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The mailing address of the Transcendent Philosophy is:

Dr S.G. Safavi
Journal of Transcendent Philosophy
121 Royal Langford
2 Greville Road
London NW6 5HT
UK
Tel: (+44) 020 7692 2491
Fax: (+44) 020 7209 4727
Email: philosophy@iranainstudies.org

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The Structure and Semiotics of the Second Book of Rumi's *Mathnawi* as a Whole

Mahvash Alavi

London Academy of Iranian Studies, London, UK

Abstract

Mathnawi is the masterpiece of *Mawlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Rumi Khorasani* (1207-1273 CE), the greatest Muslim Persian mystic and poet who composed the *Mathnawi* around seven hundred years ago in Konya.

Hitherto the most important criticism in regards with *Mathnawi* is its apparent lack of structure and plan.

However, in this paper, the author aims to illustrate the structure, semiotics and synoptic view of the second book of Rumi's *Mathnawi*, which hitherto has never been attempted before.

The main theme of the second book is 'friendship', "seeing", "not-seeing" and 'certainty' which has been presented in twelve parallel discourses. The sections within each discourse were not planned linearly but synoptically using the literary principles of parallelism and chiasmus.

The structure of the second book, which is comprised of, 3810 verses, 111 sections and 61 stories, is constituted of 12 discourses in 3 blocks. The present article is the third chapter of my forthcoming book, titled "The Structure, Semiotics and hermeneutic of Book Two of Rumi's *Mathnawi*", which will be published in December 2011 by the London Academic of Iranian Studies Press (LAISP).

Keywords: Rumi, *Mathnawi*, structure, semiotics, sign, Parallelism, friendship, "seeing and not-seeing" and certainty.

Introduction

The Second Book of The *Mathnawi* is comprised of 3810 verses, 111 sections and 61 stories, which based on the synoptic approach and due to the importance of structure, has been divided into 12 discourses. The analysis of each Section was presented in the previous chapter. This chapter will analyse the structure and general relations between the twelve discourses. In this chapter besides showing the close and organized relationship between the discourses, we will portray how Rumi has created a unique and beautiful connected network of spiritual concepts and themes which are actively related and alive in the form of stories that although in appearance seem to be unrelated and scattered, internally are connected and harmonious.

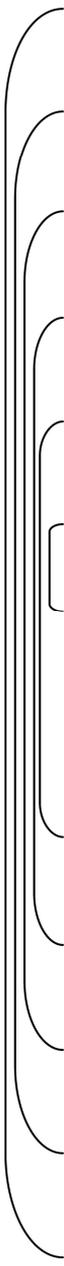
The analysis of the discourses that was presented in the previous chapter has made the analysis of Book Two of the *Mathnawi* as a whole possible. The synoptic structure of Book Two which is demonstrated in the diagram below shows that the 12 discourses have been organized through chiasmus and parallelism. Discourse one and twelve each have twelve sections. Discourse six and seven, which divide Book Two into two sections, each have 14 sections. In the design and form of the discourses there is a definite parallelism which is even, odd, odd, odd, even, even, even, odd, odd, odd, even. The collective sections of the parallel discourses also have numerical symbolic meaning. Discourses one and twelve each have twelve sections which in total comes to 24 sections, and 24 is result of the multiplication of 6×4 and 12×2 ¹.

Discourse two and discourse eleven have 12 sections, which is the result of adding $7 + 5$ and the result of multiplying 6×2 . Discourse three and ten collectively have 16 sections. Discourse four and nine each have 7 sections and collectively 14 sections. Discourses five and eight each have 8 sections and collectively have 16 sections, and discourse six and seven each have 14 sections, and collectively have 28 sections. Thus, numerical parallelism in Book Two is similar to Book one. This symmetry based on parallel duos is amongst discourses that

are structured based on chiasmus. In the diagram below the number of sections in each discourse is portrayed in brackets. The symbolic meaning of numbers has been covered at the end of chapter one.

“It is interesting to notice the way Rumi has used the number of sections in each discourse to produce a significant series and symmetry. The symmetry derives from an important distinction in Islamic Culture between odd and even numbers. In Book One the symmetry is **Odd, Even, Odd, Even, Even, Even, (centre) Even, Even, Even, Odd, Even, Odd**. In Book Two the symmetry is **Even, Odd, Odd, Odd, Even, Even, (centre) Even, Even, Odd, Odd, Odd, Even**. The numerologically significant series is derived from adding together the number of sections in discourses which are in parallel. This gives for Book One **18, 30, 18, 40, 40, 24**. For Book Two the series is **24, 12, 16, 14, 16, 28**. In Book One, the most spiritually significant number for the Mevlevi is **18**, but **12** and **6** are also important; **40** is also spiritually significant in Islamic Culture as in other Middle Eastern Cultures. Thus the series in Book One gives three times **6**, five times **6**, three times **6, 40, 40**, four times **6**. In Book Two the series is different and requires the two halves to be seen in contrast and similarity: both contain **16**, and a number, **24, 28**, and half of that number, **12** and **14**. The numerology requires that the discourses be read in parallel and chiasmically, and that is the significance of the numerological precision, to confirm that the discourses are in fact in parallel and chiasmic, the numbers may have spiritual resonances but their purpose here is to authenticate for the reader the correctness of taking the synoptic reading. The verse preface to Book Two has **111** verses. The purpose of a preface is to foreshadow what is to come. What is to come is **111** headings and sections. The number **111** in the preface has no significance other than the authentication of the number of sections, in case a scribe left one out perhaps, but it is, like the rest of the numerology, clear evidence that Rumi planned the *Mathnawi* very precisely, probably before he composed a single verse, because such precision and symmetry could never have arisen by accident.”²

A Synoptic View of Book Two

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- Discourse One On Not Seeing Reality (112 - 584) [12]*
 - Discourse Two The Insolvent Iblis and the King's Choice of Slave (585 - 1046) [7]*
 - Discourse Trthree The Topsy-Turvy World and Dhu'l-Nun's Madness (1047-1600) [9]*
 - Discourse Four Different Blindnesses and Moses and the Shepherd (1601-1931) [7]*
 - Discourse Five The Fool who trusted the Bear (1932 - 2140) [8]*
 - Discourse Six Mohammed and the sick Companion (2141 - 2603) [14]*
 - Discourse Seven Iblis and Mu'awiya (2604 - 2792) [14]*
 - Link Section Misdirection and the Escape of the Thief (2793 - 2824) [1]*
 - Discourse Eight The Mosque of Opposition (2825 - 3026) [8]*
 - Discourse Nine Fear, Appearance and Reality (3027 - 3209) [7]*
 - Discourse Ten On Ibrahim son of Adham and Others (3210 - 3423) [7]*
 - Discourse Eleven The Dervish who was accused of Theft and Others (3424 0 3572) [5]*
 - Discourse Twelve On Seeing Reality (3573 - 3810) [12]*

By using the same approach that was used in the previous chapter in order to analyse the parallelism between the different sections of a given discourse, the parallelism between the *12* discourses will be analysed.

The Parallelism Of Discourse One And Discourse Twelve

The parallelism between discourse one and discourse twelve is strong and apparent. Both discourses have a thematic structure and their parallelism is a form of contrastive parallelism. While the main theme of the first discourse is 'not-seeing reality' the main theme of the twelfth discourse is 'seeing reality'. Furthermore, both discourses have the same internal structure of twelve sections.

In terms of thematic / narrative structure the parallelism between the two discourses is as follows. The first discourse with 12 sections has a story form. The discussions presented in the different sections of this discourse are two sided. The main issue in this discourse is "unrighteous friends" and "not-seeing". The time and location of the story is the period before and after Islam, the era is ambiguous, the story is based in the Middle East region in an unspecified location. In this story visual and narrative logic is dominant over the time and space aspect. Rumi's main technique in this section is the semiotic relationship between the spiritual and material through allegorical stories. The twelfth discourse which is also has 12 sections similar to the first discourse, has a narrative / teaching nature and the discussions presented in this discourse are also two sided.

The twelfth discourse discusses three main issues: 1) the transcendent station of "*'ayn al-yaqin*"; 2) the threefold relationship of the perfect human being' (*Insan-e Kamil*), God and society and 3) Divine love as the axis of the union of God, society and human beings. The time and location of this story is ambiguous and the logic of necessity and universality is dominant to the time and space aspect. Rumi's technique in this discourse is dialogue and separation. While in discourse one the relationship of the human being with unrighteous people and Satan, and the destructive effects of this relationship have been explained, in

contrast to discourse one, discourse twelve engages in explaining the threefold relationship between the 'Perfect human being', God and society.

The common keywords of the two discourses are Truth (*Haqq*), foolishness. Squinted-eye (double seeing), Messiah, sheikh/mystic (*'arif*), Messenger of Allah, grape, the pious and crying. The contrasting aspect of the two discourses is "not-seeing" and "seeing". Time and space in the twelfth discourse is ambiguous and generalized in order to portray that the path of establishing a relationship with God and seeing reality and truth (*haqiqat*), is eternally open for those who are eager and burning with the desire of union with the Beloved. As such, Book Two of the *Mathnawi* begins with 'not-seeing' and ends with "seeing" with the aid of wisdom (*hikmat*) and love.

There are numerous other parallelisms between discourse one and discourse twelve, such as "The story of Shaykh Ahmad son of Khizrúya" in discourse one and the story of "How the Shaykh explained the hidden meaning of the tree to the seeker" in discourse twelve. In both stories the *sheikh* explains the secrets of the path for novice seekers and in both crying is effective in spiritual realisation. The parallelism between the story of "the pious" in discourse one and in discourse twelve is another instance of the parallelism between these two discourses. In the twelfth discourse the pious man reveals aspects of his stations and states for the seekers, which in a sense is a continuation of the story of the pious man in the first discourse, which explains the important results that are achieved by crying to and asking of God.

The Parallelism Between Discourse Two and Discourse Eleven

The number of sections of discourse two and discourse eleven is odd and is 7 and 5 respectively. The number 7 (the number of sections in discourse two) is amongst the sacred numbers and the signs of the stations of spiritual wayfaring. The number 5 (the number of sections in discourse eleven) is also amongst sacred numbers and is the sign of the five members of the Prophet's Household (*ahlul bayt*), and the People

of the Cloak (*ahl al-Kisa*). The structure of both discourses stress on the role of the central section and is in the form of chiasmus. While in discourse two Rumi engages in explaining the dangers and negative effects of unrighteous friends and not-seeing, in discourse eleven some of the principles of practical spiritual wayfaring for the elevation of one's spiritual state and "seeing" and establishing relationships with pure human beings are discussed. The parallelism between the two discourses is an evolutionary parallelism. In both discourses, techniques of contrasting relationships have been used in order to aid with the explanation of concepts and themes. The common keywords of the two discourses are: intellect (*'aql*), Haqq, soul (*nafs*), Prophet, Mustafa, light and Divine saints (*ulya*).

The transcendental similarity between the central sections of the two discourses is that in both discourses the negative role of self-worship has been stressed:

"That mother of bad character, whose wickedness is in every quarter, is your fleshly soul." (*Mathnawi* Book II: Verse 782)

"The fleshly soul is suspect, not the sublime Reason: the senses are suspect, not the subtle Light." (*Mathnawi* Book II: Verse 3499)

In discourse two, section four, which is the central section, contains the main message of the discourse. The first message is the essential need of the evil-doing and bad-natured soul (*nafs*) for reform and guidance. The second message is exposing the enmity and hatred of the deniers and those who are blind-hearted towards the prophets and Divine saints. The third message is the necessity of the presence of a spiritual guide (*murshid*) for the guidance of human beings at all times and eras, and stressing on the principle of General *Mahdavitat*. The fourth message is the difference between the spiritual ranks of the Divine saints (*Ulya Allah*). The fifth message, is explaining the differences in the ranks, abilities and talents of spiritual wayfarers. The sixth message is the important issue that it is the human that heart that is the subject of Allah's attention and not the body; and the seventh message is illustrating the conclusion of the mannerism of the spiritual

transformation of the true mystic and her/his ascendance to the station of spirit (*ruh*) and the World of Possibility (*'alam-e imkan*).

In discourse eleven the third section, which is the central section, contains the central message of the discourse. In this section Rumi engages in a discussion on the lack of understanding of the masses and novice spiritual wayfarers of the exalted ranks and stations of those who have reached perfection. Rumi also discusses the exalted rank of perfect human beings and their ability of influencing generated beings. The important issue that is discussed in the central section of discourse eleven, is explaining the reason for the misunderstanding and suspicion of the masses towards the perfect human beings; in addition self-worship has been identified as the main cause of the spiritual decline of the masses and the pseudo-Sufis. Real examples of the perfect human beings that were discussed in the central section of discourse two have been presented in this section of discourse eleven.

The Parallelism of Discourse Three and Discourse Ten

The number of sections of discourse three and discourse ten are even, and 9 and 7 respectively. The central section of both discourses contains the main message of the discourse. The central section in discourse three is section 5 while in discourse ten the central section is section 4. As such both discourses are parallel in terms of their structural form. In terms of content both discourses also have contrastive, transcendental and evolutionary parallelism, as in discourse three the main issue is “unrighteous friends” and “not-seeing” while on the contrary in discourse ten “seeing” is presented in its highest form, in the sense that the spiritual wayfarer is in the station of *haqq al-yaqin* and the special friendship between the perfect human being and God is the main issue of this discourse. There is a strong parallelism in the techniques used in discourse three and discourse ten. Rumi’s main technique in discourse three is explaining contradictory relationships; “without the opposite, negating the opposite is not possible”. Examples of this are fire and light, greed and generosity, the horse and the rider, the sea and the morning dew, the disbeliever and the truthful, the pious and disbeliever. In this discourse divine manifestations are presented in

the form of allegorical stories. In discourse ten, the transcendent dialectic journey of the spirit is presented in the form of allegorical stories.

The common keywords in the evolutionary parallelism of the two discourses are: wisdom, sense, *sheikh*, spiritual, hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) and talent, mystic, squinted-eye (double seeing)/ blind, the light of God, sun, genus, the universal spirit, the particular spirit, water and sea, bad nature, light and fire, the sense of the soul and the sense of the *sheikh*, soul and spirit, the sea of body and the sea of spirit, heart, soul, friend, kindness, intellect and the imperative soul.

There are also other parallelisms between these two discourses: the story of Luqman in the third discourse and the story of "how a stranger reviled a *sheikh*" in discourse ten. The parallelism between the theme and the function of love in creating a spiritual revolution (verses 1529-1532³) and the functionality of the spirit and breath of the sheikh in the revolution of objects in the story of wines turning into wine in the tenth discourse (3405-3422). Love is an abstract concept where as the *sheikh* is a real being, however both share a similar function. Another parallelism is that both the story of Luqman in discourse three and that of the sheikh in discourse ten end at the last section of each discourse.

The Parallelism Between Discourse Four and Discourse Nine

In terms of numerical symbolism there is a significant parallelism between discourse four and discourse nine. The number of sections of both discourses is even and 7, the addition of which (7+7) is 14. The numbers 7 and 14 are amongst the sacred numbers. The number 7 represents the station of spiritual wayfaring and the number 14 represents the number of the Divine saints, i.e. Prophet Muhammad, Fatimah and the Twelve Imams in *Shi'ism*. The two discourses are parallel in terms of being placed in the end and beginning of two blocks in the structure of Book Two of the *Mathnawi*. Discourse four is the final discourse of the first block, and is mainly about not-seeing, Satan, and unrighteous friends; whereas, discourse nine is in a positive

evolutionary contrast with it, as it is situated in the beginning of the third block, which is about seeing reality and friendship with God.

The structure of both discourses, with emphasis on section 4 as the central section, has been organized based on chiasmus and the sections are parallel in the form ABCDCBA.

The two discourses are in contradictory evolutionary parallelism with one another. While discourse four discusses the last stage of *'ilm al-yaqin* and is the last section of the first block, discourse nine, which is the first section of the third block, speaks about the beginning of the rank of *haqq al-yaqin*, which is the evolved and highest rank of *yaqin*. Discourse four has thematic unity while discourse nine has conceptual unity and is more abstract and due to presenting abstract concepts, it is closer to mystical literature.

In discourse four God tells Moses:

How much (more) of these phrases and conceptions and metaphors? I want burning, burning: become friendly with that burning!

Light up a fire of love in thy soul, burn thought and expression entirely (away)!

O Moses, they that know the conventions are of one sort, they whose souls and spirits burn are of another sort.”

To lovers there is a burning (which consumes them) at every moment: tax and tithe are not (imposed) on a ruined village.

If he (the lover) speak faultily, do not call him faulty; and if he be bathed in blood, do not wash (those who are) martyrs.

For martyrs, blood is better than water: this fault (committed by him) is better than a hundred right actions (of another).

Within the *Ka'ba* the rule of the *qibla* does not exist: what matter if the diver has no snow-shoes?

Do not seek guidance from the drunken: why dost thou order those whose garments are rent in pieces to mend them?

The religion of Love is apart from all religions: for lovers, the (only) religion and creed is—God. If the ruby have not a seal (graven on it), 'tis no harm: Love in the sea of sorrow is not sorrowful.

(*Mathnawi* Book 2: 1763-1770)

While in discourse nine, in section four the main emphasis is on the *pir* of the spiritual path or the *murshid* and his reality. *Pir*, *murshid* or the perfect human being, other than existential necessity is the absolute manifestation of God, whose religion is love. In this section the relationship of the perfect human and God is the union of the manifestation and the manifested. In the central section of discourse four Rumi introduces the particular and specific reality of the “*wali*”, which in this section is Moses. However, in the central section of discourse nine, which is superior to the central section of discourse four he introduces the general and universal reality of the *wali* through the allegory of the physician. Prophets, Divine saints and religiosity are amongst the other instances of parallelism between the two discourses.

Parallelism Of Discourse Five And Discourse Eight

The number of sections in discourse five and eight are even and 8. The narrative aspect is dominant in both discourses. As such, in terms of structural form there is parallelism between these two discourses. In terms of content the parallelism between the two discourses is evolutionary. Discourse five is at the beginning of the second block while discourse eight is situated at the end of the same block.

Discourse five has a narrative nature, and discussions in this discourse are multi-sided. The main issue in this discourse is the contrast between the love of the fool and that of true friends and Divine saints, and “seeing” and “not-seeing”. Until the spiritual wayfarer has not purified her/his heart's eye from the defects of the soul s/he will not be capable of seeing the secrets of the spiritual path. The time and location of the narrative is before and after Islam in the Middle East, however, the

specific time and location are ambiguous. In this discourse narrative and visual logic is dominant over time and space. Rumi's main technique in this discourse is explaining the contrast between the love of the fool and that of the Divine saints, and presenting the important principle of genus in the form of allegorical stories.

Discourse eight has a narrative / teaching nature. The discussions in this discourse are three sided. The main issue in this discourse is reminding the reader that every soul is capable of making grave mistakes, in a similar way as presented in the story of the Mosque of *Zirar*, thus, it is of essential necessity to constantly analyse and test one's thoughts and deeds in spiritual wayfaring. The time and location of the story is the era of the revelation of Islam and the story is set in Medina, the specific time and location is ambiguous. In this discourse the narrative and visual logic is dominant over the time and space aspect. Rumi's main techniques in this discourse is presenting the contrast between critique and evaluation, explaining the functionality of the principle of "testing", and usage of dual contrasts such as, moon and night, hearing and not-hearing the voice of God, contraction and expansion, wrath and benevolence, fear and hope, winter and summer, spring and autumn, warmth and cold, truth and lie, truth and falsity, spirit and body, copper and gold, death and life, sins and acts of obedience to God in the form of allegorical stories. He also presents related dualities such as, truth and desire, striving and desire, imitator and researcher.

The common keywords of the two discourses are, the Prophet of Islam, foolishness, soul, heart and Divine saints. The contrasts presented in both discourses are dual. In discourse five, the lion-hearted man and Moses aim to save those who are astray and in order to save them they present themselves as friends to them and offer them help, however, they reject their help. In the eighth discourse the lion-hearted man and the prophet of the time, is Muhammad who is also the last prophet, and this is a very delicate point that Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet is present in the last section of the second book which is about friendship and connection with the Divine saints. However, in discourse eight the complex topic of hypocrisy is presented, and

contrary to discourse five, in this discourse, the hypocrites offer their friendship to the Divine saints, while their true intention for expressing their friendship, is neither truthfulness nor the desire for salvation, rather it is aimed at misguiding people. This is similar to the carnal desires and lust that appear beautiful and attractive, however, intrinsically aim at inflicting harm and damage to the spirit and its purity. In discourse five, the bear's friend only destroys himself, however, in discourse eight the hypocrites aim at bringing about the spiritual demise of society. As such, in discourse five friendship with Divine saints, and in discourse eight the hypocrites' pretense of friendship with the Divine saints is represented. This issue is one of the important points in the teachings of Rumi and Islam which strive at reforming and saving the individual on the one hand, and the society on the other. The semiotic techniques in discourse five and eight are parallel.

The reaction of people to Moses and the Sameri, and the thought of one of Prophet Muhammad's companions in rejecting his treatment of the hypocrites represent the different reaction of people towards reality and truth and Divine saints. The world of sleep in discourse five refers to forgetfulness while in discourse eight it refers to the dream world. Dreams are the sign of Divine warning and understanding of truths and realities. In both discourses, there is emphasis on warning against disloyalty. Other issues that have been stressed in these two discourses are the prophets as the true lovers of people, and the Prophet of Islam being more compassionate towards people than they are towards themselves. Another issue that is discussed is that Divine benevolence and mercy is constantly being bestowed upon humanity.

Parallelism of Discourse Seven and Discourse Six

From the perspective of numerical symbolism there is a strong parallelism between discourse six and seven. The number of sections of both discourses is even and 14, and their addition (14+14) results in 28. The numbers 7, 14, and 28 are amongst the sacred and perfect numbers. Seven is the representation of the stations of spiritual wayfaring and is also the number of heavens. Fourteen is the number of Divine saints, i.e.

Prophet Muhammad, Fatimah and the twelve Imams in *Shi'ism* and 28 is the result of the multiplication of 4×7 and the addition two 14s (7+) and is also the number of lunar stations. Based on the origin of beings i.e. the Divine intellect, Pythagoreans have considered them to correlate to the attribute of numbers, and have considered the numbers 7 and 28 which represent the number of heavens and the lunar stations respectively, as perfect numbers. Based on this idea, the number of virtuous beings directly correlates to virtuous numbers. In discourse six and seven, the story of the Prophet of Islam and his companions has been presented as the example of virtuous beings, and the two discourses collectively form the central section of the second block of Book Two of the *Mathnawi*.

Section 7 as the central section of both discourses is emphasized in both sections. In section 7 of discourse six, the Prophet of Islam declares lack of etiquette in supplication as the cause of the companions illness, and in section 7 of discourse 7, the Prophet's companion, supplicates to Allah in order to escape Satan's entrapment.

In both discourses the spiritual wayfarer, must constantly engage in spiritual wayfaring in the companionship of the people of the Divine path, so that their spiritual congregation prevents the deceit of Satan affecting them. In these two discourses, great emphasis has been placed on paying attention to "signs", and this attentiveness to signs is distinguished as one of the criterion for success in spiritual wayfaring.

Discourse seven and six, are in contrastive evolutionary parallelism. In discourse six, the Prophet's companion becomes ill due to an incorrect supplication, and the Prophet of Islam cures him and advises him to act on the basis of the advice of the Divine saints. In discourse seven, one of the Prophet's companions becomes afflicted with the deceit of Satan; in order to escape Satan's deceit he seeks refuge in God and asks Him for guidance. In both discourses, the two companions of the Prophet become afflicted by a spiritual problem. In a sense both stories explore the two forms of Satan's and the Prophet's friendship with people, both of whom promise guidance, however, the Prophet is truthful in his guidance while Satan lies. On the other hand, the issue of seeing

beyond the appearance and seeing reality is discussed. In discourse six, the Prophet's companion does not see the quality of having a relationship with the Beloved, and is only certain that in order to attain happiness in the eternal life, he must leave this world pure and without sins, however he is mistaken in identifying the correct path and course of action. In discourse seven, the Prophet's companion is certain that Satan is not his friend and his advice is only positive in appearance, thus, based on his general knowledge about the deceitfulness of Satan, and due to admitting his own lack of understanding of the reality of consulting with Satan, he seeks refuge in God, in order for God to make him aware of reality.

As such in both discourses, the triangle of the threefold human relationship with certainty (*yaqin*) is discussed. In discourse six, the triangle of the relationship of the companion (human being), God and the Prophet is discussed, while in discourse seven, the triangle of the relationship of the companion (human being), God and Satan is discussed. These two discourses are clearly the connecting ring of the three blocks of Book Two and include 1) Friendship with Satan; 2) friendship with Divine saints and 3) pure friendship with Allah.

Common keywords between the two discourses include: Mustafa, companion, prayer (*salat*), *Haqq*, friendship, companion, mosque, love, generosity, benevolence, deceit, test, wrath and benevolence, good and evil, power of soul and power of spirit, jealous, stingy soul, squinted-eye (double-seeing), heart and supplication.

From the perspective of semiotics the following commonalities exist between these two discourses:

1. Seeking refuge in God: The sign of the method of confronting the deceits of the soul and Satan. This principle is derived from the following Qur'anic verse 'Say Lord "I seek your protection against the strong temptations of the devils."' (Qur'an: 23:97)
2. The surrendering of the human being to the deceits of the soul and Satan: this is the sign of the activity of the base soul in the human being.

3. Lies cause doubt in the heart and truth causes tranquility in the heart: this is the sign of distinguishing right from wrong.
4. Inability to distinguish good from evil: this is the sign of the rawness and illness of the heart (such as greed, drunkenness with wishes, lust, whims and desires of the soul and prejudice).
5. Pain, need and supplication: are the sign of the true spirit of prayer (*salat*), invocation (*dhikr*) and worship.

The Logic of Book Two as a whole

The second book of the *Mathnawi* discusses the different types and ranks of certainty (*yaqin*) and also the different types and ranks of friendship. In the perspective of Islamic mysticism, certainty (*yaqin*) has three ranks which are *'ilm al-yaqin*, *'ayn al-yaqin* and *haqq al-yaqin*.

During spiritual wayfaring in the rank of *'ilm al-yaqin* the mystic discovers the known, through intellectual reasoning. In the rank of *'ayn al-yaqin* the mystic sees the known and in the rank of *haqq al-yaqin* the mystic comes to witness Allah in the station of the “essence of unity” and attains union with Reality (*haqiqat*). In the second and third stage certainty is the result of unveiling and spiritual vision and is from light, which enters the heart from above the veil (*hijab*). *'Ayn al-yaqin* and *haqq al-yaqin* are above *taqwa* (God-consciousness / fear of God). The term *yaqin* and its different degrees have been derived from the Qur'an: *'ilm al-yaqin* is derived from verse 5 of *surat al-takathur*, *'ayn al-yaqin* from verse 7 of *surat al-takathur* and *haqq al-yaqin* from verses 95-96 of *surat al-waqi'ah* and verses 50-51 of *surat al-haqqah*. Imam Reza says that '*Iman* (belief) is a rank higher than Islam, *taqwa* (God-consciousness) is a rank higher than *iman* and *yaqin* is higher than *taqwa* and nothing less than *yaqin* has been distributed amongst people.'

⁴

Having analysed the parallelism between discourses that have chiasmus, now the relationship of the discourses based on their sequential form will be analysed. The second book based on the synoptic approach and

attention to the sequential form of the stories is divided into three blocks. Each block is comprised of four discourses. In terms of numerical symbolism, the combination and order of numbers, is an emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the stories. The order of numbers in Book Two is as follows: four discourses in three blocks, i.e. the numbers 3 and 4. As it was previously mentioned, the numbers 3 and 4 are amongst the perfect numbers and their combination also results in perfect numbers, as through their addition we arrive at $3+4 = 7$ and through their multiplication we arrive at $3 \times 4 = 12$, i.e. 7 and 12 which are both sacred numbers. As such a sacred and esoteric vision has been implemented in the logic of Book Two of the *Mathnawi*.

The first four discourses which form the first block, denote the rank of *'ilm al-yaqin* which is the lowest rank of certainty (*yaqin*). These discourses besides exploring the issue of seeing and not-seeing, discuss the quality, course and results of friendship with Satan and fools. The next four discourses, discourses five to eight, form the second block. These discourses discuss the transformation of certainty from *'ilm al-yaqin* to *'ayn al-yaqin*. Further, they portray the quality, course, and results of establishing relations and friendship with pure human beings, prophets and Divine saints. The final four discourses, which form the third block, i.e. discourses nine to twelve, discuss the transformation of certainty from *'ayn al-yaqin* to *haqq al-yaqin*, and friendship with Allah, which is the highest degree of certainty, seeing and friendship. Thus, in the relevant diagram, between discourses, 4, 5, 8 and 9, which in order are the end and beginning of the first, second and third block, there is a link section. Hitherto, this important discovery has never been mentioned in any other commentary on the *Mathnawi*, and it is achieved through the theory of manifesting the logic of Book Two through the discovery of the hidden structure of the text.

Below each block and each degree of the degrees of certainty and friendship will be analyzed separately.

1. The first block contains discourses one to four. The main theme of the first block is "*'ilm al-yaqin*", "not-seeing" and "seeing". In discourse one "not-seeing", "unrighteous friends" (verse 123) and the

negative role of “Satan” are discussed. In discourse two, the role of Satan and unrighteous friends as barriers in the spiritual journey of human beings, and the role of the weakness of certainty in one’s inability to attain freedom from the prison of the soul (*nafs*) is gradually explained in various stories. The third discourse engages in contrasting the “seeing” of the mystic with a profound vision, the people of the world, the squinted-eye (double-seeing), the spiritual wayfarer and jealous friends. The main issue presented in discourse four is not-seeing and laying the groundwork for the necessity of friendship with and following the perfect human, which is the topic of the second block.

2. The second block is comprised of discourses five to eight. The main theme of the second block is “*’ayn al-yaqin*” and “friendship with the Divine saints”. Thus, the second block is a transformation to a higher degree. The main issue in discourse five is the contrast between the compassion of the fools and that of the Divine saints and seeing and not-seeing. Until the mystic has purified the eye of her/his heart from the flaws of the soul, s/he is not able to see the secrets of the spiritual path. In this discourse the contrast between the love of the fool and the Divine saints, and the important principle of genus, have been discussed in the form of allegorical stories.

In discourse six besides explaining the necessity of companionship with Divine saints in order to reach union with God, separation from the Divine saints has been identified as the cause of the annihilation of the mystic, and Satan is said to destroy those who have fallen behind from the company of the wayfarers of the spiritual path. The Prophet of Islam with a spiritual rank higher than that of Moses, visits his ill companion. The companion is a pained spiritual wayfarer who without consultation with the *murshid* and his guidance, has made an incorrect supplication to the Divine court, and due to the absence of the “*wali*” has been afflicted with pain and misery. In the battle between Satan and Adam, the deceit of Satan fails against humanity, and Satan is the one who is harmed in the end.

In the seventh discourse the deceitfulness of Satan even towards those who are intelligent is discussed. This story is a clear emphasis on the essential point that even individuals, who are very intelligent, are the subject of the deceits of Satan. However, the intelligent spiritual wayfarer by “seeing” the reality of Satan’s deceit is saved from being afflicted by it. Not-seeing reality is due to the love of objects. The role of supplication and need for attaining the rank of *‘ayn al-yaqin* is also analyzed in this discourse.

By comparing the different degrees of the rank of *‘ayn al-yaqin*, which arises through intuitive knowledge, in the link sections and discourse seven and eight, Rumi discusses the sole attention of the scholars of the exoteric sciences, regardless of religious or secular, to the exoteric signs and effects, which does not lead to the attainment of union with Reality (*haqiqat*). The understanding of the philosopher and the theologian of reality, is only achieved through the rational sciences, as such it is incapable of seeing reality, such as the difference between Fakhr Razi and ‘Attar and Rumi. This issue is a discussion on the constant historic battle between theologians and the scientists of the exoteric sciences with mystics in the history of human thought.

Discourse eight is about the seekers of wisdom (*hikmat*) and certainty (*yaqin*) who on the path of spiritual wayfaring are confronted with the scholars of the esoteric and exoteric sciences, and only if they can see the essence, through distinguishing between right and wrong with the aid of the guidance of the Divine saints and Divine aid they come to discover the reality of *yaqin*. The believer who is a lover and is constantly after Qur’anic wisdoms, discovers this wisdom through the aid of the truthful guide (*murshid*), and becomes joyful. As one cannot go on a distant journey without a ride, without knowledge, deeds and the companionship of Divine friends, journeying on the path towards *Haqq* is also impossible.

3. The third block is comprised of discourses nine to twelve and its theme is “*haqq al-yaqin*” and “friendship with the Beloved (God)”. This is the most supreme stage of Book Two. Discourse nine is about the “stage of serenity (*itminan*)”, “the importance of the existence of

prophets and Divine saints”, “the attributes of the *pir*” and the stage of “seeing Allah”. This discourse is the beginning of the rank of *haqq al-yaqin*, which is attained by the perfect human. The contrast between the certainty of those who are astray and prophets and Divine saints is amongst the other issues that are analysed in this discourse. *Pir, murshid*, or the perfect human (*insan-e Kamil*), other than essential necessity is the complete manifestation of the Divine. In this discourse the relationship between the perfect human and God is “the union between the manifestation and the manifested”.

Based on discourse ten, the human spirit does not reach spiritual perfection from acquired knowledge (*ilm husuli*), however, religious wisdom which is illuminated by the Divine light delivers the human being to the peak of the skies of spiritual perfection. *Ilm al-yaqin* is the introductory stage to attaining *haqq al-yaqin*. Amongst the signs of spiritual wisdom is revealing the path towards Allah, causing positive existential transformation, patience and chivalry. In the central section of this discourse annihilation and subsistence in Allah and the quality of the rank of *haqq al-yaqin* of the perfect human is proven. Besides being a connector between the previous three sections and the next three sections, this section itself is a combination of stories and teaching segments. While in sections 2 and 5, Ibrahim Adham has been described as an example of Divine saints and those who possess the rank of *haqq al-yaqin*, in section four, which is the central section of this discourse, through explaining the general meaning of the perfect human and some of her/his degrees and the nature of her/his relationship with Allah and his dominance over the firmaments, the universality and the necessity of the concept and existence of the perfect human and her/his place in the world of phenomena is established. There is emphasis in this section on the golden rule of Islamic mysticism that there is only one infinite and unlimited “being”, and all that which is limited and multiplicity, are phenomena and not “being”.

In discourse eleven, the contrast between the Divine saints and the people of the world, the deep and mutual relationship of friendship and love between God and Divine saints, the lack of understanding and the

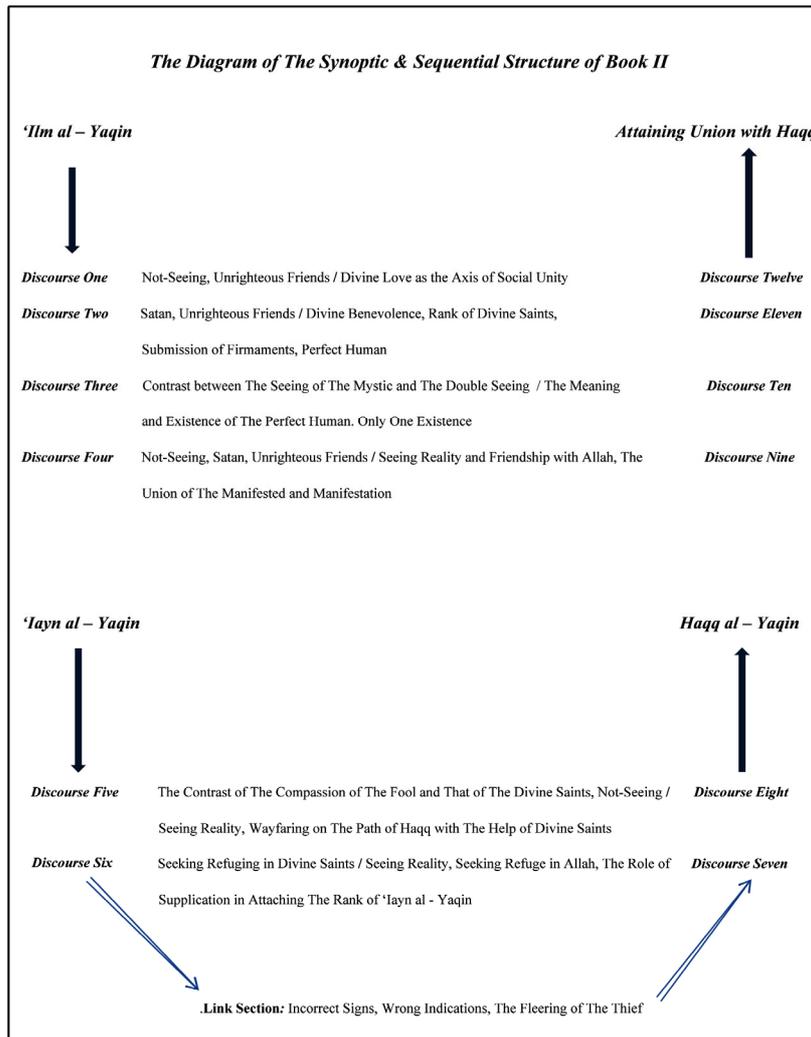
misunderstanding of people towards the Divine saints and the special benevolence of Allah towards his friends are discussed. In the initial story, the benevolence of Allah, in the second story the high rank of Divine saints, in the third story the submission of the firmaments to the call of the vicegerent of God (*wali al-Haqq*) and in the two part fourth story the different aspect of the Divine human who is "*tayyar*" and his spiritual superiority over others are discussed.

In the twelfth discourse which is the most important part of Book Two, after a theoretical introduction in section one, through presenting different allegories such as the three part story of "*Yahya* (John the Baptist) and the Messiah (Jesus)", "the tree of life", "the quarrel of four people about grape" and "How dissension and enmity amongst the Ansár were removed by the blessings of the Prophet", Rumi discusses the supreme rank of *haqq al-yaqin* and the positive, constructive and life giving role of the perfect human who has attained perfection through the Divine light, in human society. In this discourse the important and three-sided relationship between the "perfect human, God and Society" is discussed, and Divine love has been introduced as the axis of unity in society and amongst humans. This discourse is the last discourse of Book Two.

Conclusion : Linear and non-linear order of Book Two of the *Mathnawi*

In this section the way in which the two approaches of linear sequential reading and non-linear synoptic reading, and the way in which the themes of the discourses are related to each other will be analysed through parallelism. In reality the discourses of the three blocks discuss the following themes and issues in a masterful and artistic manner: the evolutionary journey of the spiritual wayfarer's spirit from incomplete certainty to transformed and perfect certainty; the results of friendship with beings with low existential ranks and in contrast the friendship of the shadow with the sun and the perfect human as the most perfect being in the world of possibilities.

The Diagram below portrays the curve the sequential movement from the lowest to the highest. The curve begins from the lowest point – discourse one- and gradually and at the same time as the spiritual transformation of the spiritual wayfarer and the perfection of the spirit moves up, and its point of perfection is portrayed in discourse twelve.



Discourse four – the final section of the first block – is primarily about not-seeing, Satan and unrighteous friends. Discourse nine is in a positive evolutionary contrast with it, as discourse nine is the beginning of the third block and is about seeing reality and friendship with God. Discourse five, is the first discourse of the second block and discourse eight is the final discourse of the second block and their primary issue is the contrast between the love of fools and wise friends and Divine saints, and seeing and not-seeing. Discourses six and seven on the one hand form the middle section of the second block of Book two and on the other hand they form the middle section of Book Two as a whole. The foundation of the structure of both discourses is based on emphasis on section 7 in each respective discourse. In section 7 of discourse six, the prophet declares an incorrect supplication as the cause of his companions illness. In section 7 of discourse seven, another companion of the prophet supplicates to the Divine court so that he does not fall into the trap of Satan, which is another form of spiritual illness. Thus, discourse seven and discourse six are in contrastive evolutionary parallelism, as in discourse six the concept of “seeking refuge in the Divine saints” is presented and in discourse seven the concept of “seeking refuge in God is presented.

In both discourses the mystic in spiritual wayfaring must always seek the companionship of spiritual friends who are also journeying on the path towards Allah. This congregation is a barrier which prevents the deceitfulness of Satan from affecting them. Further, in both discourses paying attention to “signs” has been introduced as one of the important factors of success in spiritual wayfaring.

As such in book two of the *Mathnawi* there are two systems of organizations: the system of sequential linear organization and the system of synoptic non-linear organization.

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Endnotes

¹ Numerical symbolism has been previously discussed in the first chapter and will be touched briefly again in this chapter.

² Alavi, Mahvash, the synoptic view of Book Two of Rumi's *Mathnawi* in *Rumi Teachings*, Safavi, S.G., 2008, Philadelphia. P 105.

³ By love bitter things become sweet; by love pieces of copper become golden;

By love dregs become clear; by love pains become healing;

By love the dead is made living; by love the king is made a slave.

This love, moreover, is the result of knowledge: who (ever) sat in foolishness on such a throne?

⁴ Kulaini, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol 2, p 51

Ethics in the Protection of Environment

Seyyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad
Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Earth was bestowed upon mankind in a pure and pristine condition and sworn not to abuse and destroy this God given gift. Nonetheless, today we observe a savage abuse of its natural resources, total destruction of spaces of certain inhabitants in different parts of the world, extermination of certain species, and ultimately ruining the earth, water and the space altogether to an irreplaceable degree.

Fortunately today, the environmentalists and experts are not the only one recognizing the enormity of the problem. There is a kind of rising public awareness and worldwide outrage in many parts of the world, against irresponsible behavior of certain countries and international establishments being the major cause of these destructions.

The reality is that the root cause of the crisis in the modern time should be sought in man's view and interpretation of his natural environment. In another word, the main problem is in man's epistemology and worldview.

In our opinion, the true alternative and the solution lie in return to the perception of religions towards nature and environment.

Keywords: Environment, destruction of species, inhabitants, and natural resources, religious guidance(teachings), nature, spiritual conception of nature, scientific approach, culture of protection of nature.

Introduction

Enjoining the soundness and protection of the natural environment constituted one of the most principle teachings in the history of divine religions. Faithful's believed that on the eve of creation the Lord had pledged man not to bring corruption and ruin to the earth for which he had forsaken the Heaven. Man was sworn not to betray this trust, i.e. this pristine and pure earth. He was forewarned sufficiently against the dire repercussions of not upholding this trust. Yet, the fact is that humanity attention to this matter and the insidious calamity that has befallen it, seems to an entirely modern issue. Natural environment crisis is the main issue that preoccupies modern humanity. Ferocious and cruel approach towards nature in recent centuries which stemmed from expansionist motives [and has led to] relentless exploitation of raw materials, sea pollution because of the bitter phenomena of oil spills, slash and burn of jungles, global warming and thinning of the ozone layer, has finally roused man from the stupor of dereliction. The innocent ululation of the birds because of sumptuous hunting, the extinction of forests, and the stillness of the flying birds, the death of beautiful and colourful fish and whales, has opened the eyes and ears of the human beings so much that they are dedicating themselves to this task [environmental protection]. It has moved his hard heart and made him to consider and find solutions the repercussions of this untenable style of living and consequence of this dominating and monopolistic way of life which seemingly considers any other life-form on the face of the earth as being insignificant.

Religious leaders fell

Many centuries came to pass in human life. The call of divine messengers and religious leaders fell on the deaf ears of aggressor and domineering human being. They failed turn his squandering eyes, nor tamed his cruel heart, while he continued to satiate his instincts like animals, seeking pleasures, joys and exploitations. Just as the holy Quran draws the picture of humanity at the time of Its Revelation:

”...They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle,....”¹

Man finally was caught in the painful infliction resulting from his own misdeeds; the horrible perversion that he fomented himself, had made his life miserable.

Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of that which man’s hands have wrought...²

Now it seems as if humanity is going through the first moments of wakefulness at the dawn of alertness, rubbing his drowsy eyes. The very eyes that had been closed in the deep slumber of heedlessness in the darkness of centuries.

Fortunately today, the environment scientists and experts are not the only one recognizing the enormity of the situation. There is a kind of rising public reaction and popular protest in all inhabited parts of the planet earth. This is a promising tiding; for I believe that as long as this important issue is understood by all, and the jeopardy threatening humanity is not publicly discernible; the cries of a handful of people in form of “Green parties” would not reach anywhere and will not result in the ultimate solution, i.e. a popular mobilization of humanity; otherwise the issue shall remain buried within the conference proceedings and academic papers. In solving the problem, what is of paramount importance on which everything else depend, is to have the masses of humanity understand the problem. Then all that remains is to find the root causes and to point out on the furtive secret that conforms and complies with he sound, natural and pure disposition of human being; so that a proper solution and a logical strategy could be devised.

Our time is replete with cautionary saviours in form of individuals or groups. Green parties have significant presence everywhere. Thousands of articles and books are being written and numerous screenplays and films are being made. Yet the sheer enormity and gravity of the

situation is such as if all these efforts are of no efficacy, and serve only as placebo for such an illness. What is the mystery behind this?

It seems that the riddle of the failure lies in ignoring the causes and pursuing the results. Should we not confront the issue in a fundamental way, and reach its roots, every efforts made is like giving placebo to a patient suffering from festering infectious cyst within himself. His condition is best illustrated by an Iranian poet:

Alaji Nama Kaz Delam Khoon Nayayad, Sereshk az rokham pak kardan Che Hasel?

Find me a cure for no blood comes forth from my heart, What is the use of cleaning tears from my face?

A major portion of the efforts exerted by the environmental activists is merely in form of environmental engineering. As if instead of solving the problem, they are wiping the statement of the problem. One group claims that if we could completely transform our means of transportation and eliminate fossil fuel as a source of energy, the problem would be totally solved. Another group also states that there are parts of the earth that are still untouched and man must abandon the polluted areas and move into virgin and sound areas to be free of corruption and pollution.

While appreciating all the efforts exerted towards better care from the inhabited earth using more rational means of production, transportation and similar matters, and acknowledging fact that there should be a constant drive, effort and thought given towards achieving more useful and appropriate alternate forms of technologies and lauding the works done in this respect, we believe that in spite of their scientific and scientific prominence these accomplishments alone do not hold the key to the final solution to the problem and release from the crisis. The question still remains that why the living habitat of humanity has become so unsightly and unpleasant? Why the situation has reached a point that a group of men, now that they have polluted a part of planet earth, wish to leave that place and go somewhere else so that once again they afflict that place with the same adversity? What is the

primary solution? Could an alternative be conceived that could reconcile man with his natural environment, so that he would refrain from merciless exploitation and infringement, and live peacefully embracing nature, clean and pure air and listen to the refreshing murmurs of doves, birds and fish?

The root cause of the crisis in the modern time

The reality is that the root cause of the crisis in the modern time should be sought in man's view and interpretation of his natural environment. In another word, the main problem is in man's epistemology and worldview.

We hold the view that fanatical scientism, or in another words, rigid and inflexible scientific view lacking any spiritual support and interpretation and description of the world through the narrow portal of empirical science which itself is the major gift and achievement of industrial development in recent centuries, is the main factor of destruction, pollution and ruin of humanity's natural environment. In the modern lexicon, Science has replaced "Faith" and worship of earlier human beings.

It was French scientist, August Conte who first stated that the course of human knowledge has three stages: 1) Divine or Godly, 2) Philosophical or Dialectic, and 3) Scientific. At the divine stage, human being attributed all the affairs to will of God and supernatural. At the philosophical stage, human mind became capable of experimentation and abstraction and thus attributed the natural affairs to the powers that were unseen but their effects were visible. At this stage man sought actual cause or final cause for natural events. In the third stage or the scientific or investigative stage, imagination and rationality become function of observation and experience: something is valid when it could be sensed and observed. Conte believed that humanity has passed through the first two stages and has now reached the third stage. No longer would man fruitlessly clamor for things that are of no use for him, and would only deal with matters that would benefit life and would be of use. In the later days of his life, August Conte tasted the

yen for tenderness, and upon the basis of his philosophical convictions established a creed called Religion de l'Humanite³, and built a house of worship and established a series of rites of worship. He maintained that nowadays no creed would be acceptable and followed unless the scientists of the age accept it; and that the scientists have passed through the divine and metaphysical stage, and any creed that they could accept on the basis of conviction and faith inevitably must conform with empirical science. In another words, science is the future religion of human being. Conte then added that modern science could only accept and worship a unified being, and that being is humanity which is above all things and persons, in which all individuals, both past and future, are a member and have strove towards progress and prosperity of the human kind. This entity must be worshiped. August Conte called it le Grand Etre⁴ and appointed himself as Le Grande Pretre⁵ of this creed. Of course under religion of humanity, supplication does not mean worship, rather it means nurturing and nursing.⁶

At any rate, he stated decisively that the future religion of human being should adapt itself to science. His prediction was not so off mark, for in recent centuries, science has become the great icon and the absolute object of veneration for human beings. No, not even an object of veneration, but an exclusionist god that was intolerant of any rival and partner. A lifeless, soulless icon who cut down without hearing any conceptions of meaning, spirituality and soul who did not bow before it in utter submission. Spirituality, ethics, philosophy whether natural or metaphysical, would have had no place unless they were given the seal of approval by science.

The modern science is not a peculiar method of knowledge about nature

The modern science is not a peculiar method of knowledge about nature, but rather a thorough and encompassing philosophy that reduces all realities to the material level of functions and phenomena, and under no condition it is willing to acknowledge .

The existence of so-called unscientific viewpoints. Whereas other views derived from seasoned doctrines, while not denying the legitimacy of science as a limited matter confined and encompassed by the material dimension of realities, maintain constantly the existence of a web of inner relationships, that links the material nature to the realm of the divine, and the outward appearances of the objects visible to an inner reality. Exclusive confinement of the realities of the universe to their material scope by modern science caused scholars, especially in the West, to ignore paying attention to the more inner causes and means of environmental crisis most of the time.

Humanity sought refuge in science in order to escape from hardships in order to attain a better and more comfortable life; but the very science that came to interpret the world surrounding man devoid of form of life, spirit and meaning, made man to make his world more constrictive and painful under the shadow of ignorance and neglect of inner and spiritual concepts of the natural world. According to Quran: And Whoever turns away from my reminder, for him is surely a straitened life..."⁷. Science that was supposed to be man's companion and sympathizer, became his nemesis and according to Saadi, a poet from Shiraz:

*Shod Gholami ke Ab-e Jouy Arad; Ab-e Jouy Amad o Gholam Bebord
A servant went to fetch water from the stream; The water of the
stream took the servant away*

For the urbanite man, modern science has made the realm of nature into an object devoid of meaning. It has secularized the cosmos and made it asunder from the Divine splendor. It is not a mirror whose beauties reflect the beauty of righteousness. Moreover, the natural cosmos, lacks any kind of unity and oneness with human being, man considers himself apart from nature and is estranged to it, a stranger that lacks any kind of sanctity. If there is any sanctity, the modern man maintains it solely for himself. Thus modern man does not look compassionately to nature, he simply has a material, exploitative and applied view. [Nature] is not his beloved nor he loves it, it is not seen as his life companion to whom he feels responsible while enjoying its

company. Rather to the modern man, [nature] has become like a lady of the night being there merely to be taken sexual advantage of, to whom he does not feel any responsibility or duty. The outcome of such notion was that like a woman of the night, the nature has gradually fallen into decay, as if spending its final days. It has become so old and impaired that it had fallen from man's grace and could no longer be of a service in his dominion.

It should be noted here, that in fact through its interpretation of nature, modern science has helped to unlock the secret and the mystery buried within the nature and character of man. By nature, human being is an entity set to dominate and control all that is outside him. Accordingly, he wants to dominate and transgress upon nature. Many western philosophers, and even few Islamic philosophers, are of the opinion that man is unlike what the ancient Greeks said Human is civilized by nature, but rather he is an aggressor by nature and exploiter by nature.

A seventeenth century, English Philosopher named Hobbes⁸ was convinced that man is by nature always at war and that he maintains the right of preservation only for his own⁹.

He said: "By nature man is selfish and egotistical. He is motivated by selfish desires that need to be satiated and fulfilled. In its natural state, man's life is an arena, ugly, horrid, cruel, savage and short."

Allameh Tabatabaei believes

Among present day Islamic philosophers, Allameh Seyyed Muhammad Hussein Tabatabaie believes: 'Man has a relationship with his own faculties and parts. This relationship was brought into existence and is real. Hands, feet, eye and other parts of his body are undeniably controlled and used by him. Man has the very same relationship with nature outside his being; essentially considering all external objects and even other human beings for his own, i.e. he considers them as his tools. He looks at all external matters, whether inanimate, animals and even plants with a view towards their employment [or application].'" [Allameh] believes that man is by nature, created as an aggressor and

exploiter, and that ethics is a secondary tenet for him. In another words, man is not civilized by nature, rather he is civilized by consequence and exhibition, and that Aristotle quotation that man is by nature is civilized, really meant that it is secondary nature and not primary nature.

Desanctifying the nature

Briefly, human bring is naturally disposed to engage nature and overcome it as much as it is within his power and to employ it towards his goals and enjoyments. Modern science has totally theorized this concept for him by desanctifying the nature. There remains no longer any meaning within the high mountain ranges, boundless oceans and the heavens for man to obtain. It seems rather that their majesty and grandeur annoys his dominating and arrogant disposition. By scaling and conquering them, he wanted to deprive them of their natural majesty and make them lay prostrate at his feet. No longer the spiritual experience of flight towards the kingdom of heavens as illustrated in Dante's "Divine Comedy" for Christianity and nightly flights to heaven as in the Ascent of the Holy Prophet of Islam, is the aspiration of modern man. Conquest of the mountain peaks, flying in spacecraft and travelling to the planets in the solar system, has made him proud. He sang the hymn of victory over nature and celebrated over the destroyed ruins. So successful was modern science in its attempt at desanctifying nature, that regrettably even the religious persons too lost their divine and sublime feeling towards nature and its importance.

Eliade wrote:

” The cosmic praise and the mystery of nature's participation as in Christian Drama, has become unattainable for the Christians living in a modern city. Religious experience is no longer available to the existence. In the final analysis, this experience is totally private and personal. Salvation is an issue concerning only man and his god. At most, man might recognize that he is responsible not only in relation to God, but also before history. However, in this (Man-God-History) associations there remains no place for the universe and the creatures within. From this perspective, even to a true Christian, it appears that the world is no longer felt as the work of God.”¹⁰

The confess

We must confess the fact that there is a striking neglect observed about this among custodians of religions in general, including Christian philosophers especially Protestants. For the majority of the important trends in philosophy of religion in recent centuries had dealt with the subject of man and history and had focussed on the issue of salvation and emancipation of man as a separate and single entity. For instance what is seen in the works of the famous contemporary theologian, P. Tillich, is merely apprehension about human being as an individual separate and disconnected from the world, before god. Works by Barth and Bruner suggest as if an Iron Curtain has been laid around the natural world. They believe that nature cannot teach man anything about God, and therefore is of no theological or spiritual gain. R. Bultman's works have generally ignored the importance of the spiritual and divine dimension of nature, and had brought it to the level of a synthesized construct introduced for sustained life of progressive man.

Unfortunately the western churches, religious institutes, and the Islamic seminaries in Muslim countries, did not show much reaction before recent decades. In spite of the existing resources originating from the depth of Christianity and Islam, they did not embark on compiling separate books entitled Environmental Divinity [or theology] so that to direct man towards the spiritual aspect of the natural world around him.

Silence of religious centers and lack of serious scholarly works had developed the situation to the point that in the recent twentieth century writings, the learning and teachings of divine religions, instead of demanding have taken the debtor status, and are being reprimanded as an accused party. For some of the scholars who are preoccupied with the environmental crisis have produced works in which it seems as if they wish to have the Unitarian religions shoulder a major portion of the culpability for the ruin of nature and environmental pollution instead of pinning it on the internal developments within the western civilization that had started from medieval ages, Renaissance and seventeenth century.

For instance Arnold Toynbee, the great English historian and philosopher of twentieth century, has expressed unique and controversial hypotheses about Philosophy of history, and periodic rise and fall of civilizations. He believes that the Unitarian religions have unwarrantedly come to spoil man more than he deserves. Just because they have taught him that God has created the world for him, that everything belongs to you, that all the mountains, seas and plains have been created for man's better life and his use, and that he can do whatever he desires. This way of thought had led him to unbridled exploitation.¹¹

Such thinkers ignore the fact that the unitary religion of Islam, which belongs to the very same succession of the unitary and Abrahamic religions of Christianity and Judaism, has never lost its mindfulness towards the sacred character of nature. Later on, we would point out that how Quranic quotations express the sanctity of nature. We shall also see how the Christianity and Judaism in East, unlike what we see later in West, had never taught [nor promulgated] the attitude and view point for dominating nature and laying it to waste. This is pure allegation. The teachings of unitary religions are not the cause of this crisis, but rather they are the only way out and solution for the crisis and dilemma that have come to grip man in modern times.

The later decades of twentieth century

At any rate in the later decades of twentieth century, amid the joy and rapture of conquering and commanding the nature, Man has awakened from the intoxication from the feeling of pride and victory of nature, and has recognized that what has been devastated here had been the value of victor, i.e. humanity. Fortunately at least the unanimous majority of thinkers in today world believe that the very essence of the existence of man is threatened and instead of man deciding the merit of science and technology, man's own constructs have been transformed into the criteria for establishing his value and authority; it is now time for him to revise the [his] general view of the world. According to Schoen: "It is no longer human reason that determines what is man? What is reason? What is Truth. Rather it is the machine that determines

these subjects using physics, chemistry and biology. Under these conditions, man's mind and thoughts is more than ever dependent upon the 'space' that has been created and established by his knowledge, and then after it is the very science and machines that in turn create man"¹².

Yet, in spite of the mindfulness and alertness of world scientific centers which is fortunate, regrettably the note of protest does not go beyond the limited confines of environmental supporters and authorities who have understood the depth of tragedy, and the general conscience of human community is not alerted. Whereas the ultimate solution, requires unanimous efforts and dedication of humanity. The environmental crisis would not subside as long as the feeling of kindness and compassion towards the outer world has not replaced the sense of domination and arrogance in the depth and every corner of the hearts of all humanity living on planet earth.

Our opinion

In our opinion, the true alternative and the solution at this junction, is return towards the perception of religions. More than past, today man has much readiness to accept teachings of religions. That is to say, inasmuch as his understanding and intelligence has grown, he would better understand and accept the religious concepts; this is especially so given the fact that the modern man has experienced the ineffectualness of atheistic perceptions and removal of spirituality from his natural environment, and he had tasted their bitter outcomes. Contemporary man, is repentant of his sin and penitent before Lord and has recoured to God and seeks forgiveness for past transgressions. This is a critical and invaluable opportunity for religious institutions and clerics to have the religion recounted and presented in a way appropriate with the march of time, so as to embrace with kindness the modern man who has confessed to his sin. To bring back sanctity to nature by citing original religious sources and scriptures. Certainly should man look at the world around him through religious beliefs, no such ravage would ever take place.

What we mean by religion, in its widest and universal sense, includes all the beliefs and worldviews that have been studied and investigated under this subject. Thus our view here is not solely confined to religion as defined as “Submission of man before a superior force” that would inevitably lead to the Lord and the unitary religions [the great formal religions of the world]. Official religion is a collection of principle precepts and deeds that is undertaken with an aim of linking man to a sublime power particular to a society or a community. Our intent in the present discussion, however, is linked to all tenets, words and deeds that are directly or indirectly effective with respect to preservation and safeguarding of environment. In another words, religion in this contexts applies to any system of beliefs that imparts meaning to the world, transforms man’s view, and calls for application of conscience and ethics, i.e. an inner strength and a manner of physical way of life based on enjoining good and abstaining from evil. A worldview coupled with spirituality and uprightness, is the original core of all beliefs that we mean by religion in the widest sense of the word.

The proof is the fact that all religions play this role in this general sense, and this is not something particular only to the Abrahamic religions. When we look up the Hindu tradition, we would meet a nature metaphysical belief about nature. It is thus that we see the growth and blossoming of many sciences within the embrace of Hinduism, some of which have come to influence the west, through Islam. In the Hindu tradition, our attention is drawn to Vedantic belief of Atman or Maya. A belief where in the existence, is considered not as an absolute reality, but rather as a veil that has covered the transcendental self¹³. This view is very similar to the theory of Names and Attributes in the Islamic Gnosticism. In Islamic Gnosticism, the world and whatever it holds, are manifestation of the Names and Attributes of the Righteous which we would deal with later on.

Eastern Religions

In Eastern Religions, especially in Taoism and in the Confucian doctrine, we observe a form of devotion towards nature and understanding its metaphysical significance, which is of utmost

importance. The same respectful attitude towards nature, coupled with a strong sense of symbolism and a form of awareness about the clarity and focus of universe and its transparency from the standpoint of metaphysical truths, can also be found in Japan. Shintoism strongly reinforces this perception. Thus in Far Eastern art, most notably in Taoist and Zen traditions, drawings of natural landscapes are true portraits [of nature]. They do not cause a sensual delight in the spectator, but rather convey the benefaction, compassion and beauty and serve as means of union and oneness with transcendental truth¹⁴. This is the very essence that a Muslim gnostic, Saadi Shirazi expresses:

*Tang Cheshman Nazar be miveh konnand; Ma Tamashagar Bostanim
Narrow-sighted Niggards look at the fruit, [while] we behold the
orchard*

Within divine religions, should we examine the history of Christianity in the light of eastern metaphysical and cosmological principle, we could succeed in discovering a tradition for studying nature that could serve as a record for evaluating Christianity's new theosophy towards nature.

In Old Testament, there are certain references made to nature's participation within the religious view of life. In the Book of Joshua, there is mention of Lord's vow to maintain peace with animals and plants. Or when Noah is commanded to preserve all animals, whether hallowed or not, regardless of their gain to human being¹⁵. In the same manner, the untouched nature or desert is visualized as a place of trial and punishment, as well as a refuge for contemplation, or even a reflection of paradise. This very tradition of contemplative view of nature, lives later on in Judaism in the "Kabala" and "Hasidim" schools of thought.

In the New Testament, the death and assignation of Jesus (عیسی) is accompanied with the wilting and blossoming of nature that bespeak of Jesus cosmic quality. Saint Paul, too, believes that all creations partake in the redemption of sin.

In West, due to the concern about polytheism and idolatry, and in reaction to them, the original church gradually distanced itself from the surrounding world and was completely severed from it. Even words such as paradise and desert, in their positive sense, were recognized solely with Church and later monasteries as separate and distinct institutions¹⁶. Whereas, in the Eastern Church, reflection in nature was still approved and become more pivotal. Nature was included as a support for spiritual life and the belief was formed that all nature partake in deliverance and salvation, and that the world would be revived and restored on the second coming of Jesus.

For the author, Origen¹⁷ and Irnaus, the early fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church who created “Divinity of Nature”, are of high importance. They did not restricted the term Logos, or the Word or Expression of Allah, to man and religion only, but also have used it for the whole nature and all creatures.

In his book, Hexaameron¹⁸, Saint Basil¹⁹ who was a follower of Origen, has written: “ When you think about grass or a herb yielding seed...that seed is the word that would come to occupy your whole mind.”²⁰.

This view is in complete compliance with the Islamic perception. In the Majestic Quran, the whole universe and its every components, are Kalimatullah [Word of Allah ,]just as Jesus and [the Holy] Quran that was revealed to Prophet are word of Allah.

And if all the trees in the earth were pen, and the sea which seven more seas added to it (were inks), the word of Allah would not be exhausted. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.²¹

When the angels said: O Mary, surely Allah gives good news with a word from Him (of one) whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary...²²

Gradually as Christianity expanded into eastern europe, new groups embraced it who had a deep insight about the spiritual value of nature

devoid of any signs of Mediterranean polytheism. A perfect example, were the Celts, who had a strong cognizance and awareness about balance and harmony of man and nature. The Celtic monks were always seeking Divine epiphany, and went on quests hoping to discover the harmony of Lord's Creation²³. They sought Lord in the mysterious cosmos. Pilgrimage, quest and visiting creation and nature have been repeatedly mentioned in Quranic monotheism. Please take note the following verses:

Say [O Messenger]: Travel in the earth and see how He makes the first creation...²⁴

And We made between them and the towns which we had blessed, (other) towns easy to be seen, and We apportioned the journey therein; Travel through them nights and days, secure.

In any case in the ninth century, an Irish thinker named Johannes Scotus Erigena²⁵ wrote a commentary on the Holy Bible in which he tried to establish a intimate link among Lord, Cosmos and human being. In this respect, he strongly defied some of the theologians and philosophers who due to lack of precise understanding of metaphysical and cosmological concepts of nature were inclined to accuse any such speculation as pantheism, naturalism and polytheism. Erigena thus stated "The Cosmos has a transcendental origin, and all creatures are from the Lord, but created through Jesus".²⁶

Finally in the person of [Saint] Francis of Assisi²⁷ we behold the most fantastic, respective attitude towards nature within the framework of a Christian saintly life. His life among the birds and animals he addressed is a firm example of this Christian conviction that human being cannot relate to nature through consecration. In his Canticle of the Sun and his many other canticles, he displays a deep penetrating insight free of any human gainfulness. In his conversation with animals. He displays the inner connection and sincerity that a saint attains by connecting with the divine essence that has breathed into the nature²⁸. Dante's Divine Comedy teaches the fact that human being must really trek throughout the universe so that he would recognize that the force that surrounds all

beings is:” Love and kindness that moves the sun and stars”²⁹. While this way of thinking, that observing nature based on post-medieval teachings, was confronted with fluctuations and challenges, yet it continued until the end of nineteenth century. People like John Ray still searched the nature for signs and indications of the Lord. In his work, *Our Farbenlehre*, Goethes³⁰ dealt with the existing symmetry in nature and calls people to seek out recovering a perception of this pure and eternal nature.

Quran viewpoint

Following Christianity and Judaism, it is time to take a view at Islamic learnings. The Majestic Quran has a very interesting and penetrating view of Nature. It does not allow man lay prostrate before Nature as his lord because of its greatness and magnificence, nor does it consider nature as an entity without any sanctity, meaning or essence. Quran presents the natural manifestations as Lord’s creations, and directs man that instead of worshiping [these manifestations] to worship their Creator:

And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Adore nor the sun nor the moon, but adore Allah who created them,...³¹

Although the living beings in nature, in Quran view, are created by the Lord, but [nature] itself is not a soul-less and lifeless entity; it is living. Human being could become intimate with nature, talk with it and express love for it. Due to their manner of relationship to the Lord, Quran views the beings in nature as sacred. Their sanctity and essence is inseparable.

From Quran viewpoint, all parts of nature always are glorifying the Truth. They all pray before god and conduct supplication:

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth glorifies Allah, the Ruler, the Holy, the Mighty, The Wise.³²

It is interesting to note that according to Quran, Glorification [of Lord] by creatures, could be understood, perceived and recognized by the human being. In a verse revealed to Messenger of Allah (), it announces:

Seest thou nor that Allah is He, Whom do glorify all those who are in the heavens and the earth and the birds with wings outspread? Each one knows its prayer and its glorification. And Allah is Knower of what they do.³³

As you notice, the above verse expects human beings to discern the glorification and invocations made by all the beings of the world, even the birds in the sky.

In the lives of Muslim sages, it is a simple feat to hear the sound of invocations of nature. Saadi says:

Last night a bird was singing a dirge, that robbed me of reason,
patience, stamina and conscious;

Unless hearing my chant, one of [my] true friends said:
I could not believe that the sound of a bird could make one so
senseless,

I answered: I would have not been human to remain silent while the
bird glorified [The Lord].

According to Sadrul-Motu'alehin Shirazi, every being is understanding to the extent of its essence, thus all beings in nature have understanding and awareness inasmuch as they are entitled to:

All beings, even the solids, while seemingly inanimate, are in reality alive, aware and glorify the Truth. They gaze upon the majesty and magnificence of Truth; having total awareness about their Creator and Maker. The Magnificent Quran points out to the very same thing when it says that ...And there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification.³⁴

Sadra has not interpreted the passage [you do not understand] in an active form, rather he considered it passive, thus suggesting that the beings themselves are not aware of their glorification although they are consciously glorifying. As providing further reasoning, he adds:

Meaning that because this manner of knowledge, that is knowledge about knowledge [which the Islamic philosophy calls compound knowledge] is particular to beings that are purely abstract who transcend physical.³⁵

According to Quran, all parts of nature share salvation and deliverance with human beings, and therefore, just like him, entities in nature, whether animate or inanimate, would gather in the Day of Gathering, or Day of Resurrection. About animal Quran Says:

And when the wild animals are gathered together.³⁶ The earthly beings gather along with humans, and every thing is eloquent and articulate.

When the earth is shaken with her shaking, and the earth brings forth her burdens, and man says: What has befallen her? On that day she will tell her news, as if thy Lord had revealed to her.³⁷

In Islamic learnings, the link between man and nature in deliverance and salvation, [as well as] corruption and annihilation is so intertwined that human beings devotion or negligence towards God, observance or disobedience and violation of divine precepts, directly affect nature. That is to say, that, as a part of the manifestation of Truth, nature is kind and compassionate towards upright and devout human beings, but would be contemptuous and uncompromising against wrongdoing and cruel human beings. The Glorious Quran mentions that:

And if people of the town had believed and kept their duty, we would certainly have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth.³⁸

In another verse, it quotes Noah appealing to those who sin:

...Ask forgiveness of your Lord; surely He is ever forgiving; He will send down upon you rain, pouring in abundance.³⁹

In the Hadith or accounts dealing with religious leaders, the wrath of nature has been recognized as the very wrath of the Lord against the deeds and actions of human beings.

When the rulers tell lies to people, no rain shall fall.

The Glorious Quran presents account of past group of people who because of committing sin and transgressing from divine precepts, were subjected to Divine punishment through wrath of nature. The people of Noah (Aad) and people of Lot (Thumud), each had been annihilated through natural punishments

In Islamic learnings, all beings in the world are sign and indications of the Lord, or within an Islamic Mysticism, they are all the names and attributes of the Lord. What is meant here by Names and Attributes, is that the Lord manifests in natural entities and all nature is a demonstration of Truth. Wherever human being looks, he would see the Lord. The Holy Quran says:

And Allah's is the east and the West, so whither you turn thither is Allah's purpose.⁴⁰

A portent-based view of Nature, would bestow it such sanctity that would make it totally immune against any transgression committed in course of scientific explorations.

Along with this perception, there is the conception of Divine Vicegerency that has been quoted in Quran that is explicit in presenting human being as the Vice-Gerent of the Lord:

And when thy Lord said to angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth...⁴¹

In the conversation between Lord and the Angel in the beginning of the genesis ,the angels were worried about the annihilation and defilement of earth, and discussed this with the Lord. But Lord indicated to Ilm or Knowledge when responding to them.

They [angels] said: Wilt Thou place in it such as make mischief in it... ?⁴²

In reply to them, Lord says:

Surely I know What you know not.⁴⁶

That is you shall discover the secret of this later. The Lord announces:

And He taught Adam all the names, then presented them to the angels; He said: Tell Me the names of those if you are right. They said: Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which thou has taught us. Surely Thou are Knowing, the Wise. He said: O Adam, inform them of their names. So when he informed them of their names, He said: Did I not say to you that I know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth? And I know what you manifest and what you hide.⁴³

From this conversation it appears that upon seeing the knowledge and science of Adam, the angels were convinced and attested that such a being merits divine vice-gerency and as a sign of humbleness they bowed to him. What kind of a science is this knowledge and science? Could the very science that has in recent centuries devastated the environment and ruined earth, be the demonstration of the knowledge taught by the Lord? Indeed not. The science taught by the Lord, is a sacred knowledge that sees the world as a revelation of the Lord and the reflection of the Essence of Truth. The best rendition of this that of Quran where it mentions that He had taught man the His Names and Attributes, i.e. the world. To know world, is to know the Lord, and to transgress upon world, is to transgress and violate the Truth. Attar [a Persian poet] says:

When we sent out Adam
We bequeathed Our Splendor on the Desert

A devout human being will use the gifts of nature towards evolvement and development, for the Lord has announced:

The Lord created you from the earth and called for you to prosper on it. A devout person would not take any step other than thriving the earth, otherwise who would be known as a profligate. According to the Holy Quran squandering and profligacy, are suggested by Satan, and those who execute such deeds, are Satan's brethren:

Surely the squanderers are the devil's brethren. And the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord.⁴⁴

Conclusion and recommendation

Briefly in the past centuries, by distancing itself from the spiritual perception of nature, modern science had given man an insight, that caused his dominating and transgressing ego to bring about such a intimidating ruin and crisis while he confronted nature to satiate his inner desires. Unfortunately, the theologians and philosophers are most often responsible, and even contributed, to the issue of secularization of nature. Since by not focussing and making efforts towards writing works in the field of environmental theology and presenting it to the literary scene of their time, they left the field open for the total secularization of nature by Industrial Revolution and endless application of modern science. Many theologian and religious thinkers completely laid aside the issue of nature and pursued man's salvation with utter disregard to the rest of Lord's creation. Under the present circumstances, due to this hard-hearted indifference to the right of nature and other living beings, the continued existence of Homo sapiens on planet earth has become a hazardous issue.

The time has now come for all those who are truly concerned with the human condition and seek an alternative solution to this crisis, to once again recourse to the long and historical traditions of religions; to teach the study and exploring of nature using religious texts and sources within metaphysical teachings; to attest that it is only through the revival of a spiritual and divine conception and cognition about nature

that [humanity] can neutralize the ruination of nature caused by application of modern science. It is through such revival that we could be assured that the future humanity would embark on making earth prosperous and flourishing instead of unbridled and merciless exploitation of nature's blessings and defilement of earth.

Moreover, not only the religious values, but also the cultural beliefs of people living in a region could be generally used as a rules and guidelines grown from within people in course of centuries following careful study, modification, reform and extension. Such rules could be better accepted and taken up. They could lead to practical answers in environmental preservation and achieving a sustainable development not only in one region or in a country, but also throughout the world given necessary promotion and extension.

In other words, as one of the practical and tangible strategies in dialogue of civilizations, the universalization of religious values and teaching and expansion of cultural beliefs, could encompass practical blueprints towards protection and development of environment throughout this diverse and vast world.

The existing practical methods in religious convictions and cultural beliefs include the knowledge that one could contemplate the beliefs expanded and proven in course of history, towards preservation of environment and finally the sustainable development. It is thus possible to draft solutions and act on them so that along with other methodologies, these could really, and without being imposed by an outside agency or any governing body, reach their destined goals. By their nature, these solutions would become the hallmark of existing practical methods, especially in developing societies that have an ancient culture and history that are more dependent on religious culture and principles.

Thus the author wishes to make the following suggestions to the present scholars:

Now that human thinkers are concerned about the depth of the catastrophe and disaster that has befallen the human environment, and worried about the future life of humanity and confess to the role of public beliefs and convictions in resolving this crisis, the cultural figures and religious clergy now shoulder a heavy responsibility. It is now time for this group of people to seriously and sincerely endeavor on this issue, and make reintroduction of genuine cultures, and teachings and traditions of religions towards educating the public in dealing with nature, as their main preoccupation in the present era. Resolving of environmental crisis demands general mobilization of humanity. The only way to achieve this sacred goal, is the guidelines offered by men of culture and religious authorities.

I propose that an association having scholars and authorities of various religions of the world as its member, be formed for protecting the environment. Its secretariat should constantly work for coordination and convening of scientific conferences and meetings.

The manner of introducing the traditions of religions to the present generation for a immaculate and spiritually better life, calls for a relatively deep study, since using the old methods, could not answer the present era and would be ineffective. There should be an exchange of experience among religious figures, in order to update the methods and use tools suitable for the new situation. The proposed association could attain this goal through bilateral talks and discussions.

Endnotes

¹ Al A'raf, Verse 179 (*Translator's note: Al A'raf in Arabic means the elevated places. It is the Seventh Chapter in the Bounteous Quran.*)

² Al-Rum, verse 41 (*Translator's note: Al-Rum means the Romans. It is the thirtieth chapter in the holy Quran.*)

³ Religion of Humanity

⁴ The great Entity

⁵ The Great Preacher

⁶ See Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Paul Edward | See Also *Sair-e Hekmat dar Europa (Course of Philosophy in Europe)*, Mohammad Ali Forooghi, page 113, Tehran,

Safi Alishah Publications 1927.

- ⁷ Ta Ha, Verse 124 (Ta Ha is the twentieth surah or chapter in the holy Quran)
- ⁸ Thomas Hobbes, (1588-1679)
- ⁹ M. McDonald, *Natural Rights, Theories on Rights*, Oxford, Ed. J., Waldron, pp21-40
- ¹⁰ M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane, The Nature of Religion*, Harvest/HBJ, New York 1959, p.179
- ¹¹ M Mohaghegh Damad, *A discourse on Nature and Environment from an Islamic Perspective*, Dept. of Environment, Tehran, Iran 2000
- ¹² Understanding Islam, Trans. By, D.M. Matheon, London, 1963, pp 32-33
- ¹³ Guenon, *Introduction to the study of Hindu Beliefs*, trans. by M Pallis, London 1954; also see his other book, *Man and his becoming to Vedanta*, trans. by Reynolds Nicholson, London, 1945
- ¹⁴ Matgioni, *La Voie Metaphysic*, Paris, 1956
- ¹⁵ Williams, George Huntston, *Wilderness and paradise in Christian thought; the Biblical experience of the desert in the history of Christianity & the paradise theme in the theological idea of the university*. [1st ed.] New York, Harper [1962]. Prologue, Page 10.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*
- ¹⁷ *Translator's Note: Oregenes Adamantius*, or Origen the most important theologian and biblical scholar of the early Greek church. His greatest work is the *Hexapla*, which is a synopsis of six versions of the Old Testament. born c. 185, , probably Alexandria, Egypt died c. 254, , Tyre, Phoenicia [now Sur, Lebanon]
- ¹⁸ *Hexaëmeron* or *Hexaëmeron* ("Six Days"), nine Lenten sermons on the days of creation, signifies a term of six days, or, technically, the history of the six days' work of creation, as contained in the first chapter of Genesis
- ¹⁹ Born AD 329, Caesarea Mazaca, Cappadocia; died January 1, 379, Caesarea; Latin **Basilios** early Church Father who defended the orthodox faith against the heretical Arians. As bishop of Caesarea, he wrote several works on monasticism, theology, and canon law.
- ²⁰ Raven, Charles E. *Natural religion and Christian theology*. Cambridge [Eng.] University Press, 1953. 2v. 23 cm.
- ²¹ Luqman, verse 27 [Translator's note: Luqman is the 31st chapter of the Holy Quran. The title of the chapter is taken from that of a sage to whose story it refers].
- ²² Al-Amran, verse 44 [Translator's note: *Al-Imran* or Family of Amran is the 3rd chapter of Holy Quran].
- ²³ Williams, George Huntston, *Wilderness and paradise in Christian thought; the Biblical experience of the desert in the history of Christianity & the paradise theme in the theological idea of the university*. [1st ed.] New York, Harper [1962], page 46.
- ²⁴ Ankabut, verse 20. [Translator's note: *Ankabut* or Spider is the 29th Chapter of Holy

Quran].

²⁵ John Scotus Eriugena; An Irish teacher, theologian, philosopher, and poet, who lived in the ninth century.

²⁶ Bett. Henry , *Johannes Scotus Erigena. A study in mediaeval philosophy.* pp. 204. University Press: Cambridge, 1925. 80

²⁷ Founder of the Franciscan Order, born at Assisi in Umbria, in 1181 or 1182 -- the exact year is uncertain; died there, 3 October, 1226.

²⁸ Williams, George Huntston, *Wilderness and paradise in Christian thought; the Biblical experience of the desert in the history of Christianity & the paradise theme in the theological idea of the university.* [1st ed.] New York, Harper [1962], page 42.

²⁹ The New Encyclopedia Britannica, V.16, pp971-976, 15th Edition

³⁰ German poet, novelist, playwright, and natural philosopher, the greatest figure of the German Romantic period and of German literature as a whole. The New Encyclopedia Britannica, V.20, pp133-140, 15th Edition

³¹ Fussilat, verse 37. [Translator's note: *Fussilat* means a thing made plain. It is the 41st Chapter of the Holy Quran.

³² Jummu'ah, verse 1. [Translator's note: *Jummu'ah* receives its name from the exhortation to gather together on the day of *Congregation* , or Friday. It is the 62nd Chapter of the Holy Quran].

³³ Al-Nur, verse 41. [Translator's note: *Al-Nur* means The Light. It is the 24th Chapter of Holy Quran].

³⁴ Bani Isra'il, verse 44. [Translator's note: *Bani Isra'il* or The Israelites is the 17th Chapter in the Holy Quran.

³⁵ Sadr-e-din Muhammad Shirazi (Mollah Sadra), *Al Asfar Al Arba'a, fel Hekmatul Mote'aliya [The Four Unveiling on Transcendental Philosophy]*, Vol.6, Chapter12, Tehran

³⁶ Al Takwir, verse 5. [Translator's note: *Al Takwir* or folding up derives its name from the mention of the folding up of the sun in the first verse. It is the 81st Chapter in the Holy Quran].

³⁷ Al Zilzal, verses 1-4 [Translator's note: *Al-Zilzal* means the shaking. It is the 99th Chapter in the Holy Quran].

³⁸ Al Araf, verse 96

³⁹ Nuh, verses 10-11. [Translator's note: Nuh or Noah is the 71st Chapter in the Holy Quran].

⁴⁰ Al Baqarah, verse 115 [Translator's note: *Al-Baqarah* means the Cow and is the second Chapter in Holy Quran].

⁴¹ Al Baqarah, verse 30

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Al baqarah verses 31-33

⁴⁴ Bani Isra'il, verse 27

Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī as an Exponent of Mullā Sadrā’s Teachings

Janis Eshots
University of Latvia, Latvia

Abstract

Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī was an indispensable link in the transmission of Mullā Sadrā’s teachings and an important commentator of his works. In my article, I’ll focus on one of them – a short treatise, entitled “Basīṭ al-haqīqa wa wahdat al-wujūd,” which deals with the modes of thingness (*shay’iyya*) and existence (*wujūd*) in general, and the so-called “illuminative relation” (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) in particular.

The most significant statements Nūrī makes in this brief work consist in the identification of thingness with existence and the “breath of the Merciful” (*nafas al-Rahmān*) with the “illuminative relation”. I intend to examine these two important points and the employed argumentation in detail, showing how Nūrī exploited some ideas, current in the Kalām and theoretical Sufism, to the benefit of the doctrine of Mullā Sadrā.

Keywords: Nūrī, Sadrā, existence, thingness, illuminative relation, oneness, simplicity

I

Mullā ‘Alī ibn Jamshīd Nūrī Māzandarānī Isfahānī (d. 1246/1831) was a disciple of Muhammad Bīdābādī (d. 1198/1783) and a teacher of Hājī Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī (d. 1289/1873), Mullā Ismā‘il (Wāhid al-‘Ayn)

(d. 1277/1861), Mullā ‘Abdallah Zunūzī (1257/1841), Sayyid Rādī Lārijānī (d. 1270/1853) and Mullā Muhammad Ja‘far Lāhijī Langarūdī (d. after 1255/1839), to mention just a few of his numerous students. He was, thus, an indispensable link in the transmission of Mulla Sadra’s teachings.

Nūrī’s long life (the exact year, not to mention the date, of his birth is not known but he is believed to have been at least ninety – according to some reports, more than a hundred – years old when he died), it appears, was not rich in external events. He is said to have studied first in his native Nūr (a small town on the shore of the Caspian sea), then for a while in Qazwīn, finally coming to Isfahān to complete his studies with Bīdābādī.¹

He taught philosophy in Isfahān for about sixty years. It is known that Fath ‘Alī Shāh Qājār invited him to come to teach to Tehrān, but Nūrī declined his offer, because at that time he had almost two thousand (!) students in Isfahān.²

According to his last will, Nūrī’s remains were taken to Najaf and buried in the precincts of the mausoleum of Imam ‘Alī (in the quarter of the gate of Tūsī).³

Nūrī was an important interpreter of Mullā Sadrā’s works. He wrote, in particular, detailed glosses to Sadrā’s commentary on the Qur’ān,⁴ the “Asfār”,⁵ “Al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya”, “Asrār al-āyāt”⁶ and “Mafātīh al-ghayb”.⁷ He also composed a number of treatises, in which he expounded the tenets of Sadrā’s doctrine. Two of these treatises – “[Risālat fī] basīt al-haqīqa” and “[Risālat fī] wahdat al-wujūd” – were published by the late S.J. Ashtiyānī in the “Anthology of the Iranian Philosophers, from Mir Damad to our days”.⁸

In my paper, I’ll focus on these treatises,⁹ attempting to establish, how faithful was Nūrī to Sadrā’s ideas and how insightfully he interpreted them.

To begin, the title of the first treatise (perhaps not given by Nūrī himself) - “[Risālat fī] basīt al-haqīqa” – does not reflect well the actual content of the work, since only the first four pages, out of thirty, deal with the principle of “the simplicity of the reality” directly. The rest is a discussion on the modes of thingness (*shay’iyya*) and existence (*wujūd*), and on the so-called “illuminative relation” (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*).

The discussion on the simplicity of reality is succinct and, in fact, comes down to reproducing the basic version of the argument, provided by Sadrā himself in a number of his shorter treatises (eg, the “Arshiyya”). Therefore, I’ll focus on Nūrī’s treatment of the issue of thingness instead.

II

The question of how “thing” (*shay’*) relates to “existent” (*mawjūd*), as it is well known, provoked a heated and lasting debate among the Mu‘tazilites, some of whom proposed the concept of the “non-existent thing” (*al-shay’ al-ma’dūm*), defining it as “something fixed and determined” (*shay’ thābit mutaqqarrir*).¹⁰ In the Avicennan tradition, the “thing/ existent” distinction manifests itself as the distinction between essence and existence.¹¹

What meaning does Nūrī, a representative of the school of Sadrā, whose followers assert the primacy of existence (*asālat al-wujūd*), according to which quiddity (*māhiya*) is a shadow (*zill*) and an imitation (*hikāya*) of existence, ascribe to “thingness”? Can it be, in his eyes, anything else than a shadow of existence, which alone possesses true reality – or, rather, coincides with the latter (*wujūd* being an equivalent of *tahaqquq*)?

Interestingly, our expectations are not quite fulfilled, because Nūrī treats the issue of thingness in a somewhat different way. He begins the discussion by stating that there are two kinds of thingness: one is affirmative (*thubūtiyya*) or conceptual (*mafhūmiyya*), and the other – “existential” (*wujūdiyya*). The former can be predicated to many and appears to be identical with the mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*);

in turn, the latter, which can only be predicated to a single individual, is, no doubt, an equivalent of the objective external existence (*al-wujūd al-‘aynī al-khārijī*). Nūrī describes these two kinds of thingness in the following way:

“Our intellect and intuition (*wijdān*) testify and confirm that there is something in the unlimited (=absolute) reality (*al-wāqi‘ al-mutlaq*), which, if it is considered in itself, without taking into account what is external to it, can be predicated to many (*lā ābiyan ‘an al-haml ‘alā ‘l-kathīrīn*). If it is considered solely in itself, it appears as something indefinite (*mubham*) that can be predicated to many and describes itself as “the universal” (*al-kullī*), i.e. as something to which is attributed universality (*kullīyya*)... We call this kind of thing and thingness “conceptual thing” and “conceptual thingness”; and it is [also] called “affirmative thing” and “affirmative thingness”... [Likewise, our intellect and intuition also confirm that] there is something in the unlimited reality that is different from the thing that was described above – namely, if it is considered in itself, without taking into account what is external to it, it cannot be predicated to many. If it is considered solely in itself, it appears as an absolute impossibility [to predicate it to many] and a pure negation of such predication. Its reality is a particular and real one, an individuation (*tashakhuss*) and entification (or: objectification. – *J.E.*) (*ta‘ayyun*), in the sense of the aforementioned negation and impossibility of predication to many. Such a thing in itself negates the possibility to predicate it to many. In turn, the thing which is different from it, namely, the first one, which in itself can be predicated to many, does not become something particular, real, individual and entified that cannot be predicated to many, otherwise than through the second. We call this second kind of thing and thingness “existential thing” and “existential thingness”; and it is also called [simply] “existence”. It has been definitely proved that this second kind of thing is what is truly real, while the first one, namely, the conceptual thing, can only exist accidentally, and that the first individuates and becomes an individuated affair through the second”.¹²

The conceptual thing differs from the existential one (read: the concept of the thing differs from its reality) in that it does not effect the traces (*āthār*) and properties (*ahkām*) of the thing, states Nūrī a few lines

below.¹³ This statement, together with the aforementioned proposition of the universality of the conceptual thing (as opposed to the particularity of the existential one) allows us to conclude that the “affirmation” (*thubūt*) Nūrī speaks about refers to nothing else but “the mental existence” (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*). The concept of mental existence plays an important role in the thought of Mullā Sadrā, who describes it as follows:

“This kind of existence, in the aspect of which the things and quiddities do not effect their proper traces when the soul conceives of them and when they become present in the world of the soul, without taking into account the external [objective world], is called “the mental and shadowy existence” (*wujūdan dhihniyyan wa zilliyyan*) and the “existence of the likeness” (*wujūdan mithāliyyan*)”.¹⁴

The thing which possesses only mental existence effects no traces and properties whatsoever. No doubt that the “conceptual” or “affirmed” thing is exactly this sort of thing. One might wonder what prevented Nūrī from employing the term “mental existence” (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*) in his discourse and made him speak, instead, about affirmation (*ithbāt/thubūt*). I have no ready answer to this, but my guess is that he simply reasoned in a somewhat different way than Sadrā, eventually arriving at the same basic conclusions. Nūrī might have used different terminology in a number of cases and he might have had minor differences of opinion with Sadrā but, as I hope to demonstrate in this paper, he was an entirely Sadrīan thinker.

What we call “conceptual/ affirmative thingness”, is only a shadow of “existential thingness” – just as mental existence, which leaves no traces in the outside, is a shadow of the external objective existence, which does leave such traces. Therefore, the universal is, by necessity, the shadow of its particular, as far as their existence is concerned.

But, a faithful follower of Sadrā, Nūrī goes further than this. When we are dealing with a contingent being, which does not actually enjoy existence in the full and true sense of the term, both its existential and conceptual thingnesses represent nothing more than shadows and likenesses, states he.

“Since the possible being cannot have a full and true existence, and since it is impossible to conceive of it as of a thing, possessing the reality of thingness, – rather, since it can, by necessity, only enjoy an illuminative relational existence (*al-wujūd al-idāfī al-ishrāqī*), possess a weak shadowy connective incomplete [mode of] being (*al-kawn al-nāqis al-da‘īf al-zillī al-irtibātī*) and be a thing in the sense of relational thingness (*al-shay‘iyya al-idāfiyya*), namely, by means of the relation that is called “the illuminative relation” and [by means of] a shadowy unreal thingness, nothing is a real thing, except the Necessary...¹⁵

Not only cannot the contingent, according to Nūrī, exist in the true sense of the word – it also cannot be a thing in the real sense of thingness. Such conclusion, as we saw above, can only be made if we treat thingness as either being inseparable from existence or coinciding with it fully. I’ll postpone the discussion on the illuminative relation for a while, until we turn to the oneness of existence, and will conclude the discussion on thingness with what seems to be the ultimate result of Nūrī’s meditation on this issue.

The contingent lacks not only real existence and true thingness. As a pure shadow and mere relation, it cannot even be called “he” or “it”. Hence, it is impossible to refer to it properly, as to something (at least relatively) independent - just as we cannot properly refer to the shadow, if we do not take into account at all its owner and possessor.

“The thing, whose quiddity is not fully identical with its being and which is not itself because of itself, as well as the thing, whose it-ness (*huwiyya*) depends on the other, is not “it” in the absolute sense”.¹⁶

This allows us to turn to the discussion of Nūrī’s treatment of the oneness of existence (*wahdat al-wujūd*), to which his second treatise is devoted.

III

Nūrī’s approach to the issue of the oneness of existence appears to be more radical than that of Sadrā: while the latter on different occasions

and in different aspects treats the oneness at issue either as the specific oneness (i.e. the oneness of species) (*al-wahda al-naw‘iyya*), or as the individual oneness (*al-wahda al-shakhsiyya*),¹⁷ Nūrī seems to be concerned solely with the individual oneness: not surprisingly, he only employs the expression *wahdat al-wujūd* in order to refer to the essential unification (*al-tawhīd al-dhātī al-ma‘rūf bi wahdat al-wujūd wa ‘l-mawjūd*).¹⁸

According to him, there are two levels of the oneness of existence or “mercy” – the level of the essence of the Merciful (*dhāt al-Rahman*), which possesses true simplicity (*al-basāta al-haqqa*), and the level of the flowing through (*sarayān*) of the essence of the Merciful and its all-encompassing mercy.¹⁹ The first level represents the true oneness, while the second (that of the flowing through of existence/ mercy and its being poured upon the contingents or the “carcasses of the things” (*hayākil al-ashyā’*)) refers to the oneness in manyness (*al-wahda fī ‘l-kathra*).

This second level, upon an examination, turns out to be nothing but shadow, relation and connection of the first.

“The possible existence... to which this group (the Sufis. – *J.E.*) habitually refer as “the merciful breath”... is nothing else than connection (*irtibāt*).”²⁰

Since it is nothing more than connection and relation, it should not actually be taken into consideration and paid attention to, in the same way as ink is not taken into consideration when we read a letter that is written with it.²¹

The nature of this relation or connection must now be explained, to make Nūrī’s point clearer. What he has in mind, is not the ordinary categorical relation but the so-called illuminative one (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*).²² The illuminative relation is the relation, which consists of an illuminating thing (*mushriq*) and its illumination (*ishrāq*) (e.g. the sun and its ray). Properly speaking, it consists of one side only, because,

in it, the relation (*idāfa*) is simultaneously also the related thing (*mudāf*).

The possible existence, or the breath of the Merciful, or the illuminative relation, does not have any reality of its own – in the same way as the shadow does not have any reality if considered without its owner and the ray – if taken without the sun. Hence, “there is no dweller in the abode, apart from Him”. This is exactly the stance that Sadrā had earlier taken in the “Asfār”, at the end of discussion on causation, arriving at a conclusion that

“... the existent (*mawjūd*) and the existence (*wujūd*) are confined to one individual reality, which has no companion in true existentiality (*mawjūdiyya*) and has no peer in its entity, and there is no other dweller in the dwelling of existence, apart from Him”.²³

Thus, we can conclude that Nūrī believed in the individual oneness of existence, in the Sadrian sense.

Previous to Sadrā, this attitude was typically associated with Muhy al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, who taught that everything is a manifestation and self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of the Real.²⁴

“The Real is the entity of the *wujūd*, not anything else, and [what is known as] the attribution of the *wujūd* to the contingents is [nothing else but] the Real’s manifestation to itself through their (i.e., the contingents’. – *J.E.*) entities”.²⁵

However, as we see, unlike Sadrā and Nūrī, who interpret *wujūd* as existence (*ḥastī*), Ibn al-‘Arabī takes the word, first and foremost, in its literal sense, “finding” (*yāfī*). Finding, in turn, most have an object that is being found – hence, Ibn al-‘Arabī seems to ascribe some reality to the entities of contingent things (although the Real appears to find them only accidentally, as mirrors, in which He finds (contemplates) Himself).

The immediate source of Sadrā’s teaching on the individual oneness might have been Dāwūd al-Qaysarī, who, in the introduction to his commentary on the “Fusūs”, describes three kinds of limited (or quazi-) existence – according to him, the existence that is spread upon the entities in knowledge is the shadow of the true existence, while, in turn, the mental existence and the (created) external existence are the shadows (*zillān*) of this shadow.²⁶

One fine point of Sadrā and Nūrī’s treatment of the issue of the oneness of existence, perhaps, consists in their describing this shadowy being not merely as “shadow” (*zill*) but also as “illuminative relation”: in this way, a bridge between the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabī and Shaykh al-Ishrāq was built and, gradually, in post-Sadrīan thought, the doctrines of the oneness of existence, on the one side, and the illumination, on the other, penetrated into each other, making an integral whole.²⁷ In turn, certain Nūrī’s insights on the common existence (*al-wujūd al-‘āmm*) as “connection” (*irtibāt*) have recently been developed by one of the most influential living Iranian philosophers, Ghulām Ridā Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī in his research on “connected existence” (*al-wujūd al-rābit*).²⁸

IV

The examples provided above should be sufficient to demonstrate that Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī was a thoughtful and insightful follower of Mullā Sadrā’s teachings and a skilful and innovative exponent of them. He did not attempt to imitate the letter of Sadrā’s doctrine: instead, he often employed new terms and even new proofs, or modified and elaborated those provided by Sadrā, in order to demonstrate the veracity and vitality of his teaching. He was quite successful in this, as we can conclude from the above analysis of his treatises, dealing with thingness and the oneness of existence.

At the current stage, when a good number of Nūrī’s works remain unpublished²⁹ and no attempts of a thorough and comprehensive analysis of those published, to the best of my knowledge, have been made, it is impossible to draw a sufficiently detailed picture of his philosophical views and to properly register his contributions to the

development of the Sadrian school of thought. However, even a brief analysis of some of his published treatises seems to provide unquestionable evidence of the depth of his insight and the highly refined character of his discourse. Hence, there is little doubt that the sixty years' long period, during which he transmitted Sadrā's doctrine to several generations of students, constitutes an indispensable and extremely important stage in the development of Sadrā's school of thought and in the dissemination of his ideas among wider intellectual circles of the Zand and Qajar Iran.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Among his other teachers, the biographers have mentioned Mīrzā Abū ’l-Qāsim Mudarris Isfahānī and Muhammad Ibrāhīm Jaddī Gulpāyagānī Isfahānī (d. 1199/1785) (see: Hāmid Nājī Isfahānī. “Darāmad”// *Irfān-i Irān*. No. 8. Tehrān: Haqīqat 1380 S.H. P. 81; M. Sadūqihī Suhā. *Ta’rikh-i hukamā’ wa ’urafā-i muta’akhir*. 2nd ed. Tehrān: Hikmat 1381 S.H. Chapter 5. P. 144).
- ² ‘Alī Karbāsī-zāda Isfahānī. *Hakīm-i muta’allih Bīdābādī - ihyāgar-i hikmat-i shī’i dar qarn-i davāzdahum-i hijrī*. Tehrān: Pazhūhishgāh-i ‘ulum-i insānī wa mutālī‘āt-i farhangī 1381 S.H. P. 121-122.
- ³ Muhammad Tunikābunī. *Qisas al-’ulamā’*. Tehrān: 1888 (lithogr. ed.) P. 150-151. For more sources on Nūrī’s life, see: Hāmid Nājī. “Darāmad”. P. 81-82, note 1. The most recent attempt to present a detailed account on Nūrī’s life, apparently, was made by M. Sadūqihī Suhā in his *Ta’rikh-i hukamā’ wa ’urafā*. Chapter 5. P. 143-160. However, almost the entire chapter consists of (badly arranged) quotations from earlier sources and a list of Nūrī’s most prominent students (even a tentative list of Nūrī’s writings is absent!).
- ⁴ Published in: Sadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*. 7 vols. Ed. M.Khājavi. Qum: Intishārāt-i Bīdār 1366/1987.
- ⁵ Published in: Sadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. *Al-Hikma al-muta’aliyya fī ’l-asfār al-’aqliyya*

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- ⁶ Published in: Sadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. *Asrār al-Āyāt*. Ed. M.Khājavi. Tehrān: Iranian Academy of Philosophy 1981.
- ⁷ Published in: Sadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. *Maḡātib al-ghayb*. 2 vols. Ed. M.Khājavi. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-ta'rīkh al-'arabī 1999.
- ⁸ S.J. Āshtiyānī and H. Corbin (eds.). *Anthologie des philosophes iraniens depuis le XVIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours/Muntakhabāt az āthār-i hukamā'-i ilāhī-yi Irān az asr-i Mīr Dāmād wa Mīr Findiriskī tā zamān-i hādīr*. 4 vols., Paris and Tehran: Academie Imperiale Iranienne de Philosophie et Depositare Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve 1971-79. Vol. 4. P. 545-598. Another treatise of Nūrī, "Haqīqat-i Qur'ān" (in Persian), was published by Hāmid Nāji Isfahānī a few years ago (Mullā 'Alī Nūrī. "Haqīqat-i Qur'ān," *Irḡān-i Irān*. No. 8. Tehrān: Haqīqat 1380 S.H. P. 88-96).
- ⁹ I was using the book: Ākhund Mullā 'Alī Nūrī. *Rasā'il-i falsafī: Basīt al-haqīqa wa Wahdat al-wujūd*. Ākhund Mullā Nazar 'Alī Gīlānī. *Tuhfa* (published as one vol.). Ed. S.J. Āshtiyānī. [Mashhad?]: Anjuman-i islāmī hikmat wa falsafa-i Irān 1357 S.H. P. 9-33 and 34-62. (It is impossible to establish, whether this edition actually preceded the 4th vol. of the *Muntakhabāt az āthār-i hukamā'* or it is a pirated edition that has appeared after it. In any case, the texts seem to coincide exactly with those found in the *Muntakhabāt*.)
- ¹⁰ This definition is believed to belong to Abū Ya'qūb al-Shahhām (d. after 257/871), a disciple of Abū 'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 227/841 ?) (see: Richard M. Frank. *The Metaphysics of Created Being According to Abū 'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf: A Philosophical Study of the Earliest Kalām*. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in Het Nabije Oosten 1966. P. 47 (see also the references to Shahrastānī in footnote 6)). A most useful review (together with a detailed list of the sources on the history of the issue of "thingness") is provided by Robert Wisnovsky. in his "Notes on Avicenna's Concept of Thingness" (*Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*. Vol. 10 (2000). P. 181-221, See P. 185-186 and notes 8 and 9). Moreover, the issue is discussed in great detail by the eminent Russian scholar A.V. Smirnov in his monograph: A.B. Смирнов. *Логика смысла: теория и ее приложение к анализу классической арабской философии и культуры*. Москва: Языки славянской культуры 2001. С. 293-317.
- ¹¹ As R. Wisnovsky puts it, for Ibn Sīnā, "thing and existent are identical extensionally but different intensionally" (Wisnovsky. "Notes". P. 190.).
- ¹² Nūrī. *Rasā'il*. P. 34-35.
- ¹³ Nūrī. *Rasā'il*. P. 35.
- ¹⁴ Sadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. "Al-masā'il al-qudsiyya" (Chapter 3. "Fī ithbāt al-wujūd al-dhihnī"), in idem. *Se risāla-i falsafī*. Ed. S.J. Āshtiyānī. 3rd ed. Qum: Markaz-i intishārāt-i daftar-i tablīghāt-i islāmī hawza-i 'ilmī-i Qum 1378 S.H. P. 220.
- ¹⁵ Nūrī. *Rasā'il*. P. 32.

- ¹⁶ Nūrī. *Rasā’il*. P. 58.
- ¹⁷ I have discussed Sadrā’s views on the oneness of existence in my earlier article “The Gnostic Element of Sadra’s Doctrine on Causation,” in Seyed G. Safavi (ed.), *Mulla Sadra and Comparative Philosophy on Causation*. London: Salman – Azade Press 2003. P. 73–89.
- ¹⁸ Nūrī. *Rasā’il*. P. 58.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Nūrī. *Rasā’il*. P. 28.
- ²¹ Nūrī. *Rasā’il*. P. 19.
- ²² The term “illuminative relation” (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) apparently was first used by Suhrawardī (see: Sh.Y. Sohrawardi. *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*. Ed. Henry Corbin. 2nd edition. Tehran–Paris: Academie Imperiale Iranienne de Philosophie et Depositaire Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve 1976.T. 1. P. 487). However, Sadrā and his followers interpret it in a very different way (see my article “Unification of Perceiver and Perceived and Unity of Being,” in *Transcendent Philosophy*, vol. 1, № 3 (December 2000). P. 1–7).
- ²³ Sadrā. *Asfār*. Part 2. P. 292.
- ²⁴ We are not discussing here popular ecstatic mysticism, whose slogan and catchword was “all is He”, without making any differentiation between the Real proper and His shadows and manifestations.
- ²⁵ Muhy al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī. *Al-Futūhāt al-makkiyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Sādir: non-dated. Vol 1. P. 328.
- ²⁶ Dāwūd al-Qaysarī. *Matla’ khusūs al-kalam fī ma’ānī fusūs al-hikam*. Qum: Mu’assasa muhibbīn li-tibā’a wa ’l-nashr 1423 L.H. Vol. 1. P. 17. See also S.J. Āshtiyānī’s commentary on this passage: S.J. Āshtiyānī. *Sharh-i muqaddima-i Qaysarī bar Fusūs al-hikam*. 4th ed. Qum: Markaz-i intishārāt-i daftar-i tablīghāt-i islāmī 1375 S.H. P. 117-118.
- ²⁷ I have referred to some results of this integration in my article “Cosmic Imagination in the Thought of Ibn al-Arabī and al-Suhrawardī,” in A. Asadova (ed.). *East and West: Common Spiritual Values*. Istanbul: Insan 2010. P. 237-248.
- ²⁸ Ghulām Ridā Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī. *Wujūd-i rābit wa mustaqil dar falsafa-i islāmī*. Tehrān: Sahāmī 1362 S.H.
- ²⁹ See the list in: Hāmid Nājī Isfahānī. ”Darāmad”. P. 82-83. In this article, Hāmid Nājī writes (P. 82, note 2) that he is preparing a collection of Nūrī’s works. I do not know, how far this project has advanced since then (the article was published in early 1380 S.H., i.e., some ten years ago).

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A Comparative Study of ‘Faith’ from Kierkegaard’s and Rumi’s Perspective

Masoumeh Bahram
University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

Abstract

This paper analyses and compares the ideas of Kierkegaard and Rumi on faith and love. After outlining the very divergent historical contexts in which these two thinkers set forth their ideas, the study then identifies and explains the main and additional secondary keywords related to the concepts of faith and love. This includes the three stages of existentialism, as differently expressed by Kierkegaard and Rumi. The similarity in their thinking is described, as is also the dissimilarity in their lives, contexts and modes of contemplation. Finally, both the ideas are evaluated. The conclusion is that faith and love are concepts not amenable to scientific analysis, and the ideas of these scholars are for all people in all ages.

Keywords: Faith, Love, Kierkegaard, Rumi, existentialism.

Introduction

Kierkegaard and Rumi have provided the world with profoundly beautiful insights into the nature of God and of our human life. Not only do they enjoy the capability of pleasantly comprehending Almighty God, but they also know very well how much pain we suffer in this world. They do try to alleviate humanity’s sufferings and add to its joy by getting help from the geometry of their thoughts and knowledge. In a word, I firmly believe that Kierkegaard and Rumi want to deliver a well-known message to the people of our time, and it is for

this reason that they link themselves to our minds, feelings and emotions and stand for us in this age of bewilderment and consternation that we face. They suggest that one can derive courage in order to live daringly, grant a new significance to life, cope with its hardships and spend it calmly and pleasantly, on the condition that one would be able to enjoy faith and love within oneself. Indeed, Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who was the founder of existentialist philosophy and a reviver of Christian theology, and Rumi (1207-1273), who was the greatest mystical poet of Iran, were able to provide a special vision of faith.

Faith is one of the most important subjects in theology and the philosophy of religion. Although it is an ancient subject, it is a vital element of theology. Undoubtedly, a comparative study can be used as a beam of light to illuminate a deeper understanding of faith from the perspectives of Kierkegaard and Rumi. There is, therefore, no need to emphasize the importance of conducting analytical assessments of the subject. It is, however, necessary to explain that I myself am so enraptured by Kierkegaard's and Rumi's remarks about God, faith, and the love of God that, in the course of doing the research, I have felt God with all my heart. It is a feeling that renders me incapable of explaining it or finding ways to rationalize and find logical reasons for it. The only feeling that can be explained is the permanent sense that, if I did not have God, it would be impossible for me to understand the meanings of those most beautiful words: love, sympathy, piety, and spiritual beauty and self-possession.

My seminal question in this paper is whether the concepts of 'faith' and 'love' have a joint meaning as viewed by Kierkegaard and Rumi in spite of many differences that they may have. The main objective of this research is to undertake a comparative study based on views expressed by Kierkegaard and Rumi about concepts such as faith and love, because these two terms constitute the core of the meditations these two scholars carry. The methods that can be used and relied on to document Kierkegaard's and Rumi's views are content analysis and comparative study.

Historical background related to Kierkegaard

Søren Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen on 15th of May 1813. Kierkegaard studied theology and philosophy at the University of Copenhagen. He was the founder of existentialist philosophy. It seems that the most important movement in modern philosophy was existentialism. In fact, it came into existence at the beginning of the nineteenth century and it was a German language-based philosophy. It is especially true that it is not a school of philosophy; rather, it is an intellectual movement in philosophy which includes various schools of thoughts. Although this philosophical movement served to strengthen some other disciplines such as psychology and theology and heavily influenced the contemporary Western European philosophical movement, 'it is quite natural that Søren Kierkegaard should be influenced by the philosophy of his day' (Thomte, 1948: 7). It also gradually extended its area of influence into British and American philosophy.

Kierkegaard questioned the teaching of the Danish church and argued that there was no relationship between the real Christian life and that of the official church hierarchy, seeing the latter as an example of how duties had become tools for personal gains. It can be seen that if duties are not undertaken for God, this is something worse than unbelief. He also accused the church of forgetting the spirit of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, he opposed Hegel's philosophy, which I will discuss in the relationship between faith, love and reason.

There are other philosophers who opposed Hegel's philosophy and one of them is Schelling, who argued that this philosophy does not consider the existence and individuality as separate existences, but rather they exist as networks of a whole system of meaning. Jaspers also followed Kierkegaard and believed that in Hegel's philosophy every secret has been eliminated and everything has become known.

It is important to recognise that Kierkegaard's published work amounts to several books, including *Alternative*, *Fear and Trembling*, and *Repetition*.

Historical background related to Rumi

Rumi was born on 30th of September 1207 in Balkh. His father named him Jalal al-Din, which means “The Splendour of the Faith”. When he was twelve years old, the news of the atrocities of Mongol armies who were now approaching Balkh forced his family to emigrate from Khurasan and to embark on a desperate journey which finally took them to Konya in the present-day Turkey. His father, Baha al-Din, or “The Glory of the Faith”, was a learned theologian and preacher, who soon obtained a high position among the city’s scholars and was called “the King of the Scholars”. When Baha al-Din died in 1231, Rumi took over his role as the Sheikh. In 1244 he met a mysterious dervish, Shamsoddin-e Tabrizi (the “Sun of Religion” from Tabriz).

These two mystics started discussing the difference between Mohammad the Prophet and Bayazid Bastami: Mohammad, though a Prophet, called himself ‘his slave’ whereas Bayazid the mystic exclaimed Sobhani ‘How great is my glory’. This topic would be much in keeping with the interest of both. For six months the two mystics were inseparable, so much so that the family and the disciples complained – Rumi neglected his classes, his friends, and everybody, completely lost in the company of Shamsoddin (Schimmel, 1978: 18).

Rumi gave up his public preaching, and his disciples who were deprived of their Master’s insightful teachings were angry. Shams, who knew much about human obsessions and shortcomings, felt that it would be better for him to leave Konya to avoid conflict with Rumi’s friends and disciples who could not understand Rumi’s love and respect for Shams. Shaken and heart-broken, Rumi ordered Sultan Valad, his eldest son, to find him. Sultan Valad managed to find and bring him back, but soon, in 1247, Shams disappeared, for the second time, never to be seen again. In a poem about Rumi’s love for Shams, Sultan Valad, Rumi’s son, “vividly describes the passionate and uncontrollable” love that “overwhelmed his father” at the time:

Never for a moment did he cease from listening to music (Sama), and dancing;

Never did he rest by day or night.
He had been a mufti: he became a poet;
He had been an ascetic: he became intoxicated by love.
'T was not the wine of the grape: the illumined soul drinks only the
wine of
light (Nicholson, 2000: 20).

When Shams left, Rumi selected Salahul-Din Zarkub, one of his most intelligent students, as his companion and deputy; and after Salahul-Din's death, Husam Chelebi became his companion and deputy, succeeding him as the leader of the Mevlevi Order. Rumi, who had hardly listened to Persian music and poetry before Shams, was so much influenced by Shams that he avidly listened to music and composed poetry, believing that Shams was within him listening and dancing to music and that the mystic songs that he produced were the result of Shams's continuous conversations with him, or that they were even composed by Shams.

Rumi's greatest work is the *Mathnavi-e Manavi* or *The Spiritual Couplets* in six books containing about 25000 rhyming couplets, which he dictated to Husam over the last fifteen years of his life. Jami, a later Iranian mystic poet, called it the Koran in Persian (Arberry, 1961: 11).

His other major works are the *Divan-e Shams-e Tabriz* (*Collected Poetry of Shams-e Tabriz*), amounting to some 40000 double lines or more lyric verses, the *Ruba'iyat* or *Quatrains*, of which there are about 1600, *Fihi ma Fihi* and *Munaqib el-Arifin*. Rumi has influenced many thinkers and poets, not only in the Islamic world but also in the western countries. According to Iqbal:

Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi needs no introduction. For seven hundred years now his verse has inspired millions of men. Jami, the celebrated Persian poet, hailed him as a saint who was not a Prophet but had a book. Hegel considered Rumi as one of the greatest poets and thinkers in world history. The twentieth-century German poet Hans Meinke saw in Rumi 'The only hope for the dark times we are living in'. The French writer Maurice Barres once confessed, 'When I experienced Mevlana's poetry, which is Vibrant with the tone of ecstasy and with

melody, I realised the deficiencies of Shakespeare, Goethe and Hugo' (1983: xvii).

According to Bruijn:

After the death of Jalal al-Din Rumi on December 17 in 1283, Husam Chelebi became the leader of Konya Mowlavi Order and in 1284 when Husamul-Din died, Sultan Valad, Rumi's son, took his place as head of the Mevlevi order, successfully trying to increase the reputation of the Order and writing *Ma'arif (Divine Sciences)*, similar to *Fihi ma Fihi* (1997: 111-112).

The additional secondary keywords denoting the concepts of faith and love

Faith and love are the most important keywords for Kierkegaard and Rumi respectively. I would suggest that the concept of love as has been raised by Rumi is equal to that of faith for Kierkegaard, and indeed they only differ in the terms they have used. The keywords 'faith' and 'love' were chosen because they reveal themselves at the highest level where mankind's soul begins to soar.

Kierkegaard believes that some people in this stage seek only apparent pleasure and beauty and this is a declining period of life. Ethical life comes next as a second stage: that is to say one's personality elevates and escapes from the tight cage of pleasure-taking and binds itself to observe and obey some moral principles. For instance, he tells the truth whether it gives him pleasure or otherwise. But the third stage comes when a person reaches to a point of spiritual change that is neither a function of ethical rules nor enslavement to pleasure, but is unquestioningly the function of God's command. It is wholly devotion and submission. However, such devotion may not carry any experiential evidence or even rational reasons.

One important note is that the word 'love' is the most beautiful and significant keyword from Rumi's perspective. For example, in Chapter 1 of *Mathnavi*, verses 220-225 describe only the concept of 'love'

instead of 'faith', where the good people sacrifice themselves to Almighty God, and as far as the concept is concerned, the notion of 'love' in its entirety as used by Rumi, and that of 'faith' as raised and introduced by Kierkegaard follow the same direction. Similarly, if we have not known Kierkegaard, we might assume his book *Fear and Trembling* is the exact copy of Rumi's couplets 220-225 as these have been interpreted. This also vividly reflects an exact connection of two scholars to a viewpoint. As Hegel learned about Rumi's meditation and on the other hand as Kierkegaard has a good command of Hegel's meditations, it seems that Kierkegaard may have had the same opinions as Rumi had on some occasions. As Tim May argues, things 'that are similar are more likely to borrow from one another' (2001: 208).

The following are secondary keywords that have contact with the concepts of faith and love and have been discussed directly or indirectly in this paper:

1. An entire risk or one-sided gambling

In this position mankind puts himself under the care of God completely, only because his soul hears a nice and agreeable voice sung by Almighty God. Kierkegaard and Rumi portray in their works the astonishing adventure of Abraham at a moment when he was about to offer to God his only son, Esmail or Isaac. This shows that Abraham is losing his dearest asset in order to desist from pleasure-taking and has absorbed himself in the Divine commandment. In fact, risking one's life and submitting to God's command are part of the same existentialist faith.

2. To be sacrificed and accept death

To be sacrificed and give one's life as a pledge in Rumi's works is, I think, the same stage of faith that Kierkegaard reveals in his own works. They both believe that the only spiritual condition under which a man can reach the high status and most excellent experience is that he should humbly sacrifice himself even, rather than his son. The important term "sacrifice" has been portrayed most delicately

throughout the second and third books of *Mathnavi* as well as in the book *Fear and Trembling*. As both these eminent scholars state, when love and faith take the field the lover or the true believer accepts his death in the presence of his beloved and makes his death as an intermediating means of watching the most bright and beautiful face of his highly-esteemed friend. Love and faith essentially mean escaping from “I and we” and locating in “you and he”.

3. The concept of freedom

Freedom means a complete release from everything except God. Here also Rumi's introduced love approaches Kierkegaard's faith, and they become united such that they form a single attitude to a truth with two titles. At this instance, Rumi points to the same personality that Kierkegaard nominates and refers to it as a stage of mundane pleasure that must be necessarily ignored in order to reach a perfect faith. Rumi has the same view on liberty, namely, a release from inside, self- idols, devilish uncleanness, impurities, and thereby reaching the high peak of existence.

4. Being ruined

The concept of being ruined is a keyword with profound significance that has been included in *Mathnavi* exactly in line with faith as posited by Kierkegaard. It implies that a lover or true believer is ruined in the presence of God until he finds his great treasure (faith and love), and the purpose of being ruined means departing this life, being dissolved into one's beloved and leaving behind self-estrangement.

5. Madness

This is the same supra-ethical and supra-rational stage which can be described only in terms of faith and love. For example, Abraham's act, which seems to most people without a faith to be a type of madness, can be interpreted only through an entire love and faith of the type posited by Kierkegaard.

6. Stages of existentialism

Both Kierkegaard and Rumi point to *three stages of existentialism*, with all human beings finding themselves at one of these stages. The key concepts of these stages include *aesthetic*, *moral* and *religious* stages according to Kierkegaard's thinking, and *nafs-e-Ammara*, *nafs-e-Lavvama* and *nafs-e-Motmaenna* according to Rumi's. Although different words are used to denote the key concepts in these three stages by Kierkegaard and Rumi, they are nevertheless united in meaning, and the consequence of their discussions is the fact that what we can do is that we can either remain in the dark or accept that God is able to throw light on our ignorance if we wish.

Kierkegaard's and Rumi's ideas about 'Faith' and 'Love'

To explain the concept of faith and love, Kierkegaard and Rumi make a distinction between three stages of being and believe that all human beings are at one of these three stages:

1. The Aesthetic stage in Kierkegaard's thinking is when the love of joy guides the person's life. Life is defined as a search for beauty and joy and the person who lives in this stage lives as animals do. He/she eats to work and works to eat and has physical joys without any responsibility. His/her love is only for transient things and beings. He/she may have reached the age of 40, but is still childish and his/her love of joy is still limited to momentary sensations and defined by his/her own individual desire. Unfortunately, most people are stuck in this stage and the only concepts they know are desire and joy. Here strong willpower is non-present and the individual is not committed to anything but his own personal joy. If we define life by Hegelian scientific laws and Hegelian logic, human beings can never pass this stage. For instance, a physician who smokes is definitely aware of the harmful effects of smoking on the body and knows that he has to stop smoking. Nevertheless, he/she continues smoking because human beings never stop doing things they like to do just as a result of awareness or advice or rational discussions with themselves or others.

He would stop smoking only when he comes to believe, to have faith in, the fact that smoking is damaging to his health.

Rumi also defines mankind's psychological being in terms of three layers of self which need to be transcended before human can achieve selflessness and dissolution in God.

Nafs-e-Ammara is the worship of other men and women, wealth and power. Nafs or Ego, in this state, because of its essentially "beastly" nature, can be compared with various animals, in particular the ass, dog, pig and cow. In other words, Ego is the mother of all idols, forcing mankind to be obsessed with lust, greed and love of power:

Yourself (nafs) is the mother of all idols: the material idol is a snake, but the spiritual idol is a dragon.

'T is easy to break an idol, very easy; to regard the self as easy to subdue is folly, folly.

From the self at every moment issues an act of deceit; and each of those deceits a hundred Pharaohs and their hosts are drowned.

O son, if you would know the form of the self, read the description of Hell with its seven gates (Ovanessian, 1991: 145).

Nafs-e-Ammara, which always embarks on new quests for lovely joys, superficial beauties and worldly powers, can never be satisfied. Its cravings are similar to the taste of salty fish: the more one eats, the more one desires water. In this situation, the person expects others to obey and worship him as the leader; and to achieve this, he commits atrocities beyond human imagination. Therefore, he/she becomes an instrument in the hand of carnal desires obsessed with wealth and power. Taming the wild animal of *Nafs-e-Ammara* requires a great amount of perseverance, but eventually it can be tamed by reason at its lower levels and by love of God at its higher levels. This is because reason is not capable of convincing the self when it comes to mankind's existential problem with being.

What is the remedy for the fire of lust? The light of the Religion: your (the Moslems') light is the (means of) extinguishing the fire of the infidels.

What kills this fire? The Light of God. Make the light of Abraham your teacher. (Zamani, 2000: 1052 Book No. I).

O son, burst thy chains and be free! How long wilt thou be a bondsman to silver and gold? (Zamani, 2000: 62 Book No. I).

2. The moral stage in Kierkegaard's thinking: in this stage the person is moral in thought and in practice. He/she is virtuous and, if married, has a real and faithful married life. Here women are not man's properties and are not just there to tempt and be seduced; they have personalities of different types and try to find their spiritual road to perfection. In this stage, the individual is determined to discharge his/ her responsibilities and, by using his free will, makes moral choices. Thus, his behaviour has general regular patterns and he/she leads a life of positive being alongside other people.

Nafs-e-Lavvama in Rumi's thinking is comparable to 'conscience' in the Koran (chapter 75 verse 2: 'And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit'). This is a higher layer of being in which the person is consciously involved in a conflict against the lower layers of his *Nafs* and animalism. One begins to analyze oneself and to purify and control one's desires through reason. However,

Reason can only help him to reach the door of wakefulness. S/he must respond to the call of self-knowledge, experience it, and hear it from within him/her and not learn about it from knowledge gained in books or from listening to others (Arasteh, 1974: 117).

The Man of God is wise through Truth:

The Man of God is not a scholar from a book (Shah, 1980: 108).

This stage is liberation from instinctive acts and attainment of real self. One of the best ways to tame the Nafs is through constant fasting and ascetic exercises until it becomes an obedient animal. 'Rumi, even at that early age, like many saintly people, he used to eat only once in three or four days or once during the week' (Shah, 1989: 6). Another way is little sleep:

The fishes and fowls are confounded by my wakefulness day and night.

Before this (state of mine) I used to wonder why the vaulted sky does not sleep;

But now the sky itself is amazed at my wretched condition.

Love has cast on me the spell of devotion,

The heart being enthralled by this spell no longer sleeps (Iqbal, 1983: 140).

Nevertheless, apart from reason and intuitive self-knowledge, patience is needed. It prevents one from becoming obsessed with one's devotions. Even constant fasting and prayer may easily be abused by Nafs to result in pride, which is the anathema of love and spiritual unity.

3. The religious stage in Kierkegaard's thinking: here the individual achieves faith, which is an enthusiastic energetic movement toward eternal happiness, a movement which is strengthened by will. Its enthusiastic energy can overcome all forms of hesitation and doubt. Thomte points out that 'faith is achieved when one comes to have immediate consciousness. Faith means the belief in the omniscience of God' (1948: 11). It is achieved when we think of God as witnessing all our actions and when we consider God's satisfaction as the criterion of good or bad in everything. Faith is not based on knowledge; it is not an immediate intuition reached before or after deep thought, nor is it a happy feeling which is free of doubt and hesitation. Faith is not a collection of teachings, it is a teacher itself. Faith is a movement, a leap from one realm to another. The result of the leap, however, is not a

continuous abiding state; it is, in fact, a very unstable state which is always in conflict with its opposite, which is lack of faith. Consequently, the truth of faith can never be 'objective'. It is always personal, internal, and as a result 'subjective'. It can never be described.

Objectivity emphasizes "what" is said; subjectivity emphasizes "how" it is said... objectivity only asks about the forms of thought, subjectivity asks about inwardness. At its maximum this "how" is the passion of infinity and the passion of infinity is itself truth'. In brief, subjectivity is (1) a passionate concern for one's being, which is threatened by death, relating oneself at all times to this concern; (2) it demands an adherence to anything which the individual finds edifying; (3) it entails an isolation in freedom and an uncertainty of even possessing subjectivity; (4) finally, it is a suffering which is masked from the world (Garelick, 1965: 27).

Kierkegaard believes that any attempt to find reasons or to rationalize the existence of God is blasphemy, because when you try to prove the existence of somebody who is alive and present, you are suggesting that his/her being can be neglected or ignored. God himself warns us against trying to prove his existence. God is so present and obvious that any reason used to show clearly his existence and presence is irrelevant. To believe and have faith is, on the one hand, acknowledging and moving toward truth and, on the other, taking a dangerous risk. For example, Abraham surrendered to God's command and decided to sacrifice his son. Such a sacrifice could not be logically or morally justified. In fact, it was completely immoral and illogical. Nevertheless, he decided to do it and as a result become the "father of the faithful". To sin is to risk one's faith. It is sin that leads to estrangement and separation from God. Sin destroys the possibilities of communication with God. Nevertheless, it is the same separation, the same gap that makes faith possible and leads to a possible future reunion.

Kierkegaard believes that man must first reject the objectivity of the aesthetic life where in he is a slave to things. Next he must develop the responsible inwardness of duty and self-fulfilment, but a still greater

subjectivity is found in the life in which exists a passionate tension of concern for eternal blessedness (Arbaugh, 1968: 211).

Furthermore, Kierkegaard says that if man wants to save himself from his deplorable condition and cure his spiritual problems, he should believe in God. He also believes that, once man has reached this stage, he is no longer likely to return to the previous stages of merely aesthetic or merely moral existence.

Nafs-e-Motmaenna in Rumi's thinking (soul at peace and absorbed in God) is the highest stage of the self. Here the individual is dissolved in his/her Love of God and can travel in Love and find happiness. Love is associated with the experiential dimensions of Sufism, not the theoretical. It must be experienced to be understood. Eventually, the lover is totally immersed in the ocean of Divine love. In this stage, lover and beloved are never without each other, and they act and react through each other. Therefore, longing makes lovers thin and pale.

Love makes the ocean boil like a kettle, and makes the mountains like sand (Nicholson, 1926: 164 Book No. V).

But desire of the lovers makes them lean, (while) the desire of the love ones makes them fair and beautiful (Nicholson, 1926: 248 Book No. III).

Here Rumi directly states that he is God, but as it is explained by Ovanessian:

This is what is signified by the words Anal-Haqq 'I am God.' People imagine that it is a presumptuous claim, whereas it is really a presumptuous claim to say Anal-abd 'I am the slave of God'; and Anal-Haqq 'I am God' is an expression of great humility. The man who says Anal-abd 'I am the slave of God' affirms two existences, his own and God's, but he that says Anal-Haqq 'I am God' has made himself non-existent and has given himself up and says 'I am God', i.g. 'I am naught, He is all: there is no being but God's.' This is the extreme of humility and self-abasement (1991:411).

'I am God' actually expresses humility in the sense that it means 'I am pure and I hold nothing within me except Him'. Rumi believes that there is a mysterious relationship between the lover and the beloved that can never be explained by rational thought. Although reason helps us in correcting our mistakes, it is insufficient for handling our existential problem. Love is fundamentally an experience situated beyond reason and cannot be described in words.

No matter what I say to explain and elucidate Love, shame overcomes me when I come to love itself (Chittick, 1983: 194).

Although the commentary of the tongue makes (all) clear, yet tongueless love is clearer (Nicholson, 1926: 10 Book No. I).

When it comes to Love, I have to be silent

To describe Love, intellect is like an ass in the morass,

The pen breaks when it is to describe Love (Schimmel, 1982: 101).

The proof of the sun is the sun (himself): if thou require the proof, do not avert thy face from him! (Zamani, 2000: 92 Book NO.I).

In other words, Love is also like Ibrahim, before whom the lover is willing to be sacrificed like Ishmael. It is the beautiful Yusuf, and it is Jesus with his life-bestowing breath, just as it is Solomon whose magic seal subdues djinns and who understands the language of the birds, the secret words of the heart. Love is David, in whose hand iron becomes pliable and who can soften even an iron heart. But it is also the highest manifestation of the long line of prophets, the Prophet Muhammad, the perfect manifestation of Divine Love: "Love comes like Mustafa in the midst of the infidels (Schimmel, 1992: 187).

In addition, Rumi believes that love is like faith and 'the rewards of a life of faith and devotion to God are love and inner rapture, and the capacity to receive the light of God' (Mabey, 2003: 116). To sum up, Rumi's account of his spiritual journey is simple: 'Three short phrases

tell the story of my life: I was raw, I got cooked, and I burned' (Lewis, 2000: 404).

The relationship between faith, love and reason (Similarity)

Kierkegaard was very critical of Hegel's rationalism. This was because Hegel (1770-1831) believed that all realities are parts of a system and whatever is real is rational, and vice versa, based on dialectical relationships. Hegel was not opposed to religious beliefs, but was rather against the interpretation of Christianity that did not work alongside human rationality. Hegel puts emphasis on a religion fully based on human rationality that produces a human personality characterised by morality. He thought that if we commit sins we become distant from God, so philosophy and religion are the bridges that remove such distance or separation.

In response to Hegel's attempt to rationalise Christianity, Kierkegaard experienced a complete religious reaction, and as the leader of religious existentialism from within the Protestant tradition he provided an existential interpretation of the irrational faith of the Christian world. In his struggle against Hegel's philosophy, he argues that there are feelings that simply cannot be expressed. 'Kierkegaard ridicules the idea of proving the existence (Dasein) of God. In fact, it is logically impossible to prove his existence (Dasein). God's presence is proved by worship and not by intellectual proofs' (Thomte, 1948: 11).

Kierkegaard opposed Hegel's rationality, giving priority to desire and arguing that in Hegel's system individuals have no rights and everything is determined by history. Indeed, while for Hegel rationality is important and the real is rational, Kierkegaard emphasises the feelings that arise from personal desires - and the deeper the feelings, the more inexpressible they are. In addition,

The philosophy of Hegel with its world-historic epochs has reduced Christianity to a triviality, which at any moment might be transcended by another epoch and men had forgotten the significance of existing

as human individuals; they had lost themselves in a speculative contemplation of world history (Thomte, 1948: 14).

Rumi often contrasts Universal Reason with Partial Reason and believes that Partial Reason fathers those scholarly studies which are void of inspiration and illumination. Partial Reason can err, whereas Universal Reason is infallible and immune from mistakes. It is also steadfast. Rumi explains that Partial Reason is consequential in resisting the temptations of *Nafs-e-Ammara*, but this is only when it is connected to Universal Reason. In other words, Partial Reason is incapable of saving our souls and, like Ahriman, can prove to be a devious guide.

When the lover (of God) is fed from (within) himself with pure wine, there reason will remain lost and companionless.

Partial (discursive) reason is a denier of Love, though it may give out that it is a confidant (Nicholson, 1926: 107 Book No. I).

Rumi believes that we cannot prove the existence of God by Partial Reason and logic. He also emphasizes the uselessness of philosophical arguments in the relationship of man to God. Furthermore, he says that 'logic never gets beyond the finite; philosophy sees double; book-learning fosters self-conceit and obscures the idea of the Truth with clouds of empty words' (Nicholson, 1914: 69). He symbolically refers to Satan as the first who tried to solve the problem of existence by dispute:

The first person who produced these paltry analogies in the presence of the Lights of God was Iblis.

He said, Beyond doubt fire is superior to earth: I am of fire, and he (Adam) is of dingy earth.

Let us, then, judge by comparing the secondary with its principal: he is of darkness, I of radiant light.

God said, "Nay, but on the contrary there shall be no relationship: asceticism and piety shall be the (sole) avenue to pre-eminence" (Zamani, 2000: 974 Book No. I).

To sum up, Kierkegaard and Rumi both believed that human concepts or affairs are not susceptible to being proved by reasoning. As a result, faith and love cannot be reached through the limited channels of reasoning. In fact, we cannot pass through reason's channel towards faith. Consequently, there is no relationship between faith and reason. Faith has its own special way which is the love of God.

Dissimilarity

Two thinkers, from two distant parts of the world, from two widely separated centuries, and in spite of their cultural and religious differences, express thoughts and ideas about faith and love of God which are, although expressed in different languages, virtually the same. Their similarity, however, does not extend to their personal and spiritual lives and the difference can be observed the following aspects:

1. Rumi's personal and spiritual life and his methods of contemplation were not similar to those of Kierkegaard or any other philosopher, religious teacher, preacher, or even Sufi. He believed that what can be learned from the teachings and sayings of the schools does not open the path to God and that human beings, if wishing to be the wayfarers of God's path, ought to wash away their papers, set fire to books, avoid schools and Sufi temples and embark on selfless quests within their individual beings, purified of their egotistic selves. He believed that even the asceticism practiced in the Sufi temples, because often tarnished with hypocrisy and exhibitionism, is likely to become a point of pride, a distractive occupation, a truth-covering veil that needs to be removed if one is to get closer to God.

Thus Shams had helped Rumi to transform his being into what Shams himself named "The Third Path" or "The Third Script"; a path, a script which is different from that of philosophers' and Sufi's; a script that no

one can read and even he himself, now empty of all that made him what he was, can no longer recognize (Zarrinkub, 1998: 156-7).

2. Rumi practised and taught "The True Spiritual Dance" (*Sama Raast*) which required asceticism, self-discipline, and continuous fasting and was essentially different from the ecstatic dances of Sufis. Every single *Sama*, wherever it was carried out, signified for him a journey within, a spiritual journey in a roofless temple void of pillars, decorations and luxuries, in whose purified, sacred atmosphere all terrestrial entities became celestial. *Sama* was so sacred to him that any delay could only be excused if he was involved in prayer or compensated by prayer. It gave him a feeling that was above and beyond love, a condition that could not be expressed. It gave him annihilation and dissolution in the eternal Being.

3. Kierkegaard was a Christian and influenced by philosophers before him. Rumi was a Muslim and influenced by Koranic parables and the sayings and practices of Islamic and mystic saints (*Orafa*). In the general categories of mystic saints, Rumi belonged to the ecstatic mystics (*Orafai-e Atefi Maslak*) who are associated with emotion and enthusiasm. His path was, thus, quite different from that of rational mystics (*Orafai-e Aghlani*) who believe in controlling their emotions, rational contemplation, and logical reasoning. 'Rumi says, Attar was the spirit, Sana'i the two eyes and I tread in the tracks of Sana'i and Attar' (Lewisohn, 1999: 171).

4. Unlike Kierkegaard who is a mystic philosopher, Rumi is a poet whose medium of communication is a literary language of high intellectual and stylistic calibre. In his poetry, he avoids logical arguments and reasoning and makes extensive use of parables and allegories to make issues tangible and approachable for all potential readers. Thus, sophisticated mystic arguments are expressed in terms that make them accessible. In fact, Rumi despises philosophical debates as too lowly and decadent to be incorporated in transcendental mystic representations. He openly scorns philosophy and philosophers

regarding mysticism (*Erfan*) as far above philosophers' level of understanding and incomprehensible by methods used in philosophy:

“The logician's leg is wooden/ a wooden leg is hardly complying”.

5. Rumi's understanding of being, unlike Kierkegaard's, is mystic and not philosophical. Thus, he uses an allegorical approach with symbols, metaphors, similes, and other literary figures, which have always been in use among mystics as the best means of expression. Among these one can mention Light, Love, Drunkenness, Madness, One-Sided Gambling, Annihilation, and Dissolution.

Evaluation of Kierkegaard's and Rumi's ideas

The present paper is in agreement with Kierkegaard's and Rumi's ideas about faith and love, but it appears that in the early stages of the movement toward faith, seeking help from theoretical reasoning as a source of illumination is inevitable. In fact, at the beginning of our quest to discover and understand God, reasoning and logic can prove to work better than anything else in approaching God. Furthermore, in order to counter rationalism, one needs to be rational and logical in thought.

It also seems to be evident that, at the beginning of the movement toward God, there exists a direct relationship between mankind's power of reasoning and faith or love, so that human rationality and his logical reasoning direct his/her thoughts toward a better understanding of God and religion. Nevertheless, in the higher stages of faith and love, rationality and logical thinking seem to lose their validity and relevance and there remains no need to rely on them, unlike what Kierkegaard believes to be the case. In the course of history, both oriental and occidental philosophers have made attempts to prove the existence of God by approaching the question through rational research and logical reasoning. Most of them, however, have finally come to conclusions

similar to those of Kierkegaard and Rumi, that God's existence and presence can only be certified by the spiritual eye and by faith.

Conclusion

Description and explanation of main and secondary words as used in this research study were valuable tasks that have been undertaken by using the research findings of past valid commentators; and this appears to be a typical new piece of work. In addition, the tendency to move towards faith in God is rooted in the deepest resources of human being and as a result humanity has always been in quest of a true understanding of his/her God. The resultant thoughts have created systems of beliefs and philosophical systems. One of these philosophical systems is "existentialism", which has provided the world with a beautiful point of view about God and human life. This philosophical system developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, during a time when the church of Denmark and those of other European countries had distorted religion into a means of self-aggrandisement for their leaders and when Hegel had provided the world with his completely rational and logical interpretation of religion. In response to what the church had done with religion and to Hegel's interpretation of religion, Kierkegaard declared that the only way to the true understanding of God was an unalloyed pure faith which does not rely on rational reasons. His ideas, which were somehow similar to those of Schilling and Nietzsche, were supported and augmented by Jaspers and had a significant influence on the contemporary philosophy of being.

Kierkegaard speaks of three existential stages of human being (the aesthetic, the moral, and the religious stages) and considers the religious stage to be the highest form of being human and the closest stage to God. He also states that one can never discover truth by finding objective reasons. Truth has an internal connection with the human core of being, and thus to discover truth, one needs to focus on a thorough introspective search by means of faith. As a result, in his philosophy, truth is given an internal, spiritual aspect. As he has stated, 'God is not an object but the subject.' He knew that the method he was

recommending for reaching truth is, due to being non-rational, not to be taught and communicated to others. Therefore, he stated that there is no relationship between rational reasoning and faith and that faith cannot be achieved by finding logical reasons for the existence of God.

It seems evident that mankind's deplorable state and the disastrous collapse of values have resulted in such an immeasurable increase in mankind's mental and spiritual problems and illnesses that rationality and logic can by no means be the sole source of cure for human. What is needed and seems inevitable to cure this deplorable condition is true faith and a universal attempt to get closer to God. It is predicted that in years to come, an increasing number of people will try to find solutions to their problems by approaching religious thoughts and systems like those of Kierkegaard. This tendency should increase more and more as they discover that their problems and conflicts cannot be solved by recourse to technology and the findings of either human or natural sciences.

Rumi's spiritual life is usually defined in terms of his transforming encounter with Shams. He was one of the greatest religious teachers of his time, well-versed in different aspects of Islamic thought and law, teaching in Konya. To this religious teacher came a wandering mystic, Shams of Tabriz, who became a godly incarnation for him, miraculously transforming him into a mystic thinker and poet. Rumi's love for Shams was a spiritual inundation, destroying the obstacles of egotism (*Nafs-e-Amareh*), logical bickering of Partial Reason (*Aghl-e-Jozei*), and self-obsession; it was a form of connection with a world in which there was no distinction between me and you. Hence, through music, *Sama*, and constant prayer and fasting, Rumi made connections with a world overflowing with spiritual ecstasy. He believed that all impediments are easy to overcome, but overcoming obsessions with one's self is the hard task, and that human beings cannot achieve the status of wayfarer of truth (*Salek-e Rah-e Hagh*) until he/she has transcended selfhood. This is, however, only possible through love of God which makes one capable of transcending the egotistic hunt for sensation and desire and self-centred perception of being in order to reach an assured selflessness and dissolution in God. Once in this state

the beloved and the loved, the observed and the observer, are a unified one. Even if apparently separated, their actions and reactions are from the same source of being.

In fact, love is a phenomenon that cannot be interpreted and defined in terms of intensity and extensity. It transcends all descriptions and expressions. As a result, the resort to logical reasoning of Partial Reason prevents human beings from entering a path which ends in dissolution and Partial Reason denies the significance of love. Therefore, Rumi considered a philosophy which deals with the hows and whys of being as being essentially in disparity with love and faith, which necessitate surrender and acceptance.

A great number of scholars consider Rumi's *Mathnavi-e Manavi* (*Spiritual Couplets*), on which Rumi spent the last fourteen years of his life, to be the greatest poetic and mystic masterpiece ever written in the history of mankind.

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Fundamentality of Existence

Aziz Daftari

Imam Khomeini Institute, Qum, Iran

Abstract

In this article the issue of fundamentality of existence which is one of the greatest subjects in Islamic philosophy has been considered. After explaining the key words it is stated that the issue of fundamentality of existence is intending to prove the externality of existence and that the existence is a real and external issue and it is not a mental issue.

Meanwhile it has been mentioned that proving the externality of existence was propounded for the western philosophers too, rather they were not able to prove the externality of existence and therefore they were faced with a great amount of epistemological problems. However in regard with the principle of fundamentality of existence these problems will be easily solvable.

At the end of the article some of the fundamentality of existence ramifications have been explained and then the article has come to its end by a conclusion from all the stated subjects.

Keywords: Fundamentality of Existence, philosophy, Sadrian philosophy, Muslim philosophy, Mulla Sadra.

1. Introduction

The Sadrian philosophy in the Iranian philosophical tradition is deemed to be the high point in Muslim philosophical thought, so much so that Ibn Sina's philosophy, with all its apparent power, pales in

comparison.¹ However for most people outside of Iran who are familiar with Muslim philosophy, the philosophy of Sadra is little known or completely alien.

If we see Sadrian philosophy from the outside i.e. with the current standard of intellectual western philosophy, we will see it as a mixture of intellectual peripatetic issues, gnostic observations, and theological proofs. For a person who is completely familiar with the Sadrian philosophy and is also familiar with the philosophical thought of the rest of the world, that is mainly western, this philosophy arguably is a treasure-chest of possibilities for resolving the perennial problems of the history of world philosophy. Although the Sadrian philosophy apparently, for a reader of philosophical writing in the west, may have more similarity to peripatetic philosophy, with a little profound thinking, one will realise that from the point of view of both matter and form, it is completely different.

Among Mulla Sadra's innovations and original contributions the most important is the issue of "fundamentality of existence" (*asāla al-wujud*), which serves as the basis of most of his philosophical views. Before the 16th century, the issue of quiddity (*māhiyya*) was not approached or debated in the same way that it would be debated later; the word "quiddity" was used merely to describe material objects. The significance of this issue in Mulla Sadra's thought was that he gave the word a philosophical status, demonstrating its nature by means of a number of philosophical reasons which were peculiar to him, as well as responding to his opponents' arguments.

The philosophical demonstration of the fundamentality of existence created a revolution in philosophy and granted it the elevated status it really deserved. Moreover, in the light of this principle, Sadra was able to pave the way for solving some very complex problems.

If the fundamentality of existence can be proved it can also prove that existence is objective rather than subjective and mental. In this article it will be tried to show what this principle wants to say and reference will be made to some of the related arguments.

Being external for existence was an issue that philosophers before Mulla Sadra could not find acceptable reasons to prove. Suhriwardī assumed that existence is an abstractive issue rather than an external and fundamental one.² There was a similar problem in western philosophy. Kant, for example, concluded that existence is one of the schematised categories.³ We will explain his idea regarding this issue shortly.

The lack of philosophical proof that existence exists in reality in the external world has had its own influence on many previous psychologists and philosophers. The result of this issue in arguments was nothing but the denial of the existence and reality of the external world, God and soul by some philosophers and psychologists in the recent centuries.

However, Mulla Sadra believed that we can prove the reality of the external world with our intellect.⁴ If existence is assumed to be an external and fundamental reality, the existence of the soul will also be more justifiable as one of the external existents of this material world and an inability to prove this could put the reality of the entire universe, including the human soul, under question.

This is why we have to resolve the problem of externality of existence prior to any discussions to remove the suspicion of external reality. This is what Mulla Sadra has done at the beginning of his philosophical system.

The issue of “fundamentality of existence and subjectivity of “quiddity” (*asāla al-wujud wa i'tibāriyya al-māhiyya*), henceforth referred to as “fundamentality of existence” is the most important issue in Mulla Sadra’s transcendental wisdom (*al-hikma al-muta’āliya*). One could even say that all subjects that make up Sadra’s transcendental wisdom are based on the notion of “fundamentality of existence”. The fundamentality of existence with all of its simplicity could serve as a solution to many philosophical problems.

2. The History of The Subject

As far as the history of philosophy shows, the issue of fundamentality of existence was begun by Mir Damad.⁵ He accepted the fundamentality of quiddity (*māhīyya*) and as Mulla Sadra himself has stated, like his master and many other philosophers, he believed that quiddity is fundamental and existence is nothing but an abstraction, until God guided him to the right path and disclosed to him that existence is fundamental⁶.

However, this issue was not propounded in such a clear manner before Mir Damad. Therefore none of the philosophers were able to accept one of the two principles and deny the other. For example, Ibn Sina and his followers, who were later known as fundamentality of existence philosophers,⁷ believe that the natural universal (*kulī-i tabīʿī*)⁸ exists in the external world⁹, however it is clear that this idea is harmonious with fundamentality of quiddity and as a result they deny trans-substantial motion based on fundamentality of quiddity.¹⁰ Conversely, Suhriwardī and his followers, who were later known as fundamentality of quiddity philosophers¹¹, believed that by relying on existence, ‘things’ can be individuated¹² (*mutashakhis*) and clearly this idea cannot be accepted unless by relying on fundamentality of existence.¹³

In this article we will attempt to show what the “fundamentality of existence” is purported to be. Firstly we will explain in brief the meaning of “fundamentality of existence” and those key concepts connected to it. Then, using these key concepts, we will embark on a comparison between the two main issues in question, namely the “fundamentality of existence” and “fundamentality of quiddity” in a way which is consistent with that of the Islamic philosophers.

3. Existence (*wujud*)

Existence is the only thing that does not need to be proven or defined because it is self-evident (*badīhī*); everything is defined by existence and there is nothing more obvious than existence. Everybody is conscious of it naturally, whether in his inner being or in his experience

and his actions. However it is not possible to perceive existence by means of acquired knowledge (*'ilm-i husuli*); it can be perceived only with presential knowledge (*'ilm-i shuhudi*) and personal and inner feeling.¹⁴ This is that very reality of existence which one experiences everywhere. A differentiation here must be made between existence and the concept of existence that we sometimes form in our minds: the concept that we have must not be confused with existence as externally the two are different and are covered by different rules.

Sometimes philosophers compare existence to light; this is an accurate comparison because when a light is shining on a thing, it will be determinate, individuated and illuminated.¹⁵ Existence, by itself, is one thing, but the quiddities of things are multifarious in the world. Inanimate objects, plants, animals and humans are different from each other. Each kind possesses some limitations and borders which make them distinct from others. This makes the essence and reality of their existence. In fact every existence has a specific mould and form that is called quiddity (*māhiyya*) in philosophy.¹⁶

Existence can be seen from two perspectives; from the first we can abstract the conception of existence from the presence of things (*huzur-i ashya*). This means that existence can be understood from the external quiddities (*māhiyyat-i khārijī*) – even though they are different from each other- which exist in the external world. Then we can say these things exist i.e. they possess existence.¹⁷ When we look at things ordinarily (non-philosophically) their reality seems to be the same as their quiddity rather than their existence. As a result, we would say we have abstracted existence from the presence of things. If quiddity is the very identity of things, then existence has no reality and it is only a mental phenomenon.

From the second perspective, on the other hand, with a subtle and more precise investigation it can be understood that is quite wrong and it is the quiddity of things which is a mental phenomenon and can be abstracted from the being of external existence. Therefore quiddity continually is not necessitating existence and it has no concomitance with existence. It is a very well known phrase between Muslim

philosophers that “quiddity, in itself, is neither to be existent nor non-existent”. This means that – as a philosophical vision - it is enough to pay attention to this point that quiddity is not always concomitant to real and external entity, because reality of everything is whatever possesses the effect of that thing and the effect of things always arises from their existence. There are a great number of quiddities, like human being, gold, fire, tree and the like, that appear in our mind, our writing and speaking; they are created by our mind and have no effect on the external being and thus they have not been proved to be true.¹⁸

Mulla Sadra argues that if quiddity has no continual concomitance with existence then how could it be an efficient cause of being of external existences.¹⁹ However, practically we can see that existence of external realities (not mental) is self-subsisting and for its being it has no need for anything else, since existence is essential for it, rather than accidental. In other words existence exists in its essence and not through something else and quiddity requires existence for its being. In fact existence is not an accident (*‘arad*) for quiddity; rather it is quiddity which is like a mental mould for existence. This is a very short explanation about the “fundamentality of existence” and a brief explanation of what we are going to explain in more detail.

We will now explain this word as understood in its philosophical sense. The word “existence” is used with two different meanings in philosophy.²⁰

The first meaning of existence is that of ‘conceptual thingness’ (*shay’iyyat-i mafhumi*).²¹ This means that we are able to conceive in our minds the existence of a thing which has a corresponding external reality (*misdaq*). Therefore if a concept corresponds to an external reality, then that concept of existence can be said to have conceptual thingness.²² For example the concept of human corresponds to an external reality such as John or Ali so it is true to say that mankind exists as a concept. It is clear that if a number of different concepts can be applied to a single external reality, all of those concepts can be said to have conceptual thingness. For example the concepts of mankind, essential contingency (*‘imkān-i dhātī*) and being a single unit (*wāhid*)

can be applied to an external reality such as John or Ali so it is true to say that those concepts exist. In short, every concept that corresponds to an actual external reality – not just a hypothetical or metaphorical reality - can be said to have an actual matter of fact (*nafs al-‘amr*) existence. Therefore according to this meaning, quiddity, philosophical secondary intelligibles²³ and even non-existence (*‘adam*) in the sense of privation can be said to exist.²⁴

The second meaning is that which fills the external world, or external reality itself. If we say a thing exists from this perspective i.e., it is the same as external reality, and precisely the opposite of non-existence, such a thing cannot be conceptual and if we wish to express this in philosophical terms, we say that it has an external and existential thingness (*shay’iyyaht-i wujudi*). One can find this meaning of existence in many of Mulla Sadra’s writings.²⁵

Distinguishing between the two meanings of existence can help us to understand the “fundamentality of existence” and the “subjectivity of quiddity”; indeed, to conflate them leads only to confusion and error.

4. Quiddity (*māhiyya*)

At first glance, each quiddity, for example “mankind”, can be a concept in the mind like the concept of human and it can also be an external reality like all of us. But whether it is conceptual or actual we should not think of it in terms of subjectivity or externality: rather, we must simply consider mankind itself; in philosophical terms, we must see mankind in the general sense (*ma’nā-i kullī*), paying attention only to its essence and its essential characteristics. It is only by looking at mankind in this way that we can understand the quiddity of mankind, or mankind as a natural universal (*kuli-i tabi’i*). The names of quiddities such as “mankind”, “gold” and the like have been constructed to express this modality.²⁶

5. The Terms Fundamental (*asil*) and Subjective (*i'tibāri*)

The term fundamental means, a thing that exists in reality, like all realities which we can see externally; on the contrary, subjective (*i'tibāri*) means a thing that does not have external existence but because of the kind of relation or connection it has with a thing which *does* exist in reality, our intellect assumes figuratively that it exists without any thought to its figurative nature. In other words, the intellect deems that it is existent. Philosophers usually use the terms “accidental” (*bil-'arad*) and “essential” (*bil-dhāt*) instead of “reality” (*haqiqa*) and “figural” (*majāz*) and they say “real” i.e. essentially existent (*mawjud-i bil-dhāt*) and “subjective”, i.e. accidental existent (*mujud-i bil-'arad*).²⁷

There is an important point that should not be forgotten. As previously stated, existence has two different meanings and concerning the issue of essential existent and accidental existent, only the second meaning of existence is intended. Therefore the fundamental (*asil*) is the thing that actually and essentially is a reality and which fills the external world, and the subjective is the thing that does not fill the external world, but which our intellect figuratively and accidentally supposes to be a reality. Perhaps this amount of explanation about these two words is enough to understand what philosophers claim that fundamentality of existence is, but the meaning intended by reality (*haqiqa*) is intellectual reality, and what is intended by figurative (*majāz*) is related to verbal mode of predication (*bāb-i haml*) and this is not a linguistic issue. For this reason philosophers have called reality “essential” (*bil-dhāt*) and figurative “accidental” (*bil-'arad*).²⁸ It is better to have an exact explanation of them under the title “Essential and Accidental”.

6. The Terms Essential and Accidental (*bil-dhāt wa bil-'arad*)

Let us assume that there are two subjects “A” and “B”, and that A has an attribute, C. Let us also suppose that A and B are similar in one respect, for example two pens which are the same length. In philosophical terms it is said that, because of this similarity, they have a kind of unity.

In the above example, our intellect usually ascribes the attribute of one subject to the other with which it is united. For example, when A and B are associated with one another in some way, that is when they are said to be united (*muttāhid*), to use the philosophical term, the predicate C that pertains in reality only to A is also ascribed to subject B. Obviously, in such a case, the attribution of predicate C to subject A is correct while the attribution of predicate C to subject B is merely suppositional; that is, the mind only imagines that C is a predicate of B. This type of suppositional ascription is referred to as metaphorical ascription (*majāz dar isnād*) and is indicated in philosophy by the term accidental (*bil-'arad*) as opposed to real ascription (*isnād-i haqīqī*) or predication, which is designated in philosophy by the term essential (*bil-dhāt*).²⁹

Let us apply these terms to the example in hand. It is said that the ascription of predicate C to subject B is accidental whereas the ascription of predicate C to subject A is essential. It is also said that A is the intermediary in the predication of C to B. In other words A is mediating in the occurrence (*wāsit-i dar 'urud*) of the attribution of conditional mood (*haythiyyat-i taqyidiya*) C to B, because it is due to the fact that A and B are associated or united that we apply C to B. Without the true application of C to A, we would not ascribe C to B. This sort of metaphorical ascription is quite common. Philosophers interpret this intellectual action as: “the characteristics of a thing that becomes united with another are transferred to the other.”³⁰

It is worth mentioning that recognizing some kinds of intellectual reality and figurativeness (*haqiqa wal majāz*) is relatively easy. For example, a driver says: “I had a puncture in the middle of street”. However, it is clear that what he actually means is that the tyre of the car had a puncture, and not the driver himself. However, in some cases there is need for discussion and deliberation, while in others it is too difficult to distinguish the two kinds from each other. For instance, consider the phrase “a cat is smaller than an elephant”. Is it true that we have used a kind of figurative expression in this sentence? Usually the answer is no, but in actual fact we must say yes, because every cat and

elephant has a body and a spirit and it is clear that the spirit cannot be measured and cannot be spoken about in terms of size.

Is it therefore more precise to say that “a cat’s body is smaller than an elephant’s body”? Is there any figurative expression in this sentence? Again, the usual answer would be no. But in fact the answer is in the affirmative. Because bigness, smallness and equality are characteristics of quantities and measurements and according to the teachings of the philosophers they are accidents and they are not characteristics of bodies (*‘ajsām*), which are substances (*jawhar*).³¹ However, because quantity and body (*jism*) are always joined together, so that there is no body without quantity and no quantity without body, then our intellect figuratively ascribes the characteristic of quantity to a body and judges that a cat’s body is smaller than an elephant’s body. It is therefore more precise to say that: “The measurement of a cat’s body is smaller than that of an elephant’s body”. It thus becomes clear, as we progress, that, recognizing the figurative becomes more difficult. We can now ask whether there is anything figurative in the last sentence. Philosophers before Mulla Sadra would have said there is no figurative expression involved, but Mulla Sadra’s answer on the basis of fundamentality of existence would be positive, since for him, measurement, body, cat and elephant are quiddities and according to the notion of fundamentality of existence, which is the real source of effects, the realities are instances (*masādiq*) of these quiddities. Then it is more precise to say: “the reality which indicates the measurement of the cat’s body is smaller than the reality which indicates the measurement of the elephant’s body”. Now is the chain of figurative expressions complete? From the philosopher’s point of view the answer is yes, but according to the notion of connective being (*wujud-i rābit*) in Mulla Sadra’s transcendental wisdom, which has a gnostic overtone, and also from the perspective of gnosticism in general, the answer is negative. There is a well-hidden figurativeness here and naturally this calls for another step forward in our process of reasoning.³²

With respect to the above explanation, a “fundamental”, i.e. a thing which exists without anything to mediate in its occurrence (*wāsit-i dar ‘urūd*) and conditional mood (*hayṣīyat-i taqyīdīyya*), describes

something which is in itself real, and which fills the external world; that is the real opposite of non-existence and the real source of effects in the external world. 'Subjective' (*i'tibāri*), on the other hand, describes a thing that does not in fact have external reality but which our intellect, thanks to the mediation in its occurrence of another existent, assumes to be real. Something which is 'subjective' cannot be the real opposite of non-existence; it is not the real source of effects in the external world, although our intellect supposes that it is.

7. An Overview of The Notion og The Fundamentality of Existence

To provide an overview of the fundamentality of existence we must first accept the following three contentions:

- i. There is a reality or realities and the world is not non-existent or null and void. This is self evident.
- ii. The above-mentioned reality exists really and essentially: it is not accidental or figurative. In other words it is not something which our intellect merely assumes to exist in the external world. Thus this reality is real and not subjective. In other words, real things actually exist in the external world.
- iii. This reality essentially is essential, external and distinct. It is not possible for it to be a universal concept (*mafhum-i kulli*) and also it is the real opposite of non-existence.

The result of these three things is that in such a notion as fundamental reality – or, if one believes that external multiplicity is self-evident, fundamental realities - actually exist. Furthermore, these realities are essentially external, distinct and are real opposites of non-existence.³³

Now with regard to this introductory statement we can ascertain, according to Mulla Sadra's point of view. Which of these two sentences is true: 'Existence is fundamental and quiddity is subjective; or 'quiddity is fundamental and existence is subjective'. In other words, are the things with which we are familiar in the external world

quiddities or are they something else? If we accept the first option then we admit that quiddity is fundamental and existence is subjective and in short we admit “fundamentality of quiddity”. However, if we accept the second option then we admit that existence is fundamental and quiddity is subjective; in short we admit “fundamentality of existence”.

Thus fundamentality of existence applies to that external reality which fills the world, is the opposite of non-existence and the real source of effects in the external world – and that external reality cannot be a quiddity. In actual fact, then, external existence is something whose actual essence is unknown; it is an instantiation (*misdāq*) of the concept of existence, while quiddity is the image of that in our mind and cannot be found in the external world other than as a figurative and accidental thing. In other words, our intellect assumes that quiddity is the same as external reality.³⁴ Then although at first glance quiddity can be seen to exist in the outside world and possess existential thingness, in the final analysis this is not so i.e. according to fundamentality of existence quiddity is actually conceptual – a mental image, as it were. This means that quiddity has conceptual thingness rather than existential thingness, since existence is that very source of effects whose externality is essential: it cannot enter the mind and we cannot perceive its reality and essence by means of acquired knowledge (*‘ilm-i husuli*). For this reason it is considered to be unknown in its essence (*majhul al-kunh*).³⁵

8. Arguments For Fundamentality of Existence

Before expounding the arguments we should reiterate two important points:

The first point is similar to those covered in previous paragraphs. ‘Ubūdīyyat makes some pertinent observations in this regard:

Without doubt the locus of concepts is the mind while the locus of reality is outside the mind. It would be impossible for concepts to develop independently of the mind or for external realities to find existence within the mind. Basically, being conceptual is equivalent to being in the mind and being real is equivalent to being outside the

mind. Thus, concept and reality are fundamentally distinct, each having its own separate domain.³⁶

However, despite the fact that these domains are separate, they are not completely unconnected. As *'Ubūdīyyat* goes on to point out, concepts are pictures of reality and, as such, shed light on what lies beyond the mind. Indeed, it is this very characteristic of concepts that tends to engender errors in our understanding of those concepts which are signified by the term 'quiddity' (*māhiyya*), which is the equivalent of the Aristotelian *ti esti* or 'whatness'.³⁷

'Ubūdīyyat goes on to say that nearly all people confuse mental concepts with real external existents:

We can easily imagine a person mistaking a very clear and accurate portrait with the subject depicted in the portrait. Because concepts, especially quiddities, are clear and accurate pictures of reality, people, who have no way of comprehending external reality but through the conduit of these concepts and who never come into direct contact with the external realities themselves, presume that quiddities are in fact what populates the external world. As a consequence of this presumption, they sometimes misattribute the properties of concepts to the external realities which the concepts portray. Conversely, they sometimes ascribe wrongly the properties of reality to the mental concepts, the quiddities. In a word, they confuse the properties of reality and mental concepts.³⁸

It is this conflation of the mental with the real that the principle of fundamentality of existence and subjectivity of quiddity can, one may argue, address. For this principle allows us to distinguish the ontic from the epistemic, thus drawing a clear line between the image and the object which the image represents. According to this principle, the only real properties of quiddities are the properties of an image; as such, they are nothing more than indicators whose domain is that of the mind alone. As *'Ubūdīyyat* concludes:

It is impossible for them to encroach on external reality and to assume the properties of reality. The same truth applies to realities: They cannot themselves enter the mind and assume the properties of

quiddity. Realities can at best have an image in the mind—a concept or quiddity—that represents them.³⁹

Secondly, the idea of fundamentality of existence is based on the notion that the concept of quiddity alone is not enough to prove the external world and, if we wish to make an intellectual model of the external world without attaching existence to quiddity, we will become involved in an intellectual contradiction. However, with respect to existence it is not so, for the existence of the external world can be justified logically. Furthermore, we can see clearly that every real thing in the world is a real unit which has many quiddities.⁴⁰ But if the external world is a manifestation of the quiddities only, then how are the co-existence or unity of different quiddities justified?

This is also a problem that the mind cannot solve. For example, from the concept we have of redness and of flowers we can imagine a red flower. The red flower constitutes a real unit; it is not merely two images placed side by side: a red flower is more, and other, than the mere combination of flower and redness. Here a philosophical question arises and the philosopher who supports the fundamentality of existence will question the possibility of quiddities being able to unite if, as their opponents claim, those quiddities are fundamental. This question was one which preoccupied Kant considerably; however, he was unable to answer it. For, unless existence is attached to it, Kant's "transcendental unity of the soul" remains a mere quiddity, and a quiddity by itself is not able to solve the problem of unity. To understand the transcendental 'I' (*'ana*) as a phenomenon is in fact to understand a quiddity and nothing more: Kant accepted this and also knew that he could not move beyond it. For existence is the domain of the '*ding an sich*' (*shay'-i fi-nafsih*), and this domain is out of bounds for phenomenalist philosophy.⁴¹

Kant believed that, mental concept and quiddities are not real phenomena or noumenons, they are not about to show noumenons in reality, they pretend to show that they are real representatives of noumenon of objects, rather, they are not in this mould, they are only playing the part of noumenon objects. This is because Kant did not find

the real connection between the mental concepts and their real sources in the external world.

As long as Kant and his unanimous philosophers have not ignored quiddity, their perception from existence of the world is a sensory concept that has been generalized or as Kant himself explains it is a concept within the limits of the faculty of understanding which has no way to the rationality. Kant has clearly reduced the status of rationality of philosophy in the west world and disrated it to logical categories of understanding.

However, more than a century before Kant, Mulla Sadra solved the problem and showed that existence is fundamental. Mulla Sadra believes that mental concept and quiddities are real representatives of the noumenon of objects. Quiddities actually show noumenon and basically they have no role other than to show the essence of objects. "Contingent being (*wujud-i mumkin*) exists essentially and the quiddity exists just the same as that existence, rather, it is accidental, since it is an instantiation of it".⁴² We will refer in brief to some of the arguments and of course there are many sources for anyone who wishes to learn more about the subject.

Mulla Sadra himself gives sixteen proofs of the fundamentality of existence: these are scattered throughout his books, although eight of them can be found together in *al-Masha'ir*.⁴³ Later philosophers added about fourteen different arguments and so there are thirty arguments which purport to prove this principle.⁴⁴ We will now consider some of the arguments that are presented by different scholars in different books: The argument below is the only one that Mulla Sadra expounds in *Asfar* and is perhaps one of the most convincing proofs offered in support of fundamentality of existence:

Since the reality of a thing is the same as its permanent existential characteristics, then it is more fitting that existence should be the reality rather than anything else. For example, in whiteness, the colour white has priority over all other colours: for whiteness, white is essential; for other colours, white is accidental. Therefore existence

exists essentially, unlike other things which exist only by means of existence, after existence has been conferred on them.⁴⁵

Another argument, explained as the 'fourth proof' by Sabziwārī in his *Sharh-i mabsut-i mandhuma* appears in verse form:

"All things emerge from the domain of equality (*istiwā*) thanks only to existence."

*(kaifa wa bil koni 'an istiwā'n qad kharajat qātibatul ashya' i).*⁴⁶

An elaboration here is necessary. When we consider quiddities - such as mankind, a tree or gold - we can see they do not require in and of themselves existence or non-existence: both states are the same with respect to them. In other words, quiddities in and of themselves permit either existence or nonexistence. For example, if the coming into existence of an apple were necessary, then it would be impossible to imagine the non-existence of that apple; similarly, if remaining in a non-existent state were necessary for the apple, we would never be able to say that the apple exists; to combine the two opposite states is a logical impossibility and so we can say that the essence of the apple is in a state of contingency: by necessity it requires neither existence nor non-existence.⁴⁷ However, if an apple comes into existence, and leaves that state of contingency, the question we must ask is how? The only answer is by means of existence (*wujūd*), and it is this which sits at the heart of the notion of fundamentality of existence.⁴⁸

In the book *Bidāya al-hikma*, Tabātabā'ī explains the argument as follows:

The Peripatetics are correct in their idea that existence is fundamental and the reason is this: quiddity in its essence is nothing other than itself: existence and non-existence are equal with respect to it. However, when quiddity comes into existence and becomes a source of effects in the external world, what accounts for this change in its status? If someone says existence is not the cause of this changing then it means that nothing was the cause of this change, thus presenting us with an essential transformation that is impossible.⁴⁹

Therefore it is only existence which takes quiddity out of its state of contingency. And this shows that it is existence (*wujūd*) which is fundamental (*aṣīl*).⁵⁰

Mulla Sadra insists on the point that the realities which fill the external world are not of the stuff of quiddities: the human mind merely supposes that these realities are quiddities. In technical terms, they are subjective. Sadra has explained this point as follows:

The realities that fill the external world are not quiddities. The existence of a quiddity is other than the quiddity, a truth that can be deduced from the dissimilarity of their properties. Among the properties of quiddity is its universality; it is applicable to a plurality of beings and individuals...whereas existence is essentially individuated, an individuation that is not extraneous to it.⁵¹

To elaborate, we would say that all external realities however are essentially existent, objective and individuated, meaning that as long as they are real they necessarily possess these qualities.

The assumption of a real object that is not existent, external and individuated is contradictory. Thus, existence, externality and individuation are essential and inseparable qualities of all real objects. In philosophical terms: the mode of reality is equivalent to the modes of existence, externality, and individuation. Based on this reasoning, the conclusion is that external realities are not quiddities; quiddity is not equivalent to reality. However there are many arguments from different aspects which were stated by Mulla Sadra and his followers and provide readers with more details in this regard and explaining all of them needs a space more than an article.⁵²

9. Some Ramifications of The Fundamentality of Existence

Mulla Sadra did not restrict himself to demonstrating the fundamentality of existence and the abstract nature of quiddity. Rather, he also tried to formulate some principles for that through drawing upon Illuminative philosophy (*falsafa-i ishrāqī*) and Muslim gnosticism

and proving it in philosophical terms. As a result, he also tried to demonstrate that existence is graded (*mudarraḥ/mushakik*), and that it possesses diffusion (*sarāyān*), unity, simplicity, power and so on. We will try to explain some of these concepts very briefly below.

I. THE GRADATION OF BEING (*Tashkīk-i wujūd*)

Mulla Sadra stated that the principle of “gradation of being” is based on fundamentality of existence. From Mulla Sadra’s point of view existence from the highest to the lowest levels forms one single connected chain. All existents possess existence. Primary matter is at the lowest level of existence next is mineral matter (*jamādāt*), vegetables, animals and human beings respectively. While they are all different in respect to their externality, they are united and connected to each other in respect of their inner being, that is, existence. Then, according to Mulla Sadra’s point of view, the entire universe with all of its strengths and weaknesses consists of existence only.⁵³

II. MOTION IN SUBSTANCE (*trans-substantial motion*)

Mulla Sadra drew upon the two theories of the ‘fundamentality of existence’ and ‘gradation of existence’ and proved that the essence of every material existent (whose essence or nature is a limited existence), is, firstly, gradable (since existential motion is a gradual one and, since every existence is gradable, it is capable of motion), and, secondly, in self-motion (motion by essence). This is because the nature, structure, or quiddity of objects is of two types: the first consists of immaterial (abstract) substances, which due to being immaterial, are fixed and static (however, this is limited to immaterial objects), and the second consists of material substances of objects which all possess an essentially fluid and moving nature; that is, their existence is gradual and step by step rather than sudden (*daf’ī*). If the existence of material existents were not ‘fluid’, there would be no development (no sapling would grow into a tree, and no infant would reach maturity). Unlike preceding philosophers (as well as physicists living before the advent of relativity physics) who believed that time (like place)⁵⁴ has an objective existence and is a fixed receptacle for objects and events,

Mulla Sadra argued that time possesses an immaterial rather than objective existence and is abstracted from the trans-substantial motion of things and events.

This argument proves that the trans-substantial motion of objects exists in their essence and does not occur to them as an accident, and, thus, it is not in need of a particular reason and cannot be questioned. In other words, we never ask ‘why does material substance have motion?’, for it is like asking why is water wet or why is oil greasy? Such a question is absurd, because it is similar to asking why water is water, or why oil is oil. If the essence or inner nature of something – and, in philosophical terms, its quiddity – is fluid, nothing can stop its motion except its annihilation.

The general theory of relativity in modern physics appears to have confirmed Mulla Sadra’s philosophical theory, since in this theory “time” is a part of everything, i.e. its fourth dimension, and everything has its own time since as time is one of the dimensions of every individual it cannot be shared between them.

III. The Question of The Soul

The problem which was demonstrated on the basis of the theory of “trans-substantial motion” was Mulla Sadra’s other theory on man’s soul. He believed that the soul is created from Man’s body, but develops in the light of evolutionary movement and finally becomes free from matter.

IV. Other Issues Connected With The Fundamentality of Existence

There are other interesting issues that are based on fundamentality of existence like, “indigence possibility” (*imkan-i faqri*), “Platonic idea” (*muthul-i aflātuni*), “metaphysics of love” and the like, but we are not able to explain them here because of the limitation. Those who want to

know about them may refer to Mulla Sadra's books and essays, in particular, *Asfār* and *Shawāhid al-rububiyah*.

10. Conclusion

In this article we concluded that the location of quiddities and concepts is the mind. Quiddities can only be the image of existence and external realities. We also demonstrated that existence is not a mental issue; rather it has an external reality and external world. We also said that this means existence is fundamental (*asīl*). By proving and accepting fundamentality of existence, which is proving the existence of external reality and that this external reality is a real issue which possesses real effect not a subjective issue with no effect, the following conclusions can be made:

1. The issue of fundamentality of existence became a basis for creating and putting forward many new issues which had no precedence in Islamic philosophy. Furthermore, according to this principle many philosophical problems found intellectual and philosophical justifications. We have referred to some of them in this writing.
2. The idea that existence is a mental issue had been a problem for all philosophers - including Muslim philosophers - which they were not able to solve. Mulla Sadra however was able to prove it via intellectual reasoning (as mentioned). Mulla Sadra stated that although the essence of existence cannot be understood by acquired knowledge (*'ilm-i husuli*) an intellectual perception of it is possible. However, as Mulla Sadra claimed, the essence of existence is also understandable via presential knowledge (*'ilm-i shuhudi*).
3. The question of the soul an external reality, its trans-substantial motion and related issues found an acceptable justification. This is why until fundamentality of existence was proven, the existence of the soul, its motion and many of its related issues were not philosophically verifiable or they at least presented serious difficulties. The reason for this is the denial of the soul or its reduction to mind in contemporary psychology and philosophy. However Mulla Sadra and his followers

were able to prove the externality of existence, trans-substantial motion of the entire material world, trans-substantial motion of the soul as one of the material issues, the related issues of soul and many other important philosophical issues on the basis of fundamentality of existence.

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Endnotes

¹ Mulla Sadra used all the features of previous philosophical systems like Mashhā'ī and Ishrāqī philosophy as well as Ibn 'Arabī's mystical teachings and also the contents of religious teachings. Therefore it could be said that his philosophical system is a mixture of all the previous philosophical systems in which the defects of the previous systems have been removed. ('Ubūdīyyat, *Dar Āmadī bi nizām-i ḥikmat-i sadrā'ī*, vol. 1, chapter. 1, pp. 30-31. 'Abd al-Rasūl 'Ubūdīyyat is an Iranian professor in Islamic philosophy, especially in Mulla Sadra's philosophy.)

² Suhriwardī, *majmū'a-i muṣannafāt-i shaykh-i ishrāq*, vol. 2, p. 71.

³ A.C. Ewing, *Sharhī kouṭāh bar Naqd-i 'aqli mahd-i Kant* (A Short Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason), the University of Chicago Press, 1987, translated by E. Sa'adatī-i khamsi, pp. 165-168.

⁴ - Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 4, p. 120; vol. 5, p. 2.

⁵ Mir Dāmād, *Musannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 504-507. For more details about the history of the subject see: 'Ubūdīyyat, *Dar Āmadī bi nizām-i hikmat-i sadrā'ī*, vol. 1, Chapter. 3, pp. 77-79.

⁶ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 10.

⁷ Ibn Sina, *al-Shifā, Tabī'īyyāt*, vol. 1, pp. 98-99.

⁸ Natural universal such as the human being (*insān*), tree and the like which all have many instances in the outside for example Ali, John and Sara are instances of the human in the external world.

⁹ Ibn Sina, *al-Shifā, 'ilāhīyyāt*, p. 202.

¹⁰ For more details about how denying trans-substantial motion is based on fundamentality of quiddity see: Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 3, pp. 85-86.

- ¹¹ M.H. Sabziwārī, *Sharh-i Manzūma*, p. 6.
- ¹² S.D. Suhriwardī, *Majmū'a-i Musannafāt*, vol. 1, p. 335.
- ¹³ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 43.
- ¹⁴ Our normal understandings are acquired knowledge (*'ilm-i husuli*), since this kind of knowledge can be obtained via learning from others, thinking and researching, however presential knowledge (*'ilm-i shuhudi*) cannot be achieved by learning, or something else. Our inner knowledge to our understandings, feelings like happiness, pain and the like are a low level of this knowledge. At the higher level this can be a kind of intuition which may happen for divine cultured men who have purified themselves. It is also a kind of knowledge which has no error. For more details about acquired and presential knowledge see: Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 6, p. 155 and *Ta'liqih-i Sabziwārī*, p. 231. See also: 'Ubūdīyyat, *Darāmadī bi nizām-i hikmat-i sadrā'ī*, vol. 2, chapter. 8, pp. 19-22.
- ¹⁵ Suhriwardī is one of the philosophers who used light to explain the existents chain. His optical series (*silsila-i nourīyya*), which includes all existents, is a well known theory in the history of Muslim philosophy. (Mājid. fakhri, *sayr-i falsafa dar jahān-i islam*, pp. 320-321.) Mulla Sadra also used this theory to shape one of his important principles i.e. gradation of existence (*tashkīk-i wujūd*).
- ¹⁶ We will state intended meaning of quiddity via more explanation. For more detail about quiddity see: A.R. 'ubūdīyyat, *Ma'rifat-i falsafī*, A Quarterly Journal of Philosophical Inquiry, *Asāla al-wujūd* (the fundamentality of existence), (Qom, 1382 SH), vol. 2, p.195.
- ¹⁷ *Ma'rifat-i falsafī*, vol. 2, p. 180.
- ¹⁸ In fact, this paragraph is going to state that concepts have mental locations. Mental concepts cannot have external effects. The concept of human is other than a human (for example David) which is the source of effect and the concept of fire is different to the fire which is hot and burns things. The concept of fire has no burning effect. It is the external existence of things that has real effects. However our only way of understanding external realities is through mental concepts which are images of the external realities not actual realities. The real external fire or mountain cannot come into our mind unless through its concept.
- ¹⁹ All Mulla Sadra's arguments aim to prove that quiddities are subjective issues. We will explain his argument in this regard.
- ²⁰ 'ubūdīyyat, *Ma'rifat-i falsafī*, *Aṣāla al-wujūd*, vol. 2, p. 195-197.
- ²¹ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 4, pp. 200, 201-207. See also: Sadra, *al-shawahid al-rububiyya*, (Tehran, 1360), second edition, p. 133; Sadra, *al-mashā'ir*, (isfahān), pp. 10-11-54-55.
- ²² Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 5, p. 2. See also: Sadra, *risala al-shawahid al-rububiyyah*, pp. 49-50; Sadra, *sharh al-hidaya al-athiriyya*, p. 302; Sadra, *sharh-i usul-i kafī*, p. 335.
- ²³ Some concepts like the concept of cause and effect, subjective and objective, actual and potential, above and below which can be taken from the comparison between things are called secondary intelligible, see: S.M.H. Tabātabā'ī, *Nihāya al-hikma*,

- jāmi'a-i modarisin publications, (1362 SH, Qom), p. 256.
- ²⁴ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 3, pp 32-33; vol. 6, p. 163. See also: Sadra, *majmu'a-i rasail-i falsafī* *sadr al-muta'allihīn*, (Tehran, hikmat, 1375); Sadra, *risala al-fawā'id*, p. 19; Ibn Sīna, *'ilahīyyat-i shifa*, explained by Mulla Sadra, pp. 150, 152, 185, 242; Sadra, *Ta'liqha bar hikmat-i ishraq*, pp. 198, 250.
- ²⁵ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol., 1, p. 117; vol. 4, p. 120; vol. 5, p. 2; vol. 6, p. 163. See also: Sadra, *al-masha'ir*, (isfahān), pp. 10, 11, 24, 44; Sadra, *Ta'liqa Bar Hikmat-i ishraq*, pp. 49, 279; Sadra, *Risāla fil-hudūth*, p. 43; Sadra, *Sharḥ al-hidāya al-athīriyya*, p. 223; 'ubūdīyyat, *Ma'rifat-i falsafī, Asāla al-wujūd*, vol. 2, p. 195.
- ²⁶ Sadra, *Ta'liqa Bar Hikmat-i ishraq*, p. 374, see also: Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 2, section 1, p. 2; Ibn Sina, *al-Shifā, 'ilāhīyyāt*, pp. 196-200; Motahhari, *Majmū'a-i āthār*, vol. 10, pp. 551-567.
- ²⁷ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 2, pp. 286, 287.
- ²⁸ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 5, p. 298.
- ²⁹ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 2, pp. 286, 287.
- ³⁰ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 2, pp. 286-287.
- ³¹ A short definition of substance and accident: philosophers define substance as a thing that has no need to a place. It is itself a place for some accidents (*a'rād*). For example a red apple has some accidents like red colour, shape, sweet taste, soft and the like but the apple body is its substance. If there is no substance there is no accident because the redness, shape and the like all belong to the substance and are located in their special place on it. On the other hand accidents need a place in which to occur. The red colour needs a body to colour. Aristotle divided substances to five categories as such: Matter or hyle (*hayūlā*), form (*sūra*), body (*jism*), the soul (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*). Apart from matter all the other categories have further divisions. In order to understand how and why Aristotle divided substance to these five types see: Motahhari, *Majmu'a-i athar*, vol. 7, p. 147; 'Ubūdīyyat, *Darāmadī bar falsafa-i islāmī*, A publication by Imam Khomeini Institute for Education and Research, (Qom, 1384 SH), ISBN 964-6740-96-0, section 3, pp. 179-186. 'ubūdīyyat, *Ma'rifat-i falsafī, Aṣāla al-wujūd*, vol. 2, p.197-199.
- ³² The problem of connective being (*wujud-i rabīṭī*) is one of the important issues of transcendental wisdom. According to this issue, the multiplicity of existence was negated and referred to the modes of being (*shu'ūn-i wujud*). As a result, Mulla Sadra could prove both particular unity of existence and multiplicity of the modes of being. This proof was in accordance with philosophical reasoning which was understandable by man's intellect and is of course in accordance to accepting the multiplicity which is an evidence for the claim of philosophy. Further suggested sources on this subject are: 'Ubūdīyyat, *Darāmadī bi nizām-i hikmat-i sadrā'ī*, vol. 1, pp. 199-248; S. M. H. Tabātabā'ī, *Bidāya al-ḥikma*, Matba'i al-'ilmiya, (Qom, 1364 SH), p. 10; Tabātabā'ī, *Nihāya al-hikma*, chapter 2, section 1, pp. 28-30.
- ³³ 'ubūdīyyat, *Ma'rifat-i falsafī, Asālat al-wujūd*, vol. 2, p. 199.

- ³⁴ Because of the great resemblance of the image and the owner of the image they are usually mistaken for each other i.e. we will take the image of existence as the existence itself.
- ³⁵ The reason why Mulla Sadra insists on the fact that existence has two meanings, as stated above, is to prevent the error of taking the concept of existence which is in fact the image of existence instead of existence itself which is fundamental. See: Sadra, *Ta'liqa Bar Hikmat-i ishrāq*, Lithography, p. 183.
- ³⁶ 'Ubūdīyyat, *Darāmadī bi nizām-i hikmat-i sadrā'ī*, vol. 1, pp. 82-83. Also see: 'Ubūdīyyat, article, The fundamentality of existence and the subjectivity of quiddity, translated by D. D. Sowdāgar and Muhammad Legenhausen, Published online: 12 July 2007, Topoi, A common error, p. 1.
- ³⁷ *Ma'rifat-i falsafī, Asālat al-wujūd*, p. 194.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 194-195.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 192.
- ⁴⁰ For example, a quiddity like an apple also has some other quiddities like redness, shape and size and of course we can understand something like redness in our minds as a concept (an image of real existence of redness in the outside world).
- ⁴¹ A.C. Ewing, *Sharhī kouṭāh bar Naqd-i 'aqli mahd-i Kant*, pp. 213-215.
- ⁴² Sadra, *al-masha'ir*, pp. 54, 55; and also see: 'Ubūdīyyat, *Dar Āmadī bi nizām-i hikmat-i sadrā'ī*, vol. 1, ref No. 26, pp.118-119.
- ⁴³ Sadra, *al-Masha'ir, Mash'ar-i thalith, shawahid-i*: one, two, three, four, five, eight, pp. 9, 12, 13, 14, 15.
- ⁴⁴ S.J. Ashtiyānī, *Hasī az nadhar-i falsafa wa 'irfān*, pp. 64, 65, 81-83, 85, 95, 105, 106. See also: Motaharī, *sharh-i mukhtasar-i madhūma*, vol. 1, pp. 39-41, 42; Motaharī, *Sharh-i mabsut-i mandhuma*, vol. 1, pp. 123-141.
- ⁴⁵ Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 1, p. 47.
- ⁴⁶ M.H. Sabziwārī, *Manzdhūma*, p. 99.
- ⁴⁷ The contingency here is not like the contingency which is attributed to all existences. This is a state of each quiddity that, at this state, is not subjectivity and nor externality, it is just a quiddity in itself.
- ⁴⁸ Motaharī, *sharh-i mabsut-i mandhuma*, p. 156.
- ⁴⁹ Transformation means a thing changing into another thing without any cause which is impossible.
- ⁵⁰ Tabātabāī, *Bidāya al-hikma*, chapter 3, section 1, p. 40.
- ⁵¹ Sadra, *Ta'liqa bar Shifā*, Sadra publications, (Tehran, 2003 AD), vol. 2, p. 862.
- ⁵² We have tried to collect majority of the sources in which Mulla Sadra has explained arguments to prove fundamentality of existence, see: Sadra, *Asfar*, vol. 1, pp. 43, 66, 67, 68, 260; vol. 3, pp. 83, 84; vol. 6, p. 148; Sadra, *Al-masha'ir*, pp. 12, 13, 17, 18; Sadra, *Maḥāṭīh al-ghayb*, p. 391; Sadra, *Risala fil-hudūth*, pp. 69, 70; Sadra, *Ta'liqa bar hikmat-i ishrāq*, pp. 183, 191, 313, 375; Sadra, *Mjū'a-i rasāyil-i falsafī-i sadr al-muti'allehīn*, pp. 188, 190-191, 306, 307; Sadra, *al-shawahid al-rububiya*, published by bonyad-i Sadra, pp. 11, 12 and published by markaz-i

- nashr-i dānishgāhī, pp. 7-8; Sadra, *Arshīya*, p. 22; Sadra, *rasāyil-i falsafī, al-masa'l al-qudsiyya*, pp. 10, 11; Sadra, *Ta'liqa bar hikmat-i ishrāq*, pp. 78, 79, 162, 183, 184, 191, 305; Sadra, *tafsīr-i quran-i karīm*, vol. 1, pp. 50, 51.
- ⁵³ 'Ubūdīyyat, *Nizām-i hikmat-i sadrā'ī, Tashkīk dar wujūd*, a publication by Imam Khomeini Institute for Education and Research, second edition, (1387 SH, Qom), ISBN 964-411-062-5, chapter 8, pp. 191-214.
- ⁵⁴ Peripatetic conceived of time as the product of the motion of spheres. Mulla Sadra, apparently, does not deny this view; nevertheless, he does not, in fact, agree with this view either, and believes that time is related to the trans-substantial motion.

Mulla Sadra and the Unity and Multiplicity of Existence

Karim Aghili
Manchester, UK

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to critically analyse some of the versions of the oneness of existence (*wahdat al-wujud*)¹. It seeks to argue that according to Mulla Sadra, the concept of “existence”² is one, and its extra-mental reality, then, must also be one, because one single concept cannot be obtained from a number of “realities” “Existence” is one single “reality” comprehending everything.³ The “reality” behind the veil of many different things is “pure existence” without even a trace of multiplicity, and the “quiddities” which are the source of this multiplicity are but different degrees of the one single “reality”.

Keywords: Mulla Sadra, the Unity and Multiplicity of Existence , Existence, reality, quiddities.

The Univocity of the Concept of Existence

The concept of existence is a single primary and self-evident concept which is applicable to all existents without discrimination between the Necessary Being and the contingent being and between substance and accident.⁴

A group of the Ash`arites hold the view that the concept of existence is equivocal among all existents including the Necessary Being and the contingent being and among the species of the contingents. This group

hold that the existence of each entity is identical with its concept. Another group hold that the absolute existence is equivocally applied between the Necessary Being and the contingent being, but it is univocally applied to all the species of the contingents.⁵ The reason why the Ash`arites maintain that existence is equivocal is that they consider existence to be identical with quiddity, and as quiddities are disparate from one another, existents are also distinct from one another, and we will soon prove the invalidity of this view. According to Mulla Sadra, and Sabziwari, existence is additional to quiddity but not identical with it, and as it is not identical with quiddity, it is not thereby equivocal.

Affirmative and Negative Intuitive Judgements on the oneness of the concept of Existence

Surely, Intuition is the best witness to the fact that when we see various species of things, we generally form affirmative judgements on their existence, and sometimes we form negative judgements on the non-existence of certain other things; however, the affirmative and negative judgements in all these cases are used in the same sense. For example, 'Man exists and plants exist'. 'The co-existence of two contradictories and the co-existence of two contraries do not exist'. Therefore, the concept of existence is univocally applied within the context of affirmative and negative judgements, and for this reason, Sadr al-Muta`allihin says:

That the concept of existence is something shared by all quiddities appears to be self-evident. Verily the intellect finds an affinity and similarity between one existent and the other, the like of which it does not find between the existent and the non-existent, therefore, if existents did not share a single concept but were distinct in every respect, the relation in which some stand to some others would be, [then], like that of existence to non-existence because of a lack of affinity.⁶ Accordingly, the concept of existence is univocally applied to quiddities.

Nasir al-Din al-Tusi says: The concept of negation [i.e., non-existence] is 'one', and there is no plurality and distinction in it, therefore, the concept of its contradictory, which is existence, is one.⁷

The contradictory of one is necessarily one; otherwise, if the contradictory of one were many and manifold, that would entail the removal of two contradictories.

Also, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi says: We become certain about the existence of a quiddity and doubt its characteristics, while we are still certain about its existence. When we observe an effect, we form a judgement on its cause. When we are convinced that it is a contingent being, and then our conviction that it is a possible being disappears and is changed into the conviction that it is a necessary being, the first judgement will not disappear. Therefore, being still convinced of the existence [of the quiddity] despite the change of our conviction about its characteristics indicates that existence is [univocally] shared by all quiddities.⁸

The Unity and Multiplicity of the Reality of Existence

There is a disagreement over the reality of existence among the Muslim philosophers.⁹ Some positions are directly attributed to the Muslim philosophers proper who dealt with it in their capacity as philosophers, while some others are attributed to some other authorities who have been cited in the works on Islamic philosophy. Anyway, in sum, it can be said that there are four basic positions on the reality of existence.

1. The Position of the Sufis

The first position is the one as attributed to the Sufis and their words appear to imply it, and it is such that existence has an individual unity, and the reality of existence is the very existence of the Sacred Divine Essence. He is existent in the true sense and there is nothing really existent other than He. Other existents have a metaphorical existence: "There is nothing in the world but He". Therefore, existence is specific to God alone.¹⁰

Criticism

Doubtless, this view is not rationally acceptable with respect to that which is indicated by the apparent meaning of the words of its proponents. We all realize that we exist and the existence of each individual is other than that of the other one just as the existence of humans are other than that of other entities and that the existence of all creatures is other than that of God. Therefore, holding that there is nothing existent other than God seems to be more fallacious than philosophical. Of course, they themselves also admit that this is a matter which is not comprehended by reason (*`aql*) but rather it is one which, owing to being supra-rational, should be discovered intuitively.

Well, if anyone claims that they accept something that is not accepted by reason, we cannot argue with them philosophically, since philosophy deals only with those matters which are rationally understandable. Now, it can be asked if it is possible for something to be negated by reason and to be affirmed by something else.

We can discover our rational incomprehension whenever something is beyond the ken of our rational comprehension. For instance, it is rationally understandable that the reality of external existence cannot be rationally understood, since the function of reason is to know concepts. In this case, it is rationally understandable that it cannot be comprehended. However, sometimes, something is negated by reason. So, can it be said that this very rational comprehension is incorrect? It should be said that such a view is unacceptable and that we cannot accept that a truth which is negated by reason can be proved in a different way. Accepting such a view is tantamount to denying the validity of reason and holding that reason is not entitled to comprehend truths. This view is contrary to intuition and rational self-evidence. Therefore, as is apparently understood, this position is not acceptable.

It may be argued that the words of the proponents of this position do not apparently convey what they mean; furthermore, they were not concerned with technical vocabulary; they could not express in exact words the matters which they comprehended, and what they wished to

express was not contrary to reason; however, the words which they have employed clearly convey that which is contrary to reason. Of course, this sort of argument is just a justification, and such a justification itself is not compatible with the view that 'reason does not comprehend the meanings of such words' unless this very expression is also justified in that what is meant by reason (*`aql*) in this regard is the untrained mind and common sense.

Anyway, this position cannot be accepted, and should it be justified correctly, it might be interpreted based on one of the other positions, which itself is a different issue.

The Doctrine of the Unity of Existence and The Multiplicity of Existents

Some other philosophers hold that the reality of existence is specific to God, but existent is not exclusive to God only, and it is really applied to other existents as well. This position is contrary to that of the Sufis, who hold that other existents are of a metaphorical nature. According to the proponents of this position, 'existent' is also applied to other existents, but the meaning of real existent when applied to other than God differs from the meaning of real existent when applied to God. This position appears to be based on the equivocity or homonymy of existent. The proponents of this position assert that when God is said to be existent, it means that He Himself is the reality of existence itself, but when it is said that creatures are existent, it means that they are related to existence, not in the sense of having real existence. Therefore, being-existent with regard to God means 'He is existent', and with regard to other than God, it means 'being related to existence'. Then, in order to justify the various aspects of the existent being related to existence, they assert that many examples can be given to illustrate this doctrine in such derivatives as '*tamir*' (date seller), which is derived from '*tamr*' and which is related to '*tamr*' (date). These derivatives are not like the ones that are derived from a verb or verbal noun (i.e. infinitive) and which denotes an agent which does an action. Another example which can be given is *mushammas* meaning the water which is

heated when exposed to the light of the sun, that is, being related to the sun and having no internal relationship with it.¹¹

It is seen that these derivatives just mean being related to the source of derivation. As the case may be with 'existent'. By existents (*mawjudat*) are meant essences which are related to existence. The reality of existence [i.e., real existence] belongs to God, the Blessed and Exalted, alone, and all others are related to it. This very relation is sufficient for applying 'existent' (*mawjud*) to them.

This doctrine has been interpreted as 'the unity of existence and the multiplicity of existents'. This position was taken by Jalal al-Din Dawani, and he asserted that this position was attributed to the 'tasting of theosophy' (*dhawq al-ta'alluh*), that is, if one fathoms the depth of Divine knowledge, one will come to know that the only true existent that is existence itself is God, and all others are related to Him.

Criticism

This position cannot be accepted either, because we are not dealing with the expression 'existent'. In other words, the question is not whether the application of 'existent' to creatures is lexically or conventionally a real or metaphorical one or whether there are any other expressions which mean being related to their origin. The very expressions given as examples, notwithstanding, are debatable. May a time, it is said that the expression 'tamir' has not been derived from 'tamr' (date) but rather, for example, it is derived from the verb 'tamara' meaning to sell dates. As is the case with 'mushammas' which is derived from 'tashmis' meaning to expose something to the sun.

Supposing that there were certain derivatives which are semantically related to their sources, this is still a lexical debate and can not be a solution to the philosophical problem under discussion. This position will ultimately lead to the confirmation of the position of the Sufis in that there is no other existent save God.

The Position attributed to the Followers of the Peripatetics

In contrast to the above-mentioned positions, there is another position which has been attributed to the Peripatetics. It is worth noting that by the Peripatetics, their followers, such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Bahmanyar, are meant. Otherwise, it will not be known what position the Peripatetics themselves, that is, Aristotle and his students, took in this regard in that whether they believed in the principality [i.e., fundamentality] of quiddity or in the fundamentality of existence.¹²

The argument for this position on the part of its proponents

It is deduced, especially, from the words of Ibn Sina (Avicenna)¹³ that he considers existence to be fundamentally real, but he considers existents to be really multiple. He considers the existence of each existent to be other than that of another one. He maintains the plurality of existence and of existents. That is, God's existence is other than the existences of creatures, the existences of intellects are other than those of souls and the existences of souls are other than those of material substances, and by 'existent' is meant an existent quiddity. Every existence differs from every other one in its entirety, and there is nothing in common among them, as there is a common aspect just among quidditative concepts. Two quiddities can have either totally or partially an essential aspect in common. However, existence is simple and has no genus and differentia.

Therefore, according to this position, there is no univocity among existences. If it is said that they are exactly alike, it will entail that there be no more than one existence, while it is necessarily seen that existences are disparate and multiple. If it is said that they are partially and essentially distinct from one another, it will entail that existence should be composed of a common aspect and a distinguishing aspect. The slightest objection to this view is that it implies the compositeness of the existence of God, the Exalted, because it entails that His existence should have a common aspect and a distinguishing aspect, while the Necessary Being is simple [i.e., indivisible] in all respects.

Therefore, it should be said that existences, according to this position, are disparate with the totality of their essences.¹⁴ That is, both existence and existent are multiple, and each one is disparate from every other one totally and essentially. In other words, on this view, disparity among existents is self-evident. Now, the question which can be posed is: Is this disparity, i.e., the disparity among existences, is totally essential or partially essential. If it is totally of an essential nature, it will be that which is sought. If it is partially essential, it implies that extra-mental existences have a common aspect and a distinguishing aspect in the extra-mental world. Therefore, every extra-mental existent should be composed of a common aspect and a distinguishing aspect. Its common aspect can be supposed to be of a generic nature, which can be actualized by the addition of a number of differentiae, such as animal-ness (*hayawaniyyah*), which is the common genus among its species, and by the addition of certain differentiae to it, different kinds of quiddities are constituted. Or the common aspect should be of a specific nature, hence, the distinction among existents will be of an individual nature. Anyway, something should be added to the common aspect so that a distinction can be made. This view is problematic in certain respects.

If it is said that existence constitutes the generic aspect, it implies that the concept of existence is a common genus among all existents, while existence is not of a generic nature, because it has been proved in its proper place that quiddities lead to the highest genera, above which there is no common genus. Furthermore, this view necessitates that the Divine Essence be composed of genus and differentia, while the Divine Essence is simple in all respects. If it is said that existence is of a specific nature, and its distinction is due to its individuating accidents, the Divine Essence still should possess accidents so that It can be distinct from other existents. However, this is not a correct view either. Therefore, as existence is neither of a generic nor of a specific nature, it is not part of the quiddities of things either, and things do not have a common quiddity. That is, the existences of things in the extra-mental world do not have a common generic or specific quiddity called 'existence'. Therefore, it should be said that what is understood from the meanings of genus, species and differentia is that they pertain to the

quiddities of things, and objective realities are not known by genus and differentia. In sum, according to this position, existences are unknown realities which are known only by their signs; otherwise, we cannot know the very objective reality of existence.' It can be concluded that existences are distinct from one another with the totality of their essences.

A Criticism

In contrast, it can be said that the argument advanced for the above position is not sufficient to prove that which is claimed by its proponents. Because it can be argued from another perspective that existence is not a generic or specific reality that can be individuated by differentiae and accidents. Of course, it does not mean that the unity which is attributed to existence is invalid in any sense. Existence can have a unity different from generic or specific unity which is applied to quiddities and which is not negated based on this very argument in which we are involved now. In other words, in response to the view that if existences have a common aspect, it should be either genus or species, it can be said that there is another unity which is neither of a generic nor of a specific nature. It is a unity that is specific to the reality of existence and which is not relevant to quiddities. Quiddities either have a common species or genus. However, it is not correct to hold the view that if anything in common is supposed to be among existents, it is either of a specific or of a generic nature. There may be another kind of unity which can be different from the ones mentioned above.

The Gradation of Existence

The Position of Sadr al-muta`allihin

It is a position which Sadr al-muta`allihin (foremost among the theosophers) attributed to the ancient Persian philosophers, and then he adopted, proved and formulated it in a philosophical fashion. Of course, we are not concerned here with whether the attribution of this position to the Pahlavi philosophers is correct or not.¹⁵

According to Mulla Sadra, the reality of existence is a single reality, and this unity, viz. the unity of the reality of existence, as meant by him is such that it does not negate multiplicity but rather in the same way that existence possesses unity, which can be proven through demonstration, it also possesses an undeniable multiplicity from the philosophical point of view.¹⁶ That is to say, philosophically, it cannot be said that the existence of contingent existents is identical with the existence of the Necessary Being. All the existents are really multiple, but their multiplicity is not such that it is incompatible with unity and that it causes every existent to be different from another one. While existents are multiple, they also possess unity, but this unity is other than whatish, i.e. quidditive unity. It is a sort of unity which is specific to existence and which is called graded unity.

Two existents may also possess real unity at the same time that they are numerically two in the sense that their difference is by virtue of the difference of the stages and degrees of existence. When we consider only intense existence, we see that it is other than weak existence. When we consider weak existence, it is other than intense existence, but we come to see through a deep and comprehensive survey that weak existence is a level of strong existence and a mode of its modes and a ray of its rays, and it itself has no independence of its own.

There is one independent existence and existent in the true sense of the word, and it is the Divine Sacred Essence, and there is no independent existence and existent other than It, but it does not mean that there is no other existent absolutely. There are also other existents, but their existences are dependent ones.

Mulla Sadra likens the gradation of existence to light, of whose reality both intense and weak grades and stages partake. The light of the sun is truly light, and so is the light of a candle, and their difference is not due to anything other than the intensity and weakness of light. At one level, there is the light of the sun, and at the other, there is the light of the candle. As is the case with existence. The existence of the Necessary Being is other than the existence of man, and both are truly existents.

However, the existence of the Necessary Being is an extremely intense level of existence, and the existence of man is a weak level of it.

Therefore, all the existents partake of existence itself, because all refute non-existence. Man, who is created by God, exists, and he did not exist when He had not created him, and it cannot be said that he did not exist then, and he does not exist now. He is not nonexistent, so he is really existent, but it does not mean that his existence is totally distinct from the existence of God but rather the difference is in virtue of the various levels of existence. The Divine Essence is an independent Being, and other existences are relational (lit. copulative) ones. They are needy and their existence is the very relation.

In short, the distinguishing factor and the identifying factor of existents are the same, and this is the meaning of gradation.

Further Explanation

At this point, it should be explained that the analogy of light as other analogies serves just as an approximation. First, both a weak light and a strong light share the luminous nature of sensible light, but that which is shared is quiddity, that is, they are the individuals of a quiddity, and the application of quiddity to them is of the sort of graduated universal, such as white. Whiteness is a concept, but whiteness in external reality consists of various degrees. Anyway, whiteness is a quiddity, and white is an accidental concept which is abstracted from this quiddity, viz. whiteness. As is the case with light. It is an accidental concept. Light is a qualitative accident of the sort of quiddity, and it consists of various individuals which differ in terms of intensity and weakness, and priority and posteriority like other graduated quiddities. However, such is not the case with the reality of existence, because existence has no quiddity.

Second, intense light and weak light are not dependent on each other. A weak light is independently a light itself, and an intense light is also independently a light itself. The light of a candle is not related to the

light of the sun, and the light of the sun is separate from the light of a candle. However, the gradation of existence is of a different nature. The gradation of existence is such that a level of existence subsists through another level in the sense that if there were no intense level, there would be no weak level either. One subsists through the other and not vice versa.

To use a more exact analogy, we can suppose that the level of a one watt light is contained within the level of a thousand watt light in that one watt light is dependent on a one thousand watt light, but light as used in this analogy is very different from existence to which it is likened, because a one thousand watt light is in fact composed of a thousand one-watt lights. However, most of the ancient philosophers thought that as light was an accident (*arad*), that is, as it cannot exist independent of matter, it is thus simple. Based on traditional physics, this example is not an improper one; however, based on modern physics, it has been proven that light is a substance (*jawhar*). That is, it can exist independent of matter. Furthermore, it consists of units of energy. That is, it consists of tiny packets called photons. Anyway, the example given is not an improper one for making it easier for the mind to understand.

Sadr al-muta`allihin on the Unity of Existence

In contrast to the Peripatetics who hold the realities of existence to be different, he advanced an argument: If all existences possessed distinct realities, and each existence were distinct in its entire essence from the other one, we would never be able to abstract a single concept from them, whereas we abstract the concept of existence and existent from them. This single concept is proof of the fact that all these realities have a common aspect from which we can abstract a single concept; otherwise distinct existences *qua* distinct cannot be the source of abstraction of a single concept *qua* single. If a single concept is abstracted from a number of things, the reason is that they possess a common aspect. If we abstract a single concept called man from among Zayd, `Amr and other human individuals, the reason is that there is a common aspect, which is being-man, that is, Zayd, `Amr and other

human individuals possess human characteristics. In other words, man and cow are animals, although they are different realities, and that is because they possess a common aspect in that they are all animate, sensible, voluntary movers, and so on. With respect to this common aspect, the single concept of 'animal' can be abstracted from them; otherwise if they had no common aspect, we could not abstract a single concept totally or partially in respect of their essences. Finally, if there were no single source of abstraction, no single concept would be obtained unless it was a homonymous (i.e. equivocal) one, and in each case, then, it would have a special meaning. For instance, we call the sun, gold, fountain, and so on 'ayn'. They have something in common, but this sharing is an equivocal sharing; however, the concept of existence is not a homonymous (i.e. equivocal) one.

Therefore, according to Mulla Sadra, the concept of existence is a univocal one. For instance, in the propositions Zayd exists; God exists; and in all other instances, existence is used as a contradictory of non-existence.

In the perspective of Sadr al-muta'allihin, the disparity of existents is evident, and the multiplicity and plurality of existents is undeniable. Were it to be proved that these existents are multiple at the same time that they possess a kind of unity, it implies that a kind of unity should be proved which is not incompatible with disparity. In order to make it easier to understand, Mulla Sadra employs the term gradation (*tashkik*), which is inherent in graded concepts. First, he divides these concepts into two parts: uniform and graduated.

1. The Uniform Concept

A uniform concept is a universal concept which applies to all instances equally and uniformly without there being any priority or posteriority, intensity or weakness, deficiency or increase. For example, the universal concept of tree applies to two apple trees equally without there being any priority or posterity between them.

2. The Graduated Concept

Graduated concepts are those which apply to their instances in terms of priority and posteriority, intensity and weakness, deficiency and increase, like the concept of length which applies both to one meter and to the distance between the earth and the sun, while one is less long and the other longer. Or the concept of whiteness which applies both to the whiteness of paper and to the whiteness of snow, but the whitenesses of these two are different from each other. This kind of gradation is called general gradation. Gradation is of various kinds, but we are only concerned with two kinds of it: general and particular. As for general gradation, two individuals of a universal are independent of each other. For instance, the whiteness of snow together with the whiteness of paper are two whitenesses. However, gradation can be also taken to apply to two individuals, one of which is dependent on the other and which has no independence of its own. Gradation of this kind is called "gradation in a particular sense".¹⁷

If we maintain a kind of gradation in the reality of existence, whose criterion is intensity and weakness, which are not independent of each other but one is dependent on the other, in this assumption, then, the common aspect which obtains between these two degrees of intensity and weakness, one of which is independent and intense, and the other dependent and weak, is existence itself.

In other words, existence is one single reality possessed of various degrees in terms of intensity and weakness. That which differentiates these degrees is that which unites them. In other words, the cause of the diversity is exactly the very cause of identity.

Therefore, the identifying factor is existence, and the distinguishing factor of its degrees is intensity and weakness. For example, as regards intense and weak light, intense light is only light, not light in addition to something else, and weak light is also light, not light in addition to darkness. Both are light, but they are different from each other in terms of intensity and weakness. This difference between them goes back to that which is the principle of identity and unity. This gradation is one in

a specialized sense in which the identifying factor and the distinguishing one are of the very same root. In this regard, there occurs a kind of plurality and distinction, but it does not entail composition and lack of simplicity, because there is nothing else which can be mixed with existence. It is the very existence that is both intense and weak.

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume something in common between two entities which does not impair their unity, and the argument of Avicenna that if there is something in common among existents, it should be either of a specific or generic nature is invalid. Because there is a third kind of sharing (*ishtirak*) based on which the reality of existence acts as both the principle of unity and diversity among existents and thus does not result in composition. So, it can be rationally said that weak existence is composed of existence and weakness, but this is just a mental analysis, whereas in the extra-mental world, there is nothing other than existence.

Up to this point, it has been proved that it is possible to assume a third kind of unity as mentioned above, but in order to prove its actualization, we should refer to a point that is proved in the section on cause and effect in *al-Asfar* in that an effect is a ray of the existence of cause and has no independence of its own, as, according to Sadr al-muta'allihin, it is the very relation to the cause. The existence of an effect in relation to its real cause, by which is meant the existence-giving cause but not the material and preparing causes, has no independence whatsoever, and it is the very relation to the cause but not in the sense that it is an independent thing that is related to another independent one, as in the domain of existence, there is a cause-effect relationship. Therefore all the contingent existents in relation to the Exalted Necessary Being, which is the source of emanation, are in such a state that their existence is the very relation. Therefore, the gradational difference which we have already discussed applies in this regard. The Necessary Being and the contingent being are both existences, but the existence of the Necessary Being possesses complete independence and is infinitely intense, while the existence of the contingent is very weak, but neither the Necessary Being nor the contingent being is anything other than

existence. Therefore, it can be proven that such a gradation can obtain between the Necessary Being and the contingent being.

The Gist of Sadr al-muta`allihin's Argument

Sadr al-muta`allihin advanced this argument for the main part of his contention. His contention is that both existence and existent are ``one'' and ``many''-a sort of metaphysical *coincidentia oppositorum*. Unity is multiplicity and multiplicity at the same time unity. That is, in one respect, they are one, as they share the act of existence (*mawjudiyyah*), and in another respect many, as the degrees of existence are multiple. Therefore, existence is a single reality possessing multiple degrees.

Thus, the main point which should be proved in opposition to the Peripatetics is that existence possesses a single reality, and we have already explained that existence is a single concept, and a single concept *qua* single is not abstracted from the multiple *qua* multiple; otherwise, it would imply that any concept could be abstracted from anything. If there were no criterion, the concept of man can be abstracted from stone, but such is not the case. There should be a common aspect, and the common aspect cannot be a quiddity, as quiddities are distinct from one another, and the Exalted Necessary Being, for instance, has no quiddity, so a single concept should be considered from a different point of view. This is a proof of the fact that all existences partake of the reality of existence.

This argument is controvertible, although Mulla Sadra considers it a cogent one, and his followers have adopted it.

A Criticism of Mulla Sadra's Argument

There is a difference between whatish [i.e., quidditative] and secondary intelligible concepts. If we abstract a whatish concept from an object, it should be definitely abstracted in respect of an external object which is an instance of that concept, as its occurrence is external. For example, `man' represents an existential limit which is attributed to an object in

the extra-mental world, so that we say: Zayd is man. The occurrence of being-man to Zayd is *in concreto*, and in respect of the specific limits of this existence, his quiddity is abstracted from it. Therefore, these limits should exist in the extra-mental world even accidentally and should be different from other limits of existence from which another quiddity is abstracted. The examples which have been given are of this very kind. It is because of the selfsame existential limits of Zayd and `Amr that man is in common between them. As for the quiddity of animal, it is also in common between man and cow, because they both share a genus (i.e. being-animal) which is in common between them and which forms part of their existential limits, but such is not the case with the secondary philosophical intelligibles. The secondary philosophical intelligibles can never be abstracted in respect of their external occurrence, because the ``occurrence' happens in the mind. The common aspect, i.e. genus, is mentally posited.

There can be other instances of contradiction. For example, a single concept is abstracted from a number of things, while they have no common aspect.

The Muslim philosophers hold that the highest genera have no essential common aspect. Substance and various kinds of accidents have nothing in common, and all the identifying factors lead to one of the intelligibles. We abstract a concept called genus from these quiddities consisting of the generic quiddity of substance and the generic quiddity of the nine accidental categories. The question which can be raised is if the abstraction of this concept, i.e. genus, which is applied to all of them means that they possess something in common in the external world or it means that it is a particular aspect of them that is posited in the mind.

If it is said that genera have an external common instance, then they should be composite and they themselves should have another genus on the assumption that they are the genus of genera. Therefore, the concept of genus which is abstracted from them does not mean that they possess a common instance in the external world, because the assumption is that they do not possess one and are essentially distinct in their entirety.

Therefore, the unity of such a concept does not imply that it has a common external instance.

It may be, then, asked why a single concept is abstracted. In response, it can be said that the concept of existence, according to Mulla Sadra, is one of the secondary philosophical intelligibles¹⁸ and represents an existential mode. If we assume that the external existence of an existent is entirely distinct from another existence and that they do not have a common aspect in terms of their existential modes in the external world either. Otherwise expressed, if it is assumed that objective realities are completely disparate and that they do not have a common aspect in terms of their existential modes, the mere abstraction of the concept of existence does not imply that the concept of existence can have an external instance in one case which completely corresponds to another one in another case, as the concept of existence is abstracted through a rational analysis. Although the concept of existence is not a purely subjective one, and its qualification happens in the extra-mental world, the unity of such a concept whose occurrence happens in the mind does not represent a common external instance.

In other words, if a concept were of the secondary philosophical intelligibles which did not have an external instance, neither does its unity indicate a unity common among the sources of its abstraction nor does its multiplicity indicate their multiplicity, as the concept of unity, that is the concept which is of the sort of the secondary intelligibles, does not imply having external common instances. For example, the concept of quiddity is both applied to substance and to the nine divisions of accident, though it is a single concept and indicates an aspect of unity. However, it does not mean that its aspect of unity is external and that substance and accident have a common instance in the external world, as they are entirely disparate quiddities. So, when we perceive that the answer to the question asked about 'substances' is 'substance', and the answer to the question about 'accidents' is 'accident', we rationally conclude that they have a common aspect which is itself the very answer to the question asked about 'What is it?', therefore they are all quiddities.

As for the concept of accident, it is not a genus, since the Muslim philosophers are unanimously agreed that the accidental categories are the highest genera and do not consider the concept of accident a common genus. Quantity and quality and other accidental categories are totally and essentially disparate from one another. The concept of accident does not indicate that quantity and quality have a common aspect in the extra-mental world. It is the intellect that abstracts the single concept of accident, and since quantity and quality are both accidents, they need a substratum. In fine, the accidental categories are abstracted by the intellect, and it does not imply that they have a common aspect in the external world.¹⁹

The opposite is also true. Sometimes, numerous concepts are abstracted from a single simple reality without any multiplicity whatsoever. The best example is the Divine Necessary Essence, which is a Simple Essence. There is no sort of multiplicity, even rational multiplicity conceivable in the Divine Essence. That is, the Essence of the Necessary Being cannot be divided into quiddity and existence either, therefore it is said that the Necessary Being has no quiddity, but the concepts of existence, necessity, oneness, knowledge, power, life and other attributes are abstracted from that essence, and nothing other than the Divine Essence is considered for the abstraction of these concepts.

With respect to the attributes of Divine action, it can be said that the relation of God with a specific act is considered, whereas the attributes of the Essence are abstracted from the Essence of the Necessary Being without considering anything else. The attributes of the Necessary Being are multiple concepts which are abstracted from a single reality, but this abstraction, which is the function of the intellect, indicates no multiplicity whatsoever with respect to the Divine Essence in the extra-mental world. The multiplicity of concepts is due to the multiplicity of the viewpoints of the intellect. Therefore, in the same way that the multiplicity of concepts does not indicate the multiplicity of the instances of these concepts in the extra-mental world, its unity does not indicate an objective common aspect of their instances.

The plurality and unity of secondary intelligibles is subject to the unity and plurality of the viewpoints of the intellect, not to real and external unity and plurality.

Therefore, if a single concept called existence is abstracted from among multiple objects, it does not imply that its instance has an objective common aspect, as existence, according to the view of Mulla Sadra, is of the sort of the secondary philosophical intelligibles. Therefore, this argument is completely rejected, because neither does the unity of the secondary concepts indicate the unity of the instances nor does their multiplicity indicate multiplicity. It is simply because the occurrence of these concepts is mental, whereas the occurrence of the primary intelligibles is external. Therefore their unity indicates unity in the external world just as their multiplicity indicates multiplicity in the external world. As the occurrence of the secondary philosophical intelligibles is mental, it is abstracted from different points of view. Neither does their unity indicate external unity nor does their multiplicity indicate external multiplicity.

Therefore, with respect to the reality of existence, according to Sadra, there is a unity among multiple existences which is not incompatible with their multiplicity. That is a graded unity in that the reality of existence is a single graded reality. All creatures in relation to their own creating causes, and ultimately to the Sacred Divine Essence are the very relation and dependence. With respect to their own levels, they differ in terms of intensity and weaknesses, priority and posteriority, and some of them are relatively independent of some others, but they are the very relation and dependence *vis-a-vis* the Divine Essence, who is absolutely independent.

Obviously, adopting the thesis of the gradation of existence does not mean that any existence has such a relation with another one. Therefore, it is necessary that there be a fifth position.

The Fifth Position

Wherever there is a causal or a cause-effect relationship in the extra-mental world, there is a gradation. All the existents have such a relation with the Necessary Being. However, as for the effects which are horizontally independent of one another and among which there is no intensity or weakness, they are completely distinct from one another irrespective of whether a single quiddity applies to them and they may be two individuals of the same quiddity, such as two drops of water or their quiddities may be different from one another, such as cow and donkey, but existences in relation to their real cause are existentially graded, though they are different in terms of their quiddities, as there is a causal relationship among them.

Of course, maintaining a fifth position is possible if we come to hold that the words of Mulla Sadra apparently imply that there is a gradational difference among all existences even where there is no causal relation. If that is what he means, then there will be no need for a fifth position.

The Influence of Ibn `Arabi on Mulla Sadra

There is no doubt that existence, in Mulla Sadra's view, is a single graded reality in a specialized sense, because he explicitly states this view in certain chapters of *al-Asfar*²⁰. However, it is somewhat disputable whether gradation from his point of view is applied to the reality of existence itself or to its manifestations.

Most of his words and expressions in *al-Asfar* and in some of his other works seem to indicate that existence is graded in its manifestations. He most often asserts that the Necessary Being is the reality of existence itself and the contingent beings are the loci of manifestation or self-disclosure of Its Being as he says:

In the same way that God granted me success by His Grace and Mercy in becoming aware of the everlasting non-existence and eternal unreality of contingent quiddities and metaphorical entities, He also

guided me through the luminous demonstration deriving from the Throne to the straight path in that existent and existence are specific to the Single Individual Reality, Who is Unique in His being the Real Existent and Who has no like in the extra-mental world, and there is no nothing in the world of being save He, and whatever is visible in the world of being is indeed other than the Necessarily Worshipped One and is a necessary concomitant of His Essence and a manifestation of His Qualities, which are indeed identical to His Essence as the mouthpiece [i.e., Ibn `Arabi] of some of the gnostics stated it explicitly and said: `What is other than the Real or that which is called the world is, in relation to God, the Exalted, like the shadow to a person, therefore it is the shadow of God... All we perceive is but the being of the Real within the essences of contingent beings, so that with reference to the Ipseity (*huwiyyah*) of the Real, it is Its being, whereas with respect to the variety of its forms, it is the essences of contingent beings, which are unreal in essence as understood and abstracted through speculative reason and the sense powers. Just as it is always called a shadow by reason of the variety of forms, so is it always called the world and ``other than the Real''. If what I say is true, the world is, then, illusory and has not a real existence²¹, and this is an account of that which is held by the divine gnostics and the spiritually realized saints.²²

Elsewhere in *the Asfar*, he says:

The gnostics have agreed on applying the absolute existence and determined existence to that which is not commonly used among the people of speculation [i.e., the philosophers]. Verily, existence from the perspective of the gnostics consists in being that which is not limited to [the limit of] a determined entity and to a specific limit, and in contrast to it, determined existence consists of such (existents) as humans, the planet, the soul, and intellect. Therefore, absolute existence embraces all things in its simplicity, and thus it is the agent (*fa'il*) of every determined existence and its perfection and the Origin of every excellence to which it is more entitled than that which derives its existence from the Origin. Therefore, the Origin of all things and of their effusion should be itself all things at a higher and loftier level as is the case with intensive blackness in which are found all weak limits of blackness whose levels are lower than that of that

intensive blackness in a most simple manner. [Also] as is the case with the great quantity in which are found all the quantities which are less than it in respect of their quantitative nature, not in respect of their determinations having the nature of non-existence, such as the extremities [of a line]. Therefore, a single line which is, for instance, ten meters long, includes one, two, and nine meters of it in a continuous inclusive manner. Though it does not include their extremities [i.e. limits] which have the nature of non-existence and which occur after their separation from that all-inclusive existence, and those extremities having the nature of non-existence are not intrinsic to the nature of the line which is the absolute length, which, even if assumed to be the existence of an infinite line, would be [considered] more appropriate and worthier, because it is a line [consisting of] these limited lines, and surely the extremities having the nature of non-existence are intrinsic to the nature of these imperfect limitations, not in respect of their linear nature but in respect of the imperfections and deficiencies which are their concomitants. As is the case with all-intensive blackness and its inclusion of the blacknesses which are of a lower degree than it. The same is true of intensive heat and its inclusion of weak heat. The same holds true of existence itself and the encompassment of the Necessary all-comprehensive existence than which nothing is more complete by analogy with the determined existents which are limited to certain limits. The non-existences and imperfections included in it are extrinsic to the reality of the absolute existence and intrinsic to determined existence.²³

Summary

As a summary of the foregoing, we can say that the issue of the unity and multiplicity of existence which is one of the oldest philosophical issues has passed through a harmonious path of development both in philosophy and gnosis. Essentially, four major and remarkable theories have been put forward in this regard:

1. The extreme individual unity of existence
2. The transcendent unity of existence
3. The pure multiplicity of existence

4. The graded unity and multiplicity of existence

Some of the Sufis maintain that pure unity requires that there should be no multiplicity at all in the world, therefore, they tended towards a naïve unity of existence and consider all the multiplicities to be illusory. The naivety of this theory is due to the fact that they disregard the observable multiplicity of existence altogether, and without an interpretation of their data of consciousness or a proof, they tended towards a pure individual unity and sacrificed multiplicity for the sake of unity.

The gnostics who are attracted to Unity and who also value the data of consciousness and rational proof regard as perfect the reconciliation between these two realities. However, they were not negligent of other data other than inner witnessings. Therefore, they established theoretical gnosis as a cosmological system based on mystical unveiling and reason, and thus, they interpreted the world.

Even, in certain cases, they recognize reason as the arbiter or criterion for evaluating inner witnessings. Since love plays a pivotal role in gnosis, and since love revolves around Unity and knows no duality, from the perspective of a gnostic, the unity of existence is imperative.

The question is that either multiplicity cannot be absolutely put forward or it should be interpreted in such a manner as not to damage unity. Thus, the gnostics interpreted multiplicity and at most they regard multiplicities as the loci of manifestations and modes of the One in which they are annihilated.

However, philosophy like any other exoteric science starts from multiplicity, and multiplicity is of an observable nature and confirmed by reason and revelation. If there is a unity, it is not observable but rather it is hidden and should be extracted from within multiplicity. This is not an easy task. Therefore, most of the ancient philosophers consider existence to be purely multiple and disparate realities. According to the Peripatetics, that is, the followers of Aristotle, the application of the single concept of existence to disparate existents does

not indicate, in the least, the commonality of existential realities. However, philosophy, during its maturity could not remain faithful to this common view. Especially, because of its contiguity to gnosis, while preserving the multiplicity of the extra-mental world, it succeeded in finding a strand of unity in multiplicity, whose subsistence depends upon unity. This is that which was actualized in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra. Without disregarding multiplicity, he founded the most magnificent system of the unity of existence. Not only did he reconcile unity and multiplicity which were always opposed to each other but rather he proved that they are both identical with each other and are a single reality. In this way, we see that how gnosis and philosophy came closer to each other. This proximity reaches the zenith of its unity through Mulla Sadra in his discussion of causality.

Conclusion

The unity of existence in Islamic philosophy is other than the unity of existence in Islamic gnosis. There is a unity of existence which is maintained by Muhyidin ibn `Arabi, which is not compatible either with the multiplicity of existence or with the multiplicity of existents but rather he maintains the unity of existence and existent and considers the reality of existence to be a single one. The difference between existence and existent is one between the source of derivation and the derivative, such as knowledge and the knower or knowledge and object of knowledge. In fact, he considers the multiple existing things such as planets, angels, heaven, earth and so on to be of a subjective, metaphorical or similitive nature²⁴, and according to the tasting of theosophy, as already explained, the multiple existents are metaphorically related to the real existence and existent; otherwise there is no more than one real existence and existent in the same way that when we call someone perfumer or date-seller, it does not mean that his existence consists in date but rather it means that he is in a sense related to the date even if he sells dates. Selling dates means being, in a metaphorical sense, related to dates; otherwise the date-seller is in himself simply a man not a date. Therefore, in the same way that the date-seller is metaphorically related to the date, the existent

other than God is also metaphorically but not really related to the reality of existence. This point can be illustrated by giving an example. In the same way that a squinting eye sees a second image as imaginary and unreal, we also see all the multiple existents as illusion and imagination. This is the true meaning of the gnostic unity of existence as proposed by Muhyi al-Din Ibn `Arabi, and this is what he means by the unity of existence.²⁵ This may be one of the Islamic commentaries upon the thesis of Parmenides²⁶ whom Socrates met in his youth in Athens, and it is he who is the founder of the unity of existence.

Within the system of Islamic thought, the view of Muhyi al-Din Ibn `Arabi can also be considered to be outside the domain of philosophy, because philosophy is based upon the assumption of a sort of multiplicity, which can be minimally illustrated by the triad of knowledge, the knower and the known, which is itself a logical necessity. In logic and philosophy, we have to make a distinction between the knower and the known so that we can carry out our enquiries. We think as thinking beings, and our thinking is directed at something. In general, knowledge involves both the knower and the known, both of which are not the same. Therefore, we cannot acquiesce in the gnostic view of Muhyi al-Din from the philosophical point of view. Thus, when we start thinking, we must distinguish that which we think about from both our existence and from the existence of our knowledge, and this mode of thought is different from the perspective of Muhyi al-Din, which is based on the absolute unity of existence. On the other hand, we cannot and do not wish to abandon the philosophical unity of existence. Therefore, Sadr al-Din Shirazi found a solution to this problem, which is 'unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in the unity of existence'. According to him, that type of multiplicity that is not inconsistent with unity at all is acceptable. That is to say, at the same time that we can maintain the unity of existence, we can accept a multiplicity which not only is not inconsistent with unity but it also corroborates it. Of course, Muhyi al-Din does not accept this type of multiplicity either. However, paradoxically, as already explained, Mulla Sadra²⁷ is also influenced by the gnostic unity of existence from the perspective of Ibn `Arabi.²⁸

Endnotes

1. On *Wahdat al-wujud*, see also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present Day*, New York: SUNY, 2006, pp. 74-84; See also Toshihiko Izutsu, *the Concept and Reality of Existence*, Tokyo: Keio, 1971, pp. 35-55, and William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, New York: SUNY, 1994, pp. 15-29, and Sayyid Muhammad Kazim `Assar, *Wahdat-i wujud wa bada`*, Tehran, 1350 (A.H. solar), part I.
2. See also Toshihiko Izutsu, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133, and Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, *Hasti az Nazar-i falasafah wa irfan*, Qum: Bustan-i Kitab, 1386 (A.H. solar), pp. 23-31.
3. See Mulla Sadra, *Kitab al-Masha`ir (Le Livre de Penetrations Metaphysiques)* edited and translated by Henry Corbin, Tehran/Paris, 1964, pp. 8-9.
4. See Sabziwari, Hajji Mulla Hadi, *Sharhi-i Manzumah*. Trans. M. Mohaghegh&T. Izutsu, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavari*, Tehran, Iran University Press, 1983, pp. 31-32 and *Masha`ir*, p. 6. See also, Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa, Ilahiyyat*, Chapter 5, pp. 39-40.
5. See *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, vol. 2, pp. 127 and 113, and *Sharh al-Maqasid*, vol. 1, p. 307.
6. See Shirazi, Sadra al-Din Muhammad, (Mulla Sadra) *al-Hikmah al-muta`aliyah fi`l-asfar al-`aqliyyat al-arba`ah* (*The Transcendent Theosophy concerning the Four Intellectual Journeys of the Soul*), vol. 1, Ed. Muhammad Rida al-Mudaffar, Beirut, Dar al-Ihya wa`l-Turath, 1410 A.H./1990A.D., p. 45
7. *Kashf al-murad fi sharh-i Tajrid al-i`tiqad* edited and annotated by Hasan-zadah Amuli, Mu`assisah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1427 (A.H. lunar), p. 34
8. *ibid.*, p. 34
9. See Izutsu, *op. cit.*, 134-137.
10. See Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amuli, *Durar al-fawa`id*, Mu`assisah Isma`iliyan, 1377 (A.H. lunar), pp. 87-94. See also Izutsu, *op.cit.*, p. 135.
11. Mulla Sadra, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 71-74, and 251, and vol. 6, p. 63, and Allamah Tabataba`i, *Nihayat al-Hikmah* edited and annotated by `Abbas `Ali al-Zari`i al-Sabziwari, Mu`assisah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1417 (A.H. lunar), p. 17.
12. All the major Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi, Nasir al-Tusi maintained the real fundamentality (*asalah*) of existence. See Ashtiyani, *ibid.*, p. 81, and Mulla Sadra, *Kitab al-Masha`ir*, pp. 60 and 61.
13. See Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa, Ilahiyyat*, chapter 3, pp. 327-330.
14. See Qub al-Din al-Shirazi, *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq*, lithographed edition, Qum, Bidar Publications, pp. 303 and 304, Mulla Sadra, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 108, 427, 432, and 433.
15. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. I, pp. 35-37 and 108-109. See also al-Suhrawardi, *Majmu`ay-i musannafat-i Shaykh Ishraq* edited by Henry Corbin, Tehran, Mu`assisah Mutala`at wa Tahqiqat-i farhangi, second edition, 1372 (A.H. solar), vol. II, pp. 10, 11, 107 and 108. See also Ashtiyani, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-201.
16. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. I, pp. 49 and 69-71.

17. See al-Tabataba'i, *Nihayat al-hikmah*, pp. 25-26
18. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. I, pp. 34-37
19. *Sharh-i Ghur al-Fara'id or Sharh-i Manzumah* Part one: Metaphysics, Arabic text and commentaries, edited with English and Persian introduction and Arabic-English glossary by M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, Tehran, 1969, Second Edition 1981, pp. 176-178.
20. See Mulla Sadra, vol. I., pp. 49, and 19-71.
21. See Ibn 'Arabi, *Fusus al-hikam*, annotated by Abu'l-'Ala' 'Afifi, Dar al-kutub al-'Arabi, 1398 (A. H. lunar), second edition, p. 103. See also S. J. Ashtiyani, *Sharh-i fusus al-hikam*, Tehran, Shirkat-i intisharat-'ilmi wa farhangi, 1375 (A. H. solar), pp. 691-698.
22. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. 2, pp. 292-294.
23. See Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, vol. 6, pp. 116 and 117. For further details on the various positions on *wahdat al-wujud*, see Hamzah Fanari, *Misbah al-uns*, Tehran, 1363 (A. H. solar), second edition, pp. 52-64 and 247; Ibn Turkah Isfahani, *Tamhid al-qawai'd*, Tehran, 1360 (A. H. 1360), pp. 35-48, 59ff. and 115; *Naqd al-nusus fi sharh naqsh al-fusus*, Tehran, 1370 (A. H. solar), second edition, pp. 29-30; Muhammad Mahdi Naraq, *Qurrat al-'uyun*, Tehran, 1357 (A. H. solar), pp. 59-63.
24. For instance, Rumi says: We and our existences are nonexistences. Thou are Absolute Existence showing Thyself as perishable things. (M I 602-603). See William Chittick, *the Sufi Path of Love*, Albany, SUNY, 1983, pp. 23-25.
25. See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 1983, pp. 7-22.
26. See R. J. Hollingdale, *Western Philosophy, an Introduction*, London, 1993, p. 73. Also, see Murtada Mutahhari, *sharh-i mabsut-i manzumah*, Tehran, Intisharat-i hikmah, 1404 (AH lunar), vol. i, pp. 210-215. Also, see S. H. Nasr, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 303n9.
27. As for Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra) see, for example, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy*, Tehran: Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978, and Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, Albany: State University of New York Press (SUNY) , 1975.
28. On Ibn 'Arabi in general, see S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, chapter 3, and Izutsu, *op. cit.*, pp. 7ff.

Avicenna on Matter, Matter's Disobedience and Evil: Reconciling Metaphysical Stances and Quranic Perspective

Maria De Cillis

Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK

Abstract

The metaphysical system of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) (d. 1037) was strongly influenced by Neoplatonic and Aristotelian ideas. In works such as the *Dānish Nāma-i* and in the *Kitāb al- Shifā (al-Ilāhiyyāt)*, amongst others, Avicenna often speaks in an Aristotelian *parlance* about the interdependence of matter and form focusing particularly on the nature of prime and proximate matter; he also discloses a Neoplatonic understanding of the nature of evil which he examines both in ontological and moral terms.

The following article surveys Avicenna's view of matter and evil and explores how the philosopher employs Quranic hermeneutics in order to show that his positions on the above concepts are rooted in the Quranic source. The focus is placed on the exegesis of Qurān 41:11-12 and 113: Avicenna interprets these verses in a way which allows him to demonstrate that questions mainly influenced by the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic thought - such as the notion of *'isyān al-mādda* (the disobedience of matter) and the ontological nature of evil – are clearly 'Islamic' concepts, found in the source of Islamic Revelation, and perfectly reconcilable with 'orthodox' dictates. This article highlights how Avicenna attempts to achieve this goal by setting his discourse within one of the most discussed topics in classical Islamic thought: the issue of divine decree and destiny (*qaḍā' wa'l qadar*).

Keywords: Avicenna, Matter, Evil, Quranic hermeneutics, metaphysics

A survey on Avicenna's view of matter and its role in the emanative order

Avicenna generally believed in the traditional Aristotelian analysis of existents divided in the constituent elements of matter (*mādda*) and form (*sūra*) joined in the substance, what Aristotle called *ousia*. Avicenna even adopts the Aristotelian definition of the substance as 'that whose essence does not exist in a subject [of inhesion]',¹ and he explains substance as 'what subsists without any 'foreign' *mawdū* (subject), but is subject of inhesion itself'.²

In contrast to the Stagirite, however, Avicenna stresses that the reciprocal combination of matter and form does not suffice to the existence of the substantial compound. Existence is ultimately granted by God, the only Being who is necessarily existent by Himself (*Wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*) and whose nature, according to a Neoplatonic perspective, makes the existence of the world a necessary product of His self-knowledge. God, in fact, knows Himself as the ultimate Cause of all existents and, as an eternal cause the product of divine emanation (the world) is itself eternal. Avicenna's emanative theory, inherited by al-Fārābī in its main traits,³ speaks of an emanatory process that, starting from God, progresses through the a series of intelligences till the lower and tenth intelligence, the Agent Intellect or *Dator Formarum* (*wāhib al-suwar*) so called because it is able to bestow 'forms' upon the matter of this world. It is worth noting that the first intelligence together with all the intelligences following it, is perceived as having a three-fold contemplation: a) on God as the reason of its existence, this leading to the production of another intellect; b) on itself as a necessary existent, this leading to the production of the soul of the first heaven; c) on itself as a possible existent, this leading to the production of matter or the sphere of the heaven.⁴ The whole process of emanation is said to occur through a determinism which makes the components of the supra-lunary world necessarily what they are. Their perpetual activities of cogitation (as acts of self-knowledge) are considered sufficient to emanate their direct descending effect in the hierarchy of the emanative scheme. This equals to saying that intellects' emanatory actions are compelled by their own nature. When Avicenna speaks of emanation, he speaks also of determinism

exactly because he considers that intellects emanate and are necessarily what they are due to their nature.

The *Dator Formarum* emanates the world of generation and corruption. Once reached this level, it does not emanate another intellect but prime matter (*hayūla*) which, however in order to exist, must have a form. Avicenna explains that prime matter is a receptacle for the receiving of existence⁵ and that, in actuality, it never separates itself from the form; matter exists only through the form which subsists as existent in actuality. The combination of matter and form is said to be supervised by the Agent Intellect: more specifically, since corporeal matter cannot exist by itself, Avicenna states, it 'acquires' one of the forms of the four basic elements, earth, water, air and fire. Formed matter then, acquires from the Agent Intellect higher forms and this leads to the formation of bodily humoral compositions. According to the proportion through which the bodily humors combine, there is emanation on behalf of the Agent Intellect of forms suitable for the matters of those corporeal bodies.⁶ This means that, in actual fact, it is the *wāhib al-suwar* which, by complying with the divinely-established world's order imposed by the emanation scheme, 'determines' the acquisition of a form by a specific matter. In reality, however, when Avicenna stresses that the Agent Intellect is responsible for the combination of a specific form with a specific matter, he in implicitly cutting off any 'independent' efficient causal initiative on behalf of the form. Form, in effect, is not assigned to a generic matter but to a specific and suitable one so that when the Agent Intellect produces a corporeal constitution, it also emanates in it the correspondent form by positioning a generic matter in its species. It has to be remembered that the attribution of *that* form to *that* matter is ultimately always the result of the divine power which is delegated, through emanation, onto the effective causality of the secondary causes.

The material substratum of all beings becomes a *dispositive cause* which spurs the separate causes (i.e., celestial intellects, souls and spheres) to produce forms. Matter is perceived not just as a passive and receptive element, but as a 'substance', a 'remote cause'⁷, and as a 'force' which, potentially, even has the property to 'disobey' the

purpose embedded by the divine decree (*qadā'*) in the nature of things. By stressing matter's disposition to receive the form, Avicenna accommodates his idea on matter within the notion of Aristotelian substantiality: following Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition, he assigns prime matter with a 'causative' role⁸ in facilitating the existentionation of things and the determination of their future conditions. Avicenna, *de facto*, reduces the importance of form as the absolute cause of the substance of matter and postulates the existence of a certain cause extrinsic to both matter and form (ultimately God) which makes them subsist with and through each other. Avicenna does that because he is required to explain why God is necessary for the coming together of matter and form: as a Muslim, he is compelled to divert from what is readily associated with Aristotle, namely the belief that matter and form together suffice in putting any being into existence. When Avicenna speaks of the third element, external to form and matter which acts as an ontological link between the two, he speaks not simply of the Agent Intellect's supervisory function but, ultimately, he refers to God and His action of bringing beings into existence. It has to be born in mind, however, that Avicenna views the Necessary Existent as a deity who operates through the natures of things: God ensures existence to matter and form through a necessary relation, through what between cause and effect works as a model for a necessary and efficient causation.⁹ In the end, God grants existence because He endows matter and form with their specific natures: their connection occurs through the complementarity of matter's receptivity and form's activity (which is due to what can be called a causal efficacy) and their reciprocal matching up which is 'administered' by the Agent Intellect.

Matter's disobedience: a Quranic Perspective.

Avicenna, as an heir to Aristotelian and Neoplatonic teachings, as a Muslim and a *connoisseur* of Islamic speculative theology, felt compelled to reconcile apparent inconsistencies between topics derived from Greek metaphysics and apply these to Islamic religious subject-matters. Amongst his concerns, there was the need to harmonize the theological truths present in the Qurān with some metaphysical

standpoints on matter, matter's relation to forms and matter's function in the emanative scheme. So, for instance, he endeavours to reconcile the philosophical phenomenon called 'the disobedience of matter' (*'isyān al-mādda*) with the Quranic view of God to whom all things pay absolute obedience.¹⁰

Plotinus was probably the first philosopher who spoke of the resistance of matter to

its ideal-form and employed this concept to explain the nature of evil as privation or lack of perfection.¹¹ Avicenna extensively borrows from Plotinus, but he also draws attention to his personal understanding of the disobedience of matter and presents it as a phenomenon which is inscribed in the decree of the Quranic omnipotent God. Avicenna comments on *sūra* 41 verse 11:

“God said to it [the sky/smoke-matter] and to the earth ‘Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly’. They said: ‘We do come (together) in willing obedience’”.¹²

The philosopher explains that this verse

‘Refers to what is constant (taqarrar) in so that the matter of the [celestial] sphere (falak) differs, by its quiddity, from the matter of the elements as its reception (qubūl) of the form of the sphere is done willingly (ṭaw’an). This is because prime matter (hayūla) desires the form (mushtāqa ilā al-ṣūra) and since in it there is no reception for any other form, its reception is orientated towards only one form (Ṣūra wāḥida). Since at a specific moment, in that matter, there is no other form, the preceding form being an obstacle (‘ā’iqa) for the successive form, the reception of the form by the matter of the [celestial] sphere is done willingly’.¹³

In the above comment, Avicenna employs an Aristotelian *parlance* which stresses

the relationship occurring between matter and form, but it also alludes

to the Neoplatonic emanative scheme which acknowledges a quidditative difference between the matter of the celestial spheres and the matter of earthly elements.

In his *Maḥāṭīh al-Ghayb*,¹⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has interpreted Avicenna's explication of Qurān 41:11 and has emphasized that the first goal of such verse is to demonstrate the perfection of divine omnipotence to which there is no resistance because everything is and will always be in accordance to God's eternal decree (*qadā'*) as stated in the Qurān.¹⁵

Avicenna certainly believed in the truthfulness of the Quranic revelation as well as the validity of the Aristotelian principle according to which 'in nature nothing occurs in vain'; notwithstanding these views, he also admits that, on a few occasions, the natural powers embedded in the essences of things, established by the divine decree, may sometimes fail to attain their goals, namely, fail to move matter towards specific forms and this occurrence is exactly due to the disobedience of matter. With regard to Avicenna's expositions on this phenomenon, one meets difficulties in understanding what he actually means; scholars like Caterina Belo, for instance, have stressed that such disobedience has to be taken metaphorically.¹⁶ A metaphorical interpretation is necessary since, in Belo's view, Avicenna has an overall negative conception of matter and consequentially, it is always the form which acts as a cause for motion and changes leaving no room for any material actual disobedience. This article, however suggests that, in contrast to Belo's position, Avicenna's exegesis of Q. 41:11 reveals that matter, with its accidental shortcomings, has potentially the power to tackle the purposes embedded by the decree of God in the nature of things.

The first step to be taken in this direction is to bear in mind that matter - as the material element of the substantial compound - determines its specific relation with forms according to its level of receptivity and compatibility, and this underlines implicitly a kind of independence resting on the side of matter. A clear reference to matter's role is highlighted in Avicenna's interpretation of Q. 41:11; in

this verse, the philosopher observes,

‘the mention of the sky precedes that of the earth and this is due to the fact that the mention of obedience precedes that of the aversion in a way that obedience refers to the matter of the sphere and aversion to the matter of the earth’.¹⁷

This statement can be explained if it is read with references to the emanation theory adopted by Avicenna outlined earlier: in the celestial realm, in fact, there cannot be any form of disobedience because all acts are necessarily determinate; they are what they are due to the permanent emanating cognizance of the intellects and the movements of their celestial spheres which do not encounter any variation. In the world of generation and corruption, however, the status of affairs is different and the activity of any being is dependent not simply on the influence of the heavenly bodies but also on the level of receptivity which any object has due to its material substrate. It is for this reason that, in the sub-lunary realm, it is possible to contemplate the occurrence of disobedience. As al-Rāzī had highlighted in the *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*, the earth, as a locus of changes and as a place of darkness due to its imperfection, naturally inclines for disobedience and aversion to the divine order.¹⁸

When Avicenna continues his comment on Qurān 41:11, he also explains that matter is shared amongst all non-celestial elements and that, common to all elements is the fact that the corporeal forms are non-eternal, having rather the characteristic of being generated (*kā'ina*) and corruptible (*fāsida*)¹⁹. It follows that any corporeal form is generated after an antecedent form is corrupted, as also stressed by *kalām*'s occasionalistic view on atoms and accidents.²⁰ As long as the preceding form continues to be present (*hāsila*) - Avicenna observes - matter becomes receptive of the form which is generated (i.e. the successive form) by coercion and aversion (*bi'l-qahr wa'l-karāha*).²¹ When the matter of the celestial sphere is commanded to ‘take on’ the form of the sphere, this matter obeys instinctively (*min nafsihā*) since there is no obstacle whatsoever. The matter of earthly elements, however, when commanded to receive another form, is not obedient

(*lā yakūn mutiy'an*), or rather does not obey willingly. In effect, matter's reception and preparation to obey the divine command occurs with aversion and this is because the preceding form acts as an obstacle for the arrival (*husūl*) of the successive form.²² Avicenna suggests that such an aversion is present in earthly matter as long as matter is preoccupied about its preparation for the reception of the divine commandment. Once the successive form is ready and the preceding one has disappeared then, at that time, in the substance of matter, there is no more any obstacle towards the 'new' form and, at this stage, matter's reception occurs naturally and willingly. Avicenna concludes his exegesis with reference to the verse:

'He assigned to each heaven its duty and command'
(Qurān 41:12)

and he claims that these divine words are an allusion to the separate intelligences which are the movers (*muharrakāt*) of the heavens by way of desire and love (*'ala sabīl al-tashūiq wa'l-ta'shīq*).²³

After this preliminary comment, Avicenna furthers his explanations and tackles the argument of matter's disobedience by reminding his readership that even the disobedient material substrate of the earth eventually complies with God's commandment, this occurring following a change in the disposition of the substance of its matter. It is significant however that, despite the final observance to the divine dictates, matter's initial delay to obey the divine commandment is well emphasised and meticulously structured by Avicenna. He speaks of the aversion present in earthly matter when the latter is concerned about its preparation in the reception of the divine commandment. But what is intended here by 'preparation' and what by 'divine commandment'? Avicenna had stated that in its substantiality, '*Matter has been created receptive of all the forms*'²⁴; despite this position, he 'justifies' matter's disobedience by taking into account the fact that the combination of matter with a new form occurs only when such matter is rightly prepared for receiving a new substantial form. This means that when matter - which at this stage acts as a proximate/informed matter (*mādda*) because it has already acquired lower level

forms like the elemental forms of earth, water, air and fire – is not suitable to acquire a higher form (either because it is too moist or too dry etc.), then the Agent Intellect does not emanate any inadequate form. Before the emanation of another form, matter has to be prepared by the *wāhib al-suwar* adequately, and only once it has reached a stage of preparedness matter's resistance towards the new form is overcome. The Aristotelian necessary relation occurring between matter and form which, for the Stagirite ensures their existence, is here complemented by the presence of the Agent Intellect and its role: the *Dator Formarum*, as the last constituent of the emanative order, ensures that the divine commandment (as the divine disposition of things) is ultimately obeyed. In addition, when Avicenna states that matter's aversion occurs only at the moment of its preparedness in receiving the divine command, he seems to refer to the distinction existing between prime and proximate matter: on the one hand prime matter, considered as a substance, is open to the receptivity of any possible form; on the other hand, proximate matter can only welcome and acquire one new form assigned and made suitable for it by the *Dator Formarum*. Furthermore, Avicenna states that matter's reception and its preparation to obey the divine command occurs with aversion because '*the preceding form acts as an obstacle for the arrival (husūl) of the successive form*'. The presence of one form precludes the possibility of co-existence of two forms in the same matter so that with the assignment of a new form, the preceding one has to be annihilated to leave space to what follows it. It is, therefore, the antecedent form that acts as an obstacle for the arrival of the successive one, this being an evident *kalāmic* occasionalistic view. Avicenna however, shifts his discourse on the topic of matter from a *kalāmic* standpoint to a metaphysical angle when he speaks of matter as a potential substance which shows aversion probably because 'afraid' (preoccupied - *mashghūl*) of experiencing the transition from one form to the other, namely, the transition from the security of one present form to the unpredictability of a successive one. It is not accidental that, at the very beginning of his exegesis, Avicenna had claimed that part of the verse in question '*refers to what is constant (taqarrar)*'; certainly he has in mind the difference which exists between celestial matter on the one side, and earthly matter on the other side. More specifically, Avicenna

must have been aware that the relation occurring between heavenly matter and the unique celestial form of the spheres is characterised by certainty of obedience and perfection due to a lack of alternatives (the form of the sphere is one and one only); and he must have also been conscious that the relation existing between form and earthly matter is of an irregular nature due to the plurality of forms which prime matter can potentially acquire. The initial aversion of proximate matter is said however to be superseded at the moment of existentionation of the new form, that is to say, at the very moment matter becomes (ready and) aware that it has been made suitable to acquire another specific form. Matter, then, is no longer preoccupied to be left without its own proximate guarantor of existence (form).

When Avicenna deals with the other part of the Quranic verse “*they said: ‘we do come (together) in willing obedience’*”,²⁵ he is compelled to deal with the problem of reconciling

- 1) the idea that matter is disposed not to obey the divine commandment with
- 2) the Qur’anic view of God who is omnipotent and towards whom sky and earth are obedient.

A kind of harmonization between these apparent contrasting positions is achieved because, ultimately, matter obeys the dictates of the *Dator Formarum* which establishes form’s conjunction with matter exactly as ultimately ordered by God’s command in the emanative schema. The contrast between the disobedience of matter and the divine order is eventually won by the latter. This shows that the discrepancy existing between ‘prime matter’ - which is naturally disposed to escape non-existence - and the divine commandment - which requires obedience – is in the end resolved because the two coincide within the act of existentionation (existence, to be remembered is ultimately granted only by the Necessary Existent). Avicenna fashions his *Wājib al-wujūd* in the cloak of a benevolent Provider and Sustainer of existence able to ‘tame’, with His omnipotence, defiance and disobedience. Matter’s obstructionism is ruled out by the divine commandment and matter’s

final obedience is obtained with the security of its perpetuation in existence offered by its acquisition of a specific form in a specific instant, as spurred by the Agent Intellect. It is to be highlighted that the divine victory over the disposition of matter is not occasioned by a direct divine intervention of God, as it would be expected in the *Kalāmīc* idea of *qadar*, but it is entrusted to the Agent Intellect and its surveillance over the form-matter's reciprocal matching. Eventually, even the initial disobedience of prime must be thought as being necessarily enclosed in the divine plan, with matter ultimately complying with the dispositions coming from God as the ultimate Cause of all existents.

Avicenna's ability to accommodate his metaphysical views within the Quranic frame allows him to remain firmly situated on Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysical ground. The necessary causal liaison between matter and form on the one side, matter's initial disobedience and its final compliance to the divine command on the other side, are ultimately linked to the divine emanationistic plan since emanation is said to work through delegated causalities carried out from intelligence to intelligence down to the Agent Intellect. The innovative element of the discourse is here given by the fact that Avicenna explains the phenomenon of *'isyān al-mādda* by recurring to his metaphysical stances on matter and matter's place in the emanative scheme: metaphysics becomes an instrument for Quranic exegesis. The 'foreign' (inherited by the Greek thought) metaphysical idea of the disobedience of matter is recognized as being implicitly asserted in the divine revelation and ready to be grasped by means of a philosophical interpretation. This is also evident when Avicenna refers to the verse:

'He assigned to each heaven its duty and command'
(Qurān 41:12)

with it the scholar reiterates the idea that divine *qadā'* decrees the role of the heavens and of the celestial spheres whose movements influence matter's receptivity and disposition on earth, as claimed by the Peripatetic philosophers.

Avicenna's Position on Evil and its Quranic Interpretation.

Metaphysical (and particularly Neoplatonic) connotations are evident also in Avicenna's exegesis of *sūra* 113 which relates to the problem of evil. According to Ash'arite doctrine, God - as an omnipotent Being - has to be credited with the creation of both goodness and evil.²⁶ In order to set his metaphysical ideas closer to such a stance, Avicenna comments on the verse '*Say I seek refuge with the Lord of the Dawn*' (113:1)²⁷ and distinguishes between a primary and a secondary intention in God's will. Avicenna comments:

'The daybreak shatters the darkness of privation by the light of existence (bi'l-nūr al-wujūd) which is the Necessary Existent and this is a necessary act in God's ipseity, intended by a primary intention (bi'l-qasd al-awal). The first emanation of existents is from Him and this is His decree (qadā'hu) and there is no absolute evil (lā sharr aslan) in it with the exception of what emanates hidden under the radiance of the first light. [...] Evils (shurūr) do not occur according to a primary intention but according to a secondary one (bi'l-qasd al-thān'yya)'.²⁸

Initially, the discourse on evil is addressed with references to the emanative scheme: evil (or impurity - *al-kadūrat*) emerges with the first emanated being and is said to be attached to its quiddity (*māhiyyat*) and to be generated by its ipseity (*huwiyya*). All causes in the emanative process are said to be led by their collisions towards evils which are necessary to themselves; this, Avicenna stresses, is nothing but God's *qadar* and His creation (*khalq*).²⁹ Interestingly, Avicenna uses the term creation rather than emanation in order to link his metaphysical idea on evil with the content of the successive Quranic verse (113:2):

'[I seek refuge] from the evil of created things'.

With reference to this verse, the philosopher explicates that evil is placed in an aspect (*nāhiyya*) of creation, according to a specific determination (*taqdīr*). This is so because, Avicenna explains, such

evil is generated only from the materiality (*ajsām*) of things which is due to divine destiny and not due to God's decree (*kānat al-ajsām min qadarhi lā min qadā'hi*).³⁰ This statement reveals a clear Neoplatonic undertone: in effect, Avicenna states that evil emerge in those beings which need to receive measure and determination (*al-shurūr al-lāzima fī ashyā' dhūāt al-taqdīr*) that is to say, those beings which possess a body (*badan*) and are therefore connected to matter.³¹

It is significant that, as Jules Janssens has emphasised,³² Avicenna discusses the issue of evil in both a moral and an ontological sense; it is the second connotation which has greater importance for the purpose of this article since the ontological perspective explores evil in relation to the Quranic treatment of the subject. As mentioned earlier, Avicenna observes that the primordial divine decree (*qadā'*) is free of evil and that it is exclusively when such a decree finds its concrete realization, i.e., on the level of destiny (*fī suq' al-qadar*), that evil appears. Avicenna generally conceives the divine decree (*qadā'*) and destiny (*qadar*) as respectively, the necessitating primary act of God - corresponding to the first stage of His emanatory process - and as the causal unleashing of beings following God's first causative act.³³ More specifically, in his *Risāla fī'l-qadā'*, Avicenna speaks of God's *qadā'* as His first and unique *hukm* which encompasses all things and from which all things derive till the end of time. God's *qadar* is described as His arrangement of things descending (and entering existence) from His decree 'one after the other'.³⁴ Avicenna's 'islamicity', as Janssens calls it, safeguards the vision of a Necessary Existent who allows the occurrence of evil only at the level of individual destinies; in other terms, evil can occur generally in the sub-lunary world (the only dimension in which disobedience can befall), and specifically in relation to those things which have a connection with matter (namely, all earthly beings as every being is nothing but a material compound). This means that in Avicenna's estimation, God does not get 'involved' in the direct creation of evil even if the latter is included in His decree. This demonstrates that the omnipotence of God is generally not threatened.³⁵

In the exegesis of *sūra* 113, Avicenna gives the general impression that matter, connected with corporeal creatures, is able to determine

the contours of the destinies of those things which are related to it. Avicenna, in fact, consistently specifies that the presence of evil is to be found in the 'region' of destiny, namely in the realm of existent beings whose future conditions are influenced by matter's dispositions. The potentiality of matter and its nature as a substrate and a receptacle previously discussed in metaphysical terms have shown that matter can be seen as contributing to the bringing into existence of the compound. This stance is linked to the notion of natural divine determinism: if matter facilitates the existence of the compound, then in Aristotelian terms, the nature of the material substance can be regarded as being responsible for determining what the material compound is in actuality, independently from any direct divine intervention. From a Qur'anic perspective, however, the authority of matter is simply apparent, as any degree of disobedience or any manifestation of evil are part of the predetermined divine decree responsible for the creation of everything that exists. Avicenna states:

'The daybreak shatters the darkness of privation by the light of existence (bi'l-nūr al-wujūd) which is the Necessary Existent, and evils are not at the primary level of His divine decree but at a secondary level of His destiny by order of the providence of the Lord of Dawn (fa-amr bi'l-isti'ādih bi- rabb al-falak), evils depending on what is created (al-khalq)'.³⁶

In this explanation, evil clearly falls within the confines of the divine plan for creation; creation, which in Avicennan terms means entrance into existence, implies a connection with corporeality and materiality. God's primary intention of creation leads to an inevitable connection with matter and evil, the latter it has to be remembered, only wanted by a secondary intention.

In some of his metaphysical works, Avicenna, adopts a Neoplatonic standpoint when he emphasizes that existence, as a result of the divine act of creation, clearly contrasts with the idea of nothingness (*'adam*) which is synonymous with 'privation of existence'.³⁷ The latter comes to be identified with evil in contrast to the concept of goodness which is linked to existence. Given that there is no good except in

existence, evil comes to simply mean that perfection is not realized. This reasoning implies the fact that if something is in the status of mere possibility it can be classified as evil (only what is in actuality being classifiable as good). Predictably, this principle affects matter: when considered as prime matter, therefore removed from any form, matter is an 'abode of non-existence'; it can be seen as privation and, as such, a principle of evil.³⁸ Evil is, however, overruled by the Necessary Existent who sets possible things into existence: evil-potentiality evanesces into divine goodness-existentiality.³⁹

Avicenna employs the Qurān to theoretically substantiate the above view: he looks at Qurān (13:3) '[I seek refuge] from the evil of darkness' and explains the term darkness herewith present as the shadows of non-existence of the possible quiddities which are overturned by – as the philosopher states - '*the [divine] overflowing (ifāda) of the Light of existence*'.⁴⁰ With this statement, Avicenna implicitly links the inner possibility of matter to both darkness and non-existence which are replaceable by the divine emanation of Light-existence.⁴¹

Avicenna continues his comment on *sūra* 113 referring to the verses 4 and 5. In this context, he tackles the notion of evil from a moral perspective by explaining that evil finds its abode in the dispositions of the human soul and its incapability to detach from bodily matter and its dictates. Avicenna believes that the subject which in the Quranic verses is seeking refuge is the human soul; he explains this by saying that the human *nafs* inclines to liaise with the dusky (*ghāsaq*) and murky (*mutakaddira*) animal powers, thus connecting itself with matter which is the source of darkness, evil and privation (*al-madda hiya manba' al-zulma wa'l-sharr wa'l-'adam*).⁴² In the analysis of the above verses, Avicenna implicitly employs his metaphysical perspective on the nature of the human soul and its faculties: the human soul can stay pure if it manages to tame the internal material senses which belong to the animal soul – amongst which are the common sense (*al-hiss al-mushtarak*), imagination (*mutakhayyila*), and estimation (*wahm*)⁴³ - and if it can make knowledge of the intellect to prevail over lower faculties.

The 'light' mentioned in Avicenna's exegesis which is said to overflow from the Necessary Existent can be read from a moral and a gnoseological standpoint: the Qur'anic revelation calls upon the human souls and encourages them to escaping the powers of 'darkness'; but to achieve this the human souls cannot simply rely on the first three levels of thought which in men are linked to the animal powers (sensation, imagination and estimation); willing to flee the darkness of ignorance (or non-knowledge), the human soul must strive in order detach itself from the injunctions of materiality and use intuition (*hads*). Intuition occurs when the soul is able to subjugate 'the objective data of the common sense and the two commemorative powers to the judgment of the intellect'.⁴⁴

Intuition can be attained only when the soul is in conjunction with the Agent Intellect and such a conjunction can be reached exclusively through the human rational faculty.⁴⁵ The reason for this is that the human rational soul is, like all intellects, immaterial and immortal; intelligibles like the Agent Intellect can only be perceived by faculties deprived of any material substrate.⁴⁶ It is exactly through intuition that knowledge (*ilm*) becomes authentic gnosis (*ma'ārifā*); only once the human soul has liberated itself from the imprisoning legacy of the body (and its materiality) it can engage in a communicative liaison with the intelligences that are ready to share with the soul their knowledge which pertains to them as cognizant beings in the emanative order. Clearly, by removing themselves from the limiting dictates of matter and its inclination towards evil, human souls are invited to morally choosing light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance as maintained in the Qurān.

Conclusion

Avicenna's attempt to harmonize the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic underpinnings of his metaphysical stances with the Revealed Word is reasonably successful. The Qurān serves as the edifice upon which Avicenna weaves his personal philosophical discourse which is scattered here and there with *Kalāmīc* reminiscences, in his attempt to provide his readers with a product that is certainly open to criticism and

dissent, but also undeniably 'Islamic'.

Avicenna masterly draws attention to his unconventional idea of the disobedience of matter by integrating Quranic dogmas (God is omnipotent and obeyed by heavens and earth) with metaphysically-based theories (the relation of matter and form within the compound and the emanative order). He presents the phenomenon of *'isyān al-mādda* as being embedded in the Quranic discourse on divine *qadā' wa'l-qadar*: the divine decree deterministically unravels through the elements of the emanative scheme and it encompasses everything including the initial matter's disposition not to comply with the divine command.

When Avicenna adopts the Quranic perspective which identifies evil as being part of the divine creation, he accentuates the influence of his Neoplatonic heritage by way of addressing the problem of the theodicy from a moral and an ontological perspective: on the one hand he speaks of the human souls' need to remit their salvation to divine guidance (of the Agent Intellect); on the other hand, he connects the concept of evil with that of privation through their common link with matter.

It might be argued that Avicenna's metaphysical discourse not simply finds legitimacy within the Qurān, but it succeeds in attaining something unexpected: the arguments adopted and the techniques employed for the Quranic exegesis lead the reader to think that the revealed Scripture could, or rather, should be interpreted through Avicenna's personal metaphysical perceptions.

Endnotes

¹ Avicenna, *Dānīsh Nāma-i 'alā'ī: Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. E. Mu'īn, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i Āsār-i Millī, 1952, p. 10, translated by Paraviz Morewedge in *The Metaphysica of Avicenna*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York: Columbia University Press, 1973, p. 15. Aristotle explains substance in similar terms at the beginning of his *Categories*, chapter 2. Avicenna understands substance as what subsists by itself and as what is not in a subject (*mawdū'*), and he distinguishes between the notions of subject and receptacle (*mahall*); the former is understood as what has become subsistent by itself and becomes a cause through which something, different from it, comes to be. The latter is seen

as something in which some other thing inheres, so as to acquire a certain state (*hal*) through it. Avicenna explains: ‘the substance of *hayūla* [...] is a substance disposed (*musta'id*) to receive things. The substantiality it has does not make it actual, but only prepares it to become something actual through form. [...] The meaning of saying that it is a substance is nothing but to say that it is a ‘something’ which is not in a subject. The affirmation is that it is ‘a something’ [and] its character is that it is prepared [for the reception] of all things. Its form consists in its being prepared, receptive.’ See Avicenna, *Al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyyāt: The Metaphysics of the Healing*. A parallel English-Arabic Text. Translated and edited by M. E. Marmura, Provo (Utah): Brigham Young University Press, 2005, p. 54. According to Avicenna, forms exist only in a receptacle but not in a subject – hence, the primary substantiality of form as that which is not in a subject– whilst matter has a negative sense of substantiality as ‘a something’ which is a receptacle. A similar view is advanced in Avicenna’s *Kitāb al-Hudūd*, *Le Livre des Définitions*, edition and translation by A. M. Goichon, Cairo: Publications de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1963, p.17, note 6. The relation between form and actuality, matter and potentiality is clearly expressed by Avicenna in *Risāla fī'l-'ishq*, in A. F. M. Mehren (ed.), *Traité Mystiques d'Abou 'Alī al-Hsain b. Abdallah b. Sīnā*, Leyde: E. J. Brill, III fascicule, 1889-1899, p. 6; English translation by E. L., Fackenheim, ‘A Treatise on Love by Ibn Sīnā,’ *Medieval Studies*, 7 (1945), pp. 214-15.

² A. M. Goichon, *La Distinction de l'Essence et de l'Existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, Paris:Desclée de Brouwer, 1937, p. 20.

³ Al-Fārābī, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Nasr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' arā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila*, a revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary by Richard Walzer, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 101-35.

⁴ Elements of the emanation scheme are traceable in all the major works of Avicenna. See *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, pp. 330-34; *Al-Najāt fī al-Hikma al-Manṭiqiyya wa'l-Tab'iyya wa al-Ilāhiya*, Tehran: Muḥyi'l-Dīn al-Kurdī, 1967, p. 274.

⁵ Avicenna, *Al-Mubāhathāt*, Bīdārfar (ed.), Qum: Intisharāt-e Bīdār, 1992, pp. 92 and 94. In this text Avicenna argues that what belongs properly to matter is the quality of reception (*qabūl*).

⁶ On these argument see M. Marmura, ‘Some Questions regarding Avicenna’s Theory of the Temporal Originations of the Human Rational Soul’, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 18 (2008), pp. 124-25.

⁷ The philosopher states that matter does not contribute in the existence of each form except (*illā*) for the fact that it is indispensably needed for form to exist with it, this being the specific characteristic of a receptive cause (*al-'illa al-qābiliyya*). *Ibid.*, p. 66-7.

⁸ Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Hidāya li-Ibn Sīnā*, M. 'Abduh (ed.), Cairo: Maktabat al-

Qāirat al-ḥadīṭa, 1974, pp. 243-44. For a classification of causes in Avicenna see J. Jolivet, 'La Repartition des Causes chez Aristote et Avicenne: le sens d'un Déplacement', in *Lectionum Varietates: Hommage à Paul Vignaux (1904-1987)*. J. Jolivet, Z. Kaluza, A. De Libera (ed.), Paris: Vrin, 1991, pp. 49-65.

- ⁹ B., Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, pp. 36-7, and 88-9. Avicenna, following the Aristotelian distinction between material and formal cause, distinguishes matter and form as being causes responsible for the subsistence of a thing. He refers to the wood and the form of the bed as parts responsible for the existence of the bed; the wood is nothing but the potential to constitute the bed (potential-material causality); the form of the bed is that by which the bed is what it is. See, *Kitāb al-Hidāya*, pp. 243-44.
- ¹⁰ Qurān 2:117; 16:40; 16:48-50; 36:82; 40:68.
- ¹¹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, translated by S. MacKena, B. S. Page, London: Penguin Books, 1991, pp. 67-78.
- ¹² References to Quranic verses are from Yusuf 'Alī, 'The Meaning of the Holy Qurān', Amana Publications: Maryland, USA, 10th edition, 1999, reprinted in 2004. References to Avicenna's interpretation of chapter 41 verses 11 and 12 are from J. Michot 'Le Commentaire Avicennien du Verset: "Puis Il se Tourna vers le Ciel"', *Mideo*, 14 (1980), pp.317-28, Arabic text pp. 319-21.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ References are to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb (al-Taḥṣīr al-Kabīr)*, Cairo, 1890, part VII, p. 343.
- ¹⁵ See for instance Qurān 16:48-50. In the Qurān the term *qadā'* is used to indicate a measure, a judgment and a decision. Its verbal form *qadā'* is usually employed to signify 'to decree', 'to judge', and 'to accomplish'. Speculative theology (*Kalām*), in particular, embeds this term with a sense of predetermination, by referring to it as a divine 'universal' decree; *qadā'* is conceived as a perfect and precise divine plan, projected by God *in aeternitate*, determining all things and occurrences (on these arguments see 'Abd al-Qahir Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*, Flügel (ed.), Leipzig, 1845). *Qadar* generally refers to the divine decree operating in time; it is often understood as fate, destiny and as being determined or fixed. In the Qurān it appears often in the verbal form of *qaddara* meaning to determine (something) ineluctably or according to a specific measure. See, L. Gardet 'Al-kadā' wa'l-kadar' in *Encyclopaedia Islamica* second edition.
- ¹⁶ C. Belo, 'Ibn Sīnā on Chance in the Physics', in J. McGinnis and D. C. Reisman (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004, pp. 25-41; See also idem, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007, p. 47.
- ¹⁷ *Li-yakūn al-taw'ū 'āi'd ilā madda al-falak wa'l- karāha 'āi'd ilā madda al-ard.*

‘Le Commentaire Avicennien du Verset’, Arabic text p. 320.

¹⁸ *Maḥāṣin al-Ghayb*, p. 343.

¹⁹ ‘Le Commentaire Avicennien du Verset’, Arabic text, p. 317.

²⁰ Avicenna’s position is particularly reminiscent of the Ash’arite view on atoms and accidents usually referred to as ‘occasionalism’. Based on the idea that everything in the world consist of atoms (*jawāhir*) and accidents (*a’rād*) which are combined in the bodies (*ajsām*, sing. *jism*), Ash’arite occasionalism intended to vindicate the absolute power of God and to ascribe to His direct intervention not only the coming into being of things, but also their persistence in existence from one instant to another. The Ash’arites found in the most characteristic feature of atoms - their perishable nature - a perfect tool to fulfil their intent to depict God as both the ultimate provider and sustainer of existence. Following al-Ash’arī’s claim that ‘everything in the world comes into existence through God’s fiat [...] and ceases through His commanding it to cease’ (‘Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, Istanbul: Maṭba’at al-Dawla, 1928, p. 50) the Ash’arites believe accidents are, like atoms, perishable by nature and that they belong to the class of the ‘transient things’ of this world, referred to in the Qurān. The existence of the bodies is made contingent upon the inherence in them of the accident of being (*kawn*) whilst their endurance is seen as dependent on the accident of duration (*baqā’*) which, not being capable of duration *per se*, presupposes the existence of other accidents of duration *ad infinitum*. Because of this infinite dependence, according to the Ash’arites, the durability of either bodies or accidents has to be referred to a different principle of durability (beyond accidentality). The Ash’arites identify this principle with God’s own decree to preserve in being or destroy at will the atoms or ultimate components of the world. Accordingly, both the accidents and the atoms depend for their duration on God’s decree to repeat the process of their creation as long as He pleases. Any possibility of a transitive action between two bodies is denied and the changes inherent in the bodies are explained only as the result of God’s will ceasing to create the same accident in the body. On these arguments see R. M. Frank, ‘Bodies and Atoms: the Ash’arite Analysis’, M. E. Marmura (ed.), *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, Albany: State University of New York press, 1984, pp. 39-53; idem, ‘The Structure of Created Causality according to al-Ash’arī. An analysis of the *Kitāb al-Luma’*’, *Studia Islamica*, 25 (1966), pp. 13-75.

²¹ Avicenna explains the case of heated water in which the heat present in the water is generated with aversion on behalf of the water; this is the time in which water is commanded (*mā’ mūra*) to receive, for example, the form of air. ‘Le Commentaire Avicennien du Verset’, Arabic text, p. 319.

²² ‘Le Commentaire Avicennien du Verset’, p. 320.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ The Ash'arites, the theological school which mainly contributed to the shaping of Islamic orthodoxy, believed that God is the Creator of both good and evil. They supported the idea that what is created by God is without a reason (*sabab*) which makes it necessary and that God is not bound to any compulsion or duty towards mankind (what He commands being necessarily right, and what He condemns being necessarily wrong). On these arguments, see McCarthy, R. J. (ed.), *The Theology of al-Ash'arī: the Arabic texts of al-Ash'arī's Kitāb al-Luma' and Risāla Istiḥṣān al-khawḍfi 'ilm al-kalām*, Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953, pp. 59-60, 63, 67; Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī: Exposé de la doctrine d'al-Aḥarī*, D. Gimaret (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Maḥer, 1987, p. 131.
- ²⁷ Al-'Aṣī, *al-Taḥsīn al-qur'ānī wa'l-lughā al-sūfiyya fī falsafat Ibn Sīnā*, Beirut, 1983, p. 116.
- ²⁸ Ibid. See also J. Janssens, 'Avicenna and the Qur'ān: a Survey of his Qur'ānic Commentaries', *Mideo*, 25-26 (2004), p. 191.
- ²⁹ Al-'Asī, *al-Taḥsīn al-qur'ānī*, p. 116. In *al-Najāt* (p. 325), Avicenna states: 'God wills (*jurīdu*) things and wants evil (*al-sharr*) too, in an accidental way (*'alā al-wajh alladhī bi'l-'arad*) [...] Good (*al-khayr*) is decreed (*muḥtadan*) by itself (*bi'l-dhāt*) and evil is decreed by accident (*bi'l-'arad*), and everything is according to determination (*bi'l-qadar*).' The Ash'arite view of divine *qadā'* encompassing good and evil, predetermining salvation and damnation, recompense and punishments is perfectly respected within Avicenna's construct in which God wills good as well as evil. Nonetheless, in the above quotation Avicenna significantly uses the word determination (*qadar*) instead of *qadā'* in order to stress that the philosophical 'accidental' evil, although decreed by God, is rooted within the possible nature of evil itself because evil is connected with matter and the secondary causes. This means that all existents cannot be what they are without evil (including forms of bad belief or impiety): evil, in fact, is encompassed within the divine arrangement of creation.
- ³⁰ Al-'Aṣī, *al-Taḥsīn al-qur'ānī*, p. 116.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² J. Janssens, 'Avicenna and the Qur'ān', p. 190.
- ³³ *Chance and Determinism*, pp. 114-15.
- ³⁴ Avicenna, *Risāla fī'l-qadā'*, in *Lettre au Vizier Abū Sa'ad*, edition, translation introduction and notes by Y. Michot, Beirut: Al-Bouraq, 2000, pp. 103-05.
- ³⁵ This perspective underscores the exegesis of the previous *sūra* (41:11-12) in which Avicenna's Islamic perspective shines bright when he speaks of an omnipotent God who is ultimately obeyed by heaven and earth, as stated in the

Qurān, despite the ‘temporary’ disobedience of matter.

³⁶ Al-‘Asī, *al-Tafsīr al-qur’ānī*, p. 117.

³⁷ According to Avicenna, ‘privation is not absolute, rather it is privation in relation to existence, for it is the privation of something with inclination and preparation (*tahayyu’ wa’l-isti’dād*) in a specific matter’. *Al-Shifā’*: *Al-Samā’al-Tabī’ī*, p. 92.

³⁸ Avicenna, *Risāla fī’l-’ishq*, p. 6; English translation, p. 215.

³⁹ The facts that God is the only Necessary Existent by Himself and that perfection equals existence make God - as ultimate Perfection and Actuality - an uttermost goodness. Goodness is nothing else than the absence of non-realized possibilities in *actuality*: it is a synonymous of the perfect actualization of existence. God is, therefore, ‘willing’ what is good (and best in its being actual) at all given times and from eternity, and this implies that God ‘wills’ emanation over non-emanation, emanation being actuality (or existence) over the possibility (or non-existence). *Kitāb al-Hidāya*, pp. 271-72 commented on by O. Lizzini, ‘La Metafisica del Libro della Guida’, Presentazione e Traduzione della terza parte (*bāb*) del *Kitāb al-Hidāya* di Avicenna’, *Le Muséon, Revue d’Etudes Orientales*, 108 (1995), p. 380.

⁴⁰ Al-‘Aṣī, *al-Tafsīr al-qur’ānī*, p. 118.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116. With this observations in mind, it can be argued that in Avicenna’s analysis of *sūra* 41:11-12, evil might be placed in the instant in which matter’s disposition (prior to its conjunction to any form) makes it disobedient; more precisely, evil can be found in matter’s disposition towards the reception of all possible forms, and consequently, in matter’s inclination towards everything that is not in *actu* but it is merely possible.

⁴² Al-‘Asī, *al-Tafsīr al-qur’ānī*, p. 118.

⁴³ The first is the faculty which has sense perception; the second has the function to combine and separate images and forms; the third faculty has multiple purposes such as to perceive the non-sensible attributes of things and to determine a course of action. See D. Gutas, ‘Intellect without Limit: the Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna’, *Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale Intellect et Imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale*, Brepols: Société Internationale pour l’Etude de la Philosophie Médiévale, 2006, pp. 336-37.

⁴⁴ J. Janssens, ‘Avicenna and the Qur’ān’, p. 191.

⁴⁵ *Kitāb al-Hidāya*, pp. 293-94.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 295-96.

Some Reflections upon Islamophobia as the ‘Totally Other’

Seyed Javad Miri

Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies (Tehran-Iran)

Center for Critical Research on Religion (West Newton-
USA)

Abstract

In this essay I would like to look at the question of Islamophobia by looking at various pro and con positions in relation to Islam and the “fear” which some ascribe to it, which, in return, seems to back up their antagonistic or hostile views and actions on Muslims as a community and Islam as a religion.

Keywords: Islamophobia, other, Islam, fear, Muslim, community.

Islamophobia in the context of *Kulturwissenschaften*

The fact that history of the term “Islamophobia” is very recent explains a sociological fact that societies which today display Islamophobic tendencies are in a very peculiar sense trying to come to terms with various socio-demographic transformations which are occurring globally and locally and it seems Muslims are at the forefront of these colossal transformations, either as subjects/agents of changes or the objects of changes. Apart from this sociological observation one can realize that the term Islamophobia is a neologism used to express fear of Islam, which allegedly leads to hostility toward or prejudice against Muslims. Some people believe it bears similarity to Anti-Semitism in concept, for others it reminds of the Crusade Mentality, which grew in

the Middle Ages due to ignorance and socio-political rivalries between various empires. However those who are in favor of marginalization of Islam (read Muslims) within European as well as American societies don't consider "marginalization policies" towards Muslims as a mark of any phobia as the proponents of this stance attempt to resort to history in order to substantiate their claim and the nub of their argument is that the historical record fails to show Islam as a religion of peace. Yet this position fails to explain how we could corroborate this dubious historical perspective in the light of Sufism- not mentioning other traditions within Islam, which have given birth to tremendous civilizational systems of intellectual/architectural/political/cultural traditions- which has generated one of the world's greatest mystical traditions.

This naïve historical approach is founded upon a dubious claim that Islam did not promote peace but violence. In other words, the complex histories of Muslim societies during the past fifteen centuries suddenly evaporate into a vacuum and instead we are faced with a very contemporary *mediawise* construction that does not bear any resemblance to the historical Islam (which ironically this historical stance attempts to study). But the approach provided by this school is not only confined to Islam as such and it envelops **religion as a way of life**. In other words, once we accept the fundamental critiques of this naïve historical position then we should admit that Christianity did not promote peace, sanity and mental health either. Seen in this broad perspective then it seems the very question of Islamophobia is not essentially a question about Islam per se but about the category which is universally considered as Religion and it seems Islam is the only ideology that has not lost its metaphysical unity as a cultural fountain and Muslims are the sole agents of resistance in the very broad sense of the terms both of "agency" and "resistance".

Now the next step in our analysis should be focused upon the semantics of this question and those who are subjected to these vulgar policies and possibly to find out the reasons behind this sociological problem before historicizing or psychoanalyzing Muslims in the global context of today. I, in other words, think we need to ask what Islamophobia

means and who the subject of this fear is before passing any verdict upon the object of this fear. When discussing Islamophobia some critics focus on the global aspects of violence which have been constructed by certain corporate interests groups in core countries such as America, England, France and Germany in relation to what has been termed as Jihadi movements, which is not but reflections of colonial enterprises among/against Muslims. Once they have been successful in “fabricating” these violent schools under the banner of “Islam” then the proponents of evangelical neo-Conservatism step in by arguing that Christ did not preach violence, and that the New Testament does not contain any advocating of violence as the term is understood as though Islam is a religion of violence. In other words, this is ideologically related to the historical school but takes a step further in operationalizing the tenets of the school within the context of world politics by employing all the forces which Corporate Capitalism has at its disposal in transforming any sites of resistance which may be able to pose a challenge before **corporalization of the nations** around the globe.

But the historical analyses are not very monolithic either as one can find various positions within what is naively called the **historical school**. In other words, to study the history of Islam would not automatically generate one single answer without any qualifications. On the contrary, within postmodern historical schools there are few who could by certainty state that “historical facts” speak of something without mentioning the problems of discourse, interest and power. As for modern historical schools we are broadly divided into **presentist** and **historicist** positions respectively which are, to be more specific, among themselves in disagreement and additionally they fall into various different schools that may sometimes even be in disagreements even on the primary questions of **background assumptions** as well as **methodological principles**. In early 19th century one could witness, for instance, the German historical school that was founded upon the naïve belief that we need to find facts and let, so to speak, the facts speak for themselves. In other words, what contemporary proponents of Islamophobia say about historical facts related to Islam seem not to be as **factual** as we may think at the first sight as there are many scholars

who look at these “facts” and draw diametrically opposite conclusions, which may, in turn, lead to different outcomes than the one presented by those who argue Islam is equal to *violence- perspective*. To put it differently the question of “fact” within human sciences has undergone many great transformations and the study of the history of Islam (which happens to be part of global humankind’s history too i.e. people and societies as diverse as Russia, Arabia and Iran or India and China or Bosnia and contemporary France and 15th century Spain, contemporary America or Australia and so on and so forth) could not be approached independent from these scholarly innovations within human and historical sciences.

Of course it should be mentioned that some historians attempt to distinguish between what they term as “historical record” and “historical fact” and by so doing assumingly overcoming the postmodern critique of narrative paradigms as well as perspectival theories. But contemporary Islamophobic writers rather chose to believe that such a distinction is valid based on the belief that the historical records are essentially separable from historical facts. The Islamophobic writers who seem to put themselves outside both modernist as well as postmodernist academic paradigms argue that a record needs interpretation. Unlike modernists and postmodernists they are willing to grant that the historical record has truly discernible contours and is meaningful and true. They refute much of academic historical analysis by arguing that it is a blend of **idealism** and **naïve realism** that lies behind and fuels much academic/disciplinary historical criticism, i.e., if you cannot have seen it or been there, it cannot be, and even if you were there what you are dealing with is the mental phenomena attending perceptions of something. But this position has failed so far to come up even with one single historical treatise which could be worthy of the name “authority” among historians and it is highly doubtful the axioms they have drawn in studying, primarily, religion (and transcendental issues) and secondarily Islam, which in their view poses a civilizational danger to the global order (and mainly is supported by media- theorists or think-tank writers connected to corporate media empires such as BBC, CNN, and alike).

One of the greatest achievements of contemporary philosophical imagination or as C Wright Mills (in **Private Troubles and Public Issues**) terms as “Sociological Imagination” is the imaginative/analytical ability to deconstruct complex phenomena by unearthing the complicated webs of interdependences, apart from the spiritual interdependence (that was realized by great many sages such as Saadi, Hafez, Rumi, Ferdusi, Fuzuli, Shahriyar, Vahed, Shakespeare and Nizami of the human family along the troublesome history of humankind) which our contemporary global reality encompasses.

Having this remark in mind about the deconstructive approach we can take a second look at Islamophobia. The term Islamophobia refers to both a subject and an object. The subject seems to be the European white and the object is directed at the “other” who happens to be (in most cases) non-white and (often) non-European. But now the question is why is to come to terms with the other is such a difficult task? To understand this current situation we can approach the problem from four different points of departure: historical, sociological, philosophical and economic. In other words, we can deconstruct how Europe has been conceptualized (mainly as a Judea-Christian and then secular entity where Islam is perceived as the other); sociologically we can think of the racial issues which lie at the heart of the encounter between various races and issues such as demographical decline of whites and efforts to assimilate or integrate the new-comers; philosophically we can approach questions of worldviews related to Enlightenment tradition which holds power among the elites and intelligentsia in Western Europe and America vis-à-vis Islam when it is employed as a political force; and economically we can divide the issues into two realms of *haves* versus *haves-not* within Europe and developing countries of Muslims versus developed countries of Western Europe and America which attempt to follow imperial and colonial/neo-colonial policies in order to safeguard the (anti-emancipative) liberal hegemony under a capitalist system which only reproduces poverty for the poor and wealth for the rich (a la Ander Gunder Frank and Wallerstein). Then the question of Islamophobia could be recasted in this complex context where various factors are at work and without being analytical we may fall for stereotypical or media-construed

propagandist blanket statements. Once we have deconstructed the question within these parameters then we can realize that most of discussions on Islamophobia lack “broad outlook” and suffer from “myopic vista” in relation to serious civilizational questions that Islam poses before-not only Muslims but-humanity at large both in terms of interreligious dialogue and intercivilizational engagements.

There is another position within the camp of Islamophobic writers that attempts to delegitimize Islam in terms of metatheory, namely the idea that Islam is a false faith, a religion that doesn't correspond to reality. In other words, the proponents of this argument assume that there is an “objective structure” of reality which is not represented by Islam as it is clearly represented by Christianity or other world religions (e.g. Karl Jaspers) except Islam. Although they employ philosophical terminology however they don't display any substantial commitments to the philosophical arguments if these arguments don't serve their literal readings of the particular sacred tradition they may adhere to. What do I mean by this? The relation between reality and our conceptual constructions and the accuracy as well as degrees of correspondency are of great significance within philosophy in general and positivism as well as post positivist philosophies in particular where some would go as extreme as to deny any essential sense of correspondency between reality as an objective order and mind as a mirror of that reality, on the one hand, and those who argue for the diametrical opposite stance which claims our concepts as well as our mental faculties are expressing the very structures of the objective order. To put it differently, to argue that Islam is a false faith and does not correspond to reality are both unphilosophical and untheological. It is unphilosophical due to the fact that the notion of correspondency is not an innocent term within contemporary philosophical debates and it is untheological because of the fact that within theological debates the notions of falsity and correspondency are not treated only in reference to empirical level of reality. On the contrary, what we call “Reality” is a combination of empirical, rational and intellectual levels of being which have not been conceptualized very profoundly within contemporary philosophical contexts of modernity or postmodernity yet. However, apart from this metatheoretical critique, we are faced with a

paradox here in terms of the Islamophobic writers who demonize Islam as a religion. Almost all debates on Islamophobia or Islam as the source of Fundamental Fear in Europe or America draw upon the key critiques composed by Marx, Comte, Freud, Weber, Feuerbach, Kant, Otto and Durkheim. Before assessing the intellectual relevance of Islamophobia it is of great importance to glance through the popular views on religion within disciplinary academic discourses, which would assist us to debunk the claims of Islamophobic writers about the dangers of Islam to the global peace and justice, on the one hand, and the alleged falsity of Islam, on the other hand.

***Religionskritik* and the Reliability of Islamophobic Claims**

According to Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus, problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease, but merely a symptom as it is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. This is the origin of his comment that religion is the “opium of the masses”- but following the Marxian critique would not lead us to consider, for instance, Christianity a true religion and Islam as a false religion, as his critique is leveled at the category which is considered religion even he was fathoming his critique from within and against Christian religion. (McLellan, 1987)

Another dominant outlook on religion within modern context is the Kantian approach. One of the most famous parts of Kant's philosophical theology is his critique of the traditional theoretical arguments for God's existence. He states that there are three approaches and none of the arguments for God's existence are possible, from a theoretical perspective. Kant tells us that at some future time we shall show that the moral laws do not merely presuppose the existence of a supreme being, but also, as themselves in a different connection absolutely necessary, justify us in postulating it, though indeed, only from a practical point of view. Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* considers the postulate of God that “arises out of morality” without being the basis of moral obligation. Morality thus

leads ineluctably to religion, through which extends itself to the idea of a powerful moral Lawgiver, outside of mankind, for Whose will that is the final end (of creation) which at the same time can and ought to be man's final end. In this approach theoretically we may not be able to prove God but practically we are faced with the question of morality, which leads us inevitably to the notion of God who is what creation is all about. But again to follow the Kantian approach we cannot arrive at the falsity of Islam or the lack of correspondency between Islam and Reality as at the heart of Kantian theology we can discern two towering notions of creation and morality which are the common denominator of all world religions in general and Abrahamic tradition in particular. (Kant, 1978)

The third position is the one represented by Feuerbach. He critiqued religion and Christianity in his 1841 book *Das Weses des Christentums* (The Essence of Christianity). Feuerbach defined religion as a sort of "dream" and argued that "spiritual development" was more about humans than about gods. Basically, his argument was that belief in gods is a product of anthropomorphism because humans project their own ideals and images upon nature. In other words, religion was essentially about nothing as the essence of religions is what one cannot find in religious teachings at all. In order to rectify this futile search for the essence of human existence then the best would be to establish the socialism which discards God and focuses on man. (Feuerbach, 1957) In other words, to follow this position we cannot charge Islam as a religion of futility but save other religious traditions as paths of usefulness.

The fourth position is that of Max Weber, which some view it as a respond to the specter of Marx, namely if Karl Marx provides us with an account in which religion serves merely as social opiate and agent of social control, Max Weber offers us a different vision, one in which religion can in some instances be an independent variable and, as such, a source of social change. Weber's sociology of religion, nonetheless, is notable for its claims that religion can be a source of social change, as opposed to either (a) merely a reflection of material causes of change or (b) a source of (oppressive) stability. (Weber, 1966) Here again one

cannot exempt Islam as a source of change by delegitimizing the transformative power of Islam, which has been considered as one of the most politically- laden sacred paradigms.

The fifth stance belongs to Rudolph Otto. Rudolph Otto claimed that the "sacred" was essentially anti-rational. The appeal of religion is to be found on an emphasis on "mystery" beyond the empirical- what Otto called the "numinous" literally, beyond the rational and ethical. This sacred or "holy" experience that is "quite beyond the everyday" sees the "mystery of the mass" and the "conversion experience of being born again". It is a feeling of fascination, mixed with peculiar dread. (Otto, 1993) Once again it is needless to discern aspects of Islam which may be in harmony with this position and hard to ignore or rule out.

The sixth perspective is the one represented by Durkheim. He regarded religion as of vital importance in all societies, as it provided a key function in assisting social cohesion, he was concerned with what religion was and secondly the role it played in human society without even once problematizing the truth-claim of religions. To Durkheim, religion was a "social thing" par excellence outside of each individual, waiting for him/her at birth to help mould the individual into society. He saw religion as related to a radical division of all human experiences of Sacred and Profane. Durkheim never asked what lay behind religious ritual and worship, the attitudes of awe and reverence. Lurking behind all these symbols, Durkheim saw the group itself- society- "God is the deification of society" and religion is "the sacralization of society's requirements for human behavior." Society, to Durkheim, was greater than the individual and it gave him/her strength and support and made thing possible and meaningful. The worship of God is the disguised worship of society, the great entity upon which the individual depends. (Durkheim, 1994) Based on the aforementioned statements one could not assume any difference between religions and Islam, so to speak, could not be singled out as an exception to the rule.

The seventh position is the one proposed by Zygmund Freud. Freud considered, generally speaking, religion as an Illusion or as a neurotic symptom, which could be psychoanalyzed. Freud's basic question in

relation to religion circulates around the nature of prohibition. However Freud believed, more so towards the end of his life, that there is a truth in religion but what that truth is was not analyzed or conceptualized by him as it was earlier done in relation to Religion as an Illusion.(Freud, 1962)

The eighth standpoint is that of William James from America. Although James called his lectures a “descriptive survey” of the varieties of religious experience, they in fact represent an early defense of his pragmatic view of religion. James sought to articulate a defense of the *religious impulse* of human beings, arguing against “medical materialism,” which would reduce religion to abnormal states of mind rooted in physiology; transcendental idealist and neo-Hegelian philosophies, which threatened to reduce religion to an intellectual exercise; and institutional religions, which sought to place ritual and dogma ahead of individual experience. Against those who would dismiss religious experience as psychologically or physiologically pathological, James argued for an assessment of its value in terms suggested by his conception of the pragmatic theory of truth: Beliefs or ideas are true if they “work”, that is, if they are useful. Thus, in *The Varieties*, James claims that religion should neither be arbitrarily privileged nor dismissed but should be judged according to its usefulness in achieving some valued end. Religious experiences and beliefs, in James’s well-known words, should be judged “by their fruits... not by their roots.” In James’s view, beliefs- like scientific hypotheses- are always conditional, fallible, and subject to experimental testing. This is true of religious beliefs no less than other beliefs. (James, 1929)

The last position on religion is that of the French Positivist thinker A. Comte who argued that advanced human cultures before arriving to the modern era had progressed from crude views of divinity, passing through three theological stages of fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism. In other words, religion has no relevance to the modern world, and its image will thus have to be regarded as a mere relic of the past, with no place in the scheme of modern knowledge and no bearing

on the human existence as **spiritual beliefs** are a product of social evolution. (Caird, 1893)

After this brief presentation of the current dominant views on religion within the secular academic context we can easily discern that the key theorists either consider religion as a mere illusion or of functional import and not a matter of rational analysis but of moral significance. In other words, those Islamophobic writers who attempt to corroborate their discourses on modern disciplinary paradigms are doomed to failure from the very outset as none of the above position lends itself to a discrediting of Islam. If, for instance, one follows the Marxian critique then he should explain away all religions by finding the sociological factors behind the emergence of Islam within Europe and America and in this paradigm he, like many Christian Fundamentalists, cannot save or hold on to Christianity as a religion either. On the other hand, if he, for example, is a Durkheimian then he cannot construct his critique against Islam based on the "Falsity Assumption" or the "Absence of Correspondence" between Islam and Reality as within this theoretical system the veracity of religion is not at stake but its functionality. In other words, since the emergence of modern sociological imaginations (a la Durkheim, Weber, Freud, Marx,...) intellectuals have come to approach the question of religion and its veracity in a totally different way than the theological approaches which were predominant among the intellectual elites. Although Marx and Freud presented religion as either an opium or illusion however the dominant view among sociologists and anthropologists within academia have been one of Weberian or/and Durkheimian which simply mean: We cannot say anything about the veracity of religion (as theology or even philosophy could claim to do) but we can look at its subjective value or functional possibilities (a la Talcott Parsons). Seen in this regard then we cannot state whether Islam is false or truthful but we can however approach the question of Islamophobia within European/American societies in another light, namely in relation to Xenophobia. In other words, we can ask whether Islamophobia is a kind of Xenophobia.

Islamophobia or Xenophobia: the ‘Totally Other’ is Islam

Within human and social sciences the term Xenophobia has come to denote a phobic attitude towards strangers or foreigners. The Greek lived at the fringe of Iranian Empire and felt always threatened and at times swallowed up by this mighty empire. The fear was part of their national psyche and this xenophobic element was appropriated by later Europeans who claimed to be the heirs of Greek without adhering to the transcendental principles of the Hellenic Culture. This fear of stranger has come to be like a second nature for Europeans and up to this very day alive in their languages and constitutions. For instance, in English when we want to address someone from a different country we call him or her a “Foreigner” that is composed of two terms, i.e. Foe and Reign. That is to say a person who is resident of a land which is not ours and what is not ours should surely be a foe to us. This Anglo-Saxon mentality did hold sway the modern world for over 150 years and it has been a cause of much conflict in contemporary era too. This fear of the “other” in Germanic world is expressed in the form of legal constitution which is based on “Blood” and carries the tribal elements of ancient clan mentality and commonly expressed in the forms of “racism” and “color” in contemporary Germanic and Scandinavian societies. By looking at all Euro-American societies of today we can easily discern various forms of Xenophobia (such as the persecution of Gypsies, Blacks, Muslims in Spain, Jews in Spain and pre-World War II so on) which today has got an ideological dimension which only targets people due to their faith. Xenophobia is not only fear which-like in the case of Greek states before the mighty power of Iran- had a real object but it could have an internal/moral dimension too. That is to say, it could be based on “hatred”. Xenophobia is hatred and fear of foreigners. When these feelings are applied to a visible minority the expression “racism” is often used. In contemporary Europe and America the general population due to a century inculcation of liberal intellectuals has become very “color- conscious” while at the same time lost its “religious- consciousness”. It seems the decline of religion within these societies needed to be compensated with other binding forces which the liberal intellectuals -as well as contemporary Muslim states which follow the Germanic recipes of Nationalism in the sense of

division and not in the religious sense of accepting the fact that people belong to different tribes and nations but these differences should be employed as the avenues of knowing and learning about each other or what commonly is known as Solidarity- have found them in blood, land, race, ethnicity and color. However it seems Islam denies the very structures of these societies, which are built upon color, race, blood and ethnicity as these are accidental facts and should not be employed as sources of division between the families of humanity.

In other words, what is called Islamophobia could be even studied as "sociology of the other" as grand many of Islamophobic writers such as Karl Jaspers, Giddens, Bernard Lewis and many other notable thinkers consider "Islam" (and the rise of religious consciousness among Muslims) as the '**Totally Other,**' namely a subjectivity (in the word of Jaspers) that lacks paradigmaticity. (Kafkazli, 2006)

Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to explain that issues related to Islamophobia need to be recasted within the larger context of social theory and religion and additionally I have explained that those who argue against Islam from a Christian point of view while relying on contemporary secular theories of human sciences are fighting a lost battle as either these theories don't support such claims or when they do, such as Marxism or Freudian they refute the whole category of religion as such and in this sense there is no difference between Islam or Christianity. It has been further argued that there is a strong link between xenophobia and Islamophobia within Euro-American societies and the question of Islamophobia is profoundly related to the dynamics of Islam as a global force of change and transformative element of mental as well as social revolutions. Once Islam is considered as a transformative force both intellectually and socially then we should theorize it in civilizational terms which indicate that the current research on Islamophobia is not broad enough as the researchers lack the necessary outlook in putting Islam at the heart of global transformation and those like Anthony Giddens and Bernard Lewis who look at Islam in civilizational sense lack sufficient conceptual accuracy as they depart from a Weberian

point of vantage which ends up in comparing Islam with West and lambasting the former due to its lack of similarity to the latter (which means Islam has gone wrong and is in need of correction based on Westernism). In other words, what is called Islamophobia in a broad sense is a fear of colossal global transformative power of Islam as the awakening ideology of humanity based on solidarity. Islam is a world-shaking spiritual force, which puts an end to the secularizing force of tutelage brought upon humanity and intensified by corporate capitalism that derides human soul from “personality”, “quest”, “individuation” and whatever that makes a man a gentleman. By that I mean the ability and possibility to cultivate and turn our potentials into dynamic realities, which would both transform our lives and the lives of others around us and the society which we live in. These are possibilities which are not present within the current world-system and the ideologies that endorse the dominance of secularizing system of ungodliness and this is why Islam is feared and conscious Muslims are hated as they, along with other religious intellectuals (who attempt to create *solidarizing* bridges between all God-conscious people) are working towards a global future which puts the “individuation”- and not individualism- at the heart of the world-system (its economy, politics, policies,...). Solidarity is the message of Islam and Islamophobia is the ideological respond of contemporary liberalism to whatever that could bridge the hearts of people towards solidarizing companionship.

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Religion and Artificial Intelligence

Alireza Ghaemina
University of Tehran

Abstract

How does the claim that computer thinks or it is only computer that thinks influence some religious beliefs? May it be in conflict with contents of the Scriptures? In "Artificial Intelligence", there are two important claims: some people think that computer thinks in the true sense of the term (*symbols system hypothesis*); some others claim that it is only computer that thinks (*strong symbols system hypothesis*).

In some cases, religious texts rely on thinking and intellection as well. Is "thinking" used in two cases, in the same sense? And, are religion and religious texts able to reveal some differences between man and computer? The author tries to find some replies for these questions; and taking into account religious texts, show differences between the two.

Keywords: religion, intelligence, artificial intelligence, symbols system hypothesis, strong symbols system hypothesis, Chinese room.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (abbreviated to AI) is one of the most attractive and wonderful fields in philosophical research. Computer created very great developments in man's life. Such developments have had their impacts on the field of philosophy as well. Philosophers put forward many questions concerning differences between man's mind and computer, all of which led to the issue of "Artificial Intelligence".

"Artificial Intelligence" is aimed to provide an understanding of the nature of human intelligence through study of structures of computer programs and the way that computers solve problems. According to experts in this field, such studies may reveal function and details of human intelligence.

Study of relation between this discipline and religion is one of the newest branches in the field of "religion and science". To begin, we have to mention some general points about Artificial Intelligence.

The Term "Intelligence"

At first, we should clarify what experts mean by the term "intelligence"; for, they look at "intelligence" and related notions such as "reason", "mind" and the like from a different perspective. Today, from among existing sciences, the term "intelligence" has mostly employed in psychology; and psychologists discuss about individuals' "intelligent quotient" and related issues. In "Artificial Intelligence", this applied term is employed in a fully different way (Desouza, 2002:27).

To begin in Artificial Intelligence, a *practical definition* is provided for intelligence. Philosophers are usually more interested in conceptual definitions. They wish to clarify concepts of "intelligence", "reason", and the like. For some reasons, however, experts of Artificial Intelligence have decided to use practical definition. One reason for this selection is that conceptual debates or debates to define concepts are not so useful, and usually come to an end in vain. If we seek to find definitions for concepts of "intelligence" and "thinking" and relation between the two, and understand that whether intelligence is the same as thinking or not, we will be mostly engaged in a verbal debate. For, it goes without saying that the two are conceptually different and do not refer to the same thing; and the claim is not that the two are conceptually equal. But rather, as will be explained, according to them, the two terms refer to the same measurable fact.

One of the pioneers of "Artificial Intelligence", Alan Turing has, because of practical purposes pursued in Artificial Intelligence,

proposed a relatively acceptable criterion to determine "intelligence". As said above, the reason behind introduction of this criterion is to avoid verbal debates and fruitless philosophical discussion. Turing had understood that through prevalent philosophical discussions concerning this term, no relation between functions of machines and man's mind might be found. Thus, he proposed that we should discard verbal and conceptual issues in this regard, and introduce a simple test concerning this matter; then, we should study machines objectively and tangibly. At the same time, he predicted that until the year 2000, computers will pass this test and opposing definitions will seem to be meaningless.

Turing test is based on a game which is called "imitation game". In this game, there are three persons who do not know each other. Two of them who are called "players" are of opposite sexes; and the third one is an interrogator. Interrogator is trying to find sexes of two players through some questions. One of the players (male one) is trying to hide his sex. The other (female one), however, is replying to questions truthfully. If the interrogator finds correct answer, the female player will win; and if he does not find correct answer, the male player will win. To hide all other clues such as voices, faces, and the like from the interrogator, questions and answers are exchanged through a remote printer. Turing believes that if we replace the male player with a computer and find that the machine is able to deceive the skillful interrogator, then the machine has passed the test (Haugeland, 1985:6).

Why such strange test is called "intelligence test"? As a matter of fact, using a remote printer and a picture of a deceitful man and the like are parts of the scene to carry out the test. The basis and essence of the test is *conversation*. Is a computer able to speak like a person? Or, there are some differences as well?

Study of the Test

The main problem with such tests is that "intelligence" may be of various degrees. Human beings enjoy various degrees of intelligence which we can measure. But the very assumption that computer enjoys such intelligence is doubtful. Concerning computer, we may only say

that computer is able to operate through a particular programming. In other words, computers operate only based on programming. But, do they really think? To clarify concepts of "thinking" and "intelligence", experts of Artificial Intelligence such as Turing define "intelligence" so that it covers machines as well. Instead of solving the problem, they have introduced a wrong presupposition in it which leads to "begging the question".

Characteristics of Artificial Intelligence

To solve problems, artificial intelligence follows a particular program. To take into account characteristics of artificial intelligence is useful in using such programs. From among such characteristics, five ones are of paramount importance (Bonnet, pp. 18- ,1985). We will explain them:

1- ***Symbolic Representation***: "The first characteristic of AI programs is that they deal mainly with numerical symbols to solve problems". AI solves problems based on binary system (i.e. 0's and 1's). For this reason, some opponents have said that the most important defect of AI is that it does not understand other than 0's and 1's. In other words, computer does not understand other than "yes" or "no"; and is not able to understand intermediate states between the two.

In reply, proponents of AI have said that "natural intelligence" (man's intelligence) as well understands various phenomena and things based on binary system. If we study man's nervous cells, we will find that they are based on binary states; and nervous system changes concepts and ideas to binary states. Of course, it is hard to show such conversion in concepts and percepts; study of AI programs, however, has made it easy to understand.

2- ***Heuristics***: the second characteristics of AI concerns kind of problems which are solved by it. For such problems no general algorithm is known. By algorithm, we mean a sequence of logical steps leading to a solution for the problem. Intelligence goes through this sequence step by step to find a solution for the problem. In other words, in algorithm, if we follow these steps, we will find the solution

naturally. Problems which are solved by AI have usually no algorithmic solutions. In other words, for these problems, we cannot find an algorithm or a sequence of logical steps which, if followed, will guarantee that a solution will be found. Thus, to solve problems, AI programs use "heuristics", i.e. a method which does not guarantee one's coming to a result. In heuristics, there are many ways to solve the problem, and if one selects one of such ways, he may still choose to use other ways; and to follow one of these ways does not prevent him from choosing others. As a result, programs which have no guaranteed solutions are not regarded as computer programs. For example, programs to solve second order equations are not among computer programs since to solve such problems, there is a particular algorithm.

Chess programs are a rich field for AI; for there is no known method to determine the best movement in a particular step of the game. For, firstly, the number of possible movements is so great that no through search may be done; secondly, our knowledge of the logic behind movements done by players is very small. This ignorance is, to some extent, due to the fact that these movements are done unconsciously. In some cases, of course, players hide their own logic deliberately.

Taking into account this point, one of the opponents of AI, Herbert Dreyfus has claimed that "no computer program would ever reach the level of a good human player"; but this has long been disproved because of emergence of advanced chess programs after 1985.

3- ***Knowledge representation***: AI programs differ from statistical ones in terms of knowledge representation; in other words, the former ones suggest correspondence of computer symbolic demonstrative operations with the external world. This point may be explained by a simple example. "Knowledge representation" is a title which covers a series of issues concerning knowledge such as:

1- What is the knowledge involved in the performance of the task, its types, structure, and organization?

2. How is this knowledge to be represented in the computer?
3. What sort of knowledge is made explicit by the representation? What is de-emphasized?
4. How is the knowledge to be acquired and/or revised? (Stillings & Weisler, 1995:141)

4- **Incomplete data**: AI is able to find a solution for the problem even when not all required data are available. This is the case in many medical diagnoses. Through data available to the physician, it is not possible to diagnose disease, and the physician has no enough time to cure the patient. Thus, he has to decide rapidly.

Absence of required data makes the result an uncertain one or one which may be false. In the practical life, we usually make decisions while required data are absent, and such decisions may always be wrong.

5- **Conflicting Data**: if faced by conflicting data, AI programs are able to find a suitable solution for the problem. In such cases, AI programs select the best way to solve the problem and remove conflict.

Symbol Manipulation

Computer is a machine which makes manipulations in symbols. Based on the program fed to computer, computer makes changes and manipulations in symbols; and the program determines, step by step, details of manipulations and computer operates exactly according to it. These symbols are made by electricity in computer's memory. Suppose that these symbols are some combinations of two digits 0 and 1. (As a matter of fact, computer programs are written with these two digits). For example, we write some symbols in the following four lines:

1101
1001
0001
0011

According to the program, computer performs some operations on the above symbols (above four lines). The following example is a program for symbol manipulation.

- 1- Copy content of a particular line in the other line;
- 2- Delete a particular line;
- 3- Write a sequence of symbols in a particular line;
- 4- Compare symbols in two specified lines;
- 5- Apply a particular symbol to name a specified line.

The program specifies that which operation should be performed on which line by computer. Such kinds of symbol manipulations are called fundamental operations. Computer is a machine which is able to perform some fundamental operations.

Two Hypotheses in AI

In AI, many hypotheses are discussed. Among them two ones are of more importance. The first one is, as compared with the second, more moderate and contains a minimal claim. The two hypotheses are, respectively, as follows:

1- *The Symbol System Hypothesis*: the content of this hypothesis is: "We can program computer so that it thinks". The other version of the above hypothesis is as follows: "Computer is able to think".

2- *The Strong Symbol System Hypothesis*: the content of this hypothesis is as follows: "It is only computer which is able to think". The second hypothesis is evidently more extreme than the first one and includes a maximal claim. For, according to it, whatever thing which thinks (even a natural being) should be computer. Thus, man's mind is an inclusive system of symbols; and there is no essential difference between man's thinking and that one which is considered for computers. In both cases, thinking is the ability to change and manipulate symbols.

Chinese Room Argument

An important question arises concerning claims made by AI: "how can they be replied?" Should we appeal, to reply such claims, to experiment, and gather pieces of evidence? Or, such claims are of a fully philosophical nature and should be replied philosophically? Experts of AI have attempted to prove them experimentally and through gathering experimental evidence.

According to one of the eminent contemporary philosophers, John Searle, experts of AI are wrong in that they have regarded such questions of an experimental nature. That "a machine which proliferates symbols thinks" is not an experimental fact; and no reply may be provided for it through gathering pieces of evidence. He claims that, regardless of these pieces of evidence, we may reject symbols system hypothesis. According to him, this hypothesis denies an analytic truth (such as "men are male"). The only difference is that concerning this example we may refer to dictionary and prove easily that this [denial] is wrong. But, to reject symbol system hypothesis, an accurate philosophical discussion is required. Searle introduces an argument to reject it which is well known as Chinese room argument.

As said, computer is a machine which is only able to make manipulations in symbols; and all that it performs is to make comparisons between them, delete, copy,..., them. It goes without saying that here a question will arise: "is computer able to understand?" For example, is computer able to understand a sentence in a natural language (for example Persian)? In reply, Searle says that computer is not able to understand sentences of natural language. In technical terminology, he says:

"The machine which manipulates the symbols is only skillful to deal with syntax. Syntax alone is not sufficient for semantics (Searl, 1989:31)".

Having mastery of syntax means having mastery of manipulating the language symbols. But this does not mean understanding of them.

Computers are masters of syntax rules; computer programs are not other than instructions to perform sequences of various jobs. Thus, computer is never able to get rid of syntax and to leave it for semantic.

Searle's argument is somehow difficult to understand, and a simplified version of it is required. Suppose that we have written a program to understand stories. In AI, such programs are called Sam (Script Applier Mechanism). If we feed a story to this program, and pose some questions about it, we will immediately receive proper replies. As previously said, computer programs are written in binary system (a system consisting of 0's and 1's). Thus, each step of this program is in the form of a line consisting of 0's and 1's; and we may translate it into a rule. For example, consider the following line:

00000011 0111 1100

In this line, 0111 is bit code for 7, 1100 is bit code for 12, and 00000011 is the way to tell the computer to compare. Thus, the above line is translated as follows:

"Compare the content of the number 7 with the content of the number 12. If they are equal, write 1; and if they are different, write 0".

If we write the whole Sam program in this way (in other words, if we write down all its lines as rules in natural language), "the result will be a rulebook running into many, many volumes"; and months and even years will be taken to read all its volumes. Now, suppose that someone has patiently re-written all program's lines in this way. This hero has been imprisoned in a room with rulebook of such re-writing. In this room, there are "a huge pile of blank exercise books and several thousands pencils". The only relation to the outside world is through two slots on the wall, one of which is input slot and the other is output one. Experimenters input a story together with questions into the room, and in proper time, they receive answers through output slot. In providing replies, the hero does not cheat. Both the story and questions are written in Chinese while he does not know Chinese; and even he does not know that both input and output are sentences in the same

language. For him, all these are meaningless patterns. Once he receives through input slot a story together with related questions, he refers to his rulebook, and finds for the symbols proper strings of 0's and 1's. He should make thousands of manipulations, and fill the blank pages with strings of 0's and 1's. Finally, he comes to the last page of his rulebook in which particular numbers stand for Chinese characters. He sends out the complete answers through output slot. For experimenters, such characters are completely known; for him, however, they consist of a series of distorted lines.

According to Searle, the hero understands neither the story nor questions. For such a person, input and output consist only of meaningless symbols. At the same time, he has performed everything that a computer does, and followed the Sam program exactly." but as running the program doesn't enable him to understand the story, it follows that running the program doesn't enable a computer to understand the language".

Generally speaking, Chinese room argument shows that a machine which only makes manipulations in symbols is not able to understand some point or believe in something or think about it. Thus, if this argument is true, then the symbols system hypothesis will be false.

Chinese room argument has created many debates in the field of AI; and many proponents and opponents have spoken about it. For example, Copeland has criticized it. According to him, this argument includes a fine fallacy (fallacy of the part and the whole). When we ask the one who is in Chinese room whether manipulating symbols enables him to understand input questions, he replies in negative. From this premiss, Searle concludes that manipulating symbols is never enough to understand. The main problem with Searle's argument, according to Copeland, is that he considers only one person in the Chinese room who makes manipulations symbols while there is another person involved in this case; in fact she hid; she is a product of the former one's attempts. By making manipulations in symbols, he brings this hidden person into existence. The former one is restless, and makes many manipulations; the latter one, however, speaks Mandarin Chinese

eloquently, and is able to go beyond the scope of the former one and understands details of Chinese. Searle should be asked why he asks only from the former one about understanding symbols; he is only a part of a machine or system. If we ask the same from the latter one, she will say that what the former one performs enables her to understand the symbols. Thus, Searle's argument is as follows:

"No amount of symbol-manipulation on hero's part enables him to understand the Chinese output" (premiss).

"No amount of symbol-manipulation on his part enables the system of which he is a part to understand the Chinese output" (conclusion).

This argument is invalid, since its conclusion does not logically follow from its premiss (Copeland, 1993: 125-6).

Copland is trying to show that though a part of the system is not able to understand the language, the whole system is; and Searle has only shown that a part of system is not able to understand Chinese. Copeland's argument does not seem to be convincing; for, a question is still at stake: "How does symbol manipulation enable the whole system to understand the language?" Apart from this, what is the difference between the whole and the part which enables the former to understand Chinese? Copeland argument contains some sort of "begging the question". Searle shows that nothing other than symbol manipulation occurs in the whole system and this is not enough to understand the language. But Copeland claims that this enables the whole system to understand the language. This claim should be proved.

Religion and Mechanical Understanding of Thinking

Issues in AI relate in many cases to religious beliefs, and cause some questions in this regard. Some of such questions are as follows:

- 1- Is the notion of "thinking" in AI consistent with religion?
- 2- Do not the hypotheses existing in AI cause some debates about man's superiority to other beings?

- 3- Does not man's highest activity (thinking) appear, according to AI, as some material and natural thing?
- 4- Does AI to show that all man's activities may be explained naturally?

Questions of this kind seem to, in long run, refer back to the first one; and this question is more fundamental than the others. Thus, we suffice to introduce and discuss this question from religion's viewpoint.

AI is based on mechanical understanding of thinking; thinking is not [according to AI] other than doing mechanical jobs (symbol manipulations). These are performed by machine; and thus thinking (in the true sense of the term) is not specified to man, or it is only specified to machine.

In religious outlook, man enjoys a particular superiority to other beings of the world. This does not concern only his spiritual powers; but rather it relates to his intellectual and rational powers as well. His understanding of the unseen world and the role played by God in his destiny has to some extent its roots in his perceptual and rational powers.

Searle thought that the important difference between Artificial Intelligence and man's natural intelligence lies only in understanding the language. Ability to understand the language stems from particular rational powers. Language is an important phenomenon so that some philosophers have defined man as "an animal who speaks". But if we refer to the Quranic verses, we will find other superiorities for man which can make distinctions between him and machine. We mention only two of them:

1- ***Understanding History and Taking Lessons from it:*** Man is able to understand historical phenomena and learn lessons from them. In the Chapter Yusuf, it has been said:

"We sent not before thee (any messengers) save men whom We inspired from among the folk of the townships - Have they not travelled in the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were

before them? And verily the abode of the Hereafter, for those who ward off (evil), is best. Have ye then no sense?" (12: 109).

This verse has various parts: at first, it speaks of the Holy Prophet's (s) destiny; secondly, it calls the audience to travel in the land and see the nature of the consequence for those who were before them; thirdly, it speaks of the abode of the Hereafter and warding off (evil). Finally, it blames the audience who have no sense. To call to think relates to various points and parts of the verse. The second part calls to reflect upon the consequences in the land. Reflecting upon the consequence for those who were before them and travelling in the land (local displacement), the audience goes back to the past and takes some lessons (Kamuni, 2005, pp. 101-2).

No mechanical activity or symbol manipulation is able to attain such thinking. AI is not able to make a temporal relation between locations and data gathered about various effects on the Earth, and learn lessons from the past.

2- *Understanding Nature' Laws*: from religion's viewpoint, man's reason cannot be reduced to symbol manipulation, and it has many other abilities which evidently should not be expected from AI. He is able to find nature's laws and their relation to God. In the Chapter *Hadid*, it has been said:

"Know that Allah quickeneth the earth after its death. We have made clear Our revelations for you, that haply ye may understand" (57: 17).

Nature's life and death is a natural phenomenon related to its own laws. This verse calls all people to reflect upon it and find knowledge. This phenomenon is among Divine tokens which deserve thinking about. In the Chapter *Hajj*, it has been said:

"And thou (Muhammad) seest the earth barren, but when We send down water thereon, it doth thrill and swell and put forth every lovely kind (of growth)" (22: 5).

Life begins on the Earth with rain, and then lovely plants grow. These are nature's simple laws which are, at the same time, among Divine tokens the Holy Quran calls all people to reflect upon them.

AI is able only to make manipulations in symbols. Evidently in order to solve a problem, first AI must change the problem into proper symbols understandable to it, i.e. strings of 0's and 1's. To reflect upon nature's laws and to understand Divine tokens are followed by some sort of wonder, and relate to a higher level of human thinking. These cannot reduce to symbols understandable for AI.

Existentialists make usually some distinction between mystery and problem. Problems are in the scope of sciences and may be solved by the computing reason. AI is able to solve such problems; and in such cases, to translate [the problem] into symbols and manipulating them are useful. Mystery, however, concerns fundamental issues in man's life such as death, happiness, sorrow and the like. Rational fields we find in religion are of the kind of mystery. It goes without saying that AI is not able to study them. God says:

"Naught is the life of the world save a pastime and a spot. Better far is the abode of the Hereafter for those who keep their duty (to Allah). Have ye then no sense?" (6: 32).

Man can reflect upon the worldly life and understand its negative aspects. These aspects make the worldly life "a pastime and a spot". Reason, however, is able to understand and discard them. Such things are among mysteries; we cannot solve them by the help of AI. One of the problems with modern thinking is that it reduce reason to the computing reason which is regarded in AI the same as the essence of thinking. Religious texts, however, introduces another kind of reason which is not reducible to the computing reason.

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Suhrawardi and Mohagheh Dawani on the Intuitive Knowledge of Soul

Ebrahim Rezaie

University of Isfahan, Philosophy Department, Esfahan, Iran

Abstract

With due respect to the verbum of Master of Ishraq's the term "soul" holds the two superior and interior aspects, thus holding two types of acts: an act known as "controlling of body" and an act that would guarantee the mystic knowledge and journey. The nature of the soul is of light, based on the deferent definitions of illumination that is "Self-revealed" and then it "reveals other than itself". Therefore, Master of Ishraq in proving the in corporeality of the soul discusses the "the continual apperception" or the "self-consciousness" and then discusses the different kinds of intuitive knowledge. Presenting this kind of intuitive knowledge among others of its kind indicates its necessity for other division of knowledge, in a sense the acknowledgment of the soul is a product of the intensity and the weakness in this very kind and has priority to intuitive knowledge.

Keywords: Soul, Intuitive Knowledge, Light, Act, Illumination Relation, Truth, Form

Introduction

The division of the knowledge into two intuitive knowledge and acquired knowledge is an issue of interest among scholars. This division either based on a specific philosophical orientation or a remission of an advance in the discussion, is not efficient with respect to the Suhrawardi's "Hypothesis of knowledge", (1170-1208 A.D)

since when he interprets science as “illumination relation” he blocks the way for the “Acquired Knowledge”.

The Master in the “Second Heykal” from the concise and significant book of “Hayakil al-nur” introduces some arguments about incorporeity of the soul where he clarifies his idea about the intuitive knowledge specially the self-consciousness. Among these arguments, the fist that reflects the “non-oblivious of self” is completely devoted to the intuitive knowledge. It seems that this issue is the sole interpretation and explanation the Master can provide regarding the definition of the rational soul as an incorporeal light. Hence, the arguments are so tangible and real any doubt in their fundamentals and the results would be considered inappropriate.

This article is organized in four sections for the purpose of assessing the importance of “the intuitive self-apperception”. In the first section, the old version of the psychology is analyzed in order to determine which one of the souls, according to the scholars are within the existence of human and are subject to the intuitive know ledges and this is continued by the manner by which body and soul are combined and that what the characteristic of soul would be after origination. In the second section, the first argument of Suhrawardi regarding the above mentioned issue will be analyzed as well as the position of the intuitive self-consciousness in psychology and other intuitive comprehensions of the soul. Here the correlation among these comprehensions and the definition of illumination as a soul genus is discussed. In the third section, the reasons of priority of the first kind of the intuitive knowledge on the similar kinds are analyzed and whether this priority as a necessity is of significance or not. The final section contains the completion of the science of guidance with respect to all kinds of intuitive knowledge according to Mohaghegh Dawani. (861-929 A.D)

These discussions, to a certain degree are close to the thoughts of Master of Ishraq and shade more light on the issue of this study although these discussions are based on the old school of thought.

1-The kinds of soul and the nature of the rational soul

Before entering the realm of discussion on the intuitive self-consciousness, it is necessary to indicate that what the purpose of self modification in the words of Suhrawardi and the Islamic scholars in general and knowledge of soul are? The domain of discussions around soul this expression has a fourfold application where only one is aimed to the intuitive knowledge. In the words of the scholars, human has four kinds of soul: Vegetative soul, Rational soul, Human soul and Animal soul, where each one of these souls or spirits (according to the Master, soul and spirit are synonyms) possesses its own specific power. Master of Ishraq in the fourth chapter of his collection of Hadiths “Parto name” has analyzed these four souls and counted their faculties. According to him and the consent of other scholars, the feeding, growth and reproductive faculties do belong to the vegetative soul. The motive power (anger and desire) belong to the animal soul. The apparent senses like sight, hearing, smelling, testing, touching and inner senses like (hierarchy of being).

Aziz al-din Nasafi, in this book “Zobdat Al-Haghaygh” has briefly explained the three wise, esoteric and the prophetic laws’ groupings’ concepts with respect to the macrocosm (the hierarchy of existence) and the microcosm (the human). (Nasafi, 2002 p.86)

At the end of the above mentioned chapter, he gives another arrangement to the triad souls of elemental bodies. There he realizes that the animalistic spirit is the outcome of the four-fold humors graciousness of the body (melancholy, phlegm, biliousness and blood) that after being produced at the left chamber of the heart is divided into two branches; one that goes to the brain and after cooling off is converted to human spirit and other branch goes to the liver and is called the natural spirit that contains the vegetative faculties. Accordingly, the distinction among the triad spirits are generated on the spot, otherwise each one of the three spirits is unique in nature. Master clearly believes that all animal faculties are inserted in the animal spirit and the animal spirit is the carrier of these faculties and this spirit is of a self bodied nature that is the product of the softness of body humors

like the product of the elements from its own impurity. And it comes out from the left chamber of the heart and is called the “animal spirit”. And the branch that goes to the cerebrum and stabilizes is called the “physical spirit”. And the branch that goes to the liver produces vegetation faculties... and is called the “natural spirit”. (Suhrawardi, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 3, 31)

But, besides all these spirits the “Rational soul” is different from other spirits with respect to existence and space. The rational soul is not produced in the body and is not localized there, but directly in the celestial world, created, and after finding the specific body it joins without occupying a spot there, since this type of soul is the immaterial or not corporeal.

In order to evaluate the nature of the rational soul, according to the philosophical expressions of the Master, first the two continuum “knowledge of illumination” and “hierarchy of existence” must be rigorously examined as Suhrawardi did in “Hikmat al-Ishraq” to know what exactly the rational soul is and where is its genesis.

To being with, the Master (ibid, pp.2, 106) claims that light is without definition (Suhrawardi) but latter he defines it as “light is appearance in itself and by in its nature is makes anything other than itself appear” (ibid, p.113) and then regarding the types of light and illumination he believes that light either is the very own thing is dependent on another. Anything that is the light itself is incorporeal light and absolute light but the essence on the illumination of objects is enlightened (ibid, p.107) or the immaterial Light of Lights from “Divine light” emitted on them and is called the “accidental light”. (ibid, p.138)

Accordingly the subject of “light” is related to the “equivocal hierarchy of existence”. In the “ontology” of Master “divine light” is at the summit and underneath there are the worlds of “horizontal triumphal lights”, “celestial governing lights” and “isthmuses” respectively, where each one of these worlds in their turn include numerous orders, states and equivocal kingdoms.

But the emphasis here is to express the point that the rational soul is ranked as the last element or member of the horizontal triumphal lights that is “external compulsion” or “Holy Spirit” emitted. The horizontal triumphal lights, according to the Master initiates from the Zoroastrian seven “Amshaspand” months that being with Bahman, Ordibehesht, Shahrivar, Esfandarmaz, Khordad, Mordad and ends in Gabriel.

According to the analysis done by the Suhrawardi when “disposition” reaches its perfection in man and his body is able to find the rational soul, the mentioned soul is emitted to that body, of course in his words the rational soul is called seigniorial tight as well and then:

“It accepts configurations and forms as deserved within moderation; from the horizontal triumphal light that owns the rational talisman kind that is the Gabriel, may peace be upon him, and the close father from the masters of the horizontal triumphal light; that is “the dispenser of the soul the holy ghost” the Gracious of knowledge and conformity, giver of life and eminence based on the complete humanistic disposition that produces the rational light that occupies the member and the organs of human and is a light of governance “realm of seigniorial light of nature” and points at itself as “personal subjectivity (I-ism)”. (ibid, pp.200, 201)

According to the above mentioned expressions the rational soul has two general concepts: the superior that connects to its celestial origin; the inferior that leads to the explanation of the body. The Master distinguishes the two aspects by addressing them in his thesis “Yazdan Shenakht” as:

“Therefore it should be acknowledged that there are two sides to the soul, one is the superior to be resembled as celestial souls for perfection, and the inferior that controls the body as its instrument. (ibid, pp.3, 423)

The important point here is the manner by which the relation soul relates to the body; since, the relation soul that is endowed with governess intuition must occupy the body. The Master holds the opinion that, the soul is neither a body nor within a body.

His position is based on the argument that is briefed in Nasafi's "Zobdat-Al- Haghaygh " that the intellective spirit is immaterial or not corporeal, hence, the usage of terms "inside" and "outside" do not relate to it and have no significance. Immateriality is free of space, moreover, these two words are used for tangibles: The scholars say [rational soul] is neither inside nor outside the body since it is not in space and that inside, outside are the properties of objects and rational soul is not on object. (Nasafi, p.86)

Nevertheless, the rational soul after being emitted from the Holy Ghost and except the characteristics of a star comes out of the "potential" state and joins the body that it deserves and gains the "actual" state (Suhrawardi, vol.3, p.421). At the end of arc of descent the dependence of soul to the body enters dominion.

As the Master claims, the relation between soul and body through the animalistic spirit becomes possible by taking light from rational soul that can occupy the body up to the point that this soul runs in the body. This issue is explained in thesis "Hayakil al-nur" as: "and this [animal soul] is a soft matter produced by the softness and the humors of the body. It rises from the left chamber of the heart and is spread all over the body and then is covered by the rational soul light. And if it were not soft it could not enter the bones and if on the path of this soul there is any barrier that tries to stop it, that barrier dies. And this soul is the means of possessing the rational soul and up to the time that this soul is healthy the rational soul dominates the body and when this ceases the possession is no more. (ibid, p.89)

All in all, the rational soul or the seigniorial light is an immaterial light under the emitted rays of which different animal souls function. Thus through any structural change in the body, conduct, the perception will become possible by the assistance of the seigniorial light that according to the definition it is "extrinsic-self" and "manifestation of something else". Then, if the triad material soul cause for a conduct or perception their causality is due to the light of the rational soul effects on the focal points of the body (heart, brain, liver). Therefore the material soul in itself contains no conception or awareness about other objects besides

itself and when the words run about the self-consciousness of the “soul” it means the self-consciousness of rational soul; an awareness that is the perquisite of any kind of identity.

2- The intuitive Self-Consciousness

The issue under discussion here, in fact, is the argument that Suhrawardi addressed in order to prove the immateriality of the soul in an independent manner, as a valuable subject. Although, the Master tried to solve a perplexing knowledge by ascetic practice, eventually Aristotle in a wondrous state of ecstasy decoded this theorem. The Master explains this state of ecstasy in “Al-Talvihat”. (Suhrawardi, vol.1, pp.70, 74) It is worth mentioning that the apprehension in Master’s mind regarding knowledge is general but Aristotle, through establishment of the manner of forming the knowledge in mind, on self-consciousness, in fact emphasis on the essence and necessity of the knowledge.

Master of Ishraq at the beginning of Second Heykal from his thesis Hayakil al-nur pronounces the first argument on incorporeality of rational soul as: “be known that, do not ever be unaware of your “I” and there exist no element of your body that may contribute to forgetting “him” even temporarily and you will never forget yourself. Being aware of all is prohibited and when the details are not known the whole could not be known. If you were consisted of your “you”, the whole body or a portion of it, you were not aware that you had forgotten your “I” in that state of mind. Therefore, your “you” is not the whole or a part of your body but above all this.” (Suhrawardi, vol.2, p.85)

This argument begins with “continual self-consciousness” and the Master places this issue against the lack of continuum and adherence of awareness from the members and organs of the body. It seems that whatever the conclusion, it is said at the beginning, but in reality the continuation of word is the argument for what was said at the beginning, since body members are subject to be forgotten and due to the fact that the general intelligence is in need of detailed intelligence, when the

parts of the body are forgotten the body would be forgotten as well. The subject of interest for the Master here in this argument is to counter-claim the theories which consider soul as the same object as the body or a locality in the main parts of the body like the heart, brain and liver. For instance, (Nezam) recognizes human as a real unit that incorporates the spirit "soul" and the body and defines the spirit as a soft matter inside an impure matter or the body. (Badawi, vol.1, p.286) According to Ibn Rawandi (226-266 A.D) the soul, is as indivisible and non-angelic part placed in the heart. Some scholars believe it resides in the brain and yet others consider it as the triad factually that is spread in the three centers: heart, liver and brain (Jorjani, p.250).

Encountering the doctrines of these thinkers majority of who are among the initial speakers of Islam, Master of Ishraq, based on the continual self-consciousness and not on awareness of a specific part introduces the rational soul as being superior to object and physical space. In the "Second Loh" from "Alvahe -Emadi" thesis he, after referring the invocation with the triad souls and their faculties repeats the Master's verse which by many speakers of Islam in its face value had been interpreted as a spatial character defined as "spirit" and says the intension here is the "rational soul". (Suhrawardi, vol.3, p.133)

In order to evaluate the quality of the self-consciousness, as a prerequisite of any kind of knowledge, at the beginning the act of the soul should be analyzed very carefully. The Master, in his thesis "Yazdan Shenakht" after pointing to the two concepts of rational soul writes that, since soul has two different aspects to it, two kinds of acts is accepted from it: on one hand the soul intends to assimilate the heavenly world and on the other it intends to assimilate the body control. These two acts are produced from two different faculties that exist in the soul, i.e. the theoretical, specific to the superior world and the implementing specific to the inferior faculty. Than the "rational faculty" is the combination of these two orders. (ibid, pp.423, 424)

In finalizing these themes it should be mentioned that Suhrawardi recognizes that the Holy Spirit or "the active intellect" as the donor of intelligibility or the complementary of soul and the celestial souls or

types spiritual rector as minor datum of experience of a particular from that of course in both the cases of the concept of the soul do benefit from their superior aspect, otherwise in pure practical state the soul is the dominant enlightenment or the physical soul.

Nevertheless, the Master is of the school of philosophers who consider two aspects of passive and active for the single soul in a sense that the soul with the assistance of its passive aspect, when not controlling the body is able to form a general spiritual form from the active intelligence and from a detailed form from the celestial souls and with the assistance of its active aspect would execute whatever it has learned. In the sixth chapter of “Yazdan Shenakht” the Master writes:

“The radiation of active intellect light emitted on the human soul to make him material evidence and through him comprehend the collective intelligible forms is, similar to the sunshine that makes the sight a material evidence for the physical senses to be revealed just like the sight that is the object perceived and is activated by the sunshine. The rational soul of human is a powerful intellect and through the active intelligence and radiation of light it is actualized. (ibid, p.430, 431)

Irrespective of similarity of this viewpoint with that of the platonic “recollection” where it is said that, here we are dealing with two types of soul where within both the relation between soul and “sensory form” or celestial earth concept does not allow for the third celestial form with a difference that in the rational soul an absolute immediate conception of soul belongs to the rational form that was revealed beforehand. The first kind of intellectual mind can be called “observations” and the second type “commensuration” (in Platonic sense) in the first kind the soul is exposed to difference of horizontal triumphal and governing lights and in the second kind the self is illuminated on animal spirit and soul that are its subjects. Therefore, the relation of soul with its actions with respect to intellectual observation is commensuration.

But is the self-consciousness limited to these two intellective definitions or definitions other than these two? For answering this inquiry a reference to the definition of “light” by the Master is necessary. As mentioned before “light”, according to Master’s definition, first is self-revealed and then “manifestation for something else” and because soul is of the nature of “light” necessarily, it must first be aware of itself, and then it can be aware of something-else. Here it should be added that the two intellective knowledges, the “Observation” and “Commensuration” which identify the issues other than that of the soul itself are placed under the second definition of the “light” and the self-consciousness is subject to interpretation of the first part definition. The observation and commensuration which identify the issue other than that of the soul itself are placed under the second definition of the light and the self-consciousness is subject to interpretation of the first part of the definition. Therefore, the Master, prior to addressing this issue, had inserted all subjects in the definition of “light” to be able to determine that the soul in self-consciousness is independent of its own action. Avicenna has considered this issue in “Al-Isharat wa Al-Tanbihat” before Master of Ishraq did. There, after addressing the soul continual apperception, awake or asleep and lack of the need for such conception to the “Secondary cause” or form and meaning writes:

“Indeed if you prove that your act is absolute then it is necessary to confirm its objectivity but not the subject of your nature itself; and if you could prove that it is your action know that your nature will not be confirmed, but your nature becomes a portion of the concept of your action since it is yours. Hence that portion prior to action stable in conception and at least it is with action not from it. Then your nature without that action is confirmed (Avicenna, vol.2, p.292).

Hence, soul according to this view point, is its own prove prior to the actions produced from the physical organs including the triad souls and the evident actions resulted from the connection with the superior knowledge. In the same context, the Master, in “Hikmat al-Ishraq” explicitly recognizes the awareness of things is interior to self-consciousness; the first evidence is considered as the “accidental

quality” of the second. He explains: “Therefore, soul is evident to itself by itself and this evidence is not specific to soul while the soul in itself is evident to not its else; then, soul is the soul light; hence, an absolute one and the evidence of you being other object is subject to your nature and the continuum of your being an evidence, an accidental quality for your nature.” (Suhrawardi, vol.2, p.113)

The hidden analogy expressed in the Master’s wording can be organized as: being the evidence of other objects is subject to soul (minor). Soul is a conception of its own essential reality (major). Being the evidence of other objects of soul is being the subject to the conception of soul itself (result).

Hence, the argumentation of the Master at the beginning of “Second Heykal” and the complementary explanations of it in other thesis is a successful inference of his definition of “light”. This inference accompanied with other explanations are different interpretations of the fact that soul in a possession of absolute light that belong to the triumphal lights and entitled to celestial properties in the first place is evident to itself and then reveals the other issues, as Master would say- this world without intermediary of form and definition is the nature of all kinds of science and the other levels of it in comparison with it are positions/manners/abilities.

3- Measuring the level of importance of this knowledge

The reasoning addressed here regarding the importance of the initial self-consciousness is deduced from the core wordings of the Master and he did not announce them as reasoning, whereas from superior meaning of the word it could be concluded that the priority of this knowledge to other branches of its kind regarding its preference on other knowledge is not what is meant. This subject will be evaluated at the end of this section.

The mentioned reasoning’s can be briefed in a) the self-consciousness lacks the element “relation”, b) the self-consciousness is implied without the continuum from any kind of “sign” and c) the soul is in constant unity with itself.

A- Dawani, in his describing the “Hayakil al- nur” as “Shawakil al- hur” summarizes the theory of the Master regarding “Conception” as “The reality of conception to him is a illuminative relation for soul in relation with evidence and that relation through the senses takes place and sometimes without it [in this case] the soul from future eternity often observes things that for sure they know these things are not prints in the body by faculties and this observation for a while remains attached to the soul” (inscribed). (141-143)

B- The great scholar refers to the superior and inferior aspects of the soul in the above mentioned wording. Due to the illuminative relation in the domain of body the rational soul covers the exterior and interior conceptions of human soul with a garment of light; but when the soul attains the possession of observing the tangible or intangible issues the effluence from the superior light on the rational soul is effused. However, whatever is common in the attributive versions is their being dual-positioned. In fact in the relation realm we are faced with three effects: the mere reasonable, the soul and the mere sensible. Therefore the soul, when in state of conceptualizing something other than itself inevitably directs its movement towards a recognition, while when aware of itself, mottoes and relation do lose the sense of relativity, this means it is not that the soul is not self-consciousness and after contemplation and speculation realizes its self, but awareness and its continuum, prior to any contemplation and no implicit thing, and no relation between the soul and the soul itself.

C- In the process of comprehension it is possible that one of the four types of “Sign” to occur: sensual, imaginary, illusive and intellective .This signs need to be used through one of the extrinsic or esoteric paradoxes or faculties of rational soul in order for a subject to become conceptualized. In this process, regardless of the type of the “sign” conception suggests the existence of a concrete or an abstract state in mind. The point here is that the mentioned “signs” are the product of human soul that possesses the necessity of five extrinsic and five esoteric faculties but the conception becomes possible in the effusion of rational soul. This is when the soul, for self-consciousness does not need the faculty of human soul that is subject to the body. Hence,

continual self-consciousness is without the medium of imagination and the concept is there.

The principle of apperception of soul not being achieved by the assistance of imagination and conception is an axiom that the “First teacher” has analyzed it for the Master in the previous philosophy/doctrine. Due to this analysis, if this self-consciousness is achieved by imagination, it should be said that whatever agrees with the apperception of soul possesses “Wholeness”, then, the mentioned imagination must be universal, acknowledgeable to many, while our self-consciousness according to the Master is “Specific” to the assigned properties and it is not “absolute soul”.

Likewise, the definitions “I”, “we”, “He” and “This” may not be assigned to soul, since these universal concepts are not free of other denotations while we are aware of our selves in a distinguished manner with respect to other souls. In the end the “First teacher” concludes the soul itself individually is “Reason”, “Rational” and “Reasonable”, since in its conception it does not need conformity or disconformities (Suhrawardi, vol.1, pp.70, 71)

D- The soul in all types of morphology whether sensual, imaginary, illusive and intellective is similar to that form and concept, due to the presence of form and self-consciousness that is independent of the evidence object and will never unit with it. In other words, the soul in the syntax of epistemology and in the capacity of wise is united with its reasonable state but in the syntax of soul ontology is free of evidence object.

The Master in “Al-Talvihat” prior to transference of his physical trance refers to arguments regarding the unity between “Wise” and “Reasonable” that is nothing more than what Avicenna has pronounced in the “Chapter seven” form *نمط هفتم* of the “Al-Isharat & Al-Tanbihat” book with the exception of using the term “Object” instead of “Wise” and “Reasonable” and has kept the way to prove the unity of these terms according to epistemology syntax. It should be explained here that his intention from unity refers to “Mixture”, “Substitution” and

“Metamorphosis” while all three are considered impossible, since these states have nature of object and soul belongs to the realm of the angels. (ibid, pp.68, 69)

In “Hikmat al-Ishraq”, Master resorts to the term “Manifestation” in order to explain lack of unity between intelligent and reasonable with respect to ontology; and when the soul becomes a possession of the body, the body becomes the souls manifestation; and when the soul becomes disinterested in the body by proximity of the superior world the supernal light becomes its manifestation. With respect to the similarity of these two conditions the Master tries to refute the concept of unity in the sense of qualitative changes in the body form one state to another in the supernal lights. He explains the above mentioned as follows:

“The unity that exists among the incorporeal lights is merely an intellective unity not a corpus unity and just as the seigniorial light belongs to the intermediary world and the body, its manifestation is in illusion whether it is within the body, while it is not, since the governing lights were separating its intensity from corporal lights and the light of lights and the inclination towards them make it perceive, that they are the same; therefore, the triumphal lights manifest the governing lights just as before when the objects were their manifestations.” (Suhrawardi, vol.2, p.228)

The intuitive self-consciousness stands in front of these two types of knowledge; the knowledge of the sensibles and the supernal lights that guarantee the knowledge of reasonable facts and truths; therefore, there is a distinction between evidence and object, while in the self-consciousness the individual essence is the evidence and soul takes the advantage of any kind of recognition of this unity. The result of the three characteristics of self-consciousness can be simplified as that there is no need for the soul to be aware in this kind to follow something neither be seeking an relation nor any tool/device through which a “sign” is distinguished and does not seek any “manifestation” that is manifested. Accordingly, the soul when refuting issues other than itself and ignoring all other things is aware of itself and with

respect to not considering another issue. Now, with the assistance of primary in dependence it finds dominance on the accuracy and falsity of any other knowledge. In other words, the initial self-consciousness is absolutely accurate and the fallacy is not of it. Soul certainly benefits from this initial accuracy and considers it as a theoretical and practical launching pad.

However, as mentioned at the being of this section, the “priority” does not refer to “preponderance” i.e. the self-consciousness is not superior to the kinds of knowledge specially the observations on the superior to other kinds of knowledge specially the observation on the superior separate substances. Whatever signifies this claim is the word of the Master in “Bustan al- Gholoob” where after some arguments in proving the incorporeity of the soul and evaluating the intuitive self-consciousness, he explicitly pronounces that human has lost himself.

“Now let it be known that you have lost yourself and you do not know that you are, sometimes you refer to the body and say that I am this body and sometimes when encouraged, your knowledge reaches a point where you being to doubt whether I am this body or not and am I a body or something else? In general you know nothing, and you with respect to all that you know are nothing and you are beyond all these. This is because you have forgotten God All mighty (Koran 9:67) and in you, you have forgotten yourself as well (Koran 59:19). Now, if you recall God Almighty and say that the God who has created me with this shape and intelligence, must be the great God and I did not exist before but I exist and after this I will not be; therefore, my being is not a scheme and must think about what is my texture, why am I created for where have I come from and where will be my end, it is possible a desire is raised in your being because of remembering God and found yourself then the amazing point is that you have lost yourself and desire to find yourself from far away, just like the man who was riding on his donkey and still desired to find his donkey. (Suhrawardi, vol.3, pp.368, 369)

It seems that the Master, at the beginning of this expression has expressed a controversial opinion regarding the continuum argument of the self-consciousness, but there is a difference in the predicated “distraction” in the argument and predicated “distraction” in the above expression. It should be noted that rational soul under no circumstance, even drunken, does not forget itself because light is immaterial but has forgotten itself on the basis that of forgetting its “principle”. Nevertheless, the Master at the end of the expression about “the donkey rider seeking his donkey” returns to the contribution of self-consciousness in reference to the source.

Therefore realization of the self-consciousness as radii from an active intelligence denotes that another intuitive knowledge titled as “In connection with an active intelligence”. Upon actualization of this “connection” the soul achieves the secret cognitions in the concept of the “Sources”, secrets of geneses that is more prestigious than the absolute self-consciousness. Accordingly, there is no doubt that this kind of self-consciousness in no domain be it superior or inferior would vanish and due to its continuum unity remains as is. The soul unity status is the same in both the domains, but the level of self-consciousness in the inferior domain with that of the superior domain is different; that is, there exists an intensified relation among the triad soul’s conceptions (physical, self-consciousness, and in connection with rational knowledge). This conception is actuated in Dawani’s the “Hayakil al- nur” ‘s commentator after it was realized by Suhrawardi; this issue will be discussed in the next section. Here it is worth mentioning that after going through the self-consciousness, with the necessity to achieve the source of light and with respect to distinction, the gap and falsity in soul that is given to the body against the accuracy of infallibility of the conception of self-consciousness in fact the Master pronounces his Gnostic version of the fact against the mere common theoretical views. However, the explicate announcement of the Master above dose not benefit from the existence of an intensified relation between that self loss and the possession of connecting to the superior intellect since the connection of his words carry the indication the will achieve the conception of God through the conception soul.

4- The theory of knowledge according to Dawani theory

Dawani the scholar in his iconic thesis titled “Al Zawrah” introduces two incomparable and new views that have contributed to the bases of modern Islamic philosophy. These two views are: assertion relation between cause and effect and assertion of intensified relation between degrees of knowledge. Based on the thesis of the theory of “mod”, he extracted a theory regarding the “Adaptation of worlds” and begins to work on the completion of “Knowledge”, that is in a sense the conclusion of the thesis. This thesis channels through ontological analysis to epistemological one and by this manner by relying on verses and narrations he not only opens the way for creating intensified relation between existence and knowledge, but benefits from religious explanation of the relation between material and immaterial.

Dawani, in order to present his thesis on “mod” uses the principle of “generation of an object is impossible from non- existence”, something very common in philosophy. He announces this as follows:

“Be known that whatever you heard through exalted theosophy that “generation of an object is impossible from non- existence” is clear to you that are also true in essential contingency. And ... then effect is neither contingent to cause nor is to his essence [and independent], since it carries its essence in its nature and consists of dignity of dignities and aspect of aspects and a respect of respects.” (Dawani, p.174)

According to Dawani effect has neither an independent essence from cause nor is a heteronym of it, but has the dignity of the numerous dignities of cause. Therefore, the world of the existing, the world of subjects, are not countless, but from one with numerous properties/characteristics and dignity. Then in existence, subject is not many but there exist one subject/essence with numerous properties/characteristics (ibid, p.175).

Then Dawani through the manifestation of this unique fact begins to explore the human’s knowledge. In this realm, first the truth covered in a specific form is revealed to our vision and then without these effects

on the common sense and then that truth is manifested in intellect. (ibid, p.178) With due respect to all of these, he explicitly announces that: the unique fact in any of the soul's different domains changes attire and any kind of knowledge form even intellectual form is untrue. According to him whatever is beyond this otherness is the difference in awareness and evidence.

Regarding this concept he writes:

“We made it apparent to you that the truth is not a form, then due to its pure absolute essence it is reserved without all forms that it becomes manifested by, but that truth manifests at different levels of form that are precisely another to each other, while the truth is manifested in two forms that have difference in their domains as a single unit.” (ibid, p.180)

Hence, the principle of Dawani's opinion is the distinction between form and the truth. There exists a delicate and fine relation between this theory and assertion in lack of unity between the soul and the actual fact inflicted on the soul but not the actual form inflicted on the soul-be it from the superior light kind or common beings in Suhrawardi's wording. The soul is one in the position of intelligence and reason regarding itself, but does not unit with anything that indicates the reasonable form. With all this said, we are concentrating on this issue as a level above the expressed assertions, where Dawani in producing the prestige of knowledge addresses an issue called “excessive disclosure” and expresses the status of the intensity of knowledge as follows:

“You witnessed how the sole truth emerged on the rational faculty as a unit, tender and angelic and on the senses as multiplies of unrefined and material as though that [truth] accompanied the soul by lowering its level to multiplicity and unrefined state and when the [soul] riches the soul and when it riches the level of senses it is at the maximum multiplicity and unrefined state. Hence, the truths ascend and descend as soul does, therefore the truth is within the soul and not without and the [truth] possesses the soul in different domains and in each domain to another domain, due to the decrees of unity or frequency or

tenderness or unrefined state it takes color and that's the reason of multiplicity when we say: Be aware that the prestige of knowledge is the multiplication of one and the unity of many." (ibid, p.181)

In reference to the above mentioned the known that is next to the soul is the truth itself that in different univocal states possessions states of soul in different shapes of tender and impure material and angelic state is uniquely manifested. Therefore truth could not be stabilized outside the soul while the soul is the manifestation of truth. For the same reason, Dawani, after this statement adds that the "soul is the fertile grounds for all truth" in a sense truth grows on soul and the branches of the roots are stable in it. (ibid, p.182)

In Dawani's wording these levels are distinguished in three orders:

- a- Truth is not a form.
- b- The truth serves unity and multiplicity in different topics regarding the soul.
- c- The soul is the fertile ground of the truth.

In these orders, the first level is the constituent of the last and the last is the ultimate constituent in a manner that (a) supervises the knowledge in a sense that it belongs to the accidentality of existence, while (b) contains the concept of knowledge in a sense that it is related to the linear aspect of existence, but (c) guarantees the meaning of "intellective self-consciousness" and (a) and (b) are the outcome of the intensity or the weakness of this awareness. This is explained as: the efficiency of soul as the imitation of truth that is due to the lowering of soul to the bodily level, therefore weakness of and reduction in self-consciousness, while by intensifying this very awareness, the soul gains its unity and through unity the truth itself becomes the inclusive truth. The weakness of intuitive self-consciousness is the human perplexity to which the Master assigns a religious weight to it and unifies it with the concept of forgetfulness in the holy Quran, while the frequency and completeness of this knowledge that coincides with acquiring unity is a subject covered completely in Platonian philosophy and is referred to as the extreme acme of the soul knowledge.

Conclusion

When Master of Ishraq discusses the incorporeity of the soul in his “Hayakel al-nur”, he refers to the rational soul that differed from, the vegetative, animalistic and psychic soul which are emitted in the body. The rational soul has two superior and inferior aspects to it and in its interior aspects it employs these three souls as means/tools and governs the body, but since the rational soul is emitted from the active intellect is oriented towards the superior world.

These two aspects of soul contain two types of intuitive knowledge since governing the body and the mystical journey both are the two present acts of the soul. It should be mentioned that regarding the act of governance of soul through the material spirits there always exists a distance between the rational soul, the body and the world. With respect to the process of ascent act, due to lack of unity between soul and the luminous non-material substances there exists a distinction between all the knowing and known. Only in this realm of intuitive self-consciousness and all divergences are removed and because of this continuum unity no error is allowed in this knowledge. This infallibility and continuum by all means do not indicate that the intuitive knowledge is generally different from the other two kinds. All three kinds of intuitive knowledge do not diverge with the whole instinct; in general there exists an intensified relation among them. Scholar Dawani in his theory of knowledge has pointed to this issue and he concludes that; if the soul follows its path of knowledge it would reach its main knowledge and if it acts weak regarding the luminous reality- and not that forget it completely? Since this is impossible, even in the state of being asleep or drunk- he will be affected to the material world and will suffice to controlling of the body. Therefore, due to intensified relation in the manner of knowledge, any resultant reduction in self-consciousness is an act of body control and the outcome of its increase in an act in self-transcending towards the superior worlds.

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Transcendence Model of Intellectual Evolution

Seema Arif

University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

This paper posits a transcendence model of human intellectual evolution based upon integration of multiple philosophies, such as Ibn-Sina's philosophy of gradation of existence, Sadra's philosophy of transubstantiation of soul, Ibn-Arabi's philosophy of unity of perception and Al-Jilli's potential of human perfection, Rumi's philosophy of love and divine service and Iqbal's philosophy of continuous efforts for self-construction (Khudi) and Jafarian principle of human free will and liberty. The basic idea is conceived from Allama Jafari's idea of two life-styles presented in "Intelligible Life"¹, which has been further expanded into four distinguished steps in the hierarchy. The transcendence model contends that life is experienced in seamless continuity; it is not a linear division into two extreme poles. The model postulates that life steadily unfolds itself from unconscious to consciousness, through process of intellection, ultimately reaching the sublime stage of conscientiousness. As human consciousness crystalizes itself into various life experiences, a sense of life style, or gradation of existence emerges. Moreover, the paper raises some critical questions that are faced by Western philosophy in explaining the nature of human consciousness, its working and its advancement. Since the subject under discussion is not just human soul, but human self, and shaping of personality in following a life style, we cannot neglect the opinion of eminent psychologists.

Therefore, this article is a constant dialogue between philosophers and psychologists to seek answer of a popular human enigma – transcendence.

Keywords: transcendence, Human intellectual evolution, Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra, Ibn ‘Arabi, Al-Jilli, Rumi, Iqbal, Allameh Jafari, Intelligible Life.

Introduction

I died to the inorganic state and became endowed with growth,
and (then) I died to (vegetable) growth and attained to the animal.
I died from animality and became Adam (man),
why then I should fear,
When have I become less by dying?
At next remove I shall die to man,
that I may soar and lift up my head amongst the angels;
And I must escape even from (the state of) the angels:
“Everything is perishing except His face.”
Once more I shall be sacrificed and died to angel:
I shall become that which enters not to imagination.
Then I shall become non-existence: non-existent saith to me,
(in tone loud) as an organ: “Verily unto Him shall we return.”²

These lines are often quoted for explaining Islamic concept of evolution; the first lines represent physical evolution of human race, the middle lines represent the willingness for transformation, whereas the last lines express the essence of transcendence, which this paper seeks to unfold.

The literal meaning of transcendence is going beyond, climbing up, or elevating oneself but the philosophical meaning is quite different with multiple variations in Greek, Islamic and modern perspective. Frankl has noted: “Man is the only being which is able to transcend to emerge above the level of his own psychic and physical conditions.”³ This sense of moral and spiritual elevation has been object of interest for many philosophers and religious scholars across the history and recently psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists have developed interest to explore this mysterious land as well. Each branch of knowledge has dealt with the subject in its own domain in different perspective, but there is a general agreement among all that it has a rational element attached with it and the ground for its action is human

consciousness. Hence it is assumed that transcendence has some link with human intellectual advancement and bringing about change in human ways of thinking and behaving, both at individual and societal level. Whether or not this change can be monitored or guided to bring peace and harmony among individuals and nations is the big question that needs proper scientific treatment.

Luckman has observed that transcendence is a universal phenomenon and its experiences are not limited to certain societies and peculiar religions.⁴ However, individuals and societies tend to manage it in their own ways in their own cultural context. It is hard to say that any religion or religious sect can claim monopolization of the phenomenon, though it has been manipulated by many in their own accord in history, but there are some universal values, which when observed and practiced can help in intellectual and moral advancement of the society. What is the essence of this moral uplift and what are its pitfalls, we need to determine it carefully. According to Piedmont, “transcendence is a fundamental capacity of the individual, a source of intrinsic motivation that drives, directs, and selects behaviors... as it helps individuals to develop relatively more holistic and interconnected perspective of life as individuals recognize a synchronicity to life and develop a sense of commitment to others.”⁵

Religion and spirituality are universal threads in the fabric of human experience and still religion is considered the most authentic means of obtaining spirituality rather than material knowledge in many parts of world. Science attributes such attitudes to the ignorance of people, but has no adequate answer to give us why “Enlightenment” failed to deliver its promised good. In seeking answers of such enigmas, Luckman has stated that the concept of transcendence has generally degraded as “modern social constructions of religious significance shifted away from the “great” other-worldly transcendences to the “intermediate” (political) and also to the minimal transcendences of modern solipsism whose main themes (“self-realization,” personal autonomy, and self-expression) tend to bestow a sacred status upon the individual.”⁶ The importance of transcendence as an exalted experience has been lost in its immanence, therefore, it is important to revisit those

concepts of transcendence which were source of “existential unity” as taught to us by Sadrian *al-hikmah al-muta’aliyah* or Transcendent theosophy.⁷

Whitehead has related three important sources of knowledge, each independent in its philosophical underpinning and analysis and they are: the classic Greek thought, the Egyptian religions which expanded in Eastern Mediterranean (I wonder why he had excluded other world religions and Islam), and modern science.⁸ Each system has its own significance and had its own impact on the rational and ethical development of human race. Each has ascribed an organ which serves as a key tool to acquire the prized experience of transcendence or existential unity; for Greeks it was mind and for Egyptians it was soul, whereas, the modern science rejecting the existence of anything which is non-material find human body the home for everything. The most poignant question has been about the nature and home of soul, the term which has been later replaced by ego and self. Before moving forward it is very important to define the operational difference between the three.

Soul, Mind and Ego

Mulla Sadra varies considerably with his contemporary Descartes in explanation of soul. Descartes had ascribed soul an independent ethereal existence, whereas, Sadra ascribes to soul both the corporeal and spiritual nature, having the quality and potential of transubstantiation.⁹ Modern science is suffering through the compartmentalization ushered by Cartesian Dualism as it divides religion and science according to their subject matter, soul and body respectively. Contrarily, according to Muslim philosophers, the individual soul is representative of the God in human being, this aspect of soul which is related as Ruh or divine spirit is the spiritual nature of soul. Soul carries within itself the divine energy of life, the capacity of all movement and growth in life (the potentiality) which has to materialize in this world to become actuality.¹⁰ Therefore, it needs a corporeal element, an apparatus, to provide it a safe environment to grow and actualize. This concept is synonymous with Muslim belief that body is the outer-covering, a dress

or even armor for the soul. How does soul experience the gradation or levels of growth? The answer is provided by Ibn-Sina: its bodily experience is managed through Nafs, which is another synonym for soul, when talking of its material relationships with the world around.¹¹

The soul does not remain static, as it has been celebrated in many of the Muslim philosophers' writings, such as Ibn-Sina promoting the philosophy that human khulq (essence) is alterable.¹² The 1st target of the soul is reaching the human potential in its physical, social and mental scope and the 2nd target of soul is actualizing that potential. The first target is achieved in physical growth and establishing social relationships, but the second target is realizable only by using another faculty reason through the process of intellection. Here we confirm the existential theory of Sadra that existence precedes essence, (the principle logic that has been adopted later by Sartre in developing his existential philosophy). By saying so we allow the immanent creation of mind, which is described by science as the function of human brain. The individual existence of mind is contingent upon the existence of brain. The smell of the rose is contingent upon blooming of rose; similarly working of mind depends upon development of brain. Hence, it is concluded here that body mind and soul are three integral parts of human existence and none of them can be compromised to realize full potential that human beings carry with themselves.

Mulla Sadra has proposed the theory of "Gradational Unity of Existence", which states that existence, i.e. the only entified and fundamental thing, is one reality with various degrees, i.e., people can be differentiated by existence's intensity and weakness, completeness and incompleteness, priority and posteriority, whereas, intensity and weakness are only true concerning the degrees and levels of one truth.¹³ Sadra had believed that existence in everything is real and fundamental and is the cause of the individuation of its quiddity. Existence in his words "is intensified or weakened and made perfect or imperfect while the person is the same person."¹⁴ While expounding on Sadrian theory of existence, Javadi Amoli explains that Sadra has offered us two distinct viewpoints about gradational development of soul. The first one relates to the "means", the necessities of development, which are

four: real unity, real multiplicity, real reduction of unity to multiplicity, and real reduction of multiplicity to unity. The other relates to the “end”, the destination of development and that is based upon the concepts of Unity of existence as propounded by Ibn-Arabi, i.e. the existence and existent are one; and multiplicities are shadows and rays of one existent.¹⁵

This sense of existential unity has always been challenged by Muslim theosophists, especially by the Asharites and Brethren of Purity. They take this union in body rather than in spirit. Are they challenged by Cartesian Dualism as well? However, Razaei and Bozorgi have differentiated between the concept of union as provided by Ibn-Sina and Mulla Sadra. They inform us: although Ibn Sina affirms in *Al-Shifa* the union of the intellect and the intelligible in the soul’s knowledge of its essence, but he rejects the union of the intellect and the intelligible in the perception of other intelligibles.¹⁶

Sadra has challenged this concept of union of the intellect and the intelligible on the premise that the change or transformation of one thing into another demands the existence of common matter, whereas the soul is immaterial and has no matter at all. He regards it ‘An Error and a Remark’, rather than ‘A Point’.¹⁷ However, I must remark here that the non-material quality of both provides them a common ground. When we believe in principle of life, we forget about the principle of death, which is the reversal if not opposite of life. The very principle of death leads us to belief that if nonmaterial things can transform in material ones, the material things can also transform in non-material. That is why Imam Ali (RA) renders death, the perfection of life, or the completion of the circle and Rumi says “die before your death.” Imam Ali’s saying is about physical life, but Rumi is hinting at mental and spiritual transformation.

This transformation occurs in essence, the quality of the being and not in being as it is. It is the gradual journey towards what it ought to be. Transformation of form may take place in the world of objects, but in the world of ideas the transformation is more concerned with the nature and quality of ideas rather than its form. The gradual changes that are

expected to take place in any form are related to field of maturation (growth expected with age) or development (growth that may or may not conform to the standards ascribed to age). The transformation would be regarded natural which takes place as an infant changes into child, the child into adult and the adult into the old person or a child progresses at rapid pace in school as compared to his/her peers or an individual is able to learn many languages. However, the unnatural transformation would be a boy changing into a girl or an old turning into young.

The subtle differences can only be understood by using the faculty of reason. Alas! The modern science has divided it into reason of body and reasoning of soul. Intuitive use of reason is called intellection, something akin to Greek Nous; Muslim philosophers understand “intellection” as the process of connecting one’s intelligence with the divine intelligence, as defined by Avicenna who endorsed this intellectual mechanism, as way of using one’s reason beyond the use of five senses, to try to understand the logic of creation and the system of universe.¹⁸ The process of intellection leads to the initiation of inner eye of mind or “Qalb” bringing spiritual transformation in one’s life as propounded by Rumi and others, when one is able to see the physical craft, and the moral logic behind creation of universe. Thus the vision of the creator and the created becomes one. This spiritual unification helps the human to carry out the divine mission designated for Life and the living as implied by Mulla Sadra in his transcendent theosophy or Al Jilli in explaining Universal Man – Insaan-i-Kaamil.

Being (existence) is an a priori condition for Mulla Sadra needing no proof (burhan).¹⁹ Ibrahim Kalin has further explained: Sadra’s concept of knowledge is based on two fundamental premises of his ontology: primacy (asalah) and gradation of being (tashkik al wujud). Sadra’s defining knowledge as mode of being (nahw al wujud) represents rather a new perspective within the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been continued in neo-platonic Greek tradition.²⁰

Mulla Sadra’s theory of knowledge is both a realist and an existentialist mystic. Knowledge is a bridge between the real and the

intelligible world. On one hand it helps us to comprehend forms, nature and characteristics of phenomenon as they exist in this world and on the other this primary knowledge helps us to develop understanding of the world that exists without material form. Thus the process of intellect is double folded – the opening of the eye to make the reality around us intelligible for us and closing of eye to get to intelligibility of reality itself. As propounded by many of Muslim thinkers and philosophers reality is not limited to objective world and the sense perception is not the only tool to get to it, the internal perception and its tools, imagination, reflection, contemplation and intuition are vital instruments to grasp reality.

Here Sadra has taken departure from the tradition, whereas, the tradition itself was tucked up by Cartesian Dualism, Mulla Sadra's conception of the union of intellect and the intelligible, includes all levels of knowledge including the imagination and the sensation. Therefore, in any case when soul knows something, either by intellection, imagination or sensation, the knower and the known are one.²¹ Ironically, the world of science had accepted the leadership of Dualism rather than unity and is still in search of truth; on the other hand this sense of unity is still not intelligible for intelligentsia in Muslim World as well and is more cause of tashkik (skepticism) than metal peace.

How does soul experience world?

The modern philosophers, Edmund Husserl and Jean Paul Sartre have endeavored to solve eternal soul-body or mind-body conflict. The main difference between the two is about acceptance of reality "as it is". Husserlian ideas correspond to Platonic ideas giving more importance to mental activity rather than objective reality. The threat here lies in the tendency to get lost in subjective ideas and get compromised version of reality. On the other hand Sartre pays more importance to Aristotelean realism, where we pay continuous attention on the object of attention itself and may get lost in the reality of its material existence. The threat here is losing one's own being into the object other than us. Both of these are very important phenomenon in human perception,

when we examine it critically in Islamic perspective, we get rid of the dualism, as Islamic perspective gives us quick guidance about the immanence and transcendence of experience.²²

The Husserlian methodology is worth following in rendering objective phenomenon in world, i.e. "life-world".²³ By doing so one can retain one's individual ego and it returns intact to oneself after transcendent experiences with the world. However, this transcendence might be a minor one relating to self or social relationships. Nothing grand can be expected in terms of spiritual experiences. Sartre's methodology is worth following when we study ulterior objects of nature, its laws, its operation and mechanisms; here personal ego can be effaced to reach the transcendental unity as claimed by Sufis like Ibn-Arabi, Rumi, Sadra and Iqbal. Realistically speaking both Husserl and Sartre have been more influenced by Descartes and they had compartmentalized Cartesian methodology, each adopting it in parts. Both seem to be in trouble because they talk about contents of consciousness and objects of consciousness but they do not discuss the objectives of consciousness. Both aim it wrong and get confused and puzzled and give an incomplete picture of reality to the world. This distorted image of reality and failure to get to the ultimate truth is then projected into denial of existence of God rather than failure of one's own methodology.

Though both of them (Sartre and Husserl) call Freudian notion of "unconscious thought" as either a contradiction or a grotesque misnomer, but Freud has been able to paint a relatively complete picture of consciousness and its chief actors rather than any of these philosophers. Not only he provides us with levels of consciousness but he informs us about their operating principles and authorities as well. His unconscious is parallel to Ibn-Sina's Nafs Ammara, which operates through "ID", a storehouse of basic instincts, desires, and wishes. Its governing principle is "pleasure principle", which has the sole aim to satisfy bodily needs in order to live and survive in this world. Superego is the society's representative in us, which tells us "*what ought to be*". Partly it is based upon conscience, the unconscious morality coded in our genetic makeup enabling us to sense universal values and codes of

ethics and partly it is based upon learned experiences in a specific society or culture.²⁴ According to Freud both of these aspects of personality, the Id and the superego are in constant conflict with each other trying to suppress its counterpart. The Ego is the chief operator of personality, which operates through reality principle, what it is, and it tries to mediate between the two, awarding each a partial satisfaction. When this balance is distorted, i.e., any of the counterparts (Id and/or Superego) dominates, then persons are at risk of developing personality disorders or psychological sickness. Therefore, we need to understand unconscious in context of pleasure principle and its relationships with bodily needs and their satisfaction, instead of rejecting it completely because of its superficial occupation with sexual pleasure.²⁵

It is important to distinguish between pleasure and satisfaction. The pleasure is to avoid any instinctual tension, it relates to the gratification of primary instincts, whereas, the satisfaction is that of needs, and the intensity of the need will vary from person to person.²⁶ Freud states: “every psycho-physical motion rising above the threshold of consciousness is attended by pleasure in proportion as, beyond a certain limit, it approximates to complete stability, and is attended by unpleasure in proportion as, beyond a certain limit, it deviates from complete stability; while between the two limits, which may be described as qualitative thresholds of pleasure and unpleasure, there is a certain margin of aesthetic indifference....”, i.e. it is important to determine at individual ego level whether or not the steps taken to gratify instincts met adequate success? When one is able to succeed in satisfaction of a primary instinct, those behaviors becomes a tool for further satisfaction. According to Freud the compulsion to repeat behaviors is derived from natural instincts; He draws our attention to reports made by clients during psychotherapy or to remarks of important others who have observed personality development of children and adolescents.²⁷

Freud says: there is tendency to repeat those behaviors and when such behaviors are reinforced successfully by the primary caregivers, they develop into habits – a primary source of self-satisfaction. E.g. a child who is used to take milk in mother’s lap may refuse to take it in

anybody else's lap. It will be a violation of pleasure a psychological need rather than the primary need of food. Here the basic premise of evolutionary biologists – every behavior is biologically adaptive – is questioned. Freud's pleasure principle instead dictates that every behavior is psychologically adaptive. A particular amount of satisfaction will lead to pleasure, such as just drinking juice or eating Pizza will not be pleasurable unless it is in some special quantity or is picked from a special brand. Similarly just passing in exams would not be pleasurable unless it equals or exceeds personal expectations of getting a particular grade. Contrarily, the reasons for displeasure or causes of unpleasure are mostly perceived to be operated from outside – the initiation of projection.²⁸

However, we must not forget that the course taken by mental events is autonomous and self-governed by autonomic nervous system at bodily level, whereas, apparently regulating pleasure principle is the psychological factor. It is even more important to remind ourselves that mind is an emergent condition of neural activity of brain, and the antecedent of perception is sensation. In most cases it is sensation which gives cues to imagination and fantasy. When we get lost in developing personal understanding of a phenomenon (a Husserlian case) we tend to confuse objective reality, i.e. the physical order and hierarchy of the objects comprising a phenomenon (an issue of Sartrean concern).

Freud reminds us to note carefully that the basic nature the course of events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes such a direction that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension—that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure.²⁹ The primary objective is to maintain “homeostasis” biological balance of the body satisfying its basic needs, air, water, food, constant body temperature. Sex is one of the primal needs, because human survival depends upon procreation, therefore maximum pleasure has been attached with this primal instinct and it gets symbolic significance in each act of pleasure and bodily satisfaction. This psychic representation, an archetype of so many rituals and customs, is in fact the unconscious reminder to individuals –

they must survive and the survival depends upon not just passing on the genome to next generation but to pass it in the best possible form. This is the point where the moral principle (Superego) and the reality principle (ego) get activated. To nurture rationality and develop these principles are more important and it is accomplished by developing reason, the positive emotions and not the negative emotions. Freud's stress upon the effective use of ego's tools in handling this operation – the psychological defense mechanisms – is evidence, how the unbounded energy of life –Eros – which seeks constant expression can be realized constructively. Isn't this Eros the soul of life? Isn't the psychodynamics – interaction of ego at various levels of consciousness – an effective principle to understand reality?

Freud also warns us that the persons who are unable to adjust to “reality principle” remain in loss; the reality principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. As identified by Goleman (1995) it leads to resilience and empathy – indicators of emotional intelligence – the ability leading to success and better social adjustment and relationships.³⁰ The reality principle cannot be acquired without sharpening of reason and development of practical morality. In order to get to reality principle, formal training of reason is required; otherwise, we may have to bear with overuse of speculative reason, not only mentioned in writings of mystic philosophers but training of reason on moral principles is highly recommended by modern and post-modern thinkers as well (Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Schumacher and Capra)³¹ surprisingly most of these are German philosophers. The inherent German philosophic tendency to look at whole (Gestalt) has always made it more humane in systematic thought at least even if failing to reach a praxis.

The difference between first two stages of the model (See the model below), therefore, resides in the fact that the first stage will insist on getting personally defined amount of pleasure, whereas, in the second stage people will be able to adjust their personal level of satisfaction

according to social requirements or demands of practical morality. However, the adjustment pertains to avoiding displeasure, where consciousness has broadened to realize social objectives. The problem with Freudian psychodynamics is that it governs psychopathology of human behavior more than dealing with scope of normal behavior within prescribed social limits. Though Freud refers to aesthetics, he does not pay any attention to ethics; rather in many of his writings he has blamed Victorian purity as responsible of moral degradation, hypocrisy and root cause of psychoneurosis in human behavior.

Being, Consciousness and Purpose

Sartre recognizes the a priori existence of being akin to “soul” that being is everywhere and every act of consciousness reveals being – the pan-psychic experience one enjoys with readings of Rumi’s Masnavi Manavi. His (Sartre) primary emphasis is upon the immanence of conscious experiences, since it is keeping him busy rapidly changing its screen and color. For him consciousness is empty, devoid of any content. All so-called “images,” “representations,” “ideas,” “phenomena,” “sense data,” etc., are objects for consciousness, and not contents in consciousness.³² Consciousness, for Sartre is like a cinema screen, on which the objects of intended study run; then who has the remote control? Isn’t it the ego, which may push the buttons, stop, play, rewind, fast forward or pause as intended by her? Moreover, there is no ego “in” or “behind” consciousness. Both Husserl and Sartre tend to limit the scope of consciousness by limiting it to the sphere of personal consciousness. It is not just limiting the consciousness, but limiting the scope of existence as well. I wonder how they will respond to Khaldun’s idea of collective conscience (Assabiya) or Jung’s idea of collective unconscious and archetypes.

Ego for Sartre is the unity of states and of actions and (optionally) of qualities - it is so to say a transcendent unity. It remains confusing that whether Sartre is trying to negate the presence of transcendent ego or is denying the whole principle of transcendence as it was explained in neo-platonic tradition culminating in Sadrian Hikmah al Muttalliya or transcendent theosophy. However, like Whitehead he seems to reduce transcendence to social level, more visible in acts of altruism and

personal sacrifice (as it was observed in World War II) corresponding to human relationships than crossing the boundary of material reality to embrace an ethereal one.

Sartre's self-constructed transcendent unity of states, actions and qualities helps him to create a self-contained psychological construct of "Me" and does not give us any dynamic view of life and the living. This "Me" necessarily reflects unreflected attitude "me as it is" and not the Kantian Being or Sadrian Being who is constantly reflecting upon itself for improvement, in a desire to evolve into a better being (the sole purpose that is attributed to being and consciousness by Mulla Sadra's Hikamah al Muttalyia). At his best Sartre is able to achieve a self-concocted image of "Self", which is related to our perception about ourselves, i.e., how do we view us. In sharp contrast to it, ego is a much dynamic concept, which involves working at both internal and external dimension, at inner plane it is aiming to construct a better self-image for personal satisfaction, and at the outer front, it is busy in constructing a favorable view of personality, which is how others view us.

We cannot reduce ego to mere consciousness of states and actions. "State" is predominantly an emotional concept relating to positive and negative feelings arising from perceptions of the world around. Since Sartre rejects reflection as an important tool to work with consciousness, his consciousness seems to dwindle with pain. It is very important challenge to address while constructing personal reality: whether or not working and reworking on a state may relieve us of the painful emotions; unable to do so we will remain stuck in the cocoon of a personal reality constructed for us by us in La Husslerian fashion. Isn't reflection works here with considerable success?³³

Sufism teaches us that states are temporary and we must not convert them into stations for us; even stations are transitory unless we reach final destination. This essential quality of transience and temporariness is often neglected by material philosophers like Sartre who seek permanence in their transitory states rather than moving onwards in direction of better future. The future, which is an immaterial reality,

does not find its due scope in Sartrean philosophy, leading to uncontrolled pessimism and fatalism. This idea of life is thus challenged by Allama Taghi Jafari, who believes life as an ongoing process of realizing potentiality into actuality according to Sadrian principle.

The Foundation of the Model

According to Whitehead, “Existence is activity ever merging into the future. The aim at philosophic understanding is the aim at piercing the blindness of activity in respect to its transcendent functions”³⁴, i.e. the aim of philosophy is bringing into formal logic the unknown knowledge – traveling the distance from ‘ghayb’ to ‘reality’ – Kun / Fayakun (“Be” and “it is”). Unity of existence means various physical and biological phenomenon harmonized into one whole – Being.³⁵ Conforming to his predecessors, Sadra regards acquisition of knowledge as “the ultimate aim and goodness par excellence (khayr al-mhd, summon bonum) in which all realities come to an end”.³⁶ For him, experiences of being can be described in terms such as “illumination”, “presence”, “unveiling” and “witnessing” are the ultimate sources of “transcendent wisdom.” There is a clear distinction between the concept (mafhum) and reality (haqiqah). The reality appears different because of the meaning of the concept (mafhum) rather than reality itself.³⁷

Thus knowledge is being in itself and enjoys a universal reality in its being, whereas the individual understanding or idea of the concept may vary from individual to individual determining its gradation on the path of knowledge. It is the individual knowledge of reality that undergoes transformation, whereas, the objective reality in the extra-mental world stays the same. This principle defines the relationship between the generic particulars and the absolute.

The principle has been borrowed from Ibn-Arabi, the in-bisat al wujud, the self-unfolding or expansion of being as being expresses itself in infinite number of ways, modes, states, and colors. It essentially implies that growth of being resides in growth of knowledge of the being. However, this knowledge can be as diverse as unfolding of being

itself. Knowing and acquiring knowledge is regarded as most dynamic process, therefore it is neither limited in direction, nor scope or intensity. The order of being can be determined only through the quality of its perception.

As argued by Sadra, existence exists in itself and needs no proof, what one has to differentiate is the quality or gradation of existence. Whether something exists in imagination only or it exists in reality. If something exists in reality, then we need material evidence for the proof of its reality, and if something exists in imagination then individual description of what exists is the proof of its reality of being, though not a sufficient one unless affirmed by other experiences of similar kind.

That is why scholastic reason, which regards individual logic for an object, person or phenomenon a sufficient proof, is thought inferior to other reasoning types.

The Purpose and Scope of Model

The purpose of this model is to explore various dimensions of human intellectual evolution in human life and also examine the scope of this evolution from Sufi aspect of Transcendence as stated above.

Allama Taghi has been always interested in Human life; he understood it as absolute truth that must be taken seriously.³⁸ He had strongly believed that man and the universe have objectives and attainable goals and these goals are far higher than man's material pleasures and worldly desires.³⁹ According to him it was possible for people to break away the "steel trap of their own uncalculated desires and wishes, simple-mindedly believing it to be a "free life". He had believed that "Beyond their appearance, all human cultures have a lot in common, and are inseparably associated." He was in search of that unitary element that devises "common human culture" and was able to present it in uniform styles of life that are observed in all societies and cultures: the 'natural' life style and the 'intelligible' one.

The treatise on “Intelligible Life” has been based upon the second volume of his commentary on Nahj-ol-Balagheh, which discusses the choicest values and behaviors that could guide man to the highest ideals in his life. Allama has cautioned that living merely a natural life is akin to animalistic life and those who are immersed into it are struggling for the survival of bodily life preoccupied with satisfaction of their primal instincts and basic needs. The essential demand of "intelligible life" resides in principle that human reason trained in morality governs human life and must endeavor to seek evolutionary unity of life.⁴⁰ The evolution moves in a hierarchy and everyone must strive at his best to be moved to the next situation in the hierarchy.⁴¹ This movement is not voluntary but "absolute necessity" because it helps the person to move himself from a situation surrounded by evil ambitions to a higher state enthused by divine human concerns and philanthropic values.⁴² Allama states that “the more a human utilizes freedom towards free will, the more exalted her/his reasonable life will be.”⁴³ "Intelligible Life" begins from emancipation and after passing through the stage of freedom for further development and final finished product is achieved in the lofty stage of liberty.

For Muslim philosophers, life is but perception of life; therefore, we may have to attain “unity of perception”, i.e. only well-coordinated and integrated thought system will secure us to happiness. Contrarily if there is too much confusion or contradiction, not only mental peace is disturbed, but one gets mentally sick resulting in developing neurosis or psychosis. We must not be alarmed by these bold words; though these are but extreme states of mental disorders, our everyday life experiences are infused with multiple sicknesses, like too much dependence upon lies, vanity, flattery, envy, pride, arrogance, egotism, narcissism, dictatorship, corruption, moral bankruptcy and not to forget sexual perversion. All these social evils are just seen as variation of human behaviors and nothing has been done so far to investigate and control these normal variations. Psychology has helped in defining human nature and describing its normal and abnormal states, but it has bitterly failed to offer the promised good –happiness to humanity. The heights it can reach are described in Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs or Carl Rogers’ craving for style of life. The only reason for

such ignorance is this science has no ideal, no ethics, no morality to guide it; it is as lifeless, as devoid of the afore-mentioned values as other physical sciences studying life-less nature. It can hardly help us to reach the ultimate desired stage of conscientiousness – happiness lies in submitting oneself to Divine service – submission to Allah. Those who are successful in it reach the exalted rank of Wali Allah – friends of Allah.

According to Allama life can be improved by improving the quality of its experience, not in physical terms (hedonistic or Epicurean) but in ideal forms in case of mental experience; by redefining our thought (by reflection and not merely abstraction); and by taking positive actions (praxis –harmony between moral aspect of an action and its actual occurrences) and feeling (emotional intelligence). Allama has identified five principles governing the intelligible life, 1) Escalated Consciousness; 2) Following the trajectory of elevating goals; 3) Charging the free will; 4) Realizing moral purpose of life; and 5) Reaching true happiness.

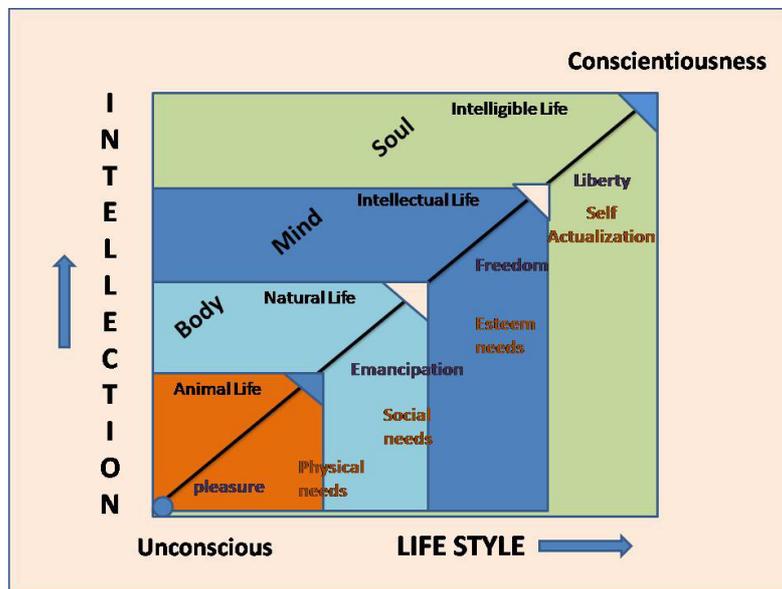


Figure: Transcendence Model of Intellectual Evolution
1st stage: Animal Life

Sadra intimates us that the animal soul is bound by three ties, by blindness, by deafness and by having no memory. ⁴⁴Qur'an comments that: *sumun...* They see and they hear but they cannot remember; their memory is short term, remembering recent instances of pleasure and pain. Hence, they are unqualified to learn from their own experience. Rumi says the whistle of the hunter remains sweet for the birds, no matter how many times they have witnessed their mates being trapped, similar is the life of a gambler, of a drunkard, of a rapist or a dacoit.

As mentioned in intelligible life, this station of life is fixated in satisfaction of natural impulses and instincts; therefore, it operates through consequentialism. The major attraction in this sphere of life are the carnal pleasures, relating to physical body, such as indulging in excessive eating, drinking (alcohol), deriving sexual pleasures (both normal and perverse). On the other hand repulsiveness is targeted towards getting body in pain, of overwork, of physical disturbances related to weather, of not getting desired food, sex and rest. The primary emotions of anger and fear cause people to fight or flight. Sometimes, fearing that pleasures will end and pain will start, results in displacing this fear as anger on the weak and vulnerable. Substitution is also important here; all types of sacrifice animal and human originate here. Demanding and paying ransoms, bonded labor, women abuse, and child labor are the natural products of this station of life. The social life style will be marked by power vested in few; the target and aim of society will be to grow in size and power often indulging into rampant quarrels and feuds. Competition will be fierce and survival will be ensured to the fittest only. Since physical reality matters the most, there are greater chances to get caught into physical determinism. The escape from this life requires physical piety, indulging into physical Ibaddah, the excessive training of body to learn to delay gratification like that in fasting, praying for chastity of body.

2nd Stage: Natural Life

When people learn to manage their physical needs without creating much disturbance in themselves or others, they are awakened to social life, because people are able to recognize others' needs as important as

their own. They are also awakened to a state of primary consciousness, where they realize that they are dependent upon many other people for satisfaction of their basic needs. This sphere of life moves with the aim of co-existence. The need here is to establish practical morality to lay foundation of a society, where some common practices will be observed, so that mutual co-existence is possible. It is elevated in a sense, that people are not motivated only for individual survival, but mutual survival. Historically, this awareness had led to the foundation of agrarian societies, where people cooperated with each other and worked hard together to ensure the satisfaction of their basic needs. People are identified for their belongingness to a family, community, race or nation. At one side it can evoke a condition of mutual solidarity, pronounced as 'Asabiya' by Ibn-Khaldun, on the other hand extreme preoccupation with this idea may give birth to ethnocentricity, elitism or racism.

At critical moments the archetypes of survival keep haunting, when faced by natural disasters like storms, rains, floods, earthquakes followed by famine or hunger. Nature is seen as an oppressive force and the aim is to subdue it. Emotions of love, accompanied by envy and jealousy take birth here. Since people have learned to hoard and preserve, what others have, I want to have it too. There are dips taken time and again into animal life to snatch from others; family feuds, tribal clashes, wars or battles disrupt the society. People share their joys and sorrows; help is available so there is feeling of emancipation. But strict laws are needed here to keep the society organized. Festivals, ceremonies, feasts, and religious congregation help to reinforce desired social habits. Excessive emphasis leads to social taboos, and rituals, rites and customs make people slaves of the 'golden cage'.

Every time they have to let go of their personal rights in favor of others, more powerful than them. There is feeling of unease inside and we want to dive into animalism again and again. A feeling of guilt and social shame is attached with such thoughts and behaviors. To overcome this, societies try to establish formal education system that passes on the tradition, to make people obey social norms and laws and compelling them not to think beyond it. Dipping into animalism is

severely punished. Since there is an emerging sense of loss of personal control over life, social determinism, and fatalism take root in heart. There is feeling of inadequacy at incapacity to meet social ideals, sense of solidarity is challenged and inferiority complex develops. Practical Sufism comes for help, the objective is to purify one's social habits for a better social conduct; social emancipation of others, sublimation in NGO type social work or getting into helping professions may help people to come out of displeasure and dissatisfaction and helps to form alter means of social identity. Benevolence, patience, perseverance and justice are much celebrated virtues in this sphere of life.

3rd Stage: Intellectual Life

When competing for satisfaction of social needs and facing failure the questions are raised in mind: why do I fail, while others succeed? One searches for answers to establish a better cause and effect relationships or try to construct a personal logic by active comparison and contrast. When successful in this attempt, one is awakened to full consciousness of another station of life, intellectual life, where reason is the faculty, people will use to identify their problems, define them and search for their practical solutions. Sensuality and all sentiments attached with it are pushed at the back of mind. I need change, social reformation. I want improvement, quality, better management of affairs, but above all I want others to recognize me as an individual 'self', a person with unique needs, an important part of the whole. I am awakened to full awareness of my potential, the dragon in me, full of opportunities and threats that I can manipulate in any social situation to claim my share that I may boast about my achievements. I know the right answers of the questions. I seek here pragmatism, utilitarian knowledge of science, which empowers my mind and let it rule on my body. With this sense, comes an ultimate sense of freedom, both in thought and action. On the positive note people spend their lives in pursuit of knowledge, in becoming successful professionals, hardcore natural scientists, mathematicians and teachers seeking self-respect and autonomy. They may spend their whole lives in calculating abject quantities, forecasting of projected relationships between various variables. Nobility, hard

work, discipline, orderliness, resilience and creativity are the celebrated virtues here.

Skepticism is the major threat that is faced here, since I want my logic to work everywhere successfully. So I compete with others through denial or rationalization. I project problems over others and I may meet critical social or personal situations with reaction formation. Personal pride blinds the people to see reality other than theirs; they are corrupted by their own moral ideals, whether individuals or nations, and they themselves, will overwrite all sacred covenants with God they had committed themselves as a social moral obligation in the state of natural life. Now they are no more the weaklings oppressed by brute forces of nature or social pressures. Neither did they need God nor society, but it is vice versa. Failure to come out of skepticism leads to neuroticism, full of obsessions attached with personal sense of glory; it may further progress to egotism or escalated and unproductive narcissism. In such a case, the dip in animalism is of the worst kind, painting the whole world red. You can put the whole world to fire and be at ease, like Nero or Hitler or Bush. You want to purify the societies and cultures and extinguish them if they do not submit, because you are the authority. It gives rise to Fascism.

Personal assumptions are more worthwhile than reality. People may be hated on the basis of the categories they belong to, bias and prejudice divides nations and societies. In hateful pride they loathe those whom they deem inferior to them, and in order to exterminate them or keep them as slaves, the war is again waged against the weak and the vulnerable, which will be resisted naturally and may be counterfeited ultimately and in this battle nations will themselves destroy, what they had built after sincere and deliberate hard work of ages and will become extinct, an exotic and invaluable item of world history of art and literature. Unfortunately, pure rationalism leads to such idealistic and perfectionist tendencies in people and nations that they never submit and give way. In their success stories, they have not learned to manage with failure or now they have forgotten that remote past. Instead of facing degradation at the hands of others, persons may commit suicide, like Napoleon or Caligula; even today, high suicidal

tendencies are observed in most affluent nations of world like Sweden and Japan.

4th Stage: Intelligible Life

The failure in obtaining selfish satisfaction in oneself or others or getting undesired outcomes of one's plans and actions motivate some people to reflect on their own acts and thoughts. They embark on the journey to final destination to realize Al-Haq. The reflection and revision of one's mission in life pushes us to seek the ultimate purpose or Telos of life, which is coded in sources of divine knowledge and which is realized by enacting internal senses of perception. Learning to cognize one's needs and adjusting them with the divine plan, be ready to submit and slay one's ego for the divine service, adopting into this serving role with humility and gratitude. It is the self-actualization, realization of full potential and submitting it as gift to the divine nature to serve nature in its different life forms, from inanimate, to vegetative, from animal to human, looking at the whole life plan and becoming a navigator of that plan. It is the initiation of the Ishq, joining hands with the nurturing force of life, becoming guardian of life systems, thus reaching the final destination of vicegerent of Allah surpassing all angels. There is sense of complete freedom from negative emotions like envy, jealousy and pride and there is complete liberty to make one's own choices. The alchemy of purification has crystallized your existence; it is shining like diamond; it has become the part of the niche, nur ala nur. So the holy has passed all lowly stations and has returned to the sacred. Instead of seeking light, it has become light itself. It has completed the mission, and restored to its original wisdom –part of collective conscientiousness. It will be source of moral awakening in others. The fruit has become the seed.

The means of reaching this station is seeking piety in physical and mental life. It is achieved through intellection which is an escalated form of intelligence, by concentrating on ideas and laws of nature through meditation, dhikr and prayer. It is the balancing act of one's moral, social and psychological intelligence. Intelligible life celebrates wisdom or Hikmah. Quran says:

“The acquisition of Hikmah is incumbent upon you and the good resides in Hikmah.”

Ibn Arabi has referred to Hikmah as wisdom and Mulla Sadra has written in *Al-shawahid al-rububiyah*, “Through Hikmah man becomes an intelligible world resembling the objective world and similar to the order of universal existence.” The ascent of Hikmah, explained in Islamic context, therefore begins from plain knowledge of existence of things to the realization of their objective reality to both micro and macrocosm to the illumination of the purpose of their being, and understanding of The Creator. In plain words, Hikmah is education and training of all: body, mind and soul, which transforms both the mind and soul and which is ultimately never separated from spiritual purity and retains the ultimate sanctity of the creator. Loving kindness, tolerance, forgiveness, chivalry, eloquence are the ultimate virtues celebrated here with a blissful sense of eternal peace inside – *Nafs-Mutmainna* – the ultimate good Islam holds for humanity.

Implications of the Model

Human being is an integrated whole of body, mind and soul. Influenced by Cartesian Dualism and Sophist approach towards life, modern science tends to look at its functional parts body and mind only, while completely ignoring soul. Body seems to be growing and changing from one state to another, whereas, soul seems to be constant. But through deep analysis we find that though changes in body are more frequent and obvious, they are less permanent and are transient. On the other hand changes in soul are slower, not very obvious and visible but are more permanent in nature. When it enters the final light stage purifying itself of all worldly pollutions, no more change in its state or station is required. What is that light stage and how can we get rid of these worldly pollutions is well demonstrated by Allama Taqi Jafari in his theory of life styles. The natural life style is indicative of the “worldly pollutions” any individual person can get exposed to during the course of life, while intelligible life is indicative of the gradual movement towards enlightenment.

Conforming to Sadrian principle of Transubstantiation, the soul does not remain static and with growth attaches a corporeal element with it. Its first target is to achieve the full potential of the body – the physical maturity and adulthood. Since soul does not die it cannot be corporeal, however, it does not develop fully and may have to leave this world as an unfinished product. Therefore, we may require even multiple generations for soul to realize its full potential. It can be done only through maintaining the life of the body by transferring the seed of life to the next generation. The soul is the DNA then? At least it appears to be its bodily representative as I do not want to reduce the dynamic identity of soul to its corporeal representative. Potential is contingent upon some source and in case of the potential of soul, in one aspect it appears to be contingent upon DNA and the repository of inherited characteristics on one hand and on the other upon quality of communication with divine intellect, which is achieved through the faculty of internal perception.

What sets limits to realization of potentiality of the soul?

DNA is the contingency, the potential that human heredity endows a child with. If DNA is soul then one must have two souls within the body, if one has one soul then the challenge is choice between right potential. Whether intellect is an independent mediating force between the two, body and mind which sets the direction and level of the drive of soul? If the intellect is overpowered and dominated by the carnal soul, the whole capacity of the intellect will be served in satisfaction of basic needs. The dissatisfaction will persist, people will behave in the same loops and one will not be able to come out the red sphere of bestial soul. The soul will be ever returning to earth for its development in search of another body like so many seeds scattered on earth wishing to become a fruity tree.

The Mantra for evolution

Aristotle and all Neo-Platonic philosophers have aimed at happiness. Can we safely assume that happiness has its origin in Love? Isn't Ishq (love) the guiding force, the purpose, the coordination, that convinces the

nature what is desired by Aashiq (lover)? Isn't the Ishq the naturalizing influence the appropriation agent that diminishes the differences between the two, created by artificial worldly perception – thus moves towards unity bridging all gaps covering all distances, whether they are of gender, age, race, religion, status, wealth, education, or any other discriminating agent. Iqbal says:

Ishq ki aik hi just nay kar diya fasla tamam
Is zameen o aasman ko bay karan samjha tha main

(Ishq took one plunge and distance between heavens and earth were parted which I thought were limitless (Referring to Miraj-e-Rasool – holy ascension of Prophet Muhammad [SAW]).

The process of self-creation is the transformation of the potential into the actual, and the fact of such transformation includes the immediacy of self-enjoyment (real happiness as discussed in Iqbal's concept of building selfhood [egoism] or Sadra's view of transcendence of human soul or Ibn-Sina's travel to Nafs Mutmaina). Indeed, self-creation is the concept developed into self-actualization later by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

However, it is very simple to understand the order of life in universe, since human beings are superior in their being, and their mental activity, they have right to claim superiority over the life-less or nature of lower order so to speak. The talisman is how will we proclaim it? What will be the magic words? Definitely it can be none other than Kalam Allah, which is revealed to individual hearts in form of Dhikr to initiate actualization and to reach their potential limit, however, small or big? It brings qualitative changes in personality by enriching soul and redefining self, its identity, sense of self-esteem and goals for development. This qualitative change is observed in the exterior by others, but it recodes the genetic make-up, thus brings reform in the future generations and improves life as a whole. The more the people are able to realize this purpose and bring personal transformations in their lives, the more the change will be observed in the society bringing a social and cultural transformation. This change may take years to

realize to reach the desired destination – the time that was taken from Adam to Abraham or from Abraham to Muhammad. Words are sacred and sounds are magical – music is one of the evidence. May be sound waves are changed into light waves and enlighten us awakening us from sleep of ignorance and neglectfulness. Amen!

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Endnotes

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- ² See Maulana Jalal ud Din Rumi's *Mathnawi Ma'anvi* (vol. III) Translation by Nicholson, P. 219
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- ¹⁷ See Ibn Sina's, *Al-Isharat wal Tanbihat*, with commentary of Khawja Nasir al-Tusi, edited by Karim Feydi, (2, V: 3, p. 319) Qom: Moassasat Matbuat Dini.
- ¹⁸ see Inati in Nasr & Oliverman, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁹ Ibrahim Kalin, *op.cit.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Corresponding to Ibn-Arabi's philosophy of "unity of perception. See Arabi's *Fatuhah* or *Fusus al Hikam*
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- ³⁵ Seema Arif 2007, *op.cit.*
- ³⁶ Asfar, *op.cit.* 1, 1, p.54
- ³⁷ Ibrahim Kalin, *op.cit.*
- ³⁸ See *Intelligible Life*, p. 22
- ³⁹ See *Intelligible Life*, p. 19
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, Chapter no. 2, p.
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Foundations and Development of Absurdism in Western Thought: Reflections from Perennialist Perspective

Bilal Ahmad Dar

Bonapora Batamaloo, Srinagar Jammu and Kashmir

Abstract

Absurdism, understood as the sense of conveying total meaninglessness, despair, nausea, eternal alienation from God and an irresolvable tussle between being and becoming and head and heart, has been one of the most disturbing developments in recent Western history. Absurdism has always been with man but in somehow contained manner: it did not grow into a full fledged autonomous philosophy with a philosophical school of its own. Its roots are discernible in certain ways throughout history, especially in the western history. The present paper seeks to unearth those threads of thought that can be viewed as the precedent causes and preparation for the development of absurd philosophy in the modern West and its absence in the esoteric metaphysical and mystical traditions of the world. Fundamental limitations and contradictions of the absurdist project are also briefly highlighted.

Keywords: Absurdism, Western Thought, Philosophy, mystical traditions.

Introduction

The history of man is the history of metaphysics. Man is a metaphysical animal, a meaning-seeking animal. All his endeavours somehow revolve round seeking meaning. Religion, art, poetry, philosophy, science all are connected with this meaning-seeking endeavour or in fact could be seen as explorations in discovering/seeking/expressing

meaning. Life itself is synonymous with meaning for those who choose to live instead of die or commit suicide. Do what he may, regardless of his material conditions and ideologies, man always finds that there are some fundamental, inevitable and inescapable questions that he has to confront as a thinking being, a metaphysical animal. These fundamental questions are what man (or life/existence) is, what for, and why, or how he flourishes best, finds peace/contentment/fulfilment and overcomes sorrow or pain. Man is condemned to choose values or reduce himself to beast, to dust. According to traditionalist authors all traditional civilizations have given similar answer to these questions and it is only modern Western thought that has been led to give a partly different answer though the answer of traditional Christian West has not been different from other traditions. In fact the founding fathers of Western thought have also not given a different answer. But there were certain orientations in the Western thought from the ancient times much developed in the West than in other traditions where such attitudes and orientations were effectively contained that concealed a nihilistic/absurdist seed. That is why scholars trace absurdism to ancient Greeks. Absurdist trend in modern thought starts from the premise that there are no values out there or ontologically grounded and given this fact one can still proceed to live with dignity. Man can create his own meaning in a supposedly meaningless universe. Absurdism, though in many ways is a modern phenomenon, unprecedented in history, is discernible in certain ways through out history especially in the Western history. Absurdism understood in its broader sense that connotes such things as purposelessness of life, despair, meaninglessness, failure of communication, life as a morass of ambiguities and contradictions, disbelief in the traditional grand claims of reason and science – pessimism in short – is the hall mark of twentieth century literature though it has always been with man but some how it didn't develop into full fledged philosophy.

Absurdism and Nihilism in History of Philosophy

In *The Dark Side: Thoughts on the Futility of Life* (1994), Alan Pratt demonstrates that existential nihilism, in one form or another, has been a part of the Western intellectual tradition from the beginning.

Genealogy of absurdism is to be traced in ancient Greeks because the first great adventures of unaided human reason and thus its failure were to be found there. The Sceptic Empedocles' observation that the life of mortals is so mean a thing as to be virtually un-life, for instance, captures the essence of absurdist nihilist thesis. The task that Camus issues for the absurd hero Sisyphus is one where man lives on without the hope of transcendence. Again, Camus earmarks this theme by writing that finally he takes Empedocles as his model, the philosopher who lives alone. In antiquity, such profound pessimism may have reached its apex with Hegesis. It is because of the fact that Hegesis maintains that miseries vastly outnumber pleasures, happiness is impossible and subsequently one must advocate suicide. One may perhaps begin the history of absurdism with the pessimistic Ionians such as Theognis and Sophocles, who were concerned about the uncertainties of life, the certainty of death, the darkness of the future, and so on. Nietzsche traces nihilism to Leucian's statement. Sophists were logically committed to a sort of absurdist nihilist thesis.

The philosophical foundations of Absurdism can be traced in the pre-Socratic philosophy. With the development of what Perennialist philosophers such as F Schoun, Rene Guenon and Syed Hossein Nasr call the 'profane philosophy' in the sixth century BC, in which the 'Greek mind' revealed itself more as analytical than synthetic, rational than metaphysical and political than being mystical. According to Heidegger this philosophy was calculative thinking and the 'forgetting of Being'. It was the start of the establishment of a divinely independent and humanly dependent tradition of rationalism and humanism which, with the passage of time, became the backbone of the western philosophy, theology (especially the Christian), and various sciences. It was this tradition that was devoid of self sufficing metaphysical principles. Metaphysics, according to perennialist metaphysicians, is the only kind of knowledge which is really direct and thus can't be based on anything other than itself. It consists of the knowledge of universal principles which are the source from which all else is derived, including the subject matter of the physical sciences and philosophy as understood in modern sense. However the isolation of the subject matter by the respective physical sciences for specific and

close treatment must be legitimate in so far as such an isolation and its procedure and the resulting knowledge is not misunderstood as self sufficient and absolute from these principles. This misunderstanding permeates through the Greek and the modern rationalism as well as in the medieval Scholasticism and its narrow interpretation of Absolute Godhead and man. Rationalism in almost all the departments of existence works on a faith which is complete self-sufficiency of human reason. Its open target is what is metaphysical and suprarational and its dream is to set the kingdom of man on earth where all values and answers must be human and its domain is the realm of 'nature': the finite universe and our imaginative exploration and scientific understanding of it are to be accepted as the sole reality and complete context of human origins, life, thought and destiny. It was this mode of thought that sought to explain and understand everything including man, Godhead, human destiny on the earth, evolution of man without taking recourse to metaphysical principles. In this man's logic and reason become the sole tools for the verification of what is true knowledge. And if we consider, besides Greek rationalism, the renaissance humanism and the modern philosophy and science as a whole it may be deduced with certainty that their common point of view is that all knowledge or even absurdity of it is confined to the domain of human reason and senses. It was this project of rationalist humanistic enlightenment that got started in the Greek, passed on in its modified form to Christian theology, re-emerged in the renaissance enlightenment and modernism and finally gave birth to its own antithesis in the form of absurdism. Absurdism too, like humanism, is a philosophy of the understanding and experience of man but it ends with the refutation of reason, logic and all rational understanding as futile groping for a black cat in a dark room under a black bed in a dark blanket which is not there. It is pessimistic through and through. Although both Absurdism and Metaphysical or non-dualistic religion rightly see this world as full of suffering and tragedy, consequence of the Fall, the latter, however, shows the ways that can guide one towards salvation. Syed Hossein Nasr explains how 'metaphysics' and its instrument of knowledge 'intellect' have been misunderstood and misconceived with 'philosophy'(as understood earlier) and its instrument 'reason' respectively:

As a result of the forgetting of the fundamental distinction between the Intellect, which knows through immediate experience or vision, and reason, *ratio*, which can only know through analysis and division, the fundamental distinction between as a *scientia sacra* or Divine Knowledge and philosophy as a purely human form of mental activity has been blurred or forgotten.¹

Renaissance and Enlightenment

It was the Greek classical spirit of rationalistic humanism and its inherent scepticism that foregrounded and foreshadowed the contexts and concepts for the logical development of the worldview in which God of realizations(both mystical and metaphysical) was deduced/reduced to be a mere conceptual/ dialectical construct. It was this deduction/reduction that grew in the renaissance revival of knowledge, deepened in the enlightenment project and finally paved the way for absurdism. To the Greek philosopher, Gorgias there is nothing supra-rational because “if it were, it could not be known; [Due to the limits of reason] if known it could not be communicated.”² In the same vein Protagoras said, “I cannot know either they [gods] exist or that they do not exist, or what form they might have, for there is much to prevent one’s knowing: the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of man’s life.”³ Epicurean belief was that man’s ultimate consolation in trouble could come only from his own power of scientific reason. This over-reliance on the reason matured into the belief of the mind that reason could formulate a conscious pattern of human perfection and could then provide an elaborate systematic procedure to achieve it. It had inspired the agnostic humanism of the Sophists, pre-Socratic philosophers, whose representatives are Protagoras and Callicles. The influence of these developments is too conspicuous in the empirical and rationalist philosophy (devoid of any presence of revelation or intuition) of Aristotle and the rise of Christianity. It was essentially this conceptualization of man and his reason centered philosophy which S Radhakrishnan terms as positivist and humanistic – indifferent to the fate of the soul – that marked the birth of the Renaissance and the modern world and its various derivatives, such as, humanism, individualism and in the religious sphere of Reformation and

Protestantism. The Renaissance was the starting point of the modern world. It was the start when man started thinking horizontally as the vertical dimension of the Christianity had fallen. The renaissance was the beginning of a new world view whose centre was now man in flesh and bones. Mazzeo in his essay *Renaissance and Revolution* says that the renaissance was a revolution of consciousness. The word that sums it up was Humanism. The great humanist thinkers as Pico della Mirandello, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, Bruno and Montaigne shattered the foundations of God centred Scholasticism thereby paved the way for a new understanding of the universe and man therein. It was the 'revaluation' of all values, a change in attitude towards a new direction. The renaissance humanism in its philosophical and practical foundations had a secondary place for God and otherworldly religious attitude because man was now the master of his own destiny. God as an 'Other', as a transcendent principle had no role whatsoever in so far as man's march guided by his own reason and understanding was concerned. This historical inevitability of assuming an independent status in which man became now god led to the exploration and invention of all that we call today modern world or the world of science, values, liberty and so on. It is a fact that Guenon admits the scientific revolution could not emerge in a metaphysically sound tradition for in comparison to the metaphysical knowledge, the scientific knowledge is considered as fragmented, lower, based on duality and even profane for it explores and thus sinks deep into the low labyrinth of heavy and dark matter-used metaphorically. The former is complete as there is no subject-object duality. It is sacred as it is the knowledge of higher and essential principles. It was the distortion or misunderstanding of this metaphysical tradition both in Greek and the modern world that helped to flourish science and a pseudo understanding of man, humanism, which led man to assume himself as the measure of everything. It was the rebirth of Prometheus. Man is the measure of everything and possesses an independent and self-sufficient judgment and discernment that can determine the nature and thereby acceptance or rejection of what is Real and illusion and what fact is and what fiction. For example when Plato talks of Ideal reality, he talks of a measure of knowledge that is impersonal therefore suprarational or metaphysical in nature thereby immutable and eternal. However, in Rational scrutiny and

search all that escapes the senses or reason, such as Revelation, intellectual intuition or other metaphysical principles such as Nirvana or Samadhi or heaven that all the major Religions and traditions of the world state and sustain on since ages, is rejected as fantasy, idealistic or as belief or utopian etc. Mirandola seems to echo Epicurean reason when he conceives God saying to man “I created thee as being neither heavenly nor earthly...that thou might be free to shape and overcome thyself. Thou mayst sink into a beast or be born anew to the divine likeness... To thee alone is given a growth and a development depending on thine own free will”⁴ . In such a scheme of things metaphysical knowledge and Intellect (in the sense as explained earlier) could have no role whatsoever even if it had been available to the Renaissance man. Murry rightly says that a dynamic religious vision gradually became petrified for many into dogmatic rationalism. Man was now in the hands of reason and where it took him becomes clear when one marches into the next phase of the development of reason in the enlightenment. Glenn Hughes puts the new anthropological project of enlightenment in the following four points:

1. Natural human reason can accurately explain the physical...in addition to the social and political problems that face humanity [including] all of the basic “mysteries” of the universe.
2. Human worth and dignity are not dependent on either divine benevolence or a transcendent destiny; rather worldly existence is its own worthy and ultimate purpose.
3. Human will and reason are not implicated in mystery to which transcendent meaning or redemption holds the key.
4. The steady improvement of the human condition and its accompanying increase of happiness are inevitable outcomes of an increasingly effective secular rationality, a rationality freed from the idea that history is oriented to a transcendent meaning or purpose.⁵

Rene Guenon’s observation regarding rational philosophy aptly sums up the whole discussion:

For profane philosophy [Reason oriented, devoid of metaphysical principles] to be definitely constituted as such it was necessary that exoterism alone should survive and that esotericism should be repudiated together.... The excessive importance which they [Greeks] had attached to rational thought was to prepare the way for the development of rationalism, a specifically modern attitude of mind which no longer merely consists in just ignoring everything belonging to the supra rational order but deliberately disavows it.⁶

When such ‘possibilities’ as intellectual intuition and revelation are denied to man and the centre of man’s being (God) is also denied, that man only left with is his own self-imprisoning consciousness of himself in the world of becoming. Albert Camus suggests that the only option man is left with is to revolt: “The rebel is a man who is determined on creating a human situation where all the answers are human.”⁷

Reaction to Exoteric Theology and Scholasticism

Christian theology has a narrow conception of Absolute God. It reduces and defines God as a personal entity that not only controls the emanation of history but is also omnipresent and omnipotent with regard to human destiny and life on earth. It was this conception that came into conflict with certain interpretations of modern science and the new rationalistic spirit that taught men how to derive a value system of things on the grounds of their immediate usefulness, validity (whether knowable or unknowable; factual or mythical etc.) and reformation of old value systems. This conflict inaugurated the project of modernity and Enlightenment which had a significant role to play in the genesis of the absurdism that culminates in Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus. D Bush portrays the picture of the medieval Christian mind thus:

... humanity had passed, a careful pilgrim, intent on the terrors of sin, death and judgment, along the highways of the world and had scarcely known that they were sight worthy of that life is a blessing. Beauty is a snare, pleasure a sin, the world a fleeting show, man fallen and lost, death the only certainty, judgment inevitable, hell everlasting,

heaven hard to win; ignorance is acceptable to God as a proof of faith and submission; abstinence and mortification are the only safe rules of life. These were the fixed ideas of the ascetic medieval church.⁸

Besides this God-Man relationship in the medieval Christianity had degenerated into a mere institutional formality and confession. Ritual replaced love and the corruption of clergy rendered religion into business in which heart died and dead morality became the norm. Other difficulty with the biblical theology is that it fails to justify divine justice of an all good and omnipotent God with the undeserved suffering of man. The humanistic outlook of God clearly shows that the omnipotent and omniscient God of the Christian theology is indifferent and silent to man's fate and suffering. He may be a creator but not a carer. He fails to prove that he loves his children. So his existence or non-existence and significance are of no consideration and importance. Instead the focus should be the earthly welfare of man which could be achieved by a mastery over nature. So the objective is to control nature by knowing its mechanics and modes. The spiritual dictums 'Know thyself' and 'control your baser nature' are now overshadowed by 'know the outer nature' to control it and thus become a god of/on earth. Although this outlook always neglected or resolved superficially (rationally) the fundamental questions (birth, death, God and man-God relationship) of human existence that the true religious genius of all the traditions resolves, not only on abstract metaphysical plane, but also on the level of concrete realisations and relationships. However, like the renaissance man, modern man became a rebel against this God because He doesn't seem to be concerned with the fate of man on this planet. The literature of revolt and Absurdism derive its sap of despair, anguish and rebellion from the apparent indifference of this God towards creation. Camus's whole philosophy of 'Absurd' and 'Metaphysical rebellion' is rooted in the loopholes that Christian theology failed to fill. Man is thrown in wilderness to suffer aimlessly and an omnipotent-omniscient personal God of Christianity looks silently. He could save man but He does not for reasons unknown. So His existence justifies only man's suffering that is inflicted on him through wars, natural calamities and pestilence. Human history manifests the ugly face of such a Creator which modern man could no

longer worship blindly. This gave birth to modern Prometheus, modern Job and Faust who revolt against the insufficiency of divine mercifulness from the human point of view. Such a God must not exist or is invalid, blind and cruel. It was this God that had been sustained and perpetuated by the medieval Christian scholastic mind. With the advent of modernism – characterized by systematic doubt, man-centredness, overreliance on logical analysis, free enquiry and ratiocination – there was no option except to kill the medieval God. Modern man dares expression unlike the medieval one. Modern man accepts the crushing burden of his own personality and is ready to suffer, unlike the biblical Job, without hope. The conclusions drawn by absurd authors with regard to their interpretations of God are various: God is absent, on leave, He has abandoned the world or He does not exist at all. So God and man assumed the position of two incompatible and irreconcilable entities – dualism – in the modern western world. The roots of this duality were sown in the marriage of Aristotelian philosophy with the Christian theology – Thomistic Synthesis – in the thirteenth century. The outcome of this religio-philosophical assimilation was that the role of intellect as a direct perceiver of profound spiritual knowledge – Gnosis – was reduced to mere sentimental Christian conception of Love; and reason was given the upper hand which, however, could operate only on nature devoid of spiritual significance. This further resulted in the terrestrialization of man who was no more conceivable as the very image of God:

Already in the Western Christian world view he was conceived as a fallen creature, and this terrestrialization indeed seemed to conform with the salvific purport assigned to the doctrine of Redemption... Man began to be conceived more and more in terms emphasizing his humanity, individuality and freedom...In the Renaissance, Western man seemed already to have lost interest in Christianity as a religion. They engaged eagerly in the pursuit of knowledge...materialization and secularization of the ideal man in an ideal society... Thus while Christian philosophers sought to erect a science of metaphysics, they were in fact – by virtue of the secular elements that had since many centuries penetrated into its metaphysical structure – only leading their metaphysics towards final dissolution, corroded, as it were, from within by those very elements it harboured. Christianity was

ultimately blamed as having forfeited the confidence of Western man in revealed religion.⁹

The Thomistic synthesis was the introduction of a new and suspect element in the Christian theology as was followed by the critique of William of Ockham (c.1300-49). The implications of this religio-philosophical debate were enormous and powerful towards the development of rationalism in religion which, in turn, was a move away from the metaphysical principles of which theology and exoteric religion are limited manifestations. As an independent thinker Ockham spread 'nominalism' or conceptualism against the prevailing philosophy of the day, realism. Nominalism contended that the only things which really exist are the particular things which exemplify the universals. The latter have been constructed by the human mind and apprehended by the senses. In this way Ockham asserted that man has no 'essential' knowledge, not to talk of metaphysical, of God, even by intuition. So it must be faith, not reason, which can form the basis for conviction and certainty in theological matters. He denied anything as Christian philosophy. And maintained that theology explores what has been divinely revealed and is to be apprehended by faith only. The philosophy, on the other hand, understands those aspects of reality which can be examined by human reason. In this way he drove a wedge between Christian theology and philosophy. The full implications of this development can be gauged from the following quote:

It (nominalism) had the effect in the long run of causing philosophy to become a lay, rather than always a clerical, pursuit. It was the forerunner of the latter empirical philosophy and of modern scientific method... [It] prepared the way for a philosophy of nature which, while not necessarily anti-christian, emphasized nature as an intelligible totality governed by its own immanent laws.¹⁰

This set the never ending intellectual tussle between the 'essence' and 'existence' of man which later emerged in various modern philosophical schools of thought. William S Haas sums up the entire argument in the following words:

The division of all experience into form and matter, which was clearly established in pre-Socratic thought, constitutes the core of Plato's philosophy with the limitless on the one hand, and on the other the limiting function of the ideas. The western Christian world conception and theology were decidedly influenced by this idea. And thereby, strangely enough, they helped to determine the intellectual prerequisites of modern science in its isolation of matter and its opposition of matter to life, the soul and the mind. The extraordinary productivity engendered by these pairs of opposites in metaphysics and theology, in philosophy and science... was paralleled by the spiritual and intellectual controversies arising from it which were all too often resolved at the price of fanatical intolerance and continual bloodshed.¹¹

Reactions of Modern Philosophy

And it was finally Descartes who formally laid the foundation of dualism on which the majority of the modern philosophy is built. From Descartes onward the mainstream of western philosophy is rationalist. The physicist Frithjof Capra observes the consequences of Cartesian duality on the western mentality in the following words:

Descartes' famous sentence *Cogitio ergo sum* – I think, therefore I exist – has led Western man to equate his identity with his mind, instead of with his whole organism. As a consequence of the Cartesian division, most individuals see themselves as isolated individual egos existing inside their bodies. The mind has been separated from the body and given the futile task of controlling it, thus causing an apparent conflict between the conscious will and the involuntarily instincts...this inner fragmentation of man mirrors his view of the world 'outside' which is seen as a multitude of separate objects and events.¹²

However, the freedom that the modernism brought to the medieval man is enormous: man was freed from "the dogmatic super structure of Christian doctrine ... freedom from written records of divine revelation."¹³ Now man opposed dogmatism, monasticism, and the dichotomy between the natural and super natural. Man stood for human

freedom: he became free to enquire and question, to discover the truth for oneself, to pursue happiness, the toleration of all views, the equality of all men. In this way the modern men spelled the end of scholasticism.

However, when one observes the passage of 'progress' from medievalism to modernism, one notices that modern man attained his immediate purpose in terms of material needs with the aid of humanistic techniques of reason, logic and science. He advanced from 'theism' to 'deism' to atheism in religion. The more he progressed outwardly the more he degenerated internally: the brave new world became mechanical world. Industrialization and imperialism could not fill the spiritual vacuum and man became more alienated from his own self. From 'the image of God' he moved into the image of a beast whose survival is to struggle only for existence or for power. The scientific theories etched man's naked picture without the presence of any divine element. Charles Darwin's theories of evolution of man from apes shattered the very fundamental belief of the Christian that man is created in God's image and he is the crown of creation. The heaven of Father and the abode of angels as well as spirits above were discovered as an empty space filled with galaxies and hot stars. The flat earth of the medieval Christian world was granted its proper shape, elliptical. The biblical earth was proved to be no more stationery and at the centre of the universe but a tiny planet like many other planets which revolve aimlessly around the sun and not vice versa as the medieval Christian astrology had for long made men to believe. All these new discoveries and hypotheses were postulated by the prophets of modern science such as Copernicus, Gallileo, Kepler and Newton. Having smashed down heaven of the Christian theology and having set earth in its true course, the post enlightenment man attained his image in this universe as that of a crawling little worm hanging midway somewhere in the infinite Fatherless and heavenless universe:

Renaissance science had introduced a new factor that was bound to affect man's understanding of himself. We allude to the new cosmology, constructed on the basis of the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton. It took time before the full implications of earth's displacement from the centre of the universe were

understood, but more and more man was becoming aware of his apparent insignificance in the immeasurably vast expanse of space and time... The confidence that man experienced when he thought of himself at the centre of things has given way to a terror before the silence of the infinite spaces. Proofs of God's existence and of man's eternal destiny seemed no longer to carry conviction. Yet even if they did, would the God established by such proofs be the God whom man really needs? Or is this God to be known only by faith – God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scientists...one must at least acknowledge that he [man] faced up to the essentially ambiguous character of the universe and to the fact that man must make his most fundamental decisions in risk, without certain knowledge. As Pascal said, we do not see the faces of the cards.¹⁴

Just as the medieval scholasticism, by its narrow perspective, reduced man's true freedom, individuality and his potential for salvation so was done by the project of modernity. The former robbed man of his material and sensual life while the later robbed him of spiritual life. Camus further observes in this connection:

Moral conduct, as explained by Socrates, or as recommended by Christianity, is in itself a sign of decadence. It wants to substitute the mere shadow of a man for a man of flesh and blood. It condemns the universe of passion and emotion in the name of an entirely imaginary world of harmony. If nihilism is the inability to believe, then its most serious symptom is not found in atheism, but in inability to believe in what is, to see what is happening, and to live as it is offered. This infirmity is at the root of all idealism. Morality has no faith in the world. For Nietzsche, real morality cannot be separated from lucidity...Traditional morality, for him, is only a special type of immorality, 'It is virtue', he says, which has need of justification'...

What is the profoundly corrupt addition made by Christianity to the message of its Master? The idea of judgment, completely foreign to the teachings of Christ, and the correlative notions of punishment and reward. From this moment, human nature becomes the subject of history, and significant history expressed by the idea of human totality is born. From the Annunciation until the last judgement

humanity has no other task but to conform to the strictly moral ends of a narrative that has already been written. The only difference is that the characters, in the epilogue, separate themselves into the good and the bad. While Christ's sole judgment consists in saying that the sins of nature are unimportant, historical Christianity makes nature the sole source of Sin... Every church is a stone rolled onto the tomb of man-god; it tried to prevent the resurrection by force.¹⁵

Existentialism

Existentialism arose as a revolt, both against the Christian scholasticism, humanistic rationalism and individualism, because both of them denied man's true understanding and realization of his essential self and true freedom – freedom from the cramp and confinement of reason, logic, idol worship to man and humanity (in case of humanism) and from the belief and faith in an unseen allegorical, other worldly abode (Scholasticism). The two systems of thought couldn't address the fundamental questions of human existence sufficiently. Humanism could not address the questions convincingly as anything like superhuman principles as God, revelation or intuition or Nirvana that doesn't fall in the grasp of human mind and its understanding are either termed as 'idealistic inventions' by human mind or are proved rationally as what can't be the norm therefore eccentric although taking no pains to explain as to how the major the civilizations of the world emerged and still survive and flourish on the very suprahuman principles that the humanism, empiricism and rationalism disprove. The principle on which the whole philosophy of humanism is based is man. Man is complete in itself as a potential and as possibility on the crest of the earth. Being so he is absolute and needs no other higher being or 'kingdom of heaven' to raise himself above the accidentality and chaos of the earth rather he must envision 'kingdom of man' here on earth whose God muse be he himself. So humanism engendered the myth of progress in terms of material possession of things, control over physical nature and a whimsical belief that one day man will thus resolve all the mysteries of existence. In the Scholasticism man was a sinner by birth and, like the Biblical Adam, he was to expiate his 'original sin' on the earth by all the ascetic practices prescribed by the Christian monastery.

He was enchained in the Christian conception of history which proceeds from the Fall to an imaginary world of resurrection when some personal God would decide the fate of each individual soul once for all. In this theorizing man in flesh and blood was ignored as Kierkegaard notes:

Christianity in the New Testament has to do with man's will, everything turns upon changing the will, every expression (forsake the world, deny yourself, die to the world, and so on, to hate oneself, to love God, and so on) – everything is related to this basic idea in Christianity which makes it what it is – a change of will. In Christendom, on the other hand, the whole of Christianity has been transferred to intellectuality; so it becomes a doctrine, and our whole concern is with the intellectual.¹⁶

The creative potential of human life that manifests divinity through the active time was lost in the Christian conception of reward and punishment theory – when history itself would cease. In this theory passive virtues replaced the natural active expressions of humanity. Tragedy, which is the lot of man on earth, was shadowed by the Christian humility. It was not the tragic sacrifice of Christ that determined the response of the Christian towards life rather it was belief in the saviour who one day would save all. It was mechanical and slavish understanding of the real spirit of Christ. Nietzsche rightly says that Christ was the only true Christian who lived the spirit of life. In short, the fate of man, as invented by the Christian theologians, was an ideological supposition that may or may not be true. It was this supposition of theology with regard to man's final destiny, not the experience of mystics with regard to man's ultimate destiny which is Buddha's *Nirvana* or Christ's heaven, which led Nietzsche to declare the death of the God of such supposition. Nietzsche inaugurated the death of the God of Christianity and the birth of modern Superman who is the child and meaning of earth, of flesh and bones and not of an allegorical Christian heaven:

...If one shifts the centre of gravity of life out of life into the "Beyond" – into nothingness – one has deprived life as such of its centre of gravity. The great lie of personal immortality destroys all

rationality, all naturalness of instinct – all that is salutary, all that is life furthering...The kingdom of heaven is a condition of the heart – not something that comes “upon the earth” or “after death”. The entire concept of natural death is lacking in the Gospel; death is not a bridge, not a transition, it is lacking because it belongs to quite another world, merely apparent world useful only for the purpose of symbolism...The “kingdom of God” is not something one waits for; it has no yesterday or tomorrow, it does not come “in a thousand years” – it is an experience within a heart: it is everywhere, it is nowhere.¹⁷

Nietzsche revalued all the eternal values of Christianity because they had fostered ‘slave morality’ which had caused men to remain dependent on the approval of a silent God and on His ministers. The slave morality had shattered the freedom of the human spirit and induced the survival of weakness and lack of self-confidence. It stood on the foundation of commonality of masses and thus took no care of values peculiar to each individual. Nietzsche tried to save man by cultivating in him the experience of ‘master morality’ which keeps man loyal to the present earthly virtues and leads him to celebrate the ‘innocence of becoming’ and ‘eternal recurrence’ against the Christian conception of ‘sin of man’ and the ‘linear theory of history’. Nietzsche’s concept of history is circular – eternal recurrence – like the Greeks which comes closer to the earthly condition of man who gets recycled aimlessly through time. Such insights led Nietzsche to deconstruct central metaphysical claims by proclaiming that there is no Truth but truths, no final interpretation but interpretations:

Since there is no possibility of ever reaching land, the question of what the ultimate destination will be loses all significance, but the question of whether one is at present sea-sick or not is a matter of very great moment. The present moment is therefore of infinite significance; it takes on the quality of eternity...Since there is no beyond and no future but only a present which recurs infinitely, the present moment mediates, and participates in, eternity...all things recur eternally and we ourselves with them...We have already existed an infinite number of times before and all things with us...I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest and in the smallest, to teach once more the eternal recurrence of all things,

to speak once more the teaching of the great noontide of earth and man, to tell man of superman once more.¹⁸

In the eternal recurrence Nietzsche realistically sees and celebrates, like absurdists, 'the spirit of tragedy' over the spirit of 'theoretical optimism' that was transmitted to the western world by Plato, Aristotle and the Christianity. By elevating the importance of the mind and by searching for a timeless Truth, a series of ideas and events were set into motion which, according to Nietzsche, "culminated in a western culture denuded of life and left only with its dehumanizing science and technology".¹⁹ The influence of the above views on the future generation of Absurdist philosophers becomes evident when we study Camus's observations on Christianity:

The Christians were the first to consider human life and the course of events as a history which is unfolding from a fixed beginning towards a definite end, in the course of which man gains his salvation or earns his punishment...The Greek idea of evolution has nothing in common with our idea of historic evolution...Jaspers is again right in saying: 'It is the Christian attitude that gradually empties the world of its substance...since the substance resided in a conglomeration of symbols'. These symbols are those of the drama of the divinity which unfolds throughout time. Nature is only the setting for this drama. The delicate equilibrium between humanity and nature, man's consent to the world...was first shattered for the benefit of history by Christianity...From the moment that the divinity of Christ is denied, or that thanks to the efforts of German ideology, He only symbolizes the man-god, the concept of mediation disappears and a Judaic world reappears. The implacable God of war rules again; all beauty is insulted as the source of idle pleasures, nature itself is enslaved...²⁰

However, it was Pascal who first rejected the Cartesian rationalism and saw human being as an essential paradox, a contradiction between mind and body. Kierkegaard shared Pascal's sense of inherent contradiction in human condition. Kierkegaard formally founded the movement of existentialism as a revolt against the idealistic Hegelian system of 'Universal Spirit' in which the individual in 'concrete' situations in life was ignored. Kierkegaard speaks of Hegelian dialectical rationalism

that “Trying to live your life by this abstract philosophy is like trying to find your way around Denmark with a map on which that country appears the size of a pinhead.”²¹ Hegel had tried to unify the duality that was caused by the Christian theism in which a Creator God (Absolute Spirit) is set over against the world which is His manifestation for self realisation and in which science now allowed him no place. In this cosmic drama human being had estranged from the Absolute Spirit although the latter was ideally an active and purposive projection of the former. Kierkegaard instead reacted to Hegel’s systematic and total account of human being and history in terms of rationality. He argued for the essential absurdity of human existence and for an irrational but deep commitment to a Christian form of life. According to him truth is subjectivity and the individual is higher than the universal, despair is a sickness of human spirit and the right way to live is to throw oneself into many and perhaps unsystematized ways of life until one discovers which way gets one out of despair. Schleiermacher also led the revolt against Kant on this point because there was ‘craze’ for objectification and generalization and system building in Kantian and post-Kantian idealism. Nietzsche and Dostoevsky likewise criticised the philosophical tradition’s emphasis on rationality as undermining the passionate attachment to the world to support a worthwhile life. It led Nietzsche to announce the death of Platonic/ Judeo-Christian God as the death gives a total freedom from objectification, systematization, idealisation and ratiocination of man, his unique and subjective self and the irrational tendencies (despair, nausea, suicide, habits, moods, passions and different kinds of attitudes (parapsychological, schizophrenia and neurosis etc) which the western schools of philosophy had neglected as trivial and unphilosophical. The death put an end to Platonic Idealism – which pervades the major western philosophical schools—which Nietzsche terms as an agent of the dissolution of Greece and its earlier Dionysian cult of revelry and earth affirming tragedy. In the same vein Nietzsche lashes the Christianity and the modern scientific realism and the mechanised society. The former robs life of passions and the latter robs passions from life. Collective convictions are bondages therefore death. To be free in life is to outgrow bondages both personal and collective thereby entering every moment of life afresh with an innocence of becoming.

But this mystical journey of 'becoming' becomes the cyclical repetition of history for Nietzsche's Superman, like the renaissance and the enlightenment man, remains entangled in the affirmation and preservation of individual in its 'super' form as 'superman'. The fate of superman is to recur eternally in the space and time without ever landing in the garden of 'silence', Nirvana or heaven or beyond-being. However the significance and novelty of existential thinking lies in the fact that it concerns the individual in concrete situations in life, "its concerns are more for the 'inner life', the 'subjectivity' and the intersubjectivity which have been ignored...by most of the high priests of academic philosophy in the west."²²

Limitations of Existential thought

The existentialist revolt, therefore, has its historical justification. However, the existentialist mind became totally free to draw all logical and illogical conclusions depending on the personal attitude and interpretation (subjectivity) of the absurdist, as it was the expression of concrete subjective attitudes of an individual in response to his quest and understanding of Reality. Dostoevsky says that everything is permitted if there is no God or immortality. Sartre believes, unlike the Buddha, that man can not pass beyond human subjectivity because subjectivity represents the highest point in the achievement of freedom. Nietzsche's "project of bringing the human being back to earth and away from its illusions about the transcendent and eternal turned him toward the biological dimension of human existence, its irrational instincts and drives: what he called 'will-to-power'...is really the answer to the metaphysical question 'what is there, ultimately?'"²³. Being devoid of metaphysical and mystical principles existentialism ended in nihilistic subjectivism and irrational tendencies which finds full expression in the fragmented and chaotic works of Samuel Beckett and the absurd philosophy of Albert Camus. Camus himself acknowledges the fact:

A nihilist is not someone who believes in nothing, but someone who does not believe in what he sees...Nihilism, whether manifested in religion or in socialist preaching, is the logical conclusion of our so

called superior values. The free mind will reject these values and denounce the illusions on which they are built, the bargaining that they imply, and the crime that they commit in preventing the lucid intelligence from accomplishing its mission: of transforming passive nihilism into active nihilism.

In this world rid of God and of moral idols, man is now alone and without a master... This unbridled freedom put him among the ranks of those of whom he himself said that they suffered a new form of anguish and a new form of happiness. But, at the beginning, it is only anguish which makes him cry out: 'Alas, grant me madness... By being above the law, I am the most outcast of all outcasts'. He, who cannot stand his ground above the law, must find another law or take refuge in madness. From the moment that man believes neither in God nor in immortal life, he becomes 'responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer in life'. It is to himself and himself alone, that he returns in order to find law and order. Then the time of exile begins, the endless search for justification, the nostalgia without any aim, 'the most painful, the most heart-breaking question, that of the heat which asks itself: where can I feel at home?'²⁴

The above observations clearly vindicate that Individualism in its different forms (humanistic and existential) affirms the individuality of an individual as the end and beginning of everything. Rene Guenon says that individualism necessarily implies a refusal to admit any authority higher than individual, as well as any faculty of knowledge superior to individual reason. Absurdism, as a movement, rejected utopian dreaming about the fate of man. It expressed the condition of individual as it is, not as it should be. Camus interprets the 'Absurd' in various ways echoing the Greek and the renaissance humanists. Absurd is the ultimate disproportion between what humans demand of the world and what the world provides in response. Humans demand rational clarity and understanding with respect to the world, while the world is a brute, silent fact that fails to respond to the human craving for rational explanations of it. As he claims, the world is fundamentally irrational. And absurd is the "Weariness [that] comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life",²⁵ "the revolt of the flesh is absurd",²⁶ and

“...struggle [that], implies a total absence of hope ... a conscious dissatisfaction ... the absurd has meaning in so far as it is not agreed to”²⁷ Camus elaborates further that “to an absurd mind reason is useless and there is nothing beyond reason”²⁸; absurd is an “...extreme tension which he [Absurd man] maintains constantly by solitary effort...which is defiance”²⁹ Lastly Camus says that “there can be no absurd outside the human mind. Thus, like everything else, the absurd ends with death”.³⁰ Here it is important to note that according to Camus the absurd mind draws absurd conclusions such as ‘crisis of motives’, ‘devaluation of all values’ (Nietzsche), relativism, nihilism, alienation, exile, impossibility of knowledge and knowing, impotence of being and the waste land of human history. It is modern humanism and individualism of absurdism that rejects the renaissance and the enlightenment ones. We can draw a general comparison stressing the points of similarity and difference between the two. Similarities: Both are man-centred. Man is the measure of everything. Both reject all that is not human and suprahuman. Reason or Human mind is the only mode through which knowledge is possible and all knowledge is essentially dual, divided into subject and object. Differences: the renaissance humanism was optimistic, theistic, objective, logical, reason and goal oriented while as the latter is pessimistic, atheistic, subjective, disjointed and nihilistic. As a reaction the modern humanism challenges and problematizes the central doctrines of the renaissance in that it, in its quest for the absolute ground of man, finds the promising renaissance man as a myth dubbed to conceal the inherent loneliness with which men, in their essential selves, are born, live and finally die. The modern humanist is not at home in this world to enjoy the beauty and reason out new adventures rather is in alienation from the centre. He has witnessed the horrors of two world wars and inexpressible pain. All values and beliefs that hold man together are now shattered to dust. Disintegration and fragmentation have crept into the collective unconscious. Power, not beauty, is the object of modern culture. Loneliness of every individual is what characterises human consciousness as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Beckett show. Communication is now impossible as the logo of language is fallen apart. The plot of human history and life is no more progressive with a beginning, middle and a heroic end but aimless

repetition of sounds and meaningless dialogues where nobody comes, nobody goes and everything is awful. Thus the modern man degenerated from man to his hidden animality, the libidinal drive of ruthless power and passion. The renaissance humanism placed progressive man in the position of stagnant God of the Christianity while as the modern one found the history of progress as a goalless journey from nowhere to nowhere. Where does historical notion of time finally takes man? Absurdists provide various responses: Nietzsche and Camus are driven towards the crushing burden of nihilism which they accept as the only worthy posture of human dignity. Nietzsche's Superman's 'will to power' and 'innocence of becoming' are two existential responses to the fundamental metaphysical question 'what is God' and 'what is our response towards history' respectively. Camus prefers 'metaphysical rebellion', suicide, 'will to life' and human solidarity combined with a deep nostalgia and resentment for, like all other major absurdists, the lost home. Heidegger seeks refuge in 'being' which is in time and not in impersonal metaphysical realization. Sartre develops good faith and takes full responsibility of choices and decisions. Beckett finds nothing more real than anything. To him 'nothing happens ever' and the human condition remains irredeemable. Man, according to absurdists, is in eternal exile, damned to suffer forever without ever knowing why. What can be known is the limited knowledge that one gets through the senses and reflects in the time and space bound mind. And what an individual has experienced and known since centuries, regarding his final destiny in the universe, is the monotonous repetition and recycling of human life and pain and the hollow and abstract promises of various narratives ranging from the Christian salvation of soul, man as an enlightenment project in himself to Marxist emancipation of body and all slavery. However, man in flesh and blood has always found himself imprisoned in the mud of which he is made to witness the never ending drama of life, decay and ultimately death. He is damned to taste the tragedy of unfulfilled ambitions alone without any saviour. All the grand-narratives of human history fail to explain to him the ultimate purpose of living and useless suffering. All that an individual can do is that he can suffer with nausea, live in anxiety, play mind games to pass time, commit suicide as an act of man's true freedom or he can indulge in masturbation, violent sexual

endeavours and drug addiction so that he can become unconscious of his imprisoned decaying self.

Conclusion

From its beginnings in pre-Socratic thinkers to modern times the history of development of Absurdism presents no consistent pattern of evolution. It appears that it has never been formulated into a coherent position – and perhaps it could not by definition be expressed as a system or consistent viewpoint for it denies order, consistency and meaning. The Greeks largely contained it and we find only fragmentary statements here and there and no such thing as absurdist school though ancient scepticism has some affinities with modern formulation of the problem and one can say anticipates it. The medieval Christianity absolutized ultimate meaning to the subordination of individuality and freedom. The renaissance humanism absolutized reason, freedom and individualism by inventing the ideal of ‘progresses’ by displacing the ultimate meaning by the immediate ones. Finally absurdism affirmed in absolute terms the notion of nothingness and irrationality. These developments echo Hegel’s dialectics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis; although after absurd ‘logic’ or ‘illogic’ synthesis seems impossible. Friedman notices this problem precisely:

For modern man meaning is not accessible either through the ancient Prometheanism that extends man’s realm in an ordered cosmos or through the Renaissance Prometheanism that makes man a little world that reflects the great. Still less is it accessible through the modern Prometheanism that defies what is over against man while striving at the same time to control, subdue, or destroy it...Today, meaning can be found, if at all, only through the attitude of the man who is willing to live with the absurd, to remain open to the mystery which he can never hope to pin down.³¹

Thus we see the absurdism has been always with man as an attitude but very few subscribed to it. It has been formulated as a comprehensive philosophical viewpoint only recently in Western history. Enlightenment and Christian reaction against it both seem inadequate to

contain this ultimately pessimistic attitude. Modernity has been decisively coloured by absurdist theses formulated across disciplines in different forms. The question is: can we fully comprehend its historical genesis, attempt to rewrite history from a more life affirming melioristic if not optimistic viewpoint that religious/mystical traditions have advocated. Theologies need to be understood at metaphysical plane in order to make sense of their central claims against fundamentally unwarranted excesses and slanders of absurdist against life and its potential to be a fount of joy and beauty.

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Religious Studies and the Question of Transcendence

Muhammad Maroof Shah
Rajbag Colony, Nagbal, Ganderbal, Kashmir

Abstract

Modern discipline of religious studies is facing a series of problems on both conceptual and methodological grounds due to lack of rigour in defining and conceptualizing some fundamental notions. Due to ignorance or partial oblivion of metaphysics as averred by perennialists modern scholarly understanding of transcendence is problematic. Lacking solid empirical grounding that is the prerogative of a saint and predisposed to question the received understanding of the sacred modern scholar of religion is not adequately trained to appreciate subtleties of traditional metaphysics and science informed by transcendentalist viewpoint. I propose to provide a brief glimpse of these notions in world traditions as understood by the perennialists. It questions some key formulations in the discipline of religious studies globally. It seeks to clarify the terms for interfaith dialogue, a subject that suffers from a lot of conceptual confusions and operational anomalies.

Keywords: Religious Studies, Transcendence, interfaith dialogue, reality, metaphysics, realization

Introduction

Despite the huge proliferation of religious studies many questions about the more fundamental issues continue to generate debate and heat. What is God or Transcendence? What is the world and what is its ontological status? What is the status of thought and its demand to be provided answers to theological/metaphysical questions? Here I

propose to provide a brief glimpse of these notions in world traditions as understood by the perennialists. It questions the terms and pleads for rewriting of much of what is being marketed in religious studies globally. It sets the terms for interfaith dialogue, a subject that suffers from a lot of conceptual confusions and operational anomalies. We need to be clear about the fundamental notions in theology and what is called as philosophy of religion. According to the perennialists nothing is more misunderstood than religion and metaphysics of which it is a symbolic expression. No age has been more misinformed about the meaning of fundamental claims of religion than the present one that prides itself on its secularism and humanism, that outlaws religion from its public life, that believes that religion is a problem or merely a matter of academic interest or phenomenology.

The Question of Transcendence

I start first by remarks on the First Principle and its transcendence. The Supreme Principle, whether we call it as One or Godhead or Absolute is transcendent. This is the unanimous proposition of all traditional mystical philosophies. The Platonists as well as the Semitic mystics in lieu with the orthodox Eastern approach place the One, the Absolute beyond existence. Existence can't be predicated of the Absolute. The notion that God is evolving with His universe, realizing Himself or emerging is an offshoot of modern evolutionist heresy. Certain panentheists have supported this idea. There can be no process of the Absolute, no progress, no change, no temporal manifestation. The Absolute stands outside history. It is a fatal error, according to perennialists, to subordinate the Eternal or divinize the temporal (time) in metaphysics and we can see it in process theologians and many modern philosophers. It is another fatal error to confound transpersonal Absolute with personal God or even lower hypostases of the Divine exemplifying the lack of rigour in ontological reflections. In fact we need to transcend ontology altogether when speaking about the Absolute. It was Aristotle's error, aver the perennialists, to reduce pure metaphysics to ontology, to define metaphysics as the science of Being. The Ultimate Reality is Beyond-Being.

In Islamic mysticism the Supreme Principle or Absolute is designated as a hidden treasure in an oft quoted prophetic tradition which even if not authentic for scholars of *hadees* (prophetic traditions) expresses something which plainly follows from the Quranic emphasis on divine transcendence. And hidden He remains even now. Absolute in itself has really never manifested and can't manifest. It remains unknowable. The Absolute in its absoluteness is Nameless and It has no signs by which It can be approached. It is beyond all perception, conception and imagination. No qualification or relation (even such a category as existence) can be attributed to It for It even transcends transcendence. No linguistic category can describe It. It lives in permanent abysmal darkness and is "the most unknown of all the unknowns" (Qaisar, 1998:132). It is *Gayyibul-gayyib*. None can have, in principle, access to It. The Pure Absolute or Essence (*Dhat*) in its fundamental aspect is beyond the insatiable human quest and all attempts to reach It, track it, pinpoint it, catch It in the net of language or realm of the finite or time, to conceptualize It, to imagine It, to speak about It, to affirm anything of It are doomed. Before the Ipseity or *Dhat* one can only be bewildered as Khaja Gulam Farid says. To quote him:

Where to seek! Where to find You Friend? All the fiery creatures, human beings, forces of Nature and the entire world is amazingly drowned in the sea of bewilderment. The Sufis, devotees, men of wisdom and learning have ultimately lost. Arshi and Bistami while embracing each other cry in vain...saints, prophets, mystics, poles and even messengers and deities incarnate proclaim weepingly that He is beyond the reach of vision. Scientists, erudites, gnostics and professionals in all humility have admittedly resigned. Ask Farid naive and simple: where do you find" (Qtd. in Qaisar, 1998:133).

Rumi encountering the Absolute and dissolving in It makes the same point in the his *Diwan-i- Shamsi Tabrez*.

When God is spoken as the Mystery, the Mystery of existence, it is a reference to this Essence as Stace has pointed out. The Spirit that transcends phenomena and yet does everything and makes possible manifestation is a mystery. The secret of things has never been, and

never will be revealed at the rational plane. The demand for rational comprehension of everything, the demand to reduce everything in terms of thought necessarily results in the discovery of absurdity. Essence isn't absurd to reason but reason can't appropriate the Essence. The sacred is something set apart, something that defies human categorizations, something mysterious that refuses to give its secret to ratiocinating faculty. Nothing can be done to do away with the mysterious ground of all existence. Rationalism can't but be ever inadequate and in fact it is clearly refuted in its attempt to comprehend Reality at all planes. Absurdist such as Camus and Beckett are rationalists who find reason finally impotent to solve the problem, the mystery of life or existence but as they acknowledge no other faculty of knowing than reason and senses they are lead to declare that reality is absurd.

The Real as Infinite

Absoluteness in its absoluteness, the highest metaphysical stage of Reality, is undifferentiated. It is Infinite. So nothing from the world of relativity, no categorization, no definition, no conceptualization is relevant. *Wahdatul wujud* (Oneness of Being), as a nondualistic metaphysical doctrine that is to be found at the heart of all revelations and traditions according to perennialists, envisages the idea, that the Supreme Reality is both absolute and infinite. The absolute allows of no augmentation or diminution or of reality or division. As Qaisar, a Pakistani perennialist, explicates:

The infinite as another fundamental aspect of the Real is limitless for it isn't determined by any limiting factor. It has no boundary. The true infinite is the metaphysical "Whole" which can in no way be limited. There is nothing outside it for then it would not longer be the whole. The metaphysical "Whole" is "without parts" for these parts of necessity being relative and relative have no existence from its point of view. This true Infinite or the metaphysical "Whole" under a certain aspect is understood as universal possibility. "There are no 'distinctive' or 'multiple' aspect existing really in the Infinite, it is our limited determinate and individual conception which makes us conceive like that. That limitation comes from the human side to

make the Infinite expressible. The imperfection of a definite and conditioned existence mustn't be transferred to the unlimited domain of universal Possibility itself" (Qaisar, 1998:134).

Many modern philosophers and postmodernists are right in emphasizing these limitations and denying rational knowledge of the whole. In fact the whole can't be spoken at all. The doctrines of Infinite and universal possibility in Sufi metaphysics appropriate all postmodern critique.

He explains why the Ultimate cannot be discussed about, conceptualized and thus why reason can have no jurisdiction in the realm of religion.

The idea of the infinite can be neither discussed nor contradicted. Since it can contain no contradiction, since there is nothing negative about it. This is all the more necessarily so, logically speaking, since it is negation that would be contradictory. If, in fact, one envisages the "whole" in an absolute and universal sense, it is evident that it can in no way be limited. It could only be limited by virtue of something outside itself, and if there were anything outside, it would no longer be the Whole. It is important to observe, moreover, that the Whole in this sense must not be assimilated to a particular or determined whole which has a definite relationship with the parts of which it consists. It is properly speaking "without parts", for these parts would be of necessity relative and finite, and could thus have no common measure with it, and consequently no relationship with it, which amounts to saying that they have no existence from its point of view. This suffices to show that one should not try to form any particular conception of it" (Guenon, 1988: 31).

In this context how problematic is the rationalist's attempt to scan God, to drag Him to the human court of reason, to question God and seek an explanation from Him. Nasr has remarked that there would be no atheists around if metaphysics were correctly understood or were accessible to all. I wish to add that there would be no such thing as the problem of evil if metaphysics were correctly understood. In fact this is the underlying assumption of Pallis' essay "Is there a Problem of Evil?"

in his *Buddhist Spectrum*. Much of modern criticisms against religion are directed against a certain construction of the latter that supposes it is something emotional (“piety with emotion”) and has something to do with individual and his needs/prejudices. However, the perennialists make it clear, that metaphysics (of which religion is a reflection or translation though not an exact one) transcends individuality. In the act of metaphysical realization individual domain is altogether left out. There is no room for feeling and sentimentalism. The mind or everything that contributes to a separative distinctive selfhood or subjecthood has to be transcended completely in order to experience the divine in the fullest sense of the term in the Eastern context and thus verify the sage’s intuition of divine goodness.

Characterizing God

For traditional religion and mysticism God is to be identified, in the last analysis, with Life or Existence in all its depths and its mystery, the ideal pole of man, the Infinite that grounds the finite, the Origin and the End, the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, the Hearing and the Seeing, the Light of the World and the darkness beyond light, so close yet so elusive, pure consciousness that is objectless and still unmanifest, transcendent to phenomenal world yet somehow sustaining/incarnating or expressing itself in the phenomenal world, not described by this or that when it comes to capture its mysterious ungraspable unrepresentable essence and best expressible through *neti neti*. It is what It is (“I am what I am”). It is transcendent to all categories, to existence. He is beyond existence and non-existence. God as non-Being, as Nothing, as emptiness of emptiness, is how the tradition of negative divine describes Him. This concept which is to be found along side the concept of positive divine in all religions, including Islam (though better formulated and emphasized in their respective mystical traditions) means God can’t be conceived as an object of knowledge. All theological statements, if literally interpreted, are false as Stace argues or at best half true or pointers. The perennialists are strongly critical of theological and philosophical approaches to God. For them knowable verifiable God is no God at all. His Infinity, Eternity, Changelessness, Simplicity and Unity exclude

knowing subject's measuring rods or tests by definition. The Infinite and the Eternal can't be tracked by the finite and temporal being. The Being of being can't be an object of being in any empirical sense of the term. Zen people experience God in three pounds of flex or salt and just keeping breathing in a relaxed manner.

Why God transcends language and thought?

God is sublime (*Lateef* in Quranic vocabulary). This means that one can't track Him in any way. The sublime, as certain postmodernists also understand it, is monstrous, colossal or abyss, bursts the bounds of reason and it refers to the inability of human beings, in their language and thinking, to represent the infinite, the unrepresentable and this is what theologians have been trying to do with our experience of God or unknown or our understanding of Divine Logic or His ways and postmodernists are not unjustly protesting against. God also is the inscrutable. The Quran is quite categorical about it. *The Book of Job* also makes this point. It is the pretence of certitude, even in the rare moment of vision of God, which we, in the tradition of Montaigne, should see as sure testimony of folly and extreme incertitude.

Traditional metaphysics has nothing to do with the anthropomorphist humanized image of the divinity that modern atheism and humanism have been fashionably – and needlessly for traditional people and their perennialist interpreters – questioning. We begin with Upanisadic *mahavakyas* (great pronouncements and declarations—their analogue in Sufism seem to be much debated *shatuhats*, ecstatic utterances, a famous example of which is Mansur's claim "I am the Truth") that sum up the central teaching of the Upanisads. *Tad ekam* (That One) *sarvam khalvidam Brahman* (all this is Brahman) *advityam* (That without a second) *prajnanam brahma* (Brahman is pure, objectless consciousness) *aham brahmasmi* (I am Brahman). Brahman is thus the "totality of existence," possible and actual. The metaphysical conception of *Tawhid* as Oneness of Being is similar. No categorical framework applies to non-dual reality. Brahman being formless, nameless, unperceivable, inconceivable, inexpressible and devoid of any and all attributes and relations can't be understood as a substance in Western Aristotelian

sense as that which remains unchanged in time as an entity or a thing as Puglinda explains in his insightful work on Vedanta. No categorical framework applies to it. Stace in his *Time and Eternity* (1952) argued on similar lines. Such categories as substance, process, attribute, relation, cause, effect, etc., apply only to manifest Brahman, to the phenomenal world. Brahman is no-thingness. When everything that can be thought away is thought away as is done in meditational practices, when all mental modifications cease, when one enters the realm of no-mind what remains is pure objectless consciousness. This consciousness is the necessary being, whereas objects of consciousness are contingent beings as they can be thought away. (Mind too is an object of consciousness in the Upanisadic or traditional metaphysical framework; we are not a “thinking thing” as Descartes would like us to believe.) When the mind is stilled, all phenomena disappear. With the cessation of mental modifications, one doesn’t experience manifest Brahman. The unmanifest Brahman is none other than pure objectless consciousness. Atman and Brahman are non-different. Brahman is not theistic God, but totality of existence, both immanent and transcendent. Modern philosophers of religion that have raised great hue and cry against traditional accounts of theodicy ignore the much more nuanced and complex and essentially symbolic understanding of fundamental terms in the debate on theodicy. However they are justified in their rejection of literalist account of theology and thus theodicy. There are theologians and advocates of God who take themselves to be His personal secretaries and relegate to the background His transpersonal dimension. They implicitly assume Him to be a Cosmic Superperson, a being among other beings rather than Being and not to speak of Beyond-Being. For them God is some Cosmic craftsman or distant Intelligence that planned the destiny of creatures from outside.

All our judgments are guilty of exclusions. As Puligandla explains: “All perceptual-conceptual truths are lower, relative, conditioned truths, to which categorical frameworks are relevant. These truths are the product of our perceptual-conceptual activities; they are inextricably bound up with our psycho-physiological constitution.” The truths proclaimed by all rational inquiries, including sciences – and

everything with which philosophy of religion is concerned are lower truths. In fact the Eastern tradition doesn't approach truth in the framework of propositions. Religion's use of language is "non-referential, evocative, symbolical and motivational." As another author explains that against the finite or categorical truths nothing can be said about the absolute truth, "about which literally and radically NOTHING may be accurately said in a noncontradictory fashion (including that one; if that statement is true, it is false). The great transcendental dialecticians—from Nagarjuna to Kant—have thoroughly demolished any such attempts, showing that every single one of the attempts to categorize ultimate reality (as, for example, by saying it is a quantum energy potential) turns on itself and dissolves in *ad absurdum* or *ad infinitum* regresses. They are not saying that Spirit does not exist, but simply that any finite statement about the infinite will categorically not work—not in the same way that statements about relative or conventional truth will work. Spirit can be known, but not said; seen, but not spoken; pointed out, but not described; realized, but not reiterated. Conventional truths are known by science; absolute truth is known by *satori*. They simply are not the same thing."

Any use of language is necessarily abuse of intelligence that perceives and judges without linguistic criteria. The Intellect of which Plato, Plotinus and the perennialists speak transcends subject-object duality and sees or rather becomes truth. Mysticism has reservations on every philosophical attempt that tries to think Being away, that attempts to reduce life to logic or linguistically represent and thus name or demystify existence. Language doesn't refer to reality. Psychoanalytical (Lacanian) and postmodern critique of referential or correspondence theories strengthens or converges with the mystical view of the same though the former may not accept the mystical map of the Real outside language or symbolic order. However what prevents traditions from falling into the absurdist trap after seeing impotence of reason in the noumenal realm is their acknowledgment of other nonrational or suprarational faculties and their attitude of trust towards the sacred, the mysterious.

Metaphysical vs. Mystical Realization

Here a few remarks on the notion of metaphysical realization as distinct from mystical realization (of which absurdists does take certain note though he seems to ignore the former) are in order. This will also clarify the difference between metaphysics and theology as construed by the perennialists. It is to be admitted that at the theological plane absurdists and other critics of religion have much force. However religions are grounded in and united by metaphysics as the perennialists have argued (a lucid discussion of this point is in Schuon's magnum opus *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*). So metaphysical understanding of such terms as God, Divine Will, Freedom, Divine Omnipotence etc. needs to be kept in the background rather than a purely theological viewpoint while evaluating religions such as Christianity. This is what many modern critics of religion including Camus and Beckett fail to do. Understanding the notion of metaphysical realization is central to the debate on religious experience from the Eastern and Sufi "mystical" or metaphysical perspective. A few remarks are in order in this connection. In the act of metaphysical realization (an experience that is *summum bonum* of all religions and mysticism as the perennialists note) individual domain is altogether left out. There is no room for feeling and sentimentalism. The mind or everything that contributes to a separative distinctive selfhood or subjecthood has to be transcended completely in order to experience the divine in the fullest sense of the term in the Eastern context. In fact as Guenon has provocatively remarked there is no such thing as mysticism (and religious experience in the modern sense of the term in the East. Here we must point out, from perennialist point of view, the difference between religion and metaphysics. As Guenon points out the metaphysical point of view is purely intellectual while as in the religious or theological point of view the presence of a sentimental element affects the doctrine itself, which doesn't allow of it complete objectivity. The emotional element nowhere plays a bigger part than in the "mystical" form of religious thought. Contrary to the prevalent opinion he declares that mysticism, from the very fact that it is inconceivable apart from the religious point of view, is quite unknown in the East (Guenon, 2000: 124). The influence of sentimental element

obviously impairs the intellectual purity of the doctrine. This falling away from the standpoint of metaphysical thought occurred generally and extensively in the Western world because there feeling was stronger than intelligence and this has reached its climax in modern times (Guenon, 2000: 125). Modern theistic appropriations of mystical experience by choosing to remain at the level of theology and not cognizing the metaphysical point of view (that brilliantly and convincingly appropriates such apparently divergent varieties of mystical and metaphysical realization as that of Buddhism and Christianity) cannot claim total truth as theology itself cannot do so. And it is not always possible to fully translate metaphysical doctrines in terms of theological dogmas. Only one example will suffice here. The immediate metaphysical truth “Being exists” gives rise to another proposition when expressed in the religious or theological mode “God exists.” But as Guenon says the two statements would not be strictly equivalent except on the double condition of conceiving God as Universal Being, which is far from always being the case in fact (Tillich comes close to holding this view of God), and of identifying existence with pure Being or what the Sufis call *Zat* or Essence which is metaphysically inexact. The endless controversies connected with the famous ontological argument are a product of misunderstanding of the implications of the two formulae just cited. It is the inadequate or faulty metaphysical background that contributes a lot to controversies on either side of the debate on religious experience in modern discourses of philosophy of religion.

As Guenon elaborates:

Unlike purely metaphysical conceptions theological conceptions are not beyond the reach of individual variations. Those who discuss such matters as the “proofs of God’s existence,” should first of all make sure that in using the same word “God” they really are intending to express an identical conception. However this is hardly the case usually and we see altogether different languages being used. Antimetaphysical anthropomorphism comes to the fore in this realm of individual variations. (Guenon, 2000: 128-129).

Modern Critiques of Transcendence

Modernity has been quite uncomfortable with theism, with the whole structure of exoteric religion. It has made quite redundant the language of literalist theology. Symbolic reading of theological propositions has been resorted to by esotericists and traditional philosophers and metaphysicians from the very beginning. Properly understood, this metaphysical esoteric understanding resists the standard critiques that many currents of modern thought have launched against transcendence. Nietzsche, Camus and Beckett are not fundamentally and absolutely against nondualistic metaphysics and against transcendence though they are, often rightly so, skeptical and critical of, certain representational models of theology. It is not transcendence itself that is dispensed with by absurdists as we have seen but the received models and maps of transcendence. Nietzsche particularly emphasized ultimate indispensability and “cruelty” of the issues related to sacred/transcendence. He and Beckett are critical of modernity for its disorientation towards transcendence. It has been my endeavour in this paper to show that perennialists do provide us a map of transcendence, in fact argue for a pathless path, trackless track, nonperspective or God’s perspective, post(rational) metaphysical modes of thought or openness to mystery of existence that (post)modern man may find useful.

Rationalism and the Question of Transcendence

A few remarks on rationalism which begets absurdism when it breaks under its own weight are in order as it is the rationalist background of modernity that alienates our absurdist writers from traditional religious/mystical worldview which found God everywhere and eternity permeating and penetrating time and always accessible through mystical/religious discipline and thus found the world full of meaning and significance. Rationalism in all its forms is essentially defined by a belief in the supremacy of reason proclaimed as a real “dogma” and implying the denial of everything that is of a supra-individual order, notably of pure intellectual intuition, and this carries with it logically the exclusion of all the metaphysical knowledge. This same denial also

in consequence rejects all spiritual authority, which is necessarily derived from a “superhuman,” supernatural source (Guenon, 1953: 111). Rationalism fits well with the modern tendency to simplification as Guenon has pointed out in the following words:

[Rationalism] naturally always operates by the reduction of things to their most inferior elements, and so asserts itself chiefly by the suppression of the entire supra-individual domain, in anticipation of being able later on to bring everything that is left, that is to say, everything in the individual order, down to the sensible or corporeal modality alone, and finally that modality itself to a mere aggregation of quantitative determinations.”

Rationalism, properly so called goes back to the time of Descartes who reduced the whole nature of the spirit to “thought” and that of body to “extension.” Reason, *ratio* is divorced from supranidividual faculty of intellect and that contributes to its gross errors and misapplications and misfounded claims. Rationalism postulates that Reality is rationally (i.e. mathematically) analyzable and unaided reason can build a metanarrative. The metanarrative of modern science is based upon claims of rationalism. Moderns claims to exclude all “mystery” from the world as they see it, in the name of science and a philosophy characterized as “rational”¹ as Guenon, the prime expositor of traditional metaphysical school, has pointed out. Since the time of eighteenth century encyclopaedists, the most fanatical deniers of all supra-sensible reality have been particularly fond of invoking ‘reason’ on all occasions and of proclaiming themselves as rationalists.

Religion and traditional metaphysics have emphatically rejected all these claims of rationalism. Modern philosophy and science have fundamentally misunderstood the nature of traditional metaphysics. Confusion arises in the very interpretation of the word metaphysics (which grounds religion’s dogmas) as “after physics” instead of “beyond physics” which is the perennialist traditionalist position. Sense-experience and reason are tied to the world of physics and thus unable to gain knowledge of a realm which lies beyond their area of operation. If physics is the science of nature in its widest sense as it is

for the ancients, metaphysics is the study of what lies beyond nature. The entire physical order comprises all phenomena and metaphysics is beyond the phenomenal world. Parapsychology and supernaturalism both belong to the phenomenal and they have no access to the corridors of the non-phenomenal realm. Metaphysics or religion's doctrinal or intellectual dimension deals with the unlimited and it can not be caught in the net of sensory or rational categories. By virtue of its being limitless it can not be defined. "In reality only something that is limited is capable of definition, whereas metaphysics is on the contrary by its very nature absolutely unlimited and this plainly does not allow of our enclosing it within a more or less narrow formula; a definition in this case would be all more inaccurate the more exact one tried to make it." (Guenon, 2000: 110). Rationalism operates with definitions, concepts and categories. It delimits, dissects and encloses. The ultimate object of religion God or Nirvana as mystics assert cannot be defined because of the very nature of the object. Aristotle's error consisted in his attempt to define metaphysics (as science of being). He was thus condemned to identify it with ontology and thus could not reach Beyond-Being or Being itself as Shahzad Qaisar presenting the perennialist view point says.

He could not appreciate that metaphysics in its essentiality was not the 'science of being' but the knowledge of the "Universal". Both 'science' and Being were limited, incomplete and conditional than "knowledge" and "Universal" which were unlimited incomplete and absolute. Though Aristotle called metaphysics as the "foremost philosophy" yet it was treated as a branch of philosophy in violation of its character of universality. The absolute whole or the universal can not be encompassed in inferior categories for intellect is higher than reason" (Qaisar, 1990: 5).

The post-Aristotelian thought of the Greeks of which modern philosophy is a fall from the "intellectual constant" lacked complete metaphysics which has been the prerogative of the East or traditional civilizations as perennialists have argued. For perennialists, Descartes' metaphysics is no more than pseudometaphysics for he only wanted to

give a solid foundation to his physics and in the process eliminated intellect and intuition.

He made the thinking of the individual ego the centre of reality and the criterion of all knowledge, turning philosophy into pure rationalism and shifting the main concern of European philosophy from ontology to epistemology. Henceforth, knowledge, even if it were extended to the farthest galaxies, was rooted in the cogito. The knowing subject was bound to the realm of reason and separated from both the intellect and revelation neither of which were henceforth considered as possible source of knowledge of an objective order (Qaisar, 1990: 6).

It is no wonder that the fundamental problem of metaphysics led to psychophysical dualism and duality 'spirit-matter' became absolute and irreconcilable Spinoza's and Leibniz's attempts suffer from the same essential limitations. As Guenon points out "rationalism, being the denial of every principle superior to reason, brings with it as a "practical" consequence the exclusive use of reason, but of reason blinded, so to speak, by the very fact, that it has been silted from the pure and transcendent intellect of which, normally and legitimately, it can only reflect the light in the individual domain"(Guenon, 1953: 116-117).

Since rationalism does not understand intellect, therefore it debases reason also, allege perennialists. Perennialist would agree with Heidegger's critique of rational metaphysics that it concentrates on the notional surface and "remains in what is." Truth is not the property of propositions, it is the unhiddenness of being. But Heidegger himself was committed to the realm of finitude. He couldn't reach the supreme metaphysical principle of Beyond-Being and considered Being finite which reduces metaphysical point of view to bare ontology. It is only the idea of infinity which establishes the possibility of metaphysics (and thus provides grounding to religion). "Infinity belongs to the combination of Being and Non-being because this combination is identical to universal possibility" (Guenon, 1988: 59-60). How could Being alone reflect the Unlimited as Qaisar asks. Without the notion of

Infinite metaphysics is negated and Heidegger adopting a finitistic viewpoint barred his road to true Infinite (Qaisar, 1990: 17). Despite their opposition to rationalism Heidegger along with Nietzsche could not extricate himself from rationalist presumptions and traps.

Explaining the difference between rational and metaphysical knowledge, Shahzad Qaisar writes:

Metaphysical knowledge is attained by intellect alone. Intellect has a direct knowledge of the principles for it belongs to the universal order. Strictly speaking, intellect is not an individual faculty otherwise metaphysics would not have been possible. How is it possible for an individual to go beyond himself? The attainment of effective individual consciousness of supra-individual states – the objective of metaphysics is only possible through a non individual faculty. The metaphysical truth is not external to intellect but lies in its very substance. Knowledge is identified with the object itself resulting in the identity of knowing and being. Reciprocity is thus developed between thought and reality. The process of reaching the heart of Reality is by virtue of intellectual intuition for it is not obstructed by the yawning chasm of subject-object duality. Intellectual intuition is supra-individual as compared to intuition of certain contemporary philosophers which is infra-rational. The former is above reason imparting knowledge of the eternal and immutable principles whereas the latter is below reason tied to the world of change and becoming. Intellectual intuition is contemplation whereas the rational capacity is logical. The infallibility of intellect is derived from its own nature with absolute metaphysical certainty (Qaisar, 1990: 33-34).

Importance of Revelation is that the means of realizing the Absolute must come “objectively” from the Absolute. Knowledge cannot spring up ‘subjectively’, except within the framework of an objective divine formulation of knowledge. Religion is existential formulation of metaphysical thought. From metaphysical point of view it binds man to a superior principle. Religion comprises a dogma, a moral law, and a form of worship. Dogma belongs to the intellectual order and it does not divest itself from its essential metaphysical character. Feeling has a cognitive content and deepens intelligence and establishes a unique

form of certitude. Moral law is dependent on the religious doctrine and has both metaphysical and social character. The form of worship is symbolic expression of the doctrine (Qaisar, 1990: 37).

S.H. Nasr, another great name in the perennialist school, has written extensively on the subject of reason and Intellect. He points out that we must distinguish between the normal use of reason and logic and rationalism, which makes of reason the sole instrument of gaining knowledge and the only criterion for judging truth. If by rationalism is meant an attempt to build a closed system embracing the whole of reality and based upon human reason alone, then this begins not with Aristotle (in whose philosophy there are metaphysical intuitions which cannot be reduced to simple products of the human reason) but with Descartes, since for him the ultimate criterion of reality itself is the human ego and not the Divine Intellect or Pure Being. We must distinguish between modern western rationalism and the respect for reason and logic, because on its own level logic is an aspect of truth and truth (*al haqq*) is a name of Allah. Intelligence is likewise praised in the Quran as it leads man to an affirmation of the doctrine of unity and of the essential verities of revelation. History stands as witness to the fact that Western rationalism became a veil which separated man from God and marked the human revolt against heaven. Intellect is the source of both reason and faith and rationalism is crassly ignorant of this. The source of revelation in Islam is the Archangel Gabriel or the Universal intellect. The intellect which is at once the source of revelation and exists microcosmically within man, must not be mistaken for reason alone. The *aql* is at once both intellect or *nous* and *ratio* or reason and the latter is the reflection of the intellect upon the level of psyche. If not dimmed by passion and is wholesome and balanced (*al-aql-i-saleem*) can then be an instrument for reaching the divine truths of revelation, truths which are super-rational but not irrational and not a veil which hides these very truths from man as in agnostic and promethean western rationalism. Muslim sages have recognized double edged nature of the sword of reason. Some like Ghazali, Rumi and Razi have emphasized the negative aspect of purely human reason as veil and limitation. Rumi critiques reason (*aql-i-juz'i*) for destroying the reputation of the intellect (*aql-i-kulli*). Nasr has

referred to Ibn Sina, Ibn Arabi and Sadr-al-Din Shirazi as having sought to reach the intellect through reason itself to make use of logic and the rational faculties of man to lead man above and beyond these faculties and planes (Nasr, 1972: 42-43). This is precisely what modern man chooses to ignore by relying exclusively on the mental faculty of reason. He has, with the revolt of existentialists and postmodernists, debased reason. From rationalism to irrationalism, the postmodern cult of unreason modern thought has unleashed subrational forces, infrarational intuitionism being one of its manifestations. It is no wonder that it has renounced traditional definition of man as a rational animal, and it has such a degenerated concept of man and his capacity to know the Absolute, to be a witness to whole truth. Modern philosophy doesn't deserve the name of philosophy because it has renounced traditional discipline of philosophy and has no use for any notion that traditional philosophers called wisdom. There is no room for either knowledge or wisdom now. All that there is is chaos, absurdity. There are no essences, no transcendent foundations or grounds of things. It is *Maya* all the way. There is *avidya* but no gnosis. There is no reason ultimately, no order, no principle of harmony and equilibrium, no light, no illumination, no clarity, no purpose, no meaning, nothing to gain ultimately. Absurdism articulates all these things. With the loss of faith in reason's traditional claims which were based on its integral view in which it is not severed from Intellect and the loss of faith in transcendence and thus all traditional values hitherto grounded by it, absurdism pictures a desolate, chaotic world divested of everything that makes it possible to love life or to make love possible. Modern thought is nihilistic and every attempt to moderate its nihilism, to overcome it or mitigate its corrosive effect has failed to deliver. Modern man is not happy. He is rootless. He is not reconciled to the world. He doesn't know why he is there to question his own meaning. He doesn't see any way to solve the problem of life and death. The mystery of things kills him. He has no access to eternity where all sorrows that are characteristic of the world of time are no more. He feels that he is punished for no sins of his own. He has no faith in his own resources to squarely face the tragedy of life. He has lost even the hope in some possibility of redemption. He is increasingly abandoning, in postmodern age, even the search for solutions, the search for

essences, for truth, for meaning and purpose. He is increasingly losing even the consciousness that he is losing something great. After having severed his ties with transcendence he has not been able to keep his relations in order with the things earthly. He has not created new values after he declared God dead. He has not replaced God. He has not created a heaven here after abandoning the search for heaven beyond. Reason has not delivered. Enlightenment has proved a mirage. Man is increasingly proving a failure. Modernity built on the foundations of unyielding despair is breaking under its own weight. Postmodernity is not able to save it. The only hope is that modern man, true to the deepest aspirations, having won his freedom from the tyranny of idolatrous thought associated with exoterism and other inadequate models of transcendent principle, rediscovers his lost or rather forgotten Tradition which, contrary to what many believe, resists modern and postmodern criticisms.

Transcendence in Ibn Arabi's Perspective and Modern Skepticism

The Bible says that only the fools say in their hearts that there is no God. The Quran asserts that no doubt can be entertained regarding God and that God is the Manifest Truth. The more they blaspheme, the more they praise God, remarked Meister Eckhart. All things are loved for the sake of the Self rather than for themselves as the Upanisads say. Berdyaev stated that "man can't exist where there is no God." Melebranche maintained that we see all things in God. If we accept all these statements as countless generations of humans have accepted until few centuries ago (All traditions have maintained belief in Absolute/Godhead though not personal God, belief in transcendence of Spirit) how can we make sense of the modern "wisdom of the fools" upheld by atheistic/agnostic academia? It is Ibn Arabi, one of the greatest mystics and metaphysicians of the medieval world, who makes such statements comprehensible and even indubitable as we shall see. He made a forceful case for transcendence and he continues to inspire Islamic transcendentalist thought. Here a few remarks about him are in order to present the case of transcendence that we have been attempting to argue in this paper.

For Ibn Arabi God is Reality, immanent and transcendent. In his understanding the Real alone is and there is no distance between us and It. We are already there in the lap of God – we have never been really away and cannot be away from It. God has never been missed. We have forgotten or fallen asleep but this doesn't alter the fact that God is our very being, our inmost reality. Man is inwardly God and outwardly a creature according to Ibn 'Arabî. The world is God's visible face. The real, the obvious, that which is always with us, has been always with us, will always be with us, is God. God is the Isness of things. He is the Meaning of everything. God constitutes all pervasive Environment (*al-Muhit* in the Quranic parlance) in which normal man lives, moves and has his being.

There is no need to prove God's existence; we only need to open our eyes to the All-Pervading or All-Encompassing. For Ibn Arabi, strictly speaking, men don't and can't find God rather they are found by God. Men can't give witness of God but God himself is the real witness. He finds Himself. In strictly nondualistic view God is not sought, because the seeker himself is in Him. One can only get lost in Him. And to get lost is to attain Him. Bewilderment is the highest station and attaining the station of no station is the supreme attainment. Realizing that everything is perfect this very moment or, in Buddhist (Nagarjunian) terminology, that samsara is nirvana is realizing God. Such notions as "sensible transcendental," "Ground of being" "depth of life" "mystery of things or existence" which many moderns have advocated as substitute metaphors for what used to be conventionally called God and most often pictured with a human face by anthropomorphic idolatrous imagination seem to be given some representation in this fundamentally Unitarian view of God as Totality, as Reality.

Because of the fact that in this existence there is nothing but God for Ibn 'Arabi, the question is not whether God is or where and how to find Him, but how to polish the mirror of heart and invite God therein. God is not an epistemological problem at all that mind/reason can investigate or He is a percept rather than a concept for Ibn 'Arabî. In more poetic terms He is a song to be sung rather than an abstract Being, a Being among other beings or an entity. The philosopher with his

reason shall only get astray or increase in perplexity. God is the knownest of the known and so close that we only need to open our eyes, to cleanse the doors of perception to see how. Belief in God is not a proposition for Ibn ‘Arabî but a matter of tasting, experiencing the divine (or the revelations of sheer Being), which, to him, presents itself in all experiences every moment and for everyone – in fact God is the Hearing and the Seeing as is often reiterated in the Quranic verse – and not just to a select few in the so-called religious experience which is Jamesian construct uncritically accepted by many modern philosophers of religion. All the roads lead to His abode as they proceed from it. God is the name of ‘that which is.’ He is not something within isness, he himself is that which is. He does not possess existence; rather the very existence is in him. Essence and existence are one for Him. Hence He is not sought, because the seeker himself is in Him. One can only get lost in Him. And to get lost is to attain Him. Bewilderment is the highest station and attaining the station of no station is the supreme attainment. Akbarian Unitarianism leads to the realization that the world is ultimately none other than the Absolute and thus finding everything perfect this very moment or seeing eternity here and now or samsara as nirvana.

This is something similar to the understanding of Being as the ground of all beings in Heidegger and God as Being of being in Paul Tillich. Ibn Arabi snatches the “God-given right” to be an atheist. Atheism denies a limited conception of divinity though in itself it is based on a narrow view of Reality. But it is absurd to be an atheist if God is construed as the Essence of existence, as isness of things, as the ground of everything, as *what is*, as Reality. Lest it be thought that Ibn Arabi has no problems with transcendence denying desecralizing and demystifying atheism and materialism, it needs to be noted that he sees the world as ordinarily experienced as consisting of dream though not a sheer illusion, a symbol that needs to be interpreted, an exterior aspect of the larger and fundamental inward or hidden reality he calls *al-haqq* which is his designation for the Absolute. It implies that the modern unbelieving world that only thinks rather than sees with the heart and believes that transcendence is an illusion as it takes sensory world to be *the* world or the only world which should concern us is simply blind or extremely myopic and guilty of idolatry.

However atheism nevertheless partly affirms God in His immanent mode because the world that senses experience is the mirror and the symbol of God. It is childish in its veto against the discoveries of more adventurous spirits of saints and prophets which discover God as real, in fact more real than themselves. God as the Self is in fact accessible to all. To know oneself, to know what it means to be human, to properly affirm "I" is what amounts to knowing God as Ibn Arabi tirelessly keeps alluding to a tradition he attributes to the Prophet that states that knowing oneself one knows God. Knowing oneself after denying the illusory desiring ego one comes to subsist in God. Atheism is often on the way to more purified view of God, a mode of passionate disbelief in idols that however goes too far. It is a case of misplaced absoluteness; it misidentifies Absolute with the world. However atheists are true to their personal lords and in a way atheism is an issue only from the dualistic viewpoint of theology which itself is strictly not true from the strictly Unitarian viewpoint which Ibn Arabi upholds. All beliefs and disbeliefs are in the realm of duality and need to be transcended. Ibn Arabi's Unitarian Metaphysics is transtheistic and transcends both theism and atheism. The Akbarian Unitarianism leads to the realization that the world is ultimately none other than the Absolute and thus finding everything perfect this very moment or seeing eternity here and now.

Transcending theistic paradigm and substituting dualist theological by nondualist metaphysical symbolist perspective Ibn 'Arabî bypasses most of modern philosophical critiques of cognitivity of religious experience and coherence of God-talk. Modern man's problems are primarily with a constricted literalist exoteric dualistic theological view of God and static absolutes of idealistic philosophies. Modern philosophy of religion seems to have gloriously misunderstood the central experience of religion if Akbarian exposition of metaphysical realization (as distinct from mystical realization which is primarily the object of inquiry in modern discourse) is accepted.

The conception of *Ahdiyyat* or pure Being or Beyond-Being of which Being/God is a determination makes it possible to transcend both theism and ontology and Being centred finitistic philosophical thought currents which we find in Heidegger and many modern philosophies.

This crucial notion is central in handling such problems as theodicy and many other theological and philosophical problems and in fact makes him a true universalist who can be approached from and appropriated in diverse perspectives, as diverse as Buddhism and Taoism or Vedanta and Zen.

God, for him as for all mystics and scriptures, is the knowest of the known and so close that we only need to open our eyes, to cleanse the doors of perception to see how. Belief in God is not a proposition for Ibn 'Arabî but a matter of tasting, experiencing the divine (or the revelations of sheer Being), which, to him, presents itself in all experiences every moment and for everyone – in fact God is the Hearing and the Seeing as is often reiterated in the Quranic verse – and not just to a select few in the so-called religious experience which is Jamesian construct uncritically accepted by many modern philosophers of religion. All the roads lead to His abode as they proceed from it. God is the name of 'that which is.' He is not something within isness, he himself is that which is. He does not possess existence; rather the very existence is in him. Essence and existence are one for Him. Hence He is not sought, because the seeker himself is in Him. One can only get lost in Him. And to get lost is to attain Him. Bewilderment is the highest station and attaining the station of no station is the supreme attainment. Akbarian Unitarianism leads to the realization that the world is ultimately none other than the Absolute and thus finding everything perfect this very moment or seeing eternity here and now or samsara as nirvana.

The Pure Absolute or Essence (*Dhat*) in its fundamental aspect – and thus Meaning/Truth/ Presence/ Identity/ Reality *per se* – is beyond the human quest and all attempts to reach It, track it, pinpoint it, catch It in the net of language or realm of the finite or time, to conceptualize It, to imagine It, to speak about It, to affirm anything of It are doomed. Before the Ipseity or *Dhat* one can only be bewildered according to Ibn 'Arabî. The world is ultimately a Mystery, a Mystery of Mysteries and no rational or scientific approach could finally and completely demystify it. The world will never cease to be an object of wonder and fascination and Beauty never cease to be worshipped or

sought or God glorified. Man must travel ceaselessly as love will never be satiated and man's quest for the Absolute will have no full stop in all eternity. Artists, scientists, mystics, philosophers and lovers shall never be out of business. Rationalization, familiarization, demystification and desecralization of the world that ultimately makes it inhuman, alienating and absurd and disrespectful towards the environment can't happen in the Akbarian perspective that sees one essence and divine face in everything. Ibn 'Arabî says in *Risâlat al-Anwâr* "You should know that man has been on the journey ever since God brought him out of non-being into being." The goal is not reached. For it is "the unspeakable, the impossible, the inconceivable, the unattainable." The goal is only glimpsed, sensed, and then lost. Meaning or Truth is never grasped in its fullness. It ever recedes. Truth escapes all our searching. We can have a vision of it, rather a faint glimpse of it through the phenomena which are His symbols.

Agnosticism and skepticisms of various orientations in the contemporary world have a point if understood as the declaration of impossibility of conceptually knowing the Reality, Transcendent Principle, the Ground of existence, the whole Truth, the Mystery. However these are often presented in cruder versions that deny men any knowledge of the supraphenomenal or the very existence of the sacred for which the Shaykh will have zero tolerance.

Conclusion

The discipline of philosophy of religion, is generally speaking, uncomfortable with the notion of transcendence. It has attempted various ways of demystifying reality and conceptually approaching it and in the process has been committed to various forms of reductionisms. It is often said that following Nietzsche we can no longer talk unembarrassingly of transcendence. The general tenor of modern thought is to either deny transcendence or reduce it to something that can be appropriated in received framework that has little space for traditional understanding of transcendence. But the fact remains that despite all adventures of rationalism the presence of

mystery (to substitute less “ponderous” term for transcendence as Stace would suggest) in the world of manifestation can’t be written off. The world is ultimately a Mystery, a Mystery of Mysteries and no rational or scientific approach could finally and completely demystify it. The world being ultimately a mystery that resists being demystified by means of conceptual intellect is what transcendence implies as Stace has explained in his *Time and Eternity*. There is no humanly discoverable ultimate truth. All representations of the Real are provisional. Godhead/ Absolute/ *Zat-uz-Zat* is opaque, deep deep darkness, impenetrable, the absolutely inscrutable unknowable Other. Gnosis consists in knowing that God can’t be known as Abu Bakr is quoted time and again by Ibn Arabi. As the world is not-He and man ever a worshipper of *his* Lord or conditioned by his belief and nothing is ever repeated as God’s theophanies change ceaselessly imply that the world will never cease to be an object of wonder and fascination and Beauty never cease to be worshipped and act as an efficient net through which God catches most of his servants vas Plato also noted. God is ever glorified by every creature and exalted over whatever man can say about Him as Ibn Arabi keeps us reminding of the Quranic statements such as “Glory be to God the exalted.” This implies that the Real or Truth can’t be appropriated in absolute terms. Man must be content to have only relative knowledge of things or God. There are countless veils on the countenance of God which though continuously being lifted can’t be wholly lifted. Man can’t afford to behold the naked truth. The Real has infinite aspects and can be approached from infinite contexts and thus perspectives. Man must travel ceaselessly as *Kitab-al-Isfar* attempts to argue. Ibn 'Arabî says in *Risâlat al-Anwâr*: “You should know that man has been on the journey ever since God brought him out of non-being into being.” The goal is not reached. For it is “the unspeakable, the impossible, the inconceivable, the unattainable.” The goal is only glimpsed, sensed, and then lost. Meaning or Truth is never grasped in its fullness. It ever recedes. Truth escapes all our searching. We can have a vision of it, rather a glimpse of it through the phenomena which are Its symbols. This follows from the doctrine of God as Infinite and All-Possibility. God is not an object that one could somehow ever encompass or possess or grasp. Man’s quest for the Absolute will have no full stop in all eternity. Life is perpetual

becoming as God's infinite riches are inexhaustible and the Beauty that never ceases unveiling its infinite faces never ceases to attract its seekers to move on and on. Artists, scientists, mystics, philosophers and lovers shall never be out of business. God is continuously experienced, ever afresh in all new experiences. Rationalization, familiarization, demystification and descralization of the world that ultimately make it inhuman, alienating and absurd and disrespectful towards the environment can't happen in the Akbarian perspective that sees the mysterious, sacred divine face in everything. Western philosophy, as Heidegger pointed out, is oblivious to the ground of being. It is not open to the sacred mystery of Being. It is not the philosopher but the poet who can show the track of the holy, to the sacred mystery of Being. Nothing in the world of known can express the Divine Darkness. All quests end in wonder. In the last analysis man knows nothing to its depth by means of senses and reason. Other modes of knowledge such as intellectual intuition give us another kind of knowledge that instead of making things comprehensible dissolves the knowing subject in the object preserving the ultimate mystery of things in the process. If to comprehend means to have discursive conceptual knowledge we comprehend nothing ultimately. All our explanations, analyses stop at a certain point. Things are as they are. There is something instead of nothing. Being or *wajud* is in the last analysis a miracle or a scandal to reason. Why should there be a knowing subject and why should our universe be comprehensible are perhaps unanswerable. Man knows but little and this applies to everything from God to quarks. God is incomparable, transcendent. Symbols are all we know. God alone knows or is Knowledge. The knowledge of reality given to mystics and prophets is of a different order. God remains inscrutable and the sacred inapproachable. Man's prerogative is to contemplate and dissolve in the mystery of being. Though being is aware of itself this awareness has no analyzable or knowable structure. We must ceaselessly move and act and desire. All our movements are because of love according to Ibn Arabi. Man loves and worships beauty without ever knowing why. Love drives everything to the Beauty that there is. Neither love nor beauty can be grasped or explained. This simply is the case. As Ibn Arabi would see it, man, by virtue of his existential state, is poor, absolutely poor in relation to the Merciful who

bestows existence. Man worships by virtue of his very state of being a creature. We are here and there is no cure for it. But, more precisely, we are not. Only God is. Only the play of divine names is and man happens to be a locus of their action rather than some independent subject or agency. The cloak of mystery can't be removed from the universe. All human knowledge is progressive unveiling of the ultimate impenetrability of the veil that disguises Reality. Essences are not discursively known. Existence is a mystery and its grandeur and sublimity defy our reason and its categories. Rereading of Kantian sublime by such writers as Derrida or Lyotard is based on increasingly felt inability of reason to contain the brutal power of imagination. We can't conceptualize or represent in language the infinity which human beings do encounter. The highest station is that of bewilderment according to the Shaykh. All this implies that dogmatisms are unwarranted. Ibn Arabi, despite what his theological critics assert, maintained divine transcendence uncompromisingly. His emphasis on similarity (*tashbih*) that Sufism has been characteristically associated with never encroaches on the rights of transcendence of the Essence. It is God and not the name of God that religions seek. Exoteric theologies may not always distinguish between the Truth and the descriptions or representations of Truth. Nothing can capture the Reality in rational propositional framework. This means we can only know our inability to know God and this means humility in the face of the Great Mystery that God is. This vetoes all self righteous fundamentalist ideologies. Jaina doctrine of *syadvada* is a corollary of the fundamental mystery and transcendence of the First Principle, the Absolute. This rules out all totalistic or totalitarian claims. Ideological conflicts are based on one's exclusive claim to have access to truth and denying one's fallibility. Religions by relegating truth to transcendent realm and its access to transcendent intellect (which is in us but not ours) veto all quarrels about accessibility to it of any worldly ideology and self-centric person. Secular philosophies that require no moral purification on the part of the philosopher are barred from entering the doors of the great King or Truth.

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Relationship of Theoretical and Practical Rationality in the Philosophy of Kant and Mulla Sadra and Some of its Consequences

Sima Mohammadpour Dehkordi
Tehran Azad University of Research & Science, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

In the philosophy of Mulla Sadra and Kant, reasoning is the natural and existential right of the human being and reason is the best criterion for perception and evaluation of reality. Both philosophers have considered rationality and thought as the most fundamental characteristics of human; with this difference that the theoretical function of reason is regarded more in Sadraei's philosophy and the practical and ethical function is more in Kant's philosophy thus, Mulla Sadra pays attention to the sphere of "speculation and theory" and considers that the criterion of rationalism is for man to be a "knowing-agent". On the other hand Kant pays attention to the sphere of "action and practice" and considers the criterion of rationalism to be an "ethical-agent" for man. One pays attention to the intellectual potential and man's knowledge base -- that which man knows -- and the other pays attention to the potential to act and be ethical -- that which man wills for.

Therefore,

1- Because in Sadraei wisdom, reason finds its meaning in relationship with Active Intelligence, Sadraei rationality has a divine origin and "the existential dignity" of human is regarded. In Kant's philosophy, the rationality has human origin based on autonomy of man and independence of practical reason. Thus, "legal dignity" of human is regarded.

2- Because Mulla Sadra's philosophy has shown its "knowledge" and Sadraei rationality regards more supernatural life of human far from troubles and their daily life. And Kant's philosophy is like appeared "life" that manages practically the earthly life of humans in some societies.

3- Rational training in Sadraei wisdom needs motives, guarantees and non-human and religious supervisions. In Kant's philosophy, the conscience is invisible itself and it is the judge with human; however, it needs a kind of exalted guarantee.

Keywords:Sadr-al-Din Shirazi(Mulla Sadra), Kant , Rationality, Transcendental Philosophy, Human Dignity.

Introduction

According to the philosophical basis of Mulla Sadra¹ and Kant reasoning is the natural and existential right of the human being. Reason is the supreme faculty of the soul and rational knowledge is the highest level of cognition. Reason is the best criterion for perception and evaluation of reality. In both the philosophies the most fundamental quality of the human being is the faculty of reasoning. Moreover, rationality is the most fundamental principle that assures the respect and dignity of the human being. In the current dissertation the difference between the rationality in the philosophy of Kant and Mulla Sadra would be researched and some of its consequences would be highlighted.

The Concept of Reason and Rationality in the Philosophy of Kant and Mulla Sadra

'Reason', in its all-inclusive meaning, has been defined as the faculty of inference and argument. This Arabic term is the translation of the Greek word 'Nous'. According to the definition of Aristotle reason is a non-material substance, which is conscious and is the source of movement and immortality sempiternity. He holds reason and thought

as the real perfection, the goal of goals and the best thing. He considers the sagacity and wisdom as a virtue of reason.

‘Reason’ has various meanings in the transcendental philosophy of Mulla Sadra and the philosophy of Kant. Moreover, it has two facets – the theoretical and the practical. According to the views of Mulla Sadra our intention from reason in this article is the reason which is identified as a part of the faculties of man. This reason sometimes has an inferential, sometimes an intuitive and sometimes a practical meaning (Mulla Sadra, 1368, Vol. 3: 418-420). The meaning of reason in Kant’s view, which has been considered in this article, is its most general meaning, which is the origin of all the elements and of the priori principles and is considered the agent of knowledge. It also has two facets – the theoretical and the practical.

By circumscribing the limitations of theoretical reason, Kant has paid considerable attention to the practical reason common amongst human beings(Kant, 1996:59). However, in both the opinions utilizing reason is the natural right of human beings. And it is the best criterion of knowledge and perception of reality. Kant holds reason as the most effective tool and the only touchstone for all kinds of reality(Ibid: 22). Similarly Mulla Sadra also holds reasoning as the highest form of perception (Mulla Sadra, 1368, vol. 3: 366). With this difference that in the Sadrian philosophy the theoretical function and in Kant’s philosophy its practical function is more important. Thus, the centre of gravity of the Sadrian philosophy is “theoretical” reason and the centre of gravity of the Kantian philosophy – in the field of anthropology – is “practical” reason, which is the reason equipped with ‘will’ or in other words is ‘rational will’.

In the transcendental philosophy of Mulla Sadra, rationalism and thinking are identified as the most fundamental quality of human beings. Thinking is one of the most fundamental pivots of Islamic philosophy. We see the rationalistic expressions in the philosophers like Farabi and Avicenna(Ibn Sina). Even Islamic gnosis(*Irfan-e-Islami*)has been categorized as the zenith of rationalism (Dinani, 1383, vol. 1: 24) . Moreover, the blessing of reason has been identified as the

cause for the veneration of man in the Divine Scripture (Tabatabai, 1347 Hijra, vol. 13: 151).

Kant as well identifies the human ability of thinking as the most fundamental quality of the nature of this being. He holds reason to have an intrinsic and objective value. He believes that this quality is specific to the human being. Kant also believes that rationalism is the only quality that is specific to the most perfect link – man from amongst the chain of natural existents (Kant, 1384: 11).

However, it must be noted that explaining the human being as a rational being by Kant with the specific meaning of “self-awareness” and “wisdom” is particular to the modern times and has been defined with qualities like “self-authority(or autonomy)” and the “autonomy of the human will”. This is an autonomy that has been identified as the fundamental principle of ethics (Kant, 1996: 89).

It is important to point out that in spite of the fact that both the philosophers consider reason and wisdom as the intrinsic qualities of the human being, that is man has the ability and the potential to be wise, they look at the problem from two different viewpoints. Thus, Mulla Sadra pays attention to the sphere of “speculation and theory” and considers that the criterion of rationalism is for man to be a “knowing-agent”. On the other hand Kant pays attention to the sphere of “action and practice” and considers the criterion of rationalism to be an “ethical-agent” for man. One pays attention to the intellectual potential and man’s knowledge base -- that which man knows – and the other pays attention to the potential to act and be ethical – that which man wills for. We shall analyze this difference in continuation of this article.

The Relationship between Theory and Practice in the Two Views

We have said that both Mulla Sadra and Kant have identified rationality as the most fundamental quality of human beings. A question arises here: The gamut of reason and rationalism in the opinion of the two

thinkers is related to which of the two spheres -- theory or practice? And what would be the results of this consideration?

Both Mulla Sadra and Kant have accepted the division of reason into theoretical and practical. But they differ in the area of application of each one of them. Paying attention to the philosophical and Gnostic basis of Mulla Sadra like: ontological primacy of being (*Asalat al Wujud*), unity of subject and object (*Ittehad Aqil o Maaqool*), abstraction of imagination (*Tajarrud e Khayal*), contingency of poverty (*Imkan Faqri*), intensified substantial motion (*Harakat Ishtidadi Johari*), corporeal origination and spiritual continuity of man (*Jismaniat al-Hudooth wa Rohaniat al-Baqa*) and especially the doctrine of the hypostatic unity of being (*Asl Wahdat Shakhsi Wujud*), points out that:

1) "Reason" and "knowledge" both belong to the category of existence. All the laws that apply to existence apply to these two as well. Therefore, not only is reason an existing entity (not only a mental faculty) but also knowledge is from the category of existence (not only a mental quality). Thus, knowledge and perception in this thought is an existential journey and movement that is both abstract and has a spiritual value (Mulla Sadra, 1368, vol. 3: 291-299).

2) Man from one end has roots in the physical world and from the other is related to the metaphysics. Moreover, according to the doctrine of the contingency of poverty (*Imkan Faqri*), man has no identity other than an existential dependence on the Exalted Knower. Thus, the rational dignity of man and the spiritual grandeur of knowledge is achieved through the connection and unity of "individual intellect" (*Aql Juz'i*) with the "Sacred Intellect" (*Aql Qudsi*). As a consequence knowledge is an existential journey and movement that is attained by man with the help of the Sacred Intellect (Ibid: 384).

3) According to Mulla Sadra the aim of philosophy is the perfection of man in terms of "thought" and "action". He holds that the essence of theoretical and practical reason is one and the same (Mulla Sadra, 1382: 292-293) and also considers that theoretical wisdom is concomitant

with practical wisdom. The first few sentences of *Asfar* (The Four Journeys) point at the complete attention of Mulla Sadra on the intellectual and practical potential of human beings. This is because he holds “wisdom”(hikmat) as perfection for man. It is the source of “existential” honor and it increases the worth of man. Moreover, from another angle he identifies the final end of philosophy as resembling God -- that is becoming a perfect manifestation, a supreme sign and a mirror of God (Mulla Sadra, 1368, vol 1: 20).

4) Although Mulla Sadra believes that without “speculation or theory”, “action or practice” on its own cannot achieve much and without action, speculation would be unfruitful but, since “knowledge” for him is a graded reality (it possesses many levels), at the initial level speculation is the antecedent for action and at the higher level action is the antecedent for speculation. However, in any case the role of practical reason is to serve theoretical reason. It is under the shadow of theoretical reason that real humanity is achieved. The perfection of rationalism is when man becomes the world of intellect (*Alam Aqli*) that resembles the world of actuality (*Alam Aini*). The secret of this resemblance and identity in the words of Mulla Sadra himself is the spiritual unity of man with the realities of existence (Mulla Sadra, 1375: 98). *Hakim* (philosopher) is someone who reaches this stage. Thus the worth of reason depends on its speculative work. Theoretical reason governs the entire life and practical reason is meaningful only under the shadow of theoretical reason and is at its service.

5) Perfection and transcendence in the opinion of Mulla Sadra is the realization of man’s potential for knowledge and reason. He calls this realization ‘proximity’(*Qurb*). Man’s proximity increases as the gamut of reason and speculation increases. Action and good morals are the antecedents of this knowledge and half-way stage on the road to humanity. They are not the end. In his opinion whosoever wants to step into the garden of transcendental philosophy (*Hikmat Muta’aliya*)first must decorate himself with purification of the soul (*tazkiyya*)(Mulla Sadra, 1368, vol. 1: 12), absolute sincerity(*ikhlas*) and free- thinking (*azad andeshi*)(ibid, vol. 6: 6). This is when rational and intellectual realities would be manifested for him from the Divine world (*Alam*

Malakoot). However, action itself is not a goal and an end. It is a resource to attain theoretical perfection and it prepares the ground to perceive rational existential realities and to unite with these (ibid, vol. 8: 136-137). As a consequence, he considers the reality of *Shariah* (Divine Law) to be its intelligible and hidden face that is its rational aspect. He also identifies the spirit of revelation as its project of making human beings human. This is done in a way that the body (*jism*) or the outward aspect of *Shariah* is based on this project (Mulla Sadra, 1382: 345).

The fundamental concepts of the philosophy of Kant like: good-will, duty, end- in-itself, conscience, autonomy of man, and having an independent reason, and other concepts point out that:

1) Kant believes in two essential elements for the essence of man: “reason” and “will” (Kant, 1996: 81). In his opinion the ‘will’ depends on practical reason or in fact the will is the same as practical reason (Ibid: 148-149). He believes that we attain the will and its autonomy from the rationality. The first consequence of an unhindered and unregimented will is the existential autonomy of man (Ibid: 79). The perfection of this autonomy is manifested in a ‘benevolent will’ that is practical reason (ibid: 49). Therefore, reason with regards its practical aspect governs the entire life and its duty is to manage the life of man that is conceiving his life with his own hands, with the support of the good-will and a stress on his own self.

2) Contrary to the opinion of Mulla Sadra, Kant holds human being as an independent and self-authorizing being whose dignity lies in himself. In his opinion, though man, through the transcendental ego, is related to a rational and meta-sensory world, his reality is defined with respect to himself, not in relation with the meta-physical (ibid: 85). Therefore, man must provide for “everything from his own self” and “with the help of his reason” (Kant, 1384: 12). This is because any dependence on any non-human agent is a kind of “heteronomy” and brings man down from the station of a “person” to that of a “thing”.

3) The value of reason for Kant depends on the practical and ethical function of it because it is unconditional. Contrary to Mulla Sadra, who did not accept any boundaries for theoretical reason, Kant believes in limits to theoretical reason that do not stand for practical reason. He does not believe in limits for the progress and growth of practical reason (ibid: 11). Practical reason governs the entire life and action and conduct are the sources of the humanity of the human being. Therefore, action does not depend on “speculation” because ethics itself is the foundation. On the other hand, action is based on “good-will” and “inherent conscience” and an autonomous will is the condition for morality (Kant, 1996: 88). Here, against the opinion of Mulla Sadra action results in the progress of speculation and guides man to a higher level of existence.

4) From here the place of conscience in the opinion of Kant becomes clearer. “Conscience” is the one of the most pivotal terms used by Kant for the rational and ethical understanding of man. It is the beginning of all ethical actions, the best inner reference and is a courtroom in which man himself is its most honest judge (ibid: 559-562). Therefore, conscience is the first agent of movement and is a deterrent that is not only the source of “ethical” conduct but also the source of “human rights”. This is because practical reason is the legislator of ethical law.

Comparison of the views of the two philosophers points out that:

First; both the thinkers stress on the importance of “reason” in the realization of the humanity of man. However, Mulla Sadra considering the reality of man to be knowledge and “wisdom”, stresses on the intellectual development of man and holds “knowledge” as wisdom. On the other hand Kant stresses on the influence of ‘reason’ on the ‘will’ and holds the “rational will” as the criterion of humanity. He also holds “ethics” as wisdom. Thus, one of them pays attention to the field of “speculation” and holds the criterion of rationality to be a “knowing-agent” for man whereas; the other pays attention to the field of “action” and holds the criterion of rationality to be an “ethical-agent” for man.

Second; although for Mulla Sadra, speculation and action are both inter-related, but at the stage of valuation theoretical reason clearly outperforms practical reason. However, for Kant when speculation and action are separately analyzed, not only the speculation is not the basis for action but also the action is preferred over speculation. It is action that guides speculation to a more spacious dominion. For this reason, the realization of humanity for Kant is conditional to action, conduct and work not to speculation, thought and belief (the way Mulla Sadra believes). Thus in the same way that Mulla Sadra does not have any boundaries for speculation Kant does not have any boundaries for “practical” and “ethical” progress.

Third; Since Mulla Sadra wants to explain the supra-human and divine foundations of man and hypothesizes under the umbrella of religion, for him the individual intellect connected with the supreme and sacred intellect is important. Thus, he pays constant attention to the Divine Intellect. However, Kant who is after explaining “human” and “ethical” foundations for man, holds the individual intellect as autonomous and self-based, in such a way that it has no relationship with the divine intellect. By paying attention to the human aspect of man he basis his ethics on man’s inner conscience.

Fourth; Since Mulla Sadra pays full attention to the intellectual-spiritual potential of man, he holds existential perfection and the perfection of the speculative reason as the criterion for the fixation of humanity. However, Kant paying attention to the ethical-human potential of man holds practical and ethical perfection as the criterion for the fixation of humanity. Thus, in one view realizing “self-existence”(*Khud Wujudi*) is perfection and end – a rational-believing man. In the other view realizing “self-ethical”(*Khud Akhlaqi*) is perfection and end – a rational-ethical man.

Some Results and Consequences of Rationality in the Opinion of the Two Philosophers

Mulla Sadra’s focus on theoretical reason that is “theoretical rationality” and Kant’s focus on practical reason that is “practical

rationality” bring with them certain consequences that shall be pointed out here:

1) The outcome of the philosophy of Mulla Sadra is a stress on “theoretical” knowledge and strengthening of beliefs. The valuable theorization, that is both rich and important, has been limited to the theoretical and abstract aspect even in the field of ethics and has not gone beyond it. Thus it has not been paid enough attention in the practical field.

The outcome of the philosophy of Kant is a stress on practical knowledge and the practical aspect of reason in a way that his thoughts have played a more prominent role in changing the conduct of human beings after him. His thoughts have become a source of legislating ethical, legal, political, social, and economic law, etc. However, it must be pointed out that the meaning of reason that Kant has in his mind is completely different from its “technical” and “instrumental” usage in recent times.

2) The focus of Mulla Sadra on the Divine aspect of reason and the rational-spiritual potential of man is a kind of transcendental guarantee regarding reason and the value and importance of man’s life. This is because the evaluating source of rationality in the opinion of Mulla Sadra is a transcendental affair and is non-human. On the other hand the evaluating source of rationality in the opinion of Kant is the inner conscience and its autonomy from any non-human or transcendental agent. Focus on a transcendental source for rationality has the potential to be considered as a kind of guarantee for human-ethical values. This is so because if man alone is the evaluating source for himself and does not have a transcendental guarantee, the worth of life would very easily be threatened by atheistic beliefs.

3) The breadth of attention that Kant pays to the importance and role of “conscience” is praiseworthy. Conscience is a kind of attention on the “real-self” of man that has the power to play an important role in building man’s life with his own hands. Conscience is the judge, comrade and God’s prophet inside man and the first agent of movement

and deterrence that has the power to develop a kind of supervision, guarantee and inner commitment to act according to law. The problem that is seen in a few societies these days is forgetfulness from this “self”. As a consequence this negligence demands intensifying incentives, overseeing and supervision, outward guarantees and usage of stimulants and deterrents.

4) Keeping in view that rationality is the most fundamental criterion of human nobility and dignity in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra and Kant, the difference in the opinions of these two philosophers regarding the importance of “speculation” and “action” has resulted in different explanations about human dignity. Thus, in one viewpoint the theoretical aspect of man is the criterion of dignity and in the other viewpoint the practical and ethical aspect. This difference has resulted in the manifestation of human dignity in the Sadrian philosophy as a philosophical-religious matter which is based on super-human and divine foundations and has roots in religion. Whereas, in the opinion of Kant human dignity is a philosophical-ethical matter and has roots in self-authority and personal aim for life and is based on human and ethical basis.

Therefore, since Mulla Sadra pays attention to the existential honor of man, his aim is to nurture a “visionary” and meta-physical human being. And since Kant pays attention to the ethical and legal aspect of man his aim is to provide a model human being like “an ethical citizen” of the world. As a result the theory of human dignity in the East – influenced by the views of Muslim philosophers and Mulla Sadra – mostly has a theoretical and abstract aspect to it. In the West – influenced by the views of Kant – the practical aspect is more prominent. Thus human dignity in one place manifested itself in “knowledge” and in another place in “life”.

Conclusion

1) According to nature of Islamic philosophy, Mulla Sarad as an Islamic philosopher gives raw material us like as thought where divine dignity and rational capacity have been paid attention and rationality

such as knowledge has been appeared. But it is others' duty to refine his thought in framework of inter-field science and offers it proficiently.

2) Although Kant's morality philosophy is origin of legal, political and social laws, andhis rationality has been presented as life but it must be noticed morality is base of life and humanity for Kant. Human with technology is a intelligent animal without morality. And he uses rationality as a tool, so he declines himself from the position of "person" to "thing".

Confrontation of two philosophies provides a suitable bed to purify Mulla Sadra's philosophy that is like raw materials in order to enter the earthly life of humans and Kant's rationality that nowadays restricted to technical application of reason, become sublime.

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Endnotes

¹ The primacy of Mulla Sadras name and ideology is purely on historical basis and does not denote any preference of value.

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Mysticism of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh An International Epic, Mystical and Sagacious Persian Masterpiece

Seyed G Safavi

London Academy of Iranian Studies, London, UK

Abstract

This article discusses Mystical aspects of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh the greatest Persian and world epical poem. The focus is placed on the parallels between power, wisdom and knowledge, the interaction between the illuminated spirit and intellect, the speech in praise of intellect, the flame that purifies the heart, *Tawhid* and Unity of Being, humble call to and the benediction of the Creator of the Good, parabolic and Mysterious aspects and Ferdowsi's point of view on Shi'ism.

Keywords: Ferdowsi, Shahnameh, Iran, Mysticism, power, wisdom, knowledge, intellect, purified the heart, Unity of Being, Mysterious, Shiism.

Introduction

Shahnameh, The magnum opus of Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi (940-1020 CE/397-319 Solar), is one of the greatest epical poem of the world at over 50000 couplets, written based on the Arabic meter, *Mutaqarib* (فعولن فعولن فعولن فعل (فعول)). It took thirty years for the masterpiece to be versified and Ferdowsi himself finished his last editing on the work at around 400-401 AH. Briefly, Shahnameh recounts the triumphs, failures, disappointments and courage of the Iranian people, composed in the form of stories and parables. There are

three distinct stages in Shahnameh: the mythical period, the era of Pahlavi and the historical. This masterpiece is a proverbial, mystical and epic verse.

The parallels between power, wisdom and knowledge:

Ferdowsi starts Shahnameh with the name of God, who grants life and wisdom; and he draws parallels between power, wisdom and knowledge:

¹In the Name of God the Merciful, the Pitiful
IN the name of the Lord of both wisdom and mind,
To nothing sublimer can thought be applied,
The Lord of whatever is named or assigned
A place, the Sustainer of all and the Guide,
The Lord of Saturn and the turning sky,
Who causeth Venus, Sun, and Moon to shine,
Who is above conception, name, or sign,
The Artist of the heaven's jewelry!
Him thou canst see not though thy sight thou strain,
For thought itself will struggle to attain
To One above all name and place in vain,
Since mind and wisdom fail to penetrate
Beyond our elements, but operate
On matters that the senses render plain.
None then can praise God as He is. Observe
Thy duty: 'tis to gird thyself to serve.
He weigheth mind and wisdom; should He be
Encompassed by a thought that He hath weighed?
Can He be praised by such machinery
As this, with mind or soul or reason's aid?
Confess His being but affirm no more,
Adore Him and all other ways ignore,
Observing His commands. Thy source of might
Whoever is knowledgeable is powerful
Is knowledge: thus old hearts grow young again,
But things above the Veil surpass in height
All words: God's essence is beyond our ken².

Mysticism in mystic tradition means wisdom and knowledge. In the opening verses of Shahnameh, Ferdowsi views strength as based on wisdom and wisdom based on knowledge, and in later verses recognizes wisdom as the divine light within the spirit of the wise man. Strength and wisdom correspond to one another and there is an explanatory and transcendental correspondence between the two. This is to say that knowledge is superior to power and there is an ontological relationship between power, wisdom and knowledge. Most likely, these verses were inspired by Imam Ali's (a.s.) supplication of Kumayl (Du'a al-Kumayl), whereby he corresponds the divine power (the second prayer) with the divine knowledge (ninth prayer).³

The interaction between the illuminated spirit and the intellect

Hakim Ferdowsi deems the particular reason incapable of understanding the transcendental truth, and like a mystic sees the heart, illuminated with the divine light, as the locus for contemplating and discovering the truth. Divine wisdom is the language for interpreting the contemplation of the heart; the particular reason has no access to contemplation of the heart. The scope of the particular reason is limited, but the heart is soaring and vast. According to Ferdowsi, the way to understand the truth is to illuminate the spirit. After the illuminated spirit comprehends the truth, only then will intellect explain them. Therefore, intellect is the tool for expressing the divine truth and not for discovering them. Discovering the transcendental truth is only possible in the realm of the illuminated spirit lightened up by the divine light.⁴

همه بودنی ها به روشن روان / بدانی به دانش بگردان زبان^۵

One way of illuminating the spirit is to perform and take care of Tawhid (attesting to the Oneness of God):

ببین ای خردمند روشن روان / که چون باید او را ستودن تمام
نخست از جهان آفرین یاد کن / پرستش به این یاد بنیاد کن
سخن هیچ بهتر از توحید نیست / به ناکفتن و گفتن ایزد یکی است^۶

The Prophet Jesus, the son of Mary, was also chosen as the Messenger of God after his spirit was illuminated:

چو روشن روان گشت و دانش پذیر / سخن گوی و داننده یاد گیر
به پیغمبری نیز هنگام یافت / به برنایی از زیرکی نام یافت^۷

The speech in praise of intellect

Contrary to the belief of some researchers who considered Ferdowsi as being against intellect⁸, he in fact was a supporter of intellect but, more specifically, intellect which was connected to the supreme intellect and illuminated by the divine light. Of course, Ferdowsi believes the particular reason is incapable of understanding metaphysical truth and of seeing things in their true light. He sees intellect as the guide in both lives and praises theoretical as well as practical intellect. Carnality and lustfulness lead intellect astray:

و گر بر خرد چیره گردد هوا / نخواهد به دیوانگی بر گوا^۹

The learned and the “discerning-heart” are theologian sages who are grateful of God (the principle of righteousness of the universe):

خردمند و بینا دل آن را شناس / که دارد ز دادار کیهان سپاس^{۱۰}

Ferdowsi’s viewpoint is similar to Sheikh Eshragh (Sheikh Shahabuddin Sohrevardi) and it is clear that both are heirs of mystical, ancient and Islamic wisdoms.

According to Ferdowsi, the signs of the health of practical intellect are:

بکوشد به داد و بپیچد ز بد / ستون خرد داد و بخشایش است
/ سخن گفتنش خوب و آوای نرم خردمند هشیار و با رای و شرم

Tolerance; avoiding inappropriate deeds; abstaining from haste; vanity and arrogance; patience; compassion; knowing the value and dignity of others; not paying attention to worldly glitter and glamour; talking in

appropriate time; socializing with wise friends; consulting; and obeying and thanking God (the principle of righteousness of the universe):

As God's best gift to thee extol the worth
Of wisdom, which will comfort thee and guide,
And lead thee by the hand in heaven and earth.
Both joy and grief, and gain and loss, betide
Therefrom, and when it is eclipsed the sane
Know not of happiness one moment more.
Thus saith the wise and virtuous man of lore
Lest sages search his words for fruit in vain:-
"What man so ever spurneth wisdom's rede
Will by so doing make his own heart bleed;
The prudent speak of him as one possessed,
And 'he is not of us' his kin protest."
In both worlds wisdom recommended thee
When gives are on the ankles of the mad;
It is the mind's eye; if thou dost not see
Therewith thy journey through this world is sad.
It was the first created thing, and still
Presideth o'er the mind and faculty
Of praise - praise offered by tongue, ear, and eye,
All causes it may be of good or ill.
To praise both mind and wisdom who would dare?
And if I venture, who would hear me through?¹¹

The flame that purifies the heart

In order to receive the truth, the heart must go through fire and burn the personal ego (*nafsaniat*) with its flames, so that the heart becomes the exclusive site for the presence of the divine splendour, and so that human existence can be illuminated with the divine light, which in turn purifies the heart. In the story of *Bijan and Manijeh*, the fire is the secret to purifying the ego. To join the truth is only possible by travelling the "Path" (*Tarighat*) and going through a series of stages. Self transcendence is a spiritual journey which must be taken step by step. "*Seven stages (labours) of Rostam*" is an allegorical story about traversing the "Path" to reach the truth. This story is further developed

in Attar Neishabouri's book, *Manteq at-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds)*, and is told through the voice of birds. One important and contemplating point is that all these stars of Iran's spiritual culture - Ferdowsi, Sanai Ghaznavi, Attar Neishabouri and Rumi- are from *Khorasan* (a province in north west of Iran), sharing the same spiritual horizon. Another commonality between these sages is their insistence on the elixir of kindness:

از محبت خارها گل می شود / وز محبت سرکه ها مل می شود
از محبت تلخ ها شیرین شود / وز محبت مس ها زرین شود

Tawhid (There is no God but God) and Wahdat al-Wujood (Unity of Being)

The kernel of Shahnameh's teachings is "Tawhid" and "Wahdat al-Wojood". Ferdowsi, three centuries before *Sheikh Mohiudin ibn al-Arabi*, proposed the important mystical doctrine of "Wahdat al-Wojood":

جهان را بلندی و پستی تویی / ندانم چه ای هر چه هستی تویی^{۱۲}

The God of pure universe is one and the creator of the world. He is superior to thought and no one has access to understanding his essence. But he is with his creatures everywhere. All good qualities, in their supreme form, exist in him. He lends a hand to the fallen man, he is the sender of the Messengers to guide his creatures and he is the owner of the Judgment Day. Guardians and mendicants (*Dervishes*) are under his special protection:

بر او آفرین کو جهان آفرید / ابا آشکارا نهان آفرید
خداوند دارنده هست و نیست / همه چیز جفتست و ایزد یکبست^{۱۳}
ز روز گذر کردن اندیشه کن / پرستیدن دادگر اندیشه کن
چو رفتی سر و کار با ایزدست / اگر نیک باشدت کار ار بد است
نگر تا چه کاری همان بدروی / سخن هر چه گویی همان بشنوی^{۱۴}

Humble call to and the benediction of the Creator of the Good

In Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, prayer which is the silent amorous prayer of the authentic poor and the affluent alike, resolves calamity and brings about wishes. In *Shahnameh*, all the champions and nobles, such as *Keykhosrow*, *Kavous*, *Rostam*, *Goodarz*, have, under dire circumstances, been defeated and have fallen in the battlegrounds. Moaning and lamenting, they all asked the Creator, the Originator of the Good, to show them the way to salvation.

Keykhosrow's Benediction:

به او گفت کیخسرو این است و بس / پناهم به یزدان فریاد رس
 فرود آمد از باره راهجوی / بنالید و بر خاک بنهاد روی
 همی گفت پشت و پناهم تویی / نماینده بر داد راهم تویی
 درشتی و نرمی مرا فر توست / روان و خرد سایه پر توست
 بر نیستان بر نیایش گرفت / جهان آفرین را ستایش گرفت
 شب تیره تا بر کشید آفتاب / خروشان همی بود و دیده پر آب
 فراوان بمالید رخ بر زمین / همی خواند بر کردگار آفرین^{۱۵}

Parabolic and Mysterious Aspects

The real and fictional characters of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* have found parabolic and mysterious expressions in Iranian mystical tradition. One example is the "Story of Phoenix," whose visit became the goal and purpose of the spiritual travellers of the "Path" (*Tarighat*). Several works on this theme have been published, such as Attar's "Mantegh O Tair." Stories such as, "Seven Labours of Rostam," "Phoenix," "Jam-e Jam," "Bijan and Manijeh," "Keykhosrow," "Eskandar" and "Iraj" are all the summits of mysticism in *Shahnameh*. In *Shahnameh*, inner struggles and battles among different forces of ego are illustrated in meticulous and artistic detail. These forces include: the battle between the mind, passion and wrath; detriments of ego; moral vices and virtues; characteristics of the overman; the battle between the army of Good and Evil; and finally, issues of compassion and loyalty. And there are "Iraj," "Siavash," "Keykhosrow," and "Zal," who are the mystical heroes in *Shahnameh*. "Keyomars," *Fereydoun*, "Zal" and "Rostam" belong to the army of light and are symbols of a pious and pure human.

On the other hand, “*Ahriman*” (The Devil), “*Afrasiab*” and “*Zahhak*” represent the army of darkness and are symbols of a human enslaved to his ego. In the battle between good and evil, between light and darkness, ultimately, with the help of the Almighty and the aid of the sheikh and the wise-man, the army of goodness and light will finally prevail. In Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, Light and darkness and good and evil exist at both individual and social spheres.

The mystical, social and epic teachings of *Shahnameh* are components that set it prominently apart from other mystical works. Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* is a vast/colossal play about people’s lives from their height to their low, and from heaven to hell wherein divine light and wisdom are their guide. The central theme of the play is human’s constant battle with inner and outer demons. The human’s place in this play is sometimes in hell, meaning when the demon wins over the human; in purgatory, symbolizing the human’s battle with the demon; or his place at times is in heaven, which signifies the victory of the human over the demon.

Ferdowsi and Shi'ism

Ferdowsi is a devout Shia Muslim who openly and candidly expresses his adoration and exaltation for the Holy Prophet’s infallible household. Ferdowsi believes the only ship to salvation is that of Imam Ali (a.s.), the Holy Prophet’s household (*Ahl al-Bayt*), and of his followers. Ferdowsi, in his famous poem “Slave of the Prophet’s slaves with praise I greet/The dust upon his mandatary’s feet” demonstrates his devotion to the teachings of the Holy Prophet’s household and to the guardianship and leadership of Imam Ali (a.s.)

Slave of the Prophet's slaves with praise I greet
The dust upon his mandatary's feet,
What others say to me is no concern,
This is my way, from this I never turn.
The sage regardeth as a sea this world,
A sea whose waves are driven by the blast;
Thera seventy gallant ships go sailing past,

Each with her canvas every stitch unfurled.
One stately vessel is in bridal gear,
As beauteous as the eye of chanticleer.
Muhammad and 'Ali are there within
That stately vessel, they and all their kin.
The sage beholding from afar that sea
Of viewless shore and depth, and ware that he
Must face the waves where all must drown, "If I
Shall go down with Muhammad and 'Ali,"
He saith, "I sink in goodly company,
And surely He will rescue me from ill,
Who is of standard, crown, and throne the Lord,
The Lord of wine, of honey, and of rill,
Of founts of milk and floods which spread abroad.'
If on the other world thou fix throe eyes
Keep close beside the Prophet and 'Ali,
And, should ill follow, lay the blame on me,
Who take myself the course that I advise.
In this Faith was I born, in this will die;
The dust upon the Lion's foot am I.
fhy heart, if prone to err, is thine own foe,
And can the world more abject miscreants know
Than haters of 'Ali, for born in shame
Are they, and destined to eternal flame?
Take not this world in jest, but walk with those
Whose steps are right; right as thine end propose
If thou wouldst be with men of glorious name.
Why do I talk so long? I fail to see
A limit to my theme's fertility.¹⁶

In the above verse, Hakim Ferdowsi describes the ship of salvation floating in a stormy sea, where the God's Messenger (Prophet Muhammad s.w.a.), Imam Ali, and his descendants are. The wise is sure that if he seeks refuge in the ship, those two loyal friends will save him from drowning. Ferdowsi, with his charismatic and epic style, identifies himself as the dust beneath the shoes of Haydar (Furious Lion: one of Imam Ali's titles). He calls Imam Ali "The Gate to the City of Knowledge," "noble companionship," "The Care Taker of the God's Messenger," "The God of the stream of wine and honey," "the fountain

of milk and pure water,” and one whose obedience will bring about the salvation in both worlds.¹⁷

Conclusion

Recited in poetic and parabolic language, and based on the flourishing culture of pre and post Islamic Iran, Hakim Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* is Iran's mystical-epic masterpiece. In addition to being the most thriving literary work in Persian language, it also contains sublime mystical knowledge. Yet, there has been less attention to the mystical aspects of *Shahnameh*. It is extremely praiseworthy that scholars familiar with Iranian literature and mysticism conduct research on the different mystical dimensions of *Shahnameh* in their Masters or PhD dissertation.

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Endnotes

¹ All translated verses in this paper are from: Princeton Shahnama Project at <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/shahnama/start.epl>.

² Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, Bertels (ed) Moscow edition, 1st book, barg negar publisher, Tehran, 1378 Solar.

³ See: Savafi, Seyed Salman, *Structural and Mystical Analysis of Supplication of Kumayl* (Qom: 1390 Solar).

⁴ See: Azmayesh (1380 Solar), Chapter III: *The Essence of Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi's Ideas*.

⁵ Dabir Siaghi, *Shahnameh*, Vol. 1, p. 92, Stanza 15.

⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 917.

⁷ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 2385, Verses 4 and 5.

⁸ Azmayesh, p. 152.

⁹ Gharib, *Shahnameh*, Vol. II, p. 1286.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Dabir Siaghi, Vol. I. Khaleghi-Motlagh, pg. 4 and 5.

¹² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 879, Stanza 3.

¹³ Ibid., p. 545.

¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 629 and 642.

¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 654-655, 680 and 681.

¹⁶ In Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, this verse is nine couplets; in the edition published by Institute for Oriental Study, it is seventeen couplets. R.K., Vol. I, p. 9 (Tehran, 1971 Solar).

¹⁷ See: Rastegar Fasaai, Mansour, "Imam Ali and his Descendants in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and its Epic Stories," *Adabestan Magazine*, No. 54.

Transliteration Table

Arabic Characters

Consonants

ء	ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ	د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص	ض
'	b	t	th	j	ḥ	kh	d	dh	r	z	s	sh	ṣ	ḍ

ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق	ك	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ي	ة	ال
ṭ	ẓ	'	gh	f	q	k	l	m	n	h	w	y	ah;at	al; 'l

Long Vowels

اى	و	ي
ā	ū	ī

Short Vowels

َ	ُ	ِ
a	u	i

Diphtongs

وَ	يَ	يَ	وُ
aw	ai	iy (final form ī)	uww (final form ū)

Persian Letters

پ	چ	ژ	گ
p	ch	zh	g

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