of lime for construction. No doubt Aryans had certain conflicts with other natives during their migration over what we call contractual relations between them.<sup>6</sup>

Aryan emigration continued until 1200 BC toward the southeast, northeast, and northwest of Iran. Later, the Aryans moved into east, west, and the south parts of Iran. Those who went toward north east

of Iran settled in Khurasan, Sistan, and Harat, whereas the groups of people who migrated toward the northwest settled in Europe, Asia Minor, and western Iran. Only, these groups were influenced differently by local groups in these areas. The people who moved into western Iran were influenced by ancient civilizations between the rivers namely Ilamids and Sarmians, with whom they established Mitani and Hittite governments. The Aryans who migrated into eastern Iran lived as nomads until 600-500 BC, whereas those who moved to India were influenced by Harappa and Mohenjo-daro people and established the small state of Rajas. Finally, the Aryans who settled in southern Europe and Greece were directly influenced by the Minoan and indirectly by the Egyptian civilization.<sup>7</sup>

## **Aryan Religion**

The Aryans worshiped natural phenomena, such as fire, and they believed in totems and the protection of the family fire by the oldest son in each family. They thought that every natural phenomena was under the control of one god--including good and bad, virtue and evil, righteousness and fallen, like Ahriman and Ahura who fight all over the world. Of course, without doubt, the good and righteous god would be the eventual victor. Zoroastrians believe that the Aryans were Mazda worshipers and that he sent Zoroaster to reaffirm the ancient faith to the first man Gayomart and later to Yima Dushata.<sup>8</sup>

Aryans believed that fire mediated between man and God, but it is not clear if they considered fire as God, the illumination of his power, or the son of God. At one time, they used to sacrifice animals to their God, in the presence of a ranking, knowledgeable priest who conducted the service and actually acted as the determining factor in acceptance of the sacrifice. For purification purposes, Aryans drank animal blood, even though they considered the meat as forbidden. The position of the priests was extremely important, because each ceremony and prayer had a special cost for ritual process, and the priest determined the cost of his service and

the money required to pay to him. Moreover, the content of the prayers during the service indicated that the gods were powerful and angry.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Founder of Zoroastrianism (Zoroaster)**

According to Gathas, the name of founder and the prophet of the Zoroastrian religion is Zarathushtra, or in full form, Zarathushtra Spitama. In Latin he is called Zoroastres, which is a modification of the Greek word Zoroastres. The Pahlavi version of the name is Zaratusht, and in the modern Persian the name is Zardusht, Zartusht, or Zarathust. Scholars in comparative religion offer different ideas about the etymological meaning of Zarathust. Scholars such as Diogen, Laertius and Geiger, who lived in 400 BC, associated the origin of the word with the Greek word "Astar" meaning star. They say the meaning of Zoroaster is astrologist, star worshiper, golden star, the commander of stars, or the descendent of Venus, the star. Scholars who work in Arabic and Syrian languages believe that Zoroaster is driven from two words-- Zar and washt-- meaning golden kingdom and royal gold. They also refer to some occupational or conditional definitions such as melted silver, goldsmith, golden shining, and gold-stern. In the Avestan language, other scholars find the origin of the word in two compounds, namely, zarath and ushtra, defining ushtra (shotur in modern Persian) as camel but offering no meaning for the first part, Zarath. They do, however, define, the Zoroaster name as 1) camel or the rider of camels, 2) the owner of golden camels, 3) the old camel, 4) camel and owner of camels, 5) one who nurtured camels, 6) one who can manage camels, 7) one who robs a camel, 8) one who torments a camel, and 9) one whose camel is fierce. Still other scholars offer various meanings for the word. Sir H.G. Rawlinson believes it is from the Ishtar family, M. Haug claims it means the worshiper, and Azar Gushasb says it is a title for the prophet after his designation as prophet with God's light in the face.<sup>10</sup>

Ashtiyani asserts that occupation as well as social and economic form and structure of society have a significant influence on the names of people. For instance, the following names of the Zartusht indicate that the Zoroaster lived in a nomadic society: for example Spitama (meaning most white) as the family name of Zoroaster; Pourshasps (meaning many horses) as the name of her mother Doghdova (milkmaid); the name of his wife is Hvovi (meaning Possessing good cattle); the name of his sons as Isat vstra, Urvatat nara, and Hvare chithra (meaning desiring pastures, commanding men, and sun-faced one, respectively), and the names of his daughters as Freni, Thrity, and Pouruchista (meaning abundance, the third one, and very thoughtful, respectively). Ashtiyani also claims that the owner of (gold) camel is the most propitiate definition for Zoroaster and concludes that camel in Gathas and cow and horse in Yashta have been used frequently. He believes this comparison leads to the conclusion that that these books were written in a different period of history in a different location.<sup>11</sup> We need bear in mind, however, that the etymological explanation does not provide a very precise definition for our terms due to lack of sufficient data.

### **Birthplace of Zarathushtra**

Zoroaster's life has been mixed with legends and myths that make it difficult to grasp accurate information about him and thus put an end to this unresolved mystery. Speculation about him is so varied that some say Zoroaster is mythical character that never existed. Regardless of such skepticism, some people never have had doubts about him and indeed have located his birthplace.

According to historical, geographical, anthropology, archaeology, or linguistic documents, scholars locate different places to his actual birthplace. Current discussions among western scholars of Zoroastrology can be classified into three groups in regard to locating the prophet's birthplace. The first group believes that Zoroaster was born in northeastern Iran tracing the origin of his religion to that area. Scholars who support this idea include

Christensen, H. Humbach, Shider, and Widen Gren; as well as Roman historians such as F. Windisehahm, Syncellus, Panodours, and Marcellinus.

Second group of scholars locate Zoroaster to the west or northwest of Iran and believe he came from the Madies family. The scholars who support this idea are Bartula, K. Geldner, Altihim, Hermitt, Boyce, Mills, Zehnear, W. Lenz, K. Rudolf, W. Eilers, and Ernest Herzted. Among Muslim historians who research Zoroastrianism such as Shahrstani (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century), at-Tabari (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century), ibn-Hurdadbah (9<sup>th</sup> century), and Yaqut (13<sup>th</sup> century) believe Urumiyah, the capital of Azerbaijan in the west of Iran, is his birthplace.

The third group reconciles the aforementioned ideas and believe that Zoroaster was born in one area but immigrated to another area due to a more favorable environment and more support from the people. Some believe that he was born in east of Iran and moved to the west, and others support the opposite notion. Among scholars, such as Lummel claims that Kharazm (Afghanistan) was the original location, but he lived the most of his life in the west of Iran.

Ashtiyani argues that Zoroaster was born and grow up in the eastern part of Iran, which was also the focal point of his missionary activity. During the rules of Medians and Achaemenids, Zoroastrians expanded into the west of Iran. Ashtiyani strongly argues that, first Asyrian and Babylon civilizations influenced the west territory of Iran, even though, we do not see such traces in the most authentic book of Zarathushtra; Gathas. Second, sociolinguistic scholars believe the style of Ghatas to be closer to eastern scriptures than to western scriptures. Moreover, Ashtiyani argues, the idea that Zarathushtra's origins lay west of Iran was created by the Sasanian dynasty to link their generation to Zoroaster and his family for political purposes; to justify the kingdom as the kingdom of God.<sup>12</sup>

## **The Life of Zarathushtra**

The confusion about Zoroaster's life and his prophecy is not surprising.<sup>13</sup> The incongruence of existing records and confusing mixture of facts, legends, myths, and fiction make any attempt to outline a satisfactory time framework for his life very difficult. As Shahriari claims, there are several methods in the study of Zoroaster's life based on myth, archeology, Greek analysis, philosophy, and history that variously classify his time as follows. First, the classical authors--Greeks and Romans-- believe Zoroaster lived around 6000 BC.<sup>14</sup> Hermippus asserts that Zoroaster lived 5000 years before the Trojan War (about 1200 BC) that comes up with 6200 BC. Moreover, Diogenes Laertius, the Greek author, claims 6000 BC to be more reliable as the time of Zoroaster.<sup>15</sup>

The second group seeks to pin down Zoroaster's lifetime based on Avesta as the authoritative document about the prophet. Interestingly enough, these authors have exposed different dates depending on whether they focus on the old Avesta (Gathas) or the young Avesta. Those who depend on the old Avesta believe that the monotheism view of Avesta has influenced all religions and nations, including Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity on one hand and the Persian Empire on the other. Therefore, they say, Zoroaster should have lived before the aforementioned religions, at least around the Second millennium BC.<sup>16</sup>

Other scholars who focus on young Avesta, especially on Bundahish (i.e., Genesis), believe Zoroaster lived around 600-700 BC. Bundahish's chronology about the creation of the world and the prophecy of Zoroaster speculates that the process of the world's creation was completed in 12,000 years. The first period covers from 1 to 3,000, the second period from 3001 to 6000, the third period from 6001 to 9000 and the fourth period from 9001 to 1200. The first period is the spiritual, non-materialist stage, following the second period with the creation of materials under the absolute domination of Ahura Mazda. In the third period, the conflict and

contest between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman occurs and in the fourth period, the victory of Ahura Mazda is endorsed. Based on this analysis, Zoroaster's life should fall in the third period, beginning 9001; however, the scripture does not provide us with decisively fixed data to locate his presence in this framework. Moreover, it is not clear if the beginning of this period would begin with his birth or the time of his prophecy.<sup>17</sup>

The young Avesta becomes the main source for the third group who are Aryan and Persian historians. Relying on information accessible at their time, which was from Zoroastrians and Young Avesta, they accept years around 700-600 BC as the beginning of Zoroastrianism. Other Orientalists have also accepted these sources as the authentic documents and have designated with the same period of time include Hining, who accepts 541, 551, or 553 BC; Hertsfield for 500 BC; Althim for 569 BC or 900 BC; and Hietle 532 BC, believing most of the Vedaha was written during the fight between Zoroaster and Vick tribes.

Interestingly, Muslim authors such as, al-Biruni (973-1048), claim that Zoroaster appeared 258 years before the beginning of the Alexander's era, however, he does not give us a decisive time for Zoroaster's appearance, if that refers to his birth date, first revelation, prophecy, or the conversion of King Vishtaspa. On the other hand, the beginning of Alexander is also very ambiguous, not clearly referring to his birth, the beginning of his empire, his invasion of Iran, or the death of the last Persian empire. This calculation gives a range of 588 to 630 BC as the birthday of Zoroaster, leaving a controversy caused by too little knowledge, about Zoroasterism based only on the writings of the followers of this religion.

In addition, the linguistic method may be used to find the time of Zoroaster, a method based on the study of the entire contents of the Avesta; however, this approach does not give concrete information in this matter. As I have mentioned earlier, based on the linguistic

antiquity and the socio-cultural allusions within the Gathas and the young Avesta, Zoroaster's date can be placed anywhere between 1500-1000 BC and between 800-400 BC, respectively.<sup>18</sup>

### **Was He a Magician**

Scholars on Zoroasterism put forth different ideas about the founder of the religion before his prophecy.<sup>19</sup> Lumel believes Zoroaster to have been from a religious family and a magi, whereas Hertle asserts that Zoroaster was of the clergy but an enemy of magi and Multon mentions that Zoroaster was from a later religious family. Altheim believes that Zoroaster was a member of a religious group, Zaota, but then he turned his back on them to bring about a new idea. Wingren asserts that Zoroaster was a religious leader. In studying the Zoroastrian scripture, Boyce says that the scripture indicates from the strong literal and mystical aspect of the writing that the author had a long tenure of teaching and training. Boyce believes that Zoroaster would have had specialized training and education because he was not only familiar with the complexity of social and political aspects of his time but also with the polytheistic philosophy of his time.<sup>20</sup>

In a section of Gathas, Zoroaster calls himself Zoroaster which translated worshiper, leader, and the reader of hymns, interchangeably, but also to the Magi those who managed the ritual ceremonies. Based on this concept, with its implication above in the hierarchy of Zoroasterism, Boyce concludes that he had a religious title before he was so designated.<sup>21</sup>

### **Was He from Kings' Family**

Following a different idea about Zoroaster's family, Hertzfield argues that he came from a royal family as a member of the aristocracy. Hertzfield asserts that the grandfather of Zoroaster--Astyages last Madees king, Cyrus--married with mother of Zoroaster, daughter of Astyages, and then Zoroaster is the result of that marriage. She married to Kambujiyah and then after his death

married Darius. Zoroaster who was concerned about the miserable lives of serfs and farmers, attempted to overthrow the dominant rule and norm in favor of the serfs, but the dominant class, aristocracy, and religious leaders sent him into exile. The supreme judge in the court is a magi by the name of Gumatay and Cyrus endorse this verdict. Azar Gusgasp asserts that his grandfather was a member of royal family, pre history Persian dynasty and from the line of Feraydun and Pishdadian.<sup>22</sup>

### **Zoroaster's Teaching and Message**

Zoroastrians believe Avesta is divinely inspired and received directly from God. They say, "All our scriptures are sacred, including the Gathas, Yashts, and Vendidad. We pray all of them in fire temple, before the sacred fire, and they have immense spiritual power."<sup>23</sup> There are, however, various ideas about when and how the Avesta and other scriptures became established in written form. In addition, the nature of its teachings is disputed; concerning whether it is a monotheistic or pantheistic. I will now turn my attention to these issues.

### **The History of Avesta<sup>24</sup>**

According to surviving Zoroastrian literature, especially Denkart and Rivayats--Avesta, original Zoroastrian scripture--were kept and preserved in the royal treasuries of both Persepolis and Samarkand. Zoroastrians claim that the archetyped copy in the Achaemenid Palace was burned and then the second one was taken by Greeks during the invasion of Alexander in 330 BC.

To Zoroastrians the reign of Seleucids and Partian were the dark period in the history of the scripture. We need to bear in mind that some claim that King Valakhsh, Partian King (51-79 BC.), ordered the search for and collection of all parts of the scriptures that were preserved, both in writing form and in memory; but to what extent he succeeded in this task or if we have any access to this effort is questionable. Later, Ardishir (226-240), the father founder of the

Sassanian Dynasty, asked Tansar, the high priest or Mobbed-i Mobbedan, to collect all the scattered fragments of Avesta. Tansar had the final word in endorsing the scripture as a true or false document.

According to Dinkard, several attempts failed to compile the teachings of Zoroaster. Dara, the son of Daruis, the Persian King, orders to put two copies of Avesta and its enterpetation (Zand) put anyway one in the royal treasury and the second in the national archive. After Alexander's attack on Iran, one copy burned in Pres-i Police and the second was taken to Greece. Balash, the Partian king, then attempted to collect the available parts of the Avesta that are true and according to the original text. Late, Ardishir, the founder of the Sasanian Dynasty, also tried to collect the Avesta. He selected seven high-ranking Zoroastrian clergies around the country, headed by Tansar, the great clergy, and Mobbed-i Mobbedan, to compile the teachings of Zoroaster.

Ardavir Afanama narrates this process differently. He asserts that, these seven people chose him to "go up" and bring them information about the unseen world and true revelation, as well as about the unknown, missing, and forgotten parts of the prophet's teachings. For this reason, Ardavir Afanama took a medicine that put him to sleep for several days so his spirit could rise. During this time, he visited the heavenly world wher the true scripture and real aspects of the world were revealed to him. After his returing, Ardavir Afanama returned and shared his experiences with fellow Mobbeds. Zoroastrians believe the present scriptures were endorsed by sacred spirits and thus are the true text.<sup>25</sup>

Zoroastrians claim that the so called honeymoon during the Sasanian Dynasty did not last long when they were faced with a major problem. Heraclius defeated Iran in 622 AD, invaded Azerbaijan, and destroyed the great fire temple. To what extent, if any, does the mentioned events damage the scriptures is not determined. Moreover, the crises in the Sasanian court was

furthered by the short lives of the kings and the rivalry between princes, making the crisis of succession the major problem to weaken the religious government of the time.<sup>26</sup>

Regardless of the validity and reliability of these accounts, the Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century that caused tremendous damage to the Zoroastrian scriptures, far greater than Alexander's invasion. The Arab invasion, as well as the neglect of Zoroastrian priests out the authenticity of our accessible scripture. To day, the oldest manuscripts preserved by the Zoroastrians in India belong to thirteenth century and in Iran belong to about the seventeenth century. The originality and date of composition of these texts leave much questions unanswered.

Most scholars argue that the Gathas is the oldest part of the scripture, dating back to an early period of the Zoroastrian tradition, possibly as early as the period of Zoroaster. Other parts of the Avesta, however, suggest a period as late as the time of the Abbaseeds Dynasty in tenth century. For me, the linguistic and historical affinity between Gathas and Rig Vedas (the Sanskrit sacred texts of ancient India) indicate that they had a common linguistic origin. The similarity between Gathas on one hand and the sister language of Regi Vedas on the other hand indicat that they should have identical sources and that both of these texts have been copied from an original text that is no longer available.

The Avesta consists of various sections including a ceremonial and ritual section and a theological portion. Obviously, the ceremonial parts were influenced by different cultures and customs, and the theological parts fell into neglect and disappeared. Based on this line of reason, some scholars argue that the present Avesta is only a small portion of original Zoroastrian scriptures. The present day Avesta is divided into two major parts, the first part is named Yasna (including the Gathas, Vispared, and Vendidad) and the second part the Khordeh Avesta and Yashts.

Yasna: Yasna, meaning sacrifice, worship, praise, prayer and feast, has 72 sections (Haiti). Yasna, the major Zoroastrian scripture covers such subjects as confession, invocation, prayer, exhortation, praise, worship, adoration, and offerings that are use in Zoroastrians' ritual and symbolic ceremonies. Yasna is divided into seventy-two chapters, but the linguistic differences among these chapters divide the Yasna into two major sections; Gathic language and younger Avestan language.

1) The Gathas contains six chapters, but five of them are Poems that are considered the authentic part of the Avesta, (hymns or songs). The six Gathas cover the seventeen chapters of Yasna as follows: the Ahunavaiti Gatha that covers Yasna 28-34; the Haptanhaiti Gatha covering Yasna 35-41; the Ushtavaiti Gatha that covers Yasna 43-46; the Spenta Mainyu Gatha covering Yasna 47-50; the Vohu Xshathra Gatha covering Yasna. 51; and the Vahishtoishti Gatha covering Yasna 53. Zoroastrians believe that the first five chapters were collected during the time of Zoroaster in is his own words. Influenced by the fives Gathas, the sixth Gatha is written in prose; some argue that this part of the Yasna was compiled by disciples of Zoroaster after his death. The major contents of the Gathas is Ahura Mazda, his omnipotence powers, the human being, the last judgment, and human reward.<sup>27</sup>

2) The Visparad (i.e., to all the lords or divine beings) consists of twenty-three chapters. As the name indicates this section covers Ahura Mazda and other gods as well as divine beings (but not excluding water, sky, animal kingdom, and seasonal festivals).

3) Vendidad (or Videvdat, meaning antidemonic law or law-abjuring demons) consists of twenty-two sections called fargards, which cover issues such as the creation of Ahura Mazda and the counter-creation of Angra Mainyu , along with laws of good religion and civilization.

4) Khordeh Avesta (Little Avesta) is divided into Nyaishe (prayers), Gah, Sirozeh, and Affingan and is derived from the other parts of

Avesta, Yasna and Yasht. This section is used in public services or private devotions.

5) The Yasht (i.e., act of devotion or worship) contains twenty-one invocations and a few fragmentary sections appended at the end. The Yasht consist of prayers that praise and worship Ahura Mazda, the seven Amesha Spenta (Holy Immortals), angels, various deities, the male and female divine powers, and other divine beings. Yashta reminds us of the norms and customs of primitive Indians and Persians before their immigration.

Other scriptures occur in Pahlavi because Zoroastrians claim that the difficulty of composition of the Avesta leads priests to translate this sacred text into Pahlavi (Middle Persian). The Pahlavi version of Avesta is called Zand, and its interpretation and commentary explanation is Pa-Zand. The authenticity of these books and the timing of these accomplishments are the subject of debates among scholars, however. Most argue that they were written after the Islamic conquest of Iran, especially during Abbasseeds Caliphs. Several other books written about ninth to tenth centuries cover the historical legends and theological beliefs of Zoroastrians, among which are the followings:

1) Dinkard (i.e., Acts of Religion): Dinkart, considered the encyclopaedia on Zoroasterism, was written by high-ranking Zoroastrian priest named Adurbad-i Emetan in ninth century. There were...nine volumes, but two first volumes are missing. The Dinkard covers a variety of topics including history, literature, doctrines, legend, customs, and traditions.

2) Bundahish (i.e., Primal Creation): In thirty-six chapters the Bundahish covers cosmogony and discusses Ahura Mazda, the good spirit, six Amesha Spenta, and other good creations as well as Ahriman and the evil spirit.

3) Other booklets including *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, the memories of Vazirs, schools of thought, *Ardavir Afanama* are difficult to accept as according to teaching of the prophet, Zoroaster.

4) *Shayest ne-Shayesta*: meaning proper and improper, this book covers rules, norms, laws and customs regarding sin and impurity; and ritual ceremonies and the qualifications of those who can perform them.

5) *Shkand Gumanig Wizar*: meaning doubt-dispelling explanations, this book is written by *Med Mardan-Farrukh* after the Arab conquest, compares and contrasts Zoroastrians with other religions including Christianity, Judaism, Manichaeism, and Islam. *Mardan-Farrukh* attempts to provide a reasonable explanation for the supremacy of his faith over other religions.

The authority of the remaining group of religious writings in Pahlavi, however, is open to dispute. These writings contain the opinions and decisions of Zoroastrian high priests of later times. Nonetheless, they have an inestimable value in supplying numerous details of religious customs and traditions that cannot be found elsewhere and in giving an insight into Zoroastrian beliefs and practices of the times preceding and following the Muslim Arab invasion. Thus, both scripture and tradition have positive values, and a judicious balance of these two will undoubtedly produce rewarding results for those seeking to understand the Zoroastrian faith.

Regardless of the fictional flavor of this claim, the Sasanian's scripture did not last long being destroyed during the Arab invasion in seventh century. What we have access to in the Avesta was compiled during the reign of *Mamun, Abbased Caliph*, due to the effort of Iranians in his court. In the later Avesta, sun and light are manifestations/incarnations of god (*Mazda*) with light as carnation of *Mazda* and sun his eyes. What we see in the new section of the Avesta are the alters the monotheism of *Ahura Mazda* into the Indo-European polytism.

These traditional accounts raise several important questions. How reliable are the accounts regarding the recovery and recording of Zoroastrian scriptures? Do these stories contain an element of political propaganda? In what language(s) was (were) the original text(s) written? To what extent these efforts overcome the neglect of Zoroastrian priests in preserving the scriptures? These questions, among others, are matters of scholarly dispute that have yielded no satisfactory conclusion as yet.

### **Zoroaster's Teaching:**

Whether Zoroaster preaches monotheism or polytheism is disputed. Student of comparative religious study arrive on different views depending on whether they focus on the old Avesta (especially Gathas) or focus on the young Avesta. The former group believes that Zoroaster's teaching is monotheism, the omnipotence of Ahura Mazda as the only God, and the second group insists on the polytheism of Zoroasterism, the presence of gods with many angels of independent identity. According to the young Avesta, Zoroastrians believed in God, Hormazd, and his adversary, the evil one, Ahriman. As in the Vendidad, Spenta Mainyu had Anghra Mainyu as his opponent. They also believe that good and evil were twins begotten by Zurvan Akarna, Boundless Time.<sup>28</sup>

Among Orientalists, many scholars believe that Zoroastrianism has been based on monotheism. For example, Lumel, Hertzfield, Barthold, and Pettazzoni believe that Zoroasterism was monotheistic and any change into polytheism resulted after his death. Scheftelowitz argues that Judaism has influenced the change of Zoroasterism into multitheism. Shedr argues that God in Gathas is omnipotent, the great wise creator of the sun, stars, and moon. Durant too believes Zoroasterism to be monotheistic and any other form of gods and multitheism is an innovation of the people.

As Mills has said the use of the plural form of God commonly occurred in religious scriptures, although it does not necessarily mean they refer to more than one God. Speigel and Windishman assert

that there is a distinction between God in the Gathas and in the other sections of the Avesta. Gathas supports monotheism, but the other parts of the Avesta do not offer clear ideas about this subject. Haug argues that Zoroaster's teaching was based on monotheism.<sup>29</sup>

### **God in Avesta**

Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd in Pahlavi) is the name of the supreme God of the Zoroastrians. The word, Ahura Mazda, has different meaning to different people. For Lumel, Mazda means knowledge; thus, he asserts that Zoroaster stopped worshiping the human form of god and that his religion is called Mazdaism, meaning the praise of knowledge. Both Bartlomag and Milton claim Zoroaster changes multi-gods into a monotheism, Ahura Mazda being the innovation of Zoroaster. Jackson believes that Ahura Mazda means wiseman and that Mazda means understanding, reason, and spiritual power. Chitariji believes that Zoroastrianism migrated in India since Asura Mohat in Veda is Ahura Mazda. Hintz argues that Ahura Mazda means the most knowledgeable whereas Shala sees Ahura Mazda as the great God of Aryans. Hertzfield believes that Zoroaster put aside ancient gods as evil, calling his own god Ahura Mazda. Roodilf argues that the God in Gathas is completely different from ancient gods. Wilhelm and Embree believe that Sura was the nature of God in India and means life; therefore, Asura means life-giver, and Ahura derives from this word. To Durant Ahura Mazda means blue sky. Gimán finds it difficult to believe that god like Ahura Mazda was worship.

According to Ashtiyani, God in the Gathas is the God of all the worlds. God does not limit his message to a specific group of people, tribe, race, or nation. Translating Ahura Mazda, Ahura is spiritual creature, Maz means great, and Da means knowledge and creator; therefore, Ahura Mazda means the great creator and great wiseman. Honesty and righteousness are honored because they make God happy and please him and good thinking makes a person closer to him. To Zoroastrians, Ahura Mazda reveals his secrets and

unseen world, including the realities of life in this world and after death. He sends his prophets to show his wisdom, power, justice, righteousness, and mercy and to help people find true perfection through faith, the path of righteousness and conviction.

Concerning Gathas, Ashtiyani says that by studying Avesta, we can describe Ahura Mazda with following attributes: He is self-created, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, invisible, and beyond human conceptualization. He is neither begotten, nor is there anyone his equal. He is, as his name implies, the Wise Lord, the Most Knowing One, and the Most Far-Seeing One. As Ahura Mazda says, my sixth name is Understanding; my seventh is Intelligent One; my eighth name is Knowledge; my ninth is Endowed With Knowledge; my twentieth is Mazda (Wisdom). I am the Wise One; my name is the Wisest of the Wise, he knows everything and is everywhere, the creator of the universe, guardian, the most perfect being, the greatest, the most beneficent and help, the most powerful, and was, is, and will be forever, the first thinker and creator of law, powerful, the most important, the creator of the world, father, the creator of human being and works according to reason and knowledge and awareness, creator of water and plants, governs according to his will.. the most knowledgeable, the most wise, with absolute knowledge, sees everything, knows everything, merciful and beneficent, rise and fall of Moon is from his power, and he is the world's creator.<sup>30</sup>

### **Spenta Mainyu**

As the ethnology and philology of the term, Spenta comes from the Avestaic and Sanskrit roots *spi* and *svi*, respectively, and means to expand, swell, and increase. One group of scholars believes that the roots of Spenta are *spit* and *svit* meaning to be bright or white and by extension resembling holiness. Mainyu comes from *Man*, meaning to think, contemplate, or meditate. Again, current scholars connect mainyu with spirit. Therefore, Spenta Mainyu means Holy Spirit, Good Spirit, and Bounteous Spirit. Spenta Mainyu thus is

one of the divine faculties of the continuous creation and expansion plan of Ahura Mazda.

Yasna refers to Spenta Mainyu as the creator of stars but separate from those and created by Ahura Mazda. In other words, the spents does not have an independent existence apart from Ahura Mazda but is a divine attribute of him. In the young Avesta, however, Spenta Mainyu is one of the creations of Ahura Mazda, antagonistic to his twin Angra Mainyu (i.e., Evil Spirit), which represents the good and evil aspects of existence in the world. While Spenta Mainyu create good things, Angra Mainyu causes evil things. To young Avesta, Ahura Mazda ,and are tridal.

Jaffari asserts that the presence of three separate entities in the cosmology of new Zoroasterianism may be due to a mistake by Christians who have been the sole Avestaic scholars and they interpret the language of Christianity in Zoroasterism. As he explains, the Gathas and the later Avesta were translated into English and other European languages in the main by Christian scholars who had the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit in mind; thus, the term has conventionally come to mean the Holy Spirit. The general notion is that it also has an adversary, Anghra Mainyu, the evil spirit.<sup>31</sup>

### **AMESHA SPENTA**

Ahura Mazda the omnipresent, Zoroastrians assert, created both spiritual and material beings. The spiritual beings consist of six celestial beings called Amesha Spenta (or Amahraspand, meaning Holy Immortal) that functions on behalf of Ahura Mazda in both material and spiritual spheres. These six celestial beings and their function are as follows:

1) Vohu Manah (also called Vohuman or Bahman, meaning good mind and best mind), the first creation of Ahura Mazda, promotes divine wisdom, divine kingdom, and the good spirit of Ahura Mazda. Through Vohu Manah, the Faithful receive the power of

wisdom and knowledge. This power guides the faithful to dispel the darkness and ignorance in the world. In the material world the people who consult with Vohu Manah are married and have more children.

2) Asha Vahishta (Rata in Old Persian and Rta in Vedic, meaning eternal law and order) refers to righteousness, justice, and the divine/natural law that governs the universe. Asha brings the final victory and establishment of the Divine kingdom and righteousness through right action and moral character. Asha, one of the attributes of Ahura Mazda, is the corner stone of the Indo-Iranian religion. Asha, according to Mehr, has been used in the Gathas under different contextual framework.<sup>32</sup>

First, Asha is an absolute value, a set of ethical conduct and righteousness. As a yardstick to evaluate people and distinguish right from wrong, wright deeds benefit people and wrong ones harm people. Zoroasterianism judges any deed right if it is based on good thinking and love; thus, the right deed benefits to both the individual and society. The good deeds are based on Asha, truth, and are done according to the teachings of Ahura Mazda. As the Gathas says, "Hear and give heed to these truths, O, men and women. Strive to avoid the lures of this material life and stop the progress of untruth and deceit. Tear away your attachment with untruth and know that the happiness achieved by untruth and woeful end of others shall bring forth nothing else, but pain and woe. Wicked persons and despisers of truth, who look forward to the destruction of righteous people, actually pervert their spiritual lives and prevent the peace of their inner souls."<sup>33</sup>

The realization process of good's triumph over evil happens gradually not abruptly. A dutiful human being, as a co-worker of God, should spread righteousness and eradicate falsehood for the advancement of the world and the progress of man towards perfection.<sup>34</sup> Righteousness is the best of all that is good, the radiant goal of life on earth. One must live righteously, for the sake of

righteousness alone. Worldly rewards should not be man's motivation. Duty for the sake of duty constitutes selfless service.<sup>35</sup>

Second, Asha refers to justice, ensuring reward or punishment as the consequences of action. In this theology, righteousness will be victorious over falsehood. As is written in Yasna:

This do I ask Thee, O Ahura and wish you to tell me truly. When the speaker of truth and needy gets cold repulse from rich people instead of help and reward, what punishment has been assigned by Thee for such negligence? I am well aware of the punishment which awaits them, according to Thy Law, after death and the day of resurrection."<sup>36</sup>

The reward which Zoroaster has promised the Magians and all the followers of this religion is Garo-Nemana or the House of Songs and Praise, the Paradise. This abode has been the House on High from Eternity, where Ahura Mazda dwells. This reward which is a divine blessing and can only be attained by pure thought and truth, I promise to you."<sup>37</sup>

Followers of untruth distort the thoughts of truth seekers and make their faith shaky; but over the Judgment-Bridge and on the day of resurrection their souls shall rebuke them openly for their bad deeds and words, and for their deviation from truth. This is the best existence for the righteous and the worst for the wicked.

Third, Asha refers to the divine law, eternal rules, and global order that govern both spiritual and material existences. The dynamism of the world is based on Asha which regulates renovation and changes on the one hand and keeps the world's order on the other. According to Zoroasterianism, man is free to choose act, thoughts, words, and deeds. Man chooses the direction of his life; however, the law of causality dominates the world, and the destiny of man is determined according to his own choice and action. In the context of religion, some actions are encouraged and some discouraged. Certain norms of conduct are highly recommended, and some acts are strictly

forbidden. For example, violence, falsehood, and lies, are evil acts, where as honesty, fulfillment of promises, and compassion are acts of piety.<sup>38</sup>

3) Khshathra Vairya (or Shahrevar), meaning desirable kingdom, personifies Ahura Mazda's regal power of might, majesty, and sovereignty. Ahura Mazda's divine kingdom is expressly that of Khshathra Vairya. Asand represents the majesty as well as the true and eternal sovereignty of Ahura Mazda. With cooperation between Ahura Mazda and human beings, through the active righteousness of man, the divine kingdom on earth would be established. According to Zoroastrian teaching, the foundation of the kingdom comes about by virtue of obedience to the religion of Ahura Mazda. In the spiritual sphere, Khshathra Vairya represents the celestial riches of the divine kingdom of Ahura Mazda, while in the physical realm he typifies earthly riches embodied in the mineral world.

4) Spenta Armaiti (or Spendarmad, Asfandarmad, meaning Holy Devotion, Bountiful Devotion is the beloved daughter of Ahura Mazda. Spenta protects people from harm along with the earth, farmers, and herdsmen. It also purifies hearts and inspires God in hearts.

5) Haurvatat (or Hordad means health) refers to complete health and perfection of person.

6) Ameretat or Murdad means life and the immortality and refers to immortality of persons. Both Haurvatat and Ameretat promise of paradise after death to the righteous and true believers. In the material sphere, the former is the guardian spirit of water and the latter protector of vegetable as well as human welfare; in the spiritual sphere, both they are guardians of perfection and human immortality.

## **Evolution and Alteration in Zoroasterism**

Any discussion about the influence of Zoroasterism on other religions or vice versa, depends on our knowledge on Zoroaster's birth date, birthplace, main teaching, and authentic scriptures. In nineteenth century, some scholars believed that Zoroaster lived west of Iran about 600-500 BC. The same authors concluded that Philon, the Jewish philosopher, as well as Assyrian, and Babylonian cultures influenced Zoroaster. These authors refer to the later Avesta as the major source for comparisons between Zoroasterism and other civilizations and philosophies.

The scholars who believe Zoroaster came from east of Iran and lived around 1700 BC, and also that only sixteen chapters of the Gathas are the most authentic scripture of Zoroaster, believe any influence on Zoroasterism seems unlikely. They argue that due to the geographical distance between countries east of Iran (Babylon) and west of Iran (Kharazm), they lack evidence to establish any relation between Zoroastrians east of Iran and Assyria and Babylon to the west. In addition, any comparison between the most reliable parts of the Gathas and the teachings of the Old Testament make it difficult to establish any influence in Zoroasterism.

In the twentieth century, scholars have had access to more information about both Zoroasterism and Judaism. According to Zahnear who has made comparisons between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the writing of the later Avesta, the influence of Zoroasterism on the Old Testament are obvious. To support his idea, Zahnear compares the teachings of the later Avesta, specially the bithesism, with Dead Sea Scroll comments on the creation of two spirits, including the righteous spirit related to light and the nonvirtuous spirit related to darkness from Zoroastism.

To me, alteration of the original holy scripture was more common in ancient time due to the following reasons. First, people were relied more on memorizing the teachings of prophets, including only the hymns and basic ritual parts, not the theological sections. Second,

educated people who were able to write the teachings of the prophets and keep records were limited to clergy men, who interpreted texts based on their will and interests. Third, cooperation between the ruling elites and religious elites alters the scripture in favor of these elites. These factors support the idea that, if the teachings of these religions come through revelation, they must have the same teachings about God and his creation. We must bear in mind that when a religion changes in a specific period of time, an idea may be borrow from another teaching that then becomes the source of altering the religion borrowed in the first place. I believe that we cannot generalize the influence of one religion on another. Any investigation about the process of altering religions and the influence of one religion on another must be studied in a specific time period and limit to a specific topic or subject.

### **Zoroaster and Iran**

There are not sufficient sources to provide an accurate date about the beginning of Zoroasterism in Iran. Apparently, Zoroaster was teaching his religion to the northeast of Iran in Afghanistan. The authentic parts of the Gathas indicate that his teachings were directed to a nomadic community. Vishtaspa headed the community where there was no sign of civilization, urbanization or government; however, the Zoroastrian name of the Mades' kings and fire temples indicates the present of Zoroasterism in Iran during this period.<sup>39</sup>

More information is available from ancient historians, as well as reliefs and inscriptions about the religion of Achamenian. Herodut, the Greek historian, who visited Iran in 480 BC and describes the sacrifice ceremony, birthday party, and funeral service in Persia. In his discussion, the distinction between the teachings of Zoroastrism on one hand and the teaching of the Magi's (the religious leaders of ancient Persia before the Persian Dynasty) is obvious. The young Avesta was written based on the old Avesta, but to what extent the old version was altered remains questionable. The Magis, religious leaders of pre-Zoroasterism in Persia, were powerful

leaders with high status in the social and political systems. It is not clear, however, to what extent they were able to change the original scripture to reflect their particular interests and benefits since they did not thoroughly believe in Zoroaster but in myths and superstitions.

Fire temples in Media are similar to those in the Achaemenid dynasty and the name of some Media's kings has been influenced by Zoroastrian cultures. Scholars believe that Zoroastrianism was introduced to Persia at the time of Achaemenids based on the following reasons. First, Persian kings assert in the inscription and relief of Achaemenids, that they are Mazda worshipers and believe in Ahura Mazda. Second, they focus on ethics and moral principles such as justice, honesty, truthfulness, and righteousness qualities that are commonly associated with Zoroastrian ethics and norms of conduct. Third, the parent's names of Darius and Cyrus are Zoroastrian names. Fourth, the funeral ceremony for the royal family and members of the court are similar to Zoroastrian ceremonies.

A question remains unanswered, however, about why Achaemenid kings praised other gods and renovated and rebuilt the temples of other religions. Bear in mind that Persian kings were politicians whose leadership stability and legitimacy were their major priorities. To endorse their stability and support in a vast empire of the world with a multicultural nation, they had to praise other gods and respect other religions. Because of his policy, Cyrus took advantage of the conflict between the king of Babylon and his religious leaders, promising to rebuild the temples in exchange for the support of the religious elites of Babylon for Persia in its war with Babylon.

Ichaporia asserts that the present Gathas are the fragmented parts of the original text that was written in poetic verse. Comparison between the Gathas and the *Vida Ragis*, .....that the *Vida Regis* has a more smooth verse than the Gathas. Moreover, verses of the

Gathas abruptly end many times. Interestingly, there is not much to say about the main teachings of Zoroaster; good deed, good thought, and good words in the Gathas.<sup>40</sup>

To my thinking alterations in the Zoroastrianism were likely due to several lines of reasoning. First, writing among the general public was not common; this skill was left to a small number of religious leaders. Second, Christian historians narrated religious discussions between Christians and Zoroastrians that later groups did not refer to in any book on their debates, indicating that they had no written scriptures. Finally, the form of transfer of knowledge and learning based on repetition and memorization was so famous among other nations that Arabs called Zoroastrians "repeating groups" (ahl-i Zamzama).<sup>41</sup>

In their discussions of alterations and innovations in the scriptures of Zoroasterianism, scholars have offered another line of reasoning. To Minoucid, the magis were teachers of the ancient religion of Persia. Since Zoroasterism became the official religion during the Achamaneds, they converted to this new religion and kept the same position. They became the teachers of the new religion and benefited from the prestige and social status even while they preached their old faith. The ideas about worshiping natural phenomena in new parts of the Avesta come from these Magis.

### **Zoroaster and Government**

The history of prophecy and the lives of the founders of the other great religions such as Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, indicate they lived under similar socio-political conditions. They lived at the time of a ruling oppressor who exploited people. His oppressive ruling dominated the land even as his subjects looked for a savior to liberate them from oppression, establish a just society, and endorse peace and love on earth based on divine law. A brief review of history brings a clear picture of the social and political situation in the time of these great men. Their times were marked by periods of oppression and aggression of rulers who imposed their will and will

on the people. There was no peace and comfort when oppression and tyranny dominated the land.

According to the Old Testament the Israelites lived in Egypt under the yoke by oppression of the Pharaohs. Moses who asked for freedom for his people, wanted them to migrate to Phelastein. Jesus also faced a similar situation when the Palestinians were under the domination and control of Caesar and the Roman Empire. Caesar had absolute power over the land and exploited the people, he draining the wealth of the land for own purposes. Jesus preached love and peace within and between neighbors. In his letter, Mohammed also invited the heads of the superpowers of his time--the Persian king and Roman empire—to accept the new religion based on justice and the rule of God. In the Gathas we learn that many of the Iranian lands were controlled by evil rulers who brought death and destruction to the houses, families, tribes, clans, and country. Under these circumstances, all of these great men identified identical purposes and sought similar goals. In their manifestos, they abhorred tyranny and the demoralization of political life on one hand, even as they acknowledged liberty and freedom of choice according to divine law along with the domination of justice, order, and righteousness.

Zoroaster also lived under similar socio-political conditions, in a nomadic society without urbanization, civilization and a complicated form of public administration. In the Gathas, as the most reliable part of Zoroaster's teachings, we do see explicit complaints about the presence of unjust rulers at that time. By implication, this provides a guideline about the form of administration and public affairs. As in any religion under this form of administration, the role of individuals and their relations with God are important. Man being free, his freedom and responsibility in society are determined in the context of religion; that is, the relationship between man and God. The political and social norms of Zoroastrianism are based on good and true thinking, good deeds and good words that lead to the highest levels of perfection. This

leads to the sovereign rule of God on earth that can be called the kingdom of truth and good thinking of leadership that creates peace and harmony on earth which is the mirror of Ahura Mazda's own dominion on earth when he says: "This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. How shall I bring to life that vision of mine, which the master of a blessed dominion--someone of great power like Thee, Wise Lord--would decree by reason of his lofty rule, as he continues to dwell in his seat in alliance with truth and good thinking."<sup>42</sup>

This verse also reveals that Zarathustra knew full well that the only enduring power in the world was based upon truth and good thinking insofar as the givens of the natural world--the sun, moon, stars and winds--owed their creation and perfection to the truth embodied in the good thinking and spirit of their Creator, a matter emphasized earlier in this particular song. This is the reason why he continued in the next verse to ask further: "This I ask Thee. Tell me truly, Lord. Have they truly seen that vision that is the best for those who exist, and which, in companionship with truth, would prosper my creatures already allied with truth through words and acts stemming from respect?"<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly enough, not only the political, social and economic elites were against prophets but also the group of people who were not patient enough or who did not want to sacrifice or take risks beyond the status quo. At the expense of their own freedom, they were against change. No wonder Moses faced the complaints of the Jews who were not strong enough to face such difficulties. Jesus faced the danger of priests who cooperated with the Roman empire to stop his effort to liberate man from injustice and hate. Even Mohammed fought two fronts; one group of unbelievers (Kuffar) and a second of hypocrites.

Finally, in Zoroaster's time priests followed the desires of the evil rulers of the land. They made Mobbeds and rulers the representatives of God on earth. Noticing the miserable conditions of human life contrasted with the perfection and harmony in

society, Zoroaster appealed to God and asked: Where shall there be protection instead of injury? Where shall mercy take place? Zoroastrians altered God's religion and brought intermediary factors to be on the position of God and the prophets.<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Zoroastrianism is the religion of a tiny ethno-religious community who follows Zoroaster as the founder of their religion. Some of the Zoroasterians moved to India after the rise of Islam where they are known as Parsees or Parsis. In deed, there is a hot dispute about the life and teachings of Zoroaster. According to scholars his dates vary from 8000 BC to 550 BC and they argue about his teachings if he supported monotheism or he taught pantheism. Indeed, Zoroastrianism has gone under many innovations; but, the nutshell of its teachings has been monotheism, mixed with secrecy and magic by Zoroaster's opportunistic followers. The innovations and changes in the teaching of Zoroaster has been based on the incorporation of Men of Knowledge with the ruling elites as well as Zoroastrian political and social views.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> . For more details see: S. A. Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research* book. New York, McGill Queens Univ Press.: 1993. And Ashtiyani, Jallal. *Zarathushtra, Mazdayasna, and Governance*. Tehran, Sherkat-e sahami Inteshar. 1984.

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## **Weaknesses of Schools of Thought in Quantum Mechanics**

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### **Abstract**

We point out that there are 29 schools of thought in quantum mechanics. We highlight almost all weaknesses of the existing schools of thought but with emphasis on the Bohrism, Einsteinianism, Everittism and Bohmism. Each of them is shown to be value-laden and in particular Bohmism is very much Hindu-Buddhistically value-laden and contradicts to the Christian and Islamic teachings. Independent of the Hindu-Buddhistic values, the weaknesses of the schools of thought are also presented from the Christian and Islamic perspectives whenever we find it appropriate.

**Keywords:** Quantum Mechanics, Einsteinianism, Bohrism, Everittism, Bohmism, Hindu-Buddha teachings in Quantum Mechanics, Contradictions of quantum mechanics with Christian and Islamic cosmological doctrines.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The earliest critique on quantum mechanics (QM) from Albert Einstein (together with his students, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen) through their famous thought experiment referred to as the EPR *gedanken* (Einstein *et al.* 1935) which had generated a well

known deep unending debate between Einstein and Neil Bohr. This gave rise to originally two schools of thought in QM: the standard interpretation of QM known as the Copenhagen interpretation of QM or Copenhagenism or Bohrism, and Einstein's Realism or Einsteinianism. The weaknesses in these two schools of thought had produced many more schools of thought (interpretations) of QM.

We list almost all schools of thought in QM, but we discuss their weaknesses by concentrating on the four well known schools of thought: Bohrism, Bohmism, Einsteinianism, and Everittism because we believe these are the four most sophisticated, successful and influential interpretations of quantum mechanics. Most of the weaknesses have already been known long time ago but have not been presented to the "public" because QM has been overwhelmingly portrayed as the most successful physical science ever invented, as if QM is the ultimate theory of physics. Here we collect almost all existing weaknesses and present our own analysis which includes our study on the incompatibility of those interpretations of QM with religious values in particular Islam and Christianity.

## **2. SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT**

Shaharir (2011) listed 26 interpretations or schools of thought in QM! Even that here we show that the list is not exhausted. The first four listed here are well known and most influential, and since they will be further discussed in highlighting their weaknesses, unlike the others, we will provide relevant references later on. These 26 schools of thought are (1) Copenhagenism or Bohrism (strong and weak version); other names are the standard, the conventional or the Copenhagen interpretation of QM, (2) (Einsteinian) realism or simply Einsteinianism (naïve and not naïve), (3) Everittism or MWI (many world interpretation) or relative state interpretation, (4) Bohmism, Bohm-Hileyism or de Brogli wave-pilot interpretation, (5) decoherencism (Paz & Zurek 1993; Zurek *et al.* 1993; Zurek 1998a,b; Habib *et al.* 1998), (6) pragmatism (Shaharir 2005,

Bachtold 2008, CREA 2007, Healey 2011), (7) Wignerism or Mind over Matter interpretation (Wigner 1967; Davies & Brown 1993; Petterson 1996; Shaharir 2005), (8) statisticism (Born 1926; Pauli 1926, 1933; Shaharir 2005), (9) quantum probabilism and statisticism (von Neumann [1932] 1955; Acardi (1976-1989) and Acardi *et al* 1982; DeWitt-Morette and Elworthy 1981; Putman 1968; and Bub 1974), (10) quantum potentialism (Bohm 1950s as described in Bohm 1980, Bohm and Hiley 1993; Shaharir and Nik Rusdi 2000-2003), (11) Kochenism (Kochen 1978), (12) Healeyism, relational interpretation or interactionism (Healey 1989; Internet 3.1), (13) Bornism or naïve realism (Born 1926, **Author** 2005), (14) Littleism or elementary wave theoretical interpretation (Little 1996), (15) Cramerism or transactional interpretation of QM (Cramer 1986), (16) Youssefism or complex probabilism (Youssef 1994; Shaharir 2008b), (17) Blanchard-Jadczykism or events enhanced quantum theory interpretation of QM (Blanchard & Jadczyk 1996), (18) Zurekism or existential interpretation of QM (Zurek 1998a), (19) modalism or Diek-Kochenism (Kochen 1985; Diek 1993) and its variation by Bacciagaluppi and Dickson (1999), (20) multiple quantum realism (Roberts 1996, 1998, 2000, *ud.*), (21) Penrose-Hamerroff quantum consciousnessism (Penrose 1989, 1994a,b, 1996; Hamerroff 1998, 2001; Hamerroff & Penrose 1996), (22) Aharonovism or quantum-ice interpretation of QM (Aharonov 2000), (23) Mermin-Rovellism or relationalism (Mermin 1998 and Rovelli 1998), (24) Spontaneous locality interpretation of QM (Ghirardi *et al.* 1985), (25) topological geometrodynamics interpretation of QM (Pittkanen 2003 and Kheyfets & Miller 1995), and (26) vacuum zero-point energy or simple vacuum energy interpretation of QM (Saunders and Brown 1991; Milonni 1994 and Internet 3. 2).

Meanwhile Penrose (2004) also discusses the first four school of thoughts listed above plus two more schools of thought: “consistent history” interpretation of QM (Griffiths 1984,1993, 2003; Omnes 1988,1994, 1999a; Gell-Mann and Hartle 1990, [1991] 1994) and his own hopeful school of thought which he refers it as “the new

theory of wave collapse” interpretation. Shaharir and Nik Rusli (Shaharir 1995, 2008b, Shaharir and Nik Rusli 2000-2003) also have their own foundational nature of QM which they called *resapism* whereby everything is interpreted as a diffusion of a hypothetical ion, *resapion* (based on the Malay word *resap* which means diffuse). **Thus the total number of schools of thought in QM now is twenty nine!**

The presence of that many schools of thought surely represent a weakness of QM. In fact a new criteria for validity of a theory emerges, namely democracy: Several surveys (Raub 1998; Tegmark 1997; Wikipedia 2008) were conducted just to find out which interpretation is the most correct, most supported or popular. This is ridiculous!

A Well known institution in USA , *The John Templeton Institution* had arranged a special symposium <sup>(1)</sup> in 2002 whose invited participants were 13 experts (philosophers, QM experts, a comparative religions expert, an *Isma'iliyah* studies expert, an Indian classics and Western thought expert, a sufism expert, and a Muslim intellectuals) to discuss interpretations of QM for a purpose of obtaining points of agreement so that a better interpretation of QM presumably could be formulated. Since there is no report on the results of the symposium, we assume no agreement has been reached. On the other hand, Marano (2004) presents some agreement between a few QM experts and a Buddhist scholar. This is understandable since a few popular books on the compatibility of QM, Buddhism and Taoism have been published since the last three decades and become bestsellers notably Capra ([1978] 2004 ) and Zukav ([1979] 1984). This shows that the present interpretations of QM are only acceptable from the common Taoist and Buddhist cosmological doctrines; and this is a kind of weakness of the present QM which should be addressed by physicists especially those among *ahl al-Kitab* (Christians and Judaists) and Muslim physicists. The following are the four schools of thought which we have decided to examine in detail especially on their weaknesses.

They are, in the order of age: Bohrism, Einsteinianism, Everittism and Bohrism.

### **2.1. Bohrism**

Dualism of wave and particle is well known product of QM. However less well known is the controversy and problems arise from it. This is in fact one of the roots of many conflicting interpretations and hence schools of thought in QM. It becomes a factor which leads to an interpretation of quantum mechanics, the standard or conventional interpretation better known as the Copenhagen interpretation of QM whose main contributor is Bohr (1927, 1930s, 1948) and hence we simply refer it as Bohrism. Other contributors are Born, Pauli, Jordan, Heisenberg, Schroedinger and Einstein (through his critiques). Other factors which lead to this interpretation is the visualizability-nonvisualizability (*anschaulichkeit-unanschaulichkeit*) of the matrix mechanics and the wave mechanics by Heisenberg and Schroedinger respectively, the well known EPR *gedanken* (Einstein *et al.* 1935), the interpretation of the wave function and the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. The features of the Bohrism are as follows: (1) Recognizing “the complementarity principle” for rationalizing the duality of wave and particle for an atomic particle which says that the wave and particle properties emerge in a very exclusive state only as such no experiment can be materialized to show that the two properties appear simultaneously; each measurement is reducible to a classical state (classical-quantum is also a dualism such as through Hamiltonian formalism and the Hilbert space), all of them are only complementary. (2) The reality of atomic particle, the microscopic world or quantum world which Bohr says the wave function does not represent reality but merely describing “knowledge” of an observer; one should not ask any “reality” question because the reality only applies to the instrument used by an observer (classical world only) and the “wave collapse” occurs at the time of measurement is not a physical phenomenon but an “additional knowledge” to the observer; QM does not aim to obtain the reality

of the atomic world but to provide a description of it. (3) The randomness of the atomic particle based on Born-Pauli-Jordan interpretation (Born 1926; Pauli 1926, 1933; Jordan 1927; an interesting story on this matter is in Crease 2009: Chap 10) of the wave function, namely the probability of an ensemble of particle is given by the square of the absolute value of the wave function which measure the probability of a dynamical observable obtains a value whenever a measurement is made on it; there is no actual value of the observable known to the observer, exists or not, before the measurement. This made Einstein and his followers believe that QM is “incomplete”. Recent article by Gomatam (2007) discusses the controversial issues in Bohrism whereas Camilleri (2007) concentrates on complimentarity principle, the whole issues of the *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 2007, 38(2) and 2008, 39(4) discuss the strength and weaknesses of probability concept in QM vis-à-vis Bohrism, whereas Muller and Seevinck (2007) questions the whole Bohrism vis-à-vis technology. The well known problem in QM where Bohrism failed to explain or justify is the measurement where the problem is again critically reviewed by Dickson and Lewis (2007).

The fact that so many new interpretations of QM emerge after the Bohrism (at least 28 interpretations more mentioned at the beginning of this section), clearly shows the weaknesses of this so called standard interpretation of QM. Notwithstanding with this situation, some people like to extend the dualism principle of quantum mechanics to other pair of subjects such as mind and matter, conjugate observables or variables, spiritual and physical, external and internal, physics and metaphysics etc., all of the pairs are assumed to be as true as the original dualism, wave and particle. So it seems that the opinion of Shahidan (1999a,b). We believe that the analogy used is incorrect because the wave and particle are both physical, external or observable but not necessary the other pairs. Regarding “mind and matter”, for example, the problem is not only one of them is physical and the other is not, but the present QM (based on Bohrism or the Copenhagen interpretation) gives rise to

the situation where mind overcomes matter (problem of measurement in QM) and hence dualism among them is inappropriate. The extension of the dualism to those pairs could only hide the weakness of the dualism of wave-particle in QM.

As far as the compatibility of the Bohrism and the Christian teaching is concerned, Howard (2008) is perhaps the most critical of them all. He shows that the Bohrism is incompatible with the Christian theology and apologetics, in particular it conflicts with the Christian belief about God and world, infact he shows it contradicts the whole Christian worldview. His argument is yet to be reexamined by Muslim scholars *vis-à-vis* the Islamic teachings. We believe that similar conclusion may well be obtained albeit based on Islamic cosmological doctrine.

## **2.2. Einsteinianism**

A school of thought in QM sponsored by Einstein 1935 through his EPR *gedanken* but was thought by some quarters to be successfully dismissed by Bohrists, is referred here as Einsteinianism. The gist of this thought is regarding (Einstein's) physical reality which is characterized by him as follows: (1) There exists real things independent of observers. (2) Consistent observations and conclusions can be repeated at all times and places with little effects. (3) No information travels faster than light; in other words, everything must be locally causal, or locally realistic. (4) Everything must be deterministic. Through his EPR *gedanken*, Einstein shows that QM violated (1), (3) and (4); the violation of (3) astonished him and he expressed the situation as “a spooky action at a distance”, whereas the violation of (4) awed him in disbelief by saying another of his famous expression “God does not play dice”. Normally, it is said that Einsteinianism is dead because Bohrism and observations have killed it all. However Shaharir (2011) have disussed this issue at length and conclude that the locality-nonlocality is still inconclusive especially the conclusion based on Gissin and his colleagues experimental results (Gisin 1998, 1999;

Gisin & Gisin 1999; Gisin & Go 2001; and Gisin & Zbinden 1991) versus the nonseparability phenomenon or Aharonof effects (Aharonov and Bohm 1959) and experimental result by Salart *et al.* (2008). Properties of Einsteinianism are also not fully dismissed by Bohrism and other schools of thought. Recently, Butterfield (2007) theoretically strengthening Einsteinianism through his review on the stochastic locality. Thus Einsteinianism is here to stay. However from religious perspective, Einsteinianism is far too limited to be recognized as the correct reality because it is not only due to its rejection of nondeterministic causality principle (a necessary Islamic principle), but it does not provide enough explanation to many observations and hence it is believed to be incomplete and there are hidden variables left out in the present QM; and the uncertainty involved either in the interpretation of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle or in the role of wave functions is a strange concept of unknowability which is yet to be resolved even among the physicists.

### **2.3. *Everettism***

Everettism is an interpretation of QM developed by Everette in 1957 which he called the relative state formulation of QM as his Ph.D thesis. The theory was left untapped until 1968, Bryce DeWitt, felt in love with it and rebranded it as the Many World Interpretation (MWI) of QM and popularize it in a series of papers in *Physics Today* 1970. It was an instant success. Then to make the theory more accessible and with some improvements, DeWitt and Graham (1973) edited an anthology of articles on the MWI. This is the second wave of the MWI of QM. The theory was then further articulated by DeWitt's student and a strong advocate of the MWI, Deutsch (1998) who exploited the theory in his well known contribution in quantum computation. However, this has been challenged by Bacon (2006) whereby he shows that the MWI of QM is actually unable to explain satisfactorily the nature of the quantum computation. The MWI of QM, or we called it simply Everettism, suggests that every thing in this world has its infinite

number of identical copies. This interpretation is presented and accepted by many physicists hoping to explain a phenomenon which cannot be explained satisfactorily using the standard interpretation of QM (Bohrism or the Copenhagen Interpretation). Recent reviews on Everettism are presented by Wallace (2006) and Baker (2007) in which some of the problems in this school of thought are highlighted. Greaves (2007) even shows that Everettism has an epistemic problem which could not be resolved satisfactorily. Despite its popularity, for solving a few well known paradoxes in QM such as the Schroedinger's Cat and the wave collapse, the weaknesses of the Everettism are well known particularly in two items: carrying extra metaphysical baggage for having an infinite number of identical worlds, and the impossibility of the theory to be tested experimentally (i.e according to Popper's philosophy, the theory is unscientific because it is unfalsifiable). Other weaknesses are in Albert (1992), Kent (1990), Peres (1993), Price (1995), Lehner (1997), Lewis (2000), Janssen (2002), Streater (2003), Vaidman (2002), and Internet 3.3. Not less important for us, **Everettism is incompatible with Islamic cosmological doctrine** in which there is an axiom that one sole corresponds to unique physical body, whereas the founder of this interpretation, Everett believes that his theory guarantees that every one lives forever (in different worlds) because one consciousness bonded or attached at each branch of oneself following whatever path which does not lead to death at infinitum. His daughter also believes in Everettism because his daughter's suicidal note states that "I am going to a parallel universe to be together with my father" (Shaharir 2011). Even hasty and careless Muslim scholars also happily equate the Everettism with a phenomenon of self-cloning among the highest order of *shufists* who could present themselves simultaneously in many places (Shahidan 1999a, 1999/2000, 2004). We believe that this is very improper and it is a result of without a careful consideration. Similarly, the identification of the tunneling concept in QM (Hawking 1987,1993 and Isham 1988) according to the Everettism, with the the supernatural ability of the *shufists* (their *karamahs*) and the supernatural ability of a demon (*Jin*) known as

‘Ifrit who could bring the Balqis (Queen of Sheva) palace instantly in front of the prophet Sulaiman/Solomon as stated in *al-Qur’aan, Surah al-Naml* (7): 39-40 as highlighted by Shahidan (1999a) are inappropriate and misleading.

#### **2.4. Bohmism**

Bohmism is a school of thought in (or an alternative formulation of) QM founded by David Bohm motivated by various Einstein’s critique on QM, particularly in the EPR *gedanken* which he had extended to become the EPRB *gedanken* (Shaharir 2005). Thus his original aim in the 1950s was to develop a hidden variable theory in QM as he describes it in Bohm (1980) and formulate a deterministic QM. But his school of thought (also known as the Bohm interpretation of QM and de Broglie wave-pilot formulation of QM) only emerges after his introduction of the new orders in physics, the implicate and explicate orders in 1970s as he explains it in Bohm (1980). His formulation became popular after his further articulation on the nature of the orders which lead him to a global theory which he term it as the “undivided universe” or wholeness of the world (Bohm & Hiley 1993) and other terms are holism and inseparability (Howard 1989, Healey 2008). This interpretation of QM become a new approach in QM also known as the Bohmian mechanics. But we simply refer it as Bohmism.

Despite its popularity, there are many weaknesses of Bohmism. First of all, despite the claim that the Bohmism have resolved the well known paradoxes in QM, the Schroedinger’s cat and the measurement paradox, but the resolution is not satisfied by many, and worse still it produces a new paradox through a thought experiment by Aharonov *et al.* (1990) and Aharonov (2000). Bohmism fully supports the nonlocality of QM (against the very important issue raised by Einstein in his EPR *gedanken*) but he argues the phenomenon occurs only at the simplest level of explicate order. However, this theory may well be in a position of “betting the wrong horse” due to the experimental result by Salart *et*

*al.* (2008) who show the impossibility of nonlocality phenomenon to occur. According to *NationMaster-Encyclopedia* (ud) and *Wikipedia* (2008), Bohmism is too artificial to be recognised as a science, and further more the nonlocal hidden variables in it do not give new insight in QM. Further, these two sources and Introzzi & Rossetti (2004) find that Bohmism also needs to recognise a special observer who is in a classical world. Brannen (2003) dislikes the strangeness of Bohmism in which the implicate order associates with so diverging objects as an exact position of a particle with a wave.

Goldstein (2006) lists 21 items which he said have been raised by various writers regarding the weaknesses of Bohmism. Goldstein tried to dismiss all of these weaknesses by saying that all the weaknesses are based on prejudices or misunderstanding. However we find that at least eleven of the items which Goldstein argued against the rejection of Bohmism are also based on his sentiment or weak reasonings (Shaharir 2011). The issues are the simplicity versus nonsimplicity of Bohmism (parsimony principle in science), Bohmian particle trajectory, intuitiveness of Bohmism, explanatory power of Bohmism in the double slit experiment and the Schroedinger's cat paradox, the nature of Bohmian prediction compared to the conventional QM, Bohmian new results, quantum potential, equivalence with the Everettism, Bohmian definition of the wave function and Bohmian QFT.

Streater (2003, 2007), and Cushing *et al.* (1996) show that Bohmism is inconsistent with experiment which set up to test the Bell's inequality. Streater goes on to say that the Bohmism is more accurate to be called as Bohmian model of particle without spin which gives a different prediction than the conventional QM including the position of a particle. He also believes that Bohmism cannot be a successful theory.

Brannen (2003) and Durr *et al.* (2004) point out the weakness of Bohmism for not being able to formulate QFT satisfactorily.

Brannen (2003) also shows that Bohmism gives a contradictory result (compared to the conventional QM). Bacon (2006) points out that the Bohmism does not have explanatory and predictive power in the domain of quantum computation and computer, even though Lewis (2007a) shows that Bohmism does solve measurement issue in a fairly good manner. However Lewis (2007b) also shows a problem in interpreting wave function in Bohmism, whereas Callender (2007) indirectly shows some problems in interpretation of probability in Bohmism since it is well known that Bohmism is originally designed for a deterministic model of quantum mechanics.

The creation of implicate and explicate orders in Bohmism needs a new world or universe (a new geometry) which is not a three dimensional space or a four dimensional space-time, and not even a surprising and mind boggling finite dimension such as the eleven dimensional space-time in string theory (Greene 1999) but an infinite dimensional “universe”. Even though Finkelstein (1987) suggests that Bohmian universe is a collection of  $n$ -simplex, where  $n$  is at least 4, but until today no one is able to formulate such a simplex. Bohm (1987) explanation on the nature of mind and reality, time and death, which he relates to the implicate and explicate order of his universe is very much influenced by Hinduism. Thompson (1989) and Jagan (2000) believe that **Bohmism is heavily influenced by monism in Hindu-Buddhism** as manifested in the rejection the wave-particle dualism. Thompson also points out Bohm provides many inconsistencies in explaining not just physical things, but including social and human behaviours, in particular the corruption, using his implicate and explicate order. Further, Thompson (1989) suggested an improvement of the Bohm explanation on nature of human thought but with even **much more influenced by the Hindu-Buddhism** cosmological doctrine. Gardener (2000) believes that **Bohm tried to internalise a school of thought in Hinduism** as taught by his closed friend and teacher, Krishnamurti (a Hindu Guru), on the infinite dimensional nature of reality as manifested in Bohm interpretation of infinite level of

realities in physics: Newton's physics is in a level of reality where the universe is deterministic and independent of mind, the conventional QM is at the level of indeterministic, dependent of chances, and with a need of element of solipsism, at subquantum level the deterministic world return and shows a reality, and there is further level of realities at infinitum which naturally he believes could not be reached by human. This truly **contradicts the Islamic cosmological doctrine.**

Hiley and Peat (1987) says that **Bohm believes in the existence of life in everything** including those atomic particles. In fact Bohm gives the name for it as protointelligence and he produces his own version of evolutionary theory which is different from the Darwinian Theory of Evolution. Here, there is an element of similarity with the Islamic cosmological doctrine which could may well attract hasty and overzealous Muslim scholars or writers to Islamise Bohmism. But this is only coincidental similarity, and the Bohm evolutionary theory based on the **evolution of the protointelligence is against Islamic doctrine.**

Thus it is true that **Bohmism is perhaps most successful in bringing a religious element in QM more than any other interpretations of QM but it is all Hindu-Buddhism.** The similarity of Hindu-Buddhism on QM based on the implicate and explicate order of the "wholeness" or "undivided universe" is shown by many authors, some of them have already mentioned earlier, and they are Peats & Briggs (1987), Hiley & Peats (1987), Weber (1986), Thompson (1989), Talbot (1991), Keepin (1993), Rinpoche (1992), Jagan (2000), Gardener (2000) and by Bohm himself (Bohm 1987, Bohm & Peats 1987, Krishnamurti & Bohm 1985; and not forgetting the two bestsellers, Capra ([1978] 2004) dan Zukav ([1979] 1984). Therefore we believe that **Bohmism is the most successful Hindu-Buddhist Quantum Mechanics ever produced and it is very wrong to identify any element of Bohmism as compatible with the Islamic cosmological doctrines.**

## Endnotes

(1) *The John Templeton Foundation* 2002. The Science of Nonlocality and Eastern approaches to Exploring Ultimate Reality. This is a Symposium whose invited participants are as follows (A report by Umar M.S.)

Chairman:

Guiderdoni B. (astrophysicist), presented a paper, “*Islam, Contemporary Issues in Science and Religion*”.

Other Participants:

Balslev A. N. (expert in Indian Classics & Western traditional thought, Prof. in Philosophy), presented a paper, “*Ultimate Reality and Subjectivity*”.

Chiao R.Y. (quantum physicist). No paper is available.

Chittick W.C. (Prof. in comparative studies, Islamic philosophy with emphasise on tradition of *shufy*), presented a paper, “*The Search for Meaning in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition*”.

Cowsik R. (astrophysicist), presented a paper, “*A triad of non-localities*”.

Gisin N. (A group leader for the Optics Division of the Group of Applied Physics at the University of Geneva, Univ. of Geneva). No paper is available.

Kafatos M. (physicist and Prof. in interdisciplinay sc.), presented a paper, “*Non-locality, Consciousness and the Emerging New Science*”.

Azim A. Nanji (expert in Syiah Isma‘ili studies), presented a paper, “*The Science of Nonlocality and Eastern Approaches to Exploring Ultimate Reality — A Perspective from the Muslim Philosophical Tradition*”.

Natarajan P. (Assistant Prof. of astrophysics at Yale University with an abiding interest in the philosophy of science). No paper available

Ravindra R. (Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Chair Prof. for comparative religion, Prof. in international development and Physics Adjunct Prof.). No paper is available.

Suarez A. (quantum philosopher, the founding director of the *Center for Quantum Philosophy*, a division of the Zurich-based Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS).). No paper is available

Muhammad Suheyl Umar (philosopher and Pakistani intellectual), presented a paper, “*The Science of Nonlocality-Perspectives and Implications*”; and

Zeilinger A. (quantum physicist, professor of physics and director of the Experimental Physics Institute at the University of Vienna). No paper is available.

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## **An etiology analysis of women's clothing and Hijab during the Qajars era**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** the present research aims at identifying and specifying conductive factors in making the form and type of women's clothing and Hijab among the Qajars' women in which, the most important features have been taken into consideration.

**Method:** the method of the study is library-bound, based on the most significant journeys and memories of the Qajars era. Therefore, a descriptive analytic method has been employed to examine the type of clothing and the main factors of its use and prevalence during that period when different aspects of clothing should have been deemed on the basis of appearance and ideology of the society.

**Findings and results of the research:** to reveal and to identify influential elements in women's clothing and hijab during the Qajars era, such as each period, not only shed a light on politics, religion, economics, and culture of the society, but also represents intellectual movements and developments of that progressive era. Four domains should be regarded to display a discrepancy in factors creating women's clothing and hijab in the Qajars era: the ideological domain: inside and outside of the home, the domain of the usage of hijab in cities and villages, the domain of strata, considering commoners and aristocrats, and the domain of time, before and after Nasereddin Shah's journeys

to Europe. The women's clothing was alike inside and outside homes in the previous periods, until Mohammad Shah's era, but it was changed after attending Iran in the worldwide realm, and the appearance of modern thoughts. In general, hijab as a type of ideological clothing for women was common in all periods of the Qajars' Shahs.

**Keywords:** Qajars' women, Clothing, Chador, hijab, causative factors.

## **Introduction**

Etiology, i.e., the study of causative or behavioural factors, is a study to reveal the cause of phenomena, and remove the ambiguities of an event, viewpoint, variable, and disease which has been significantly applied by the physicians and researchers in the domain of disease diagnosis. The study discloses the origin and connection between cause and phenomena ,i.e., causality, and represents a way of new events may be happened.

In philosophy, the logical analysis of questions about existence, natural science, ethics and so forth, is defined. Etiology, a common term in the above-mentioned sciences, but less frequent in historical studies, has been selected, because not only it identifies the factors of forming a revolution, but also it mirrors the process of historical changes and how they may gradually come true, which happen " progressively" or "rapidly". Etiology displays the effective factors in creating an event, the expansion of pre-existent culture, and the advancement of related ideology, also, it reveals a kind of systematic classification of the subject under study, and a pattern in line with the existing features and specimens. By this classification, there are studies about social- cultural history, especially the lifestyle, the origins and approaches in different aspects might be envisaged, and also a suitable program of findings and correct manners in the social lifestyle might be received. The etiology of

clothing and hijab, as a multi-dimensional method emanated from beliefs and thoughts is manipulated in the other features of this era and other periods of time, and may not be considered as a distinct aspect. Etiology defines other effects without any further effort, and that is why it contains versatile dimensions and effects. It may not regard a single aspect in different topics.

In this research, clothing and hijab as a cultural-ideological component presents viewpoints, beliefs, and in general, the cultural policy of Iran during that time; clothing and hijab are combined together since they may not be separated concerning women. In the Qajars era, women's hijabs were considered as their inseparable clothing customs; therefore, clothing and hijab were regarded as two-dimensional. During the history of Islamic Iran, in the consolidated assets originated from religion and custom, clothing and hijab have always been considered together, and everywhere the clothing of women was discussed, hijab had been presented as an effective factor on clothing manner, and one of its main component. Even in dictionaries, hijab and clothing have been defined as the essential section of each other. The role of etiology in four mentioned groups is influential in recognizing of women's clothing manners, the hidden facts inside social-political-cultural attractions and even in creating the balance in researchers' viewpoints and consideration its intermediate function without suppressing the opponents, which reveals the concealed reality of this custom as a strong stimulus.

Although etiology in its common definition, the "cause" in a causational system, is rather equal to a disease than to a "reason", the purpose of this research is to recognize the diseased factors and irrational behavior of women's clothing customs. Although it was unstructuralist and norm-driven for society and it was pseudologic entity apparently being a belief, for public opinions believed by the Qajars' women, the factors may not be regarded as authentic and intact. However, two out of four mentioned factors, i.e., strata and functional factors, may not be included in etiology in its specific

sense for this study. Two mentioned domains are only originated from environmental factors and lifestyle which may be clarified through geography and civilization. It means that in the practical domain, geography, which is changeable in different areas, may be the final decision-maker in the lifestyle, provided that it is not reached by mankind. In the stratum domain, the civil society and the process of civilization involving economic, political, and cultural aspects, may conduct city dwellers' behavior; therefore, differences of social class importantly coming from economics represent a civil feature, and instinctively create a discrepancy between whatever changing with economics. Consequently, the factors are only involved in the general sense of etiology, i.e., causal system, in this research. Regarding the two other factors, i.e., ideological or belief and time elements (shah journeys to Europe), they are unreasonable and diseased, because of their results in the society and uncertain existence. This existence, based on genuineness might be related to acceptance by the public, not "compromisingly", but "knowledgeably", and should consider self-awareness, unimitativeness, or at least making links between the period of time qualitatively and quantitatively; so it is not considered in ideological and time elements. The motivational element, emanated from beliefs, may come from an unrealistic, dependent and diseased notion, without any suitable existence, and its suggestion by paternalism in the Qajars' society may be acceptable either correct or incorrect. The clothing customs among most of the Qajars' women were not related to their independent thought and desire, but related to institutionalized dependence hidden in their personalities coming from self-awareness of their dependent behavior, which penetrates into their mind and soul to be believed by them in such a way that they were prejudiced against it, and made an effort to continue it. Women's behavior inside and outside home, their beliefs when alone, and in the defined honored time in public were unconsciously related to the opinion of the dominant group of the Qajars' society, i.e., men. The level of permission for them to go out and come in, to discover, learn and entertain, and all affairs created their lifestyles were under the

control of men's group, which were totally different from religion (religious law), customs, traditions, and history; and all rituals among women were the same suggestions that most of men in a sensible way, either desirable or undesirable, had involved or benefited them. The opinions of men regarded for women may not be believed by women, which were out of recognition of women, and even their inspired forms, were considered as a diseased ground in the Qajars' society. If this belief had not been diseased and unreasonable, firstly it should have been accepted by the society, and the determined punishment for disobedience of this rule had not been criticized by both men and women; secondly it should have not been disapproved and questioned by the internal and external writings to put it certainly under controversy. The approval of time and society, the fear of being suppressed and outcast, satisfaction of men and having a clear conscience<sup>1</sup> were not part of real "belief" of the Qajars' women, but they were "the cause" of their behavior in choosing clothing inside and outside home. Because the feature of purified concept, i.e., recognition, may not encompass none of the said items such as fear, prevention, and receiving satisfaction from others not "oneself", and it may present the behavioral belief, which is unrelated to environmental factors and negative reactions like "fear" or "prevention" producing safety and certainty through the appearance of recognition and its enjoyment. In addition to that, when a behavior is, or becomes collective as a result of publicity accepted by a group of people, they forget their own desirable behavior and sometimes it becomes so faded that individual desirability may be sacrificed by collective desirability; therefore, men or women are not able differentiate between what they "themselves" seek for and what they have been encouraged to own, and it is called a pseudo-belief not a real one, which has unconsciously formed in individual's mind in time.

In the time domain, when shah went to Europe, cause in its particular sense, i.e., disease, is also witnessed. The resultant changes in the appearance of the Qajars' women were emanated from external factors, and there was no rational and balanced

connection between internal and external dress, but it was totally accepted from the foreign world; and women's feelings, desires and priorities for their appearance were not taken into consideration, and this matter, involved a cultural complication and ambiguity, making a kind of ignorance<sup>2</sup> arisen the question of how there had been no ignorance and reform in women's clothing and hijab up to that time, and internal production was so weak that was changed just with a trip, and in comparison with its great difference with the external countries, Shah was convinced to follow it. Such weakness does not convey "a change", but this change comes from an imitation, which shows societal destruction is not a real change. The destruction not only displays the weakness of the previous views, shattered just by Shah's journey, but also predicts its collapse in coming future, since the steadiness of each change is related to the continuity of the past behavior, adding some assets and valuable concepts to it, and removing inappropriate old and new conduct. Although the change of women's clothing was in its form and model indicated purity and chastity, it was not transformational in the society. Nevertheless, the translating of change into its meaning should not be denied, and it should not be totally summarized in the form of women's clothing and hijab. It would be evident that the social changes firstly appear in the forms and then, on the basis of level of acceptability and the creation of the thought revolution, slow or fast, penetrate into sense and content. Therefore, a change, originated from imitation without the pleasure of thought and meaning may be temporary and marginal, but not intact and intellectual; a change, which is flexible, may be based on thought, creation, rational and valuable analogy, and move toward improvement and development, regarding past behavior, mind enjoyment, and the merits of new conduct, resulted in mental and "self" growth without imitation of "other". It means that, this change would not only be a transformation, but contain, a self of revision and betterment, which employs the other one as a source of inspiration and instrument to pay attention to itself and become aware of what would be going on deeply, but not superficially.

The subject of women and their clothing and hijab in the shape of common clothes, beyond the topics of industry, material, texture, and price of cloth, refers to the social changes in that era, and confirms development and purification of the cultural community of Iran. The Qajars' women's appearance, which was significantly related to their clothing and hijab, a symbol of their image in that time<sup>3</sup>, was proportionately changing, based on its own features and internal (Iran) and external (the world) transformations, which would be regarded as a great change on the basis of the fixed transition about women<sup>4</sup>. The change since the time before the Qajars' era, has been presented as a reactive factor on the surface and in depth of the societies, and in connection with historical, traditional, religious trend and following events, originated from objectives, and ignorance of emperors and rulers, has displayed one of the most significant aspects of human identification<sup>5</sup>, which has been resultative, and effective in making movements toward the same direction in some historical times.

In the Qajars' era, a time when it is not an exception from the other historical periods, there was a pre-defined-determined clothing for Iranian women, which came back to the historical period of the Islamic Iran, and in each decade and century, it contained fluctuations related to a special time and its features. During this period, although there was a kind of transition from traditionalism to modernism, and a twinkle of modernization and intellectualism was shining in front of Fathali Shah's period, which was invisibly conveyed to the variables and mechanisms of the internal society of Iran, the style of clothing and hijab, connected with the beliefs on the surface of society continued, and in spite of the arrival of developments, clothing behavior among low-brow women, involving most women of public society remained sound; the development might be only observed among Haram and aristocratic women in the shape of a new mode.

Two viewpoints were always considered about women's clothing and hijab in that era without any general consensus. In the first

perspective, this kind of clothing should be regarded beyond women's choice and interest, just based on prejudice and policy of men's<sup>6</sup> tradition and society<sup>7</sup>. Some believe that the aim of this clothing was to keep women at home which may introduce one of the features of religion in the traditional-Islamic Iran.

The advocated of the first perspective assume that women in Islamic dress and hijab would not be considered as assistants in the society, and this clothing may not allow them to and roleroles in the political, economic, and cultural domains in convergent or divergent aids; therefore, their assistance would be only limited to their unimportant tasks at home, and finally in mosques, and outdoor bathrooms. Another group suppose that women's clothing and hijab reveal their preference, desires, and internal motivations<sup>8</sup>; not only it was desirable for their class, but also it provided a homogeneity between such a clothing and freedom of women's action. Since if they put aside their traditional clothing, perhaps the Qajar's women might not continue their daily duties, so they had to accept this style of clothing. Taking those tow viewpoints into consideration, one should face with two different perspectives of the researchers in the sphere of women's history, presenting discussions about women's multi-dimensional presence in society, referred to the clothing of Iranian women which may deny the opinions of the second group, using their pieces of writings. One group, regarding the right of modernism and the speech of equality and justice, believe that the common appearance of the Qajars' women was a hindrance for them to display their own views and desires in the society; so they consider it as an action against versatile and practical tasks, and their assistance was totally weakened in the society. since the clothing of Iranian women has been influenced by religious-traditional reasons in the old country from the past time up to now, this group are well-informed that based on their presupposition for women's assistance in society and then making a change in their clothing, they reform the ideology of people, which come true by hijab speech, uniformed clothing, and finally removal of hijab, an action beyond a modification. however another group believe that

there is no conflict between women's clothing of Islamic dress (Chador) and veil (Chaghchoor), and the principle of social acceptance; therefore, they accuse the result of hijab removal and official change in clothing of Iranian women and ideological transformation that creates a gap among assistant women of society and culture; since after the removal of hijab, women not accepting the new regulations about clothing, kept away from groups and associations, and became isolated. Accordingly, there was always a challenge between the two groups and their viewpoints, whether the Qajars' women were satisfied with their own appearance and felt liberated, or they considered it as a limitation and old-fashioned factor, imposed on them by religious-traditional beliefs. A study about the matter and its challenges, making predicament in societies in dependent or independent forms, needs the analysis of the most important factors of women's appearance with that clothing, using the main sources that the author has endeavored to pay attention to. Before the study of four-fold etiology, presenting two frequent terms, i.e., "clothing" and "hijab", which are the most critical terms in this research, seems unavoidable.

## **Clothing**

Clothing means wearing, protection, garment, care, hijab, screen, clothes, covering, and house ceiling. Clothing comes from "to have clothes" which means a thing covering another thing<sup>9</sup>. The style of clothing<sup>10</sup> in different cultures, indicated environmental beliefs and values, and common conventions.

## **Hijab**

It means covering, modesty, screen, avoidance of coming out, covering oneself with a veil, chastity, and shame. In terms of jurists, Hijab word indicates clothing, and covering has been employed instead of hijab<sup>11</sup>. Hijab denotes women's Islamic clothing. In terminology, it means guarding among tow things<sup>12</sup>. Hijab has been used seven times in Quran in the meaning of a barrier<sup>13</sup>.

Some believe that hijab is a kind of protection against men's lustfully look, and consider it essential and as a symbol of women's resistance in the presence of men<sup>14</sup>. In the world, hijab would not suggest Chador and covering. Hijab indicates "screen" and its verb is "to screen". Fatima Mernissi, an activist of women's rights, an author and sociologist, claims that the place behind hijab would be a forbidden space<sup>15</sup>. The duty of clothing is creating a banned or holly space without the danger of men's lustfully looks, and also a tool for people who do not intend to be exposed to sexual harassment<sup>16</sup>. Gabriel, a researcher and instructor of theology and religious studies, emphasizes that non-muslim women assume that hijab may be a force by men, and they do not consider women's intention in this regard. Hijab may be considered as a sign of muslim women, displaying their identity and personality<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, muslim women in connection with their institutionalized values, need a differentiation that hijab would satisfy this desire<sup>18</sup>.

Mernissi determines hijab in three types: visual, spatial, and moral. The important point is that most people only pay attention to its visual aspect and two other aspects, i.e., space and morality, will be ignored, unaware of the fact that the space behind hijab seeks a special dignity and sacredness; therefore, women magnify the moral aspect of hijab by their clothing<sup>19</sup>.

### **A: Ideological domain: inside and outside home**

The most significant factor, consisting limitation and definition of women's clothing in and out of home, was religious-traditional beliefs of women and society in that era, which its right or wrong came from religious thoughts, and because it satisfied women's intentions, they followed it even if it was difficult for them. The purpose of usage of hijab inside and outside of the home is taking the importance of two different environments in the Qajars' society into consideration, i.e., women's protection, or "household" and "dignity (Namoos)" custody; this matter protected them from probable immoral behavior<sup>20</sup>; therefore, it had a restraining role in

actions against clothing or a complementary function in religious deeds and following religious verdicts summarized in hijab for women. The considered hijab for women could come true only when there was a safe and personal place for them; therefore, men left homes during the day, and made a living with a moral certainly about their homes.

The Qajars' women wore a short dress, and a kind of clothes called , arkhaleghi<sup>21</sup> shorter than the previous one, to cover the upper part of their body, and they put on a garment for the lower part of their body to cover the back of their legs, They veiled their hair with a scarf called Charghad. Outside home, they used Chaghchoor<sup>22</sup> for their legs and a black Chador to cover their whole body from head to legs; Roobandeh (something like a visor) was unseparated element of the Hijab. These could be studied from two views, either religious or traditional aspects. It should be considered as a religious factor or a traditional feature (social habits and norms), which has been Veil (Roobandeh) was a usual part of her hijab<sup>23</sup>, and going out without veil, was a disobedience from religion and tradition. The usage of Charghad and a transparent Chador inside home among women might raise doubts, but it was integrated with their traditions and customs, originated from their religious beliefs. Because religious thoughts and beliefs of Iranian people were moving as a river during that time and used conventional views to make a combination, which created a mix based on its special time. The penetration of hijab in women's personal and social life was in such a way that they observed it at home and even in wedding ceremonies, they covered their faces when using make-up or if they were sitting in a room, they used a curtain to keep away from non-mahram men<sup>24</sup>. The type of women's clothing and hijab emphasized in Islamic rituals and considered as women's chastity, has been repeatedly mentioned in the written sources such as travelogs and memories. Iranian and foreign authors have described types of women's clothing and hijab, and presented different views and analyses in this regard. By the study of such writings, it would be realized that although having hijab was a strict rule and out of the

control of the families, in public recreational places, gardens, and mourning ceremonies like Taazieh, its strictness was somewhat decreased, so that men and women could look at each other for a short time. At this time, there was a lack of consistency in clothing appearance, because in some religions, penetration of religious factors such as hijab related to clothing, was continually spreading. The discrepancy had changed women's clothing in different areas, and even in religious and non-religious cities; for instance, women in the north part of the country were freely present outside home, while there was a double strictness for women's clothing in cities such as Yazd and Isfahan<sup>25</sup>.

Karla Serna has described women's clothing inside home as a short loose dress <sup>26</sup>(Sheliteh)<sup>27</sup>. Poolak also mentions, "women cover their head with a shawl and wear a transparent silk dress in blue or pink which is embroidered, and the breasts can be seen under it. Instead of a skirt, they wear some underpants called "underwear", and their clothes are full of puffs because they put on a lot of clothes" {1}.

Women's clothing was influenced by various situations, for instance, when they had some guests, "they<sup>28</sup> tie a cloth around their waist called Chador-enamaz, and its tail is pulled on floor" {2}. Although women's attention to their appearance by the way of clothing and making up, needed a lot of time to spend on buying cloth and clothes, outside home they showed up with a different clothing which was acceptable and justifiable by the society, as Ursal mentions, "A shrewd man with a lustfully look cannot recognize one from another, even if he sees them a thousand time" {3}. Women's clothing was in the shape of hijab that Chador and veil were inseparable components of it, and the hijab made their body uniformed, and of the same color<sup>29</sup>. Karla Serna describes women's clothing out of home the way, "women's clothing consist of a dark blue chador and loose pants, made from green, purple, and grey cotton, covering their legs like stockings, and high-heeled sandals" {4}. A significant difference might not be found between

women's clothing in Tehran and in other cities, and the only difference was sometimes related to color and material of women's clothing. Monnesoddoleh about chador and veils of women living in the towns says: "Qomi women wore a tent with pins to the lower part of the body and there was only a small opening in front of their eyes to see; their chador was like a bag called "laki". Kermani women wore a white chador completed with a veil...Khorasani women put on silk colored chador with a veil...Kordestani women never wore a chador, they tied a larg silk shawl around their head and wore a long dress and Kalijeh when going out....kashani, and Yazdi women used a tent without a veil" {5}. Turkish women wore a cloth called "Iza" instead of chador, made from blue or red silk together with a belt, having a round golden buckle decorated with gems<sup>30</sup>.

By explanation what mentioned about the type of women's clothing in this era, it is assumed that the life for European women living in Iran was not suitable and acceptable because "they could not appear in the streets, since people followed them, and they disliked Muslims' clothing" {6}.

When women used chador and chaghchoor in that era, it was difficult to realize whether they were young or old. Yoshida mentions "during a few months, when we stayed here, women did not show us their faces, and we could not see women without chador and hijab. In this case, from the color and smoothness or wrinkliness of the skin of their hands, we could know whether they were young or old" {7}.

Regarding the clothing of Qajars' women, which had a parallel and convergent trend with their religious imitations, some researchers believe that the variable, displaying women's appearance of that society, may have a motivational aspects, as well as prevent some usual irregularities; so it would provide a safe margin for women, and decrease the concerns about women's security<sup>31</sup>. Although women's clothing and hijab were agreeable in the public opinion of

that time, the authors of the subject expressed their ideas showing that hijab actually functioned against moral and secure features of women's clothing. According to the speculation or the certainly of these people, women employed hijab, as a progressive not retrogressive device, to perform what they intended and desired, and be present in the society, and arrive at women's congregational centers, such as public bathrooms, mosques, doctors' offices, and markets. It should be mentioned that this would not mean women's clothing and hijab out of home. But it was a progressive instrument, more rapidly and easily helped them enter the said public places with less anxiety. As if, when they had such clothing, they would not be afraid of being observed, followed, and accused, and they would securely arrive at women's situations to learn some superstitions and negative behaviors of public beliefs. Because of this matter, some people like Tajossaltaneh considered the style of women's clothing and hijab as a reason for their immorality and lack of knowledge; she subjectively believed that, all of women's misfortunes and retrogressive trend in their life at that time were originated from their clothing style, "the destruction of the society and corruption, and lack of progress in any activity come from women's hijab. In Iran, the number of men's casualties is always more than that of women; if jobless women at home, consisting two third of population, worked with men wealthy....thousands of immoralities have been spreading in the country, because of women's hijab" {8}. She argues that women's clothing is a hindrance to their participation in the economic and social activities, and their function in the society would be the only solution to improve society; therefore, women can benefit from their time, and play an essential role in the progress of the country than to issue traditional and superstitions thoughts. The prevalence of the misery, i.e., hijab, prevented women from thinking and acting sensibly, which they boasted of and considered as a fortune, "Hijab is in favor of them in many ways, so women would not make an effort to change it. Women can easily perform any intended purposes, by using hijab. Women, by putting on this kind of clothing, covering their whole body, would enter everywhere they desired to, without being

recognized by anybody. Because nobody, even their husbands can take off their veils in the street, and if men do such an action, they will be severely punished or, in some situations executed...only Shah's haram women and their children are deprived of the advantages" {9}.

In spite of above mentioned opinions, which have considered women's clothing and hijab as the most critical obstacle to progress and growth among women, it cannot be ignored that one of the important clues, related to retrogressive trend in women's society, are a series of public rules and beliefs, created and directed by men in the society. The usual misinterpretation of men's society of Islamic rules<sup>32</sup>, rooted in their intentions and consisted in a long chain of ideas from their paternal ruling, are regarded as factors influencing women's existence rights and beliefs. This paternalism, a formed triangle of religion, tradition and history from their paternal ruling before and after Islam, owned the authority to make decisions about society and the other half of it, i.e., women, and some unpleasant norms of women, containing a negative and deteriorating trends were related to public opinions especially those of men; therefore, women of that era, just to be accepted and seen, had to resort, to displeasing means led to their loss and negligence. It suggests that women in the feminine framework, deserved to be loved; if men kept away from them, because of their appearance and ardour, women would lose their beloved position as Zaeefeh (an adjective used for women at that time); therefore, women might attempt to preserve their positions in front of men, but the purpose was badly directed forward; its pathology and discussion on the subject should be debated in details in other situations.

Some travellers and researchers assume that public opinions about Iranian women's hijab is intruded into their freedom and rights and a way to suppress their desires<sup>33</sup>. Gabriel<sup>34</sup> points out that women's hijab may provide a functional freedom for them in society, while keeping them away from men's aggressive attention, and while maintaining their privacy in a public situation. Contrary to previous

views, some researchers as Colonel Si believe that Iranian women own more freedom than that of European women, and the former follows ethical values, he also argues, "based on my 8-month experience living in Iran, I deny the bad effect of hijab, because I never saw women having unacceptable movement or a gesture or a lustful look" {10}.

Women's freedom in the covering of hijab and its destructive effects may not imply corruption and debauchery, but it denotes that women resorted to an unrelated atmosphere beyond a reasonable lifestyle, penetrated in the public opinions and more visibly among women, so that this matter had decreased their cultural and scientific growth. Sometimes, they met fortunetellers and exorcists, as a kind of mental self-assistance, to meet their wishes; obviously if they took part in the social activities, similar to free women wandering in the desert, they might not show the misconduct collectively or individually. In some pieces of writing, these kinds of deviations, connected with Iranian women's assumptions through their careless and ignorance, have been more emphasized. MirzaAghakhan-e-Kermani asserts, "when women covered their faces, all these virtues might be gradually deteriorating. Actions such as having sexual relationships with children and servants, betrayal, lustful look, married women, shameless men, and instruments for cutting generations are easy to be performed" {11}. He also states, "according to other people's ideas, Iranian women are not only disreputable, downtrodden, weak, and prisoners, but also abandoned from knowledge and science of the world, lacking the arts of all human beings" {12}.

Such an idea would be considered as the other aspect of the critical and controversial topic of this time and any period of human being's societies, which regards hijab as a matter of negligence and criticizes and challenges it based on existing events and knowledge. On the other hand, hijab is taken into consideration as a moral value, contrary to the aspect that brings all its values into question. The two different notions about hijab pave the way to study

women's clothing and hijab in the Qajar era, regarding its ethical values or unethical aspects, protections or corruption, freedom or reformation.

### **B: Stratum domain: Commoners and Aristocrats**

Qajari citizen, in general, consisted of two strata: commoners and aristocrats; the middle-brow of Qajari society would be easily grouped in the two classes. The middle-brow, contrary to the present time or probably some other times, belonged to one of these categories (commoners or aristocrats); it was not actually a middle-class of the society so that welfare, insight, and intellectualism could not be considered for it as a real middle-class. Only in some rare situations, a group as a middle-class could be seen not containing a fundamental change in their clothing and hijab.

In addition to a strong and unavoidable stimulus called "motivation" as a significant factor of women's clothing and hijab mentioned before, belonging to these main classes of Iranian society greatly influenced women's clothing style. Based on the writings of this era, the chief framework of women's appearance was alike between the two classes; the only discrepancy might be in textures and designs of the clothes, including two forms: "simple" and "luxurious". However, the degree of importance and rigidity of this matter among aristocratic women would be more than other classes of society, originated from the situations, governing this group because they tried to have their own expectations and competitions as well as keep their social, political, and economic dignity. Regarding the generality of hijab and clothing, common women followed noble women; if there was a great change in the style of clothing, aristocratic and Shah's women were the leaders of this happening.

About women's clothing of the two groups in general, Benjamin argues, "the form and style of women's clothing at home for commoners and aristocrats are the same; the only difference is connected with the type of cloth, color, crocheting, embroidery, and handicrafts used for clothing of the women...." {13}. in Kashan's

history, the clothing related to different classes of society has been described in this way, "women's garments from scholars to businessmen were alike; in general. In winter, at home they wore chaghads, white ghamis dresses<sup>35</sup>, Kermani termeh arkhalghs are kasha Koliye velvet<sup>36</sup>, Kermani termeh fastened around waist, especial for generals, broadcloth<sup>37</sup>, barak<sup>38</sup>, and pants full of folds of European model...but women related to the middle class at home wore chaghad and white ghamis dress with finely-knit chintz, European chintz pants, and shoes made from goat leather for women....and women of the low class, at home, wore kasha thread woven clothes, and in the wedding ceremonies, they put on European chintz clothing"{14}. Henry Bayender mentions that women's clothing was simple or luxurious based on their classes of society and they wore stockings and a Sheliteh<sup>39</sup> which were European dancers' clothing<sup>40</sup>.

The clothing and hijab among Shah's harem with a small difference in materials, decorations, and designs were similar to common women in the society. Inside Harem, women wore shorts, looses, and folded underpants up to their knees. They used spring inside these underpants to make them more folded; they put on socks, their chaghads were made from Zari<sup>41</sup> and Gars<sup>42</sup> (based on some notes about Nasereddin Shah's personal life, p. 29). Women had a competition for their make-up and appearance, "Shah" Harem was a center of entertainment and make-up for women to display their needed cloth from the market not to let anybody use it"{15}.

Doctor Wilz, by making use of "upper class" and "lower class", defines the appearance of women inside and outside homes in this way, Iranian women's underpants consisted of a short dress for women consisted white or blue chintz up to their legs among lower class women but this dress was made from silk among upper class women. Shirazi women used embroidered cotton cloth and rich women consumed transparent lace and gold thread with pearls sewn skirts. They wore silk chaghads over their heads fastened with a pin under their chins and necks"{16}.

It is evident that there was a serious and forceful control over women's hijab from the society in that era; the public approach was heightened among Shah Haram's women, since they were a symbol of and chastity and honour of the kingdom; therefore, they should have covered themselves because of moral values, and the citizens might have controlled their manners not to hurt themselves or women. As a result, the passage of Haram's women from streets and recreational places meant a kind of warning for people, and it was possible that one became accused of having a lustful look at Shah's women confines. Shah's women covered their faces and bodies completely, and they were also protected by maids, servants, and special guards; so when they were passing a place, nobody dared to glance at them (see: in the land of the sun, pp.88-89). There might not be such regulations for common women out of Shah's Haram, so their hijabs were not so strict, and when they interacted with other people in the society, a kind of tranquility could be observed, because the public did not pay a careful attention to them, and they were not scrutinized by people and the government.

"veil" was consisted as a complementary section of women's hijab, used by women for some time; the author of "the old Iran and the old Tehran"{17} writes, "for a while, modern women put a veil over their faces; this veil made from hair, was only common in the upper part of the city and it was forbidden downtown. If a woman made a mistake and put on a veil, people would sneer at her and sing:"a beaver has come a veiled women has come".

In explanation about the style of women's clothing among the two mentioned groups, i.e., commoners and aristocrats, the distinction might be just connected with material, form, and design of clothing, and there was no difference in the main rule and definition of the covering for them. Hijab and clothing came from the institutionalized values of the society, originated from history, tradition and religion; therefore, no separation would be witnessed between commoners and aristocrats, and a homogeneity of values and norms may exist in the appearance of the Qajars' women. Being

aristocrats, commoners, noble, and Shah's mistress on one hand, and being impoverished, lack of fame and reputation on the other hand, may not reflect the acceptance of reformation and ignorance about hijab, i.e., both categories were forced to obey hijab, and the same general rules were set for both groups. consequently, in the hierarchical system of the Qajar's era, the clothing and hijab may be regarded the same for all women and the contrast would be only seen in unimportant details, not creating a significant change in the main structure of clothing for women.

### **C: The domain of the usage of hijab in cities and villages**

What includes clothing and hijab of the Qajars' women, and has been repeatedly discussed in different writings, would be the flexibility of its framework among rural, nomadic, and farm women in some provinces. The recognition of this cause is related to different geographical regions. Since the old historical times up to this time, geographical factors have influenced interactions, livelihood, and even tegular relations inside social contracts. The explanation of typical duties, expectations, intentions, lifestyle, motivations, and norms may vary, based on the environment, called "geographical strategy". The geography outside the cities, which is considered as a source and the center of meeting requirements of the cities because of its nature and climate, would lead to the equality of men and women, so this parity may reflect in the concepts, such as labour, production, economy, marriage, clothing and hijab, and totally in making decisions on all domains of life. Two geographical regions on a single political border may depict two images with two discrete features. Therefore, presentation of two various thoughts in city and township would not be considered irrelevant, so rural and nomadic women display this inconsistency with their clothing style, coming from those separate characteristics in the geographical ground. Women would labour and as a developing and producing device reveal themselves within the domain of authority and decision-making. They have taken some steps beyond their own femininity, and divided the opportunities

between the femininity and assistance in order to manifest their existence and effectiveness, by participating in the rural society. Consequently, the style of their clothing may be strongly dependent on the internal culture of their society.

In the Qajars' era, among nomadic Bakhtiyari tribes, women did not manipulate hijab and took part in the society with a kind of clothing different from that of women in the cities. They often wore a long dress and their clothes were "red and blue without a veil on their faces"{18}, and Bayender relates, "they wear cotton and dress reached their legs and tie it around their waist while they do not use underpants"{19}. No strictness about hijab would be observed among Bakhtiari women and they took part in the society without using a veil on their faces; veil was used by women from noble families living in cities<sup>43</sup>. Karzen writes, "bakhtiari women wear a chaghchoor similar to pants with a string, and based on the common term of the 19<sup>th</sup> century their clothing consist in a slit skirt, and a loose dress fastening a shawl over it"{20}.

Bakhtiari women's trousers would be "blue cotton chintz....and they wear flower-patterned cotton scarf, covering their heads and breasts"{21}. The life of people living in the desert regions especially the south part of Iran, was simple and natural providing a tranquility for these people away from preoccupations of the cities. Some researchers believe that because these women did not wear veil on their faces, they wear chaste, and are faithful to their families. Diolaphova tells, "nobody can see mistreat and misbehavior from these women"{22}.

There is a general consensus among most of travellers that rural women did not use chador and veil. Forbezleith {23}, settling in Iran during 1910-1920 has stated, "rural women wear a short folded skirt, i.e., sheliteh, often reached under their knees and a loose dress over that; the colors of this skirts and dresses are chosen from light and bright ones. They cover their heads with a charghad fastening its tail under their chins. But they never conceal their faces from

other people similar to women living in cities". In spite of that Christian people did not accept hijab similar to Muslim women, they followed an appropriate clothing in order to keep safe their social life and not to be probably harmed"<sup>44</sup>.

In these situations, women living in the cities would have some mental difficulties in the normal ground of femininity; although they followed a kind of clothing and hijab based on the traditional and religious verdicts, their life was placed in a competition field, but rural women enjoyed an assistant appearance with an open clothing and hijab, and a simple and natural life to rely on their own power, will, and respect. They leaned against a framework carrying and maintaining their humane values. This important aspect of rural life was not only connected with the intentions of nomadic women in the rustic regions and geographies, it was also related to factors such as the acceptable of men's society of women's participation, environmental conditions and their requirements, because of their lifestyle, as well as being remote from general policies of the government control which involved city-dwellers because of their closeness to the government.

#### **D: The time domain: before and after Nasereddin Shah's journeys**

The time domain on the basis of Nasereddin Shah's journeys to Europe would be regarded as a cultural renaissance; the journeys were not of great importance just because of encouraging Shah for making some developments; since the journeys per se were not considered as a standard of changes, but the novelty of views, objectives, and revolutions in that era provided a suitable ground for the style of the Qajars' women's clothing and hijab. In addition, this time should be assumed as the beginning of negligence and carelessness in different issues; and a kind of flexibility is witnessed in various dimensions and the subject of this research in the Qajars' era. After Shah's trip to Europe, some facilities were provided for the society, so the certainly and rigidity of the social culture were

decreased and reformed to some extent. Flexibility may not indicate to make hijab easy and grant choice freedom in clothing and hijab, but creating some changes in the style of clothing may prove that when a mind can tolerate alterations or in other words, when it can be prone to accept reforms because of travelling around the world; therefore, minor changes may be expected in the domains of values and motivations. Before Nasereddin's era and the beginning of his trips, women covered themselves similar to the previous time, i.e., the Zandieh, and they were the followers of hijab related to the Zandieh's time explained in full and details in the first section of this research (ideological domain). After Iran attendance in the world observing western culture and policies and making journeya of Nasereddin Shah to the west, in addition to visible or invisible social alterations, there would be some changes in significant factors, such as hijab, included women. The transformations can be considered for different subjects but the clothing and hijab of the Qajars' women were investigated since in that era, among women's issues, this matter might have more manifestation in the society, and it was firstly discussed in the writing of this time so that women's positions and contexts were regarded of great importance to be studied; the lines of these researchers's writings are full of sociological judgements, evaluations, and analysis based on hijab. Furthermore, a modification in clothing may indicate a change in the traditional structure of Iranian society, and in the trend of societies developments, it has been considered as a primary change playing a key role in the cultural and political issues.

A transformation in women's clothing even at home and inside Shah's Haram is not harming the religious values, may imply the penetration of the western patterns coming from abroad. As a result, although at first the cultural importations did not lead to removing veil, chador, and chaghchoor, the acceptance of the style of the western clothing and its conformity with Islamic-Iranian clothing would be a step towards a relation with abroad, and its prevalence may display a demand for such changes even very minor. For instance, in some so-called European sources, the Qajars' women in

the well-known street such as Lalehzar have been denoted or the photo of Tajossaltaneh, Nasereddin Shah's daughter, has been shown with such clothing<sup>45</sup>.

As it was mentioned in the first section of the research, before Naseri era, women's clothing, not very different from that of men, were simple and uniform made of cotton or silk material. In general, their clothing under hijab consisted of three pieces: trousers, a long skirt, and dress. They wore long and loose pants covered by a loose skirt. The skirt or its bottom was long so that its edge was sometimes dragged on the floor<sup>46</sup>. Outside home, the usage of chador, chaghchoor, and veil was unavoidable. About women's clothing in "my biography" before Shah journeys, Mostoufi argues, "before Nasereddin Shah journeys to Europe, Iranian women's clothing contained a short dress and arkhaleghi shorter than that for covering the upper part of the body and underpants, reaching up to feet. In winter, they wore "kelijeh" to keep safe from cold weather. When going out of house, they had to wear chadore, chaghchoor, and veil<sup>47</sup>. After Shah journeys and watching the excitement of European dancing and songs, underpants of women were gradually shortened from the shank to the knee. They were becoming shortened until Shah replaced tunic and chador-namaz<sup>48</sup>.

Shah journeys to Europe, among the pioneers of modernism and intellectualism in the world, were considered as a surprising happening, not only for himself, but also for his surroundings, and its image might be a strong stimulus for creating a change in women's appearance; therefore, Shah's Haram was regarded as the best place to accept a new pattern and spread it in the society. Sha's mother was from a group<sup>49</sup> who made an effort to create new modes, and following this desire, Shelitehs of short skirts became common in women's gatherings<sup>50</sup>.

Doustali Moayeromamalek{24} about the expansion of the mode states, "at that time, new modes came from Sha's Haram, and

women of the city waited to see what came out from Haram to follow it...".

Women's clothing in royal receptions considering created modes and changes<sup>51</sup> can be described because each woman based on her position and dignity, would attempt to wear the best clothing and jewelry while participating in these receptions<sup>52</sup>.

The change of clothing also contained shoes before this time, women, wore "naleyn" (Arabic-style sandals), "chamoosh", and "relaxed shoes with tips coming back" and "shoes for travels" in the color of red and blue. Then, some Zoroastrian and Armenian shopkeepers started European business and importations such as small shiny black leather shoes called ghondareh. {25}.

According to what was discussed, women's clothing subject was connected with situations such as Shah journey to Europe, and the unstructured development was originated from the historical-cultural turning point of contemporary Iran, i.e., Shah journey. Although this happening might not influence Iranian fundamental assets, coming from a combination of tradition and religion, it should be considered as a preparation for a change in the cultural structure of Iran and as a factor to determine women's behavior in clothing and hijab.

## **Conclusion**

The identification of accepted norms and values related to each time come from the social behavior of its components, and individual and collective behaviors may indicate a belief or a group of beliefs ruling the society. Recognition and description of social behavior would be formed by two internal and external qualities, and by reflection of individuals, intentions based on their appearance, their real ideological images in particular, and their motivational actions in general may be revealed. Therefore, foundation-making factors, or the ground of obvious institutionalized norms, and then views connected with societal actions, together with easily accessible and

biased clues to criticize the societal norms may lead to "behavioral analysis" and "behaviorology" of individuals consistently and impartially.

In the research, the most evident social behavior of the Qajars' women, i.e., clothing and hijab, was investigated as a single subject; they influence one another and because of their relations, they should be used as a single concept, "clothing", in the study.

The clothing custom defined as clothing behavior, would be a path towards expressing beliefs and thoughts, coming from religious values which display public people's beliefs, dos and don'ts of the society more than other social behaviors. At least, based on the analysis of this period of time, and the notes of travellers, as well as researchers of this era, women's clothing and hijab were received too much attention, and were studied more than the other subjects, and to depict the total image of the Qajars' society by referring to the behavior, the researchers draw some conclusions about cultural, political, and economic areas. The way of women's making elegant with the clothing instruments inside and outside homes and its distinction with the external clothing, may be possibly a good reason for its importance or sensitivity, and strictness of the society may be a reasonable cause to magnify the women's clothing and to find a way to make a connection between clothing behavior and social aspects and changes. The most tangible rays of thoughts in women and even men in society would be observed in this ideological and controversial variable, which has a high capacity to scrutinize women's environment, abilities, opportunities, challenges, restrictions, and even their freedom. Therefore, the studied etiology in this paper may play a supplementary and illuminating role in effective factors of the formation of women's environment and the said items, based on the clothing ideology, analysed in different kinds, and their functions have been presented in selecting and spreading women's clothing and hijab in an invisible and unknown way. From the mentioned four-fold factors in finding the reason of women's clothing behavior, it should be comprehended that in

general, the main image of their clothing and hijab, which was of great importance in each condition, was related with their motivation and belief; three other features only created some trivial alterations and stimuli on the surface not often which would not play a great role in justification of this behavior. The totality of the behavior may be considered just in the practical or geographical factor, since this matter was different from three other factors, and all environmental elements such as climate, the geography of outside city, agriculture, and animal husbandry were integrated to introduce acceptable reasons for a behavioral discrepancy between inside and outside cities. In the stratum domain, there were two main groups in dividing citizens not making a great difference in kind and style of clothing and hijab, only influenced the details, which originated from the class source, and involved in income and prestige of people in the society. For instance, material, design or tools, used for clothes women utilized for their clothing, were chosen based on their social and political ground. The stratum factor never influenced the thoughts of society to move towards making a difference in the style of clothing; therefore, in etiology, this factor is considered unimportant which did not enjoy strong and decisive standards to greatly affect the clothing method.

In the domain of time, based on the development of this era considering Shah journeys to Europe, the details were again regarded, but it had a contrast with the class domain, because the details of time were beyond material and design of clothing, and they were referred to the form and kind of clothing showing a special purpose to make an alteration in the motivation about clothing. Although, during that decade, women's behavior about clothing had not so greatly changed that put the institutionalized beliefs of the society at risk, and only limited to use short and folded clothing again influenced by Chador and Chaghchoor, the hijab limit was maintained, but this change had come from the external factors, displaying the external influences which was against the beliefs of the religious-traditional society of that time, a contradiction with their holy things and finally coming thoughts

from external borders, a threat for their cultural existence. Consequently, two factors out of four about main ground of women's clothing, i.e., the social class and its usage in villages and cities, may not form the main origins of women's appearance and only contain those elements which did not contradict the defined values and norms of the society, and were not effective factors in the style of appearance. Therefore, two factors of motivation and time, in spite of their obvious differences in their effects, would be related to the religious belief which created a double capacity in creation, movement, continuation and the prevalence of this factor; "motivation" is in the previous condition and continues its way, but "time" may be studied in the past and existing situations while it is moving forward. The time domain is defined based on making journeys so it always causes a motivation, because Shah journeys have been right examples of the development in a ideological society; sometimes, this motivation was on the basis of religion and maintenance of religious values, and at times, it did not contain any religious motivation, and was only continued for political and economic purposes. In the middle of those motivations, sometimes, making a connection between old culture and beliefs, and modern concepts and values were considered, in order that the society would not be deprived of flexibility and making a relation with modernism. Since in industrial societies, it is believed that inflexibility in front of the great flow of advancement, which its result would be post-modernism, means continuing dependence on the old, historical cultures, not allowing newly created concepts and cultures to be effective in that society. This limitation in the connection and acceptance of modernism may expose the society to the unaware changes in the global village, i.e. suppressing intellectualism and lack of continuous and stable development, because only awareness would be an obstacle to changing the directions, so if it is converted to unawareness, it may move on contrary to the social situations and put the society at a stoppage.

finally, it should be said that in the trend of identifying stimuli playing rolee in making, spreading, and continuing the appearance

of the Qajars' women inside and outside the country, religious beliefs and traditional values of Iran are considered as the main factors; even when they become gradually faded in the society, they are continuous and the pivotal elements, affecting the clothing of women. "motivation" as the most practical factor in the cultural development of societies, was so influential that even affected women's clothing inside home, and just in situations when women were present not to be observed by men (non-mahram), women's clothing under Chadour and Chaghchoor was in such a way that if a man arrived inside, they could cover themselves only with Chadours; actually, there was no difference between their clothing inside home and what they wore under Chadour and they had hijab to some extent at home; the only common aspect of Iranian women's clothing with European women in four-fold factors, was that Iranian women wore a little freely at home, of course, not totally similar to European women, and they had hijab confines even in women's meetings.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> . the disobedience of the clothing framework and hijab for Iranian women based on religion, custom and history made by men is considered so rejected and worthless that women in that era just followed it accepted by the society and to feel safe; therefore women might have not accepted it because of their fear for future in this world and doomsday.
- <sup>2</sup> . Making ignorance by Shah and its conveyance to the society
- <sup>3</sup> . In general, the subject of hijab is the most important characteristics of Moslem women in different pieces of writing about them (Gabriel and Hannan, 2011, p.131)
- <sup>4</sup> .in this time, Iranian women like other women in different nations faced with the western culture and politics and some of vacuums existing in their life were revealed. This topic became one of the controversial subject and objectives among reformists and even western politicians and the freedom of these women was of great importance (Torab, 2002, p. 4)
- <sup>5</sup> .for example, after Islamic revolution of Iran, women accepted an appearance in line with the objectives of Islamic republic system which was imposed on them (Homa Katouzian, the Persians: ancient, medieval and modern Iran, 2010, pp. 334-335)
- <sup>6</sup> . in the book of religion and culture in Iran and in a Quran's interpretation, men are the final decision-maker for women and it is strenue that women should be obedient; therefore, the best woman is one who does not appear in the society and does not talk with men except behind a screen (Torab, 2002 p.175)
- <sup>7</sup> . Gabriel & Hannan, 2011 p.14
- <sup>8</sup> .Ibid
- <sup>9</sup> .Dehkhoda, 1998, vol.4, pp.5795-5796; Ghosheshi, 1998, p. 250
- <sup>10</sup> .In Iran, islamic clothing refers to hijab for both men and women, and clothing is an altered term of covering. The usage of hijab for women's clothing is a new term (Mottahari, 1999, v.19, p.430). women's clothing in islam denotes that women in their relationship with men must cover themselves and not show off or reveal their body (ibid. pp.430, 431)
- <sup>11</sup> . Ebne Manzoor, 1414, vol. 1, p. 298; Azar Noosh, 2003, p. 277; Dehkhoda, 1998, v.5, pp. 7637-7638; Mottahari, v.19, pp. 429-430.
- <sup>12</sup> .Safipour Ta'absara, 1998, v.1, p.222; Tarihi, 1996, vol. 2, p. 34; Ghal-Aji, 1408, Following Hijab.

- <sup>13</sup> .AAraf:46; Esra:45;Maryam:17; Ahzab:32, 53; Fosselat:5;Shora:51.
- <sup>14</sup> . Ahmed, 1992, pp. 165, 235
- <sup>15</sup> . Gabriel&Hannan, 2011, p.16
- <sup>16</sup> .Gabriel&Hannan, 2011, pp.16-17
- <sup>17</sup> .about reaction and confrontation with muslim women's hijab and clothing, this question arises why public anxiety and rage are only towards them while other societies such as Sikhs, Hindus,...follow a suitable and acceptable clothing. In explanation looking at non-muslim women's hair and hand and not considering any ban for it, Gabriel claims that muslim women's hijab is related to their religious belief and identity. Muslim women believe that hijab is a personal protection and keeps their dignity (Gabriel&Hannan, 2011, p. 14&16)
- <sup>18</sup> .Ibid, p.14
- <sup>19</sup> .Ibid, p. 17
- <sup>20</sup> .Ibid, p.16
- <sup>21</sup> . It is a short tunic used for covering the upper part of the body.
- <sup>22</sup> .it is a kind of pant for covering body from waist to toes and folded in the shank,
- <sup>23</sup> .najmi, 1998, p. 463
- <sup>24</sup> . Wills, 1987, p. 170
- <sup>25</sup> .Azad, 1998, p. 321
- <sup>26</sup> . he says that brassiere was not common among women and they wore a loose and short tunic to cover their breasts.
- <sup>27</sup> .Serena, 1983, p.74
- <sup>28</sup> . Their dress is made from gauze or muslim woven with threads of gold, and reveals the breasts containing long sleeves, which are opened or closed with buttons on the wrist. Women wear a piece of starched white gauze over their head (Dalmani, 1954, p. 289)
- <sup>29</sup> Polak, 1956, p. 116; in the street, they wear a blue chador covering the whole body and hang a piece of thin, long cloth called veil (Roobandeh) in front of their face, and put on light blue and green pants called Chaghchoor covering their legs toes (Polak, 1956, p. 116)
- <sup>30</sup> .Diolafoa, 1992, p.567
- <sup>31</sup> .Gabriel&Hannan, 2011, p. 16
- <sup>32</sup> .it is connected with Damad's speech referred to men and women's potion of misinterpretation of Quran (Torab, 2002, p. 135-136).
- <sup>33</sup> .Mac Gregor, 1981, p.23

<sup>34</sup>.p. 16

<sup>35</sup>. a long and loose dress hanging from the body to cover it.

<sup>36</sup>.a kind of overcoat or labbadeh.

<sup>37</sup>.a kind of thick and fuzzy cloth for making clothes and curtains.

<sup>38</sup>.a kind of fine, tight-fitting, and thick cloth usually used for making winter clothing.

<sup>39</sup>.when Shah saw Russian dancers wearing fine and tight-fitting trousers and a short dress over them, he decided to make it common in Iran, of course, with some change. First, this clothing became usual among Shah Haram's women and then for common women.

<sup>40</sup>.Bayender, 1991, p.112

<sup>41</sup>.a kind of brocaded

<sup>42</sup>.A type of soft cloth

<sup>43</sup>.Bishop, 1996, p. 74

<sup>44</sup>.see: Fourier, 1947, p. 271

<sup>45</sup>.Kalantar, 1460 , p. 11

<sup>46</sup>Uliviey, 1992, pp. 156-157

<sup>47</sup>.Mostufi, 1992 v.1, pp. 510-511; Najmi, 1998, p.434

<sup>48</sup>.See: Mostoufi, ibid; Najmi, ibid

<sup>49</sup>.Serena, 1983, pp. 74-75

<sup>50</sup>.ibid

<sup>51</sup>.such as underpants with springs and miniskirts of the French lords

<sup>52</sup>.Bozorg Omid, 1984, pp. 39-40



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