A-T. Tymieniecka
Editor

IPOP 6

Sharing Poetic Expressions

Beauty, Sublime, Mysticism in Islamic and Occidental Culture

Springer

SHARING POETIC EXPRESSIONS

Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue

VOLUME 6

Sharing Poetic Expressions

Beauty, Sublime, Mysticism in Islamic and Occidental Culture

Edited by

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

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Springer

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We present here a collected volume of essays read at the first meeting of the founded CENTER FOR THE PROMOTION OF CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING which took place on August 13 and 14, 2009 on the topic of POETIC EXPRESSIONS: SAYING THE SAME IN DIFFERENT WAYS, BEAUTY, SUBLIME, CREATIVITY IN ISLAMIC AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURE. In the Prologue we shall explain the history and Mission Statement presiding over the founding Center. We owe thanks to the speakers who have offered us their essays for this beautiful and unique collection.

Mr. Nazif Muhtaroglu, of the University of Kentucky, served with expertise as Secretary General of the meeting with Mr. Louis Tymieniecki Houthakker as his assistant. As usually, Mr. Jeffrey Hurlburt has performed the administrative work. All of them merit our thanks.

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

PROLOGUE

1. HISTORICAL PROFILE

It is with joy that we present to the public the first fruit of our work in the newly founded CENTER FOR THE PROMOTION OF CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING. This institution joining our Islamic metaphysics and Phenomenology program of the World Phenomenology Institute has been founded in a meeting which took place on January 27 and 28, 2007 at the Harvard Divinity School with the following members: Professor Nargiz Arif Pashayeva, Vice-Rector on International Relations, Baku State University, Azerbaijan; William Chittick, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, State University of New York, Stony Brook; James Duesenberry, Professor Emeritus of Economics, Harvard University; Mr. Peter Flanagan, Attorney at Law, Hanover, New Hampshire; Mr. Louis Tymieniecki Houthakker, Assistant, World Phenomenology Institute, Hanover, New Hampshire; Professor Salahaddin Khalilov, Rector, Azerbaijan University; Mrs. Rosemary Lunardini, former editor of Dartmouth Medical Journal, Hanover, New Hampshire; William McBride, Professor of Philosophy, Purdue University; Professor Sachiko Murata, State University of New York at Stony Brook; Professor A.L. Samian, Director, Center for General Studies, National University of Malaysia; Mr. Alexander W. Schimmelpenninck, Executive Vice President, Springer Science & Business Media B.V.; Thomas Ryba, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Notre Dame University; Professor Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Department of Creative Arts, Siena College, Loudonville, New York; Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Professor of Philosophy, President of The World Phenomenology Institute, Hanover, New Hampshire. This meeting set out our program of which the first realization which took place on August 13 and 14, 2009 at Radcliffe Gymnasium, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Its topic—the title of our present collection, SHARING POETIC EXPRESSIONS: BEAUTY, SUBLIME, MYSTICISM IN ISLAMIC AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURE expresses the sense of our proposed endeavors.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

A world ever more extensively interlinked is calling out for intensive serving human interests broader than those inspiring our technological advance. The interface between cultures—at the moment especially between the Occident and Islam—that present challenges to mutual understanding, in particular, the challenge of how the world may address our common existential concerns while preserving cultural identities.

The aim of our association of scholars from various fields of inquiry is to elaborate foundation for such greater understanding and to establish new links of communication. Reaching to common roots in human life, knowledge and creativity as these are found analogically across the living cosmos on its path to ultimate reality, may set us on the way in the human quest.

In pursuit of this goal, the Society plans to hold periodic conferences at which participants will seek to elucidate their own cultural values and assumptions and to explore the values and assumptions of their fellow participants in a open, interdisciplinary manner.

In our present phase of the history of our world there is obvious a conundrum of cultural trends from various sectors of the civilization which have developed their specific trends of thinking the great issues of existence, values of life and appreciation as well as their attitudes of tendencies and feeling toward others as well as thinking about the sense of life.

These attitudes which have developed in difference to each trend due to different natural geographic conditions to which its inhabitants are subjugated: climate, nature of the soil, sand, mountains, cosmic influences, etc. leading to types of toil and collaborative and societal forms and habits of inhabitants. We cannot forget also the evolutionary progress/regress of the living beings culminating in humans whose development of consciousness enhances experiences to the pitch of sensibility and spiritual unfolding toward beauty, generosity, sublimation of feelings and attitudes. . .

While at the lowest dimensions of existence the struggle for life prompts to resolve it at its vital level in competitions and rivalry, at these more elevated spheres of emotional developments the strictly human reactions are sumblimized. The vital experience individualized by life's singular conditions becomes elevated toward a spiritualizing sphere at which all human beings encounter

and share. No matter in which particular tribal forms and interpretations they stay. Indeed, while we all stay in the existential situations of vital competitions making surge adverse or inimical feelings and attitudes, here, at the higher level of human spiritual elevation of consciousness we all reveal deeper sources of our beingness going beyond vital and rudimentary experiences of vibrant existence. If we need to seek their common interpretive symbols, reach the cipher of the common existential elevation we will reach together the deepest stream of the fraternal reality.

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

Left to right.

Back row:
Claudio G. Antoni
Louis Tymieniecki Houthakker
Mahmoud Jaran
Detlev Quintern

Middle Row:
Bruce Ross
Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka
Gul Kale
Herbert Coyne

Front Row:
Nazif Muhtaroglu
Habip Türker

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SECTION ONE

WILLIAM C. CHITTICK

THE AESTHETICS OF ISLAMIC ETHICS

Abstract: Muslim philosophers devoted many books and treatises to ethics as the practical side of their theoretical vision. They never developed clear theories of aesthetics, but they frequently referred to beauty as an underlying rationale for ethical conduct. Their metaphysics was founded on the notion of unity (*tawḥīd*), and they saw harmony, equilibrium, balance, and beauty as unity's manifestations. In his treatise on love, Avicenna demonstrates that love drives the Necessary Being to create the universe. Others pointed to the prophetic saying, "God is beautiful, and He loves beauty," and explained that it is precisely God's specific love for beauty that brings the universe into existence with a special view toward human beings, whom he created in his own beautiful image. The human task becomes one of actualizing *taʾalluh*, "deiformity," which is latent in the soul. "Ethics," literally "character traits" (*akhlāq*), is then the practical endeavor of "becoming characterized" (*takhalluq*) by God's own character traits, which are designated by what the tradition calls his "most beautiful names" (*al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*). Thus, Avicenna explains, the Necessary Being's love for beauty is fully realized in God's love for deiform souls.

In emulating Aristotle the early Muslim philosophers paid a good deal of attention to ethics. The language they employed often resonated with the worldview of the Koran, which helps explain why scholars from other schools of thought also discussed the topic. Neither the philosophers nor anyone else, however, developed a systematic approach to what we would call aesthetics, though beauty was never far from their concerns. In the case of the philosophers, beauty played a prominent role in their explanations of how ethics is rooted in both ontology and cosmology.

Before explaining what I mean, I should remark that I use the word "philosopher" in the expansive, modern sense, not in the narrow, technical sense, in which case it would refer only to those like Avicenna who called themselves *faylasūf* and gave pride of place to Greek wisdom. In particular, I will have occasion to mention Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), whose name raises a red flag in some circles. He has typically been considered the greatest mystical theologian of the tradition, and until recently this has been sufficient to exclude him

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from consideration by historians of philosophy. His status as an outcaste from the ranks of respectable scholars is not unrelated to the idea, common among Orientalists and modernist Muslim intellectuals, that al-Ghazālī and others like him undermined the strict rationality of the philosophers and paved the way for the eventual dominance of anti-rational tendencies in Islamic thought. This is an extraordinarily simplistic reading of Islamic history, no matter how popular it has become among journalists. Among other things, it conveniently ignores the massive reevaluation of the excessive rationalism bequeathed upon the West by the Enlightenment that has occupied so many prominent thinkers for the past half century.[1] Concerning Ibn ʿArabī specifically, we need to keep in mind that he has been pigeonholed as a "mystic" largely because historians have not wanted to deal with his writings. Not only was he one of the most prolific of Muslim authors, but also one of the most difficult. Moreover, whatever the fuzzy word "mysticism" may mean, it plays only an ancillary role in his unparalleled synthesis of the Islamic intellectual tradition, with all its legal, theological, cosmological, psychological, philosophical, and metaphysical dimensions.[2]

1. UNITY

The various branches of Islamic learning are tied together by the notion of unity, by which I mean *tawḥīd*, the foundational axiom of the Islamic worldview. Literally the word means to say one, assert one, or acknowledge one. In the word's technical sense, the one in question is God, or the Ultimate Reality. Many thousands of books and treatises have been written explaining *tawḥīd*'s implications, and it is not difficult to grasp that it undergirds the work of all the philosophers, not least Avicenna and Averroes.

People take it for granted that the religion of Islam is based on the Koran and the teachings of Muhammad. This is true enough, but the Koran insists that the notion of unity goes back to the origin of the human race. In the creation myth as the Koran retells it, Adam did not so much "sin" as slip or stumble, and this was a one-time affair. He ate the forbidden fruit not because of any corruption of his will but because he "forgot" (20:115). Then he quickly remembered, and God appointed him as a prophet to his children, who needed guidance because they were to inherit his forgetfulness. After all, the Koran tells us, "Man was created weak" (4:28). In response to human weakness, God in his mercy sent prophet after prophet, the traditional number being 124,000, ending with Muhammad. The prophets have had two basic functions: to remind people of their innate understanding of unity and to explain how they can put unity into practice and achieve integration in their own souls.

This way of looking at things draws a distinction between truths that are universal and timeless, and others that are particular and historical. *Tawḥīd* is a universal, ahistorical truth that has been acknowledged in every community on earth because of our common human nature. Prophecy, although it has exercised its effects everywhere, offers guidance in the form of specific truths that pertain to the unique circumstances of each community. The Koran makes the point in the verse, "We never sent a messenger before you except that We revealed to him, saying, 'There is no god but I, so worship Me' " (21:25). In other words, God revealed the notion of unity ("There is no god but I") to every prophet and also provided specific instructions for proper human activity ("worship"). It is these instructions that differentiate the prophetic messages, a point that is made rather plainly in a verse addressed to all the prophets: "To each of you We have appointed a right way and an open road. If God had willed, He would have made you one nation" (5:48). In the traditional Islamic understanding, the idea that everyone should follow the same path is absurd. God alone is one; everything else is many, including the paths that lead to God.

Generally, Islamic thought is built on these two axioms: *tawḥīd*, or the universal, timeless truth of unity; and prophecy, or the acknowledgement that God has sent diverse forms of guidance to human beings. These two axioms are implicit in the first pillar of Islamic practice, the Shahadah or "bearing witness." As is well known, Islam is based on five pillars: the Shahadah, the daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, paying the alms tax, and making the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is often said that the Shahadah is Islamic "belief," but this is not technically the case. It is in fact the primary ritual act performed by Muslims, that of uttering the formula, "I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His messenger." Performance of a ritual, we need to remember, does not demand understanding.

The issue of how to understand the Shahadah was addressed not by the specialists in practice (the jurists) but rather by theologians, Sufis, and philosophers. It is they who tell us that the first half of the Shahadah, specifically the statement "There is no god but God," should be called "the sentence of *tawḥīd*," because it asserts God's unity and refers to the timeless, ahistorical truth that was taught by all prophets. The second statement, "Muhammad is God's Messenger," refers to specific teachings and practices that make the Koran one among many prophetic messages. In short, the meaning of the Shahadah is explained under the headings of two of the three principles of faith, *tawḥīd* and prophecy—the third principle being the return (*maʿād*) to God.

The Muslim philosophers devoted a great deal of attention to all three principles of faith, though they were especially concerned with the implications of *tawḥīd*, typically in the language of Being, which was formulated most decisively by Avicenna. They paid much less attention to prophecy, though it

played a significant role in their discussions of the purpose of human life and the nature of the soul. They addressed the third principle in the context of both cosmology and psychology, that is, in their explanations of both the origin and the final end of the cosmos and the soul. It was the last of these issues, the soul's entelechy, that was in fact the real focus of their attention. Philosophy was not a disinterested study of the nature of things, but rather a discipline aimed at guiding lovers of wisdom to intellectual, spiritual, and moral perfection.

One of the many ways in which the philosophers spoke of the soul's becoming was in terms of the Arabic word *ʿaql*, which is commonly translated as "reason," though "intellect" is better suited to catch the nuances of the word, not least the notion of a hierarchy of intelligence and self-awareness. "Reason" tends to designate the technical application of a philosophical or scientific methodology, and asking someone to be "rational" too often means that he or she should adopt the prevailing worldview, which nowadays is that of scientism and ideology. The word "intellect" is also better suited to render the Plotinian notion of *nous*, the first emanation of the One, which the philosophers called by names such as the First Intellect, the Universal Intellect, or the Active Intellect. They took the position that the human soul, in its deepest reality, is a potential intellect, and the goal of the philosophical quest—and indeed, of human life generally—was for the soul to realize its potential and become a fully realized intellect. This can only happen when the soul reunites with the Universal Intellect from which it arose.

In short, my first point is that all Islamic thinking—philosophical, theological, mystical, even juridical—is rooted in the notion of the unity of the Ultimate Reality. This Reality is called "God" in the more mythic or theological language, and "the Necessary Being" in the more philosophical language. Theologians and philosophers also named it by a great variety of other names and explained why each name is appropriate to it. A whole theological genre investigated the significance of God's "ninety-nine" or "most beautiful" names. Although Avicenna does not employ the theological language, he does talk about the principal attributes of the Necessary Being, such as unity, eternity, consciousness, desire, power, wisdom, and generosity. He employs all the logical and philosophical tools at his disposal to prove that these are necessary attributes of the Necessary Being. The theologians had no real quarrel with him on the identity of these attributes, but they went about proving their point by having recourse to the Koran.

2. LOVE FOR BEAUTY

Aesthetics and ethics intersect in the notion of *tawḥīd*. This can be seen if we take time to analyze the significance of a well-known saying of the Prophet:

"God is beautiful, and He loves beauty." To understand how this saying was understood, we need first to review the basic manner of discussing *tawḥīd* in Islamic thought. The formula "(There is) no god but God" was taken as its most succinct expression. The Koran, and following in its wake Muslim thought generally, brings out the meaning of *tawḥīd* by substituting other divine names for the word "god" in the formula or in various paraphrases. For example, if God can properly be called "one," then "There is nothing one but God." This is to say that true and real oneness belongs to God alone, and everything other than God participates in manyness and multiplicity. In the same way, if God is merciful, then none is truly merciful but God; human mercy is a pale reflection of the real thing.

With this formula in mind, we can see that by saying that God is beautiful and that he loves beauty, the Prophet was saying that God is properly designated by the two names Beautiful and Loving. Hence, there is nothing beautiful but God and nothing loving but God. Real love and real beauty pertain exclusively to the Ultimate Reality; love and beauty as we experience them can at best be metaphorical, like light borrowed from the sun. In his "Treatise on Love," Avicenna makes these points by demonstrating that the Necessary Being is the true lover, and that its love is directed at the true beauty, which is itself. He sums up the discussion with the words,

> The First Good perceives Itself in act always and forever, so Its love for Itself is the most perfect and most ample love. There is no essential distinction among the divine attributes in the Essence, so love is identical with the Essence and with Being, by which I mean the Sheer Good.[3]

Just as the notion that "God loves beauty" throws light on the nature of the First Good, it also provides insight into cosmogeny. The universe was typically understood as everything other than the Necessary Being, that is, the entire realm of contingency, or "creation" as distinct from "the Creator." Philosophers looked at this contingent realm as having no beginning and no end, not least because beginning and end would imply that time exists outside the universe, whereas it is one of the constituent factors of contingency. They often described the cosmos in terms of "origin and return" (*mabdaʾ wa maʿād*). They held that the unity of the Supreme Reality demands that all things come forth from the One and return back where they came from, so the universe is an on-going process of emergence and submergence. All beings participate in never-ending change, the result of their essential possibility or contingency. Everything other than the One dwells in the realm of "generation and corruption" (*al-kawn wa'l-fasād*), so at every moment each is generated, and at every moment each is also undergoing corruption. In Ibn ʿArabī's terms, God renews creation at each instant, so everything disappears constantly only to be replaced by its similars.

When we apply this ontological and cosmological discussion to the human realm, we observe the obvious fact—obvious to much of pre-modern thought, at least—that everything in the realm of contingency is striving for the Absolutely Good and the Absolutely Beautiful, which is not generated and does not become corrupt. In other words, we and all things are driven by love for the One. The oneness of the Beautiful is expressed in the formula of *tawḥīd* by saying, "There is none beautiful but God," or "There is none good but God." Given that "God loves the beautiful," to say that there is none beautiful but God is also to say that there is none beloved but God, a favorite theme of Sufi poets like Rūmī. What usually does not come through in the translations that have made him so famous, however, is that he was thoroughly versed in metaphysics, cosmology, spiritual psychology, and ethics. He constantly reminds his readers that all lovers are in fact aiming at a single point, and that they will never reach fulfillment until they understand what it is that they truly love and put their understanding into practice. In one of his prose works, he makes the point as follows:

> In man there is a love, a pain, an itch, and an urgency such that, if a hundred thousand worlds were to become his property, he would still gain no rest and no ease. These people occupy themselves totally with every kind of craft, artistry, and position; they learn astronomy, medicine, and other things, but they find no ease, for their goal has not been attained. . .. All these pleasures and goals are like a ladder. The rungs of a ladder are no place to take up residence and stay—they're for passing on. Happy is he who wakes up quickly and becomes aware! Then the long road becomes short, and he does not waste his life on the ladder's rungs.[4]

Coming back to cosmology, we see that the Muslim philosophers held not only that the universe is driven by love for the beautiful, but also that the Creator of the universe—the Necessary Being understood vis-à-vis contingency—brought the cosmos into existence because of its own love for beauty. This is another common theme in Sufi literature, typically made by referring to a famous saying of the Prophet, according to which David the Psalmist asked God why he created the universe. God replied, "I was a Hidden Treasure, and I loved to be recognized. Hence I created the creatures so that they might recognize Me."[5] In a typical interpretation of this saying, the Hidden Treasure refers to the names and attributes of the Real Being, which are the latent possibilities of manifestation. Love designates the fact that God wanted his beauty to be spread infinitely wide so that it would be recognized and loved by all things good and beautiful.

3. ETHICS

The Arabic word that was used to render the Greek notion of ethics is *akhlāq*, which I prefer to translate as "character traits." The word is the plural of *khuluq*, "character," which in Arabic script has no vowels and is written exactly the

same way as *khalq*, "creation." Only the context allows us to discern whether creation or character is at issue. In fact, the two words are parallel expressions of a single notion, which is that things come into being having specific characteristics that distinguish them from other things. If we look at the ontological side of things, we talk about creation. If we look at the moral and spiritual side, we talk about character, which is the sum total of the soul's invisible qualities that motivate its external activity.

In English, when we say "ethical", we mean moral, proper, and good. But the discussion of character traits among Muslim philosophers was tightly bound up with differentiating the good from the bad, the praiseworthy from the blameworthy. If, as the philosophers claimed, the goal of human life is to transmute the potential intellect into an actual intellect, then the soul needs to assimilate the qualities of the Necessary Being in order to bring about this transformation. The theoretical side of the soul strives to contemplate the Good and the Beautiful, and the practical side strives to act in conformity with the object of contemplation. In order to achieve conformity, the soul itself must become good and beautiful. Only then will it be the object of God's love and fulfill his purpose in creating the world, for He loves the beautiful, not the ugly.

Ethics, then, is the study of character traits with the practical goal of beautifying the soul. To use a common expression, the aim of the seeker was "to become characterized by the character traits of God" (*al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh*). This was a favorite theme among theologians like al-Ghazālī, who uses the expression, for example, to explain the importance of learning about God's names and attributes in the introduction to his book on the divine names.

This understanding of the divine roots of ethics goes back to the Koranic notion that God taught Adam all the names and appointed him as his representative in the earth. The factor that distinguishes human beings from other creatures is not simply that they are *ḥayawān nāṭiq*, "rational" or "speaking" animals, but rather that they have the capacity to speak about anything that can be named, including God himself. Speaking about something presupposes knowing how to refer to what you are talking about. In Adam's case, he was taught not only the names of everything that exists, but also the meaning of all the names. In our case, most of us talk about things which we do not in fact know but which have been transmitted to us in the process of enculturation.

Muslim philosophers were acutely aware that it was the common lot of mankind to speak on the basis of ignorance. Not only are most people devoid of real knowledge, but they are also ignorant of the fact that they do not know (hence the phrase *jahl murakkab*, "compound ignorance"). In order to explain why most knowledge is in fact ignorance, the philosophers (and many Sufis as well) drew a sharp distinction between two basic sorts of knowing. The first they called "imitation" (*taqlīd*). It is based on transmission and hearsay and is the foundation of all human affairs, given that practically everything we

know or think we know—language, customs, religion, science, philosophy—has been passed on to us from others. Little if any of it is real and certain knowledge.

The second sort is called *taḥqīq*, "realization." The word derives from the same root as *ḥaqq*, a Koranic divine name that means real, true, right, and appropriate (as well as the corresponding substantives). The meaning of the name can be understood from the formula of *tawḥīd*: "There is nothing real, true, right, appropriate, and worthy but God." Anything else to which these qualities are ascribed can only possess them in a contingent, secondary, or illusory manner. As for the word *taḥqīq*, it means literally to actualize the *ḥaqq*, that is, to understand what is true, real, and appropriate and to put it into practice. According to the philosophers, one must achieve realization by recovering the innate human potential to know all things, that is, by transforming one's soul into an actual intellect.

The quest to achieve realization was a basic impetus of both philosophy and Sufism. It is formulated already by al-Kindī, the first of the Muslim philosophers, at the beginning of his treatise "On the first philosophy": The goal of philosophers in their quest for knowledge, he says, is "to hit upon the *ḥaqq*"—that is, the true, the real, the right, and the appropriate—and their goal in their practice is "to practice according to the *ḥaqq*."[6] This means that seekers of wisdom are striving to understand the Real and the True, other than which there is nothing real and true; and they are also striving to put this understanding into practice by bringing their souls into conformity with what they know. This quest was by necessity intensely personal and individual, given that no one can understand for you, and no one can practice for you.

On the theoretical side, realization means recognizing what we already know because God taught Adam all the names, and we are Adam. On the practical side, it means acting in conformity with the divine form in which we were created. The notion of the divine "form" (*ṣūra*), better known in English as the divine image, is implicit in the Koran, though its clearest formulation comes in a saying of the Prophet that echoes Genesis: "God created Adam in His own form." It is this form that bestows on human beings the potential to know and realize all the divine attributes, which are precisely "the divine character traits."

The purpose of the science of ethics, then, was to provide a theoretical framework for the realization and actualization of the form in which God created human beings. This is what al-Ghazālī and many others called "becoming characterized by the character traits of God." The philosophers carried out the same discussion, but they paid much less attention to the Koran. Nonetheless, Avicenna and others tell us that philosophers strive to achieve "similarity with God" (*al-tashabbuh bi'l-ilāh*), or, in a bolder formulation, "deiformity" (*taʾalluh*), a word coming from the same root as Allah.

4. HUMAN BEAUTY

The basic truth about beauty is that nothing is truly beautiful but the Necessary Being. One of the most salient characteristics of the Koran's depiction of God's activity in the universe is its constant reference to him by a variety of names. In four verses it says that these names of God are "the most beautiful names" (7:180, 17:110, 20:8, 59:24). When Adam was taught all the names, these included the most beautiful names of God. The Koran epitomizes the human situation with the verse, "We created man in the most beautiful stature, then We sent him down to the lowest of the low" (95:4). According to Ibn ʿArabī, when the Koran refers to God with first-person pronouns, it uses "I" to designate the absolute unity of the One and "We" to designate the plurality of the divine names. Hence, "We" in this verse can mean the divine reality inasmuch as it created human beings in the form of the most beautiful names.

There are many other Koranic references to the beauty that was instilled into creation generally and mankind specifically. For example, in several verses God is called "the Beautiful-doer" (*al-muḥsin*), and the Koran says, "He made beautiful everything that He created" (32:7). Addressing human beings, it says, "He formed you, and He made your forms beautiful" (40:64). The same word was used by philosophers to discuss Aristotelian hylomorphism—the idea that all things can be analyzed in terms of an obscure receptivity called "matter" and an intelligible activity called "form." Among God's Koranic names is the Form-giver (*al-muṣawwir*). This was understood to mean that nothing bestows forms on matter but God. Every form bestowed by the Form-giver is beautiful, but, in the human case, God bestowed on man the form of the totality of the most beautiful names, not the form of just one name or several names.

The verse about God's creation of man in the most beautiful stature goes on to say that God sent him down to the lowest of the low, which is the realm of generation and corruption known as the cosmos; or, it can be a reference to man's fall from the Garden. In either case, it means that the beautiful divine form was obscured. Adam forgot for a moment, and his children forget all the time. What they forget is *tawḥīd*, the fact that there is no reality but the Supreme Reality and that nothing else is beautiful. They imagine that the beautiful, the desirable, the lovable, is found in the realm of generation and corruption, where the forms are displayed in dust.

The philosophers called the human soul a "potential intellect" not least because it is the beautiful divine form that has not yet actualized itself. As lovers of wisdom, they were striving to transform their potential intellects into actual intellects or into wisdom itself. This meant not only the perfect understanding that belongs to the theoretical side of the intellect, but also the perfect and appropriate activity that belongs to its practical side. In short, the quest for

wisdom and perfection, whether undertaken by philosophers or Sufis, was a quest to become beautiful, or to actualize the most beautiful character traits that are innate to the human soul because it was created in the form of the Beautiful.

5. MUTUAL LOVE

The key Koranic verse about love is this: "He loves them, and they love Him" (5:54). Here we have God as lover of human beings, and human beings as the beloved of God. We also have human beings as lovers of God, and God as the beloved of human beings. If human beings can love God, this is because he created them in his own form, and he is the Lover. If God can love human beings, this is because he loves the form in which he created them, which is the form of the most beautiful names. In other words God loves his own beauty, other than which there is no true beauty, as reflected in the human form.

Everyone knows that the goal of lovers is union—what the early Sufis called "unification" (*ittiḥād*). Both God and human beings are lovers, and each loves the other. Both are striving for the same thing, which is to come together, and both do so as lovers of beauty. God's love for every possible manifestation of beauty drives him to create a beautiful universe displaying the properties and characteristics of the most beautiful names, including the all-comprehensive human form, which is both lover and beloved. God's goal is to share the love and the beauty, and he does so by making man a beautiful lover of beauty.

Love aims for union, so man, in his love for the beautiful and his desire to become one with it, must strive to overcome his forgetfulness. He has forgotten who he is—that is, beautiful and beloved—and what he loves—that is, the truly beautiful and the truly beloved. The only way to eliminate all forgetfulness and ugliness from himself is to become characterized by the true Beloved's most beautiful names. God cannot come down to our level—or rather, he has already come down to our level by creating us in his own form. It is now the human task to rise up to his level by acting beautifully and being beautiful. As the Koran puts it, "Do what is beautiful, as God has done what is beautiful to you" (28:77). In order to actualize their beauty, people must become unified with the Beautiful, and that can only happen if they eliminate from themselves the dominating properties of multiplicity and difference.

In philosophical terms, the human soul, as a potential intellect, is dispersed and inchoate by definition. The only way it can become integrated and achieve oneness is to actualize its potential by becoming an actual intellect. The philosophers called this actualization "conjunction" (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active Intellect. By achieving it, man becomes one with the object of his love. Avicenna explains that all things are in love with the Beautiful and

each is striving to achieve oneness with it, but those who reach the goal are only those who attain to the station of deiformity—being characterized by the divine character traits. Notice that his discussion recalls the hadith of the Hidden Treasure—God's love to be recognized, and his creation of the universe to bring about this recognition:

Each of the existent things loves the Absolute Good with an inborn love, and the Absolute Good discloses Itself to Its lovers. Their reception of Its self-disclosure [*tajallī*] and their conjunction with It, however, is disparate. The utmost limit of nearness to It is the true reception of Its self-disclosure, I mean, in the most perfect way possible. This is what the Sufis call "unification.". . .. The love of the Most Excellent for Its own excellence is the most excellent love, so Its true beloved is the reception of Its self-disclosure. This is the reality of Its reception by deiform souls, so it can be said that they are Its beloveds. To this refers what has been narrated in the reports that, when God's servant is such and such, "He loves Me, and I love him."[7]

6. THE MYTH OF THE FISH

By way of conclusion, let me quote a little story from one of Rūmī's prose works. It expresses in straightforward language the abstruse discussions of philosophers concerning love's power to bring about the union of lovers and their Beloved.

Like fish we say to the Ocean of Life, "Why did You strike us with waves and throw us up on the dry land of water and clay? You have so much mercy—how could You give us such torment? . . ."

The Ocean replies, "'I was a Hidden Treasure, so I loved to be recognized.' I was a treasure, hidden by the curtain of the Unseen, in the private cell of No-place. From behind the veils of existence I wanted My beauty and majesty to be known. I wanted it to be seen what sort of water of life and alchemy of happiness I am."

The fish say, "We are the fish in this ocean. We were in this Ocean of Life from the first. We knew its magnificence and gentleness. . .. From the first we recognized this Treasure, and in the end we will be its recognizers. At whom did You direct this long exile for the sake of 'I loved to be recognized.'"

The answer comes, "O fish! Although fish know the worth of water and love it, and although they cling to union with it, their love is not of the same description—with such burning and heat, with such self-abandonment, with such lamentation and weeping of blood, and with such roasting of the liver—as the love of that fish whom the waves throw up on dry land and who tosses for a long time on the hot earth and burning sand. . .. Separation from the ocean allows him no taste of life's sweetness—after all, he is separate from the Ocean of Life. How can someone who has seen that Ocean find joy in this life?" . . .

God says, "Just as I wanted to manifest My Treasure, so I wanted to manifest your ability to recognize that Treasure. Just as I wanted to display the purity and gentleness of this Ocean, so I wanted to display the high aspirations and the nurturing gentleness of the fish and creatures of the Ocean. Thus they may see their own faithfulness and show their own aspirations."[8]

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NOTES

[1] I have addressed some of the shortcomings of this all-too-common reading of Islamic history in *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

[2] For an overview of his approach to the major intellectual issues that were discussed by philosophers generally, see Chittick, "Ibn Arabi," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-arabi/

[3] *Risāla fi'l-ʿishq*, edited by Husayn al-siddīq and Rāwiyya Jāmūs (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2005), p. 54. Cf. Emil L. Fackenheim, "A Treatise on Love by Ibn Sina," *Medieval Studies* 7 (1945), pp. 208–228, specifically p. 214.

[4] *Fīhi mā fīhi*, edited by B. Furūzānfar (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1969), p. 64. See also A. J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rūmī* (London: John Murray, 1961), p. 75.

[5] This saying, in contrast to the saying, "God is beautiful," is not considered authentic by the specialists in hadith, a fact that did not prevent authors from quoting it. Ibn ʿArabī studied with many masters in the science of hadith, so it is not surprising that he acknowledges the weakness of its pedigree; nonetheless, he declares that the correctness of its ascription to the Prophet is affirmed by visionary knowledge. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 391, note 14.

[6] al-Kindī, *Fi'l-falsafat al-ūlā*. For the passage, see Alfred Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), p. 55.

[7] *Risāla fi'l-ʿishq*, pp. 82, 87–88; Fackenheim, pp. 225, 228.

[8] *Majālis-i sabʿa*, edited by Tawfīq Subḥānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Kayhān, 1379/2000), pp. 121–122; see also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 70–71.

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Thomas Coohill
Particia Trutty-Coohill
Herbet Coyne
Janie Coyne

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ON GENEROSITY EAST AND WEST: THE BEAUTY OF COMPARISON

Be happy with what God has given:
Be a seeker of God-given meaning.
Abu al-Fayz Fayzi[1]

Abstract: Generosity is an attribute of the divine in the Christian West and the Islamic East. This essay examines how the art of these two great traditions image divine generosity, both explicitly and phenomenologically. Both traditions derive from iconic and aniconic imagery in the classical world, e.g. Trajan's Column and the Ara Pacis. In the West the greatest example of generosity of the divine is shown in the sacrifice of Christ, an image that is implicit in Leonardo da Vinci's Burlington House Cartoon and even in the plans of the great cathedrals. In the East, the benevolence of Allah is proclaimed in the Qu'ran and in the aniconic decorations in sacred architecture. In this paper, the decorative programs Dome of the Rock and the mosques Isfahan—are "read" phenomenologically in relation to the Qu'ran as well as the texts of Mulla Sadra and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka.

When Professor Tymieniecka asked me to give an illustrated talk about Eastern and Western arts for the first meeting of her Center for the Promotion of Cross Cultural Understanding, images that came to mind involved generosity. No wonder, for this is the motive of her organizations and of her efforts at bringing scholars from many cultures into community in the World Phenomenology Institute. No wonder that now she has founded an organization devoted to an understanding and communication that bring harmony between our two worlds.

While attempts in politics and in philosophy have been made to bridge the divide between the East and West, in the end it may be more efficient to set up a dialogue between and among the arts of the two cultures. Tymieniecka has regularly argued that the inspiration for art operates in advance of conceptual thought. Al-Farabi extends the argument, linking the imagination to action:

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 17–31.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_2,

For the actions of a human being frequently follow his imagination, more than they follow his opinion and his knowledge, because often his opinion or his knowledge are contrary to his imagination, whereas his doing of something is proportional to his imagining of it, and not to his knowledge or his opinion about it.[2]

What is more, Ibn Sina emphasizes that the poet's concern with the imagination requires that his work be judged on its own terms and not on the level of intellectual judgments,[3] or in our case, prejudices we might have for our own modalities. Poetic and imaginative discourse has the advantage of being ethically neutral; it merely seeks to "provoke wonder through the beauty of the comparison."[4]

Generosity must also be the virtue practiced in the work of the participants, for only through generosity of spirit can one be open to the ideas of others and only through the spirit of beneficence can we reveal our thoughts and systems to the searching eye. Thankfully, the generous design of creation encourages comparisons to reveal correspondences and harmonies. God seems to have allowed and even encouraged variety in creation, so rather than forcing one another to "sing in unison," perhaps we should seek the harmonies of brotherhood which depend not only on shared blood, but on our generous tolerance and celebration of the uniqueness of each other.

Mulla Sadra expected the sage to possess generosity and good humor,[5] which I also beg of you, for sometimes my reaches are beyond my grasp. With these thoughts in mind, let us perform a Mulla Sadran "existential investigation" within an approximate historical framework to find the pulse of generosity revealed in works of art of the East and of the Occident. While the works I have chosen are not necessarily entitled "generosity," I hope that meaning will unfold as we examine them. Furthermore, this study will not provide lists of comparable iconography because, as Mulla Sadra wrote, philosophy requires analysis as well as demonstration. The mere rehearsal of ideas [or images], adhering to past authority and conjecture do not constitute philosophical reasoning. Rather let us turn to pictures that allow us to analyze them in terms of generosity, that reveal just what are the fecundities of art—and of the artist.

1. GENEROSITY DEPICTED IN TRAJAN'S COLUMN

Let us turn then to imagery that is the basis for the traditions in the Christian and Islamic worlds, Roman art where images of the personification of generosity, *liberalitas*, abound especially as a topos for Roman emperors.[6] Pliny attributes this praiseworthy virtue to Trajan 14 times in the *Panegyricus*, see especially Pan. 25.3 and 27:3–4.[7]

A column erected in 106–113 C.E to celebrate Trajan's defeat of the Dacians depicts not only instances of imperial *liberalitas* but its qualities (Fig. 1). For example: a scene of the seated Trajan rewarding his troops, one receiving and another carrying off his reward in a sack over his shoulder implies, in its cinematographic technique, an unending succession of generous acts.[8,9]

Imperial generosity is shown in Scene 29 in which Trajan directs the embarkation of the Dacian women and children so they can be saved from the ensuing battles (Fig. 2). Sarah Curry has shown another virtue prized by the Romans is evident here. When one Dacian mother desperately proffers her child to the emperor, begging for mercy, one would expect Trajan to be moved. However, he pays no heed, indeed, his gesture of direction doubles as a dismissive "back of the hand."[10] The Romans would have read the mother's wheedling attempt obtain mercy through emotional blackmail as a demonstration of the moral weakness of the Dacians. The free children of Rome would not have been offered as chattel. They would be treated as potential members of society, as they were shown in the processions of the Ara Pacis of Augustus erected a century earlier.[11]

These literal examples demonstrate generosity in historical acts. Let us look at the Column of Trajan again, but this time phenomenologically; let us consider our experience of it as a whole. Such a discursus will take us through to one of major points I will make: That the work of art should not be divorced from its context; that it is an expression of the deepest of the whole of its context. Only by understanding this can we fully appreciate what the work of art can do.

First, there is the great size of Trajan's Column: Originally topped by a 20-foot statue of Trajan himself, the 96-foot tall column—the height of the hill that was removed to make the Trajan's Forum complex—made of twenty-nine pieces of white marble weighing a total of 1,100 tons. Second, there is the two-to-four-foot high band of narrative reliefs that winds around the column to a length of 600 feet. It has more than 2,000 figures; some would have been embellished with bronze (real weapons). Curiously, very little of this narrative could be read from the observer. What can be seen tells an accurate story, full of detail, so one is led to assume (correctly) that the whole is carried out as carefully.

As impressive as the size and the narrative are, originally there were other experiences of the Column, for it was not designed just an object to be read but to be a means of realization, even revelation. One approached it from Trajan's spacious forum, passing through a triumphal arch into a basilica that spread out over a broad lateral roofed enclosure. Through the "back door" one entered into a rather small courtyard framed by twin libraries. The reduction in the scale of the environment makes the Column's four-meter diameter more impressive and

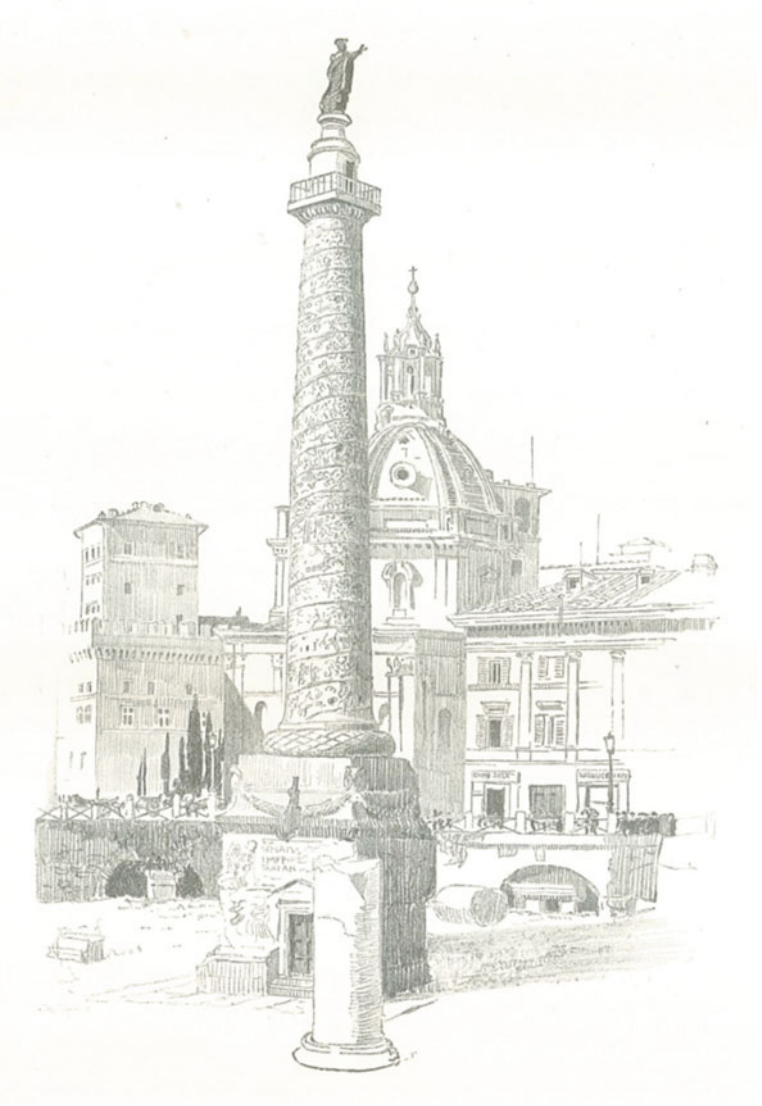

Fig. 1 Trajan's Column, Rome, 106–113 C.E. From Fred Richards, *A Sketch Book,* Rome, Project Gutenberg eBook, 2006

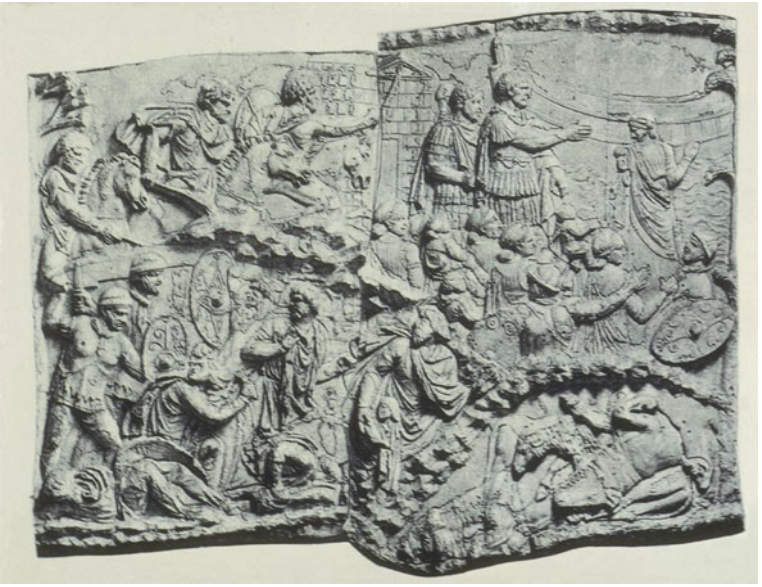

Fig. 2 Column of Trajan, Rome. Detail, section 29. Trajan sends Dacian Women Away from Battle. Cast, "Museo della Civiltà Romana"

overwhelming. It focuses our attention on the significance of the column and the surprise of the doorway in the base (covered with reliefs of heaping spoils of war). Originally, although not today, we would have climbed an interior spiral stairway to a viewing platform. According to McMaster's Trajan Project:

> Even to a modern visitor, accustomed to office towers and glass elevators, the experience of climbing the column's stairs and viewing Rome from 120 feet in the air is quite impressive; for the ancient Roman, living before the age of the skyscraper and also at a time when the Forum of Trajan was intact, the effect would doubtless have been even greater. The staircase itself is carved and finished so precisely that one could think it a modern addition. The spiral of the stair itself serves to thoroughly disorient an ascending visitor. The windows, one every quarter turn, were the only source of light and are placed at such a height that it is impossible to see anything but sky. The whole experience of climbing the column, then, involves a long, twisting ascent, punctuated by bright rectangles of light and culminating finally in a sudden "epiphany" as the climber emerges into the bright light of day on the viewing platform.[12]

From the viewing platform one could look at, could gain an experience of the plan, would appreciate the constructions of the marvels of Rome. So important is this aspect that the McMaster Trajan Project argues that "the ascent and resulting view may have been thought of by the column's designers as a more important device for experiencing the column than the carvings themselves."[13]

Such an experience accomplishes what Mulla Sadra called a "modulation of existence." The more we experience of the column's existence, the more enriched are we, the more intense is our existence. This is the way of the creative activity. It intensifies not only our understanding, but our very life, cf. Hafiz' "Good poetry makes the universe reveal its . . . secret."

2. THE ARA PACIS: A HARMONY OF ICONIC AND ANICONIC IMAGERY

Let us now address the forty-second name of Allah, the Generous and the Bountiful. Let us look at one work in which both iconic and aniconics images of generosity and bounty are paralleled: Augustus' Altar of Peace, Ara Pacis, dedicated in the year 9 BCE. It was erected to celebrate the peace and therefore prosperity that Augustus Caesar established after he had defeated his many enemies. In the upper register of the long sides of the altar, Roman Senators and the family of Augustus, including the children, all piously process toward the front of the structure toward the sacrificial altar on the interior. The dado is covered with acanthus vines and flowers. This two-part imagery wraps the whole structure, an iconic level at the top, aniconic at the bottom. One might think of them as Isaac and Ishmael, the sons of Abraham, each distinct individuals, each operating according to their personal modes, although they start at the same point.

The carvings at the east end of the Ara Pacis are a case in point (Fig. 3). The dado continues the vining acanthus motif, while in the panel above, a monumental female hold two children. She is accompanied by other personifications and, wildlife and vegetation. Identified as the Tellus (Earth), Peace, Ceres the goddess of grain, and even Livia, Augustus' wife, the type will also be used for Caritas. This figure, whatever name she is given, personifies the value of virtue, to which even nature responds. The beautiful woman is hearty enough to suckle two children; even the winds, here fair breezes, blow over air (she rides a bird) and the sea (on a sea creature), and the land and sea have been bounteous. She is the image of fecundity; her generosity makes the earth bounteous.

3. IMAGES OF DIVINE GENEROSITY IN THE WEST

The image of the Tellus Relief has a long life; it is echoed in the numerous Christian paintings of Mary, Christ and John the Baptist, e.g. Leonardo da Vinci's *Burlington House Cartoon*. Here Leonardo presents the Mary, sitting

Fig. 3 Ara Pacis Augustae, 9 BCE, Rome. Dado covered in rinceau that express the fecundity of the land caused by the peace Augustus brought. In the *upper* figural frieze, *left,* is the imperial procession; at the *right,* the Tellus Relief. Author's photograph

against her mother Anne's lap, with the child in her arms. It is a lovely drawing, full of life in many ways, especially the way Leonardo has invited us in and even allowed us to finish the gesture of St. Anne. Indeed it is that gesture that tells the story, for this is more than an intimate family scene. Herein lies the heart of the Christian tradition, for Mary, earthly mother of Jesus, allows him to reach out and even bless his mission (as symbolized by John). The story lies at the heart of the Christian tradition, its sacred narrative continuing to the brutal death of Christ on the Cross. St. Anne indicates with her gesture that Christ's mission is a transcendent one and its bounty, to save humans from the effect of original sin through His suffering and death, is an act of divine generosity. As a sign the crucifixion allows transcendent divine generosity an immanent, a substantial place in human lives. It is, as it were, an idea that must be seen and lived to be believed.

Images of the crucified Christ are so ubiquitous in the Christian world that even the "body" of most churches is cross-shaped. A phenomenological reading of walking into such a church can show the power of the icon. In the Middles Ages, one entered the church after undergoing a Last Judgment depicted in the tympanum above the doorway. The believer enters/accepts the cross and, moving from the darkness of the narthex (or the confusion of

daily life if the Last Judgment is exterior) discovers in that cross-shaped edifice a transformation from suffering to solace. The walls emit a light from the transcendent sphere transformed by colored glass, transmitted and made immanent in the very space of his cross. Phenomenologically the faith-full one has travelled right into the generosity of God made sensible by art.

4. IKRÂM: ANICONIC IMAGES OF GENEROSITY IN THE EAST

In the Christian Incarnation, the divine places itself directly into and partakes of the life of the world, like Trajan's *liberalitas* passed directly from his hands to his soldiers or to Roman children. While the narrative of the Christian image is simply told and easily assimilated (at least for westerners), the visualization of "Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful" that begins all the suras of the Qur'an but one,[14] would have to be told in an aniconic art of pure symmetry. This seemingly simple principle—as it is on the Ara Pacis—is developed in the Islamic world to an extraordinary level of intensity. I argue here that sheathings of multiform geometric patterns and/or vegetal arabesques, as ubiquitous as the crucifix was in medieval Christian world, often embody a vision of the beneficence of Allah. Rinceaus, developing into arabesques, flow over surfaces often combining with geometric patterns and calligraphic inscriptions. Their style depends on the culture for which they are produced, but the policy of covering surfaces with, often breathtaking, pattern is shared in Medieval Islamic worlds.

This similarity caused nineteenth and twentieth century Islamists to maintain that such patterns are expression of the essential doctrine *tawḥīd*, the oneness of God. This is the basis of the lesson plans in Islamic pattern generation developed by New York's Metropolitan Museum Education program.[15] Its great advantage is that it allows a Western audience with limited mathematics to enter into the brilliant, varied, expansive pattern work of the Muslim designer. And it demonstrates geometrically how multiplicity can come from unity. Indeed, this is the way I learned to appreciate the beauties of tessellation.

I am aware of recent objections to arching, unhistorical analyses of Islamic art, so well argued by Gurlu Necipoğlu and D. Fairchild Ruggles. My generalizations about theme are a means of demonstrating how Christian and Islamic visions might be compared in very broad strokes, at a most primal level. The value of the broad stroke is its power to break down sclerotic prejudices. As my colleague, Scott Foster, said in a demonstration of gesture drawing in which he was teaching the student to look for the structure of the figure rather than its details: you need to put in eighty percent of your energy into the general ideas because so much energy (the life of the insight) is lost in the later refinements.

And so it is that, in the last pages of her argument for a more sophisticated and historical understanding of the medieval Islamic *girih* (Persian: knot) mode of geometric decorative schemes, Necipoğlu must conclude that this "abstract sign system—both linked to roots in a commonly shared Islamic past and at the same time deviated from them through distinctive transformations—that assured their rich communicative potential. These polyvalent visual signs embodied both an overall familial resemblance and a studied individuality."[16] My goal is to show commonalities of sense between Christian and Islamic art, despite their differences in mode of expression.

So let us turn to three examples of rinceau-arabesques applied to major Islamic sites, the late seventh-century interior frieze of rinceau fulminating from vases on the interior of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and the interior and exterior patterned arabesques that cover the interior and exterior of two domed mosques in the Imam Square of Isfahan, built a thousand years later, in the seventeenth century.

The oldest building in the Islamic world is covered with mosaics from different periods, and inscriptions from various parts of the Qur'an.[17] The mosaics on the interior drum of the Dome of the Rock depict vases filled with vigorously overflowing vines, like generosity that cannot be contained (Fig. 4). This overflow is not chaotic but forms itself into harmonious symmetrical arabesques.[18] These mosaics were laid when Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan built the shrine in the seventh century. Nine hundred years later, in the sixteenth century, Suleiman the Magnificent added a band of inscriptions above them from the Qur'an's Yasin sura (36). While the sura is replete with advice to "a people whose fathers have not been warned," [Christians?],[19] let us not forget that these castigations are threaded throughout with praises of the "Beneficent God" (lines 15, 23, 33–36, and 52). Indeed, like nearly every sura in the Qur'an, the Yasin sura is dedicated to name of "Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful." Passage 36.33–36 reiterates the theme of the Ara Pacis: the Beneficent Ruler causes life to spring from the earth.

36.33: And a sign to them (those who do not listen) is the dead earth: We give life to it and bring forth from it grain so they eat of it.

36.34: And We make therein gardens of palms and grapevines and We make springs to flow forth in it,

36.35: That they may eat of the fruit thereof, and their hands did not make it; will they not then be grateful?

36.36: Glory be to Him Who created pairs of all things, of what the earth grows, and of their kind and of what they do not know.

And as if to illuminate the meaning of the vigor and size of the vines on the mosaic frieze in the Dome of the Rock, line 36.77 asks: "Does not man see

Fig. 4 Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, Mosaics of Dome and Drum. Note rinceau surge from and overflow in distinct symmetries

that We have created him from the small seed?" The sura culminates in a list of Allah's creation, and ends, as it were, prostrate in *sudjah* in the recognition of "Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things" (36:83).[20]

So with the implied meaning of the rinceau-arabesques of the oldest Islamic building in hand, we can now turn to Isfahan, the city that Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman tell us has the best geometric ornament in Iran.[21] Let us examine phenomenologically the arabesques of two mosques on the Naghsh-e Jahan Square, the Great Mosque (begun 1612) and that of Sheik Lotf Allah (1617)[22] built within two decades of Mulla Sadra's residence there.

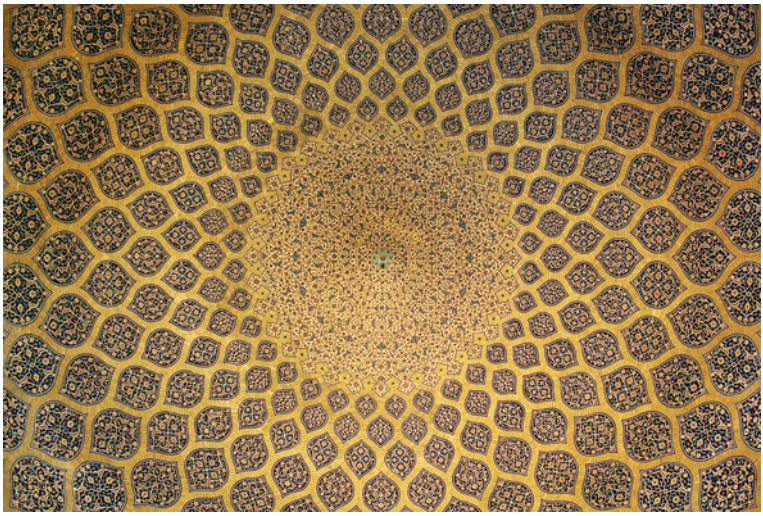

Fig. 5 Isfahan, Sheikh Loft Allah Mosque, interior of the Dome. Photo: Phillip Maiwald, Wikimedia Commons

The interior mosaics in the dome of Dome of the Rock are refined in the great dome of the Sheikh Loft Allah Mosque (Fig. 5). In the Dome of the Rock, the design is additive: half of the visual diameter is composed of concentric interlaces finished by a band of inscription; in the outer area three rings of ogival lozenges radiate outward toward a band of inscriptions in a ring above the ring of openings at the base of the dome.

The dome of the Sheikh Loft Allah Mosque simplifies the layers, limiting the designs to two parts, the inner interlace and the four rings of ogives with blue backgrounds overlaid with foliate arabesques that rest on the openings at the base of the dome. The colors here could tell the story of Neoplatonic emanation: those areas of complex interlacements closest to the center are full of gold, a gold that penetrates into the predominant blue patterns that expand as the dome widens. The ogival shapes at the base of the dome have three to four times the diameter of those at the top; their golden outlines remain the same width. The God's gold holds all in place.

From that center flow down all variety of wonders: the zig-zag of the band of spandrels that make the transition from the circle to the ogival arches punctuated by turquoise twisted responds that alternately frame wall and corner niches. The solution to regularizing the square base and the dome brings to mind Sura 55.9: "keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient."

Fig. 6 Isfahan, Great Mosque, Muquarnas of the entrance iwan. Wikipedia Commons

The revetments on the north iwan of Isfahan's Shah Mosque (Fig. 6) are set so that one patterns answers another, as if responding to a call for "more," as if finding a more perfect symmetry from the addition, as if to ask, with the Sura of Beneficence (55) "Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?" The question is repeated 25 times. Its answer becomes a list of Allah's bounty: man, the heavens, the earth and its bounties, the seas and its bounties, fire storms, punishment of sinners, two fountains of good things "man has never touched before." These blessing rain down, like the wondrous muqarnas of the entrance iwan. So overwhelming is the repetition that it calls for an affirmation of belief: "Blessed be the name of your Lord, the Lord of Glory and Honor."

If we look at examples of patterns in domes, one can even see visualizations of philosophies adapted to the faith, for example, the patterns on the interior surface of the main dome of the Imam Mosque in Isfahan[23] (Fig. 7) change and expand. The blue of the predominant pattern is not found in the center; it does not explicitly develop from the center. The relationship of the center to the whole is not from linear extension, but implicit sensual, relationships. The subtle optical effect of the concentric circles (obvious in the Dome of the Rock) and quiet vibrations of the golden yellow of the center against the blue pattern fading with its distance from its heart, these have the shimmering, effect of the Mulla Sadra's litotes that echo the "Pure One." As the patterns on the dome

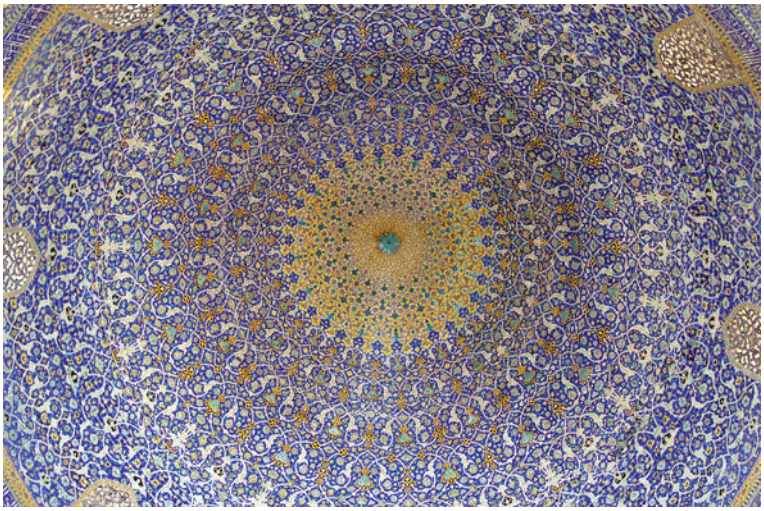

Fig. 7 Isfahan, Imam Mosque, interior of the Dome. Photo: ©Brian James McMorrow

lessen in intensity as they approach reach a grounding on the drum from which the pattern will disperse, so the prose relaxes to the release "being flowed from it":

> The Pure One is the cause of all things and not of all things. Rather it is the beginning of everything and not all things. All things are in it and not in it. All things flow from it and subsist and are sustained by it and return to it. So if someone says: how is it possible that things are from a simple one that has no duality or multiplicity in it in any sense? I say: because a pure simple one has nothing in it, but because it is a pure one, all things flow from it. Thus when there was no existence (*huwiyya*), being flowed from it.[24]

5. CONCLUSION

We have demonstrated and analyzed images of generosity—only a few—from the west and from the east. Here in the extraordinarily beautiful and true mosque Shah Abbas built for his son-in-law while Mulla Sadra resided in Isfahan, let us read a passage from what has become a book of revelations for me, Professor Tymieniecka's *Logos and Life*, on the Creative Experience. Life is generous, sometimes to a fault, but that generosity should not be thought of as *exceeding* limits. It does not overflow itself because life is not about containing, it's about developing. Its knots are points from which life grows, exceeding limits that are merely known. Its bounty bridges past and future.

The essential task of the intellect consists in expanding life to its greatest reach. And when we in retrospect follow the evolution of forms taken by the progress of life, we will be struck by its constant effort at making the ordering links in forms, relations, principles ever more complex but also more concisely and clearly articulated. There is an ever-greater expansiveness of individual forms within their circumambient realm of existence, their world. . . . We move to a consistently synchronized complex of elements with a focus upon the objective individual structure which gives it all an objective unity. . . .the intellect moves up a ladder to a translucent understanding of the world.[25]

Because creation is bountiful and generous.

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NOTES

[1] Abu al Fayz Fayzi (d. 1595–1596), Akbar's poet laureate, translation Gülru Necipoğlu, 131, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture,* Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995, quoted on p. 218.

[2] Al-Farabi, *Ihsa' al-'ulum* [*The Book of the Enumeration of the Sciences*]: 85 as cited in Valérie Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture,* London; New York : I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London; New York: Distributed in the U.S. by St. Martin's Press, c. 2001.

[3] As cited in www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/H020.htm. Accessed 16 August 2009.

[4] As cited in al-Isharat wa-'l-tanbihat: 80-1, www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/H020.htm

[5] Al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a [The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect], gen. ed. S. H. Khaminihi, 9 vols. 2001–5, VI:6, as cited by Sajjad Rizvi in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://plato.standord.edu, consulted 11/2/2009. This is Mulla Sadra's summa with the glosses of his 19th commentator Sabzavari.

[6] Although the practice of *liberalitas* was not as well accepted in the last generation of the Roman republic, but was rehabilitated during the reign of Augustus and, by the end of the first century A.D., *liberalita*s was accepted by the members of the governing class in Rome. See C. E. Manning, "*Liberalitas*—The Decline and Rehabilitation of a Virtue," *Greece and Rome* 32/1 (April 1985), 73–83. Carlos F. Norcua points out that in classical world, although magnanimity and generosity are the most common royal virtues in intellectual treatises and on official inscriptions, for Latin authors, benevolence "was best understood through its concrete manifestions" ("The Ethics of Autocracy in the Roman World," *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought,* ed. Ryan K. Balot, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, 275).

[7] Ibid., 74.

[8] Trajan's second and third distribution of money after each Dacian War amounted to 650 denarii per person; his earlier *congarium* and that of Tiberius was about 75 denarii per person. Nero had handed out 400 (Wikipedia, "Congiarium," based on John Bagnell Bury, *The Student's Roman Empire*, New York: Harper, 1893, 436. Consulted 11 April 2010).

[9] Legend has it that this scene saved the column from destruction. Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) was so moved by the image that he saved the column from the general anti-pagan destruction of the city. See also Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* IV: CXLI: "He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes/Were with his heart, and that was far away;/He reck'd not of the life

he lost nor prize,/But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,/There where his young barbarians all at play,/There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,/Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday."

[10] Spiral 5, Panel A. See Sarah Curry, "The Empire of Adults: the Representation of Children on Trajan's Arch at Beneventum," 160, in *Art and Text in Roman Culture*, ed. Jas' Elsner, Cambridge Studies in New Art History, Cambridge 1996, 153–181.

[11] See Curry, op. cit. According to Pliny the younger in the *Panegyricus* for Trajan, *liberi* [free children] do not beg, but stand upright as future citizens. Trajan's *alimenta*, illustrated on Trajan's Arch at Beneventum protected all Roman or Romanized children who were provided education and nourishment as they should be in a well-governed state.

[12] The McMaster Trajan Project: http://www.stoa.org/trajan/introductory_essay.html#experience, consulted 2/25/10. Penelope J. E. Davies described the kinetic design at length and notes this is the first specifically designed viewing station ("The Politics of Perpetuation: Trajan's Column and the Art of Commemoration," *American Journal of Archaeology* 101/1 [January 1997], 4–65, esp. 61.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Only Sura 9, "The Immunity," does not begin with the dedication of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

[15] The simplest way to introduce the power of pattern in the Islamic world is: http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/publications/pdfs/islamic_geometric/islamic_art_and_geometric_design.pdf.

[16] Necipoğlu, 222–223. Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetic: An Introduction*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004, 4–44, "Eleven Common Mistakes About Islamic Art" argues that Islamic art should be judged on aesthetic, not religious or social terms.

[17] The Al-Israh surah of Mohammed's Night Journey (surah 16) is inscribed above it. According to Shlomo Dov Goitein, the many of the inscriptions are both polemic against the Christians and yet a sense of mission to them (the sura Maryam, 19, 35–37; "The Historical Background of the Erection of the Dome of the Rock," *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 70/2, 1950, as cited in Wikipedia, Dome of the Rock, consulted 4 April 2010).

[18] Image available at http://www.jupiterimages.com/Image/royaltyFree/87464152, consulted 6/3/10.

[19] For the inscriptions see Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art,* New Haven: Yale, 1973.

[20] Translation, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia. I am grateful to the internet which in its organization provides generous support to things it never thought of.

[21] Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, ed., *A Survey of Persian At from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, 6 vols., London: Oxford University Press, 1938–39, as cited in Necipoğlu, 92.

[22] The vegetal arabesques derive from the Timurid-Turkmen tradition adopted by the Safavids. See Necipoğlu, 218.

[23] Brian James McMorrow's photographs can be found at http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/isfahan. Georg Gerster's aerial view of the Shah Mosque complex shows the pattern on the exterior: See Gerster and Maryam Sachs, *Paradise Lost: Persia from Above*, London: Phaidon, 2008.

[24] *Al-Hikma al-m, uta`aliya fi-l-asfar al-`aqliyya al-arba`a [The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect]*, gen. ed. S. H. Khaminihi, 9 vols., 2001–05, VII: 351, as cited by Sajjad Rizvi, op. cit. Is it possible to think of the shimmer of the patterns as a kind of trans-substantial motion, a visualization the process of Origin and Return of the *al-Mahbda `wa'l-ma`ad*?

[25] Anna Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life: Creative Experience and the Critique of Reason, Analecta Husserliana* XXIV, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988, 425.

JACK STEELE

THE OCCIDENTAL EPIC AS COMPARED TO THE ISLAMIC EPIC

Abstract: In the oral tradition the epic has lived through generations of both Occidental and Islamic literature. The epic in Occidental culture is the hero in *The Odyssey* by Homer and is the sublime in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton. The Islamic epic, the *qasida* (hymns to Muhammad), is poetry recited or sung celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's nativity; both the feast and the recital called *maulidi*. It is the most prestigious poetical creation through Arab history. It is deemed the ultimate work in artistic achievement, similar to the epic in Occidental literary tradition. These two creative entities define and scope culture and values as they exist in poetic sublimity. Their traditions carry prestige in arts and literature helping to define and enrich poetic expression.

To begin a discussion of the Occidental sublime one must closely examine the Occidental mind and its Judeo-Christian influences. Two works capable of achieving such an analysis are *Paradise Lost* by John Milton and *The Odyssey* by Homer. Although in contemporary society *The Odyssey* is more popular, *Paradise Lost* is closer to the sublime.

Achieving sublimity is possible through divine reference. The epitome of evil, Satan, is well illustrated in the first few books of *Paradise Lost*. Milton focuses on fire, in many forms, to develop toward the end of evil. The waves of flame engulfing hell[1] as he articulates the realm of eternity created for the Archangel lap into the readers mind. Satan is surrounded by all of deceit, which will contribute to original sin that man has won in disobeying God.

Original sin reoccurs in Occidental literature and in the mind of the Occidental. His original trespass is never lost, never forgotten, never ignored. Further is the contribution of woman to the original sin.[2] Her weakness exhibited through Adam's folly is not inconsequential. All the evil of eternity, carefully bestowed on man by the serpent, leads to his loss of such sublime perfection as the paradise he inherited from God.

Again, the woman is essential. When Odysseus, the hero, is in Hades' domain, the Greek afterworld, Agemmemnon, his equal, also a king, shares the deceit of his wife murdering him. He further explains the curse she brought

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 33–37.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_3,

on herself and all women to follow her "...that artist of corruption heaped shame upon herself and on all women in time to come..."[3] reiterating the curse woman brought on herself by persuading Adam to eat the forbidden fruit in Eden. Original sin is so central to Occidental culture that it is a genesis to much of Occidental religious practice, another dominant influence on Judeo-Christian culture in the Occidental.

The question then is created: How is original sin capable of the sublime? An analysis of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* reveals the sublime as the nature of paradise man once enjoyed. The divine paradise Eden, what most of Occidental culture considers the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, is what is sublime. Further, the paradise Satan lost, the heavens where God is written to domain, is also sublime. The Jews have long considered the area near the supposed Eden, Palestine, to be their homeland. Americans, following the Second World War, sympathized with the Jews and have provided military support to permit the Jews their homeland despite Arab opposition. Islam hasn't any political designation. Nevertheless, political disaster has resulted in Western negligence of the Islamic faith. Will terrorism and war smearing the Islamic faith or asserting its political place allow for such sympathy to give it a homeland? Only time will tell, yet the sublime expression possible through Islamic art may allow some of paradise to its people.

The sympathy the Western culture has given the Jews is present as early as *The Odyssey*. The gods, deities as described by Homer, were often sympathetic with the hero. It is prominent as nature takes a fortunate turn for the hero. Everyone, even the most common of readers or listeners of the epic, can understand this type of sympathetic existence. It is only required to believe that there is something greater than man at play, yet the Greeks portrayed it as the divine influence of the gods. Odysseus, man of many wiles, may have been great, but there was no misunderstanding that only the gods determined his fate, despite all of his heroic effort, he was less than the gods.

The epic is an oral tradition which through the innovation of the printing press became literary. Today we read *The Odyssey* by Homer and *Paradise Lost* by John Milton. John Milton was blind nevertheless he composed the sublime imagery of *Paradise Lost* which readers are capable of enjoying in the Occidental. The graphic imagery of Satan and the sublime heavens he so carefully paints in the minds of the readers is all intellectual imagery that exists for the Judeo-Christian Occidental. The Islam has Mauritania. The Occidental may not know how to interpret the effect of the listener of Mauritania, but it approaches the same sublime of paradise we read from John Milton. It captivates the Occidental mind and allows it into the sandy dreams of paradise, the sublime possibilities of God we all share.

The possibilities of expression to the human mind become relevant while considering the Islamic epic. The *qasida* is often put to music, expressed through such purity of form. It is also used in the introduction of theatrical plays molded by European example,[4] a further artistic expression. Despite proximity of the Occidental epic to theatrical plays, being posed as verse recited by a poet, it is not applied in such a way. It is maintained through the discipline of literature, written text, as shared by the articulate means of the author, not through other artistic forms such as music or theatrical plays.

The epic as a literary form in Occidental culture has transcended verse. James Joyce, an Irish intellect, authored *Ulysses*, a work in constant allusion to *The Odyssey* by Homer. Through such means it is capable of representing such physical states as the "diaphane"[5] and such illusive nature as "dancing coins."[6] This example illustrates the literary tool the epic can be in the Occidental. It is so powerful in *Ulysses* that it gained political notoriety in society and was federally banned in the United States.[7] It is powerful enough to incite love in the reader.

The *qasida* may have such influence on the Islamic listener. It may be that the epic is such a powerful social tool that it can have as tremendous an influence as *Ulysses* has on readers by the virtues of tonal expression and divine reference. Although the experimental methods of James Joyce are not godless, they don't use the divine references that John Milton instituted in *Paradise Lost*. Rather, allusions to an epic that has shaped literary culture for centuries, along with several other techniques concerning consciousness, have such severe consequence. One would expect the *qasida* is of similar utility in Islamic society. Listening to a *qasida*, watching the people chant and sing in unison[8] should bring them to such emotive states as *Ulysses* is capable of doing in post-modern Occidental society.

The differences between the two epics, Islamic and Occidental, reflect the differences in faith. Islam is definitively the submission to God. While performing its epic, music is commonly used. Perhaps the accompaniment of music to the verse composed in the Islamic epic is a further submission to God. It allows the formality of verse to have an exhibited rhythm and tone. It gives it more purity of artistic form causing the sublime to exist in the minds of the listeners. The Occidental epic, conversely, is maintained in the unaccompanied form of written text. It's developed beyond the oral tradition and merely historically posed as verse that was once shared orally. It is really the reference to deity, the illusions of divinity, which bring the Occidental minds to such heights.

The verse used in both epics is intermittent and in no way the stoic rigidity of formal poetry. The *qasida* is limited by the parameters of tradition. An opinion concerning the performance of a *qasida* follows, "We do not deny Umm Kulthum the strength of her voice and the unique resonance of its intonations,

but in this I have come to consider her to be only a tradition-bound imitator."[9] The converse opinion asserts how tradition may be a possible barrier to the sublime concerning the *qasida*.

Understanding the differences in the two epics creates a question of values. Islam attempts to create a communal worship through its epic, one more directed in the name of God, through the minds of its listeners and performers. The Occidental is more pensive, composed in verse, but recorded in text to be read by a solitary reader, no longer the group of listeners in the audience of a poet. The communal values of Islam, a people, unified by their faith, are celebrated in the *qasida*. The Occidental epic sustains the oral tradition in *The Odyssey*, written as a composition of verse shared by a poet, although *Paradise Lost* is clearly an epic poem to be read, not recited. The poet may perform the epic in Occidental culture, although it is not commonly practiced as in Islam.

The values of the Occidental are more extensively displayed through the treatment of beasts. In Book X of *Paradise Lost* the beasts, "Devour'd each other; nor stood in awe of man, but fled him. . ."[10] It is developed in such a way that the power of God is lived through man and assumes a natural emanating that Milton pervades through the beasts of the earth. They "Glared at him passing. . ."[11] being only beasts they scorn the presence of God. They can not submit to him. Milton did not believe in the soul, apart from the human body. The beast itself needed to be animated, if not by music, then by allusive reference to deity.

It seems as though the values of the two very different parts of the world meet in the epic. The communal *qasida*, the solitary reader of *Paradise Lost*, and the friendly traveler listening to *The Odyssey* are all epic. They are two very distinct cultures with two very contrasting ideas of what is epic, yet what they have in common is the belief of something greater and the attempt to bring their minds to it.

NOTES

1 John Milton, *Paradise Lost* ". . .as the lake with liquid fire. . .", Book I, p. 15; W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

2 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book X, p. 233; W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

3 Allen Mandelbaum, *The Odyssey by Homer*, Book XI, p. 227.

4 Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, p. 45.

5 James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 37.

6 James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 36.

7 John M. Woolsey, *Ulysses*, pp. ix–xiv.

[8] Umar Bin Abdullah, As-Seggat – Mawlid *Qasidah*.
[9] Viginia Danielson, *The Voice Egypt Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, p. 53.
[10] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book X, p. 249; W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
[11] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book X, p. 249; W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

DETLEV QUINTERN

CROSSING THE SPATIOTEMPORAL DIMENSION OF HUMAN CULTURE: MORAL SENSE OF JUSTICE IN THE FABLE OF THE RINGDOVE

Abstract: The fable of the ringdove, written by Ibn al-Muqaffa`in the mid of the eighth century, traces back to oldest traditions of conveyance of ethical and moral values, which had been already documented in Old Egypt before spreading all over the world. In Islamic miniatures the ethical values correspond in their written form with the paintings. The visualization is didactic and child-oriented in order to enhance ethical behaviour. Philosophically the fable is based on poetic justice which is fundamental in Islamic ethics. Here, Islamic ethics go along with the understanding of moral sense that, following Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, lies at the core of the metamorphosis of the life into the human condition. On this background the interplay of Islamic poetic justice and moral sense as a key in the understanding of the Logos of Life is particularly suitable for the enhancement of cross-cultural dialogue.

There hadn't been any historic times in which human communities exchanged only commodities and things inside and between the continents. Encounters of people went hand in hand with cross-cultural understanding, enriched by an interchange of immaterial values, ideas and knowledge. Animal fables testimony impressively the message of poetic justice throughout the spatiotemporal dimensions of human culture. When revealed in a specific historic-cultural milieu, they come down to us in oral, visual and/or literal tradition. As a carrier of moral and ethical values, fables had been wandering for Millenniums throughout the globe.

The manufacturing of paper in Bagdad in the mid of the eighth century not only developed itself along with the innovation of the mass production of books but as well with the flourishing of miniature painting, which reached its peak in the thirteenth/fourteenth century. From this time one miniature-decorated scientific books and literature—older ones are mostly lost—came down to us as manuscripts, like the famous collection of fables *Kalīla wa Dimna*. These fables had as well been decorated with miniatures, in order to harmonize the dimension of seeing with that of understanding. One of the oldest known

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manuscripts of *Kalīla wa Dimna* is today preserved in the state library of Munich (Cod.arab.616).[1]

Today the progressing replacement of narrative traditions by virtual worlds is obvious. The illusionary world of digital images replaces not only the narrated and written word but at the same time the human capacity of contemplation. The aura of words, writings and arts is more and more marginalized by virtuality, which has consequences that are not yet concretly foreseeable, especially for children. While playing computer games, children learn from the earliest stages of their socialization on how to react quickly but loose at the same time the capability to unfold the richness of creative fantasy. While listening to a story-teller, children are able to consciously imagine the narrations like an inner film in their minds. By loosing these potentials, which are preformed in early childhood, the ability of constructive imagination is blocked.

The theory of learning, developed by *Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ* in the tenth century, worked out the unfolding from perceptive faculties (*al-umūr al-maḥsūsa*) in earliest stages of childhood to abstractive abilities (*al-umūr al-maʾqūla*).[2]

The spiritual soul endowed with reason (*ʿaql*) allows the forces of imagination to create inner vision, which had been emphasized by *al-Ghazālī* (1058–1111):

> The inner vision is stronger than the outer one, the 'heart' keener in perception than the eye and the beauty of the objects perceived with the 'reason' is greater than the beauty of outer forms which present themselves to the eye. . . . He who lacks the inner vision cannot perceive the inner form and he cannot derive pleasure from it, love it and incline toward it. However, he who appreciates the inner values more than the outer senses, loves the inner values more than the outer ones.[3]

The fable of the ringdove, written by ʿAbdallah *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ* (d. 857) during the dawning of the Abbāsid Caliphate in the mid of the eighth century, orientates towards the shaping of an inner vision of poetic justice. As a part of a wider collection of fables, titled *Kalilā and Dimna*, it became one of the most widespread books worldwide. The two jackal-brothers *Kalilā* and *Dimna* symbolize two entirely different characters, the compassionate and helpful *Kalilā* and the cunning and deceitful *Dimna*.

While the opening fable is about the immorality of treacherous ruse, the later following one of the ringdove communicates a concept of reason, which is embedded in poetic justice. In Islamic ethics the ringdove symbolizes reason, inseparably bound up with loving truth and faithfulness. Corresponding with the ethical dimension of justice, the fable of the ringdove is a literarily reflected light of the Islamic tradition of storytelling. Here, the literature of fables meets Islamic ethics, the deeper layer in the fables' world, which later had been inculturated as well in occidental fables' tradition.

Kalilā wa Dimna had been translated between 1257 and 1263 into Latin by *Johannes Capua* under the title *Directorium vite humane*.[4] On the basis of

the Latin translation *Das Buch der Beispiele der alten Weisen* had been published by the cleric *Anton von Pforr,* who inculturated the reading-instructions, given by *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*, into his version, written in Early-New-High-German (frühneuhochdeutsch). The reader is trained in *fürsichtigkeit* (guardedness, foresight, thoughtfulness, wisdom) in order to discover the hidden moral message in the fables. The text is very near to the original of *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*. *Anton von Pforr's Buch der Beispiele der alten Weisen* shows how in scholastic times Islamic tradition of ethics (and sciences) had been very important in the process of reception in the occidental world.

Jean de la Fontaine (1621–1695) emphasized in the preface of the collection *Fables* that these consisted of two parts, one which could be named the body, while the other one constituted the soul: "L'apologue est composé de deux parties, dont on peut appeler l'une le corps, l'autre l'âme."[5] More than 800 years before, *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ* wrote in his preface to *Kalilā wa Dimna* that reading the book, one should know about its four purposes: "the entertainment of the youth by speaking animals, the entertainment of princes by colored pictures of animals, the spreading of the book, based on these characteristics, as well as a hidden purpose, which concerns only the philosophers."[6] The fable's structure is composed of two levels; the one of the body is the visible and entertaining dimension, decorated with miniature paintings, which at the same time follow a didactic approach in order to facilitate the development of a child's awareness. The second level, the soul, is the deeper dimension of the fable, where the moral sense is instructed towards poetic justice.

1. THE LION AND THE MOUSE

A cross-cultural retrospective of poetic justice, following the longtime historical tradition of the animal fable, leads back to Old Egypt in the 20th Dynasty (1171–1085 B.C.), where story-tellers already wandered throughout the country, entertaining not least children with tales and fables.[7] A mythical novella from this period served as a model for the compilation of the "*Myth of the Sun Eye*" (Papyrus I 384, Leiden, first/second century A.C.),[8] in which the bringing-home of *Tefnut*, the sun-cat, who rebelled against her father, the sun-god *Re*, by walking abroad in southern Nubia, is the framing story. *Re* sends the divine courier *Thot* in form of a dog-headed monkey, who tries to bring the daughter of god back to her senses by telling her stories. *Thot* had woven animal fables into the story, which show how her father *Re* represents the cosmological order based on *Maʿat*. "The good and the evil, which is done on earth, *Re* rewards it. Even if it is said, I should be smaller in figure than you, *Re* looks upon me in the same way as on you."[9] The animal fables underline

the principles that are valid as well for human beings as for plants and animals. The teachings of *Maʿat* base on the principle of poetic justice; they embody solidarity, reciprocity and retaliation. Poetic justice orientates towards acting for each other, a communicative solidarity: "How nice it is, to act for the acting. Lucky is his heart, who acts for the one, who acted for him."[10] The allegory of the lion and the mouse as characters of the fables *Thot* tells to *Tefnut*, has the reciprocity of acting for one another to its center.

The lion is confronted with the ruse of man, who mistreats animals (panther, donkey, bear, etc.) with hunting and setting traps. After he had learned from other animals, that the humans are the trickiest beings, the lion, living in the desert before without knowing a human being, decided to look for man in order to repay for the sufferings he had caused. One day a mouse got caught in his paw. The mouse pleaded him for not devouring her, because if he would do so, he wouldn't be satisfied anyway since the mouse is too little to still his hunger. The small mouse promised that she would help the lion, in case he would be in danger one day. After the lion thought about the mouse's words for a while he let her free. In a Sudanese version from the beginning of the twentieth century, which had been documented on the bases of an oral tradition by *Leo Frobenius* from 1912, the mouse quarrels with the lion who claims, that he is the strongest among all animals: "What you are saying, my lion, is not true. The most important force is cleverness/intelligence. I am a small mouse but wiser then you and therefore stronger. But more powerful than all the other animals is *Beni Adam*, the son of *Adam*, the human being."[11]

As in the old Egyptian fable, a little later the lion was caught and tied up by a hunter. The mouse kept the promise by gnawing the ropes to pieces. After the lion had been liberated, the mouse accompanied him by travelling in his mane throughout the desert, into which the lion withdrew immediately after his experience with the trickery humans.

The poetic justice as a communicative act of reciprocity/solidarity between the weakest and the strongest animal in the desert entered the Greek collection of fables, which probably had been gathered first by the legendary *Äsop*, later handed down/recorded in the Latin *Collectio Augustana* in the second/third century A.C. Finally the fable of the lion and the mouse was incorporated into the *Fables*, collected and interpreted by *La Fontaine* in the years 1668–1694. Under the title *Le Lion et le Rat* the central motive of poetic justice shifted slightly to magnanimity of the king, who lets off the weaks' life. During the fables' travel to occidental culture certain figures and motives are often slightly transformed into corresponding ones due to the specific historical-cultural circumstances, like natural ones; thus, the mouse becomes a rat or the jackal a fox. But the ethical and moral core, the soul of the fable remains.

While one direction of poetic justice as a central motive in the world of fables leads from old Egyptian tradition via Greek and Latin adaption towards occidental inculturation by *La Fontaine*, another tradition derives from the Islamic culture of the early Abbāsid period in the mid of the eighth century. Bagdad had become a center for immaterial heritage; the literary richness of Millennia had flown together in the city of peace, as the Abbāsid metropolis was named. Here the epos of *Gilgamesch* met with tales and fables from India or Egypt.

2. THE FABLE OF THE RINGDOVE

Over a long period of man's history fables developed a world language, which is, independent from time and space, universally understandable. This is not only true for the adult, but holds especially for the child, to whom the fable is read out. Ethics and moral values, when internalized by the child, give an early orientation for the differentiation between good and evil, just and unjust, self-interest and devotion, far-sightedness and narrow-mindedness, modesty and arrogance, stupidity and wisdom etc. The pictorial language of the fable expresses unmoral as well as moral modes of acting and behavior with animal figures. The example of *Dimna* the jackal, who, out of hurt vanity, provokes a deadly fight between two close friends, the bull and the lion, the king of the animals, impresses ethical values and moral modes of behavior on the child by ways of emotional learning. Devising intrigues motivated by self-interest, finally ends with damnation and death, while acting in reciprocity/solidarity guarantees a life in harmony and bliss. Fables cultivate, even if not yet consciously reflected, philosophical foundations, which enable the child to think and act humanely.

By identifying itself with the ideal figure of the wise animal, the child learns to refrain from acting reprehensible and to do good things. The child discovers itself as a human(e) being. In the fable of the ringdove it is not the small mouse, that can be identified with unassuming wisdom but the dove, who once gave birth to the goddess *Ištar*—adopted as Venus in the Roman period—representing goodness, compassion, gentleness, humility, sincerity and hope; as a bird of the soul it saved out from danger.[12] The dove, which returned to Noah's Ark after 7 days, symbolizes the salvation of the believers; it embodies the spirit of God, standing as well for honesty (Mt 10, 16). Recent research came to the result, that certain doves are able to differentiate nearly 725 pictorial patterns; furthermore they have astonishing cognitive abilities.

In Islam the dove is identified with loving truth.[13] Here the dove stands for reason, solidarity and self-sacrificing. On this background she corresponds

with the virtue of justice, as it is described by Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī (1201–1274): "... no relationship is nobler than that of equivalence, as has been established in music; and among virtues, none is more perfect than the virtue of justice, as is obvious in the discipline of ethics, for the true mid-point is Justice, all else being peripheral to it and taking its reference there from."[14] *Al-Ghazālī* characterizes justice as being "not surrounded by two vices, but its antipode being the only vice of injustice, because there is no mediator between order and disorder. Through order and justice heaven and earth are maintained, so that the whole world is comparable with a single person, whose capabilities and parts work together."[15]

The constructive harmony in Islamic micro-macro-cosmology, which is flowed through by universal reason (ʿaql al-kullīya), is based on justice, while destructivity finds its cause in injustice.

In the *Fable of the Ringdove*, written by *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*, who wrote one of the first known Arabic treatises on logic,[16] and also books on governance (*Adab kabir*; *Rīsala fi'l Ṣaḥabā*),[17] the doves, by setting an example of wise and communicative acting, initiate friendship and solidarity between the animals, which are hunted by a cunning man. Having been lured by a net covered with red berries the doves got caught in the trap. The first helpless reaction was to flatter up and down but the ringdove, the queen of the doves, reminded the others to act thoughtfully and rationally: "Don't refuse reciprocal help in your common endeavors. None of you should care more for herself than for the other! We should help each other and concentrate all our efforts on raising the net up into the air. In this way we can be rescued by reciprocal help!"[18] So it happened that the doves flew away, carrying the net with them. After a while the hunter gave up to follow the longed-for bag. Still captured in the net, the doves reached the house of a mouse, who was a friend of the ringdove. Immediately the mouse started to liberate her friend, the ringdove, by gnawing the net. But the ringdove said: "Don't start your efforts with myself! Begin with the liberation of the other doves!" The mouse replied: "As you are in danger, you should have compassion with yourself." But the ringdove explained to her friend: "Later on, in case fatigue will overcome you, my friends will not have the chance to be as well liberated. If I would be the last still caught in the net you would not leave me to my fate, even though you were totally exhausted."

So did the mouse. After the doves had been liberated by the mouse they flew away. Everything that happened had been observed by a raven, who now wanted to become a friend of the mouse too. But the mouse was sceptical, supposing the raven acted out of self-interest. She remained in her hole, elucidating to the raven: "The people of the world exchange two different gifts by which they are linked to each other, namely intellectual (ruḥanīya/ʿaqlīya:

geistige) and material ones (Gaben der Hand). Those, who give each other intellectual donations, are the true and sincere friends, while those, who donate only with their hands, are the ones, who count upon return (Erwiderung)."[19] The mouse continued: "The one, who uses friendship just for immediate pay/reward, always eying for worldly profit, is like the hunter, who spreads berries not in the birds' favor, but—by doing so—promising advantage for himself. The one, who risks his life for friendship, is more suitable than the one, who only hands over his property. Truly, self-sacrifice is the greatest sacrifice."[20]

After a while of showing his good intentions, the raven succeeded in convincing the mouse, who had made bad experiences with human-beings as well, to leave for a better and peaceful place. He took her into his beak and flew to a pond, where the turtle, a friend of the raven, lived. Later the raven, the turtle and the mouse liberated the gazelle, acting with communicative and cooperative reason. After that the turtle was freed herself, having been caught in the net of the hunter, just as the gazelle before her. Finally the community of animals lived in peace and fortune at the pond, while the hunter had decided to come back never again to this mysterious region. The fable ends with a moral allegory:

> If even such small and weak creatures are able to rescue each other one after the other out of the snares' disaster and to turn away misfortune, by resisting and pleasing each other – how much more should the human being, who is endowed with reason and knowledge in order to differentiate good and evil, be united in friendship through reciprocal help. This is the allegory of the sincere friends and their friendly solidarity.[21]

The allegory shows and teaches the specific human potentials compared with the animals. The fable's moral layer communicates with the moral sense.

> The emergence of the moral sense and of conscience places the human being on 'higher' plane . . . than that of the 'lower' animals. With the appearance of the moral sense a special emphasis is now given communal ties; the vital solidarity of the drove or pack is raised to the plane of a moral responsibility to care for the other, to show solidarity, sympathy, love.[22]

As the fable is decorated with miniatures, it is addressed especially to children to unfold their moral sense of justice. Emotional learning can be sustained by attracting visual sensitivity, harmonizing the narration with the forces of imagination. Philosophical dimensions slumber in the deeper layers of the fable, such as the relation between reason, justice and free will. Here, cross-cultural concepts of reason (logos/ʿaql) can be found, which can be followed along the adaption and reception of *Kalīla wa Dimna* in occidental culture.

3. ON SEEING AND UNDERSTANDING IN ISLAMIC AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURE

The didactic approach of the ringdove-fable corresponds with learning theories, which had been worked out systematically by Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ. Human beings unfold cognitive capacities out of perceptive faculties to rational realization and abstract knowledge, "because sense perception is closer to the grasp of the learners/beginners . . .."[23] From first emotional experiences in earliest phases of childhood, the ladder of sense perception is climbed, according to the Iḫwān, from touching, tasting, smelling and hearing to seeing, the most sophisticated perception of the senses.

In the child's brain sense perceptions are put together and combined to images. But in early childhood images can be trickery, because the capability of reflection on an abstract-rational level is not yet developed.[24]

The miniatures, which seem to decorate Islamic-Arabic fables, tales or stories, avoid giving a three-dimensional corporeal character or central perspective to the paintings. In a well-considered proportion, the size of the text of *Kalīla wa Dimna* harmonizes with the miniature, which takes half of the page. The miniature should not develop its own life, which is avoided by using illusionary techniques, like the linear perspective, but visualize the narration didactically.

The mathematical construction of the pictorial perspective came down from the Islamic sciences of optics (refraction, reflection of light) to the Italian Renaissance. These pioneering scientific findings, developed by Ibn al-Haitham (965–1041)[25] in his book on optics (Kitāb al-Manāẓir), which had been translated into Latin with the title *Perspectiva*, paved the way for a new theory of artificial seeing in western culture, leading eventually to today's virtuality.[26] While the occidental arts were orientated towards capturing vitality by way of copying realities, Islamic arts unfolded the cosmological forces of light mostly in a mathematical-geometrical manner.

> Neither gravity of matter nor accident dominated the world, but light, and in the light a mathematical structure of creation became evident, which . . . can only be represented geometrically and not by pictures (Abbildungen), which are reproductions of bodies.[27]

The understanding of light's creativity was central to the concepts of Islamic arts, not least light had been deeply reflected philosophically.

Light is the cosmological force, that not only communicates between heavens, earth and beyond; furthermore it is identified with reason (*ʿaql*). Following al-Ghazālī, according to their origin bodies constitute the lowest category of beings and colors and figures are the lowest of their accidents. All beings are within the realm of knowledge/reason. But, as the eye can't see endlessness, it is knowledge going beyond finiteness, which only reason can grasp. That's why reason can be called *light*.[28]

On this philosophical background cosmological structures of light are visualized through geometrical patterns such as the *muqarnas.* By approaching their beauty, human reason communicates with the creative forces of universal reason (ʿaql al-kullīya).

But why did the doves, as they stand for well-considered acting, get caught in the hunter's trap? Had it been caused by the illusionary sense of seeing, which was attracted by the shimmering of the corporeal red berries? Was the temporary suffering of the doves necessary before the process of liberation could begin?

The fable of the ringdove opens the readers mind hermeneutically along three levels, which, following *Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka* can be described:

> . . . as new sense giving factors: the intellective sense, the aesthetic sense, and the moral sense, which together inspire the emerging of human mind. The *intellective sense* accounts for the human order of the world of life and communication. The *aesthetic sense* accounts for the expansion of experience beyond the strictly pragmatic apprehension of what serves the vital interests of self-individualizing beingness, for the opening of the specifically human realm to beauty, ugliness, and the sublime. It is, however, the *moral sense* that lies at the core of the metamorphosis of the life situation from vital existence into Human Condition. It is the moral sense that accounts for the world as a human community.[29]

How much more than the small and weak animals should the human beings, who are endowed with moral sense in order to differentiate good and evil, be united in friendship and reciprocal help? The moral sense of justice as expressed in the fable of the ringdove can be read allegorically in view of the necessities and potentials for the enhancement of cross-cultural dialogue, especially between the Islamic and Occidental culture.

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NOTES

[1] Detlev Quintern, Miniaturmalerei und Malschulen im Orient, in: *Tierisch moralisch, Die Welt der Fabeln in Orient und Okzident* (Oldenburg: Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch, 2008), p. 120.

[2] Detlev Quintern, Kamal Ramahi, *Qarmaṭen und Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ, Gerechtigkeitsbewegungen unter den Abbāsiden und die Universalistische Geschichtstheorie* (Hamburg: Theorie und Praxis, 2006), p. 396.

[3] Al-Ghasali, *Das Elixier der Glückseligkeit*, aus dem Arabischen von H. Ritter (Jena: Diederichs, 1923), p. 150; Richard Entinghausen, Al- Ghazzālī on Beauty, in: *The Grand Library of the History of Art*, Vol. 13, ed. J.S. Ackerman, C. McKnight, H.W. Janson, R. Rosenblum, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (New York, London: Garland Pub., 1976) p. 163.

[4] Görge K. Hasselhoff, Die lateinischen Übertragungen von Kalilā wa Dimna, in: *Tierisch moralisch, Die Welt der Fabeln in Orient und Okzident*, ed. Mamoun Fansa, Karen Aydin (Oldenburg: Landesmuseum Mensch und Natur, 2009), p. 51.

[5] Jean de la Fontaine, *Fables*, Texte établi, annoté et précédé d'une introduction par V.-L. Saulnier (Paris: Editions de Cluny, 1950), p. 50.
[6] ʿAbdallah Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalila und Dimna*, *Die Fabeln des Bidpai*, aus dem Arabischen übertragen von Philipp Wolff (Oldenburg: Landesmuseum Mensch und Natur, 2008), p. 273.
[7] Emma Brunner-Traut, *Frühformen des Erkennens, Am Beispiel Altägyptens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), p. 126.
[8] The fable had been translated in the study by Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, a Book of Readings, Vol. III, The Late Period* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980) pp. 156–159.
[9] Emma Traut-Brunner, *Altägyptische Märchen* (Düsseldorf, Köln: Diederichs, 1965), p. 133.
[10] Jan Assmann, *Maʿat, Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* (München: C.H. Beck, 1995), p. 66.
[11] Leo Frobenius, *Märchen aus Kordofan* (Jena: Dieterichs, 1923), p. 91
[12] Clemens Zerling, *Lexikon der Tiersymbolik*, Mythologie, Religion, Psychologie (München: Kösel, 2003), p. 107.
[13] Annemarie Schimmel, *Die Zeichen Gottes*. *Die religiöse Welt des Islam* (München: Beck, 1995), p. 55.
[14] Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, translated from the Persian by G.M. Wickens (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 95.
[15] Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Das Kriterium des Handelns, Mīzān al-ʿamal*, aus dem Arabischen übersetzt, mit einer Einleitung, mit Anmerkungen und Idices herausgegeben von ʿAbd-El Ṣamad ʿAbd-El Ḥamid Elschazlī (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), p. 148.
[16] Christel Hein, *Definition und Einteilung der Philosophie, Von der spätantiken Einleitungsliteratur zur arabischen Enzyklopädie* (Frankfurt a.M., Bern, New York: Lang, 1985), p. 41.
[17] Francesco Gabrielli, *Ibn al-MuqaffaŶ*, The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, ed. B. Lewis, V.L. Ménage, Ch. Pellat, J. Schacht, Vol. III, H-IRAM (Leiden, London: Brill, 1971), p. 884.
[18] ʿAbdallah Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalila und Dimna*, Übersetzung aus dem Arabischen von Philipp Wolff (Oldenburg: Landesmuseum Mensch und Natur, 2009), p. 125.
[19] Ibid., p. 124.
[20] Nasrollah Monschi, *Kalila und Dimna*, Fabeln aus dem klassischen Persien, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Seyfeddin Najmabadi und Siegfried Weber (München: C.H. Beck, 1996), p.119.
[21] ʿAbdallah Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalila und Dimna*, Übersetzung aus dem Arabischen von Philipp Wolff (Oldenburg: Landesmuseum Mensch und Natur, 2009), p. 146.
[22] Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*, Book 1, The Case of God in the New Enlightenment (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), p. 201.
[23] Susanne Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaften in der Enzyklopädie Kitab Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ* (III) (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1975), p. 49.
[24] Detlev Quintern, Kamal Ramahi, *Qarmaṭen und Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ, Gerechtigkeitsbewegungen unter den Abbāsiden und die Universalistische Geschichtstheorie* (Hamburg: Theorie und Praxis, 2006), p. 397.
[25] Ibn al-Haitham invented the *Camera Obscura*, which originates etymologically in the Arabic *baīt muẓlim* (dark room). For the development and occidental reception and adaption of Islamic sciences see the five Volumes of Fuat Sezgin, *History of Sciences and Technique in Islam*, Vol. III (Frankfurt: Institut für die Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschften, 2004), pp. 165–199.
[26] Hans Belting, *Florenz und Bagdad, Eine öst-westliche Geschichte des Blicks* (München: C.H. Beck, 2008), p. 105.

[27] Ibid., p. 114.

[28] Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Die Nische der Lichter, Miškāt al-anwār*, aus dem Arabischen übersetzt, mit einer Einleitung, mit Anmerkungen und Indices herausgegeben von ʿAbd-El Ṣamad ʿAbd-El Ḥamid Elschazlī (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), p. 63.

[29] Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*, Book 1, The Case of God in the New Enlightenment (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), p. 194.

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MAHMOUD JARAN

OCCIDENTAL AND ISLAMIC CULTURES: DIVIDED SKIES, COMMON HORIZONS

Abstract: Al-Tayyeb Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) is, famously, considered an inversion of the narrative movements (in time as in place) of *Heart of Darkness*. The Kurtz figure, as it were, appears in the person of Mustafa Sa'eed (main character in *Season*), who journeys from colonial Sudan to England, reversing the direction of the journey into the heart of darkness. Such considerations offer less importance to other hypotheses which move *Season* closer to other canonical novels such as *The Red and the Black* by Stendhal. The object of my chapter is to examine the similarities (saying the same in different ways) between the central figures, Mustafa Sa'eed and Julien Sorel, in these two narratives highlighting (1) the injustice suffered by both characters: Julien is a victim of a society divided into two classes, rich and poor, Mustafa is a victim of a world split into colonized and colonizers; (2) the campaigns of Mustafa and Julien that are carried out strictly in terms of physical and psychological violence; (3) the structures of alterity which portray their relationships with the external world; and most of all (4) the poetic expressions shown, for instance, in their description of the Nile as a metaphor of their destiny. Through a comparative analysis, I discuss the ways in which Salih and Stendhal present their characters who belong to two different worlds, and how these develop their actions. Ultimately, this chapter is concerned with asserting the claim that the poetic dimension which unites Islamic and Occidental worlds is both rich and strong.

The importance of "saying the same in different ways" and in different cultures is remarkably increasing in some fields like Cultural Studies, Literature, Philosophy and Social Studies. The main laboratories in which such *idea* is studied are Comparative Literature and Post-colonial Theory. Both flourished in Anglo-Saxon academic world in the last two decades. In my view, the most significant element which leads us to understand cultures in this way derives from the notion of cultural hybridity. Culture, any culture, indeed, cannot be pure. That is why differences between cultures must not be imagined so radical to the level of ignoring the similarities between them. Such interpretation of "culture" allows us to identify what Homi Bhabha calls the "Third Space"

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 51–58.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_5,

(Bhabha). The Indian theorist distinguishes between "cultural diversity" which confirms the disagreement, and accordingly the clash between cultures (the *other* culture is simply exotic and different) and "cultural difference" which represents a new context that produces new interpretations. Cultural difference, therefore, tells us that cultural signs are not fixed. They can be re-appropriated, ri-historicized and reinterpreted. This is the hybrid dimension which invites us to reread cultures and mostly the distance between cultures, not as a clash and conflictual zone, but as rich and heterogeneous one.

In this chapter, I will highlight the similarities between two literary works that belong to two "different worlds" and to two different epochs. The first is al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), and the other one is Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1830).[1] Through a comparative analysis, I will discuss the ways in which the two authors, Salih and Stendhal, present their characters and how these develop their actions. *Season of Migration* tells the story of Mustafa Said, a genius from Sudan who goes to study first in Egypt and then in England, where he hunts women but eventually falls for one himself. After a marriage consummated by violence and a prison sentence, he returns to Sudan, moving to a small village on the Nile, where he marries again and has children. He disappears mysteriously in a flood.

It's worth noting that Salih's novel is famously considered as a re-writing of another canonical Occidental work: *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad:

> If *Heart of Darkness* narrates the history of modern British imperialism from a position deep within its metropolitan centre, *Season of Migration* presents itself as the counternarrative of the same bitter history. Just as Conrad's novel was bound up with Britain's imperial project, Salih's participates (in an oppositional way) in the afterlife of the same project today, by 'writing back' to the colonial power that once ruled the Sudan (Makdisi, p. 804).

Furthermore, no one can ignore the similarities between the main character in *Season of Migration*, Mustafa Said and Conrad's Kurtz: both travel to the *other*'s world (south–north and north–south); both are colonizers; both use violence and both have a chaotic sexual life etc. Naturally, such parallelism between *Season* and *The Red* is less obvious, since Stendhal's work is not about colonialism. This, however, doesn't remove the possibility of paying attention at the poetic intertextuality and some common concepts in both novels such as: ambition, injustice and violence, which put together the major aspects of Mustafa Said's and Julien Sorel's lives.

The Red and the Black is an historical novel which satirizes post-Napoleonic French society, particularly the materialism of its aristocracy, drawing attention to the opposition between Paris and province and the dichotomy between bourgeoisie and nobility. In addition, the novel reveals, on the one hand, the contradictions between justice and injustice, and between equality and

hypocrisy on the other. The protagonist, Julien Sorel is a victim of this society divided into two worlds (rich and poor). In the same way, Mustafa Said is a victim of a world divided into two categories: colonizers and colonized. Both characters react on the ground of the historical contexts in which they live: social injustice and colonialism. Julien's ambition is not, in fact, to become noble, but, as Dr. Shaheen puts it, to eliminate the chasm between social classes. Likewise, the main purpose of Mustafa Said is the abolition of the hierarchy created by colonialism. Mustafa says:

> Until the meek inherit the earth, until the armies are disbanded, the lamb grazes in beside the wolf and the child plays water-polo in the river with crocodile, until that time of happiness and love comes along, I for one shall continue to express myself in this twisted manner (Salih, p. 41).

It is no longer important, for Julien and Mustafa, to become rich or colonizer. What is essential for them is the cause that drives them to act. The question which torments Julien, in the course of the novel, concerns the attempt to justify the injustice that affects people born in poor conditions or in a lower social class. In other words, Julien would like to ask: why social injustice is hereditary? It is the same question that Mustafa Said tries to pose regarding African people, subjected to colonial power only because they were born near the Equator (Salih, p. 108). This also recalls the words of Marlow, the narrator in Heart of darkness:

> The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much (Conrad, pp. 10–11).

Moreover, Mustafa Said and Julien can be considered as Others in the contexts in which they live. The otherness of Mustafa reaches its climax in his flirtation with the English women. In the case of Julien, alterity can be seen in his romantic adventures with women belonging to higher class. There are two types of women who fall in love with Julien and Mustafà: the first type includes Ann Hammond, Sheila Greenwood and Isabella Seymour in *The Season*, and Madame de Renal in *The red*. Simplicity, sincerity and spontaneity are the characteristics which illustrate these women. The second type, instead, includes Jean Morris in *The Season* and Mathilde in *The Red*. Both of them choose to have a tense, complex and anxious life with Mustafa and Julien. The complexity of these relationships is probably due to the combination between love and ambition, which shapes the approach of Julien and Mustafa with this type of women. One can consider natural that the conflict, based on two opposite poles, such as love and ambition, would generate violence in the two novels (Shaheen, p. 100).

Mustafa's encounter with Jean Morris should be read as an encounter between colonizers and colonized, North and South. It is not a coincidence that

the novel matches Mustafa's journey to Morris to his journey to The Victoria Station. The Victoria station refrain, with its journey to Morris, is repeated three times: "And the train carried me to Victoria Station and to the world of Jean Morris" (Salih, pp. 29, 31, 33). The Jean Morris affair is meant to be central to Mustafa Said anti-colonial campaign. In the court, when the judge asks him why he killed jean Morris, Mustafa finds the best moment to reveal his views about colonization and the colonial power that once ruled his country. Afterward, he returns to Sudan to retrieve and assert identity through marriage, family settlement, work etc., but Jean Morris' name remains the only portion of his past life that emerges in his dreams. Her central position and role in his life makes him assert: "Everything which happened before my meeting her was a premonition; everything I did after I killed her was an apology, not for killing her, but for the lie that was my life". (Salih, p. 29). To Mustafa, Jean Morris' coldness and sense of superiority, along with her "pose as representative of a colonialist mind" (Al-Musawi, p. 198) that looks upon others as "savage" and "ugly" but nevertheless attractive, make her the culminating destination in a quest for confrontation, no matter what the consequences are:

> She was my destiny and in her lay my destruction, yet for me the whole world was not worth a mustard seed in comparison. I was the invader who had come from the South, and this was the icy battlefield from which I would not make a safe return. I was the pirate sailor and Jean Morris the shore of destruction" (Salih, p. 160).

The tense relationship between Mustafa and Jean Morris brings to mind a scene of Stendhal's novel, located in the library of the Marquis, which is also a meeting place, sometimes secret, between Julien and Mathilde (Shaheen, p. 102). Julien enters in the library and immediately notices her cold eyes and then asks: "You don't love any more?" Mathilde replied, weeping: "I have a horror of giving myself up to the first comer" (Stendhal, p. 299). Surprised by her answer, Julien glances at a medieval sword on the wall. He thinks that he would be the happiest man in the world if at that time could kill her. Subsequently, he snatches the sword and thinks vividly about his benefactor, the Marquis de la Mole, father of Mathilde:

> "I kill his daughter," he was saying to himself, "What horror!" He made a movement to throw the sword away. "Of course," he thought, "she will only laugh when she sees the melodramatic moment." That thought calmed him completely. He observed the blade curiously, as if he were looking for a nick there. Then, putting it into the scabbard with the greatest unconcern, he replaced it on the bronze hook (Stendhal, p. 299).

Mathilde reacts unemotionally: "I was on the point of being killed by my lover!" (Stendhal, p. 299). Instead of terrifying her, the violent act of Julien fascinates her: "She stood silent before Julien, without a trace of anger in her eyes. She was indeed charming at that moment" (Stendhal, p. 299). The man

who was about to kill her deserves to be her master. Thus, Julien leaves the library and thinks:

> Mon Dieu! How beautiful she is. And she is the one who threw herself into my arms with such abandon a week ago! Ah, that will never come back! It was my fault. When she was so charming to me, I should not have been so sensitive. Yes, I have a coarse and miserable nature (Stendhal, p. 300).

After this scene, The Marquis appears to tell Julien that his "higher destiny" would be a journey, to the north. Certainly, travelling northward is not the only element which recalls al Tayyib Salih's novel (Shaheen, p. 104). It seems, in fact, that Salih had in mind the episode of the sword (in *The Red*), during his writing of the scene, in which Mustafa kills Jean Morris:

> "Darling," she said painfully, "I thought you would never do this. I almost gave up hope of you." I pressed down the dagger with my chest until it had all disappeared between her breasts. I could feel the hot blood gushing from her chest. I began crushing my chest against her as she called out imploringly: "Come with me. Come with me. Don't let me go alone (Salih, pp. 164–165).

In both scenes Julien and Mustafà are unsure about their actions. Both would feel satisfaction if they kill. Mustafa plays with the knife in the same way that Julien wields the sword. Both seem to be two tormented souls, which would lead them for the same fate.

Another point the novels in question have in common is the behavior of Morris and Mathilde. They don't fear death (Shaheen, p. 104). Their contempt for the protagonists becomes, under death threat, an attractiveness and total submission, as it appears in the last words by Jean quoted above. According to Rotraud Wielandt's astute analysis:

> She inevitably discovers that he is not – as she had accused him a few days earlier of being – a man who is by his nature incapable of killing even when he is continually tormented and humiliated, and [. . .] that he is not a representative of an inferior race and civilization condemned forever submitting to European violence. Thus she is now able to respect and love him (Quoted in Al-Musawi, p. 199).

Mathilde, similarly, could think only of the felicity of having come within an inch of being killed. She went so far as to say to herself "He is worthy to be my master, since he has been on the point of killing me" (Stendhal, p. 358). The two female characters are also similar in terms of their own sense of superiority (Shaheen, p. 106). On one occasion, the narrator describes the sincere sentiments of Mathilde and her conviction that she had chosen the right man to spend her life with: "What does he lack? Friends, money. I will give him both". But soon after this sentence, the narrator appears again to illustrate the hierarchical nature of the relationship between Mathilde and Julien: "She thought, nevertheless, of Julien as inferior whom she might love whenever she chose" (Stendhal, p. 304). Such hierarchy is even clearer in the way Jean Morris treats

Mustafa in *The Season*. This probably is due to the fact that hierarchical relations in colonial context are more evident. Jean Morris' behavior, in this sense, is nothing but a metaphor which evokes the economic and cultural exploitation of the colonizer:

> She stripped off her clothes and stood naked before me. All the fires of hell blazed within my breast. Those fires had to be extinguished in that mountain of ice that stood in my path. As I advanced towards her, my limbs trembling, she pointed to an expensive Wedgewood vase on the mantelpiece. "Give this to me and you can have me," she said. If she had asked at that moment for my life as a price I would have paid it. I nodded my head in agreement. Taking up the vase, she smashed it on the ground and began trampling the pieces underfoot. She pointed to a rare Arabic manuscript on the table. "Give me this too", she said. My throat grew with a thirst that almost killed me. I must quench it with a drink of icy water. I nodded my head in agreement. Taking up the old, rare manuscript she tore it to bits, filling her mouth with pieces of paper which she chewed and spout out. It was as though she had chewed at my very liver. And yet I didn't care. She pointed to a silken Isphahan prayer-rug [. . .] It was the most valuable thing I owned, the thing I treasured most. "Give me this too and then you can have me," she said. Hesitating for a moment, I glanced at her as she stood before me, erect and lithe, her eyes agleam with a dangerous brightness, her lips like a forbidden fruit that must be eaten. I nodded my head in agreement. Taking up the prayer-rug, she threw it on the fire and stood watching gloatingly as it was consumed, the flames reflected on her face (Salih, pp. 156–157).

In his book *Tahawualt* (1993), Dr. Mohammad Shaheen refers to one more passage from *The Red* which comes to mind while reading *The Season* is to be found in Chapter 36, when the magistrate appears in the prison to meet Julien, who confesses all: "I killed her. I intentionally killed her [. . .] I bought the pistols and have them loaded. Article 1342 of the Penal Code is explicit; I have deserve death, and I expect it" (Stendhal, p. 387). The magistrate, surprised by the character of this confession, sought to multiply his questions so that the accused might contradict himself in his answers. Julien, however, continues his confessions: "But don't you see? [. . .] that I make myself as culpable as you desire? See, monsieur, you shall not miss the prey you are pursuing; you shall have the pleasure of sentencing me to death" (Stendhal, p. 387). The attitude of the magistrate recalls the attempt of Professor Maxwell Foster-Keen in *The season* to defend Mustafa Said in the court:

> He related to them how I had been appointed a lecturer in economics at London University at the age of twenty-four. He told them that Ann Hammond and Sheila Greewood were girls who were seeking death by every means and that they would have committed suicide whether they had met Mustafa Sa'eed or not. "Mustafa Sa'eed, gentlemen of the jury, is a noble person whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization but it broke his heart. These girls were not killed by Mustafa Sa'eed but by the germ of a deadly disease that assailed them a thousand years ago" (Salih, pp. 32–33).

Judges, magistrates and lawyers try in vain to save Julien's and Mustafa's lives. Mustafa shouts in the court: "This is untrue, a fabrication. It was I who

killed them [. . .] Why don't you sentence me to be hanged ?" (Salih, p. 33). Julien, in the same way, says to the judge as well as to his attorney: "There was a murder and premeditated murder [. . .] I'm sorry, gentlemen," he added, smiling; "but it makes the matter a little less complicated" (Stendhal, p. 405).

It is worth noting that the refusal of Julien and Mustafa to any defense can be seen as a triumph of their cause (the anti-colonial campaign for Mustafa and the struggle against social barriers for Julien), since this is much more important than their condemnation. Thus, instead of defending himself in the courtroom, Mustafa speaks to everybody, extolling the principles of his case:

> When Mahmoud Wad Ahmed was brought in shackles to Kitchener after his defeat at the battle of Atbara, Kitchener said to him, "Why have you come to my country to lay waste and plunder?" it was the intruder who said this to the person whose land it was, and the owner of the land bowed his head and said nothing. So let it be with me. [. . .] Yes, my dear sirs, I came as an invader into your very homes: a drop of the poison which you have injected into the veins of history" (Salih, pp. 94–95).

Equally, Julien decides to speak to the court, not to justify the crime he committed, but to expose his cause:

> Gentlemen of the jury, I can brave contempt now, and I will speak. Gentlemen, I have not the honor of belonging to your class; you see in me only a peasant who rebelled against the lowliness of his station. [. . .] This is my crime, gentlemen, and I shall be punished with a greater severity, since I am not judged by my peers. I do not see on the juror's bench any rich peasant, but only bourgeois who are feeling they have been outraged (Stendhal, pp. 412–413).

Finally, since the conference is about "poetic expressions", one more similarity can be added between *The Red* and *The Season* regarding the poetic expressions with which Julien and Mustafa present their ideals. According to Shaheen, adopting metaphors, both protagonists use the image of the Nile in order to demonstrate key concepts for which they lived, fought and eventually died. The Nile, for Mustafa, is a figure that represents the Native, the local and more generally the Sudan:

> And the river, the river but for which there would have been no beginning and no end, flows northwards, pays heed to nothing; a mountain may stand in its way so it turns eastwards; it may happen upon a deep depression so it turns westwards, but sooner or later it settles down in its irrevocable journey towards the sea in the north (Salih, p. 69).

In order to paraphrase this literary description of the Nile, one can find out that this river symbolizes life. The fact that the Nile flows northward could be interpreted as the progress and the development of Sudan. But this progress is impeded by the colonial and post-colonial exploitation, which arrives from East and from West. The Eastern–Western colonialism should not surprise the reader, because the colonizers of Sudan were the British and the Egyptians.

Ultimately, the Nile, like Mustafa, is an anti-colonial figure who, despite the historical deviations, continues to live and progress.

No less eloquent is the metaphor of the Nile expressed by Julien at the end of the Stendhal's novel. In prison, he contemplates his situation as a man born into a lower class, who had to face a very difficult destiny in that society which doesn't comprehend that, in reality, all men have the same origin. This leads Julien to use the image of the Nile which explains so faithfully his situation: "Nothing is known of the sources of the Nile [. . .] It has not been given to the eye of man to see the king of rivers in its state as a simple stream" (Stendhal, p. 480).

The great eloquence of Julien and Mustafa is a poetic device which allows them to touch the essence of their cause (Shaheen, p. 116). Both face death with courage in a society in which they live as Others. If for Julien death is synonym of ambition which makes him bypass social hierarchy, for Mustafa death can be considered as a synonym of anti-colonial struggle.

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NOTE

[1] I owe the whole idea of this comparison to Dr. Mohammad Shaheen's book *Tahawulat al-Shawq fi Mawsem al-Hijra ila al-Shamal* (Love Transformation in the Season of Migration to the North), Al-mu'assasa al-arabiya lil nashr, 1993.

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LEJLA MARIJAM

THE SUBLIME IN THE POETRY OF IZET SARAJLIĆ AND JACQUES PRÉVERT

Abstract: Izet Sarajlić was a Bosnian poet of Muslim origin, whose poetry evokes the essence of love and yearning, melancholy and loss. His simple language and clear imagery along with the use of repetitive phrases form a dialogue between the reader and the subject matter, creating a new relationship between life and art. Sarajlić brought his world to life from the tragedies of the World War II to the Yugoslav war in the 1990s, and he remains one of the great Bosnian poets of the twentieth century. His work is compared to that of French poet Jacques Prévert, and in my paper I propose to explore the similarities between these two poets' treatment of the poetic sublime using philosophic thought of Deleuze and Guattari.

Izet Sarajlić, a Bosnian poet of Muslim origin, and French poet Jacques Prévert share a similar attitude toward their art and its influence on their readers. Though they come from different cultural and religious backgrounds, their voices express the same underlying trust in the power of poetry to break the traditionally established boundaries between peoples and to bring about a fresh worldview, in which love is more powerful and certain than violence. Prévert's collection of poems *Paroles* and Sarajlić's collection *Gray Weekend* respond to the atrocities of World War Two by overcoming the limitations of traditional poetic form and thus creating an abstract line, or what G. Deleuze and F. Guattari would call a line of flight, which carries with it the potential for transforming the relationship between art and life:

> There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject (p. 23).

In considering the poets' treatment of the sublime in their art, I will focus on two poems in particular, Prévert's *Barbara* and Sarajlić's *Born in '23, Shot in '42*. In these poems they respond to the violence and subsequent disorientation of the twentieth century, professing a belief in the redemptive power

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of humanity's creative force. As A.-T. Tymieniecka puts it, "the human creative function is the prototype of moral action *tout court*," and these poets see their poetry as part of the solution in building a future of better moral choices. Both poets address the readers intimately, through the creation of a female addressee: Barbara for Prévert and "my little girl, my woman" for Sarajlić. They both show what A. Greet would say is Prévert's "faith in those human spirits who have not been contaminated by mechanized society," (p. 140) and they invite these readers to assume a position of co-creators with the poets. Sarajlić and Prévert thus become only partly responsible for creating the reality that the reader is immersing himself in: the way in which the poem is read and the attitude of the reader towards the text comprise the other half of the creative experience. The lack of punctuation in Prévert and the use of personal pronouns instead of names in Sarajlić imply that for these poets the text itself becomes a creative entity and a timeless embodiment of the act of love, influencing the process of artistic experience. For example, when Sarajlić writes: "tonight we will love for them," the reader is engaging in the process of reading the poem, which is exerting an emotional effect and creating a dialogue between itself, the voice of the poet, the characters discussed in the poem and the reader. Prévert similarly describes this experience of entering into an intimate dialogue with a stranger:

> You were smiling
> And I smiled too
> Remember Barbara
> You whom I didn't know
> You who didn't know me

which establishes a connection that the reader can see has become immortalized via the poem. Though Greet writes that "Prévert's heroes are often destroyed by their own verbal fantasy. . . .in which one pitches one's imaginative resources against an unworthy reality," (p. 138) I would argue that this 'game' is one that can resuscitate western culture and, as Greet herself says, "open doors for us upon forgotten realities" (p. 139) that can help us balance out the violence of History. The description of the union between strangers is in itself an act of love, as the intent of the poet is to allow for a sincere emotional investment with the material, and Sarajlić's statement "tonight we will love for them" translates as more than just a request to be executed at a future point in time, but also as a statement in support of the factuality of love that is ongoing, and that can at different points in time be realized in different forms.

The poets speak of a quintessential pair of tragic lovers, which is represented in Prévert's poem by Barbara and her lover, but as the poem progresses

these characters become internalized and therefore universal. The poet says to Barbara:

> And I ran into you in Siam Street
> You were smiling
> And I smiled too

describing their encounter, which in the space of that smile turns them from strangers to lovers. This shift becomes evident as the poet continues to describe Barbara's meeting with her 'actual' lover in very similar terms:

> A man was taking cover on a porch
> And he cried your name
> Barbara
> And you ran to him in the rain
> Streaming-wet enraptured flushed
> And you threw yourself in his arms

The following lines establish a lovers' connection between the poet and Barbara, as well as the poet and anyone who has ever experienced love:

> And don't be mad if I speak familiarly
> I speak familiarly to everyone I love
> Even if I've seen them only once
> I speak familiarly to all who are in love
> Even if I don't know them

The repetitions and world play remind the reader of the overall lullaby-tone of the poem, and the feeling of familiarity between himself and the poet grows into an experience of love itself: the reader becomes one of the lovers.

In Sarajlić's poem the tragic lovers are presented as a multitude of faceless young men who cannot be counted, but who would have found their lovers and would have been fathers had the war not destroyed them: "There were 28 of them. There were five thousand and 28 of them. There were more of them than ever there was love in one poem. They would be fathers now. Now they are no more." As the poem progresses, familiar names emerge from the multitude: Ana, Zoya, Zanet, implying the existence of their nameless lovers who went to war and did not come back. Finally, the only couple left is the poet and the addressee: "my little girl, my woman," and these voices seamlessly, through the use of repetition of this phrase, become the voices of the readers and their lovers, of dead solders that the readers once knew or heard about and of the lovers those soldiers might have had, finally engulfing in its spiraling of associations the fate of the unloved nation, and world itself. However, the

tragedy of the loss is ultimately overcome by the undying spirit of love present in the poet's exclamation: "tonight we will love for them."

Repetitions abound in both poems and include repetitions of phrases as well as symbols and themes. Prévert constantly calls out in *Barbara*: "Remember Barbara" and "Don't forget," he repeats the adjectives in different contexts, seeing "happy rain", a "happy face," a "happy town," and "iron rain" made of "iron and steel and blood." Greet explains this type of artistic expression in revolutionary terms, as she writes that "by exposing clichés, he negates a tired civilization; he affirms life's essential value by creating new meanings for words or by renewing old ones" (p. 131). In describing the actions of a lover Prévert reverses the order of his repeated adjectives, so that "streaming-wet enraptured flushed" becomes "flushed enraptured streaming-wet," magnifying the importance of the repeated action by adding another level to its meaning, as if it were a magical phrase that has to be spoken a certain way under certain conditions for the magic to work. On the other hand, when Prévert describes the devastation of war he thwarts the melodiousness and symmetry of the repetition, which starts with "this iron rain/Of fire and steel and blood," and is repeated as "a storm/Of iron and steel and blood." Similarly, the reader is caught off guard to read about the "shitstupidity the war," which is so jarring that it in every way reminds us what love is being set against, and what it is expected to conquer.

Sarajlić's "we," which includes both the poet and the addressee, as well as all the readers and all the lovers in the world, also undergoes several repetitive descriptors in terms of their nonviolent choices in time of war: "We who suffered, on the terminals of an epoch, through the loneliness of all the world's Robinsons; we, who survived the tanks without killing anyone." Prévert's rain is matched in Sarajlić by the soldiers' summer, filled with poppies which are infamous World War One battlefield relics. Just as Prévert's Barbara shares a passionate moment with her lover who is lost in the 'real world' after the war, Sarajlić describes the magnitude of the tragedy in terms of passion left unrealized in the "real world," which only still lives in his poem:

> There were no secrets of imprints in the grass. There were no secrets of a weakened hand releasing the lily. There were no secrets of the first button undone at the collarbone. There were nights, there were wires, there was a last view of the sky, there were trains returning empty and deserted, there were trains and poppies, and with them, with the poignant poppies of a soldiers' summer, their blood competed with a wonderful sense of enticement.

The blood of the soldiers is as red as the poppies and as the "horizon of their desires" which bursts aflame "red as communism." This straightforward accusation has the same function as Prévert's description: "shitstupidity the war," and serves to dissociate the reader from the traditional understanding of

the world and its ideologies and values, and to instead get the reader to accept the realm of poetry as the one with the true answers to life's burning questions:

> And do not ask if they could come back. And do not ask whether we could turn back when, for the last time, red as communism, the horizon of their desires burst aflame (Sarajlić).

and

> Now what's become of you
> Under this iron rain
> Of fire and steel and blood
> And he who held you in his arms
> Amorously
> Is he dead and gone or still so much alive (Prévert).

When Prévert describes Brest and its Siam Street, as well as when Sarajlić describes Kalemegdan, the Prospects of Neva, the South Boulevards, the Quays of Parting, the Flower Squares and the Bridges of Mirabeau, they treat these spaces as both battlefields and lovers' refuges. Prévert writes of what he sees is left of Breast after the destruction, and what bares no resemblance to either the passion that built the city nor the violence that destroyed it, but what resembles a deserted space not even fit for graves and memories:

> But simply clouds
> That die like dogs
> Dogs that disappear
> In the downpour drowning Brest
> And float away to rot
> A long way off
> A long long way from Brest
> Of which there's nothing left.

However, this ending bears within it a contradiction, since Prévert has already introduced us to Brest and continues to do so days, months, years and decades after it's 'complete destruction.' As Greet writes, "his poetry. . .shows that the role of will and reason (as manifested by words) has been vastly exaggerated in regard to human motivation; that traditional belief in the omnicompetence of reason may even lead to deadly bondage" (p. 140); Brest continues to live on in Prévert's poetry and with the help of the readers who are united in this creative process of reconstruction through it. Sarajlić similarly ends his poem by uniting the dead and the living in love:

On the meeting place of love they now wait like graves.
My little girl, my woman,
Tonight we will love for them.

Without negating the reality of the violence that threatened to destroy the familiar contours of Western civilization, Prévert and Sarajlić remind the readers of the history of these places and their future potential, wherever and whenever it may be realized, and they offer their poems as one possible locus of reorganization and revival.

Prévert and Sarajlić are considered peoples' poets, as they are very popular and widely read in their respective cultures. This is in part due to the seeming straightforwardness of their ideas, and their tendency to repetitively use familiar signs and symbols in a new context to alert the readers to their own prejudgments, and to induce an estrangement from the cognitive process in order to establish an intimate connection on an emotional level. Their poems presented thus encourage the development of a personal freedom from both the bounds of language and form as well as from the oppressive societal standards and ideologies. Through imagination and the creative process in which these poets engage the readers, they are opening the path to the different realities, such as those described by Husserl, of which some have never materialized and some are established as the only 'true' realities.

In his *Essays*, Deleuze writes that tragedy lies in judgment, as judgment prevents us from perceiving the world around us in its newness, and from understanding the "creation of a mode of existence" (p. 135). Prévert and Sarajlić reject the communion with God and find the sublime in poetry, as they create new modes of existence in their poems, one based in cosmic love. In what Deleuze would term combat, the poets defy the "'nothingness of the will,' a deification of the dream, a cult of death, even in its mildest form—that of the Buddha or Christ as a person. . ." (*Essays*, p. 133). The poets make it their mission to recreate a new human territory in their works, and to counter the writing of the book with the writing of life, which is in itself alive and vibrant.

When the poets counter violence with love, they invade the presumed reality of the "real world" with the world of dreams and imagination. They thus assert their own freedom and point to the possibility of the audience's freedom by engaging in free action themselves, "which by its essence unleashes the power of repetition as a *machinic* force that multiplies its effect and pursues an infinite movement. . . .proceeds by disjunction and decentering, or at least by peripheral movement: disjointed polythetism instead of symmetrical antithetism" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 498).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, to "be an artisan and no longer an artist, creator, or founder, is the only way to become cosmic, to leave the milieus and the earth behind" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 345). The kind of art that Prévert

and Sarajlić produce is one that has the power to liberate man from the strata of judgment by initiating the process of becomings. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari:

> . . .this requires all the resources of art, and art of the highest kind. . . . .It is through writing that you become animal, it is through color that you become imperceptible, it is through music that you become hard and memoryless, simultaneously animal and imperceptible: in love (p. 187).

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ADDENDUM: TRANSLATION OF IZET SARAJLIĆ'S POEM BY LEJLA MARIJAM

Born '23, Shot '42

Tonight we will love for them.
There were 28 of them. There were five thousand and 28 of them. There were more of them than there ever was love in one poem. They would be fathers now. Now they are no more. We who suffered, on the terminals of an epoch, through the loneliness of all the world's Robinsons; we, who survived the tanks without killing anyone,

My little girl, my woman,
Tonight we will love for them.
And do not ask if they could come back. And do not ask whether we could turn back when, for the last time, red as communism, the horizon of their desires burst aflame.

Over their unloved years, stabbed-out and upright passed the future of love. There were no secrets of imprints in the grass. There were no secrets of a weakened hand releasing the lily. There were no secrets of the first button undone at the collarbone. There were nights, there were wires, there was a last view of the sky, there were trains returning empty and deserted, there were trains and poppies, and with them, with the poignant poppies of a soldiers' summer, their blood competed with a wonderful sense of enticement.

And at the Kalemegdan and the Prospects of Neva, at the South Boulevards and the Quays of Parting, at the Flower Squares and the Bridges of Mirabeau
beautiful even in the absence of love
there waited Anas, Zoyas, Zanets. They waited for the soldiers to return. If they do not return they will give their white, unloved shoulders to the boys.

They did not return. Tanks rolled over their riddled eyes. Over their riddled eyes. Over their unfinished Marseilles'. Over their shot illusions. They would

be fathers now. Now they are no more. On the meeting place of love they now wait like graves.
My little girl, my woman,
Tonight we will love for them.

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SECTION TWO

Left to right:

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HABİP TÜRKER

BEAUTY AND ITS PROJECTION IN CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC TRADITION

Abstract: This essay deals with the conception of beauty and its manner of reflection in Christian and Islamic tradition concisely. Thus some influential thinkers in both traditions are chosen in order to exemplify the common conception of beauty. Christian tradition embraced Greek conception of beauty and art; however it brought a metaphysical depth to Greek conception of beauty in the hands of Christian thinkers. The conception of beauty in Islamic tradition was inspired by the religion and the Hellenistic heritage. However, the most elaborated theories on beauty in both Christian and Islamic tradition were done by mystic philosophers. In both traditions beauty is interpreted as something ontological. Accordingly, beauty is being, not a property added to it accidentally.

However, the projections of this common conception of beauty differentiate from each other in some respects. While Christian art emphasizes divine intimacy and tragedy in naturalist perspective, Islamic art concentrates on the statement of the unity, transcendence, and eternity of God in stylized form. Yet, this essay does not overlook counter-examples and different artistic ages in the history.

This chapter is a brief essay which aims at to show that Christian and Islamic traditions have a common conception of beauty. Thus I have chosen a few major philosophers from both traditions in order to exemplify their common conception of beauty. Yet the views in this chapter must be read in a very special context. The title and the conception of the chapter are very general and contain many dangers every generalization could have. Both religions have diverse theologies and a variety of confessions inside themselves; all of the philosophers whose views on beauty are given below have different philosophical systems and important differences in their aesthetics. Alongside these many differences, we have historical reasons, such as their shared references to Abrahamic and Hellenistic heritages, to forge general similarities between these two traditions. In any case every generalization on big traditions under which countless artists and philosophers acted must be approached cautiously. But first of all this writing is not a theological article. Thus it has no

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responsibility such reflecting the dominant or non-dominant theological views and perspectives. Secondly, to interpret art from the perspective of some theological sects may not yield a correct explanation because there cannot be held an exact parallelism between religious orthodoxy and arts or aesthetics.

Christianity and Islam emerged in the culturally fertility of Hellenism and Abrahamic soils, where the influences of earlier generations became very decisive in their histories in many respects. What is interesting is that the early responses of Christians and Muslims to their heritage contradicted each other. While early Christians were resistant to philosophy, owing to their religion and probably politics too, they welcomed the Hellenistic art. On the other hand, while early Muslims gave credit for the philosophical thought of antiquity, they did not show interest in its art in narrow sense, that is, painting, sculpture, and some literary species like tragedy. However, it is well known that the development of architecture and music in Islamic world is influenced by the antiquity. Therefore, it would not be true to deny the antique heritage's influence on Islamic art. But in this essay we will focus only on the conception of beauty in Christian and Islamic traditions.

1. BEAUTY IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Neither Christian nor Islamic philosophers in the medieval age produced a full-fledged theory of art; but this does not mean that they did not speak on beauty or lacked a conception of beauty. It is known that poetry takes an important place in the Bible. Many passages of both old and New Testament evokes in us deep aesthetic effect and pleasure. The poetry in Bible sounds much more epic due to its narrative character. Christian tradition embraced Greek conception of beauty and art; however it brought a metaphysical depth to Greek conception of beauty in the hands of thinkers such as Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius The Areopagite, Anicius Boethius, Duns Scotus Erigena, St. Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. In my opinion, the essential reason for their embracing of Greek conception of beauty or art in general was that it corresponded to the conception of truth of Christianity, which embodied in Jesus. In the Christian perspective we know God and his ultimate truth and beauty in Jesus. The body of Jesus is a living, wandering God in our midst. God with his human side is not transcendent but one of us. We can look at, touch, and contemplate God here and now. Our relationship to God takes place in very naturalistic perspective, which is enriched by Christian metaphysics. For Christians believe that "God, who is trinity, creates by, or through, His second Person, His Word or Son, who is continually begotten from the First Person, the Father, in eternal creative activity. Father is only known to himself

by beholding his image in His son."[1] In this case, the world becomes an artifact of God through His Second Person of Jesus. Therefore, Christian aesthetics, like Islamic one, cannot be read without truth.

As is known, the ancient conception of beauty was developed mainly by Pythagoreans, Plato, and Aristotle. It consists of harmony, proportion, measure, symmetry, order and a certain magnitude. These elements are elevated into divine sensibility by the great thinkers of Christendom. The mathematical or geometric conception of beauty plays very important role in Islamic art too. It gains a high metaphysical expression in it so that definite forms turn into an expression of indefiniteness or eternity.

Doubtlessly, the major philosopher among the Greek Philosophers on the subject matter of beauty is Plato. The mathematical conception of beauty by Plato appears in his last dialogues, such as *Philebus* and *Timeus,* where Plato, under the influence of Pythagoreans and the school of Elea, holds that proportion, measure, and harmony determine the beauty of an object. The conception of beauty in these dialogues sounds very external, but keeps the idealist character in some degree and the identity between goodness and beauty.[2] Yet, his last phase must not allow us to overlook the ontological theory of beauty developed in his earlier idealist phase. We find the first traces of ontological conception of beauty in *Greater Hippias*. Plato expresses that it is the form (idea) which beautifies every thing when added to it. It appears in Greater Hippias that the ideas good and beautiful are identified ontologically.[3] The idealist character of beautiful is put forward more clearly in the *Symposium*, where beauty is an ontological value that includes goodness and truth. In this dialogue, the beautiful is not only an aesthetic-ethic value, but also epistemological one. Therefore, the conception of beauty in this dialogue appears an ontological conception.[4] Beauty as an ontological conception is not just a property, but rather an existence which mirrors on every individual existent, both natural and man-made. For Plato of *Symposium* artistic works are made by artists while contemplating the ideas.[5] In the idealism of Plato beauty appears as a being rather than only an external property of real objects. Plato's ontological conception of beauty in *Symposium* tended to disappear in his last writings in favor of mathematical conception that overlooks the metaphysical character of beauty to a great extent and that suggests only the external features.[6] The mathematical conception of beauty was criticized by the Neo-Platonist philosophers because of its restrictedness.

Plotinus, the founder of Neo-Platonism, criticizes the idea which suggests that beauty is simply related to external features. He says "almost everyone declares that the symmetry of parts towards each other and towards a whole, with, besides, a certain charm of colour, constitutes the beauty recognized by the eye, that invisible things, as indeed in all else, universally, the beautiful thing is

essentially symmetrical, patterned."[7] But beauty, Plotinus stresses, should be not only for sight, though it is addressed "chiefly to sight", but also for hearing (as in music) and in virtues. "All virtues are a beauty of soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of these others". What symmetry can one find in "noble conduct", or "excellent laws", "in any form of mental pursuit", "in points of abstract thought"? For Plotinus, beauty cannot to be restricted to the symmetry of beings accordant with each other, since there could be accordance where there could be just ugliness. The symmetry cannot enter here. Plotinus also denounces the view that "only a compound could be beautiful", since anything that has no parts cannot be beautiful; the beauty consists in wholeness; therefore only a whole could be beautiful, the several parts could be beautiful not in themselves, but only when they are arranged together.[8]

As can we see above, Plotinus objects to the mathematical conception of beauty because of its restrictedness and asks that if we hold this conception, how can we explain the loveliness of color, the light of the sun and stars, which are devoid of parts and not symmetrical. These kinds of beauty would be ruled out of the realm of beauty. Whereas, "beauty is something more than symmetry, that symmetry itself owes its beauty to a remoter principle". It is The Principle that bestows beauty on material things.[9] Plotinus expresses explicitly that beauty is existence or being by saying that "Beauty is the authentic-existence and Ugliness is the Principle contrary to existence."[10] In this phrase it appears that beauty is existence and ugliness is nothingness. The theory of Plotinus in general bears the spirit of Plato in *Symposium.*

The stress on the ethical ones can be, in some sense, understood an indication to the essential relationships of the values (aesthetic and ethical, even epistemological) to each other. It is important that he expresses that beauty is essentially existence, not a property added to it accidentally.

The conception of Plotinus determined the aesthetic tendencies of Saint Augustine, Pseudo Dionysius The Areopagite, Thomas Aquinas, and others. But it found its most perfect, impressive, and poetic expression in the elucidations of Pseudo Dionysius. He dealt with problem of beauty as an ontological problem related to divinity, goodness, and existence: "Good is existence, every sentient and living being has soul and life because of the existence of good. So also with soulless and lifeless matter. It is there because of the Good; through it they received their state of existence"[11] This essential good is same as the divine subsistence and beauty or beautiful. Since the essential good through its existence extends goodness into all beings, there does not need to be any rational process or act of choice, it becomes necessarily.[12]

Dionysius stresses that there is essentially no difference between "beautiful" and "beauty" as applied to the Cause which gathers all into one. The beautiful is that which participates in beauty; "beauty" is the cause of the beauty in every

thing. But the "beautiful" beyond individual being is called "beauty" because it bestows beauty on all things, in other words it is the cause of the harmony and splendor in every thing.[13] It is nothing but absolute beautiful to which one cannot ascribe relative qualifications. Dionysius states obviously that Beauty or Beautiful is existence so that the existence of every thing comes from it. Thus it appears that the Beautiful is the identical as the Good; there is no being in the world without a share of the Beautiful and the Good as the origin of being. Good or Beautiful is the source of the identicalness and differences of each being.[14] One can wonder how they are differentiated; they differentiate from each other through their degree of sharing in the divine subsistence or existence in the hierarchy of being. Up to this point, it became apparent that beauty, both for Dionysius and Plotinus, is not just a property but existence in which each being shares in its own way.

Without a doubt, Dionysius' elucidation of beauty deeply influenced the medieval Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas, although his views on this subject are very controversial and interpreted differently by Neo-Thomist philosophers. Aquinas continues the discussion of beauty and good in the framework of Dionysius by interpreting *The Divine Names.* According to him, the Good is God himself. Beautiful and beauty belong in a different way to God and to his creatures. In God beauty and beautiful are indivisible; the beautiful and beauty are distinguished with respect to participation and participants. Thus we call something "beautiful" because it is a participant in beauty. Beauty, however, is a participation in the first cause, which makes all things beautiful. Therefore beauty is identical with Good and therefore with Being. He is called Beauty because he gives beauty to all created beings, according to the properties of each one. Everything that exists comes from beauty and goodness, that is, from God.[15] In this regard, it appears that for Aquinas, too, beauty is being.

2. BEAUTY IN ISLAMIC TRADITION

The most elaborated theories on beauty in Islamic tradition were done by mystic philosophers; this is the case in Christian tradition too. The conception of beauty by arts in Islamic tradition was inspired both by the Koran, tradition and Hellenistic heritage. Koran's verses were revealed in poetic manner to the extent it challenged the poets at the time. The conception of beauty of Islam cannot be imagined without its conception of truth which extends to all areas of being, whether involving God, humanity, life, or world. This is essential to Islamic aesthetics. Islamic *holistic* art, in general sense, could be seen a manifestation of Islamic ontological conceptions, taking worldly and human necessities into consideration. In other words, it is the aesthetic

reflection of Muslims' world view just as Christian art is the aesthetic reflection of Christians' world view. Yet to regard Islamic art wholly as religious would be a misleading generalization. However, many important artistic works in both Christian and Islamic art are religious.

The Koran is full of the verses where beauty is presented as the demonstration of God's existence. Therefore beauty is not just something for sensual pleasure, but also a contemplative proof of, or an eye through which we can comprehend, God's existence. Besides, the Koran points to the importance of aesthetic or perceptual pleasure for humans in its many verses and does not see perceptual or sensual beauty in itself as problematic.

The Koran offers us to think beauty as something related to creation and being in general, and so suggests an ontological conception of beauty. The essence of coming into existence is beauty itself. It is not that God creates beings and then makes them beautiful, but God beautifies them as they are created. All beauties in the world are the manifestation of the absolute beauty of Him. According to Islam to be brought into being is blessing given by Him, and the human being must live considering this truth. So it appears that one cannot imagine beauty apart from goodness at a metaphysical level. "For existence is ontologically the manifestation of God's Jamâl (beauty) and kamâl (perfection) nothing in the world is essentially ugly. Beauty is essential and ugliness is accidental. That means beauty and ugliness could be evaluated or interpreted differently with respect to the relationships of the state of affairs to each other. But everything in its absolute sense is beautiful."[16]

As is known, Neo-Platonist theories influenced profoundly the thought of philosophers in Islamic tradition. They happened to see some similarities between the Islamic suggestions and Hellenistic tradition to the extent they called Plato "Plato the Divine" and they tried to harmonize Islamic belief with Hellenistic philosophy. But this harmonization brought many controversies between theologians and the Peripatetic philosophers in Islamic medieval world with regard to the divine nature and the theory of emanation, which was indeed incompatible with Islamic theology because Neo-Platonist theory of emanation excluded divine will and held many mediating hierarchic intellects in creation. The most devastating attacks on these theories were done by al-Ghazali in his *Tahafut al-Falasifa.*

Al-Farabi, one of the most prominent philosophers of the early Islamic philosophy, built his philosophical system on the metaphysics of causation, emanationism and the Ptolemaic astronomy. Al-Farabi's conception of beauty must be dealt with considering his general ontology and cosmology. Actually he states clearly in *On the Perfect State* that beauty is mainly ontological.

According to Al-Farabi, The First Cause, or God in the language of religion, is the First Mover who is incorporeal and source of all beings. Through the

first intellect, the First Cause gives beings all incorporeal and corporeal existence in an emanationistic process. All beings are an emanationistic extension of this necessary, perfect, and absolute beautiful Being. Al-Farabi's notion of beauty is an intelligible and contemplative beauty. He sees splendor and brilliance as related to beauty. However, beauty is not only something visual but also intelligible because the First cause is also thinker and thought. "The First is in the most excellent state of existence, its beauty surpasses the beauty of every other beautiful existent, and the same applies to its splendour and its brilliance. Further, it has all these in its substance and essence by itself and by thinking (intelligizing) its essence."[17] Accordingly, Beauty as the Being is the giver of being of all existents. However, Farabi regards our beauty, splendor, and brilliance as accidental qualities because these are not in our substance. The beautiful and the beauty in the First are nothing but one essence.[18] The philosophy of al-Farabi suggests an optimistic philosophy and his understanding of beauty is consistent with it. "Beauty and brilliance and splendour mean in the case of every existent that it is in its most excellent state of existence and that it has attained its ultimate perfection."[19]

The famous illuminationist philosopher Sohravardi, too, deals with beauty related to perfection and holds an ontological conception of beauty. According to him, "The Necessary Being has absolute perfection and beauty. The beauty of a thing is that the perfection that befits it is to be obtained unto it. So nothing has beauty like the beauty of the Necessary Being, because its perfection is not other than its essence. Necessary being is the giver of all perfection: thus, complete beauty and perfection belong to it."[20] He identifies the good, beautiful, and beneficial in the terms of The Necessary Being. The Good, beautiful, and beneficial are same as essence of The Necessary Being. All things come into being because of It: Its perfection, goodness and beauty.[21] In this point of view it appears that Beauty as being is the cause of all existents.

The same thing applies to Ibn Arabi, one of the most elegant mystic philosophers of the history of thought. Beauty which is being because what exists is only Being, is a part of his mystical ontology where the multiplicity of being is impossible. Being which is identical with God is essentially and in nature one, but it has different manifestations or appearances in the terms of different spheres and levels. The world is the manifestation of Being that is Truth, Beauty, Grace, Compassion, Majesty; however, Being, or God, is neither identical with nor diverse from world.[22] Ibn Arabi mentions in his *Book on Majesty and Beauty* (Kitab al-Jalal Wa-l Jamal) where he makes a brilliant mystical metaphysic of beauty, basically two kinds of beauty: Jalal (Majesty) and Jamal (Beauty), and two different aspects of Beauty as related to existence and truth and their supra-aesthetic effect.[23] In this book Ibn Arabi puts

forward obviously the relation that proceeds from beauty to existence or the continuation of existence.

Rumi, the poet and thinker, treats beauty as ontological concept and related to love and truth. From his perspective, beauty could be divided into absolute and relative forms. The genuine and absolute beauty is that of God, for He is the being whose beauty is of him. The other beauties are beautiful as much as they participate in this absolute beauty because their beauties are not of them as their being is not of them. In the center of thought, for Rumi, is the divine love from which cosmic existence emerged. The absolute beauty shows itself with its manifestation on things and so God contemplates His own beauty on them and admires Himself. Love is the precondition to see and to know the truth of being. While we drink water from a glass we look at God, but the one who is not a lover sees his own face in the water.[24] Beauty and truth in Rumi are closely linked with each other. The beauty of things is the contemplative and intelligible manifestation of absolute beauty and truth. Love and beauty correlate with each other; we cannot imagine beauty without love and the converse. The cause of existence is God's love for himself or his own beauty. And, while He enjoys his beauty, its manifestation in the human, he falls in love with it, and so with himself. In short, the world is the mirror of our genuine beloved's beauty.

We are not trying to equate the conceptions of different religions and philosophers, but to indicate to that the conception of beauty is essentially common between these traditions whose traditional art is mainly divine. Up to this point, it appeared that both Christian and Islamic traditions saw beauty as existence or something ontological. This divine conception of beauty is linked strictly with conception of truth and morality. And the art works of both of them worked with this principle of beauty.

3. THE PROJECTION OF BEAUTY

However, the projections of this common conception of beauty differentiate from each other in some respects. Christian artists applied this conception of beauty in the naturalist perspective of Greek artists. But the Christian perspective transformed the Greek perspective and conception through its metaphysics to a more elevated form of the divinity; Christian art suggests divine intimacy through Jesus Christ more than the transcendence of First Person. Christian art embodies or imitates the reality which Second Person actualized so that we could feel and intuit the vitality and love of God directly. Christian art tries to evoke in us in general the divinity through the lived experience of Jesus Christ. Jesus penetrated into all of the holistic arts of the occidental culture, where it was focused on the grief or passion for which God is redemptive. Christian

art emphasizes the livingness, tenderness, and self-sacrifice of God; we contemplate in a painting of Jesus on the cross not only a crucified man that is projected in a very realistic way, but an innocent man who compensated for sin and suffered for the sake of all humanity. We see in his blooded eyes a plea to the Father for us. He is the bearer who bears the load of humanity. We do not contemplate only a murdered man, but a tragedy between father and son. Jesus on the cross is a tragedy in which God gave his unique, begotten son as a sacrifice for the redemption of humanity from their original sin and for their eternal happiness. In this regard, Christianity is a tragic religion that aims to purify (catharsis) all humanity. Thus, the Jesus of Christianity is a tragic hero differently from the Jesus of Islam. And, I believe that this holy tragedy is an important factor in the achievement of all tragedy in occidental culture.

Islamic art projects the divine beauty from a different perspective. Islamic art concentrates on the statement of the unity, transcendence, and eternity of God. Therefore it intends to make us feel or intuit them and to display the absolute forms of objects in the eternal and infinite knowledge of God. It is generally agreed that Islamic art was not carried out with the conception of mimesis or imitation. In my opinion, it is possible to read Islamic art as mimesis, perhaps not exactly the naturalist mimesis or imitation of embodied objects, but the mimesis of divine names and ideal beings or essences of embodied objects. For example, a horse or a man in a miniature is not an ordinary or a living being in the world, but a universal concept in the mind of God. While dealing with a special living being, it tries to reflect its eternal form in the knowledge of God. Islamic art brackets and stylizes or abstracts the real object in order to obtain its essence and sometimes makes radical changes in the reality of objects. The bracketed and abstracted object is freed of temporality. While in Christian art natural existence is prior to essence, in the Islamic arts essence is prior to natural existence. Yet this does not mean that Islamic art does not deal with reality or real events as topics. For instance, Turkish miniature art treated different social phenomena, such as Turkish victories, festivals, state affairs, and so forth.

Islamic art did not embrace "perspective" until modern period; the reason could be the insistence on eternity and transcendence for "perspective" suggests the sight of human. But, Islamic art intends to suggest the sight of God, not of the human–Turkish miniature painting embraced perspective under the influence of Western painting and also produced wonderful examples of miniatures with perspective. Besides, Islamic art invokes in the observer peace and tranquility; that is why it beautifies reality and does not show interest in tragedy. Rationality for Islam and love for Christianity can be taken as the central point. I think, Islam's strong emphasize on rationality caused Muslim artists overlook tragedy in life.

But how do we know that every individual artist in this tradition intended to reflect these views, while they were painting? Indeed, this style of painting is way of aesthetic expression rooted traditionally in Islamic countries, though an individual artist may or may not have thought or intended these philosophical views. This kind of explanation is not an attempt to read what went on in the heads of the artists, but an indication of the traits of the artistic style. In other words, these are not philosophical interpretations of the individual artists, but that of a tradition where many artists from different traditions work on both ordinary and extraordinary themes.

Secondly, the claims above on both traditions have, of course, exceptions or counterexamples, and the aesthetic experience of these artistic traditions is something richer than these general statements; they should be taken prevailing traits of both these traditions for certain ages. Especially, the statements on Islamic art are valid rather for its pre-modern era or for the phases prior to influences of western painting.

This general reading on Christian and Islamic art must not be absolutized. The art of a culture cannot be read deductively. Aesthetic interpretation appears in the details that emerge while one is experiencing art works; it does not matter whether they belong to this culture or that culture, whether its aesthetic conception is expressed in one way or another.

In conclusion, both Christianity and Islam try to reveal the divine beauty or beauty in their art works, in which we see reflections of the absolute beauty, though in different forms.

Mardin Artuklu University, Mardin, Turkey

NOTES

[1] Dorothy sayers, "Toward a Christian Asthetic," *in Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World*, ed. Roderick Jellama (Grand rapids: Eerdmans 1969), p. 169. Quotation: Nicholas Walterstorrf, *Art in Action* (Grand Rapids, USA: Eardmans Publishing Co. 1980), p. 68.

[2] See Plato, *Philebos*, Complete Works, ed. John M. Cooper and trans. Dorothea Frede (Indianapolis, USA: Hackett Publishing Company), 51a–d, 64e; Plato, *Timaeus*, Ibid., trans. Donald J. Zeyl, 87c et seq.

[3] See Plato, *Greater Hippias*, Ibid., 289d and 197c, d.

[4] See Plato, *Symposium*, Ibid., trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, 211a, b; 211b.

[5] See Plato, Ibid., 209b, c, d.

[6] In the Pythagorean philosophy mathematic has a metaphysical character. Therefore, harmony, too, as a part of beauty has a metaphysical character. And, for a detailed and chronological discussion of the beauty in Plato's dialogues, see Habip Türker, "Platon Estetiğinin Uğrakları –Zamandizinsel Bir Yaklaşım", *Kutadgubilig* 13 (March 2008). pp. 9–19.

[7] Plotinus, *The Ethical Treatises –First Ennead*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Boston: Charles T. Branford Company), p. 78.

[8] Ibid., p. 78–79.
[9] Ibid., p. 78–79.
[10] Ibid., p. 85.
[11] Pseudo-Dionysious The Aeropagite, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, USA: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 73.
[12] Ibid., p. 72.
[13] Ibid., p. 76.
[14] Ibid., p. 767.
[15] Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas,* trans. Hugh Bredin (Harvard, USA: Harvard University Press, 1988) p. 26 seq.
[16] Turan Koç, *Islam Estetiği* (Istanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2008), p. 107.
[17] Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, *On The Perfect State*, trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford, USA: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 85.
[18] Ibid., p. 85.
[19] Ibid., pp. 83–85.
[20] Sohravardi, *The Book of Radiance*, trans. Hossein Ziai (Costa Mesa, USA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), p. 41.
[21] Ibid., p. 41.
[22] Ibn Arabi's conception of creation is not coming into being from nothingness, but from existence to another state of existence; existence is wholly different strata of one Being. He calls existence of something in the knowledge of God before its appearance in the world as *thubût* and its becoming in the outside world as existence. While an existent appears in the outside world, its existence as *thubût* goes on. In order to be brought in to being, something has to have ability to accept to exist. This is not something gained later but an essential ability to exist. The contingents are separated from the impossible ones by their ability to exist; God's will to create applies to only the contingents. Ibn Arabi calls the existents in the knowledge of God before their becoming in the outside world as *a'yan thabita* (unchanged essences or eternal individual entities). These unchanged essences that are the knowledge of God on himself are neither identical with, nor differentiated from the essence of God. So God's creation, which is the necessity of his Grace and Compassion, becomes manifestation of his essence (zât); creation is a passing from a state of existence to another state of existence. Ibn Arabi explains the relationship between God and the world through the metaphor of mirror. Mirror represents the Being or God, and the forms on the mirror represent the contingents. Ibn Arabi uses this symbol in antoher way too. Accordingly, God is the forms mirror on the mirror and the contingents are the mirror. In concise, creation is the manifestation of God on the mirror of contingents or the manifestation of contingents on the mirror of God. See Tahir Uluç, "İbn Arabi'de Mistik Sembolizm", *Tasavvuf: İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*16, (2007), pp.151–190.
[23] See Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, *On Majesty and Beauty*, trans Rabia Terris Harris, http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/jalalwajamal.pdf#search="jamal"
[24] İsmail Yakıt, "Mevlana'da Aşk Estetiği", *Journal of Rumi Studies*1, 2007, pp. 39–40.

BRUCE ROSS

A POETRY OF MYSTICISM: SOLOMON IBN GABIROL, MAULANA JALALUDDIN RUMI, AND RAINER MARIA RILKE

Abstract: Ibn Gabirol (c.1021–c.1058), Rumi (1207–1273), and Rilke (1875–1926) each produced poetry that reflected what might be called mysticism. Some of the poetry of Ibn Gabirol and Rumi has in fact been incorporated for liturgical and devotional purposes. Rilke's poetry, reflecting the challenges of the modern world, has been interpreted and alluded to by many artists, writers, and musicians. Ibn Gabirol sums up the provenance of these three poets in his philosophic work *The Fountain of Light*: "sometimes [you feel] that you are only part of them [spiritual substance], because of the bond between you and between physical being; and sometimes it will seem to you that you are the sum total of these [spiritual] substances and that there is no difference between you and them." As he declares in "And Don't Be Astonished": "he's soul encircling the physique,/and a sphere in which all is held." Rumi expresses this experience in "Suddenly A Moon Appeared": "For in the moon, my body, by grace had become soul./And when I traveled in this soul, I saw nothing but moon,/Until the mystery of eternal theophany lay open to me." He puts it succinctly in "Ode 2721": "For the fire within us/There is no translator." Whereas Ibn Gabirol's poetry as an approach toward the spiritual and a state of "blessedness" and Rumi's poetry as a return to the spiritual through love are expressed with confidence, infused as they are by neo-Platonism, Judaism, Kabbalah, Islam, and Sufism, Rilke's poetry affected according to Arthur S. Wensinger, "the transmutation (by the poet) of the world into spirit through feeling … because we (and he) are mortal and remembering." Rilke expresses in the *Duino Elegies* this transmutation as a necessity in a complicated time: "Nowhere, beloved, can world exist but within./Our life is spent in changing./And ever lessening,/the outer world disappears.../The spirit of the times makes vast storehouses of power,/formless as the stretched tension it gathers from everything." This chapter examines how through poeticized acts of remembering and communion these three poets explore the extraordinary nature of internal mystical experience.

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Why are you troubled and frightened, my soul?
Be still and dwell where you are.
Since the world to you is small as a hand,
you won't, my storm, get far.

Ibn Gabirol, "Why Are You Frightened"[1]

Every thirst gets satisfied except
that of these fish, the mystics,

who swim a vast ocean of grace
still somehow longing for it!

Rumi, "The Reed Flute's Song"[2]

The inner soul, that presence of which most know nothing,
about which poets are so ambiguous,
he married that one to the beloved.

Rumi, "Sanai"[3]

I would like to step out of my heart
and go walking beneath the enormous sky.
I would like to pray.

Rilke, "Lament"[4]

In Mircea Eliade's monumental *A History of Religious Ideas* the scholar of spirituality matter-of-factly distinguishes philosophic and mystical elements in various spiritual traditions. Two of the three poets considered here, Ibn Gabirol (c.1021–c.1058) and Rumi (1207–1273), are connected with established spiritual traditions, Judaism and Islam. Ibn Gabirol was directly influenced by neo-Platonic thought and both he and Rumi incorporated Sufism and its mystical values into their world view. Ibn Gabirol's poetry continues to be used for liturgical purposes and appears in Jewish prayer books. Rumi's father taught Islamic spirituality as did Rumi and Rumi's poetry continues to be used in devotional practice. Rumi in fact is credited with establishing the so-called whirling dervishes of Sufism. Like Rumi's spiritual breakthrough in meeting with the wandering teacher Shams, the young Rilke's (1875–1926) visit to Russia revitalized his conventionalized Christianity through observation of the simplicity of spiritual practice and the depth of faith he witnessed there. Later under the sway of artistic currents and aesthetic theories in Paris circles he developed an intensity of observation to connect with nature and art. More importantly, it is clear that he had mystical-like experiences in different parts of his life that compared to those of Ibn Gabirol and Rumi. Their poetry explores

emotional currents that are easily associated with mysticism: a transformation of consciousness, a related transformational poetics, ecstasy, a cosmic ocean of wisdom, a sense of universal unity, a poetic imagery of the moon, stars, and sky, and an elevated understanding of love.

Ibn Gabirol's devotional "All the Creatures of Earth and Heaven" relies on the Kabbalist numerological and alphabetical mysticism of the *Sefer Yetzirah* (*Book of Creation*):

All the creatures of earth and heaven
    together as one bear witness in saying:
        the Lord is One and One is his name.

Your path has thirty-two courses
and all who fathom your mystery see them[5]

The first stanza's third line is the central tenet of Judaism, the Unity of God, expressed in the central prayer of Judaism ("Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One"). The next two lines expound the mysticism of creation according to Kabbalah. The "thirty-two courses" are the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet through which God created the universe and the ten *sefirot*, the attributes of God that carry divine influence to the visible universe, as elaborated in line twenty-five: "All flows from you in extension." The *sefirot*, here the Kabbalist diagram of ten concentric circles surrounding the *En-Sof*, the eternal ray of divine light, also accompany a ritual gesture of both hands held upward in "He Dwells Forever":

He yearned, longing for the teacher's counsel;
thought to reveal the ten spheres and their circles;
and against them inscribed

        ten without end—
    and five against five now depend.[6]

In the invocation of the devotional *Kingdom's Crown* Ibn Gabirol delineates the distinction between the physical and spiritual, relying on neo-Platonic imagery:

yours is the real which becomes existence
    in light's reflection
and in whose shadow we live:

yours the two worlds and the border between them,
    one for action and one for reward . . .[7]

Rumi uses similar neo-Platonic imagery in "Where are We?":

What is the body? That shadow of a shadow
of your love, that somehow contains
the entire universe.[8]

Most known for his ecstatic poems based of Sufi practice, Rumi's frequent use of wine is defined by a music ensemble that interprets Sufi poetry, including Rumi: "'drunkenness' refers to the successful attainment of a Special State, and wine is understood as the concentrated Practice which opens the 'door of the Tavern.'"[9]

The Sufi whirling, which Rumi participated in, is a form of trance dance that intends to unite the believer with God, the symbolic spiritual connection of drunkenness.

The essential Sufi mystical practice of remembering God's Presence is simply defined in "Zikr" where also the core testament of Islamic faith is declared:

A naked man jumps in the river, hornets swarming
above him. The water is "zikr," remembering,
"There is no reality but God. There is only God."[10]

This is the phrase said to be repeated endlessly, like the Jesus prayer, the Buddhist Nembutsu prayer, or the Hindu mantra, to maintain a mystical connection to spiritual reality.

Rilke, according to Wolfgang Leppmann, regarded the spiritual practice of the West a "mundane form of Christianity."[11] The breakthrough experience of Russian Orthodox Christianity, including the devotional use of icons, offered Rilke a Christianity in which simple feeling was connected with deep belief, an experience of spirituality that could be applied to his poetry and poetics. Yet, as Leppmann notes, before this time "Rilke was no mystic; the *unio mystica*, the fusion of one's soul with God, remained foreign to him."[12] Though this might not be said of Rilke's subsequent poetry, he sees the despiritualization of the West as an avoidance of transpersonal states, such as mysticism: " . . . the experiences that are called 'visions,' the whole so-called 'spirit-world,' death . . . [have been] so crowded out of life that the senses with which we could have grasped them are atrophied. To say nothing of God."[13] Rilke's Russian illumination produced the "Book of Hours." One of its prayers depicts the Western collapse of spirituality:

Lord, the great cities are lost and rotting.
Their time is running out.

The people there live harsh and heavy,
Crowded together, weary of their own routines.

Beyond them waits and breathes your earth,
But where they are it cannot reach them.[14]

His *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* records the inner struggle against this condition where Malte's life "began its long love to God" and "his senses, accustomed to far distances, grasped the extreme remoteness of God."[15] Even after his move to Paris, he remarks in an essay of this condition: " . . . [we live in] a world in which fate and even God himself have become famous above all because they answer us with silence . . . ."[16] Rilke, as expressed in a letter, sees a redemptive resolution of this condition through an encounter with a kind of cosmic emptiness that underlies the universe:

> Not until we can make the abyss our dwelling-place will the paradise that we have sent on ahead of us turn around and will everything deeply and fervently of the here-and-now, which the Church embezzled for the Beyond, come back to us; then all the angels will decide, singing praises, in favor of the earth![17]

Rilke's poetry and poetics, in Arthur S. Wensiner's summation, "the transmutation (by the poet) of the world into spirit through feeling . . . because we (and he) are mortal and remembering," are the testament of his experience of spiritual recovery.[18]

The route to a transformational poetics passes through a transformation of consciousness. In the mystical path the transformation often begins with fear and trembling and completes itself in a sense of wonder and awe, a path incorporated in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetics of the West. For the believer poet, like Ibn Gabirol and Rumi, such a transformation is centered on their relationship with God.

Transformation often begins in a sense of longing for something unknown. Ibn Gabirol in "What's Troubling You, My Soul" expresses this: "[I] sigh for this world and its smallness/which can't contain my longing."[19] His devotional "I Look for You" connects this process with God:

I come confused
 and afraid for you see
the thoughts of my heart.

. . . . . .

And so I'll give praise
 to your being as long
 as your breath-in-me moves.[20]

This is expressed as a precious simile:

Small in my awe
    and fear
in my own
eyes like an inchworm . . .[21]

His "Why are You Frightened," cited as an epigraph, puts a whimsical containment of such fear through prayer or meditation:

Why are you troubled and frightened, my soul?
Be still and dwell where you are.
Since the world to you is small as a hand,
    You won't, my storm, get far.[22]

Gabirol contrasts true personal inner illumination with those who the world generally honors: "Once you've found your knowledge you'll find/the world's elect are last in its line—"[23] In "Your Soul Strains and You Sigh" the object upon which that illumination depends is expressed in the imagery of the beloved, not unlike that in the "Song of Songs." Here the beloved is the *Shekinah*, literally dwelling, the divine presence in the visible universe:

It isn't good for my soul to be
    like the sun darkened by darkening clouds,
so long as I live I'll lift that soul
    up towards its dwelling beyond their mist—[24]

Since the *Shekinah* is conceived of as feminine and associated with the moon, the poem's imagery suggests the vicissitudes of the soul's relationship with divine presence, the waxing and waning moon.

Ibn Gabirol's poetics is grounded in a transformation of the world, *tikkun olam*, a kind of reparation of original cosmic good, that is a kind of spiritual second sight:

For I have an eye that ranges the world
    and sees the secrets of other men's hearts,
and my heart's gates have always been open
    and my poems' blades are sevenfold sharp[25]

This poetics is also predicated in the Kabbalist metaphysical duality of the true *sefirot* and a counter *sefirot* derived from the evil force in the world, the *sitra achra*. The dichotomy in essence as played out in the world of men is one opposing the *yetzer ha-tov*, the good impulse, to the *yetzer ha-ra*, the evil impulse. In phrasing suggestive of Blake's "Eternity" Ibn Gabirol suggests one "wake" to the eternity in the present and not be consumed with worldly desire:

If your desire is like a fortified city,
a siege will bring it down in time:
You have no portion here in this world—
So wake for the world to come.[26]

In a poem from *Kingdom's Crown* addressed to God this poetics is elaborated:

and your wisdom gave rise to an endless desire
in the world as within an artist or worker—

to bring out the stream of existence from Nothing,
the light flowing from sight's extension—[27]

This poetics is not unlike what Rilke comes to formulate. Rumi's poetics is more focused on the spiritual transport resulting from inner transformation. Rumi expresses his poetics in "A Community of Spirit," which begins by rejecting existential fear and concludes with the illumination of a dervish's dance:

Be empty of worrying.
Think of who created thought!

Why do you stay in prison
when the door is so wide open?

Move outside the tangle of fear-thinking.
Live in silence.

Flow down and down in always
widening rings of being.[28]

The transformation implied here is not unlike Ibn Gabirol's yearning. Rumi accordingly notes: "My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that,/and I intend to end up there."[29] He even provides a blueprint for meditation that incorporates the word for divine presence with breathing:

Don't be satisfied with the "name" of HU,
With just words about it.

Experience "that breathing."[30]

The state of transport is in a transpersonal state as Rumi famously expressed: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,/there is a field. I'll met you there."[31] This state contrasts with rationalistic understanding in the transcendence of what normally are mutually exclusive designations of time:

We look back and analyze the events
of our lives, but there is another way
of seeing, a backward-and-forward-at-once
vision, that is not rationally understandable.[32]

This vision is metaphorically compared in a poem with the vividness of the dream state:

There is an inner wakefulness
that directs the dream,

and that will eventually startle us back
to the truth of who we are.[33]

It is also suggested metaphorically as his house being covered by water. He declares that the water "rose last night out of the courtyard/hidden in the center of my chest."[34] Another metaphor for the state is a blank sheet of paper where "something might be planted,/a seed, possibly, from the Absolute."[35]

The seeds are moments of spiritual illumination but they are also the basis of Rumi's poetics where the seeds become his poems. In Sufic practice and in Rumi's poetics the normal self is abandoned by a state of ecstasy in which an inner mystical beauty is experienced which transforms the world:

I saw you and became empty.
The emptiness, more beautiful than existence,
it obliterates existence, and yet when it comes,
existence thrives and creates more existence![36]

Rilke didn't have an established spiritual framework equivalent to Ibn Gabirol's Kabbalah or Rumi's Sufism to ground his own fears and yearnings or to establish a poetics. Yet he, like them, underwent transformations of consciousness and established a transformational poetics. While Ibn Gabirol confronted personal social disassociation through his orphan status and presumably unappealing appearance and displacement because of the loss of patronage and Rumi encountered the devastating loss of his teacher Shams, Rilke suffered the presumed peculiarities of his upbringing and the near collapse of Old Europe through war and the breakdown of social hierarchies. Yet, each poet through the complexities of their innate genius was able to engage a similar kind of inner transformation to develop memorable poetry of spiritual illumination.

Rilke's spiritual crisis is famously pronounced at the beginning of his *Duino Elegies*:

Ah, whom can we use then?
Not angels, not men, and the shrewd animals
notice that we're not very much at home
in the world we've expounded.[37]

Rilke's solution to his crisis, that which will serve as a buttress to this devalued worldview, is a transformational poetry and poetics. He therefore notes: "I believe that almost all our sadness are moments of tension that we find paralyzing because we no longer hear our surprised feelings living."[38] This internal loss of childlike wonder collides with the depersonalization of the great European cities:

So my voice becomes a breath and a shout.
One prepares the way, the other
Surrounds my loneliness with angels.[39]

May both voices accompany me,
when I am scattered again in city and fear.[40]

He reiterates his condition in "The Spanish Trilogy" where the pastoral solace of nature is contrasted with the cities:

Let me, though, when again I have all around me
the chaos of cities, the tangled
skein of commotion, the blare of traffic, alone,
let me, above the most dense confusion,
remember the sky and the darkening rim of the valley
where the flock appeared, echoing, on its way home.[41]

Such romantic memories, Wordsworth's "spots of time," are not the final solution to his alienation, though, as the symbolic caged animal in "The Panther" attests. The panther rarely has such a memory, suggestive of "Zikr," of its lost freedom: "Only at times, the curtain of the pupils/lifts, quietly . . . ."[42] The solution for Rilke is to find the "equivalents among the visible for the inwardly seen."[43] He is moreover looking for the timeless absolutes underlying being in a stressing condition: ". . . we, who have undertaken God, can never finish. We keep putting off our nature, we need more time."[44] This condition and its hoped for solution is addressed in *Sonnets to Orpheus*:

Hail to the spirit that can unite us;
for we live really in figures. Always
go the clocks with little strides
along with our intrinsic days.[45]

Yet in considering the modern world's collapse confronted in the *Duino Elegies* and the deep consideration of death that surrounds our existence in *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Rilke notes of the nexus of these projects: "To show the *identity* of dreadfulness and bliss, these two faces on the same divine head . . . which just presents itself this way or that, according to our distance from it or the state of mind in which we perceive it. . . "[46] To resolve the complicated nature of such a state, Rilke concentrated on getting closer to that experience: "Through participation in it all to bind myself more firmly to reality—which so often denies me—*to be of it*, not only in feeling but in knowledge. . . to become more sure and not so homeless."[47] This new mode of identification is predicated on the "inner self": " . . . everything penetrates more deeply into me and does not stop at the place where until now it always used to finish. I have an inner self of which I was ignorant."[48] Rilke explicates the amorphous nature of the developed feeling of such a self in the *Duino Elegies*: "For when we feel,/we evaporate ./ . . . Does the cosmic space in which we dissolve taste of us? Do the angels really seize . . ./. . . a bit of our being . . .?"[49] Later in the elegies he sums up the enormity of the juxtaposition of the inner self and the spiritless world:

Nowhere, beloved, can world exist but within.
Our life is spent changing. And ever lessening,
the outer world disappears.

. . . . . .

The spirit of the times makes vast storehouses of power,
formless as the stretched tension it gathers from
everything.
Temples it knows no longer.[50]

The dilemma as expressed earlier in the elegies is that " . . . even the nearest things are far from mortals"[51] and " . . . turned to creation, we see there/only the reflection of the free,/darkened by us."[52] Strategies for confronting the seemingly hapless are offered in *Letters to a Young Poet*: poetic creation is dependent on "its continuous great confirmation and realization in the world, nothing without the thousandfold concordance from things and animals . . ."[53]; " . . . be attentive to that which rises up in you and set it above everything that you observe about you . . ."[54]; " . . . [o]nly the individual who is solitary is like a thing placed under profound laws . . . "[55]; and " . . . [one] must hold to what is difficult . . . [and] it is good to be solitary, for solitude is difficult . . . ."[56] These strategies are necessary for a poet searching for deeper meaning who is confronted with a secularized world. For Rilke, they lead to a transformation of the purely observed inner nature of things to an almost mystic transformation of those things:

Work of the eyes is done, now
go and do heart-work
on all the images imprisoned in you[57]

The poet Hölderlin serves as a model of this process. In Rilke's "To Hölderlin" the process of "completing" or transforming an image, "filling" it, is described:

We are not permitted to linger, even with what is most
intimate. From images that are full, the spirit
plunges on to others that suddenly must be filled[58]

In the same poem a transformative poetics is offered in which the "narrow similes" of lesser poets are compared to Hölderlin's disinterested but superior treatment of the poetic imagery:

No one
gave it away more sublimely, gave it back
more fully to the universe, without any need to hold on.[59]

The artifice and cleverness of the lesser poets are bound to a mental dependence of objectivity. Hölderlin was able, rather, to intuitively represent the spirit of reality as such in his poetry. Rilke uses the metaphor of a bee gathering honey to represent what he recognized as Hölderlin's poetics in his own:

> Everywhere transience is plunging into the depths of Being . . . . It is our task to imprint this temporary, perishable earth into ourselves so deeply, so painfully and passionately, that its essence can rise again, "invisibly," inside us. We are the bees of the invisible. We wildly collect the honey of the visible, to store it in the great golden hive of the invisible. The Elegies show us at this work, the work of the continual conversion of the beloved visible and tangible world into the invisible vibrations and agitation of our own nature . . .[60]

If Rilke were under the sway of Kabbalah or Sufism he would consider this "continual conversion" a tracing back to ultimate reality.

In his story "An Experience," which Rilke called the "most intimate thing [he] ever wrote"[61] this mystical tracing back might be perceived:

> A periwinkle standing near, whose blue gaze he had often already seen, came to him now from a more spiritual distance, but with such inexhaustible significance, as if nothing more were now to be concealed. Altogether he became aware that all objects appeared to him now more distant and at the same time, somehow or other, more true.[62]

This transfiguration of experience is explained by Rilke almost in the mystical language in Ibn Gabirol's philosophic treatise *The Fountain of Light*:

> The angel of the Elegies is that creature in whom the transformation of the visible into the invisible, which we are accomplishing, already appears in its completion . . .; that being who guarantees the recognition of a higher level of reality in the invisible.—Therefore "terrifying" for us, because we, its lovers and transformers, still cling to the visible.[63]

The nature of reality as expressed in the philosophic and scientific issue of the one and the many, becomes a spiritual issue in Rilke's poetics. The Taoist myriad things held within the Tao and derived from it and the enlightened Buddhist vision in which the Buddha is seen in all things and processes address this transformed idea likewise. The poet Rilke verges on such understanding in a letter:

> I often wonder whether things unemphasized in themselves haven't exerted the most profound influence on my development and my work; the encounter with a dog; the hours I spent in Rome watching a rope-maker, who in his craft repeated one of the oldest gestures in the world—as did the potter in a little village on the Nile; standing beside his wheel was indescribably and in the most mysterious sense fruitful for me . . .[64]

The naturalness of these images is suggestive of an adjusted state of existence. Rilke praised this state in plants and animals and the fleeting transport between lovers. If such realities and their poetic expression are amplified emotionally, they approach the mystical states of ecstasy and wonder celebrated by our three poets.

One of the distinguishing features of mystical experience, recorded in personal testaments, is this experience of a powerful sense of ecstasy and often a corresponding sense of cosmic wonder. The boasting tone of hyperbole in Ibn Gabirol's "I'm Prince to the Poem" could be construed as a metaphoric expression of the poet's overwhelming joy before all experience, an idiom close to that of Rumi: the poet becomes a prince and a musician and singer for all the kings. His concluding lines suggest the ecstatic wisdom contained in such feeling: "and here I've lived just sixteen years,/and my heart is like eighty within them."[65] His "Now the Thrushes" also suggests Rumi in its celebration of the rebirth of spring. The naturalness of the birds which "sing on the sprigs without thinking" and the budding branches seem "as though they were speaking" depict an elevated state of joy where the world flows out in wonder and makes the poet urge everyone to start drinking.[66] In *Kingdom's Crown* such wonder is directed toward God. So God's form becomes an enigma: "and your form's obscure and beyond detection/and deeper than all revelation . . .. "[67] The refrain "You are alive" which is the first line of each of the four stanzas in Canto IV expresses the hidden mystical truth of religious experience, concluding with an allusion to the Tree of Life in Genesis:

> You are alive,
> and those who reach your secret discover
> delight in the world,
> and eat and live forever . . .[68]

Thus in his philosophic work *The Fountain of Light* there is an awareness of the spiritual connection of all things in such an elevated state:

> . . . and sometimes [you feel] that you are only part of them [spiritual substance] , because of the bond between you and between physical being; and sometimes it will seem to you that you are the sum total of all these [spiritual] substances and that there is no difference between you and them.[69]

In a neo-Platonic rendering, Ibn Gabirol's poetry and liturgical prayers take their intellectual grounding for the oceanic feeling of cosmic wonder.

Rumi, however, suggests the ecstatic state is non-describable by normal language or thought in "Ode 2721":

For the fire within us
There is no translator.

. . . . . .

Every atom of out soul is a universe
No mouth may contain the universe.[70]

He is also cautionary about the universal flow of experience. In "The Many Wines" he exclaims "Every object, every being,/is a jar full of delight" but advises one to "choose the purest" and concludes with a Taoist-like metaphor for the naturalness of true joy:

Drink wine that moves you
As a camel moves when it's been untied,
And is just ambling about.[71]

For Rumi the philosophic mind/body problem can be resolved through an understanding of the body's true nature:

The body is a device to calculate
The astronomy of the spirit.
Look through that astrolabe
And become oceanic.[72]

However, even the mystics depicted in one of the epigraphs are, in a somewhat stretched metaphor, like fish who aren't aware of the water they live in, the "vast ocean of grace," because though they are in a state of bliss they desire more of that bliss.[73]

In a neo-Platonic turn on the ideal and physical body Rumi sees the reality of both but suggest an awareness of transforming both into the mystic's state of grace:

We are the mirror as well as the face in it.
We are tasting the taste this minute
of eternity.[74]

Moreover, this experience of grace and cosmic wonder in the immediate present tense can be received, reliably, in the Sufi's dancing, according to Rumi: "A secret turning in us/makes the universe turn."[75]

Rilke's continued dialectic of the poet's consciousness with the manifestation of the world is expressed tenderly in his *Letters to a Young Poet*. Early advice is to look at nature with childlike, even Taoist, receptivity: ". . . draw near to Nature. Then try, like some first human being, to say what you see and experience and love and lose."[76] Later advice brings the poet to Rumi-like joy:

> And about emotions: all emotions are pure which gather you and lift you up; that emotion is impure which seizes only "one" side of you being and so distorts you . . . Every heightening is good if it is in your "whole" blood, if it is not intoxication, not turbidity, but joy which one can see clear to the bottom.[77]

In "An Experience" Rilke makes clear that these procedures, here responding to a bird's call, will have their desired effect:

> . . . a bird-call in the open and in his inner consciousness were one, when it did not, as it were, break on the barrier of his body, but gathered together into an undivided space, in which there was only one region of the purest, deepest consciousness, mysteriously protected. On that occasion he had closed his eyes, so that he might not be confused by the contour of the body in such a generously granted experience, and infinity passed into him from all sides in so familiar a manner that he could believe he felt within him the gentle presence of the stars which had now appeared.[78]

This is the kind of experience that mystics might have and which theologically leads to God as Rilke suggests in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*: "Fate loves to invent patterns and designs. But life itself is difficult because of its simplicity. It has only a few things of grandeur not fit for us. The saint, rejecting fate, chooses these, face to face with God."[79] Rilke's Orpheus is able to bridge the reality of our mortality to express such moments of grandeur, much as Buddhists find form embedded in cosmic emptiness: "Only in the dual/realm will voices become/eternal and pure."[80] The *Duino Elegies* focuses on related moments of illumination: "For it seems that everything/is keeping us a secret. Look: the trees *are* even though most of humanity metaphorically goes past everything like a bartering of the breeze."[81] The essence of past spiritual striving though outpaced by the modern world is for Rilke nonetheless available: "I show it to you, angel, still *there*."[82] He refers to this reconstruction of such essence metaphorically as the state of innocence in the bold phrase: "for womb is all."[83] Humanity lives a belated existence in which "we have the bearing/of a man going away" and "we live,/forever saying farewell."[84] Yet the world can be transfigured through the poet and as expressed in the metaphor of lovers'

feeling: the poet is able "to say it/as the Things themselves never fervently thought to be" and where, for the lovers, "everything seems/transfigured/in their feelings."[85]

Appropriately Rilke addresses an ineffable "Beloved" to whom he offers his transformed experience:

All the immense
images in me—the far-off, deeply-felt landscape,
cities, towers, and bridges, and un-
suspected turns in the path,
and those powerful lands that were once
pulsing with the life of the gods—
all rise within me to mean
you, who forever elude me.[86]

This flow of experience resonates with Rilke's theory of in-seeing in which things are transfigured, here exemplified in a dog's essence:

> . . . what I mean is to let yourself precisely into the dog's center, the point from which it begins to be a dog, the place in it where God, as it were, would have sat down for a moment . . . I tell you "where" my very greatest feeling, my world-feeling, my earthly bliss was, I must confess to you: it was, again and again, here and there, in such in-seeing—in the indescribably swift, deep, timeless moments of this godlike in-seeing.[87]

In-seeing is predicated upon Rilke's view of consciousness, perhaps in part derived from his encounter with Freudian theory:

> Extensive as the "external" world is, with all its sidereal distances it hardly bears comparison with the dimensions, the *depth-dimensions*, of our inner being, which does not even need the spaciousness of the universe to be, in itself, almost unlimited . . . . From my earliest youth I have felt the intuition (and have also, as far as I could, lived by it) that at some deeper cross-section of this pyramid of consciousness, mere *being* could become an event, the inviolable presence and simultaneity of everything that we, on the upper, "normal," apex of self-consciousness, are permitted to experience only as entropy.[88]

Ibn Gabirol, Rumi, and Rilke have each used the imagery of the moon, the sky, and the stars to evoke such "inviolable presence" and awe. The prayer for the new moon in Orthodox Judaism is an example of the spiritualization of such imagery. In "Truth Seekers Turn" Ibn Gabirol uses the Kabbalist symbol of the *Shekinah*/moon as a simile for his poetry of "hidden wisdom" that is "like the new moon, month by month in its rise."[89] The feminine divine presence, the *Shekinah*, is also the intersection of the transmission point of the divine influence to world as the last point on the sefiriotic system, *Malkut*. So Ibn Gabirol is suggesting in his poems' "hidden wisdom" a kind of divine illumination. Using the moon in this way as a symbol of heightened spiritual

awareness is similarly a commonality in Buddhist-oriented poetry and religious writing in general. The connection for Ibn Gabirol is made in a pun through Kabbalist letter-mysticism in "The Moon was Cut." He describes the crescent moon cradling a star, as is sometimes seen. This image resembles the Hebrew letter *yod* with a dot for emphasis. *Yod* is the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, the four-lettered unpronounced name for God. Therefore the poem ends with the poet "who saw there the name of the Lord . . . ."[90] The *Shekinah*/moon symbolism appears again in "I am the Man":

It was night and the sky was clear,
    and the moon was pure at its center
    as it led me along discernment's sphere,
teaching me by its light and direction—[91]

The poem later uses the symbolism of the Exile of the *Shekinah* as a metaphor of a lack of spiritual connection: "I no longer hope for the moon, my friend,/which thickest dark has replaced."[92] The importance of such imagery is reflected in "Three Things," a prayer on divine presence that is a kind of meditation exercise, perhaps like the transport brought on by the prayer for the new moon. Addressed to God, the poet first presents his meditation on "the skies which make me [him] think of your Name"; he then describes the formal standing position in prayer as "the place where I stand"; and thirdly, he thanks God for his soul, "for heart's reflection with me," the soul being the vehicle for divine illumination.[93]

Rumi is using the moon also as a symbol of divine illumination in "Be Melting Snow" which deconstructs the symbolic moon from the real one:

"The moon. The full moon is inside your house."

My friends and I go running into the street.
"I'm in here," comes a voice from the house, but we aren't listening.
We're looking up at the sky.[94]

Rumi also incorporates this symbolic moon imagery in "Quietness":

Your old life was a frantic running
from silence.

The speechless full moon
comes out now.[95]

The Taoist saying "Enter stillness" evokes the spiritual state recommended here.

Rilke emphasizes also the stillness of this state in the one of his poems in which the heightened poetic impact of the heavenly bodies is emphasized:

My soul, dressed in silence, rises up
and stands alone before you: can't you see?
Don't you know that my prayer is growing ripe
upon your vision . . .

. . . . . .

And I grow strong with all magnificence
and turn myself into a star's vast silence
above the strange and distant city, Time.[96]

As if struggling with the philosophic issue of time and the mystical experience of timelessness, in "Lament" Rilke uses the available sense of awe in the imagery of the sky and stars to express one of his heightened inner moments:

Everything is far
and long gone by.
I think that the star
glittering above me
has been dead for a million years.

. . . . . .

I would like to step out of my heart
and go walking beneath the enormous sky.
I would like to pray.[97]

The mystical idea of union with the universe would almost seem moribund. Our three poets in various modalities document the existential reality for them of this transpersonal state. Ibn Gabirol expresses it boldly in "Forget about 'If' and 'Maybe'":

For I'm, indeed, a soul
    that moves man in creation,
and I'm a sphere as well, it's true,
    the planets circle through me;
and the world is like my chariot,
    my train fills completely.
Evil will never enter my heart,
    never cross its threshold.[98]

The poet has transformed himself into what some Kabbalists call "big mind," an elevated cosmic state in the world that is obviously beyond good and evil. Here the distinction between cosmos and microcosmos evaporates. Reminiscent of Rilke's poetics, everything is experienced and transformed

in this elevated state and presumably unified by it. In *Kingdom's Crown* Ibn Gabirol directly addresses the theological statement of unity in a prayer that begins each stanza with "You are One." Approached experientially as mysticism, Ibn Gabriol expresses the theological wonder of such an idea; "and your oneness's mystery amazes the wise,/who've never known what it was."[99]

Rumi in "Admit It and Change Everything" also expresses boldly the experience of this sense of unity in an often hyperbolically dramatic manner:

I do not know who I am.
I am in astounded lucid confusion.
I am not a Christian, I am not a Jew, I am not a Zoroastrian,
And I am not even a Muslim.

. . . . . .

I am the life of life.
I am that cat, this stone, no one.
I have thrown duality away like an old dishrag,
I see and know all times and worlds,
As one, one, always one.[100]

Yet this feeling of oneness has been expressed like this by many believers and non-believers before and after Rumi.

Rilke puts the experience in simple language in *The Book of Hours*:

I find you Lord, in all Things and in all
my fellow creatures, pulsing with your life;
as a tiny seed you sleep in what is small
and in the vast you vastly yield yourself.[101]

He repeats this sense of universal presence in "Buddha in Glory," addressed here to Buddha's essence as the other poets addressed poems to God's essence:

Center of all centers, core of cores,
almond self-enclosed and growing sweet—
all the universe, to the furthest stars
and beyond them, is your flesh, your fruit.[102]

The poem was based on a statue in Rodin's garden. Impressed by the stillness projected continuously by the statue Rilke said to Rodin, "He is the center of the world."[103] The drive toward unification of spiritually received experience is expressed in the poeticized flow of natural imagery in part one of "The Spanish Trilogy": "from me, Lord, and from all this, to make/one single Thing . . . ."[104]

Rilke again described the experiential nature of such a state that links the cosmos and microcosmos:

> . . . a star, falling through cosmic space in a tensed slow arc, simultaneously . . . fell through my inner space; the body's dividing outline was no longer there. And whereas this happened then through my eyes, once at an earlier time . . . the same unity had been granted me through my hearing.[105]

He expresses this again in a discussion of how the poet needs to understand both life and death: "there 'is neither a this-world nor an other-world, but only the great unity,' in the 'angels,' those beings who surpass us, are at home."[106] Rilke's angels, the purely spiritual beings, symbolize the immortal ground of being that is uncovered in the mystical experience, including the sense of what he had called "the inviolable presence and simultaneity of everything."[107] Perhaps Rilke is offering here an elevated aesthetic reworking of the pre-Socratic issue of the one and the many or an intuitive understanding of the Buddhist and Hindu idea of an interdependent unity of the universe as well as a reformulating of traditional Western theological ideas, as much as recovering the notion of an afterlife.

In mystically grounded experience love is the current that recognizes the presence of such unity in another person. It is predicated upon the theological idea or mystical experience of such a reality in God. In a devotional poem "The Hour of Song" Ibn Gabirol traces this connection from "awe and fear" to divine love:

you're my desire and cause.
  And here out of love
in you my mind is immersed[108]

"I Love You" compares the desire of a teacher to help develop their student to God's desire to formulate the visible universe, both acts of love:

  sages have said that the secret
  of being owes all
to the all who has all in his hand:
He longs to give form to the formless
  As a lover longs for his friend.[109]

Rumi whimsically insists on the efficacy of prayer through love upon the metaphysical unity of being:

Forget your life. Say "God is Great." Get up.
You think you know what time it is. It's time to pray.

. . . . . .

If you've opened your loving to God's love,
you're helping people you don't know
and have never seen.[110]

The beloved in Sufism is a representation of God. In the epigraph by Rumi this is the beloved, lodged in his soul, which he married. Rumi separates the intuitive nature of such love to the intellect:

Love is for vanishing into the sky. The mind,
for learning what men have done and tried to do.
Mysteries are not to be solved. The eye goes blind
when it only wants to see "why."[111]

In an account of a transformational experience, Rumi notes: "God lives between a human being and the object of his or her desire."[112] If we substitute a fellow traveler for an object of desire we have an idea of love in Sufism, a connection to that divine aspect in each person.

Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* catalogues the nurturing effect of love on the artist: it is the only true vehicle for understanding art; it adheres in the naturalness of plants and animals; it is good because it encourages deeper levels of feeling.[113] In a note in the margin of *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* manuscript Rilke drew close to the Sufi idea of love expressed by Rumi: "To be loved means to be consumed. To love is to give light with inexhaustible oil."[114] The *Duino Elegies* both celebrates and deconstructs lovers in the conventional sense.[115] Perhaps Rilke's presiding idea of spiritual love occurs in a comparison of human objectifying consciousness to the natural openness to the world that plants and animals possess. In language again suggestive of Rumi and, to a lesser extent, Ibn Gabirol, Rilke finds possible correlatives to such openness "only in the first moments of love, when we see our own vastness in the person we love, and in the ecstatic surrender to god."[116] Moreover, Rilke in the *Sonnets to Orpheus* reconstructs the traditional symbolism of the unicorn to support his poetics of transformation. The unicorn meant for him "all love of the non-proven, the non-graspable, all belief in the value and reality of whatever our heart has through the centuries created and lifted up out of itself . . ."[117] In Christianity and its mystical traditions the presiding divine influence is love. In Judaism and Kabbalah the *sefira Hesed* or Compassion mediates the *sefira* of *Gevurath* or Judgment of the divine influence. In Islam and Sufism one acknowledges the influence of divine love in the universe.

Ibn Gabirol, Rumi, and Rilke similarly explored the nature of higher love and other aspects of mystical experience in considerations of time, space, and other phenomenological modalities through their theological, philosophic, and literary productions, as well by the recorded statements of their transpersonal

experiences. The long history of Western theology attempted also to reckon with such considerations in relation to God and the nature of the world, in essence, transcendence and immanence. The long history of mysticism represents testaments of an available ontological modulation of those two polarities. Such traditions were evoked through the emotions of fear and awe. The scientific discoveries of geologic time and infinite space initially produced similar emotions. Now it would seem that the modern world, the one Rilke collided with, has displaced the higher sense of awe or is trying to and replacing it with a lower sense of fear.

Each of our three poets had the original higher senses of fear and awe available to them and are consequently closer to each other than one might expect. So in "Haven't I Hidden Your Name" Ibn Gabriol testifies to the central mystical enigma: "The heavens can't contain you,/and yet my thoughts somehow do."[118] In a note to this poem by its translator Peter Cole, both a rabbinical saying, "The world is not His place, but rather He is the place of the world" and a Sufic statement attributed to Muhammad of God's declarations, "My earth and My heaven contain me not, but the heart of my faithful servant containeth Me" are equally referred to as a gloss of this enigma.[119] Rumi declaims in "Where Everything Is Music" that poems are mystical but beyond the poems is mystical experience itself:

They derive
from a slow and powerful root
that we can't see.

Stop the words now.
Open the window in the center of your chest,
and let the spirits fly in and out.[120]

In a parable, "The Dream that Must Be Interpreted," he metaphorically likens such experience to the mystery of dreams, a Chuang-tzu-like enigma, that become realer than the reality in a spiritless time.[121] The universality of this experience was spoken by Rumi during the Crusades: "I go into the Muslim mosque and the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church and I see one altar."[122] Rilke in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* comments likewise on a difficult time: " . . . that heavy, massive, desperate age. The age in which the kiss of reconciliation between two men was only a signal for the murderers who are standing around."[123] Rilke visited Cairo in 1910. When he saw whirling dervishes he immediately saw the connection of their dancing, derived from Rumi's Sufic practice, to Western prayer: "It is so truly the mystery of the kneeling of the deeply kneeling man."[124] Rilke expresses the intensity of such practice as in his experience of the bird's call in "An Experience":

. . . he could see the starry heavens through the gentle branches of an olive-tree, how vision-like the world-space before him was in that disguise, or how, when he continued thus for a sufficient length of time, everything was so completely absorbed into the clear solution of his heart, that the flavour of creation was present in his being.[125]

Rilke has related moments drawn out of ordinary experience that open into moments of illumination and mystery. In the penultimate of the *Duino Elegies* his depiction of these moments, his *Dinge*, (things) reaches a zenith of understanding and poetic expression:

And these things that live,
slipping away, understand that you praise them;
transitory themselves, they trust us for rescue,
us, the most transient of all. They wish us to
transmute them
in our invisible heart—oh, infinitely into us![126]

In a commentary on the infinite vision of the angels of the elegies, one that offers an almost Ibn Gabirol-like idiom in its neo-Platonic description of the spiritual procedure of mystical experience, one shared by our three poets, Rilke explains:

For the angel of the Elegies, all the towers and palaces of the past are existent *because* they have long been invisible, and the still-standing towers and bridges of our reality are *already* invisible, although still (for us) physically lasting . . . All the worlds in the universe are plunging into the invisible as into the next-deeper reality . . . *we, in the sense of the Elegies, are the transformers of the earth; our entire existence, the flights and plunges of our love, everything, qualifies us for this task* (beside which there is, essentially, no other).[127]

One could conclude with Samuel 1: "For man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (16:7). Our three poets, to extend this wisdom, have looked onto eternal experience and transformed it in their heart.

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NOTES

1 *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, trans. Peter Cole (Princeton University, 2001), p. 105.
2 *The Essential Rumi*, trans. Coleman Barks with John Moyne (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), p. 19.
3 Ibid., p. 105.
4 *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Vintage International, 1982), p. 9.
5 Op. cit., p. 124.
6 Ibid., p. 126.
7 Ibid., p. 140.
8 Op. cit., p. 15.

[9] Program Notes, Soma Ensemble, The American Folk Festival (Bangor, Maine: August 23–24, 2008), p. 2.
[10] Op. cit., p. 114. And see Coleman Barks' explication of "La'illah il'Allahu" for its mystical content, pp. 286–287.
[11] Wolfgang Leppmann, *Rilke, A Life*, trans. Russell M. Stockman (Fromm International, 1984), p. 112.
[12] Ibid., p. 112.
[13] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (Norton, 1963), p. 67.
[14] *Rilke's Book of Hours, Love Poems to God*, trans. Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy (Riverhead, 1996), p. 129.
[15] Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. M. D. Heter (Norton, 1964), p. 214.
[16] From Rilke's essay on dolls cited by Robert Hass in his introduction to Selected Poetry, op. cit., p. xxv.
[17] Ibid., p. 333.
[18] *Modern European Poetry*, ed. Willis Barnstone (Bantam, 1978), p. 111.
[19] Op. cit., p. 87.
[20] Ibid., p. 113.
[21] Ibid., p. 119.
[22] Ibid., p. 105.
[23] Ibid., p. 91.
[24] Ibid., p. 93.
[25] Ibid., pp. 101–102. See also Psalms 119 and 164 where one is said to praise seven times.
[26] Ibid., p. 105.
[27] Ibid., p. 149.
[28] *The Essential Rumi*, p. 3.
[29] Ibid., p. 2.
[30] Ibid., p. 5.
[31] Ibid., p. 36.
[32] Ibid., p. 27.
[33] Ibid., p. 113.
[34] Ibid., p. 19.
[35] Ibid., p. 15.
[36] Ibid., p. 105.
[37] Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. C. F. MacIntyre (University of California, 1963), p. 3.
[38] *Letters to a Young Poet*, p. 64.
[39] *Rilke's Book of Hours*, p. 134.
[40] Ibid., p. 41.
[41] *Selected Poems*, p. 121.
[42] Ibid., p. 25.
[43] *Notebooks*, p. 76.
[44] Ibid., p. 199.
[45] Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. C. F. MacIntyre (University of California, 1964), p. 25.
[46] Quoted in *Selected Poetry*, p. 317.
[47] Quoted in *Letters*, p. 115.
[48] *Notebooks*, pp. 14–15.
[49] *Elegies*, p. 15.
[50] Ibid., p. 55.
[51] Ibid., p. 57.

52 Ibid., p. 63.
53 *Letters*, p. 37.
54 Ibid., p. 46.
55 Ibid., p. 47.
56 Ibid., p. 53.
57 *Selected Poetry*, p. 135.
58 Ibid., p. 141.
59 Ibid., p. 141.
60 Ibid., p. 316.
61 *Rilke, A Life*, p. 318.
62 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Selected Works*, trans. Craig Houston (1954), pp. 35–36.
63 *Selected Poetry*, p. 317.
64 Ibid., p. 331.
65 Op. cit., p. 45.
66 Ibid., p. 72
67 Ibid., p. 142.
68 Ibid., p. 143.
69 Ibid., p. 244.
70 *Poems by Rumi*, trans. Zahra Partovi (Harvard College Library, 2007), p. 20.
71 *Essential Rumi*, pp. 6–7.
72 Ibid., p. 14.
73 Ibid., p. 19.
74 Ibid., p. 106.
75 Ibid., p. 278.
76 *Letters*, p. 11.
77 Ibid., p. 74.
78 *Selected Works*, p. 36.
79 *Notebooks*, p. 176.
80 *Sonnets*, p. 19.
81 *Elegies*, p. 15.
82 Ibid., p. 57.
83 Ibid., p. 65.
84 Ibid., p. 65.
85 Ibid., p. 69.
86 *Selected Poetry*, p. 131.
87 Ibid., p. 313.
88 Ibid., p. 324.
89 Op. cit., p. 41.
90 Ibid., p. 61.
91 Ibid., p. 97.
92 Ibid., p. 98.
93 Ibid., p. 112.
94 *Essential Rumi*, p. 13.
95 Ibid., p. 22.
96 *Selected Poetry*, p. 3.
97 Ibid., p. 9.
98 Op. cit., p. 47.
99 Ibid., p. 141.
100 *The Essential Mystics*, ed. Andrew Harvey (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 155.

[101] *Selected Poetry*, p. 5.
[102] Ibid., p. 69.
[103] Ibid., p. 304.
[104] Ibid., p. 119.
[105] Ibid., pp. 314–315.
[106] Ibid., p. 319.
[107] Ibid., p. 324.
[108] Op. cit., p. 117.
[109] Ibid., p. 108.
[110] *The Enlightened Heart, An Anthology of Sacred Poetry*, ed. Stephen Mitchell (Harper Perennial, 1989), p. 56.
[111] *Essential Rumi*, p. 107.
[112] Ibid., p. 286.
[113] *Letters*, pp. 29, 36, 53, 54.
[114] *Notebooks*, p. 209.
[115] *Elegies*, pp. 69, 5.
[116] *Selected Poetry*, p. 329.
[117] Ibid., p. 338.
[118] Op. cit., p. 130.
[119] Ibid., p. 283.
[120] *Essential Rumi*, p. 35.
[121] Ibid., p. 112.
[122] Ibid., p. 246.
[123] *Notebooks*, p. 191.
[124] Cited in *Essential Rumi*, p. 277.
[125] *Selected Works*, pp. 36–37.
[126] *Elegies*, p. 71.
[127] *Selected Poetry*, p. 328.

CHRYSSI SIDIROPOULOU

SELF, OTHER AND NOTHINGNESS IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND IN ISLAMIC MYSTICISM

Abstract: This chapter explores Kenan Gürsoy's attempted comparison between Islamic mysticism (tasavvuf) and twentieth century French existentialism. Kenan Gürsoy is a contemporary Turkish thinker whose recent book entitled *Etik ve Tasavvuf* (English: *Ethics and Tasavvuf*) explores similarities as well as differences between the two perspectives mentioned above. The present chapter is a sympathetic analysis of Gürsoy's main line of thinking and attempts to strengthen it and elaborate further upon it. For this purpose it introduces İlham Dilman's notion of "affective solipsism" as well as Ludwig Wittgenstein's much discussed notion of "an attitude towards a soul." It argues that the Western dichotomy between the self and the world—seen in both Descartes and Sartre—cancels out the possibility of sense and, so, inevitably of freedom, as well. It also suggests that the understanding of "nothingness" present in the tasavvuf is not infected by such a dichotomy; consequently, that it can enable a person's realization of being through a dynamic interaction with the world.

1. INTRODUCTION

Etik ve Tasavvuf (Ethics and Tasavvuf) consists of a series of dialogues between Professor Kenan Gürsoy and three young scholars, Ahmet S. Akçay, Itır Erhart and Semih Yücel. It unfolds through six consecutive parts and it gradually introduces the reader to issues in ethics and morality, individual and society, values and knowledge, the human self and its ways of relating to the world.

Gürsoy avoids strict dichotomies between individual and society as well as between man and nature. He suggests that an individual *becomes* the being he/she is within the relational framework that binds him/her to others, both human and non-human. In support of this idea, he introduces a distinction between the transcendent and the intrinsic, personal dimension of morality. He claims that it is mostly the latter which raises morals to the level of ethics and reaches beyond imposed conformist observance of norms. Consequently, the personal element is necessary for individuals in order to find their way towards

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an understanding of good and evil, towards becoming a real agent and ultimately towards ontological authenticity. An authentic self, however, assumes its place in an ontological horizon where individual and society have struck an appropriate balance. When this is the case, a person can freely shape and affirm his or her own values. In the opposite case, these values are open to reductionist analysis which would equate them with social habits, conventions, or received tradition. According to Gürsoy, in such a case they cannot be called *ethical.*

Apart from being one of the most important problems in philosophy, the question of freedom serves another significant function for Gürsoy: it effects the transition to the major theme of the book. This is the presentation of tasavvuf morality as a freely shaped one and so, according to Gürsoy, as subject to parallelism with existentialism. At the basis of the attempted parallel lies an effort to answer the following pivotal question: do human beings make their values themselves or are values something independent and external to them, something to be *received*?

A reading of the book may suggest that Gürsoy thinks of the question above as a false dilemma or, at least, as an unfruitful way of phrasing such a problematic. And this despite his often avowed position that we are ethical beings only to the extent in which we freely develop our views and carry out our actions. In this chapter we shall attempt to show that the implicit but clear rejection of the dilemma holds the key for understanding Gürsoy's view vis-à-vis existentialism and tasavvuf.

In various Western philosophical perspectives the quest for an ethics where the subject builds his/her own values and takes responsibility for his/her actions rejects reference to any transcendent reality. In the twentieth century this was most prominently expressed after the Second World War in France by the existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. At the hands of these thinkers it yields a strong atheistic conviction and calls on man to affirm the absurdity of being thrown into a world devoid of meaning. It is in this sense that man has to build his own values as a *pour soi being*, to use Sartre's term from *L' Être et Le Néant*. There is neither metaphysical essence nor intrinsic value in the world. Being is in a constant process of realizing its existence.

For Gürsoy such emphasis on the existential realization of being constitutes a major similarity between existentialist philosophy and tasavvuf. For many others any similarity between atheistic existentialism and Islamic mysticism is implausible. This is a very narrow interpretation, however. The real challenge is to show that they both share a strong commitment to a morality that is not imposed on but freely shaped and adhered to by a human being. For existentialist thinkers like Sartre and Camus this is done by accepting the absurdity of the world's meaninglessness: man has to invent meaning against such a dismal background. But how can this be the case in the framework of

tasavvuf's *insan-ı- kâmil* ideal? What are the points of contact and of divergence between such a Western and an Islamic perspective? This is what we purport to explore in the remainder of this chapter.

2. NOTHINGNESS AND FREEDOM IN J. P. SARTRE

Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism and its understanding of human freedom are by no means exhaustive or even typical of modern Western philosophy. Nevertheless, we shall proceed to an exploration of what it involves for two reasons: First, because it is the philosophical perspective which Gürsoy compares with tasavvuf. Secondly, because we shall also examine İlham Dilman's interpretation of Sartre and analyze what he has called "affective solipsism" in Sartre's thinking. Based on our analysis of this point we shall then revisit the comparison between existentialism and tasavvuf; in so doing we shall also explore the latter's perspective on the relation between the self and the world.

Sartre delineates his existentialist view of human freedom in his major philosophical work *L'Être et le Néant (Being and Nothingness*, 1943) as well as in the two existentialist plays *La Nausée* (*Nausea*, 1938*)* and *Huit Clos* (*No Exit*, 1944). Central to his understanding is the distinction he draws between "being-in- itself" (*être en soi*) and "being for itself" (*être pour-soi*). Being- in- itself stands for the mode of being of what lacks consciousness of itself, such as animals and inanimate things. It is intrinsically colored by causality. Causal relations, as manifested in nature, form a network of "action" and "counteraction" which run their course without allowing for any alternatives or any kind of choice. Let us think, for example, of the law of gravity. If we hold a book in our hands and we let it go, it will certainly fall down. Pending an utter reversal of our understanding of physical reality, no other "reaction" on the part of our book can be reasonably expected.

The way in which a human being, as an être-pour-soi, relates to the world is at the antipodes of causal relations. This is a very emphatic claim on Sartre's part. Carried further, it yields the idea that we become who we are by radically disassociating ourselves from the world. Such disassociation is not simply a matter of location but a deep existential reality: the reality of negating the object so as not to be absorbed by it. The human being has to *realize* his or her own existence through a constant process, away from any notion of essence. In Sartre's view, essence signifies a positive and static identity. The latter he considers an external imposition on human consciousness. For this reason, one must detach himself/herself from the world and empty his/her consciousness from anything given externally. This is *nothingness*, and nothingness denotes existential freedom.

In this way, Sartre puts forward a picture in which freedom and the very existence of a human being are ontologically connected. Freedom, as Sartre defines it in *Being and Nothingness* is not a contingent reality. It is not the kind of freedom that a person can forego or a people may lose under foreign occupation. Sartre's freedom is a necessary one, for there is nothing, either in the world or in the person himself or herself which could cancel it. The human being can never lose freedom because he or she can never be divested of responsibility. On Sartre's view, responsibility may or may not be taken away, but it cannot be *removed*: how one acts is definitely one's own, whatever the circumstances. This is what underlines Sartre's famous turn of phrase "we are condemned to be free." The freedom that Sartre talks about is not something we have striven to attain or that we necessarily value. It is an ontological feature expressing the human condition in a universe devoid of meaning, within which one has to realize one's existence, again and again. Furthermore, it is the breeding ground of existential anxiety, *angoisse.*

Setting out from this brief exposition of Sartre's thought, let us now explore the repercussions of Sartrean freedom for an understanding of the self. First of all, it is worth noting that for Sartre the human being is *always* detached from the world, even as one finds himself or herself thrown in it and living a life within a certain context in space and time. Just like the freedom Sartre talks about, this is no *empirical* detachment. Perpetual radical aloofness does not seem plausible. After all, a person is always connected to others in ordinary life, with ties ranging from biological affinity between close relatives to the ties of friendship, sexuality, collegiality, and many others. Sartre means something very different here, which is captured by his categorical denial that others enter the ontological constitution of my existence. For Sartre, others would project facticities on me, thus imposing the solidification of my consciousness and the fixing of a positive identity. That is the very opposite of existential freedom: it constitutes self deception. One denies his or her responsibility and looks at oneself the way another person would do. In so doing, such a person throws herself at the mercy of causal powers that characterize the relations between en-soi beings. Sartre calls this *mauvais foi*, "bad faith."

Next to Sartre, Albert Camus has also presented a very similar perspective in his famous existentialist novel *L' Étranger* ("The Stranger", 1942). Camus's hero, Mersault, embodies the reality of existential freedom in the very way Camus together with Sartre conceive of it. Mersault is an eccentric case by the standards of ordinary life: one would say that he exhibits a pathetic form of detachment vis-à-vis both the death of his mother and the feelings and expectations of his mistress. His aloof attitude does not change even when he unexpectedly kills one of the local Algerians. There is no trace of emotion or

remorse over his crime, and the way he responds to it is expressed in a matter of factish, report like description:

J'ai compris que j'avais détruit l' équilibre du jour, *le silence exceptionnel d'une plage où j'avais été heureux*. Alors, j'ai tiré encore quatre fois sur un corps inerte. . .[1]

(I realized that I had destroyed the equilibrium of the day, *the exceptional silence of a beach where I had been happy*. And so, I shot four more times at an inert body.) (italics and translation from the French by Chryssi Sidiropoulou)

We can plausibly consider Mersault's favorite phrase *"ça m' était egal"* ("it's the same for me") as the real epitome of the existentialist hero sketched by Camus. Mersault's attitude constitutes a literary analogue of Sartre's metaphysics of freedom. Camus's perspective in his famous novel is not a psychological, but an ontological one. He is not offering an anatomy into Mersault's soul or analyzing the character of an eccentric or even emotionally challenged person. On the contrary, Camus's literary exposition of *l' absurd* through the character of Mersault gives graphic expression to the Sartrean understanding of freedom as something to which one is *condemned*. And this seems to mean: ontological gap between one's authentic self, on the one hand, and one's connections and affiliations with the world, on the other. Freedom seems to presuppose the silence of the world for only a silent world can sustain such a gap. The silence which Mersault seems to have enjoyed and then lost, is itself the existentialist universe's fundamental characteristic. Once this is disturbed, what Mersault goes through is not simply a personal crisis, but an existential rupture.

3. İLHAM DILMAN'S CRITICISM OF EXISTENTIALIST FREEDOM: "AFFECTIVE SOLIPSISM"

In his book *Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism*, İlham Dilman discusses Sartre's conception of freedom and individuality. His analysis sees Sartre's position as a form of solipsism which, albeit different from the Cartesian one, also denies the reality of the other. According to Dilman this solipsism directly originates in the way Sartre understands human existence and the ontological features of man. He writes: "As for 'the other', that is people as seen from the point of view of the first person, my central contention here is that while the other exists independently of me—the denial of this being 'solipsism'—nevertheless his reality is equally to be found in 'the personal dimension'. For there are people for whom others do not have a full reality, are treated as and taken to be satellites and so having a relatively shadowy existence for these

people. We could say of such a person that he does not *live* fully the 'otherness' of other people- their 'otherness', that is their 'separate', 'independent' existence, their existence 'in its own right'. Elsewhere I called this 'affective solipsism' and distinguished it from Cartesian, *philosophical* solipsism (see Dilman 1987, ch. 8)."[2]

Here Dilman highlights a predicament different from the one a Cartesian solipsist finds himself in: what is denied by Sartrean solipsism is not the existence of other minds besides my own, but rather the ontological reality of any affective ties with others. If we understand Dilman correctly, talk of "solipsism" in both contexts denotes the view that the existence of others is contingent to me. It is contingent to me as a disembodied mind in the Cartesian case or a being condemned to freedom in the case of Sartre. Moreover, Sartre thinks of one's ties and interactions with others as inevitably negative and a source of inauthenticity. The way he sees it, they are the breeding ground of an inauthentic persona. Such a persona expresses a positivity: it signifies the way other people's perceptions, thoughts and evaluations are imposed upon one, thus reducing him or her to the receiving end of a causal process. This seems to be making authentic human relations impossible. Dilman comments that on Sartre's picture, "Human existence being what it is, in particular our individual autonomy being achievable only by our separating ourselves from others, the kind of communion which we seek in love and friendship is impossible."[3]

Dilman believes that Sartre runs two non identical things together: on the one hand, the fact that I am my own self, an individual distinct from others; on the other hand, the presumed threat that others constitute for my authentic individuality. He puts forward his criticism lucidly: "The 'otherness' or 'separateness' of the other, forms an important aspect of human life. To become individuals we have to separate or 'differentiate' ourselves from others and in turn acknowledge their separateness – these being the two sides of the same coin. But this 'separateness' may come to be seen as itself a form of 'separation' (see Dilman 1987, ch. 7). Sartre sees it as an inevitable source of conflict between people because it engenders in them, as he believes, the desire to 'appropriate' the other, that is, to make him into a satellite. Thus having successfully rejected Cartesian solipsism Sartre falls into a different kind of philosophical solipsism, which may be characterized as 'ontological solipsism' because it has its source in a feature of human existence as Sartre conceives of it."[4]

In a way akin to Dilman's, Gürsoy also finds Sartre's view of the relation between the self and the "other" problematic. He first focuses on a distinction between what he calls the *transcendent* (in Turkish: *aşkın*) and the *intrinsic* (in Turkish: *içkin*) element manifested in ethics. He illustrates these two elements as follows: "**Aşkın öğe**; ahlâk kişisinin, kendisini karşısında ahlâk kişisi olarak

bulduğu, sorumluluğunu yaşadığı ödevler, değerler, normlar alanıdır. Kişiye nazaran dışta kaldığı için buna '**aşkın öge**' adı verilir. Ama asıl önemli olan unsur içkin ögedir. Bu öge de **insanın kendisidir**."[5]

("The transcendent element comprises the area of duties, values and norms that the moral subject, in so far as he is a moral subject, is confronted with and lives in responsibility for. It is called the 'transcendent element' because it remains external to the person. However, the really important element is the intrinsic one. This element is the person himself."/Translation from Turkish: Chryssi Sidiropoulou.)

Despite Gürsoy's emphatic claim that the intrinsic element is the human being himself, he then asserts that only a synthesis of the immanent with the transcendent can validate human freedom and shape an authentic self. Ethics is not compatible with the domination of the transcendent, external element over the person. A person needs a code of values formed by reference to his or her sense of responsibility and so of freedom. A conformist acceptance making the person adhere to a positive morality vis-à-vis which she cannot take responsibility is a far cry from ethics. So far Gürsoy is in agreement with Sartre. Nevertheless, he undercuts what we have presented as Sartrean solipsism as follows: ". . . Ama diğer taraftan da, eğer bu bilinç kendine nazaran aşkın bir değeri hedef almadıysa, burada da ahlâkîlikten bahsedemiyoruz. Diyebilirsiniz ki, "Bir özgür bilinç hâli, kendinden başkasını hedef almamış olabilir mi?" bu Jean Paul Sartre'ın örneğidir. O kendi özgürlüğünü bir değer olarak alır. Bir mânâda gerçekleştirilmesi gereken aşkın değer, onun kendisini özgür olarak fark edip inşa etmesinden başka bir şey olmayan özgürlüktür. Bunun egoizmden, bencillikten ne kadar farklı olup olmayacağı hususu bir tartışma konusudur."[6]

(. . . On the other hand, however, if this consciousness has not assumed as a purpose a value which transcends this consciousness itself, we cannot talk of an ethical perspective in such a case. You could say: but how can a free state of consciousness not have assumed a purpose other than itself? This is Jean Paul Sartre's example. He takes freedom as itself a value. In a sense, the transcendent element which has to be realized, is a freedom consisting in nothing but constructing itself upon realization of its being free. To what extent this differs from egoism and selfishness is a matter subject to debate."/Translation from Turkish: Ch. Sidiropoulou)

According to this, Sartre's freedom is deprived of reference to anything other than the self. In its outright rejection of the transcendent element (*aşkın öge*) and its exclusive preoccupation with the self, consciousness remains directionless. Later in the book, Gürsoy will say that, seen in this way by Sartre and Camus, consciousness has directionality but lacks direction towards a definite target, so it collapses within itself. [7] Gürsoy's claim that to talk of egoism

(*egoizm*) and selfishness (*bencillik*) may be appropriate here comes quite close to Dilman's charge of "affective solipsism."

4. A WAY OUT OF ALL SOLIPSISM: WITTGENSTEIN'S "*EINSTELLUNG ZUR SEELE*"

Let us now examine Sartre's position, which (adopting Dilman's term) we have branded as "affective solipsism." As we mentioned, this is not epistemological solipsism of the familiar Cartesian type. We would like to suggest, however, that affective solipsism cannot easily escape the trap of epistemological skepticism, either. Our argument will be that this cannot be the case, precisely because our affective stance towards the world and our active engagements with other people and our environment, constitute the antidote to *Cartesian* solipsism as well. However, it is precisely such involvement that Sartre's existentialism rejects.

As is well known, Descartes' methodological doubt reduces him to a disembodied consciousness. As such, not only is "he" deprived of any reliable knowledge of others, but "he" is totally cut off from any connections or attachments to them. For in such a situation, ex hypothesi, there are no others with whom to engage.

Cartesian doubt and the philosophical responses to the predicament it engenders have been much discussed. Our view—for which we cannot argue here given the constraints of this chapter—is that Cartesian solipsism cannot be treated within its own terrain or answered in its own terms. One has to show that solipsism itself is not a meaningful project on the grounds that it wipes out the conditions which would allow it to put forward its very own claims.

Signs of this approach are clearly shown by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later period. In the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) he attacks solipsism and Cartesian dualism primarily by showing that meaningful language and concepts cannot be shaped through an introspective, disembodied and worldless consciousness. Paragraphs 243–315 of the *Philosophical Investigations* constitute the so-called "Private Language Argument" which articulates this line of response. Again, to offer an analysis of the "Private Language Argument" is beyond the scope of the present work. Here we shall limit ourselves to a particular strand of Wittgenstein's critique of solipsism. It is the idea that even though solipsism is a theoretical construction, it cannot be given an exhaustive theoretical answer. There cannot be, that is to say, a final justification of *why we believe* that the world exists or that others around us are equally conscious beings. Given this, the distinctive character of Wittgenstein's perspective lies in

his bringing into focus the ontological significance of our affective connections and relationships with others.

In his analysis of Cartesian dualism and introspection, Wittgenstein often discusses the concept of pain. A Cartesian dualist finds it impossible for *me* to be certain that another person is in pain, even when he or she behaves just like *I* do when *I* am in pain. As Wittgenstein sees it, efforts to provide *theoretical justification* for our ascription of mental states to other beings bring about the opposite result: they make such certainty elusive.

On his part, Wittgenstein denies that such a demand for justification makes sense. So he introduces the element of human interaction as a pre-conceptual, pre-theoretical reality on which everything else is subsequently built. Taking pain as an example, he writes in paragraph 287: "How am I filled with pity *for this man*? How does it come out what the object of my pity is? (Pity, one may say, is a form of conviction that someone else is in pain.)"[8]

Are my feelings of pity and attitude of compassion justified? What if this is not a person but a perfectly human-looking android? In Wittgenstein's view, there is no *theoretical assurance* behind my seeing *this being* here as a man like me, as a conscious human being. *I act* compassionately and try to alleviate the pain of, let us say, the injured person in the hospital bed. In so doing, I am not *answering* the solipsist challenge; *I am leaving the solipsist framework behind.* This means: as I act, compassion has already rendered doubt irrelevant, or at least insignificant.

Confronted with a hospital patient, my certainty that the "object of my pity" is conscious and capable of pain and suffering is *ultimate*: it cannot be given any further justification. In our view, the phrase "a form of conviction", encapsulates the *certainty* of a conviction while denies *its theoretical grounding*. *Any* justification, Wittgenstein thinks, can only develop within a framework of concepts and assumptions which is built out of pre-theoretical forms of human interaction. It cannot *presuppose* them.

The same perspective on this issue, albeit on a larger scale, is reiterated on p. 178 of the *Philosophical Investigations*: "Suppose I say of a friend: "He isn't an automaton". - What information is conveyed by this and to whom would it be information? To a *human being* who meets him in ordinary circumstances? What information *could* it give him? (At the very most that this man always behaves like a human being, and not occasionally like a machine.)

"I believe that he is not an automaton", just like that, so far makes no sense.
My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul."[9]

In this excerpt, Cartesian doubt does not simply challenge another person's capacity to feel pain, but engulfs the whole ontological status of the other. On the Cartesian picture the question whether a being I am confronted with is

a conscious human being or a machine, remains always open. And just like in paragraph 287, here too, Wittgenstein responds by drawing attention to the standard non philosophical and non theoretical attitude which people ordinarily exhibit towards each other. This is what he attempts to convey through the contrastive pair "attitude-opinion." As was previously indicated, Wittgenstein uses "attitude" in the sense of a primordial, non-justifiable but still ultimate confidence. By contrast, "opinion", stands for the unachievable—in Wittgenstein's view—theoretical answer as to why we should consider other beings similar to us.

Two of the terms Wittgenstein uses here are of considerable significance: pity (German: *Mitleid)* and soul (German: *Seele*). These two words bear an explicit ethical import and are themselves subject to examination in moral philosophy. Wittgenstein considers them relevant to an analysis of "the problem of other minds" (The latter signifies the solipsist question whether other beings have consciousness and a mental life commensurable to my own.) In so doing, he gives central place to major ethical themes (such as our acknowledgement and treatment of others) within the investigation of a central issue in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. He thus insists that it is only within such a reality of engagement and active, pre-theoretical (that is, non-based on justification) acknowledgement of other people as *persons* that solipsism can be beaten.

If this is granted, then a Sartrean solipsist's aspiration not to fall into "bad faith" has very serious philosophical repercussions. This is because affective solipsists make it very hard to fight against epistemological solipsism as well, since they think that any involvement and engaged interaction with others is inauthentic. What they reject as inauthentic seems to coincide with Wittgenstein's "attitude towards a soul." They reject, that is to say, Wittgenstein's way of blocking epistemological skepticism. In effect, we suggest that the "affective (Sartrean) solipsist" does not realize that she is quite powerless against Descartes' *deus malignus*.

5. NOTHINGNESS AND EXTINCTION IN UNITY: THE PATH OF A SUFI

Earlier we saw how Sartre's existentialist understanding of freedom is part of his rejection of essentialism. In Sartrean existentialism, the rejection of an essential, positively fixed self underpins the ontological priority of existence over essence. Moreover, it generates the idea of nothingness as the ontological framework within which a human being can be authentic. We shall now turn to a crucial part of Gürsoy's parallelism between existentialism and tasavvuf. This is the claim that tasavvuf also discourages an essentialist understanding

of the human self and yields a conception of nothingness as the ideal of human fulfillment.

A pivotal idea of Islamic mystical thinking in which clear influences from Hinduism have been traced, is that of extinction in unity (Arabic: *al-fanâ' fi'l-tauhîd*). It was mainly expressed by Abu Yazid al-Bastami and by the martyr Mansur al-Hallaj in the ninth century CE, and, as part of a more sophisticated and mature synthesis, by al-Ghazali in the eleventh and Ibn-Arabi between the twelfth and the thirteenth century. Both al-Bastami and al-Hallaj but also al-Ghazali in the eleventh century were stongly influenced by Abu'l Qasim al-Junayd (ninth century CE).

A leading figure in the history of sufism, al-Junayd speaks of the need to isolate the temporal from the eternal as a presupposition of getting any genuine knowledge and grasping God's unity. Majid Fakhry describes al-Junayd's position as follows: "Once this isolation of the temporal from the eternal has been completed and the creature has been reduced to his primordial condition as an idea in the mind of God, man becomes dead unto himself and alive unto God and this, as al-Junayd has put it, is the essence of the mystical experience."[10]

With al-Hallaj we have a further development of this understanding through the concept of *"ain al-jam"* ("essence of union"). The esence of union is the state in which the sufi's being is saturated by the divine presence. As described by Majid Fakhry, "... all the actions, thoughts, and aspirations of the mystic are wholly permeated by God."[11]

According to the moderate al-Junayd, "essence of union" should not be thought of as annihilation of the self and identification with God, but, in Fakhry's wording "...rather in its elevation to joyful and intimate communion with the Beloved."[12]

Radicals such as al-Bastami and al-Hallaj, though, took no heed of al-Junayd's warning. They crossed the Rubicon into pantheism by failing to draw the very distinction which he was so careful about. Thus in its historical development, tasavvuf has had to confront and solve the thorny issue of pantheism. The latter could not but be a scandal for any monotheistic tradition. Al-Ghazali's contribution to the easing of this tension has been of chief importance. Combining in his person the shrewd adept of theology (*kalam*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with the sufi, al-Ghazali constitutes, in our view, a remarkably comprehensive intellectual figure. Despite his momentous attack against the Islamic Neoplatonism of thinkers like al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali himself adheres to the metaphysical framework of Neoplatonism in his mystical work. In his *Mishkat al-Anwar* (*The Niche of Lights*), al-Ghazali introduces a hierarchy of beings, reminiscent of neoplatonic emanation, in which God is the Supreme Light. Other beings receive their light from God, so they can be called "luminous" in a derivative or metaphorical sense. The closer they are to Him, the more luminous they are. Within this scheme of things human

beings occupy a distinct position. Majid Fakhry illustrates al-Ghazali's view as follows: "Man occupies a unique position in this hierarchy. Not only did God create him in His likeness, but He has made him a "compendium" of the whole universe. The divine image in him has been inscribed by God Himself, *hence only he who knows himself can attain to a knowledge of his Lord, as a Sufi tradition has it.* However, this image is merely that of God the Merciful (*al-Rahman*), not God the Lord, since the latter can never be portrayed or expressed in created terms. This is the divine mystery, which, al-Ghazali insists, can only be expressed metaphorically or figuratively." (My italics)[13]

Two points from the excerpt above stand out, in our view. First, the unmistakably neoplatonic character of the assumption that I have to know myself in order to know God. Quite reminiscent of Saint Augustine's notion of *memoria*, it also calls to mind the neoplatonic scheme of exitus and reditus. The latter imparts that the being of man emanates from the One *(exitus*) but then wishes to return to its source (*reditus*). For a human being, self knowledge involves knowledge of one's source of existence, ultimately, that is to say, knowledge of God.

Secondly, and more interestingly, one sees al-Ghazali's distinction between God the Lord and God the Merciful. God the Lord absolutely transcends human knowledge. It is out of mercy and compassion for His creatures that God wishes to make Himself known. Consequently, God the Merciful opens Himself to human comprehension. In this way, a steep path for climbing through successive levels of reality is offered to human beings. At the end of this journey it is possible for them to see God as pure unity. According to al-Ghazali, those who succeed in reaching such a higher understanding see nothing apart from God. They are immersed into a vision of divine unity (Arabic: *tauhid*) in which their own self has been annihilated (Arabic: *al fana*).

In this context, the neoplatonic aspiration of returning to where one came from is served by the destruction of the self in order for the self to reach its authentic and ultimate form of existence.

Al-Ghazali is very careful to stress that what the mystic achieves is not identity with God but the awareness that ultimately there is no other Being apart from Him. In connection to this point, Fakhry presents the following evaluation in a quotation from A. J.Wensinck's *La pensée de Ghazali*: "Ghazali does not see in existence anything save the Unique Being, who for some unknown reason has at one moment of eternity figured out and realized a world which possesses in itself neither existence, nor the power to act. According to pantheism, God does not exist except through the universe. According to Ghazali the universe does not exist at all."[14]

We can conclude then, that the tasavvuf ideal as illustrated by al-Ghazali suggests that the human being is to find his or her real self in nothingness. The ordinary picture of the world which we get in human life is due to the fact that

the true nature of God is concealed. In our world of experience in space and time we only get a limited understanding of the nature of being as fragmented and multiple. So the sufi has to leave this fragmented reality behind and reach an understanding of true unity.

Consequently, the perspective of the sufi appears quite similar to existentialism in its discouraging the building of a fixed human identity based on immutable essence. The self has to be annihilated in order to be genuine. At the same time, we hope to have made it clear by referring to Al-Ghazali, that tasavvuf's nothingness is not emptiness, but fullness of being. This is a crucial difference from the intrinsic meaninglessness of the existentialist universe.

How are we to compare this picture of nothingness with Sartre's nothingness? They both associate "nothingness" with a human being's authentic self. They both locate their ultimate, authentic human condition within this nothingness which is at the very center of their ontological framework. However, for Sartrean existentialism nothingness signifies the radical possibility of freedom and involves the run of consciousness away from anything other than itself. Thus for Sartre, nothingness is the situation where the world is *an object to me*, and where my consciousness stands as an ontological buffer zone between my *pour-soi* being and the other, the *en-soi* beings. In tasavvuf, by contrast, nothingness is the point where the person and the world coincide. The world is not objectified by my consciousness, for my atomic consciousness becomes extinct *within* the world. On the other hand, the world cannot objectify me, either, given that "it" is indistinguishable from myself.

Gürsoy's attempted comparison between existentialist ethics and the ethics of tasavvuf may strike some as odd: for after all, it is a parallelism between an atheistic philosophy such as Sartrean existentialism and the mystical tradition of a monotheistic religion such as Islam. So how can one create one's own values and remain autonomous within a monotheistic perspective? Aren't the values and the ethical standpoint of a tasavvuf follower already given in the most definite way within Islamic faith? One of Gürsoy's interlocutors asks a question very close to this.[15] Prima facie, such a world seems to be at the antipodes of the Sartrean existentialist universe: in the latter I am authentic only in so far as I succeed in not allowing any element of the world to project itself and its own evaluations upon me.

We would now like to address the following: does the sufi make his own values himself? As we saw, he aspires to reaching a state of being where all distinction between the self and the world is lifted ("extinction in unity"). This is an ideal shaped within a particular way of life which transcends the individual.

As such, it appears to be at the antipodes of Sartre's understanding of freedom. So is the sufi's existence less free and authentic than that of

existentialist heroes such as Sarte's Roquentin or Camus's Mersault? But first a caveat: we are not going to discuss the question whether a religious believer may be autonomous in the ethical sphere or whether, on the contrary, following a religious faith is in itself a compromise of one's freedom. We shall, rather, focus on the ways in which existentialism on the one hand, and tasavvuf on the other, understand the relation between the human self and what is other than the self, the world. Hopefully this will shed a different light onto the question asked above.

If we look at Sartre's basic thesis we see a real dichotomy between the self and the world. Far from been an integral part of whom I am, the world threatens my freedom and challenges my authenticity. I am radically free because I can always escape the world's impositions and I am my authentic self when I succeed in keeping the world at bay.

In the light of the above, this dichotomy may be seen as a reiteration of the Cartesian one. But fine distinctions are called for here. The opposition with which Sartre works is not of the same kind as Descartes's and Sartre has himself been critical of Cartesian dualism.[16] As we have seen, Cartesian solipsism is an epistemic solipsism which insists that, for all I know, it is always possible for me to be utterly wrong about the existence of the "external" world or the mental life of other beings. Sartre's perspective, by contrast, can be better grasped by Dilman's term "affective solipsism", introduced earlier in the present work. This term successfully captures the rejection of affective attachment and interaction with the world. Such connections are seen by Sartre as encroachment upon one's freedom and expressions of an alienated self.

Dilman is certainly right in keeping the two kinds of dualism distinct. However, and especially for the purposes of comparison with tasavvuf, it remains fair to say that the existentialist perspective, just like the Cartesian one, is a perspective which looks at reality from the point of view and through the prism of the individual. It follows into the steps of the Cartesian model, in which the self is to be conceived in isolation from social and historical existence. Given that this is a central leitmotiv of Western modernity, we consider it plausible to say that Sartre's existentialism and theory of the self constitute a typically Western perspective.

6. TASAVVUF, ESSENTIALISM AND OUR BEING IN THE WORLD

In this last part of the chapter we shall attempt a comparison between Wittgenstein's suggestive remarks presented in the third part above and Kenan Gürsoy's understanding of tasavvuf. We hope that in so doing an

alternative to the problems posed by Sartre's and Camus's existentialism will emerge.

In dialogue VI. of *Etik ve Tasavvuf*, entitled "Tradition and Morals" (*In Turkish: Gelenek ve Edeb*),[17] Gürsoy and his interlocutors explore the issue of freedom. The question posed at the outset is whether in the context of tasavvuf the effort towards actualization of the self, along with the ethical quest undertaken, are freely chosen or not. That is to say: does tasavvuf enforce a pre-determined ideal, external to the person? Is it plausible to suggest that in tasavvuf a human being shapes his or her own personal way towards realizing his or her own authentic existence? The implied contrast with Sartrean existentialism is clear.

In response to the question introduced above, Gürsoy's main line of arguing is that in tasavvuf, just like in existentialism, existence precedes essence. This means that the self is not a static given built on finite positivities. It is always on the making. One is engaged in a perpetual effort to realize oneself, to *become* who he or she is.

Moreover, on Gürsoy's view, the self cannot be shaped on the basis of any essence. The latter is by definition something abstract and deprived of a real context. As such it cannot account for the very individuality of man. According to Gürsoy's analysis, individuality is a dynamic reality, consisting not merely in worldless consciousness but also in a network of relations with all other beings in the universe.

Human beings relate to their fellow human beings, animals, and all of nature. They are also related to God. Gürsoy stresses that tasavvuf's mode of relating is love, a love which culminates in the love of God (Turkish: *İlahi aşk*).[18] Moreover, he maintains that God confers upon the sufi understanding of being a distinctive dynamism. Reference to God completes the intrinsic directionality of being with a real sense of a target outside oneself. This marks a very deep difference from Sartre and Camus' existentialism. In Gürsoy's view, the latter is doomed to failure because the absence of God deprives the self from genuine direction and imprisons consciousness inside itself.[19] Thus, freedom becomes something to which one has been "condemned", rather than something to be cherished.

7. CONCLUSION

At this juncture, it is important to realize that tasavvuf sees the way towards the fulfillment of being in clearly non essentialist terms. Each one of us forms his or her own path towards the ultimate reality, *Hakikat*. This path is to be understood in very personal terms. No general description of it could ever be offered.

On the contrary, it is a path taken within actual life and the very tangible and particular contents this involves. Such contents do not simply have to do with a person's own embodied condition, or social and historical circumstances. Equally, if not more importantly, they have to do with our involvement in the world and our ways of relating to others. So the particular way through which we come to ultimate reality is completely up to us to draw. Despite this fact, all the different ways which different people may make their own are unified. Gürsoy's poetic metaphor of the ney illustrates this beautifully: No lamentation played in the ney is identical with any other. At the same time, though, they are all the same. When you listen to a lamentation, played by one particular musician, you recognize all the others through it.[20] To use the sufi metaphor, once the curtain is lifted all reality is one. Then, my own self and my path, as I have freely drawn and followed it, *become extinct in unity.*

As we approach the end of the present discussion, it is of paramount importance to see that such a plurality of ways as presented above pertains to a being *very much involved with the world.* If one were to use Sarte's terms, one might say that the sufi is in constant interaction not only with other *pour-soi* beings but also with the vast array of *en-soi* beings. The follower of tasavvuf is not a being separated from others through an ontological gap. In tasavvuf's perspective, the world out of oneself, the world of space and time is not a threat to one's authenticity and it does not throw one into bad faith. Most importantly, in tasavvuf a person's freedom becomes real in involvement with all other beings and realities of the world. Even the ascetic is no exception to this: (as Gürsoy stresses, tasavvuf is *not* a system of asceticism, but 'an all encompassing art of living.' (In Turkish: *bütünü çevreleyen, ihata eden bir yaşama sanatıdır.)*[21] For the ascetic position is also a position of engagement with reality and it beautifully expresses itself in very tangible symbols such as the woolen garment and the dervish dance. It is a stance vis-à-vis the whole of reality characterizing the sufi's effort to purify himself from what keeps the self hostage to the demands of the lower "nafs", the crudest part of the self.

In the light of all this, it may be suggested that tasavvuf's understanding of freedom is radically different from Sartre's: it does not consist in an exclusive turn of consciousness towards itself. It is, rather, freedom to shape one's own stance towards the realities of the world and the concealed meanings inherent in them. Tasavvuf encourages the attitudes of consent (In Turkish: *rıza*), gratitude (In Turkish: *şükür*) and praise of God (In Turkish: *hamd*).[22] Such values exemplify the life of a person who accepts the reality of the world and his or her organic belonging to it. Interestingly, *rıza*, *şükür* and *hamd* are dimensions of our relations with others, God included. In tasavvuf's perspective, they are not conventionalist impositions, external to the self. The person will furnish them

with real content in a way which is personal and unique. So they do not trigger Sartrean anxiety, self-deception, bad faith.

In conclusion, tasavvuf seems to us quite close to Wittgenstein's spirit in certain respects. Just like tasavvuf, Wittgenstein also maintains that we become who we are as free beings not in retreating from the world, but in engaging with people and things therein. Our acting and reacting, responding to others, is an sina qua non of our identity, is what makes us who we are. Empathy and compassion considered by Wittgenstein to be the most ultimate presuppositions of sense, seem to us near what Gürsoy terms "an unconditioned love, the primordial sentiment of the East."[23]

In this way, tasavvuf, seems to be in agreement with Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: my treating others as a being with a soul—that is by exhibiting certain affective and ethical commitments towards them—is the ground of the possibility of meaning. It is there that I become who I am, where all the meanings dear to me are possible.

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NOTES

[1] Albert Camus, *L'Étranger*, Collection Folio, Éditions Gallimard, 1957, p. 95.
[2] İlham Dilman, *Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism*, Barnes and Noble, 1993, pp. x–xi.
[3] Ibid., p. xi.
[4] Ibid., p. xi.
[5] Kenan Gürsoy, *Etik ve Tasavvuf. Felsefi Diyaloglar*. In Turkish (*Ethics and Tasavvuf. Philosophical Dialogues*). Sufi Kitap. Istanbul, 2008, p. 22.
[6] Ibid., p. 24.
[7] Ibid., pp.164–165.
[8] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M Anscombe, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1953, 1958, p. 98.
[9] Ibid., p. 178.
[10] Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed., New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 245.
[11] Ibid., p. 252.
[12] Ibid., p.252.
[13] Ibid., p. 256.
[14] Ibid., pp. 257–258.
[15] Itır Erhat asks: 'But if God is the owner of action, how free can I be?' A very interesting exchange between Erhart, Akçay and Gürsoy follows. See Gürsoy, op. cit., pp. 190–191.
[16] For a detailed elaboration of this point see Dilman, *Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism*.
[17] Gürsoy, op. cit., p.181.
[18] Gürsoy, op. cit, p. 165.

[19] Ibid., p. 171.
[20] Ibid., p. 169.
[21] Ibid., p. 123.
[22] Ibid., p. 179.
[23] Ibid., p. 163. The Turkish text reads as follows: 'Şark'ın ezelî duygusu olan, . . . bir mutlak aşk söz konusudur.'

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JAD HATEM

LA NUIT DU TEMPS: SUR UN POÈME DE JOAN VINYOLI

Abstract: La poésie possède le privilège de penser la naissance du temps humain parce qu'elle sait qu'elle en procède comme de l'événement vital qui va se décliner dans la pluralité des durées. La force du poème de Vinyoli *Gall* (du recueil de 1956 *El Callat*) réside dans l'opposition de deux temporalités extrêmes, elles-mêmes distinctes de celle dont nous avons l'expérience quotidienne.

COQ

Coq, toi qui culmines sur la plus haute tour
Me voilà, à la lisière de la nuit et de l'aurore.
Ton chant est toujours un cri dans la nuit du temps.

Temps mort, temps mort, je te vois
Tel un fleuve qui s'allonge dans l'obscurité.
Hôte inexpérimenté de la terre,
Toujours en exil, dans mon for,
J'observe les eaux entre les murs
De la ville abandonnée.
Coq, toi qui culmines dans la nuit,
Coq sauvage enfoncé
Dans l'épaisseur du bois, — celui qui ne bouge
Pas de la triste rive, et contemple
Le passage lourd de l'eau morte,
Ne te verra ni n'entendra jamais ton cri.

Mais le bon chasseur qui se lève
À l'heure grave entre la nuit et l'aube,
Entend l'appel dans la forêt,
Pleine d'eaux vives et secrètes,
Et prend le chemin qui mène
Vers la voix intacte.

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 125–136.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_10,

Girouette qu'atteint l'aurore,
Tout au sommet de la flamme,
Le coq tourne posément.[1]

La comparaison du devenir à un fleuve a reçu d'Héraclite ses lettres de noblesse et se perpétue depuis lors.[2] Signe de la vie qui se renouvelle ou qui s'écoule (*fluxus temporis*). D'autant plus originale l'équivalence établie par Vinyoli entre le fleuve et le temps mort. Originale et étonnante[3] car soutenant un oxymoron implicite : changement et immobilité entrent en composition. Un temps mort qui serait encore et toujours fleuve s'offre à la représentation comme une chose figée, ce qui convient à la notion de passé. Le poète n'use pas d'une épithète qui confirmerait cet arrêt, une stagnation due à la puissance de la glace, pour exprimer la toute-puissance de l'avoir-été (dont la foudre même, disait Coleridge dans *Christabel*, n'effacera jamais la marque). Il recourt plutôt à l'ambiguïté : « tel un fleuve, dit-il, qui s'allonge dans l'obscurité » (v. 5). Quand on sait que cette modalité de l'élément liquide a toujours cette forme, on peut se demander si le quasi pléonasme ne recouvre pas une insistance d'une autre nature : au vers précédent, « temps mort » est répété. Ici on insinue une mise au tombeau : le fleuve s'allonge dans l'obscurité de la mort. Et alors, ce qui devient frappant n'est plus qu'il puisse être exténué ou qu'il signifie le temps ayant trépassé (car l'image s'élucide ici d'elle-même), c'est plutôt que le fleuve procède lui-même à son enterrement, l'obscurité faisant office de cavité, d'un espace scellé qui a pris la consistance de destin. De quoi jeter une lumière sur l'être du fleuve : non pas la glaciation, mais le devenir-terre. La vie au passé se durcit, fleuve qui s'enfonce dans le sol et s'épuise, ne laissant que sillage de lit.[4] Et bien que l'allongement soit progressif, car la mise au passé se fait instant après instant, chaque présent est comme surpris par ce qui se passe car il n'a de lui-même aucune expérience de ce qui lui arrive. Nulle intelligence du passé auquel il est soudain livré. De là vient que de la terre l'homme est l'hôte « inexpérimenté » (v. 6). Il est vrai que ce n'est qu'au sein du champ de la conscience que la mise au passé se fait goutte après goutte. Il n'en va pas ainsi pour la sphère existentielle pour laquelle cela se produit par tranches : telle période est révolue. Le résultat n'en est pas substantiellement différent car que le dépassement se soit opéré par surmontement ou par rupture, le paquet chronal ne sait rien de ce qu'il sera comme être-au-passé. Une période se croit pérenne.

Pourquoi condamner à l'extinction un fleuve qui s'enfonce dans le sol? Qu'on se souvienne, dans le *Kubla Khan* de Coleridge, d'Alphée dont la carrière se poursuit dans les contrées de sous-terre. Il est vrai qu'il se précipite dans une mer sans soleil. Mais ici et là il rejaillit avec force. Est-ce le temps des vivants ou celui de l'Hadès ? Celui du retrempement au royaume des Mères,

pour Coleridge.[5] Qu'en est-il pour Vinyoli ? C'est plutôt, par-delà l'alternative antinomique, un temps humain déterminé, crépusculaire, surchargé d'un passé dont on ne peut pas plus se soustraire que s'extraire : on lui appartient et on y est englué. Un temps de clôture, presque circulaire. Le temps discontinu qui régit l'agir quotidien cède devant la continuité, qui se fait de plus en plus compacte, de la chose révolue. De là vient la lourdeur du passage de l'eau, disons aussi sa gravité. Lorsque Vinyoli évoque « celui qui ne bouge pas de la triste rive et contemple le passage lourd de l'eau morte » (v. 12–13), il fait allusion à l'âme du mort qui regarde l'Achéron.[6] Nonobstant quoi, il ne s'agit pas d'elle. L'homme dont il est question n'est pas encore devenu une ombre. Il lui est seulement comparé, de par la raréfaction des potentialités dont il dispose, car l'impermanence que signifie la fluidité temporelle se comprend comme différence entre la réalité et la possibilité (ce que précisément le passé n'offre plus). La contemplation participe de la spatialisation. Comme l'avait noté Ronsard, ce n'est pas le temps qui va, mais nous qui nous en allons.[7]

En bref, bien que le fleuve mort qui s'allonge dans l'obscurité continue de couler dans l'outre-monde, il tient de la mobilité par le moyen du pur regard contemplatif. Le passé, lui, n'advient pas. Il revient au même de dire qu'est au passé tout temps qui s'écoule, tout temps qui ignore l'instant.[8] Il est aussi immobile que des eaux pris entre les murs d'une ville ou une enveloppe charnelle abandonnées. S'il y a déroulement, il n'est que cinématographique.[9] Sa ressemblance avec la vie vient de ce qu'il est repris dans la représentation laquelle est tramée d'impermanence ou de variabilité selon l'éventail que peut déployer la mémoire ou la puissance conférée à l'imagination. Plus la rive est triste, moins l'imagination a d'efficience. Or puisque tout se récapitule *dans l'œil*, la souplesse que permettent l'accélération et le ralentissement, de même que la bifurcation opérée par la virtualisation du passé, relèvent uniquement de l'ipséité et dépendent du vécu affectif du remémorant. D'où vient l'Achéron ? Dante l'apprend à Vinyoli : des larmes de l'humanité.[10] Mais s'il y a un maximum dans la manipulation du souvenir, il y a aussi un minimum, cas de celui qui contemple le passage lourd de l'eau morte. La vision sans vie du passé sans vie constitue le degré zéro de la vision. Non qu'il s'agisse par là de statuer sur une quelconque objectivité de la contemplation. En risquant le mot de récapitulation, j'ai rendu indécise la réponse, car la chose ne va pas sans une hiérarchie, serait-elle précaire. S'il n'est pas opéré un choix entre les éléments du fleuve, comme de disqualifier les moments de joie et de plaisir pour n'observer que les tristes afin de s'y complaire, le tout est quand même teinté de morne et d'insipide, y compris ce qui avait culminé dans le bonheur. Toute prolifération est rabattue sur la monotonie parce que c'est ainsi que la subjectivité la perçoit désormais. On n'est plus dans la situation de vivre et de se voir vivre simultanément par ce geste quasi spontané qu'on appelle

réflexivité. Ici on abdique la vie pour ne plus avoir qu'à l'observer gagnée par l'entropie. L'autre nom du temps mort, c'est le temps pur, réduit à lui-même, une durée sans contenu de vie, sans *adventus*.

Regarder l'instant en face (ou même dans les yeux), comme le recommande *l'Élégie de Marienbad* de Goethe, ce n'est pas seulement l'affaire du vivant exempt de nostalgie. Cela requiert le vivant tourné vers le monde, c'est-à-dire, dirait Vinyoli, celui qui, habitant résolu de la terre, est devenu expert en choses du monde, qui a multiplié les tentacules pour se saisir d'elles, silencieuses ou loquaces. Du monde il n'est le familier que parce qu'il y est spontanément accordé en sorte que la réalisation de sa vie est pour lui une entreprise qui, impliquant une prise simultanée de sens et de chair, est indissociable de l'ouverture à l'ensemble de ce qui existe et à tout ce avec quoi un commerce spirituel est envisageable. En revanche, le temps pur est donné à celui qui est exilé dans son intime après avoir perdu tout rapport compréhensif à l'être.

Les *commencements* n'ont rien à voir avec les *fins*, comme dit Margarit dans le poème dont le titre est précisément composé de ces deux termes. Mon commentaire a préféré prendre son départ dans la description des fins parce que de tout acte inaugural déchirant une trame, le plus percutant (sans doute pas le plus fort) est celui qui s'attaque à une vie épuisée. Commencement en guise de résurrection et non d'affrontement (comme lorsqu'un commencement advient à une vie en pleine expansion, qui n'en a pas encore fini avec les potentialités produites par un commencement antérieur). Bien que le poème de Vinyoli ait trait à un commencement, il a préféré ne pas donner la première parole à quelque chose d'autre que la première parole. Il a placé la description des fins au milieu, comme une chose dont on traite dès lors qu'abolie. Serait-ce en raison d'un risque d'enlisement ? À croire que la trop longue considération d'un serpent qui a tellement mué qu'il en a perdu toute peau et même les viscères, exerce sur l'individu une fascination paralysante. Il y a là un charme létal auquel on n'échappe que par l'événement de la naissance. Alors que le temps mort ne rend aucun son, sauf peut-être ce « bruit d'avoir été » dont parle Jean Ogier Gombauld dans l'un de ses *Sonnets chrétiens*, le temps originaire prend vie dans un claironnement.

La première strophe ne fait pas qu'évoquer un cri. Elle en répercute l'écho assourdi. C'est du moins ainsi qu'il convient de l'ouïr. Mais rien ne se donne à entendre sans une dimensionalité, ce pour quoi un dispositif est d'abord mis en place : avec le coq et l'homme, l'espace et le temps. Le premier est juché sur un promontoire qui n'est pas de fumier. L'allusion à la tour la plus haute, parce qu'elle implique l'existence d'autres, suggère, outre la flèche de la transcendance (trait accentué dans le cas du coq du clocher, symbole du Christ), qu'on est en présence d'un château. Il est remarquable que pour l'homme, c'est le paramètre temporel qui est mis en exergue plutôt que le spatial. Situé sur la

ligne de partage de la nuit et de l'aurore, il est au carrefour de lui-même, lieu du jaillissement où viennent se cogner l'avant et l'après. Il est clair que l'homme et l'oiseau vigilant sont en correspondance. En effet, il est dit par deux fois que le coq culmine : la première, sur la plus haute tour (v. 1), la seconde dans la nuit (v. 10). Alors que la première notation est élucidée par le mot « girouette » (*penell*) qui intervient au vers 22, le lecteur demeure intrigué par la deuxième : du coq qui culmine dans la nuit, il sait, par les vers 11 et 12, qu'il est bien vivant et, de surcroît, de mœurs forestières. Que signifie alors l'image d'un surplomb nocturne ? Où trouver une cime dans l'absence des coordonnées spatiales ? C'est là qu'il est donné de vérifier que les deux coqs sont le même (ce que le titre du poème, au singulier, déclare). La nuit, qui est l'élément premier des deux coqs selon que le premier y jette son cri (v. 3) et que le deuxième y culmine (v. 10), est en rapport avec le donjon du château… intérieur. Dans l'invisible et dernière profondeur de l'âme, ce n'est pas le Dieu de Thérèse d'Avila qui se tient, dans l'attente que le Moi y fasse une solennelle entrée et conclue le mariage spirituel, c'est le coq !, ce qui fait advenir la clarté du jour à partir de la nuit obscure.[11] Celle-ci est solitude et affectivité pure éprouvée dans l'immanence, celle-là ouverture au monde et multiplication. Ceci comme condition de cela. Goethe a fort bien formulé ce rapport de subordination : « Peux-tu seulement te concevoir au milieu de cet ordre éternellement vivant si ne se manifeste aussi en toi un admirable mouvement qui gravite autour d'un centre pur ? »[12] Sans giration autour de soi, il n'est pas de monde possible, au sens d'une totalité organisée dans la représentation. En la totalité de chacun, déclame Jean Paul, brille un *punctum saliens* autour duquel gravitent les parties accessoires.[13] La cime évoquée par le poème serait assimilable à ce que Maître Eckhart appelle le *vertex animae*[14] et le castel[15] si le mystique n'avait situé la partie supérieure de l'âme dans l'éternité,[16] à moins que ladite éternité se comprenne comme pur retrait de toute extériorité et comme intemporalité de l'immanence.[17] Qu'il suffise ici de noter que le faîte est synonyme de fond de l'âme,[18] là où règne la nuit des images. Certes, la *scintilla animae* répudie toutes les créatures.[19] Mais il y a, outre la connaissance des choses en elles-mêmes, et ceci dans l'horizon du monde, une connaissance de ces mêmes choses telles qu'en Dieu (c'est-à-dire dans leur cause essentielle). La première est qualifiée de vespertinale, la deuxième de matutinale.[20] Le passage de la première à la seconde se fait par la nuit profonde, entendre l'ignorance totale à l'endroit des choses quelles qu'elles soient. « Qu'est-ce que les ténèbres ? Que l'homme ne s'attache à rien, qu'il soit aveugle et ne sache rien des créatures ».[21] Ce qu'il obtient alors c'est « Dieu nu tel qu'il est en lui-même »,[22] ce qui correspond, dans l'interprétation ici proposée du poème de Vinyoli, à l'ipséité considérée indépendamment de l'immense champ bariolé de l'extériorité, ipséité réduite à elle-même (en sa

puritas essendi) et vivant sans pourquoi du fait que la vie puise dans son propre fonds.[23] Reste à savoir de quelle nature le temps dont la nuit résonne du chant qui est un cri (v. 3). Bien que le passage d'une strophe à l'autre soit marqué par l'espace blanc entre le vers 3 et le vers 4, le lecteur (et surtout l'auditeur) est en droit de rattacher la nuit du temps au temps mort, réflexe que justifie la métaphore dont use Alice de Chambrier : « Mais nul ne connaît plus l'histoire / Que recouvre la nuit du temps ».[24] Nuit comme extrémité du crépuscule et enfouissement dans l'oubli. S'expliquerait alors que le chant se fasse cri (v. 3), comme dégradé et défectueux, en un mot déchanté. Que si l'on considère la première strophe dans sa relative autonomie, la nuit n'y paraît pas relever du terminal car frontalière de l'aurore. Relèverait-elle de l'ancestral ? La question se pose compte tenu du cas où la nuit est attribuée au temps pour dire les origines abyssales et ce qui éventuellement persiste depuis. Il y aurait difficulté alors à la faire frontalière de l'aurore, à moins que la proximité suggère l'engendrement et une sorte de participation comme si les opposés ne pouvaient naître l'un de l'autre que par la médiation de ce qui tient des deux. Je dirai donc que la nuit du temps, chez Vinyoli, n'est pas encore le temps comme forme universelle du changement ou, du moins en désigne cette structure suprême et englobante qu'est l'éternité, ce dont le temps mort n'est même pas la parodie ou le déchet, mais seulement l'antithèse, car elle est profusion, ou comme dirait Eckhart un bouillonnement interne (qui est *parturitio sui*) aboutissant à un déversement à l'extérieur.[25]

Qu'on ôte le temps, et l'Occident est l'Orient, disait Eckhart.[26] Il n'est pas de fractionnement dans la nuit du temps et donc de mesure de soi, si bien que le jour ne s'y annonce guère par touches infinitésimales. Au lieu de la progression germinative, une déchirure[27] et un déclenchement. Quand Salvador Espriu se plaint qu'on ne lui a fait « l'aumône que de la richesse d'un instant »,[28] il ne faut pas négliger l'insinuation que cette opulence est absolue, car outre que l'instant constitue l'amorce de tout ce qui est, il est, comme disait Kierkegaard, à l'intersection du temps et de l'éternité, de celle-ci un atome.[29] De là son imprévisibilité et sa part d'éclair qui force l'issue hors de l'insondable abscondité et pose un monde. La nuit du temps ne s'expulse de son invisible retranchement que par un acte.[30] C'est cela même qui prévient d'en faire une réalité privative. Pas d'éclair sans tension, disons même sans encombrement de soi. L'événement n'est pas issu de rien. La nuit du temps est gorgée de désir, de quoi ? de lumière ! Il est désir de se dire dans son contraire ! Étant luminescence, l'éclair a vocation de jour sans pouvoir le devenir jamais par lui-même car toujours repris dans la nuit noire.[31] Comme le jour est une clarté étalée jusqu'aux confins, on pourra dire, avec Baader, que le désir comblé est lumière.[32] Comprenons que la nuit du temps est une quiétude inquiète, une volonté de révélation qui, plutôt que d'attendre le moment favorable à

l'éclosion, se déclare enfin à l'improviste—par une fulguration, par la clameur du coq qui réveille la volonté assoupie et commande la décision qui doit faire époque, laquelle ne peut provenir que d'un geste qui brise l'opacité. Ce n'est en effet pas le très lent passage de la nuit au jour, appuyé sur un chromatisme intermédiaire, qui est mis en relief. La fonction du cri n'est pas de faire glisser le présent (lequel est à notre disposition) dans le passé (qui échappe à tout pouvoir) et l'avenir dans le présent comme sur une trame, mais de faire advenir le présent comme événement, c'est-à-dire comme inattendu et non comme anticipé. La génie de la langue allemande a perçu que le présent est d'abord opposition (*Gegen-wart*) au passé, ici au temps mort. Ce n'est pas qu'il en naît, et comment le pourrait-il ? Il ne jaillit jamais que du non-temps ou, mieux, de cette identité originelle qu'est la nuit du temps. Mais pas plus qu'il n'illumine la nuit, l'éclair ne la vainc, car il se contente de donner le jour au jour. Il ne revient pas non plus à la fanfare du coq de chasser la nuit. Si j'ai rapproché le cri de l'éclair, ce n'est pas seulement en raison de leurs soudainetés respectives toutes deux prélevées sur la matière du dévoilement. C'est surtout parce qu'ils sont liés par une relation d'analogie. Admise la sentence de Johann Wilhelm Ritter écrivant à Oersted : « La lumière est le son visible, le son est la lumière audible », le cri, où se comprime tout le son, sera identique, au mode de manifestation près, à l'éclair, ce concentré de lumière. Prêtons aussi attention au fait que la culmination se dit de l'étoile—que la symbolique nous donne comme germe d'éclair. Pas de causalité donc comme dans la mythologie où Hélios est réveillé par le chant du coq. Ni de concomitance non plus comme si présidait au lever du monde la correspondance des parfums, des couleurs et des voix. Mais une métaphorisation réciproque : éclair et cri sont d'un seul tenant. Ils disent le commencement, voire la résurrection, ce pour quoi celui qui a pris ses quartiers sur la berge du fleuve mort sera sourd à l'appel et aveugle à l'émergent. Il ne sent plus l'aspect exaltant, disons même exclamatif de l'existence. Vivre se réduit pour lui à ressasser. On a attribué au coq le pouvoir de chasser les démons[33]; il semble que lui résiste celui de la mélancolie pour autant qu'il interdit à l'homme qu'il habite la disponibilité à la survenue d'un avenir.

Le coq invu et inouï qui désigne la fine pointe de l'âme, ce qui de l'homme sourd de l'absolu, possède le caractère de l'inapprivoisé car indemne de tout rapport aux autres et au monde ambiant (puisqu'il culmine dans la nuit). Ce pour quoi il est qualifié de *sauvage*. Il convient de raviver la teneur étymologique du mot. Notre coq est forestier, ce que le vers 12 confirme puisqu'il nous le dit en harmonie avec sa nature lorsqu'il s'enfonce dans l'épaisseur du bois. C'est ainsi qu'il assure (en étant également le coq haut juché) le lien entre l'altitude et la profondeur, la clarté et l'opacité, disons même l'intérieur et l'extérieur. Si donc par une dimension, il échappe

totalement à la prise de notre entendement, une autre l'exhibe, en sa fonction d'anémoscope, comme ce qui nous oriente par une calme giration (v. 24) vers les vents souverains. La girouette est le signifiant absolu présent à toutes les directions selon les intimations de l'esprit. Ce qui fait ainsi rotation autour de soi comme centre de tous les rayonnements temporels est également désir de se donner à soi-même à travers la matière du monde.

Comme c'est seulement dans la nuit du temps que le chant du coq est un cri, il est permis de se demander ce qu'il en advient au matin, dans le plein midi ou au crépuscule. Réponse : il est poème. De l'oiseau René Char dit : « Il crie, c'est toute sa présence ».[34] Pareillement, le poème est toute la présence du poète. Nous avons ici notre chasseur levé avant l'aube, en une heure qui a du poids qui engage tout l'être, en un mot : décisive.[35] Il lui est donné d'entendre le coq sauvage, non de le voir. Ce n'est pas là un vulgaire tireur sur du gibier. Nous avons affaire à un chercheur qui engage son être entier. Vinyoli révèle de quoi il est en quête : de « la voix intacte ». Ce n'est pas que le son le conduira à l'animal dont il convoiterait la chair. La voix est le Graal, dans la mesure évidemment où elle est *pure*.

Le bon sens s'insurge contre mon explication, car on ne se rend pas auprès d'un son en le prenant comme fil d'Ariane (puisque dans ce cas le son est déjà chez la personne qui l'écoute), mais auprès de l'émetteur. Il faudrait donc suppléer : « … et prend le chemin qui mène vers l'être porteur de la voix intacte ». Or c'est ce que Vinyoli n'insinue pas ! Je considère, pour ma part, que l'appel qui résonne (au vers 18) n'est pas la voix impolluée qu'on désire. Autre le cri qui convoque, autre le verbe inchoatif qui n'est encore qu'intonation du point vierge et cadence, rythme premier, poussée de l'émotion, en un mot, l'expression simple de l'ipséité qui parle sans paroles[36] à partir d'elle-même[37] et ceci avant même qu'elle ne dispose du premier mot[38] et s'apprête à nommer tout ce qui comparaît sur le théâtre du monde baigné de soleil. La quête de la voix constitue la réponse à l'appel. Celui-ci émane de la cime de l'âme, celle-là est déjà matrice de la forme dont se sert l'essence pour se manifester, car dès lors que *touchée* la voix prononce les choses, l'une après l'autre ou toutes ensemble. Il y a temps de par la polarité de l'appel et de la réponse.

Pour espérer atteindre la voix, le chasseur doit traverser une « forêt pleine d'eaux vives et secrètes » (v. 18–19). Quel contraste avec le fleuve visible et mort que ces sources dissimulées à la vue et dont le besoin alimente le désir d'être par le moyen de la soif du non-su.[39]! Invisibles, elles le sont en effet car elles appartiennent à la nuit, entendre le Soi. Vinyoli n'oublie pas de noter que le chasseur s'est levé avant le point du jour, ce pour quoi il lui est donné d'entendre l'appel. Il écrira : « Notre / humble service : ouvrir grand l'oreille / au chant primordial / et décliner ».[40] Marque de vigilance extrême, car au coq est confié l'appel non le réveil. Ainsi se conjuguent les parts active et passive

de la quête tout de même que jour et nuit figurent les deux faces de la même subjectivité. L'étincelle de l'âme qui demeure dans la nuit du temps devient flamme dès lors que l'aurore atteint la girouette (dans l'ultime strophe). Il y a donc contact. Aux poètes, dit ailleurs Vinyoli, a été accordé le privilège de « la sainte folie d'être cantique, / vent déchaîné, incendie / qui se détruit lui-même, tandis que sauvées / restent les choses qu'il touche et plus pures ».[41] Alors que la luminosité, conscience accrue du monde, flamboie, les choses qui commencent à comparaître, par vertu d'élection, dans la nomination poétique sont appelées à exprimer leur vérité substantielle. Rilke dirait : voici le temps des choses dicibles et périssables qui aspirent au salut parce que célébrées.[42] Mais le propos, chez Vinyoli, prend un tour idéaliste puisque les choses, dès lors que poétisées, participeraient davantage à l'être en dépit même de leur anéantissement et gagneraient leur expiation en prenant rang d'idées.

S'il appartient au coq sauvage (et non moins perspicace[43]) d'annoncer l'aurore de sa *voix rauque* (selon le poème de Vinyoli précisément intitulé *Amb ronca veu*[44]) et qu'il revient au coq culminant de la recevoir sur sa crête, cela trouve son explication dans le fait que le premier est nocturne et le second diurne ; je veux dire par là qu'ils représentent les deux dimensions qui se croisent dans le poète, celle de la pure affectivité et celle de l'ouverture à un monde sans amarres, ce pour quoi la girouette, bien que soumise à l'influx capricieux de l'inspiration, est *sens* (à la fois *signification* et *direction*). Culmination comme pénétration dans le mystère[45] et don des langues de feu (car l'esprit est igné), don qui vient à l'homme du verbe éclatant comme plénitude de force et l'invite à sortir de son exil intérieur (qui est crispation sur sa seule ipséité) et du discours convenu (qui enserre l'eau dans des murs) afin de se faire le familier de la terre qui l'accueille.[46] Mais de tourner autour de soi avec la lenteur qui convient, cela le poète le tient de l'essence en elle égocentrée, nocturne et sauvage en dépit de tout le dressage auquel elle peut avoir été soumise. Hölderlin dit, cité par Vinyoli :

« Mais ce qui perdure
les poètes le fondent ».[47]

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NOTES

[1] *Obra Poètica completa,* Barcelone, Edicions 62, 2001, pp. 113–114 (cité par la suite : O) ; *Promenade d'anniversaire,* tr. P. Gifreu, Paris, Orphée / La Différence, 1990, pp. 59–61. Gall que cimeges en la torre més alta, / heus-me acíen la partió de la nit i l'aurora. / En la nit del temps crida sempre el teu cant. // Temps difunt, temps difunt, et veig / con un riu allargant-se en la fosca. /De la

terra sóc hoste inexpert, / sempre en exili, dintre meu, / Mirant les aigües entre murs / de la ciutat abandonada. // Gall que cimeges en la nit, / gall salvatge endinsat / en la boscúria espessa, — qui no es mou / de la ribera trista, contemplant / el pas feixuc de l'aigua morta, / mai no es veurà ni sentirà el teu crit. // Per però el bon caçador que es lleva / a l'hora greu entre la nit i l'alba, / sent la crida en el bosc, / ple de secretes aigües vives, / i pren el camí que duu / cap a la veu intacta. // Penell tocat per l'aurora, / al cim de tot de la flama, / pausadament gira el gall.

2 « Le temps est comme un fleuve formé d'événements, un courant violent » (Marc Aurèle, *Pensées pour moi-même*, IV, 43 ; cf. V, 23).

3 Par contraste avec la métaphore plate, que nous lisons dans l'*Elegia de Vallvidrera* du « fleuve du temps paisible » (O, p. 427).

4 On pense à Maurice de Guérin : « Il y aura tantôt huit jours que ma vie intérieure a commencé de diminuer, que le fleuve a baissé, se réduisant par un décroissement si sensible qu'après quelques tours de soleil, il n'était plus qu'un filet d'eau. Aujourd'hui j'ai vu passer sa dernière goutte » (*Le Cahier vert*, 10 décembre 1834). « Mon fleuve se perd dans les sables » (30 avril 1835). « Il y a au fond de moi je ne sais quelles eaux mortes et mortelles » (12 juin 1835).

5 L'eau peut être sans vie sans que le fleuve le soit, lorsqu'il est déserté par toute flore et faune. Mérite-t-il encore le qualificatif de mort quand il se déverse dans les abysses ?

6 C'est l'Achéron qui est qualifié par Dante de « triste rivière » (*Inferno,* III, 78).

7 *Je vous envoie un bouquet*, in *Continuation des Amours.*

8 Cf. Kierkegaard, *Le Concept d'angoisse* (*Samlede Vaerke*, Copenhague, 1920–1936, IV, p. 396).

9 Ce que le déterministe Chrysippe dit de l'écoulement du temps, qu'il est semblable au déroulement d'un câble qui n'apporte rien de nouveau, mais développe ce qui était (*De divinatione*, I, 56, 127), ne s'applique pas, comme il le croit, au futur, mais seulement au passé dès lors que répété au degré zéro (chez Vinyoli, dans la conscience ; pour un tenant de l'éternel retour, dans le cosmos).

10 Cf. *Purgatorio*, XIV, pp. 113–116.

11 On se souvient que Pic de la Mirandole compare la partie divine de l'âme à un coq lequel, lorsqu'il chante, fait revenir l'homme égaré à lui-même (*Oratio de dignitatis hominis*).

12 *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, I, ch. X.

13 *Der Jubelsenior,* in *Sämmtlische Werke*, V, Berlin, 1826, p. 31.

14 *Sermons latins*, XLIX ; Dans la *Predigt* 26 : « das oberste der sêle ».

15 *Bürgelîn*, dans la *Predigt* 2.

16 *Predigt* 26.

17 C'est le geste de Michel Henry commentant Eckhart (*L'Essence de la manifestation*, Paris, PUF, 1963, § 39, 49). Sur la nuit comme symbole de l'absolu qui échappe à l'espace et au temps, Novalis a dit l'essentiel dans ses *Hymnen an die Nacht*, II (cf. aussi Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie,* II : « L'Absolu est la nuit et le jour est plus jeune qu'elle »). C'est à Novalis qu'Henry a emprunté sa métaphore (Op. cit., § 50) et lui a donné son statut conceptuel dans une philosophie de l'immanence affective. « Dans la Nuit, s'élaborent les possibles non nés, les volontés inassouvies de la Vie, tout ce qui avant de déployer son être extatique dans la lumière n'existe qu'en tant que ce pouvoir immergé en lui-même et qui jouit de tout ce qu'il peut faire » (Henry, *Voir l'invisible*. *Sur Kandinsky,* Paris, François Bourin, 1988, pp. 241–242). Sur le rapport entre l'écriture poétique et la nuit, cf. J. Hatem, *Soleil de nuit*, Paris, IDLivre, 2002.

18 Voir par exemple la *Predigt* 71.

19 *Predigt* 48.

20 Chez Eckhart, dans le traité *De l'homme noble.* La distinction lui vient d'Augustin (*De Genesi ad litteram*, IV, 23, 40).

21 *Predigt,* 72.

22 *Predigt* 73. Nu ou « sans mode » (*Predigt* 5b).

[23] « Ich lebe dar umbe daz ich lebe » (Predigt 5b).
[24] *La Pendule arrêtée.* Dans *Lune d'été*: « De ce rayonnement qui remplissait les airs / Il ne restera rien qu'un chaos de ruines / Traversant égaré la nuit de l'univers ».
[25] *In Exodum*, n° 16. *Bullitio* (*ad intra*)*, ebollitio* (*ad extra*).
[26] *Expositio sancti Evangelii Secundum Johannem,* § 8.
[27] C'est le terme, dans le poème de Vinyoli *Aban que neixi l'alba*, où c'est un aboiement qui déchire le silence dur.
[28] *Llibre de Sinera,* XV.
[29] *Le Concept d'angoisse*, p. 395.
[30] Relisons dans ce contexte la sentence de Schelling en remplaçant le mot « Dieu » par « ipséité » pour l'adapter à l'esprit du présent commentaire : « De même que l'éclair sort de la nuit obscure et perce par sa propre force, de même aussi l'auto-affirmation infinie de Dieu. Dieu est également la nuit éternelle et le jour éternel des choses » (*Aphorismus zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie*, § 102).
[31] La fulguration, dit Schelling, comporte deux éléments simultanés : rayonnement et rétraction (*Sysem der gesammten Philosophie*, § 33).
[32] « Die erfüllte (. . .) Feuer ist Licht » (*Über die Begründung der Ethik durch die Physik*, in Baader, *Sämtliche Werke*, Leipzig, 1851–1860, V, 16).
[33] Voir, par exemple, Rabelais, *Gargantua*, ch. X.
[34] *Le Martinet*, in *Fureur et mystère.* On peut également songer au joyau (*gemma alectoria*) qu'on extrait du gésier du volatile.
[35] On lisait « incertaine » (au lieu de « grave ») dans une première rédaction (cf. *Obra Poètica completa*, p. 614). Vinyoli est passé ainsi du cliché atmosphérique à la teneur existentielle.
[36] « The Word without a word », dit Eliot (*Ash-Wednesday*, V).
[37] On reconnaît la langue natale de l'âme (Baudelaire, *L'Invitation au voyage*).
[38] Vinyoli évoque dans l'*Elegia de Vallvidrera*, III, le mot qui lui vient sans avoir encore projet de sens (O, p. 426).
[39] Je fais ici allusion aux vers de l'*Elegia de Vallvidrera* : « Aru puc dir : sóc a la font i bec, / i bec fins a morir-me / de set de voler més no sabent què » (O, p. 427) « Enfin je dis : je suis à la source, / et je bois, je bois à mourir / de soif de toujours vouloir je-ne sais-quoi » (tr. p. 39).
[40] *Elegia de Vallvidrera* (O, p. 427). Équivalente de l'écoute attentive : la force de recevoir l'éclair et de le retenir (dans *Minim ajust,* in *Ibid.,* p. 330).
[41] *Elegia de Vallvidrera* (O, p. 427). La combustion du poète est, chez Vinyoli, un thème récurrent. Son *Autoportrait, avec boue et rubis* se conclut par le vers : « Je brûle tout en chant » (*Ibid.,* p. 131). On comprend qu'il se consume parce qu'il écrit. On n'oublie pas que le feu est l'unique élément que l'homme est à même de produire et qu'à ce titre il peut symboliser l'acte poétique comme faire.
[42] Cf. *Duineser Elegien,* IX.
[43] « Qui a donné au coq l'intelligence ? » (Job 38 :36). Voir le *Cantico del gallo silvestre* de Leopardi.
[44] « I sóc el gall salvatge : / m'exalto de nit quan les estrelles vacil.len, / amb ronca veu anuncio l'aurora, / tapant-me els ulls, tapant-me el crit amb les ales, / i m'estarrufo collinflat i danso, / tot i saber que em guaiten els ulls del caçador » (O, p. 239) « Je suis le coq sauvage : la nuit, je m'exalte, et les étoiles vacillent, / j'annonce l'aurore de ma voix rauque, / cachant mes yeux, mon cri, de mes ailes, / et je me pavane, collet monté, et je danse, / tout en me sachant guetté par les yeux du chasseur » (tr. p. 89).
[45] On connaissait un procédé de divination dénommé alectryomancie qui consistait à placer un coq dans un cercle tracé sur le sable et divisé en vingt-quatre espaces sur lesquels était écrit une lettre de l'alphabet surmontée d'un grain de blé. Aussitôt qu'un grain était picoré, on procédait

immédiatement à son remplacement afin de ne pas influencer l'oracle. Il suffisait, à la fin de l'opération, de lire le mot ainsi assemblé.

[46] Il est à remarquable que dans *Le Livre du coq*, le Christ ressuscite l'oiseau et le doue d'une langue humaine.

[47] *Andenken*; *Elegia de Vallvidrera* (O, p. 431).

SECTION THREE

NAZIF MUHTAROGLU

CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC ROOTS OF A HOLISTIC RHETORIC

Abstract: Generally, it is accepted that rhetoric has two main aspects. Those are first its persuasive function and secondly its ornamental character. Both aspects are usually regarded as implying that rhetoric is quite distinct from science and philosophy or even works in opposition to them. There might be a more holistic approach to rhetoric in which scientific and philosophical knowledge are seen as different branches within rhetoric. This paper offers such an approach indicating its roots in some Christian and Muslim theologians such as Augustine, and Ibn Wahb.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric may be defined in different ways. In this paper, I will consider the following two common strands in its characterization: conceiving it as an art concerning the conditions for beautifying the speech written or not and as a type of argumentation used for persuasion. Both strands are usually regarded as implying that rhetoric is a discipline which is quite distinct from science and philosophy or even works in opposition to them. I will argue that this depiction of rhetoric should be changed into a more holistic one which includes scientific and philosophical knowledge as different branches within rhetoric. In fact, Plato would be regarded as the common source of these two different approaches to rhetoric. I will develop Plato's point supporting the holistic approach by appealing to the intuitions of the scholars such as Augustine and Ibn Wahb whose studies were centered on the sacred texts in Christianity and Islam.

2. THE TENSION BETWEEN RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY & SCIENCE

The assumption that rhetoric is in opposition to philosophy goes back to Plato at least in the Western philosophy. Plato considers poetry to be a kind of rhetoric and identifies the problematic relationship between poetry and

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 139–148.
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philosophy by saying that "there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry."[1] In the *Republic*, poets are depicted as imitators of everything without trying to distinguish truth from falsity. So, they might distract people from the Truth and consequently such poets are dangerous, they should be expelled from the city and not permitted to enter into it. In the *Gorgias*, rhetoric is defined as a discourse that produces gratification. It does not care about the truth but gaining gratification from the population. It is closely allied with sophistry. Ignorant people aim to persuade others by using rhetoric and sophistry.[2]

Aristotle does not characterize rhetoric and philosophy in such an opposite way but considers the former to be inferior to the latter. Rhetoric is a means for persuasion and closely allied with dialectic. Both of these disciplines depend on common opinions (*endoxa*) and do not have the epistemic value of demonstration which is the highest standard in the philosophical argumentation.[3] This point is accepted by Ibn Rushd (Averroes) later in the medieval period and reflected in his classification of different types of arguments with respect to different types of people.

Ibn Rushd divides people into three different groups according to their different rational powers. The first group is the ordinary people (*jumhur*) who think through imagination and cannot go beyond that. Such people can argue only through imagination and rhetoric is the type of reasoning which should be used in order to convince such people. Rhetorical argumentation usually appeals to analogies and examples (*mithal*) to make a point because people in this group can only gain an understanding through them. The use of examples and making analogies is considered to be inferior to the other types of argumentation by Ibn Rushd.[4]

The second group includes the theologians which can go beyond imagination but do not grasp the first necessary premises and as a result they come to false conclusions. This is the method of dialectic. The last group is the philosophers who grasp the first necessary premises and come to the right conclusions, according to Averroes. Following this categorization, he argues that the first group should not be allowed to interpret verses allegorically at all because they are incapable of understanding the deep theoretical aspect of such verses. In Ibn Rushd's view, rhetoric is very inferior to demonstration and so rhetoricians are inferior to philosophers in the same way.[5]

In Aristotle's analysis, the epistemic aspect of rhetoric is accompanied with eloquence and the conditions of beautifying the presentation of the conveyed message. In the Medieval Latin curriculum, rhetoric is divided into five sub areas which reflect both aspects of Aristotelian analysis. These parts are as follows:

1. *Inventio*: The invention of arguments for what is intended to say.
2. *Dispositio*: organizing arguments in order to persuade relevant people.
3. *Elocutio*: the art of embellishment and beautifying the speech.
4. *Actio*: the actual performance of the speech.
5. *Memoria*: techniques used to memorize them.[6]

Philip Hallden points out that after 1500 eloquence (*elocutio*) became more dominant among the other parts and came to characterize rhetoric without the others. Especially Petrus Ramus's (1515–1572) contention that invention and disposition were more properly executed by philosophers led the elimination of them from rhetoric and "rhetoric was increasingly conceived of as an art concerned with how to communicate, if needed, embellish a Truth, which was to be found and established outside the rhetorical domain."[7]

Even though this characterization of rhetoric separated it from philosophy, rhetoric was not necessarily put into opposition with philosophy. However, in the modern era, with the increase of scientific rationalism, rhetoric as an art was belittled with the label of "flowery language" or "simple demagogy" and scientific language and discourse were exalted. As Hallden rightly states, even the defenders of rhetoric, poetry and aesthetics worked with the assumption that the artist's work is quite different from science and philosophy.[8] Rhetoric's separation from philosophy and science, even its opposition to them is still widely held.

In brief, the problematic relationship between rhetoric and philosophy/science stems from the following assumptions: in terms of the epistemic value of rhetoric, it is inferior to philosophy and science. As an art mainly concerned with eloquence, rhetoric is neutral with respect to truth, it does not need to appeal to truth. It can include both falsity and truth.

We find some clues to challenge these two assumptions again in Plato. In the *Phaedrus*, we find the following passage from the mouth of Socrates:

> A man must first know the truth about every single subject on which he speaks or writes. He must be able to define each in terms of a universal class that stands by itself. When he has successively defined his subjects according to their specific classes, he must know how to continue the division until he reaches the point of indivisibility. He must make the same sort of distinction with reference to the nature of the soul. He must then discover the kind of speech that matches each type of soul. When that is accomplished, he must arrange and adorn each speech in such a way as to present complicated and unstable souls with complex speeches, speeches exactly attuned to every changing mood of the complicated soul-while the simple soul must be presented with simple speech.[9]

This short but dense passage starts with an emphasis that truth is the first property of any message conveyed. However, it is not enough, the way to communicate this message is also important and it is determined according to the

type of the soul of the audience. The speech must be presented and embellished in an appropriate way. Rhetoric is present wherever and whenever people speak.[10] All discourses might be regarded as rhetorical in a sense. Even thinking is an internal speech for us. It is the art of "leading the soul by means of speech."[11] It aims to persuade the audience. However, true rhetoric cares about Truth and must be distinguished from its other versions which have nothing to do with Truth.

Plato's emphasis both on truth and the way of communicating it was developed by scholars who dealt with understanding the scriptures and conveying their message to an audience. I will clarify this point by examining St. Augustine from the Christian tradition and some Islamic scholars.

3. ST. AUGUSTINE'S RHETORIC

St. Augustine's view on rhetoric is centered on his account of the exegesis of the Bible and clearly summarized in his *On Christian Doctrine* (*De Doctrina Christiana*). As John H. Patton points out, his exegesis has two interrelated aspects: interpreting the Scriptural text and conveying the meaning of the text to people through persuasive ways. Patton prefers to call the former aspect "wisdom" which is actually "the content to be understood" in Augustinian terms, and the latter "eloquence" as "a way of teaching what we have learned" according to Augustine.[12] These two aspects of his rhetoric roughly correspond to a distinction between means of discovery (*modus inveniendi*) and means of expression (*modus proferendi*) which he made in an earlier book *Concerning the Teacher* (*De Magistro*).[13] The wisdom aspect of exegesis is concerned with discovering the proper meaning of the text. That is to say, it is essentially related to Truth. The eloquence aspect of exegesis is related to the ways and forms of communicating the Truth properly to different types of people. These two aspects are necessary to disclose the meaning of Scripture and characterize St. Augustine's view on rhetoric.

As far as the wisdom aspect is concerned, St. Augustine thinks that there is a correct interpretation of a passage in the Scripture and he describes how to discover it in the Books 1–3 of *De Doctrina*. Gerald A. Press draws attention to the fact that St. Augustine's insistence on the proper meaning of the text and true interpretation of it makes him different from other rhetoricians of his time such as Cicero and Quintillian. For instance, according to Cicero, it is not necessary that a text has a correct or true interpretation.[14] Although Augustine is concerned with the true interpretation of the text, he admits that there are ambiguous passages which may lead to fallible interpretations. In his opinion, the interpreter might be deceived but does not lie in such cases. In addition, there

are certainly true interpretations of the text which clearly show the intended meaning of the text. As an example, he says that the terms "bona voluntas" and "caritas" might be interpreted mistakenly in what these words themselves signify, but their ultimate meaning as intended by its author, namely God, is clear and certain to the interpreter, which is to promote *caritas* and destroy *cupiditas*.[15]

As far as the eloquence aspect is concerned, proper presentation and stylistic embellishment of the message is required in order to inform people about the divine intention with respect to them and motivate them to act accordingly. As Michael Leff points out, "Christian orators have only one legitimate objective: the spiritual salvation of his auditors."[16] For this reason, the way to propagate the Christian message to the audience becomes important according to Augustine. What Augustine emphasizes in the presentation of the message is to clearly identify the type of the audience and form a type of speech which is appropriate. Some of the audience might be believers and some of them might be pagans. The interpreter should address people by taking into account what kind of mental state or soul they have.[17]

4. RHETORIC IN ISLAMIC CULTURE

It is difficult to find just one Arabic term exactly corresponding to "rhetoric." There are several sister terms in Arabic such *as al-balagha*, *al-khataba*, *al-bayan*, etc. as well as different opinions how they are defined. Philosophers such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd followed Aristotle in characterizing these terms. The term Ibn Rushd chose for rhetoric is "al-khataba" for instance in his book on Aristotle's Rhetoric. I would like to focus on another strain in Islamic culture which handled these terms in terms of the exegetical studies on the Qur'an.

Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri highlights the term "al-bayan" to characterize the nature of the studies on the Qur'an. He says that this is an original term expressing the Islamic-Arabic world view which is centered on the Qur'an. It is not easy to give a clear cut definition of this term, but he points out that there are two dimensions of the studies directed under the paradigm of *al-bayan*, namely *bayani studies*, i.e. the conditions of interpreting the discourse, and that which is related to the conditions producing a discourse.[18]

On the one hand, al-Jabiri presents al-Shafi'i as a thinker who focused on the conditions of interpreting the discourse but neglected the other dimension. In *al-Risala,* al-Shafi'i worked to explicate the rules and conditions on how to interpret the Qur'an and how to derive practical rules for everybody from the sources of Islam. According to al-Shafi'i, *al-bayan* is any meaningful

expression of different species with a common origin. *Al-bayan* with respect to the Qur'an is about how to derive different particular rules, judgments, prohibitions, commands, and advice on daily life from some essential principles which function as the common origin.[19]

On the other hand, al-Jahiz had a different approach; he focused on the conditions of producing the discourse but did not pay attention to the other aspect. According to al-Jahiz, the target of *al-bayan* is not the intention of the author or the speaker but the audience. So, his emphasis is not on understanding and interpreting the message of God but conveying it to people. In writing *Hayawan wa al-Bayan wat-Tabyin*, he followed a pedagogical method and technique by considering the psychological states of the people who read that book. After long remarks on a certain topic, he deviated from the main subject and gave information about different things and said that this is good to redraw attention of the reader by relieving him. Al-Jahiz emphasized fluency in speech, harmony and cohesion among the chosen words and also the proper expression of the meanings. In his view, *al-bayan* is the expression (*dalalah*) of the hidden meaning. Then he talks about different levels and types of this expression and defines *al-balagha* as the harmony between certain meaning (*ma'na*) and the term (*lafz*) that expresses it.[20]

Al-Jabiri then introduces Ibn Wahb as a synthesis and systematic organization of the intuitions belonging to al-Shafi'i and al-Jahiz. In Ibn Wahb's view, *al-bayan* is closely related to reason, and conceived as a function of it. Similar to al-Jahiz's view, *al-bayan* is understood as the explication of meaning. There are four types of *al-bayan* according to Ibn Wahb:

1. *Via Reasoning* (*i'tibar*): This is essentially about inference from experience. For instance, to understand that snow is cold by touching it is an inference from the state of snow. Also some a priori principles such as that the concept of oddness is different from the concept of evenness are in this category. The inferences we make are sometimes certain but sometimes not. Ibn Wahb also allows fallible inferences within this category.
2. *Via Belief* (*i'tiqad*): The results reached by inference from the beings are settled in humans and called "beliefs." Ibn Wahb considers these beliefs as a different type of *al-bayan* maybe because a belief is always with the person who has it; a belief can always express itself to the person who has it. They are subdivided into true, false and dubitable beliefs.
3. *Via Expression* (*ibara*): In this category, Ibn Wahb examines the conditions of interpreting expressions as well as the conditions in which they are produced. *Balagha* is defined as expressing the intended meaning with proper words, correct sentences and fluent speech.
4. *Via Writing*: Ibn Wahb considers writing as a separate category.[21]

As we have seen, Ibn Wahb theorized a system which is closely linked to reality and had a concern about truth both with respect to the correct interpretation of the Scripture and the world. In terms of the epistemic status of our beliefs, both fallible and infallible ones are included in interpretation. In addition, he did not ignore the conditions for expressing truth in proper ways.

5. RECONSIDERING RHETORIC

In the light of St. Augustine's and Ibn Wahb's intuitions, we can reevaluate the antagonistic understanding of rhetoric in terms of following points:

1. Rhetoric's relation to truth, aesthetic and stylistic elements.
2. The epistemic force of the arguments used in rhetoric.

As far as the first point is concerned, we may ask whether rhetoric should concern itself with truth. Is it the job of rhetoricians to care about the truth? If somebody does not regard truth as something intrinsically valuable, this question is vacuous. Let's take for granted that truth is intrinsically valuable. And let's restrict our discussion to the type of rhetoric where an idea or a message is conveyed to others. However, why do we insist that an orator should care about it besides the philosophers? The reason is that are trying to persuade people about something. If they do not wish to know what is true and what is false, they may mislead people in taking wrong actions and accepting false beliefs. If somebody really regards truth as something valuable, he cannot do that. To prevent sophistry and demagogy, a concern for truth is needed. Even though rhetoricians may be mistaken in what they take to be true, by expressing such beliefs they do not intentionally mislead people.

How to appeal to the aesthetic and stylistic elements in expressing truth should be determined in accordance with the context of that expression. The rhetorician should take into account the psychological, mental states of the audience, their social, political position and all other relevant factors in conveying a message to them. The style used in writing an academic paper about mathematics should be different from the form of speech in daily life because the audiences are different. In this respect, rhetoric is used both in writing an academic paper and in daily life. The arguments should be chosen in accordance with the context as well. As St. Augustine pointed out, the arguments that persuade the believer may not work for the unbeliever. It is useful to remember that, both epistemically strong a priori principles and dubitable truths are included in Ibn Wahb's account of *al-bayan*. However, it is the context that determines how we use them.

As far as the second point is concerned, it is not correct to consider rhetorical arguments inferior to philosophical or dialectical ones as Ibn Rushd claimed if

rhetoric is characterized as above. Arguments with different degrees of epistemic force can be regarded as rhetorical if they are structured according to the nature of the audience and persuade them. An argument given for a believer for instance may not justify some common assumptions shared by the speaker and the audience and in this respect it might be seen as inferior to an argument that justifies such assumptions in addition. However, there is no need to give such an extra justification in the former case where the addressee is a believer. Such an argument is appropriate to him but not to an atheist.

Moreover, the ways and methods that might be used to address certain people might not be regarded as inferior to some other methods per se. Ibn Rushd's restriction of analogy to the rhetorical argumentation for the use of ordinary people is quite misleading. It seems to be correct that ordinary people are persuaded by concrete examples and analogies rather than abstract principles. However, it is not the case that analogy is inferior to analytical abstract thinking in every case. There is a common confusion about the use of analogies. The use of analogy is usually interpreted as an inductive justification of the relevant conclusion. For instance, a house is used as an analogy to the universe by listing the common properties between them and it is inferred that the universe must have an originator since the house has a builder. This is a typical inductive inference and inferior to the deductive ones. Nevertheless, an analogy might be used to make a point clear in somebody's mind and enable him to grasp an abstract principle behind it. As Bertrand Russell points out,[22] we do not try to justify that 2+2=4 when we exemplify it for instance by showing two apples and add two more to them and arrived at the conclusion that there are four of them. Children might grasp this a priori truth by focusing on such concrete examples, but later they can get rid of the irrelevant particularity and understand that the example was just a tool to grasp an abstract idea rather than a justification of this idea. Similarly, when the house example is given, it might be intended to make ordinary people grasp an a priori principle behind it, namely that everything that comes into existence must have a cause. As soon as this principle is grasped, it works as a crucial premise toward the conclusion that the universe has an origin. The reason why we sometimes do not explicitly formulate that premise in our arguments lies in the fact that people we are talking to are of different types.

6. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, I did not aim to give a clear cut and complete definition of rhetoric in this paper. However, I emphasized that rhetoric can be recharachterized in terms of the following two points: a concern about the truth of the

message or ideas being conveyed and the contextual conditions relevant to the presentation of the message. The mental and psychological state of the audience as well as its social and political position plays a crucial role in terms of affecting the form or mode of rhetoric. In this respect, rhetoric encompasses many different areas and disciplines ranging from logic, mathematics, and science to religious sermons and poetry by being a meta-discipline guiding speech. This characterization of rhetoric helps unify many disciplines which are assumed to be totally distinct from one another or in opposition to each other. In addition, this holistic approach to rhetoric brings unity to the human mind by connecting the practical side of reason to the theoretical side. Theoretical reason is concerned with grasping the truth of the message and practical reason is concerned with presenting it properly with regard to the context. In rhetoric understood as above, both aspects of reason are working together. Besides this, through the way of presenting the message, people may be influenced emotionally and motivated to take an action accordingly. In brief, a complete actualization of our human nature relies on such a holistic understanding of rhetoric.

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NOTES

[1] Plato, *Republic*, tr. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992), p. 607 and b 5–6.
[2] Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. Terence Irwin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[3] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, tr. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Dover Publications, 2004).
[4] Ibn Rushd, *Fasl Al Maqal*, in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, tr. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2007), p. 326.
[5] Ibid., p. 326.
[6] Philip Hallden, "What is Arab-Islamic Rhetoric? Rethinking the History of Muslim Oratory Art and Homiletics", *International Journal of Middles East Studies*, 37 (2005), p. 26.
[7] Ibid., p. 27.
[8] Ibid., p. 27.
[9] Plato, *Phaedrus*, tr. Christopher Rowe (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 277.
[10] Ibid., p. 261 and d 10-e4.
[11] Ibid., p. 261 and a8.
[12] John H. Patton, "Wisdom and Eloquence: The Alliance of exegesis and rhetoric in Augustine", *Communication Studies*, 28: 2, p. 96 and St. Augustine, *On the Christian Doctrine (De Doctrina Christiana),* tr. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merill Company, Inc. 1958), Book I. i.1.
[13] St. Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher* (*De Magistro*) and *On Immortality of the Soul* (*De Immortalitate Animae*), tr. George G. Lecklie (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938).
[14] Gerald A. Press, "The Subject and Structure of Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana", *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), p. 120.
[15] St. Augistine, *De Doctrina*, Book III. x. 15.

[16] Michael Leff, "St. Augustine and Martianus capella: Continuity and Change in Fifth Century Latin Rhetorical Theory", *Communication Quarterly*, 24, (4) (fall 1976), p. 6.
[17] St. Augustine, *De Doctrina*, IV, xiii, 29.
[18] Muhammed Abid Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, tr. by Hasan Hacak, Ekrem Demirli and Burhan Koroglu (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayinlari, 2000), pp. 20–26.
[19] Ibid., p. 29.
[20] Ibid., pp. 33–39.
[21] Ibid., pp. 44–49.
[22] See for more detailed information: Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 7.

A.L. SAMIAN

AL-BIRUNI'S "ONE AND MANY": SAYING THE SAME IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Abstract: Much have been written about al-Biruni's (973–1051 A.D.) contribution to the development of the quantitative aspects of science that has earned him a distinguished place in the history of astronomy. Yet little is known about his qualitative views of numbers, especially pointing to its transcendental meaning. In this article, the author will examine his position regarding the matter based on some of his writings, in particular his *al-Athar al-baqiya min al-qurun al-khaliya* (The Chronology of Ancients Nations) and his *Kitab fi ifrad al-maqal fi amr al-zilal* (The Exhaustive Treatise on Shadows).

1. INTRODUCTION

Mathematics is a universal language with numbers and geometry as its foundation. All expressions about nature and its phenomena have underlying mathematical structures. Inspite of the different cultural constructs of these mathematical entities, therein lies the same existence that gives its transcendental meaning. In this paper, we shall examine al-Biruni's thought on numbers and we will show that there are three levels of existence of numbers imbedded in al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics. The three levels correspond to the physical, mental and metaphysical level of existence.

In order to show the various levels of existence, first of all we need to distinguish two levels of perception in al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics. Al-Biruni maintains that the two levels of perception, for example, brought dualism in belief. The scholars have different belief from the masses because they can perceive through the second level. The perceptions of the masses, by and large, do not go beyond the first level. They are more attracted to the sensible world than the world of abstract thought favored by their scholars. They perceived God as idols[1] or the idols are intercessors with God.[2] The Greek masses, for example believed their idols to be mediators between them and the First Cause.[3] The educated among them who can perceive through the second level, however, disapproved idolatry. Instead they believed God to be eternal,

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omnipotent, and beyond gross representations.[4] In other words, the sensible mathematical objects at the first level of perception become part of the veil between them and God.

The mathematician does not realize that in the final analysis, there is no such separation as he has initially perceived at the rational and empirical level of ordinary experience. At the second level of perception, al-Biruni believes that the mathematician ascends to a higher hierarchy of mathematical truth. He understands that gross mathematical objects which include physical representations of number in the external world are not the ultimate level of reality. He is convinced that there is in fact another pervasive reality, the One which continuously dominates the Many. He believes this higher reality to be the Divine. Furthermore he is convinced that although it is He Who creates mathematical objects and everything else, He is not underdetermined by them. He is "separated" from them. At this level too, the whole processes of mathematical abstraction and the resulting mathematical experience integrates with the mathematician's spiritual insight by way of inner witnessing (*Shuhud*), presence (*hudur*) and trans-empirical awareness (*ahwal*).[5] It is at this level that numbers, for instance, have metaphysical existence. At this higher horizon, mathematical knowledge implies unification (*tawhid*) of the soul of the mathematician with the Absolute Truth which underscores all mathematical meanings. According to al-Biruni, the mathematician will then *understand* the meaning of the Quranic verse:

> We shall show them Our portents on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifested unto them that it is the Truth (x1I: 53).[6]

It is the epitome of mathematical experience. As a matter of fact, the mathematician gains intuitive knowledge of the One, in which the number one is nothing but a very pale mathematical manifestation of one of His Divine Names and Qualities (*al-wahid*), *never His Essence* (*dhat)*. In this state, the mathematician experiences God's revelation of an Aspect of Himself through His Beautiful names (*Asma'*) or Attributes (*Sifat*).

Mathematical objects in the external world in the second level of perception, according to al-Biruni, are reflections of something real. Mathematical objects exist at each cosmic moment independent of the mind of the mathematician. Each moment is discontinuous, thus making counting *and* mathematization of problems possible. According to al-Biruni:

> Duration, of time in general, only applies to the Creator as being his age, and not determinable by a beginning and an end. In fact, it is his eternity... But as regards common time, which is determinable by motion, the single parts of it apply to beings beside the Creator...[7]

And elsewhere he elaborates in greater detail the 'discontinuity' of time with respect to creations. Says al-Biruni:

Also, verily time is the extension between two assumed instants, the two being two times of two known states, and because of the existence of these two situations, one after the existence of the other, the extent (of time) between the two may include or shortness, and (whatever) situation may exist in it in succession capable of having smallness and largeness.[8]

In accordance with al-Biruni's belief that nature is countable, we posit that in al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics the creations are like the series of natural numbers. If we assigned the continuously created mathematical objects according to the series of natural numbers, we will find that perceived as numbers, no matter how big they are they can be derived from one without the one ever losing its original identity in the sense of "losing" part of itself. This unique relationship, in the author's perspective, points to the aspect of unity in everything–that is ever-alive.[9]

Al-Biruni maintains that at the second level of perception, the mathematician realizes that mathematical objects which include physical representations of numbers are nothing but creations of the one which have descended to the level of sense experience. He sees with his heart (*qalb*) the one characterizing the Many without ever imperfecting Itself, the Many appearing and disappearing perpetually. In his mathematical experience, he sees the Divine through His Attributes. The mathematician experiences the revelation of God: "Where so ever you turn, there is the Aspect of God"[10] and he is ever more convinced that "to Him shall they all be returned".[11]

In mathematizing and solving the problem he will admit that it is Him that made it all possible and "above every knowing man, there is God all-wise!"[12] Thus al-Biruni, in the process of mathematizing the problem on Shadows, reminds himself that:

God, be He exalted! Is the Helper, and the Praised at the beginning of each treatise and at its end. By the praise of God and His help, finished is "The Exhaustive Treatise on Shadows" . . . and to God be the Praise,[13]

Elsewhere, having solved the problem posed to him by "a learned man"[14] concerning the eras observed by different nations, al-Biruni concludes by saying:

Let us finish our book with the praise of God, who afforded me help and guidance, and who taught me to distinguish the path of truth from the path of blindness.[15]

Therefore the "union" with the Divine in al-Biruni's mathematical experience does not mean union with the Divine as He is in Himself, instead it is when the Divine manifests Himself through His Beautiful Names and Sublime Attributes. The mathematician is ever aware that his mathematical experience, is incomplete and limited because God in His Essence is beyond any mathematization. Commenting on the Hindu whose mathematical experience has been

led astray, al-Biruni writes that they began to think of God as a point,[16] which to al-Biruni is just a mathematical representation in geometry.

Moreover, al-Biruni considers those people who claim union with God in His Essence as those who are misguided and have deluded their followers. He classifies them under the Chapter entitled "On the Eras of the Pseudo-Prophets and Their Communities Who Were Deluded by Them. . .,".[17] An example that he gives is Husayn bin Mansur al-Hallaj who "preached that the Holy Spirit was dwelling in him, and be called himself God".[18] According to al-Biruni, al-Hallaj writes letters to his followers describing himself as:

> The He, the Eternal, the first He, beaming and shining light, the original origin, the proof of all proofs, the Lord of the Lords, the Lord of the mountain (Sinai), who is represented in every shape.[19]

Al-Biruni, however, admits that it is difficult to understand what the Sufi (al-Hallaj) really means for in his other work he states:

> The saying (sic) of the Sufis is hardly understood among them (selves), much less among others, and especially the word of Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj.[20]

In al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics, mathematical experience as part of contemplative action of Divine Presence, must be under God's guidance. The mathematician must be aware while solving problems that he is in need of God. Otherwise he might end up believing that everything in reality is God, or that nature is God and God is nature. He might believes this in the monistic or pantheistic sense. He might even be led astray by convincing himself that He is the Divine, or a reincarnation (*hulul*) of the Divine. The mathematician is oblivious that whatever mathematical experience that he had is incomplete, imperfect knowledge of the world and its creator, for Perfection and Completeness belong only to Him.

2. NUMBER AND NUMBERING, ZERO, ONE AND MANY

Now that we have elaborated two aspects of the external world believed by al-Biruni, our task now is to analyze the manner whereby the mathematician can ascend through the levels of reality. We maintain that the answer lies in al-Biruni's analysis on the status of numbers in his conception of mathematics since numbers are to him the very essence of counting. His statements concerning the nature of the main constituents of numbers; one, zero, many and infinity in his philosophy of mathematics are tremendously important.

Al-Biruni believes that numbers do exist and they possess ontological status. They are not, so to speak, absolute non-existence (*ʿadam mutlaq*). They are far from mere illusions. But it does not mean that they are in the state of existence,

subsisting by themselves because absolute existence is the prerogative of the creator of numbers alone. Number and its series are nothing but a series of accidents. They are manifestations *(tajalli*) of Aspects of the Divine. It is for this very reason that al-Biruni observes "all numbers are found in physical appearances of the works of the soul and life"[21] and the physical appearances "demonstrate the being of the Creator from His creation".[22]

That "counting", to al-Biruni, "is innate to man" is because man in his primordial self, in the state before he came into this temporal world, understands the perfect concept of One. As a matter of fact, God reminds them of this pre-historical state of utmost importance when He says:

> When the Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins their descendents and made them witness unto themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes indeed, we do witness (7:172)

The soul of the mathematician understands in that state, for he knows by means of direct vision (*shuhud*), a kind of knowledge that is beyond any doubt, of God as his Lord, the Master the Sustainer. He witnesses The One (*al-wahid*) and His Attributes. It is because of the primordial experience of the Oneness of God that in this world the mathematician can intuit the number one (*ahad*). Also in the primordial state where in the mathematician sealed the covenant with God, the mathematician recognized that he is different from God, that God is *sui generis* but he is not, he understands that he is part of the Many because he is neither The First (*al-Awwal*) nor The Last (*al-Akhir*).[23] Hence his capability to intuit the Many.

Although he is part of the Many, he is not equal to the others. Unlike the rest of the many, man is created different. Says al-Biruni, "it is undeniable that God has the power to combine the whole world in one individual (i.e. to create a microcosm in him)",[24] that man is created in His image. What does this fact mean to the mathematician concerning the levels of reality? It means that the mathematician has the capability, when he arrives at this world, to transcend himself, that is, to ascend from the world of gross mathematical objects into the realm of the Divine Immanence. The ultimate objective of the mathematical quest, ever since the primordial state of mathematical experience, is none other than to be with Him, to return to Him who is The One and The Truth.

In al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics, this union is the mathematical experience of the highest order, the highest level of mathematical truth which the mathematician seeks to strive for, again and again, through his problem solving activities in this mundane world, a world of generation and corruption. In fact, this is the first mathematical experience, the primordial-proto-quantification state which the primordial man undergoes.

When the rational man comes to this world, he already has a limited insight of the One, remnants of his mathematical experience in the primordial state. Thus in defining "One" (*wahid*), al-Biruni writes:

> One is that to which the term Unity is applied. Complete (*kamil*) in itself, it does not admit of being added to or subtracted from, nor is it altered in substance from its original condition by multiplication or division. It has the powers of all numbers and all the properties pertaining to these, and has in addition a special technical function to discharge with regard to things which are numbered. In this sense it occupies an intermediate position between the higher numbers, which result from the continuous addition of units, and the lower fractions into which it may be divided, and differs from both in that it does not alter by being multiplied or divided by itself, where as the former are respectively increased or diminished, and the latter diminished or increased by these processes while 'one' occupies its own position between the two.[25]

How close is al-Biruni's description reminding the mathematician of some Aspects of God! Since the idea of "one" is so crucial in his understanding of mathematics, it is best to turn to another passage of his own work about it. Al-Biruni continues:

> Although 'One' is in reality indivisible, nevertheless the unit one (*ahad*) as a technical expression, employed in dealing with sense-objects (*mahsusat*), whether by weighing, measuring by bulk, or length or number, or merely in thought, is obviously capable of sub-division (*tajziyah*) for as a technical expression one (*al-wahid*) only means unity (wahdaniyyah).[26]

The notion of "One" is so significant in his philosophy of mathematics that to al-Biruni, "The one (*al-wahid*) is not called a number (*ᶜadad*)", in fact, "The one is excluded from the category of numbers" because "a number is defined as a sum of units".[27] That the Many emanates from the "One", reflection of the fact that everything originates from Him, is evident from al-Biruni;s definition of natural numbers (*al-ᶜadad al-tabiyyah*). States al-Biruni: "The natural series of numbers results from the successive addition of a unit to one and is, therefore known as consecutive (*mutawali'*), for examples, 1,2,3,4,5." We can discern that al-Biruni's contemplative knowledge of one of the Attributes of God (*wahdaniyyah*), and His Name, The One (*al-wahid*), characterizes his penetrating insight into the foundation of mathematics.

It is interesting to note here that al-Biruni's conception of "One" is very similar to that subscribed to by the Ikhwan al-Safa (ca. 960). According to this group:

> The most general expression or name is thing, and a thing may be one or more than one. One is used in two ways: in its proper usage and in its metaphor. In its proper usage, it is a thing which cannot be partitioned and divided and everything which cannot be divided is one when looked upon from the aspect by which it cannot be divided. One is that in which there is nothing but itself, by which it is one. As for metaphor, it is every aggregate which is considered a unique. One is the epitome of oneness as black is the epitome of blackness.[28]

Unlike al-Biruni, the Ikhwan did not differentiate as lucidly as al-Biruni on the distinction between "wahid" and "ahad". The Ikhwan only maintain that one is analogous to The One. The latter states:

> The relation of the Creator to the universe is analogous to the relation of the number one to the numbers; as one is the origin of the numbers and that which generates them, their beginning and their end, similarly God is the cause of all things and their Creator, their beginning and their end. And as one cannot be divided, nor can it be compared to any other number, so God cannot be compared or likened to anything in His creation; and as one encompasses and accounts for all the numbers, so God knows all things and their natures. Hence God is exalted over that what the unjust say in grandeur and magnificence.[29]

It is interesting to note that the work of the Ikhwan as-Safa was known to al-Biruni.[30]

In al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics, the essence and the existence of the natural numbers (*al-ᶜadad al-tabiyyah*), are actually mental objects of the mathematician which tend to exist in his mind. In the extra-mental reality, essence *is* existence. Such is the case because in the final analysis, the natural numbers which are part of the Many are merely a series of the act of creation of Existence. The creation of numbers is like a person and his shadow.[31] The speed of light from the Sun is beyond the imagination of the mathematician so much so that he thinks his shadow exists simultaneously, and that the shadow is not created since to him creation necessarily involves time. In similar vein, the mathematician's ability to perceive the natural numbers might fool him to believe that *all* numbers, for that matter all mathematical entities, exist at once. He might even believe that they have independent existence. He overlooks the fact that just as there is a time lapse between him and his shadow, there is a time lapse between one, two, three and so forth. He also forgets that just as his shadow under the Sun needs the ever presence of the man and the presence of the man does not require the existence of his shadow, so is the existence of natural numbers and other mathematical objects. Analogous to shadows, the existence of the latter is never Absolute Existence because they are continuously existing and perishing. Thus that which is construed as essence or quiddities (*mahiyah*) of numbers, perceived at the level of gross mathematical objects in the world of sense experience are simply accidents *(aᶜrad*) and not Existence (*wujud*) itself.

So far we have treated several aspects of the number one and certain aspects of the Many that we think are imbedded in al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics. There is more to be said concerning them but before we delve deeper into the subject, we want to examine al-Biruni's conception of zero (*sifr*) and infinity. We maintain that his view of zero has a profound impact on issues pertaining to the Many.

What is zero to al-Biruni? Zero to him is not nothing. Rather zero in al-Biruni's terminology refers to a place where something is not created there *yet*. Man never experiences nothingness because since his creation, there is always something. God is always there. Zero symbolizes that emptiness which God creates in order to be filled. It alludes to a state of precreation. Zero, to al-Biruni, is that which "has to be written in places lacking a number"[32] and he says elsewhere, "Should any group lack a number, a sign is used to indicate the vacancy. We employ for this purpose a small circle, o, and call it zero, but the Hindus use a point".[33] Hence, in a sense, zero is not a number like 1, 2 or 3. Zero points to the Divine Presence and nothingness besides Him. This observation reminds us of the saying of the Holy Prophet: "The Divine, and there was nothing with Him".[34]

Concerning the notion of infinity, we believe that al-Biruni does not subscribe to the idea of something infinite in so far as that something is countable in the world of sense experience. In other words, everything that can be mathematized from the external world has a limit. Otherwise man is incapable of describing a point because one of al-Biruni's descriptions of point is that "if a line is finite (countable), its extremities are points".[35] But lines can never be infinite because they are objects of creation and thus not eternal since eternity, to al-Biruni, belongs only to God. Thus points must exist (by his description). Since points exist, lines must also exist because, by his description, they exists together. Therefore lines must be finite. All mathematical representations, then, are finite.[36] The concept of infinity, in so far as mathematics is concerned, could only means "as finite as you want". There is no such thing, mathematically speaking, as "actual infinite"[37] in the world of sense experience.

Absolute Infinite belongs to God, whose other name is *al-Akhir*.[38] Just as the number one never represents the Essence (*dhat*) of God which is the One (*al-wahid*) from al-Biruni's point of view elaborated earlier, so is the mathematical infinite. The mathematical concept on infinity can only be understood as a pale reflection of one of the Names of the Divine, who is The Absolute Infinite and the Ultimate Reality.

Al-Biruni believes that when the mathematician contemplates the Many, he realizes that the existence of the Many is similar to that of the natural numbers; they are multiples of Unity, Diversities within Unity. The more he contemplates at the first level, the more he becomes unaware of his physical body since he increases his attention to the objects of contemplation. He will witness the continuing disappearance of the forms that he initially perceives as the essence of the mathematical objects since, at the level of gross mathematical objects, it is the forms that separate the mathematical objects from each other. The mathematical experience that he undergoes changes accordingly. The mathematician transcends the first level and enter the second level of reality. He will

see, ever-increasingly with his heart (*qalb*), the disappearance of the varieties of the mathematical objects of the external world. Instead of the Many, now the mathematician sees the One. He will see that all mathematical abstractions involved in solving the problem are increasingly unified into a single, pervasive Unity. The mathematical experience will climax with a vision whereby the mathematician experiences that instant of God's manifestation of Himself (*Tajalli*) through some of His Names or Attributes. He will see various Aspects of God in every stage of his mathematical abstraction. This, is the ultimate fruit of his mathematization.

Al-Biruni's activity of problem solving, in light of the discussion above, is not so much to find the correct answer as to experience His Divine Presence, as an act of worship to Him, because the mathematician knows that only God has the absolute, true answer.

In that instant where God reveals an aspect of Himself to the mathematician, it is not the case that the Essence (*dhat*) of God is united with him. The mathematician, for that matter, will never know the Essence of God, at least not in this temporal world, because God is Perfect whereas his mathematical experience is not. It is impossible for the mathematician to know the Essence of God because God is above all particularizations (*la ta^{c}ayyun*).

Moreover in terms of al-Biruni's philosophy of mathematics, unity with the Divine can only means that the mathematician witnesses the greatness of God as his Lord (*rabb*) and he is merely his humble servant (^{c}*abd*). Unity with the One does not imply unity in Essence, rather the experience of unification strengthens the distinction, the disparity, between the Creator and the created. He understands even more than he ever had, the meaning of His names and Attributes. According to al-Biruni, the experience will "show that the Creator .... is infinitely sublime, beyond everything which we poor sinners may conceive and predicate of Him".[39]

The illuminative experience of the mathematician, unfortunately, does not last but it is not lost. How could he lose it when the experience of unity is with Aspects of the Divine, The Eternal? Now he has the knowledge derived from his illuminative experience; certainty which is acquired by way of direct experience (*haqq al-yaqin*) after he transcends himself. God will give him his consciousness of the material world and he will return to the first level. Al-Biruni argues that it is not possible for the mathematician to concentrate on a particular problem continuously. Says al-Biruni:

> This is that the human, when he is charged with an affair, whether practical or theoretical, will not be devoid of (some) thoughts, and the remembrance of (certain) situations which endanger his heart for a time. It passes as a (sic) water of a river, through his consciousness and heart, it being a category, and example of which is dreams (sic). Discussion regarding it can be lengthy. (Indeed) it

is not possible to free the heart from it and to compel the imagining force to forsake it, except for a moment, after which it comes back.[40]

The mathematician, falling from the state of illuminative experience, will again confront the Many, the world of mathematical objects. Although physically he is the same mathematician, spiritually he is different. Unlike the state he was in before the illuminative experience, now he knows everything else besides the Divine (*ma siwa Allah*); mathematical objects, mathematical representations, mathematical models and indeed mathematical abstraction, have only perpetual existences given by God. God is always creating *and* annihilating, organizing and disorganizing, constructing *and* destroying *et cetera*, without in anyway affecting Himself and His Unity. The mathematician witnesses the dynamicity of God's act. Quoting approvingly from a Hindu text, al-Biruni says; "All things are one," and commenting on the statement, he continues; "However, such views come to the intelligent man of knowledge".[41]

3. CONCLUSION

In al-Biruni's view, mathematical knowledge enables the mathematician to understand the ontological status of things in the hierarchy of creation, thus recognizing the proper relation between God, mathematics and himself. The numbers such as zero, one, and the concept of infinity reflects the various levels of reality, and correspondingly, levels of truth. This is the status of mathematical knowledge.

Although al-Biruni was not a Sufi in the traditional sense of the word, yet he could transcend the veil of multiplicity (the many) of the phenomena which nature seems to display endlessly, experiencing the presence of the Divine, acknowledging His Wisdom and understanding His Divine Names and Sublime Attributes. Consequently, al-Biruni knows the true place of himself and the Ultimate Reality in the order of being and existence as a result of the mathematical experience that he undergoes. Could there be a nobler product of mathematical research than this perennial, encompassing truth that transcends the veil of different expressions?

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NOTES

1 See *India*, p. 53.
2 This is the belief of the pagan Arab. See *India*, p. 59.
3 See *India*, pp. 59–60.

[4] See ibid., vol. 1, p. 18. Regarding al-Biruni's interpretation on the origin of idolatry, please refer to ibid, p. 111., cf., A. Jeffery, "Al-Biruni's Contribution to Comparative Religion", *Al-Biruni Commemoration Volume*, pp. 36–37.
[5] See O. Bakar, *Tawhid And Science*, op. cit., p. 50. Other terminologies used are *ishraq*, *mukashafah, basirah*, *nazar*, *badihah*, *hads* and *firasah.* See ibid, p. 38.
[6] See *Kitab al-Jamahir*, p. 5.
[7] *Chronology*, p. 118.
[8] The Exhaustive Treatise On Shadows, p. 12.
[9] See Tymieniecka, A.T., Ed., *Phenomenological Inquiry: The New Enlightenment*, Hanover: The World Phenomenology Institute, 2008.
[10] See *al-Quran*, 2:115.
[11] Ibid., 3:83.
[12] See *Chronology*, p. 335.
[13] See *The Exaustive Treatise On Shadows*, p. 281.
[14] See *Chronology*, p. 2.
[15] See ibid., p. 365.
[16] See *India*, vol. 1, p. 32. This is an interesting example because it shows that mathematics is indeed influenced by one's world view.
[17] See *Chronology*, p. 186.
[18] See ibid., p. 195.
[19] See ibid., p. 195.
[20] See *The Exhaustive Treatise On Shadows*, p. 66.
[21] See *Chronology,* p. 294.
[22] See *Kitab al-Jamahir*, p. 5.
[23] See *al-Quran* 57: 2–3.
[24] See *Chronology*, p. 2.
[25] See al-Biruni, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Arts of Astrology (EA*), op. cit., p. 23. Please note that 'One' refers to God whereas 'one' denotes the numerical unit one.
[26] See ibid., p. 24.
[27] Ibid.
[28] See Goldstein, B.R. "A Treatise on Number Theory from a Tenth Century Arabic Source", *Centaurus*, 10(1964), p. 136. Altogether, Ikhwan As-Safa wrote fifty epistles. Goldstein's article contain the translation of the first epistle.
[29] See ibid, p. 140.
[30] See al-Biruni's comment on the Ikhwan in his *The Exhaustive Treatise On Shadows*, p. 79.
[31] It is interesting to note that in al-Biruni's time, when the current research was on "investigation of the actual light and what is connected with it", he preferred rather to study "what (is connected with) its absence, that is, shadow". See ibid., p. 1.
[32] See *EA*, p. 42.
[33] See ibid., p. 36.
[34] *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
[35] See *EA*, p. 3.
[36] It is interesting to note that al-Biruni's predecessor Ya^{c}qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (c. 805–873) has furnished mathematical arguments to support the view that there are only two possibilities of things; either finite or infinite. "It is not possible there can be an infinite thing greater than some other infinite thing", writes al-Kindi. See al-Kindi's third thesis in his epistle *Fi idah tanahi jirm al-^{c}alim* which was translated and reproduced by Nicholas Rescher and Haig Khatchadourian as "Documents and Translation: Al-Kindi's Epistle on the Finitude of the Universe" ISIS, vol. 56(4), (No. 186), (1965), pp. 426–433. Apparently al-Biruni shares the same view.

[37] I think this is the underlying belief of al-Biruni in one of his responses to Ibn Sina about indefinite division. See al-Biruni's reply in S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction* . . ., p. 171.
[38] See *al-Quran* 57: 2–3.
[39] See *Chronology*, p. 295
[40] See al-Biruni, *The Exhaustive Treatise on Shadows*, p. 228. The analogy of "it passes as water through a river" reminds us of he Quranic verse: "Thenceforth were your hearts hardened: they became like a rock and even worse in hardness. For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth; others there are which, when split asunder, send forth water; and other which sink for fear of God" (2:74).
[41] See *India*, vol. II, p. 153.

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MUSTAFA ZAMAN ABBASI

BREEZE OF TAGORE, RUMI AND LALON, IN POETIC EXPRESSIONS: SAYING THE SAME

Abstract: When a poet expresses a sigh, it may have deeper vibrations in another meadow, in another time. A reader can as well feel this vibration in his soul and embrace the poet's inner feeling surpassing barriers of space, time and languages. The same name of the omnipotent and omnipresent may be pronounced centuries after, or sung in a different poetic expression.

1. INTRODUCTION

TOMARI NAM BALBO NANA CHALE
I SHALL PRONOUNCE YOUR NAME ONLY UNDER ANY PRETEXT

This is how poet Rabindranath Tagore offers in one of his many renderings to the Lord. Bengal does not have a more known poet than Tagore not because his Geetanjali won the Nobel in 1913, but because his poetic expressions have found home in other homes of the world. Lalon Shah (from whom Rabindranath Tagore drew direct or indirect breeze) had these same the age old vedic hymns as well as the monotheistic Sufi thoughts which pervaded their poems in such a manner as to give Bengali a fresh breeze of God consciousness. Tagore songs in *Geetabitan* numbering 3,000 though bears various categories are woven in direction of expressing love of God. Bengali language is enriched by Lalon Shah, a baul poet whose poems are philosophically rich and poetically vibrant to reach any God seeker with a feeling of awe and wonder. To an audience like this, one is looking into a poetry being transformed into a song, a song being transformed into a prayer. We all know that a poem is better attired than prose, a song better suited than a poem and a prayer with tearful eyes is all it aims. When all these are combined we have reached Tagore and Lalon. The Prem, Puja, Prakriti, Utshab turns to one, beauty that the Absolute is. Hours may be spent on Gitanjali alone. As Paul Nash puts

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 161–174.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_13,

it "They light me: for example, I am glad to find my confused thoughts and feelings expressed so clearly and beautifully that I have sometimes laughed for joy, sometimes felt tears to come". Its true, Lalon, the unlettered mystic, had composed poems orally and his disciples took it down. Translations brought to you by the best translators are no where near the original. About Tagore, W.B. Yeats comments in 1912, "At times I wonder if he has it from the literature of Bengal or from religion .... I find pleasure in thinking it, a mystery that was growing through the centuries". We try to through some light on the mystery.

2. GEETANJALI: MYSTERY OF LIFE

It is difficult to fathom Tagore's style, beauty of language and craft of any kind not reading the original. It becomes unnecessary, as Paul Nash puts it, when "one is reading Bible for comfort and strength". The slim volume Gitanjali, translated into all major languages has put Bengali on the world literary map, "travelled a long way, nine decades, touching lives of statesmen, poets and the ordinary man" (Sujit Kumar Basu, Vice Chancellor), Viswa Bharati, preface to Geetanjali by UBSPD.[1]

The vast mystery of life opened in front of his eyes in a twinkling.

I was not aware of the moment when
I first crossed the threshold of this life
What was the power that made me open
Out into this vast mystery

Like a bud in the forest at mid night!
When in the morning I looked upon the light
I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world
That the inscrutable without name and form
Had taken me in its arms
In the form of my own mother

Even so, in death the same unknown will appear
As ever known to me. And because I love this life,
I know I shall love death as well

The child cries out when
From the right breast the mother takes it away,
In the very next moment to find
In the left one its consolation.

In Geetobitan there are 3,000 songs. Study reveals that the main theme of the songs are: God consciousness.

In Geetanjali he says:
Ami je gan diye Tomai Khuji Bahir Mone

My translation:
I searched you ever in my life through my songs
These songs led me from this door to that.
I felt myself and touched my world
The secret paths are shown to me.
Before my sight I can see stars risen on the horizon of my heart.
They guide me all day long to:
Mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain
In the evening
The palace get awaiting at the end of journey

"Geetanjali should be recited and sung", as the first Japanese translator, Suko Watanabe wrote. When I recite the following Watanabe's comments get real meaning.

He Mor Devota
Bharia Ae Deho Pran
Ke Amrito Tumi Chaho Karibare Pan

Translation:
What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God,
From this over flowing cup of my life?
My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation
Through my eyes and to stand at the portals
Of my ears silently to listen
To thine own eternal harmony?

Thy world is weaving words in my mind
And thy joy is adding music to them,
Thou givest thyself to me in love and then
Feelest thine own entire sweetness in me

3. TAGORE'S LIGHT

When reading Tagore alongwith Rumi, one is lost as to find where the shore is. As Tagore whispers:

Light, oh where is the light? Kindle it with
The burning fire of desire
There is the lamp but never a flicker of a flame-
Is such thy fate, my heart! Ah, death were better
By far for thee!

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what this is that stirs in
me,- I know not its meaning

> *A moment's flash of lightning drags down a*
> *Deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes*
> *For the path to where the music of the night calls me.*

Light oh where is the light! Kindle it with
The burning fire of desire! It thunders and
The wind rushes screaming through the void. The night is
Black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the lamp of love with thy life.

Followed by:

Light, my light, the world, feeling light, the eye kissing light, the heart sweetening light!
Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the center of my life, the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love, the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.
The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and Jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.
The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling and it scatters gems in profusion.
Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,
and gladness without measure. The heaven's river
has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is aboard.

Light and noor are not the same thing. Who hasn't read NARUN NURUN ALA NURIN YAHDI ALLAH (See full Ayat at the end). Light upon light. Poet see the light and prophet see light upon light. Sura 24.35[2] Discussion on the above can be long. In my case it is short. If I claim that Tagore experienced that light of light, who can refute me. Read his on lines here (Geetobitan: Puja PP 319).

Aloi Alokmoy Kore He
Ele Alor Alo

Translation
When light of lights appeared drowning my world with light
All darkness disappeared from my eyes on the horizon

4. TAGORE READ WITH RUMI

Compare Rumi when he says in his poems in Music Master

Watch the dust grains moving
In the light near the window
Their dance is our dance.
We rarely hear the inward music
But we are all dancing to it nevertheless
Directed by the one who teaches us
The pure joy of the sun,
Our Music Master[3]

Andregide writes: "After 214,778 versus of the Mahabharata, and 48,000 versus of the Ramayana, what a relief" to have the briefs in density, quantity and weight in 103 short poems. After reading Rumi, Lalon and Tagore simultaneously we are surprised to find how interesting and close they are in saying the same in various expressions.

When Rumi says
When I am with you, we stay up all night
When you are not here, I cannot go to sleep or
We are the mirror as well as the face in it
We are tasting the taste this minute of
eternity. We are pain
and what cures pain, both.
We are the sweet cold water and the jar that pours.

Now a story as told by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, while he was the student in Oxford when Tagore was visiting. Robert Bridges the professor commented that Tagore was more spiritual in person than even in his poems. Someone in the crowd asked, do you think the poet has been brushing his beard with gold? The poet burst into laughter and said it was the sunlight playing on his white beard.

When Rumi and Tagore are read together, one is lost as to find where the shore is. When Rumi whispers in *Masnawi*:[4]

It's said
The sounds that charm our ears
Derive their melody from rolling sphere
But faith surpasses the boundaries of doubt
And sees what sweetens everything.

When life began, its earliest times,
We heard the angels sing,
Our memory, though dull and sad retains
Some echo still of heaven

Music is the meat of all who love
Music uplifts the soul to realms above
The ashes glow, the latest fires increase
We listen and are fed with joy and peace.

Tagore declared that when he sings he can see the whole world more clearly as depicted in this song:

Ganer Bhitor Diye Jakhon Dekhi Bhubankhani I sing
Takhon Tare Chini Ami Takhon Tare Jani

Tagore in his Nobel Price acceptance speech confided that "I do not think that it is the sprit of India to reject anything, reject any race, reject any culture". Music embraces the ideal of unity. This is the weapon one could use for bringing world closer, not the weapon of mass destruction.

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not
Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own
Thou hast brought the distant near and
Made a brother of the stranger.

A thinker very recently argues: "Tagore had foreboding but not clear understanding that the crisis that the human society would face within a few decades".[5] From Kalidasa to Shakespeare to Tagore we embraced poets and philosophers to show the path to humanity to rise to higher levels. They endeavour to kindle our consciousness level without using a crystal bowl.

Tagore sings joyfully:

Thus it is that joy in me is so full
Thus it is that thou hast come down to me
Oh thou lord of all heavens
Where would be thy love if I were not?

We will sing this beautiful song: 2:30 Mins

Jeevana Jakhono Shukhaya Jaye
Karuna Dharaye Esho

Trans:
When the heart is hard and parched up,
Come upon me with a shower of mercy.
When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.
When tumultuous work raises it din on all sides
Shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of
silence, with thy peace and rest.
When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up
in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come
with the ceremony of a king.
When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust
O thou Pure one, wakeful one, come with light and thunder.

After 100 years of Tagore's *Chinnapatra,* I went in search of locations in central river beds of mighty Padma river and to feel his oneness with exotic nature and the soil. Dr. Nawazesh Ahmed, who prepared a pictorial version did the same thing for millions who cannot come to see Bangladesh.[6]

5. TAGORE: IN THE LIGHT OF IBNUL ARABI

On the true knowledge of the way station of the keys to the store houses of munificence, Ibnul Arabi, the most renowned philosopher on cosmology describes various aspects of God's generous giving.[7] He looks at bodily things on the store houses of lights, Wazud, after all, is light. God says, "God is the light of the heaven and the earth" (24:35). The messenger of God Prophet Muhammad s.m. said in his supplication: "O God, place in my hearing a light, in my eyesight a light, in my hair a light", to the point where he said, "and make me a into a light", and so he was.

I have presented a full chapter on Noor-e-Muhammadi, the light (Noor) of Muhammad s.m. in my book Muhammader Nam,[8] in which all the ideas of Noore Muhammadi from Sura Mayeeda (Chapter 15) to Muqatil, Tushtari, Bowring (Prophet of Islam), and Anne Maria Schmmel (The light of Muhammad) has been discussed thoroughly.

Ibnul Arabi has rightly arrived at this conclusion of claming the Prophet as the climax, the Perfect Man, *insan-i-kamil* where he is placed at the circle of micros, representing the macrocosm through whom the creator is observing his

creation. In the words of Tagore, "my poet is it thy delight to see the creation through my eyes".

Tagore's most famous book on poems is *Balaka*. It means the bird which is always trying to fly towards the infinite. This book reminds one of Fariduddin Attars Muntekut Taiyasi. The works of Niffari, Sheikh Muhammad Al Shabistari, Ibnul Sammak, Yunus Emre, Galib, Iqbal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sultan Bahu have taken the whole world by storm. Their works were translated into many languages including my own.[9] Niffari was a wayfarer in a desert and whatever he said was scribble in a paper which were later printed by son. His Kitabul Mowakif (book of height) describes the way stations in the journey to Light. Tagore and Lalons journey at once reminds of Niffari's journey.

Worry not from a clear heart
Like the polished glass of innocence.
The innocent mirror contains all, unashamed
For this clarity, see yourself shamelessly,
This is truth.

As a glass shines bright with polish
So the heart's mirror will shine,
The deeper you look
Between the glass and the heart
There are only secrets.

After Rumi, Lalon sang the same 700 years after.

People and people are in this world
I say what are they? What is their shape?
I can't see
Its difficult to know this self
What's he like? How's he like?
Formless, Colorless
No clue to find
The truth is hidden in this polished self
How far are they separable?
Siraj Shai says: Lalon, you fool
Realise this truth in the end.

Rumi says:
In your light I learn how to love
In your beauty, how to make poem
You dance inside my chest
Where no one sees you

But sometimes I do
And that sight becomes this art.

After Rumi Tagore says the same thing where he eulogizes his master for the flow of music which quenches his quest for love.

I know not how thou singest, my master!
I ever listen in silent amazement.
The light of thy music illumines the world
The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky.
The holy stream of thy music breaks through
All stony obstacles and rushes on,
My heart longs to join in thy song.

Tagore in his entire works has expressed the name of the Absolute in many different ways some of which are unique in Bengali. He played with words like these:

Parana Shakha Bandhu (Heart bound friend)
Dukkho Rater Raja (King of be saddened night)
Hridoy Haran (One stole my heart)
Antarotaro Se (Innermost One)
Rajendra (Lord of Lords)
Bhanga Deuler Debota (Diety of the ruined temple)
Nikhil Bhuban Nath (The caretaker of the entire universe)
Anando Dhono (The center of all happiness)
Shurer Guru (The master of all symphonies)
Arup (Beyond all forms)
Nibhrito Praner Debota (The lord of the solitary soul)
Alor Alo (Light of lights)
Mouno (One who speaks not)
Nirob Nath (Lord of silence)

We could give many many examples. They are not necessary. Now I share my life experience while reading and reciting Tagore. It was the whole day Asarh afternoon when the clouds had assembled and filled up the entire sky. I was in my study singing some beautiful numbers from Tagore. He gently appeared on my behind. “I am enjoying as much you are”. It was for a twinkling of an eye. You have the right to this believe.

I am filled with you
Skin, blood, bone, brain and soul
There’s no room for lack of trust, or trust,
Nothing in this existence but that existence *- Rumi*

700 years later Tagore sings:

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight
O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet
Only let me make my life simple and straight
Like a flute of read for thee to fill with music

My song has put of her adornments
She has no pride of dress and decoration

Lalon was a son and sun of soil, an unlettered mystic. At times Tagore and Lalon have merged. Its a treat to read them together in a gathering like this.

6. BREEZE OF KALIGANGA OVER LALON

Lalon Shah was born 1774 in Harishpur, Jhenaidah, Bangladesh in a lower cast Hindu family. He led an unremarkable life until he caught the dreaded small pox while on a pilgrimage. Rapidly his condition deteriorated and his friends left him thinking that he was dead. A muslim woman brought him to her home and she and her husband revived his health. He was then introduced to Siraj Shain, a muslim mystic who had a tremendous impact on his thoughts and later writings. Lalon came back home, but his family refused to accept him as he had lived in a muslim family. Rejected at both ends Lalon kept away from orthodoxy. He sang universal message of God which embraced all the teachings though. Baul was not a new religion, but a new way as we find numerous folk religions in Japan these days. His beautiful songs were appreciated by Tagore who used to come to Shilaidaha to look after his Zamindary (Landed Property). There are plenty of songs where Lalon's baul music and philosophy has made a permanent imprint on Tagore.[10]

Ever since my boyhood, I travelled from village to village in tracing Baul singers, who travel on foot singing of unity of mankind through simple God consciousness. God resides in human breast, a simple philosophy indeed. Rituals in mosques, temples and churches do not attract them. They discard "shows of piety". Lalon, a humanist, never believed in cast and creed. He passed away on 17th October 1890 at Cheuriya, Kushtia at the age of 116. Bengali literature has been enriched by the contribution of 1,000 folk poets and singers. It is one of the richest belts in the whole world in folk music and literature. Mysticism is an integral part of Bengali psyche. Every Bengali feel the root of this mystic feeling. The Sufis, 500 of them preached Islam in this area, some of whom included Hazrat Shah Jalal, Hazrat Shah Paran, Hazrat Khanjahan Ali, Hazrat Shah Makhdum Ruposh, Sheikh Jalal Uddin Tabrezi, Makhdum Shah Muhammad Ghaznabi, Baba Adam Shaheed, Hazrat Mahi

Sawar and may more.[11] Lalon's mysticism drives towards Vaisnavism. Its more in line with the teachings and music of saint Kabir. The Bauls congregate every year in two festivals, namely, *Sadhu Sanga* or *Motsob*, during *Dol Purnima* in line with the Vaisnavism and other on the occasion of the death anniversary of Lalon Shah in the month of October. Humanism is the central theme of his songs the creator is one and the universe is the expression of his oneness.

Sab Loke Koy Lalon Ke Jat Sansare

Trans:
'What is the caste of Lalon', ask all
I haven't seen its shape and form in my eyes', says Lalon
Muslim is he who is circumcised
What happens to women then?
Brahmin is recognized when he wears the secret thread
But how to recognize a Brahmin woman then?

Around the neck
Someone puts on a necklace,
Someone a string of beads
Does it make their faiths different?
No sign of caste remains anywhere
During the time of going and coming

People talk about caste everywhere
The take pride in that anywhere
All these religious doctrines are buried
In the bazar of sages.

Lalon asks, who am I? What is my nature? Who talks in me? What is the original entity in me? Who is that all powerful? He wants to be one with his illusory neighbour whom he has never seen. We sing this song (2:30 mins)

Barir Kache Arshinagar
Shetha Ek Parshi Bashat Kore
Ami Akdino Na Na Dekhilam Tare

Trans:
Not a single day I could see him
So near is Arshinagar
There lives a neighbour.

Deluge devours the village
No banks, no boats at the shore
I wish I could see him
How to go there?

What to speak of the neighbour
He has no hands, no feet, no shoulders and no head
At times floats in air
At times in water

If he would touch me
All my pains would wither
Lalon and he stays together
Yet they are miles apart

Lalon is buried in Cheuriya, Kushtia near the dying Kaliganga river. He was fond of rivers.

7. ARE THEY SPIRITUAL?

Was Tagore a spiritual man? He must have been. His life and teachings were delved in establishing the TRUTH, which he found through his inner eye. Writings on his spirituality are plenty. The one by Syed Mujtaba Ali, a famous writer, impresses the most. He said, "I have no doubt that Rabindranath touched the great Sublime reflected in his songs, poetry 'religion of man,' 'Santiniketon' and other essays".[12]

So was Rumi. So was Lalon. I was in Konya, Cheuriya and Shantiniketon, were these three poets remain in rest. Millions like me go there to pay respects.

8. PRAYER OR POETRY OR BOTH

Is there anything more inspiring than prayer itself? Yes, it is the soul of prayer, answered Rumi. What's more interesting than poetic expressions, then? My answer: The soul of poetry, the secret prayer to communicate with him.[13]

When common people cannot communicate with Him, poets help. Prophet of Islam was a connoisseur of poetry. When Hasan Ibne Sabith used to recite NAAT E SHARIF, the Prophet used to give him a stool near him and listen to Sabith with rapt attention.

To an awakened soul, the succession of the properties is not an event of the past. The vitality is symbolic as if it happened only yesterday experiencing directly in the present as blazing lights in the vast firmament of human BEING.

To invoke blessings upon them is to affirm and invigorate our own highest wisdom-nature, to create a living continuity of blazing "NOOR" or lights.

9. CONCLUSION

Allah and God looks the same, but connotations are different. Asamul Husna, the beautiful names of Allah are mentioned in the holy book.[14] No other languages including my own has more beautiful names than these.

There is a story around Peer Nuruddin Jabrahi (R.A.) who was once going through a bazar in crowded Istanbul City. He entered a Jewelery shop and as he was having a Peach he whispered a few words on to the Peach which turned into a big precious Ruby. He asked Yunus Musalli, the goldsmith how much the Ruby would fetch. Yunus said he did not have any wealth to buy this precious stone. Again, Peer Nuruddin pronounced a few words and the peach got its original shape. Yunus Musalli instantly became a disciple of Peer Saheb. Peer Nuruddin said "You have to make your breath into gold if you really want to do what I have done".

Poeticity is the first step as it opens our
hearts. The truth is ahead of us.[15]

Dialogue on Cultural Policy, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

NOTES

[1] Geetanjali: Rabindranath Tagore, UBS Publisher Dist. Pvt. Ltd. Visvabharati, Santiniketan, 2007.

[2] "The parable of His light is as (if there were) a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east (i.e. neither it gets sun-rays only in the morning) nor of the west (i.e. not it gets sun-rays only in the afternoon, but it is exposed to the sun all day long) whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself), though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guide to His light whom He wills. And Allah sets forth parable for mankind, and Allah is All-knowner of everything". Sura 24:35 AN-NUR.

[3] The Essential Rumi: Coleman Barks with John Moyne.

[4] A treasury of wisdom for the Poet of the soul Harper San Francisco, 2000.

[5] Tagore, Ibsen and other Essays: Muhammad Habibur Rahman. Adorn Publications, 2008.

[6] *Chinnopatra*: Pictorial version by Dr. Noazesh Ahmed: 2002 Mowla Brothers, Dhaka (152 photographs of Bangladesh Riverine beauty following Tagores *Chinnopatra).*

[7] The Self disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn-ul-Arabi's Cosmology by William C. Chittick, State University of NY.

[8] *Sufi Kabira: Rumi, Niffari, Sultan Bahu and other translated into Bengali by Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, Publishers Bartaman Samoy, Dhaka.*

[9] *Muhammader Nam*: Biography of the holy Prophet by Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, Ananya Publishers, Dhaka.
[10] Selected Lalon by Haroonuzzaman: Adorn Publications, 2008.
[11] Rumi viewed in Bengali Sufistic tradition, a paper read in International Rumi Conference held in Istanbul and Konya by Mustafa Zaman Abbasi. 8 out of 800 Sufi Poets were highlighted in this article. The poets are: 1. Shitalong Shah Fakir (1800–1889). 3. Fakir Lalon Shah (1774–1890) 3. Hasan Raja (1855–1922) 4. Jalaluddin Khan (1894–1972) 5. Abdul Halim Bayati (1930–2007) 6. Kazi Nazrul Islam (1898–1976) 7. Mansur Ali (1855–1988) 8. Panju Shah (1851–1914).
[12] *Gurudev O Shantiniketon*: by Syed Mujtaba Ali, Mitra and Ghosh Calcutta.
[13] The Illuminated Prayer: Colman Barks, Michael Green Ballantine Pub. Group, Year 2000 NY.
[14] "Ninety nine names of Allah", by S.K. Ahmed, Joy Books International, Dhaka.
[15] "And this is a blessed reminder, which we have sent": Sura 21:50.

CLAUDIO G. ANTONI

WOMEN AND THE VEGETABLE KINGDOM: LOVE METAPHORS IN CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC MEDIEVAL POETICS

Abstract: Despite the antinomic character originally attributed to the concept of grotesque and arabesque which, according to historical periods and individual interpretations, has surprisingly shifted from opposition to juxtaposition of the two terms, such a cultural parameter can still offer the opportunity of tracing a credible dividing line between the creativity of the West and that of the Middle East. A limited number of vegetable and floral metaphors connected to images of female *personae* are taken into consideration under the grotesque/arabesque guidelines, from Petrarch and his metaphor Laura = laurel to masters of poetic mannerism in Arabic literature such as Ibn al-Rumi, al-Sanawbarī, al-Mutamid and others. The major distinction arising from this display of poetic virtuosity points in the direction of the well known prohibition, in Islamic arts, of human representations which, for this reason, are bound to undergo a metamorphosis from the human to the vegetable kingdom, thereby justifying the principle of foliated/floriated motifs in the arabesque and its transfer to kilim-related designs and ornaments. On the other hand, the origin of the Petrarchan floral metaphor, stylistically related to Arnaut Daniel, seems to reside more squarely in the sense of psychological and historical conflicts inherited by the West from Greek and Latin literary *topoi*.

The identification of a female figure with a metaphor indicating a plant, a tree or a flower seems to be a device common enough to poetry throughout the cultures worldwide, even though such a frequent construction hides profound differences and seemingly unsolvable structural and ideological oppositions. In this respect we are going to analyze a few floral/vegetable love metaphors present in early Arabic and Western poetry; the latter will be represented by Petrarch's collection of sonnets entitled *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* or *Canzoniere*.

The idealized love for Laura hinted at by Petrarch is, among other poetic figures, the carrier of one of the most famous metaphors ever employed in the West, namely the paronomasia Laura-lauro (laurel), which expands towards

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inanimate figures and concepts not unlike what is required by the metric structure of the sestina (*laura/Laura-l'aura*; *laura/Laura-l'auro*), of which were fond, among others, both Dante and Petrarch.[1] It must be emphasized that the existence itself of the puns surrounding Laura's name is conditioned by the fact that the apostrophe between the article and the noun was left out in the Middle Ages, thus rendering the comprehension of the metaphor more hidden and, therefore, more startling than in our times. Furthermore, the lexical pair Laura-lauro could also function, at a further significant level, as a *senhal*, namely as a nominal allusion employed in Provençal poetry to indicate a character or poetic *persona* that was improper to call by his or her actual name. The references to Provençal poetics actually brings us to a little known detail in Petrarch's style: it is generally assumed that Petrarch himself was the creator of the couple laura-lauro, but it is not entirely so. The further elaboration of the paronomasia was certainly his, but only in the sense of a variation on the theme. The starting point seems to derive from Arnaut Daniel's so called signature, where the poet says *Ieu sui Arnaut / qu'amas l'aura / que chatz la lebre ab lo bou / e nadi contra suberna*,[2] as Gianfranco Contini pointed out in 1970.[3]

We have chosen Petrarch and his famous metaphor for their centrality in the development of the sonnet genre, but there are other reasons. For instance, well known is Petrarch's admiration towards the metrical compositions of Provençal poetry, but he is also the most important poet in the Middle Ages who opened the door of humanism to the recreation of ancient Greek and Latin myths, literature and culture, in what will later become the enormously influential Renaissance cultural movement. In this respect the couple laura-lauro, before Petrarch, is nothing but one of the many myths of classical antiquity, and certainly not the most representative, pivoting around the major figure of the god Apollo who, one day, decided to have a flirt with the nymph Daphne. She did not reciprocate his love and, in order to escape the unwanted attentions of the god, asked to be turned into a bush named laurel.

Like Petrarch, Apollo owns the gift of poetry and shines over the earth as a personification of the sun, bestowing his gifts connected to creativity both physical and poetic, which allows some comparisons between the Greek god and the Italian poet, such as the laurel crown worn by both and representing the everlasting value of poetry, as well as the condition of a somewhat hidden conflict between the male actants (Apollo and Petrarch) on one side and Daphne/Laura on the other. This is the most interesting aspect of the metamorphosis in its numerous literary developments over the centuries, since it represents a conflict and its overcoming on the background of a highly dramatic situation.[4] It should be noted that such a metaphorical structure is not uncommon in Greek mythology, as can be seen in the myth of Adonis and his

metamorphosis into a hyacinth, as well as in the troubled stories of Philomela and Aracne, turned into animals such as the nightingale and the spider, just to quote three of the best known myths centered on violence, flight and subsequent changes of form. Thus, despite her remote likeness with Beatrice, Laura is not a spiritual figure: her metamorphosis into a laurel bears witness to the fact that, even after her transformation, she is still very much linked with the earth, its produce and its vegetable kingdom; this, in turn, activates the unavoidable connection with the image of the sun/Apollo/Petrarch, in the ineluctable system of laws governing the universe.

Switching now from the myths and themes of Western poetry to the ones pertaining to Arabic literature and civilization, lyrical compositions (*qasida*, *muʿallaqa*, *ghazal*, etc.) seldom or never allow a female representation similar to Laura's, even though the centrality of the woman's figure, different but still fundamental, is out of discussion as a poetic icon. What we have indicated as the sense of historical and psychological conflict inherited by some female *personae* from Greek and Latin literature, turns out to be non-existent, because the poet, whoever he is, does not seem to recognize the need to acknowledge the presence of such an inner conflict. On the other hand, the reference to the imagery of flowers, plants and trees is still very much in place as an unavoidable artistic reflection: the essence of the female spirit cannot help belonging to a green landscape (an oasis, maybe?), even after centuries of inescapable relatedness with sand, deserts and dunes.

Within the framework of the *adab*, namely in what, according to the terminology of Medieval *belles-lettres* in the Arab world, was defined, at the same time, as poetry, artistic prose and literary scholarship, Ibn ar-Rumi (d. 896) stands out, in the ʿAbbasid period, as the creator of a number of conceits and far-fetched metaphors. In his panegyric on Ismāʿīl ben Bulbul,[5] the woman's individual features and parts of her body are likened to different items from the vegetable kingdom: her figure to a bough, her buttocks to a hillock, her cheeks to apples, her breast to pomegranates, her hair to dark vines, her eyes to narcissi, until the poet reaches the symbolic number of nine distinct items, in a vegetable portrait not unlike those painted by the Italian artist Arcimboldo in the late sixteenth century. The insistence on conceits, recognizable as a fundamental feature of baroque Western poetry, reappears, this time with a major alteration, in another poem by Rumi, where the earth itself is decked out in a maiden's embroidered garments; in this landscape boughs whisper to one another, birds and trees look intoxicated and the rainbow appears to be made with several layers of women's clothes, each of a different color and lenght.[6] Here, on the other hand, the classical Western directionality of metamorphosis from the woman to the vegetable kingdom is turned around, thus suggesting that, for some reason, the conflict is not so inescapable as the one

experienced by Daphne and, at the same time, hinting at the possibility that the woman can still get the upper hand in the fundamental instability of creation. Another specialist in mannerist poetic manipulations, as-Sanawbari (d. 945), great celebrator of plants and gardens, proposes not only mirror-like metaphors in which the transformation into something remains frozen in the attempted act, since humans and flora keep participating in their contrasting natures ("The likening of gardens to lovers has increased the lovers' love for gardens"),[7] but also questions the belonging of the Persian metaphor of the cypress which, as late as the second half of the nineteenth century, was considered as pertaining to the male figure ("Cypress trees look like courtesans who have lifted their skirts"),[8] in which what is revealed under the skirt is not so much the contour of the naked legs, as a hasty modernist would insinuate, but rather the pants covering the lower limbs.

The Andalusian poet Ibn Zaidun (d. 1070), who spent most of his life in Cordoba, thus describes the interaction between a tract of land covered with greenery and a river crossing the landscape: "The garden was smiling from his silver water, similar to necklaces strewn on your bosom."[9] Al-Mutamid (d. 1095) further elaborates on the concept of the double nature of flesh and tree bark when he writes: "She slightly parted her dress like a tender willow branch, as a bud unfolds revealing the flower."[10] On the other hand, Ibn Quzman (d. 1160) remains faithful to the mannerist correspondence concerning body parts and their non-human equivalents, in what could be described as a delicate synesthetic game *à trois* involving poetry, painting and the sense of taste: "Your small breasts are apple, / flour are your little cheecks, / pearls are your tiny teeth, / sugar is your petite mouth."[11]

At this point we could go on and on trying to establish similarities, more or less profound, between lyrical images derived from the East and the West. But the major question remains: what is that makes these two classes of vegetable/floral metaphors suitable to an eventual comparative examination if we agreed, from the start, that they belong to different origins and cultures? The key to such an exegetic dilemma may be found in the opposition between grotesque and arabesque,[12] which materialized, in its conceptual form, as a result of the unforeseen discovery of Nero's *domus aurea* in Rome around 1480. The distinction between grotesque and arabesque was probably meant to be, in the beginning, a sort of firm dividing line between two different ways, Eastern and Western, of comprehending and reproducing nature in the foreground of the well-known *querelle* involving poetry and visual arts, even though it should be emphasized that the dichotomy between grotesque and arabesque could not subsist outside the traditional opposition between East and West, already established by and large in the Middle Ages. However, the temporal proximity to the momentous innovations

in baroque painting and literature, which promoted sudden colorful transformations matched with bold metaphors and surprising similes, was responsible, instead, for the weakening of the original meaning, at whose center probably stood the incomprehensible Islamic prohibition, at least for Westerners, about the artistic reproduction of the human figure. In the *Cotgrave Dictionairie of the French and English Tongues* (1611),[13] no distinction whatsoever is held between grotesque and arabesque: actually the expression comes to signify a jumble of different objects pleasing to the creative imagination of the artist. It is no wonder, therefore, if this paradoxical definition cuts through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries without being challenged at all; as such, we find it again in E.A. Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), at a time when orientalism was fashionable but not necessarily deeply understood.[14]

In order to restore the original dichotomy dividing the grotesque from the arabesque, it is necessary to rediscuss the meanings that should be attributed to these terms. In the first place, grotesque is not meant as a connotation in the sense of deformed or bizarre, but rather derives its meaning from the position of the *domus aurea* whose inside, standing lower than the road level because of debris accumulation over the centuries, could be reached only by sliding downward and following a grotto-like route. Grotesque as a semantic deviation signifying misshapen, odd and the like belongs to a later assessment of the term, when similarities became commonplace between the frescoes decorating Nero's villa and the disquieting fantastic creatures adorning Medieval cathedrals in Northern Europe. In this respect, any design or figure in the *domus aurea*, mostly drawn from traditional mythological stories, could qualify as grotesque according to the original ethymology including, eventually, the legend of Apollo and Daphne and her aberrant change into a vegetable being.

More complex appear to be the signifying levels attributed to the term arabesque. While, according to Patricia C. Smith,[15] the arabesque cannot escape its fundamental floral meaning because of the Coranic injunction against the representation of human or animal forms, the grotesque can not only elaborate on manifold shapes and images such as human beings, fantastic figures, buildings, genii, beasts, etc., but also indulge in any visionary mixture of the above including floral and vegetable forms. However, the distinction between the two iconic parameters does not stand exclusively on the question of a mere variety of objects. Both James S. Curl[16] and Patricia C. Smith agree on the semantic dichotomy of the natural/unnatural category applied to the grotesque and arabesque: while the latter does have a type in nature, represented by the snapdragon (to which, perhaps, the acanthus should be added), the former, devoid of a natural point of reference, consists of an iconic perspective, nonexistent in nature, based on the whimsical predilection of objects chosen by the painter or poet.

However, the higher level of naturaleness exhibited by the arabesque is not exclusively limited to the theological restriction implied in the blasphemous competition between the human artist and *al-musawer*, the absolute creator, one of the ninety-nine attributes of Allah. As suggested by Terry Allen,[17] the nature of the arabesque is primarily ornamental and, as such, points in two different directions which, for us, are of a major intellectual consequence, since they define the fundamental artistic areas to which Islamic creativity has applied itself since the times of *al-jahiliyah*, namely the convoluted graphic elaboration of Coranic verses and prayers that decorate the walls of mosques, and the symbolic ornamental pattern constituting the essential part of rugs and carpets. We have previously mentioned the Western *querelle* between painting and poetry dating back to Greek literature (Simonides of Ceos) and Horace's *ut pictura poesis*; in the Islamic environment, according to Allen, something similar must have occurred, but the controversy – unlike the one running high in the West until the end of the baroque without a clear stand and an ultimate winner—found a way to resolve itself through an absorption of functions. Consequently, the visual supremacy was assigned to poetry (let us not forget the fundamental role that religious calligraphy played in the process), even though poetic compositions had always had the voiced component on their side. This is why the iconic element, deprived of its historical constituents (such as animal and human figures, fundamental in any kind of plot and narration), was reduced to a figural motive such as calligraphy and floral decoration.

This, of course, is a theory that awaits a proper confirmation. However, it should be noted that parts of it, particularly the ones concerning carpets and rugs, reveal an interesting application to the dispute of vegetable/floral metamorphosis in Eastern poetics. In the first place, the presence of carpets in a place intended for prayers, either a mosque or a home, indicates a state of ceremonial purity: the faithful is thereby protected by the eventual pollution generated by the floor or the ground. Furthermore, the designs on the carpets, whether floral or geometrical, contain major references to a symbolic interpretation: the carpet thus becomes an emblematic map which could eventually hint at an expanded story, even though we may never be able to organize its fundamental traits in narrative form and eventually point out the individuality of the woman in question. A feminine portrait seems therefore to trace itself in the background of every *kilim*, and this consideration becomes even more compelling considering the fact that the symbolic contents of the carpet are directly related to some kind of social identification, primarily the single or married condition of the weaver.

The highest point of self-fulfilment, within this assumption, could eventually be reached if the concordance between the ornate element in calligraphy and in carpets could lead to the same reference point, namely the female figure

or *persona.* In actuality what occurs, instead, is the realization of an ordinary cultural impediment related to the life of any average Arab woman in the Middle Ages, namely the fact that she was generally unable to read and write. Consequently, the calligraphic word/world, as Derrida would have it, is assigned to man, whereas carpet weaving and the symbols of its iconic configuration remain within the female domain (an interesting application of this assumption can be found in some of Abū Nuwās' compositions such as II, III, IV and V,[18] that could be read according to a double semantic interpretation, both gender-related and calligraphic at the same time, in the strict interdependence occurring between calligraphy and man's creative enterprise).

Going back to the poetic fragments we have previously considered, a possible hermeneutic device uniting different kinds of lyrical inspiration could be represented by the application of a principle based on the intensity of cohesion between the female *persona* and the metamorphosis of which she becomes the object. In our case Laura represents the highest possible achievement in a metaphor so cohesive that we cannot tell the dividing line between the human nature and the vegetable tissue, even though it should be said that Petrarch's stylistic conceits come only second after the uninterrupted continuity between the human and the vegetable essence originally imbedded in the Greek myth. Rumi sees an interlocking between floral and human nature as the prevailing condition of a simile, although the major ingredients of the metamorphosis (boughs, apples, pomegranates, narcissi, etc.) are there waiting for a poetic miracle to happen; even the inversion of the maiden's garments with respect to mother earth, although colorful, is liable to lead to a separation between the two natural realm, not to a renewed perception of cohesion. Closer in his metaphorical results appears to be as-Sanawbari, despite the mechanical open–close mechanism of the skirt turning into a cypress foliage; however, on second thoughts, the mirror-like condition between gardens and lovers is nothing but a box full of surprises for readers in love, not the anticipation of the blending of two natures.

In this respect, Ibn Zaidun gets much closer on the path of the unnatural wonder generated by the connivance of nature and poetry: actually the metamorphosis has already begun, and the pearls made of water will soon submerge the body of the female *persona*, as if the silvery water represented a Western deity waiting to impose an unwanted metamorphosis. Ibn Quzman extends some vegetable similes in a condensed metaphorical game where the remembrance of nature is already a thing of the past, since the reader sees beyond the produce itself (flour, sugar, etc.); only apples are there to remind us of a pristine state when the elaboration of the food cycle was less significant than nature as a generating principle. In conclusion, however, only Al-Mutamid shows the kind of lyrical intuition leading to the lack of distinction between human and vegetable

tissues, namely to the figurative and intellectual core of metamorphosis, when the parted dress becomes one with the curling of the bark and the subsequent revelation of the flower contained inside the vegetable limb.

Although, in the case of metamorphosis, cohesion seems to be the only interpretative device to close the gap between different forms of poetry expressed by the grotesque and arabesque, the same theoretical principle should be applied to the association between the carpet and the woman who represents both the physical maker (weaver) and the symbolic agent responsible for the meaning of the designs. To find anything similar to a poetic intervention not only on the theme of the carpet, but also on the assumption of a possible hidden conflict inside the poetic image, we have to resort to a fragment of Ibn al-Muʿtazz contained in a normative page by Al-Bâqillânî[19] on poetic writing: "All night long I spread my cheek (as a carpet) under his feet in humility and I dragged my trains over (his trace)"[20]. This is the fragment appreciated by the critic in comparison with a similar one available in the *muʿallaqa* by Imru'ul-Qais', which reads as follows: "And I arose with her and walked forth while she dragged the trains of a cloak adorned with figures (to efface) our traces behind us".[21] Al-Bâqillânî complains about the constraints or forced constructions belonging to Imru'ul-Qais (i.e., the excessive care surrounding a number of obvious actions deserving instead a good erasure), in the name of the principle of poetic conciseness, but seems to ignore the fact that, from our standpoint, such a relentless recommendation towards terseness would eventually be responsible for the disappearance of a major detail in the verse, namely "... a cloak adorned with figures...", which turns out to be the only connecting metaphor linking together the cloak and the carpet in the act of brushing each other. It should be noted that the figures embroidered on the cloak might have the same significance or symbolic extent as the ones we find on the carpet, since both manufacts have female figures as ultimate referents.

Much more should be said about this curious correspondence between the functionality of certain love metaphors and the extended meaning attributed to a hidden dramatic outline supporting the whole structure of a lyrical composition. In the first place, while Western poetry seems to be surrounded in many ways by gardens, orchards and streaming waters, the same longing does exist in Arabic poetry, but here such a feeling for the blending of two natures, the human being and the plant, must pass through a sort of filter consisting of inanimate icons or inorganic materials (carpets, cloaks), to remind us, if anything, that the principle of *al-musawer* is still governing a living world thoroughly different from a lifeless agglomeration of matter and symbols. Whereas for Laura/Daphne her mythical past is one with the conflict generating her metamorphosis, for the nameless women appearing in Arabic poetry the ornamental motifs contained in carpets and cloaks identify themselves with their symbolic

history through the intermediation of writing (calligraphy). It does not matter whether women are illiterate; the symbol is for someone else to decipher, not for the bearer herself. At the same time, this metaphor reveals the indispensable contact between the organic and the inorganic which represents the first step, albeit never taken, towards the painting of a living being.

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NOTES

[1] Cfr. Salvatore Battaglia, *Le rime "petrose" e la sestina (Arnaldo Daniello, Dante, Petrarca)*, Naples, Liguori, 1964.

[2] "I am Arnaut / who accumulates the air, / hunts the hare with an ox / and swims against the current". Trans. mine. These lines represent the conclusion of Arnaut's *canzone En cest sonet coind'e leri.*

[3] See Gianfranco Contini, "Préhistoire de l'aura de Pétrarque", in *Varianti e altra linguistica*, Turin, Einaudi, 1970, pp. 193–199.

[4] See also Charles Tomlinson, *Poetry and Metamorphosis*, New York and Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1983; and Jean-Charles Seigneuret, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, 2 vols., London, New York, Westport (CT), Greenwood Press, 1988.

[5] Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant and G. Rex Smith, eds., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, New York and Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1990, pp. 17 sgg.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Cfr. Ashtiany e. a., eds., *The Cambridge History*, op. cit., pp. 164–166.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Francesco Gabrieli, *La letteratura araba*, Florence, Sansoni-Accademia, 1967, p. 151. Trans. mine.

[10] Gabrieli, op. cit., pp. 152–153. Trans. mine.

[11] Gabrieli, op. cit., p. 157. Trans. mine.

[12] From a strictly logical and linguistic standpoint, grotesque/arabesque is a hermeneutic semi-contrastive model similar, in its significant structure, to the following lexemic couples: oranges and apples (an accumulation of objects only apparently belonging to the same category), left and right (everywhere, in the sense of "scattered around"), topsy-turvy (upside down, disorderly), tit for tat (an eye for an eye), etc. The first lexeme (grotesque), may share a fundamental quality with the second (arabesque), but cannot necessarily identify itself with the latter, since it owns, at the same time, an irregular component with respect to the group they both belong to.

[13] Cited by Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque. Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*. Austin (TX), Davies, 2007, p. 4.

[14] Poe's vague definition reads as follows: "The epithets grotesque and arabesque will indicate with sufficient precision the prevalent tenor of the tales herein published". Cfr. Harpman, op. cit., pp. 141–142.

[15] Harpham, op. cit., ibid.

[16] James Stevens Curl, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture*. Oxford, Oxford U.P., 2000, *passim*.

[17] Terry Allen, *Five Essays on Islamic Art*. Occidental (CA), Solipsist, 1988, pp. 9–34.

[18] Gregor Schoeler, ed., *Dīwān des Abū Nuwās*, vol. IV, "Bibliotheca Islamica", Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1958–1988.
[19] Ilse Lichtenstadter, *Introduction to Classical Arabic Literature*. New York, Twayne, 1974, pp. 114 and 322–339.
[20] Lichtenstadter, op. cit., pp. 336–337.
[21] Ibid.

KARÁTSON GÁBOR

TO SEE A WORLD

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.

Abstract: This first stanza of William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence* comprises in it, so to say, the whole of the one-in-all and all-in-one philosophy of the Chinese Buddhist Hua-yen a or Flowery splendor school, as a living refutation of Kiplings famous "*East is East and West is West*" dictum.

In Fa-t'sang's (643–712) *Treatise on the Golden Lion* we read:

> In each of the lion's eyes, ears, limbs, joints, and in each and every hair, there is the golden lion. All the lions embraced by all the single hairs simultaneously and instantaneousy, enter a single hair. Thus in each and every hair there is an infinite number of lions, and in addition all the single haics, together with their infinite number of lions, in turn enter into a single hair. In this way the geometric progression is infinite, like the jewels of the Celestial Lord Indra's net.

Indra is King of Heaven in Hinduism. His net, hanging before his heavently palace and being a favorite Buddhist metaphor, "is decorated with a bright jewel on each knot of the mesh. Each of this many jewels reflects not only the image of every other (single) jewel, but all the other jewels (in their totality), and so on to infinity."[1]

This treatise, originally a sermon before the empress' palace, is one of the most famous literary examples of the philosophical concept of *li*, principle, playing a decisive role not only in Buddhism, but in Neo-Confucianism too; *t'ien-li*, Heavently Principle being present not only in the whole realm of Nature or the Law or Existence, but in every single being, a brush, a shoe, a hat, a bird or a man; not in the a-drop-of-the-sea manner, but in it's totality. Thus, if a human being is enlightened, the whole Universe is enlightened too. Needless to explain the practical-paradoxical joke of Buddhism; the meaning of this statement is the question of Enlightenment itself.

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 185–189.
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If we monld look, eventually, at this beautiful and translucent description of "all that there is" as a somewhat statical picture of our life the *Lebenswelt*—, finding its meaning only is commiseration and, seeningly, nothing else, than the—by the way much older—*Booh of Changes*, the *I ching* gives us with its own, somewhat similar, somewhat different mesh, the sequence of its hexagrams, a dramatic story of the encounters of Heaven and Earth, a musical system of variations: various combinations of the "strong" and "weak" lines of Heaven and Earth. What we see here in its progress is the same principle of interpenetration, about which Northrop Frye wrote in relation to the Book of Revelation and some Buddhist scriptures, worked out and described here in immeasurable depths.

The character *li*, very close in its meaning to another important character, *fa*, "measure or pattern" (like in Lao Tzus "The Measure of Man is Earth / The Measure of Earth is Heaven / The Measure of Heaven is the Tao / The Measure of the Tao is its spontaneity"[2]) is already in itself a wonderful graphic illustration of this idea. On its left side we find the character "village, place of residence, a measure of distance", consisting of "field" and "earth" (the phallic pillar of Earth) and pronounced *li* too (note the oracle bone forms), on its right side the character *yü*, "jade", to two together meaning "to cut jade according to its veins; to mark; divisions of fields; regulate (and also fibres in muscles, structure of a basket) and thus "reason" and "principle."[3] In the *I ching* both mean "structures of the Earth" commentaries (*veins* or *patterns* of the Earth), to which man must hold himself.

But to come back to our mesh of the *I ching*: Heaven and Earth (called *Ch'ien* and *K'un*), glorious and life-giving in the ascension of their first five lines (all hexagrams, picture and poetic texts associated with it, to be red from bottom to top) as the Dragon and the Mare, both commit in their sixth line the mistake of soaring too high ("The high dragon has regrets", *kang lung yu hui*), for what the further 62 hexagrams must pay, by and by and in their turn, with unceasing efforts to achieve some dynamic equilibrium and harmony every moment, day by day anew.

Thus Heaven and Earth must unite their different perspectives according to the sentence of a *I* ching commentary, *The greatest virtue* (or magical power, *te*) *of Heaven and Eaarth is life (tien ti chih ta te yüeh sheng*). The mystical sense ot this story seems to be some unificaation of Heaven and Earth; the interpenetration of the two happening—like in some reparation of the original hybris—through the descent of Heaven into Earth (or below the Earth) in Hexagram XI, Extensivity, *t'ai*, into the caves of the mountains in Hexagram XXVI, Great Restraint, *ta chu*, and finally the descent of light into the grave of Earth in Hexagram XXXVI, The wounding of light, *Ming Yi*, the deepest and strongest unification, for we ascend from this abyss in Hexagram XXII,

Bi, Decorate like in some sort of resurrection, *"White ornaments, no error, the top has achieved the goal"* (translation by Wu Jing-Nuan).

Which seems to be very similar to Jacob Böhme's (1575–1624) *"For the Earth shall come to life again, as God has born her to new life in Christ through his flesh, and lifted her to his right" ("Denn die Erde wird wieder lebendig werden: sintemal sie die Gottheit in Christo hat wieder neugeboren durch sein Fleisch, und zur Rechten GOttes erhöhet," Aurora*[4] Cap. 19, 64—the *I chingstory* being the closer to its Christian parallel through the astonishing fact, that it comes to happen too through the mediation of a symbolic person, the Count of, somewhat similar to the sacrifice of Christ in the New Testament. Somebody, who made the fate of light his own fate; there is an ontological story of light in the *I ching.*

The *I ching* contains, thus it seems to me, a process of redeeming (or saving) Heaven and Earth, whatever this may be ontside the mesh of hexagrams. Rather unique, I think, in the history of religion—if the *I ching* belongs at all to the category of religion; and Böhme's endeavour or vision, many centuries later, is similar to this, quite unique in the history of Christiality. Only, that Böhme's narration originates from the despair of modern man, unable to find any spirituality, any form of life in the new astrononical worldview. All the more striking for us, it we see in Cap. 19 of the *Aurora*, how his spirit comes to a breakthrough through the gates of hell into the innermost birth of Deity (*"alsbald nach etlichen harten Stürmen ist mein Geist durch der Höllen Pforten durchgebrochen bis in die innerste Geburt der Gottheit"*). As far as somebody mig ht think to be the sometimes clumsy and naive, but always genial and triumphant theosophy of Böhme—Blake was also seriously influenced by him—from the magical Classicism of the *I ching*, they both belong nevertuelles to the same human season (it could be interesting to search into ore of their common themes, that of the Abyss); and even if it wonld seem to be too far-fetched to follow his line of qualitative thinking through Blake and Goethe until Husserel and Merlean-Ponty (Goethe being, on the other hand, a *Wahlchinese)*, truth wonld be surely on our side.

But instead of beginning everything anew from the scratch (and dissolving in the end into thin air), let us quote a few paragraphs from the wonderful Cap. 19 (dating, by the way, from the same time, when the crisis of European sciences started its fateful and dubioys course).

1. ABOUT HEAVEN

1. The true and real Heaven, which is our own Human Heaven, where our soul goes, departing from this body (and where Christ our King went in, and from where he came forth from his Father and was born, becoming a

man in the womb of the Virgin Mary), was until now nearly hidden from the children of man, who on their part formed many kinds of opinions about it.

2. Scientists were scratching themselves too in this respect with many curious writings and books, tearing each anothers hairs with abuse and reviling; calumniating thereby the Holy Name of God, and wounding his limbs, and destroying his Temple, and desacralizing Holy Heaven with this blasphemous hostility.
3. People imagined Heaven always and everywhere to be many hundelreds or thousands of miles above the surface of this Earth, and God dwelling only in that Heaven; some trying even to measure this height, bringing forth many curious things.
4. And even me, before this my coming to cognition and before the revelation of God, adhered to the opinion, that the only true Heaven is that, which closes in a light-blue circle high over the stars, thinking God to have his separate existence only there, and reigning in this world only through the power of his Holy Spirit.
5. But when this gave me then many a hard kick, coming without doubt from that Spirit, who was fond of me, I finally fell into a dreadful melancholy and dispair, looking at the great abyss of this world with suns and stars, clouds, rain and snow, beholding in my spirit the whole creation of this world.
6. Finding than in all things bad and good, love and hatred: in senseless creatures like wood, stones, earth and elements just the same as in people and animals.
7. Looking also at this little spark of man, how he could be esteemed by God at all before this great work of Heaven and Earth.
8. And finding, that there is evil and good in all things, in Elements as well as in creatures, and that in this world godless people have as much luck as pious people, and that the best countries ave occupied by Barbarions, and that they are favoured even more by fortune than the devout.
9. I became quite melancholic and full of sorrow, and no Scripture could comfort me, although I did know them very well; meanwhile, to be sure, the Devil didn't allow himself neither the least holiday, blowing into me many heathen thoughts, about which it is wiser to be silent.
10. But when in this melancholy my spirit (about whicfh I understood very little, nay, nothing, what is should be at all) was ascending earnestly in God like with a great storm, embracing in it my whole heart and temperament, together with all other thoughts and wishes, struggling earnestly with the love and mercy of God, then he blessed me, that is, he illuminated me

with his Holy Ghost, to understand his will, and to give up my sorrow; thus Spirit was breaking through (*"so brach der Geist durch"*).

11. But then, when in my ardent zeal I fought so hard against God and the gates of all hells, as if I had still more strength in me, being ready to give up my life for it (what, of course, I could not have done without the help of the Ghost of God), in the end, after as many sieges, my spirit way breaking through the gates of hell into the innermost birth of Deity, being welcomed there with such love, as a bridegroom welcomes his dear bride.
12. What a triumph that was in Spirit, I can't describe, neither can I speak about it: it can be compared only with that, when in the midst of death life is born, and it is similar to the resurrection of the dead.
13. In this light my spirit has soon pierced through everything, seeing and recognizing in all creatures, as well as in weeds and grass God, who he is, and how he is, and what his will is, and so in this light my will was growing with a strong impulse to describe the being of God.

NOTES

[1] Wing-tsit Chan, *A I Source Book in Chinese Philosophy,* Princeton University Press, 412.

[2] Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching 25

[3] Karlgren, Bernhard, *Grammata Serica*, Taipei 1966 and Needham, Joseph, *Science and Civilisation in China,* Cambridge University Press 1954

[4] *Aurora oder Morgenröthe im Aufgang.* Jacob Bönhme, Sämtliche Schriften. Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe von 1730. Fr. Frommans Verlag Stuttgart, 1955.

CLINT JONES

NATURE, SPIRIT, AND THE CONVERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC ECOPOETRY, OR, HOW OUR POETS CAN HELP US REDISCOVER OUR SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO THE EARTH AND EACH OTHER

Abstract: This paper is focused primarily on our ethical relationship to nature, but my concern here is that the success of any environmental or earth ethic must be grounded in spirituality. The main operating premise of the paper is that to address this spiritual grounding we need more than just religion to guide us especially as religions become more antagonistic toward and isolated from each other. I argue that if we cannot turn to our religious leaders we can turn to our poets since reacting to a poem's pulse and images may resonate deeper than policy pronouncements. The poet is free to expand our understanding of the self and the other which means that it is the poetic that is best suited in a modern age to connect us to different viewpoints and show us our world as it is seen through the eyes of another and, perhaps more importantly, see our own reflections in the world around us. I utilize several poets from both the Christian and Islamic traditions but my primary focus is on the works of Wendell Berry and Jalal al-Din Muhammad known more popularly as Rumi. Through these poetic works I examine the roots of our disconnection from nature and attempt to show how poetry can help us replenish ourselves and restore nature by bringing us back to an understanding of Human that is a part of and partner with nature not its sovereign ruler. Toward this end I attempt to draw conclusions from both Christian and Islamic traditions to demonstrate how closely related their ecological projects are to one another in explaining the convergence of the ecological and religious world.

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro the United Nations has repeatedly identified the environmental crisis as a critical global challenge.[1] As recently as 2008 environmental pollution was identified as one of seven

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new deadly sins. With growing concern about the environment the importance of understanding this issue's relevance not only to the secular individual but also to the religious person is imperative since any solution to the problem of ecological degradation must rely on both traditions. Usually when scholars talk of the convergences of diverse cultural perspectives regarding nature they include the sciences and academia, public policy, and ethical theory. However, our strongest connection to nature is, or seems to be, a spiritual matter. Michael McElroy has observed that "to change the global environment irreversibly without concern for the consequences to present or future generations creates a fundamental challenge for the moral principles of the world's religions."[2]

Each of these other disciplines have significant contributions to offer any attempt to save, protect, or conserve the environment. Unfortunately, we seem to have lost our spiritual connection to the environment which is also necessary, and should be central to, environmental movements. First, religious values need to be identified and evaluated and then, so, too,

> the values embedded in science, education, economics, and public policy also need to be more carefully understood. Scientific analysis will be critical to understanding nature's economy; education will be indispensable to creating sustainable modes of life; economic incentives will be central to an equitable distribution of resources; public policy recommendations will be invaluable in shaping national and international priorities. But the ethical values that inform modern science and public policy must be uncritically applied. Instead, by carefully evaluating the intellectual resources both of the world's religions and of modern science and public policy, our long term ecological prospects may emerge.[3]

Hence, this is a paper focused primarily on our ethical relationship to nature, but my concern here is that the success of any environmental or earth ethic must be grounded in spirituality. The historical record makes clear that religious teaching, example, and leadership are powerfully able to influence personal conduct and commitment.[4] However, if we relied on our current religious traditions to advance a harmonious unified position from the proverbial pulpit the project would be in perpetual peril from the many antagonistic obstacles that separate various religions today ranging from different scriptural interpretations to grave cultural misunderstandings. Yet, if we cannot turn to the our religious leaders we can, I hope to demonstrate, turn to our poets since reacting to a poem's pulse and images may resonate deeper than policy pronouncements.[5] Poets are able to overcome with relative ease the obstacles that hinder other paths to ecological awareness while also enjoining us to work together as humans and not different peoples. Consider the following poem,

> Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu,
> Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion

or cultural system. I am not from the East
or the West, not out of the ocean or up

from the ground, not natural or ethereal, not
composed of elements at all. I do not exist,

am not an entity in this world or the next,
did not descend from Adam and Eve or any

origin story. My place is placeless, a trace
of the traceless. Neither body or soul.

I belong to the beloved, have seen the two
worlds as one and that one call to and know,

first, last, outer, inner, only that
breath breathing human being.[6]

The poet is free to explore the shadowy areas of life outside the traditional limits of custodial literature. The poet is free to expand our understanding of the self and the other which means that it is the poetic that is best suited in a modern age to connect us to different viewpoints and show us our world as it is seen through the eyes of another and, perhaps more importantly, see our own reflections in the world around us. Poems thrive by shocking the senses and an "alertness to nature other than ourselves has spurred poets in every culture and century. The American William Carlos Williams incited his countrymen in 1923 to 'imagine the New World that rises to our windows' every day."[7] Early in her career and well before her tragic death Iranian poet Furugh Farrukhzad wrote the following:

Poetry is like a window which automatically opens
when I go to it. I sit there, I stare, I sing, I cry
out, I weep, I become one with the vision of
the trees. . .on the other side of the window there
is an expanse, and someone hears.[8]

It is Farrukhzad's window that poetry leads us toward. A personal place where we can stare out at and into the world, sing and grieve for what we have and what we have lost, and become one with the vision of the trees. This is a crucial point of view because it is our inability to see ourselves in the world from a natural perspective that has driven us away from our spiritual connection to the cosmos.

Similar themes pervade the work of the two poets that weigh most heavily on my aesthetic conscience and led me to this project: Wendell Berry and Jalal

al-Din Muhammad better known as Rumi.[9] Because they are among the best poetic representatives of their faiths and cultures both demonstrate not only the capacity of poetry to reconnect us to nature but the importance of a healthy spiritual connection to nature. Berry tunes us back to the land while Rumi excites the spiritual connection to our primal animal soul. Consider the similarities of the following two poems this one written by Rumi,

A simple, open sky is sometimes
an unsterile lancet
that will give you an infection

Dear sky, learn mercy
Change your revolving

You fed us when we were young,
with the beauty of weather,
and with your fire-baskets,
the star-lanterns, that never
seem to need oil.

Materialists think that you have always existed,
sweet sky, but mystics know your beginnings,
and the prophets have taken us beyond sky-worship

* * *

We must become ignorant
of what we've been taught,
and be, instead bewildered.

Run from what's profitable and comfortable.
If you drink those liqueurs, you'll spill
the springwater of your real life.

Distrust anyone who praises you.
Give your investment money,
and the interest on the capital,
to those who are actually destitute.

Forget safety.
Live where you fear to live.
Destroy your reputation.
Be notorious.

I have tried prudent planning
long enough. From now
on, I'll be mad.[10]

And this one composed by Berry,

So, Friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone that does not deserve it.

* * *

Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.

* * *

Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years

* * *

Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.

* * *

Swear Alligence
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and politicos
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.[11]

The themes woven throughout Rumi's poetry holding his *mathnawi* together like a Persian rug are paralleled, mirrored, and continued in Berry's own work. Where Berry seeks to refocus our attentions and intentions Rumi seeks to explode commonly held notions of the commonplace. Love, friendship, laughter, death, community, life, God, light and darkness, peacefulness, respect for all others, common sense, love of the land all play important roles in creating a holistic picture of human nature that depends on integration with not separation from the whole world that we inhabit, cohabit, and belong to in the sense that

we must one day return to it elementally. By examining the roots of our disconnection from nature I hope to show how poetry can help us replenish ourselves and restore nature by bringing us back to an understanding of Human that is a part of and partner with nature not its sovereign ruler. As Rumi says,

> To the Prophet, everything is soaked in Glory.
> To us, things look inert. To Him,
> the hill is in motion like the stream.
> He hears a subtle conversation between
> the clod and the brick. We don't.[12]

2. DOMINION—A FATEFUL GIFT

Dominion is derived from the same Hebrew root as "tyrant": an ominous gift, like the command contained in both the Bible and the Qur'an to humans given dominion over the earth, that is, dictates to be stewards of, to care for, the earth.[13] I do not want to digress too far from the intent of this paper, nor do I claim to be a scholar of enough skill to interpret the nuances of such old and ancient traditions, but in Genesis 1: 26–28 when God tells his creation to "fill the earth and subdue it," I am fairly certain God did not mean overpopulate and destroy it. The command of a Land Sabbath in the book of Leviticus 25: 4–6 further limits the idea of unrestricted dominion when God tells Moses the land is to have a Sabbath unto him every seventh year during which time fields are to be unplowed and vineyards untended. Likewise, in the Qur'an (6:166) we are told that it is Allah that has placed us as viceroys of the earth exalting us in rank above all others that he may test us.[14] Again, in (7:74) we are called upon to remember the bounties of Allah and to not do evil or make mischief in the earth. On many occasions the Qur'an emphasizes the ultimate principle that nature is not there just by accident, without meaning or purpose. Therefore, if humans ponder and scrutinize the very structure of nature we can deduce the existence of the Creator.[15] Regrettably, it would appear that these commands are not enough to sustain us in our spiritual relationship with nature since history shows that humans have long interpreted these and similar commands to their advantage. Take the following Berry poem into account,

> It is the destruction of the world
> in our own lives that drives us
> half insane, and more than half.
> To destroy that which we were given
> in trust: how will we bear it?

It is our own bodies that we give
to be broken, our bodies
existing before and after us
in clod and cloud, worm and tree,
that we, driving or driven, despise
in our greed to live, our haste
to die. To have lost, wantonly,
the ancient forests, the vast grasslands
is our madness, the presence
in our very bodies of our grief.[16]

What we need is not mere sponsorship of the environment but a spiritual reconnection to nature. "Take the vigor of a creation hymn—Psalm 104—wherein the 'trees of the lord are full of sap,' Leviathan can 'take his pastime' in the wide sea, and plants yield 'wine that maketh glad the heart of man.' Here earth's fullness comes to mean an interconnected whole, embedding us in its midst. Tied in one and naming things and creatures, words recognize this world—Adam's task, and poetry's too."[17] The idea that the naming of the creatures of creation was Adam's task occurs in the Qur'anic account as well but contrasted in that "God 'taught Adam the Names' which implies that these Names are themselves aspects of the Divine that precede the phenomenal world or Creation.[18] Like Plato's Ideas, these words are original and authentic; they are coined, as it were, by God to refer to Himself and are applied to things in the realm of multiplicity only by extension."[19] Thus, if Adam's task is poetry's and naming constitutes a reference to the divine then when the poet awakens our senses to the vividness and wonder of nature, s/he also signals our connection to its divinity.

This is exactly what the poet is capable of once we are touched by the poet's words. Poets sift through the vitriolic trash heaps and intellectual compost of civilizations salvaging for future use broken thoughts, lost dreams, and discarded ideas ahead of their time. The page becomes an "animate site of communion across material forms and metaphysical states as the text becomes involved in a 'complex biological cycle'."[20] The modern environmentalist cries out 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!' in an increasingly futile attempt to browbeat the disaffected into action. Without knowing the cause of the disaffection such actions are wasted. We are "habituated to the faucet's flow, \\ our minds [can] not acknowledge \\ the terms of earth \\ we [choose] to live by guile."[21] The poetic is an active attempt to reconnect us, to dissolve the disaffection that comes with urbanization, globalization, and secularization and replace it with a new and heightened sense of community, belonging to nature, and responsibility. The poet cries out 'Reword, Rework, Recycle!' encouraging us to

re-envision our lives as a part of something larger than simply a rugged individual self. It is only after the slavery of the body that one's consciousness can be enslaved, but "it is the mind incarnate \\ in the body, in community, and in the earth \\ that they cannot confine."[22]

By examining the poetic similarities of the importance of the human relationship to nature as stewards of the Earth we can begin to see the importance of living in accordance with nature not above it or artificially outside of it. Through the poetic interpretations of this divine command I propose that our relationship to nature and the world is representative of the importance of our relationship with God. Keeping in mind that "there is a distinction to be made between God the Creator and God the Ruler. God the Creator is a God of mystery, a presence felt but not known. God the Ruler is a man-God, limited by (and to) the human understanding."[23] Compare Berry's position to that of Rumi in the following poem,

> What is form in the presence of reality?
> Very feeble. Reality keeps the sky turned over
> like a cup above us, revolving. Who turns
> the sky wheel? The universal intelligence.
>
> * * *
>
> *There is no reality but God*,
> says the completely surrendered Sheikh
> who is an ocean for all beings.[24]

Once we acknowledge that stewardship is a spiritual duty of everyone then it becomes easier to make the connection to moral obligations, but, perhaps more importantly, the acts of stewardship themselves become easier allowing for greater individual integration and unity with the natural world. Only then can we begin to understand nature as an interconnected whole for which we are responsible even if we never see or experience the entirety of it. As Edward Abbey says, "Mountains complement desert as desert complements city, as wilderness complements and completes civilization. A man could be a lover and defender of wilderness without ever in his lifetime leaving the boundaries of asphalt, powerlines [sic], and right-angled surfaces. We need wilderness whether or not we ever set foot in it."[25] The idea of wilderness is key here. Wilderness is wild. It is not the woods lining the creek at the city park, or out behind one's house, or growing unkempt between four-lane interstate highways. Wilderness is everpresent in religion and the site of many encounters with God.[26] Wilderness is a place where people can move, alone, unhindered by civilization as a creative force. For this reason its preservation is important so that one can "feel the relief of mountains and deserts after overpopulated, overmechanized regions. It is only in the wild places that a

man can sense the rarity of being a man. In crowded places he is more and more closed in by the feeling that he is ordinary—that he is, on the average, expendable."[27]

3. MAN AND NATURE: A PART OR APART?

By rejecting the familiar dichotomy of "man" and "nature" as two separate entities we can begin to answer the question of what the human place is as a tenant of planet earth. How one speaks about this distinction is as telling as anything else about how that person understands their place in the world. Consider what is being championed when one calls for environmental protection: "do we want our environment managed *for* or protected *from* people? The word 'environment' centers our surroundings on a human standpoint whereas 'ecology' [focuses on] a biosystem of interacting organisms needing preservation for the sake of the whole."[28] How we talk about what we want for and from nature reflects our competing mindsets and poems try to link what we believe to what we experience making it easier to revise or reaffirm what we want from our life as a creature among creation. We must begin to see that we are alive now, in this moment, in this world with other Beings moving in a relationship, a design, that is definite, like people dancing.[29]

The dominance of Man in this binary distinction has long guided our approach to the natural world and rarely to our benefit. Nature is not purposeless nor is its only purpose the service of humankind rather there is a relationship between the purposefulness and meaningfulness of the natural world and of humankind's conduct in life.[30] Since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 the anthropocentric and ecocentric camps have been antagonizing each other and reconciliation of the two is necessary for the successful establishment of a functional ecological or earth ethic. Certainly no easy task, but consider the story Rumi tells in one of his poems about a group of people taken individually to an elephant in a dark room, allowed to touch it briefly, and then asked to share with the others what they experienced in the room. Each tells of a different type of animal based on what part of the elephant he felt. Rumi concludes,

> Each of us touches one place
> and understands the whole in that way
>
> The palm and the fingers feeling in the dark are
> how the senses explore the reality of the elephant
>
> If each of us held a candle there,
> and if we went in together,
> we could see it.[31]

The one fundamental idea that we must strive to unburden ourselves of is that we are meant to understand and with it the notion that we can. We may increase our scientific facts and data, but we will never fully comprehend the knowledge that what we seek. We must begin to see ourselves as belonging spiritually to nature and seeing nature as the place where all aspects of life—ethical, practical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual—as well as death occur. Through poetry humanity can find itself reconnected to the rhythms of nature capable of moving with the world, its ebb and flow and constant flux, without losing respect for community or sight of oneself; capable of confronting the "mortal dangers" of the world and loving "with abandon."

While many disciplines, to varying degrees, can help reroute our understanding of our place in nature poetry can bring together the multiplicity of differing cosmologies and ethics by linking them in two specific ways. "One is in seeing nature as a metaphor—a steppingstone to the divine; the other is seeing nature as a matrix—a meeting place for the divine. In both of these perspectives nature is valued and cherished."[32] A new or renewed understanding of our relationship to the world would imbue it with new meaning. An infusion of new meaning into our relationship with nature would translate into an infusion of meaning into our own lives because "unless an act or an occupation is suffused with meaning, constantly and indivisibly meaningful, it is meaningless. It is not possible to work at meaningless work, and then go home or to church or to a museum and experience meaning."[33] Because it is nearly impossible to imagine a world where human consciousness has been reintegrated into nature as an active meaningful participant a balance between the two camps is necessary to secure the maintenance and flourishing of both humans and the natural world without which all is in jeopardy.

4. THE RECONNECTED POETIC SELF

Allow me to shift my focus for a moment away from the poetic and talk about Graffiti. Graffiti has not always been compulsion but has always been a form of expression.[34] Graffiti is probably as old as prostitution, politics, and gambling. The one key difference between the latter three and the former is that graffiti never caught on as a professional pursuit. Most likely because it is incredibly personal in a way that even prostitution cannot claim to be. Graffiti has been carried across the globe wherever humans have traveled, settled, or adventured. It can be found with relative ease from Mesopotamia to Metropolitan New York from city parks to national parks and everywhere in between. As Wendell Berry points out "there are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places."[35] However, what was once a small token left

behind to mark one's passing through, a goal achieved, or love consecrated or lost has now become an unseemly blight. It may seem odd at this point in a paper on the intersections of Christian and Islamic ecology and poetry to be discussing graffiti but hopefully it will become clear that this is precisely the most logical place to begin the conclusion since graffiti is, first and foremost, the art of self-destruction.

Graffiti is a self-destructive behavior that begins in loss and we have lost something very important in our secular, technological, fast-paced world. Graffiti is the mark of someone searching, desperate to find his or her place in the world and the meaning behind it. Why else should someone destroy his community? Sully nature? Bring ruin and ugliness to the world we all share? It is more than having lost our moral bearings because if that were it then we could correct it through the dissemination of the best ethical works available. Unfortunately, the problem is bigger than such a simple solution precisely because morally chastising each other only works when we can expect each other to respond in a way similar to ourselves. This response can only be expected if we share the same personal commitments to our past, present, and future, by having a similarly developed sense of belonging to something larger and more important than one's "self" as we have come to understand that concept through the lens of rugged individualism. What I mean is that saving ourselves, indeed, saving the world will require more than just a simple ethics or a profound one.

As hypocrisy and superstition are rooted out and exposed in our religious traditions, as secularism and scientific advances take root and fill the void, as greed and profit-margins guide moral decision making we are more and more cut-off from our spiritual health, our spiritual connection to others, the environment, and our place in the world. Poets, poetry, and poems can bring us back to an orientation to the cosmos and our role in it. If religion or some other discipline could accomplish this alone we would not need the poetic with such urgency; but in the event religion, politics, education, or any other attempt cannot we can always find the spiritual by turning to the poetic to create a place where humans "recognizing the limitations of phenomenal reality, undertake specific practices to effect self-transformation and community cohesion within a cosmological context."[36]

We have at our disposal a sound environmental ethic (and, arguably, more than one), we have leadership committed to finding new and better ways to produce capital and utilize the environment, we have religious leaders pushing for increased awareness of ecological destruction, but what we no longer have is an inward spiritual awareness of our place in the world. These three things, the environment, our communities, and our spiritual well being, have been ripped apart, disconnected from each other, separated into categories, and

given specific functions in our daily lives. It is, as I have argued, poetry that can play the role of bridging these three key aspects of our daily lives. Poetry is as personal as graffiti but done well poetry, unlike graffiti, can allow us to see the world through others eyes, it can touch our souls and move us in ways that other activities cannot. Most importantly poetry can be a shared experience across cultures, generations, and epochs and in that sharing, I believe, we can find a way to reconnect to our communities, the land, and ourselves. We must not forget that "All men are brothers, as we like to say, half-wishing sometimes in secret that it were not true. But perhaps it is true. And is the evolutionary line from protozoan to Spinoza any less certain? That also may be true. We are obliged, therefore, to spread the news, painful and bitter though it may be for some to hear, that *all living things on earth are kindred*."[37]

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have attempted to draw conclusions from both Christian and Islamic traditions to demonstrate how closely related their ecological projects are to one another in explaining the convergence of the ecological and religious world. I used the poetry of these two traditions to highlight the parallels between them and show them as working to establish the same understanding of our relationship to nature. But my attempts here are merely a feeble first step on a long journey of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual understanding that must occur before a serious inter-religious and intercultural effort to preserve the planet can be undertaken. My argument is that while we work toward that goal poets can bring us together and help act as a catalyst for more rapid individual awareness and appreciation. The importance of poetry is that it can help to alter attitudes, increase awareness, and broaden our understanding and acceptance of others especially when considering that we need "to make distinctions between human need and greed, between the use and abuse of nature, and between intrinsic value and instrumental value of nature. We need to move from destructive to constructive modes of production, and from the accumulation of goods to the appreciation of the common good."[38] So, to offer one final insight into how we are to accomplish this I would like to offer once more the wisdom of Rumi,

> This is how a human being can change:
>
> There's a worm addicted to eating
> grape leaves.
> Suddenly, he wakes up,
> call it Grace, whatever, something

wakes him, and he's no longer
a worm.
He's the entire vineyard,
and the orchard too, the fruit, the trunks,
a growing wisdom and joy
that doesn't need
to devour.[39]

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NOTES

1 Tucker (2001), 8.
2 Tucker (2001), 2.
3 Tucker, 19.
4 Tucker, 9–10.
5 Felstiner, 356.
6 Barks (2004), "Only Breath," 32.
7 Felstiner, 2.
8 Excerpted from an untitled poem reprinted in Fernea and Bezirgan, 291.
9 All uses of Rumi's poetry are taken from translations rendered by Dr. Coleman Barks. While Dr. Barks humbly admits that he is no scholar of Rumi merely a lover of his poetry I find his translations to be passionate and colorful, written with great intensity and respect for his subject, but above all, I find them to be accessible. For a more scholarly take on Rumi see A.J. Arberry, Reynold Nicholson, M.G. Gupta, and John Moyne. Additionally, Rumi gave only one name to the collection of his works, *Mathnawi*, rather than individual titles for each poem. Hence, in my paper when I use a title it is the title under which it appears in the corresponding Barks text; titles which Dr. Barks has chosen and which make referencing the poems themselves much easier.
10 Barks (2000), "A Spider Playing in the House," 55.
11 Berry (2008), "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front," 12.
12 Barks (1990), "The Pear Tree," 82.
13 Felstiner, 19.
14 See also Qur'an 3: 83 and 41: 11. Additionally, see Parvez Manzoor's essay "Nature and Culture: An Islamic Perspective." in *Nature Across Cultures*.
15 Foltz et al., 8.
16 Berry (1998), "1988 Sabbath Poem #2," 98.
17 Felstiner, 2.
18 We ought to remember here that there are Biblical examples of a similar relationship between God and words. For instance, "In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

[19] Wilson and Pourjavady, 5.
[20] Rifkin, 560.
[21] Leax, John, "Thirst," *Tending the Garden*, 132.
[22] Berry (1998), "1990 Sabbath Poem #3," 118.
[23] Berry (1970), 35.
[24] Barks (2004), "The Grasses," 43. Emphasis in the original.
[25] Abbey, 162.
[26] For instance, Hagar and Ishmael are given water by God in a wilderness, Moses encounters God as the Hebrews wander toward Canaan, Elijah first hears the call to serve God, Isaiah cries out to God in a wilderness preparing the way for the Messiah, and Jesus resists temptation in a wilderness. Additionally, in order to literally prepare the way for Jesus, John the Baptist not only takes to the wilderness but becomes one with it eating locusts and wild honey and dressing as one totally reliant on wilderness must. His rise as a prophet precedes, predicts, and is a prerequisite to Jesus ministry and John's assassination precedes Jesus' crucifixion. Without wilderness, in short, there would be no salvation. Where these events happen are not "woods" or "forest" or "meadows" or "glades" they are wild places. See Felstiner, 20. I am also indebted to Gary Deaton for his insights into this relationship between the wilderness and the divine.
[27] Berry (1970), 41.
[28] Felstiner, 5.
[29] Berry (1970), 53.
[30] Ibrahim Ozdemir in Foltz et al., 10.
[31] Barks (2004), 252.
[32] Tucker, in *Nature Across Cultures*, 116.
[33] Berry (1970), 37.
[34] To be sure graffiti has a storied history and its history includes, as an important form of expression, links to the poetic both as a means of self affirmation and as social protest. However, my focus here is on the destructive side of graffiti that plagues modern society as a means of lashing out against the inevitable loss of the individual in the urban. For more on the loss of the individual see Edward Abbey "Desert Solitaire." For more on graffiti as a form of expression see Saul Williams "The Dead Emcee Scrolls."
[35] Berry (2005), 18.
[36] Tucker (2001), 14.
[37] Abbey, 25. Emphasis added.
[38] Tucker (2001), 20.
[39] Barks (1990), 127.

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SECTION FOUR

JAD HATEM

LA CHAIR LUCIDE

Je voudrais, comme le Christ, condamner le soleil à donner des yeux aux aveugles.

Mais où puiser encore du soleil? Sa blondeur s'est volatilisée par les voies sélènes.

Non qu'il se soit excessivement prodigué!

Avec grande douceur et pauvreté les astres morts en sucent la moelle sans besoin d'enfoncer des crocs.

L'âme que j'avais cru inexpugnable engloutit son propre commencement

Lorsqu'elle se montre sans préavis au miroir de l'extase.

Tendre ventre d'une plaie à vif, je te saurai gré de me dire

De quel indissoluble enchaînement se compose l'être

Qui se montre à moi dans le giron et le gésir.

Heureuses les annonciations qui demeurent dans le vieux levain du rêve de soi!

Mais la tâche leur est impartie, trop vaste pour elles, comme une innocence d'univers,

De multiplier les embrasures par-delà tout souffle retenu

Et de disséminer les clignotements de l'âme en ses ulcérations.

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 209–211.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_17,

Qui donc est le Nom pour avoir éclaboussé la charpente des cieux?
En la boucle de ses chemins et jusque dans la lassitude
Écartelée, l'homme aux outrages se passe l'âme sur le visage,
Onguent qui charme l'essence et la réciprocité des transparences.
Je voudrais, comme le Christ, naître d'une chair lucide,
Iriser mon aile par-dessus le tourment de l'Énigme.
Comment mieux qu'en épiant les yeux revenus à la vie
Recueillir les éclats perdus depuis la fondation du monde?
Que dans la déroute de mon cœur qui s'est hasardé en rase campagne
Ils s'unissent coupe de cristal par cela que j'appartiens
À toute folie dormante qui verse à la soif le rouge vif
D'un silence prédit! Je dérive en terre inconnue,
Rêvant des hautes demeures où le soleil se damne de toucher
L'émail du Glacier céleste. Tu as rêvé de moi, fleuve
Que la lumière emprunte pour revenir dans l'œil du temps,
L'indomptable, non celui qui se laisse docilement mesurer.
Voici que je t'offre la fleur de l'éclair comme se laisse
D'un coup d'aile glisser sur son erre la nef qui fut clair de lune.
Ainsi que la Cité sylvestre, je me drape en Seuil de fiancement des guérisons.
Ô yeux braisés, je vous palpe comme j'enlace l'émoi!

Et ce sont pleurs d'arcs-en-ciel qui meurent en moi
Qui fus leur temps de grâce.
Et c'est prise de parole de l'Invaginé.
Je voudrais comme le Christ n'être pas le Christ.
Mêler ma chevelure au délire des rosiers,
Dans le spasme du repos faire mon élixir,
Répandre à foison les cris de frêle beauté.
Mais jour et nuit je viens en l'obédience
Des yeux aveugles, de la chair lucide.

Universite Saint-Joseph, Lebanon

RUZANA PSKHU

POETIC EXPRESSIONS IN SUFI LANGUAGE (BASED ON AL-NIFFARY'S "KITAB AL-MAWAQIF")

Abstract: The Kitab Al-Mawaqif by Al-Niffary (tenth Century) is an illustrative example of Sufi consciousness immersion in Koran. The result of such immersion in the Sacred Islamic Text is an original mystical language, which abounds in poetic expressions. Diversity of the poetic expressions of al-Niffary points at logical impossibility of verbal expression of communication mystery with the Supreme Entity.

The Sufi history of includes some names of mystics, who are beyond the Sufi movements and there are different reasons to this. One of them is absence of information about teachers or pupils of the mystic. The most vivid example of such mystics is Muhammad Ben Abd al-Jabbar Niffary, a medieval Iraqi Sufi, who lived in the tenth century. We have very little information about his life. According to the tradition his name goes back to the place Niffar in Mesopotamia (near Babylon and Kufa). We know that his nickname was "Egyptian", because the most of his life he spent in Egypt, that he didn't compose his works, that was written by him on scraps of paper, that he was a wanderer and died in Egypt in 965 or 977. The commentator of Niffary's works was a Sufi poet, Afif ad-Din at-Tilimsani, who mentions Niffary's grandson as collector Niffary's works. At-Tilimsani was born in 1213 in Algeria, where he was educated. He was thirty when he went to Cairo where he lived in one Sufi hanaka, he died in Damask in 1291. He is known as a partisan of doctrine of the absolute unity, which means that the being of everything in the world is the Divine being. The role of Niffary's written works in the history of Sufism is very significant. First of all, the Kitab Al-Mawaqif by Al-Niffary is an illustrative example of Sufi consciousness immersion in Koran. The result of such immersion in the Sacred Islamic Text is an original mystical language, which abounds in poetic expressions. The dialogues between the God and the mystic, presented in the work, are devoted to explaining the main stayings on the path to the God and the God himself explain to the mystic the divine meaning of these stayings which are denoted by different terms.

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 213–215.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_18,

According to al-Niffary, the human path to God includes three stages: (1) letter (harf), i.e. Koran, (2) knowledge (‘ilm), (3) gnosis (ma‘rifah), i.e. mystical knowledge. All of them are regarded by Al-Niffary as the important hidden obstacles in the path to the true communication with God, because all of them, in opinion of al-Niffary, hide God from the mystic. The doctrine of al-Niffary is based on the concept of staying (waqfah), which is regarded as the spirit of gnosis (ma‘rifah): whereas gnosis sees God and itself also, waqfah sees only God. Ma‘rifah is the limit of the expressible, but waqfah is beyond the expressible.

The very rich allegorical potential of the text is extremely dangerous to scientific research under conditions when the researcher hasn’t one of any means usual for any historian of philosophy such as information about ideas of predecessors or followers, historic and cultural influence on the intellectual evolution of the mystic, his own explaining his worldview etc. But all this as it has been told above exceeds possibilities of any researcher who took the trouble to translate and study of Niffary’s mystical heritage. He has only to deal with the text, more precisely, with language by which al-Niffary expressed his spiritual experience of communication with the God.

The paradoxicality of Niffary’s language shows an abnormal state of Sufi consciousness and its symbolicalness demonstrates impossibility to express in language the human soul communication with God. Diversity of the poetic expressions of al-Niffary points at logical impossibility of verbal expression of communication mystery with the Supreme Entity. The semantic polysemy of this text gives to the reader and to the researcher a wide field for interpretation: one phrase of al-Niffary can generate two or three interpretations clearing it. The manner in which Niffary’s language destabilizes the normal boundaries of self and other, human and divine. In Niffary’s dialogues there are two voices. Sometimes it becomes difficult to know who is speaking to whom, and identities seem to shift at the center of the standing.[1] The paradoxicality of the phrases used by him to express his thoughts completely disorients the reader in his attempts to understand and reconstruct the logic structure of Niffary’s doctrine. Contrast of meanings, contradictory of thought, which turns to meaning, opposite just expressed, deprives the reader of hope to reconstruct Niffary’s doctrine. The only thing, which al-Niffary grants to his reader, is possibility to follow the process of his thinking or precisely to watch how he play the language game which is developing in his face on the pages of the work. The only thing that we can say with sureness is that Niffary’s Kitab al-Mawakif is constructed on effect of unexpectedness: the reader is in stressful situation of a never-ending paradoxicality and places absurdity. There, where the God gives to the mystic a certain prescription, always, as a rule, it is necessary to expect an opposite prescription. The “fruit” of such paradoxicality should be

an understanding of true nature of the God as the love, which is saving and gracious.

The frameworks of usual concepts and language possibilities of the reader during his conceiving Niffary's phrases should be broken. And it means that any attempts to pleasure the God by following to any systematic way in search of His achievement are useless until they are based on confidence of the person that he is able to save himself. Value of such efforts is equal to zero—that can give them the importance, consists only in force of their attracting to the God. It is possible to say that the only thing that remains to the person on his path to God is a seeking, which will be his path. In other words, the knowledge which is found by the mystic in dialogues with the God, means comprehension of that all depends on will of the God. And in this situation of comprehension of extreme dependence on the God, the only thing that remains to the mystic is to hope for favour of the God, being entirely given on His will.

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NOTE

[1] Early Islamic Mysticism. Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings. Translated, edited and with an Introduction by Michael A. Sells. New York, 1996, p. 283.

CHRISTINE McNEILL-MATTESON

TUNING FORKS OF THE SOUL

Abstract: The poetic expressions of sentience and consciousness with cultural understandings both from the intimate experiences to the observer's reflections bring nature and the human element together. Seen through the colored glasses of self bias and cultural understandings are all inclusive with strong emotions reflected from an anthropological/psychological perspective in distant human traces such as Afghanistan,

His robes layer in muted beige
veiling the fingering beads of prayers,
spoken silent, held behind his back. . .

to Lebanon, to Africa to personal colloquial perspective in such places like the Deep South.

"Come on in, but wipes yer feet."
I's been cooking all morning,
got sumpin' sweet."

It is the voice of many in different tones and reflections from people in different cultures in their moment. It is the simple voices which bring us to the complexities of our times.

The poet is the voice of many different tones and reflections from people in different cultures; in their moment in time. True to the Islamic culture as well as Occidental culture the voices of the poet put reason to social science, anthropology and challenge the philosopher. Throughout history the Islamic culture and many cultures of the mid east have revered the poets as voices of reason and truth. The scholars are the poets of today and in the past; almost every scientist is a poet. Although written from the bias of each individual poet's understanding, it rises to the universal consciousness, and becomes a familiar voice to be recognized by diverse cultures. The Psychologist study the science of human behavior, and the Anthropologist study the diverse behaviors within the human race. The poet brings the epiphany of both sciences, and the world recognizes his/her own voice in spite of the time, place, or individual culture.

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 217–228.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_19,

Recently a poem was written in Afghanistan from an anonymous female author. I share:

(Look) at my wounded body, (you) do less cutting me
off
I don't want your pity or harm, I do not want your
honey or venom
Give me some water; pour it in a wine-class
I am a mother, (I am) everyone's Mom! I am the source
of life
It is crime, to spin my day(s), wastefully, into the
Armageddon

- Ameneh: Mohammed's mother (Author Unknown)

This is a poem, a cry of passion to be heard from her cultural place in the world; her expression of identity and justification. Where is the golden thread? It is within the "tuning fork of the soul". The poets of the past and present are and continue to be the quoted consciousness of humanity.

HAIKU

Poets listen, hearing
sounds break like tuning forks of
the soul; passing time.

The diversities and complexities of the world's multi-culture awareness are recognized by the poet's ear whether from one's own culture or in the observation of another. The biases of the observer can be explained away by social psychologists and cultural anthropologists, but they are often understood and questioned by the tuning fork of the poet's words. The poet's observations are wrapped within and immersed in expressions to resonate to the outside world a deeper understanding. It is often metaphoric and poignant, visceral and spiritual and kept for understanding without time constraints, or geographical divides.

ETHEREAL MOMENTS

Between before and now there are beginnings
Riding into tomorrow the sun ascends with a cool
Gray of winter's cast across the placid sky

Yet
Across the existence of all that can be seen between,
the other side, full yellow moon descends into the white night
Left from the fading shadows
Together
I am riding in amid, connecting the moment's time
Of anticipation and remembrance
As the sun and the moon keep step
Passing
The successive fulsome of the time
of night and day in a moment of crimson
Display as the opposing master; moon and sun
Ethereal Moments
The of-the-day and nocturnal are one
Staring across creation for just a moment
And the lone-one early enough, get to
Observe[1]

It is the varied contrast which brings the beauty of global acceptance, as long as we listen to seek understanding with an intellectual ear, although from our own cognitive bias and willingly accept the differences without the feelings of threat. The very principle of approach in understanding the differences of others according to Allport is "the stimulus object approach and the phenomenological approach."[2] In the words of Dr. Michael Vlahos,[3] "Even the tribal diversity seek identity and legitimacy." The world's cultural places are passing into a universal consciousness of identity and evolving into a part of our programming as a multi-layered cultural society. We will see in time the development of change, inasmuch as we try desperately to put tribes to nations with history and practices into an understanding according to the western world, the change will seek its own identity and legitimacy and the poet will be there to publish the cry of compassion.

DICHOTOMY

As a student of psychology,
frequently I read the suasions
others have, and why
they think as they do
Piled in the midst of minds,
Temporal confusion
seeking clarity to

enigma with propagational clues
I listen to the
out cry of misunderstandings. . .
I distinguish myself
writing of my own queries.
While people seek to share their
confusion from the lockers
of our minds,
the poet inserts a key and writes.[4]

Steven Pinker talks about not finding spatial locations for the areas of thought such as consciousness and sentience, "the mind is considered spatial locations of thought, not the area of the soul."[5] I believe it is truly the resident of the soul. Steven Pinker believes "the consciousness is an activity in the 4th layer of the cortex.[6] While his conclusion is; "some problems continue to baffle the mind", like Noam Chomsky, and David Hume, "Homo sapiens lack the cognitive equipment to solve them."[7] Scientists go on to say; perhaps we cannot solve conundrums like free will and sentience. Yet, the poet continues to challenge the sciences, the sciences of cognitive psychology and social psychology as well as anthropology. They write the unspeakable said of today to question the understandings of yesterday and the futures of tomorrow.

GRAY WALLS

Gray Walls, rubble past,
Wars of times gone by, carried on
the backs of old men. . .

Colorless survival
maintained in layers lost. . .
Perilous footing

Yet the climb is ongoing,
hopes past on to those behind,
tomorrows remain. . .[8]

The Social Psychologist Gordon W. Allport, writes, "Meliorism should be our guide."[9] Poets seek and revere the differences and seek understanding all the while accepting even in the face of offense.

IT IS NOT

It is not the tattered shoes that strap my small feet of four,
or the brown dust that covers my dress.

It is not the encrusted poverty where I remain
or the hard rocks that bruise my feet.

It is not the heat of the day without comfort,
or the stench of the decay that feeds my nostrils.

It is not the swollen belly that stays hungry,
or the need for warm arms to ward off anger.

It is the eyes that stay fast in purpose,
Old eyes that see in old ways. . .

This will keep me among all state of affairs,
As I the children fight to survive. . .[10]

As stated by Steven Pinker, "there is something peculiarly holistic and everywhere-at-once and nowhere-at-all and all-at-the-same-time about the problems of philosophy. Sentience is not a combination of brain events or computational states." "Free will is not a causal chain of events and states, by definition."[11]

IN THE BEGINNINGS

I kneel, where no man kneels,
I pray where no man prays.

I wait where no man waits,
I seek the alpha of the beginnings

I become what only I can become
I am in the place where only I can be

I spread my garb before me
I prepare it only for me.

I place my hands upon my knees
I am bent on sands of the sea

I have taken off my shoes;
I am now on Holy Ground. . .

I have prepared myself to be,
I kneel, where no man kneels.

I wait where only I can wait,
I am now in the presence of the "I AM".[12]

We kneel in our own understanding across the planet in the hopes that it is perceived sacred. At the same time, others kneel in hopes of the same even if it counters our own awareness of consciousness.

The cultures in passing are becoming a universal consciousness into the transformation of a larger consciousness of identity and legitimacy. We need to respect the differences that bring us together, assimilation is not the answer, and equipping the elite is not the answer. "Globalization and modernity will cause destruction as it takes away from the needed identity and legitimacy of the smaller groups."[13]

UN-RESOLVED

I sit in the threshold of truth or untruth
a desert legacy a nescient man named it 'the
parched pious realism'. . .

Recalling, as I sit in yesterday's comings
of faithful suitors, seeking
the elusive forever. . .

Summer sun prisms
stain glass of southern tiffany
esthetic expressions of faith. . .

Faded white pews rowed
contrast on sawn trampled timber
lay deeply in the past of believers' footprints.

I blend in the living, remembering
promises of the dead, fanning away the
summer heat, and the doubter's stance.

Shaded doorway breakthrough refuge
from the duality of real and imagined,
touching the gravity of all promised.

I imagine the old spirituals chorusing
the graces I feel and can't explain,
except in my own innate sentience. . .

We ask of time, why did you have to go,
only to feel it's sweetest in remembering
those who went. . . and then we know.

White carved southern doorway
tucked in time past, saves the goings
leaving the door unlocked for tomorrows.

To brush the agnostic's man sands of doubt from
the feet still traveling in the living truth
of intricate places where the clock runs both ways.[14]

Words influence how we think. The poet and philosophers have always challenged the thinkers, whether scientist or artist. Written into the phrases, prose and rhymes are the metaphors, and abstracts of the observation of humanity. Zen teaches we are all a part of the universal consciousness. If we are to accept the Zen doctrine then we have no other choice but to try to understand cross-cultural understandings. Poetry even in the field of science or philosophy draw from Fisher's, "consciousness has access to all reality—all that is, 'and thus' is not bound by conventional space-time notions." He goes on to warn us, "It is not of a universal consciousness of which our consciousness is a part."[15] I believe we are a part of a universal consciousness and yet a unique identity that makes us aware of our own cultural uniqueness.

"SHADOW"

I know she is there,
I just can't say. . .
but when I look
she is there any way

This shadow comes
from all sides
and often she
playfully hides.

No definitions
or defining features
frequently reflects
a stranger creature.

Even then she is
familiar

shapes she takes
are often similar.

To the person I have
always known,
walking shadow
the darken clone.

Psychologists suggest
we lesson this gray,
So we see ourselves
in a better way.

Jung implies we
do not like, the
shadow that follows
us just out of sight.

These treasures lost
in darken shades,
dissect arts of
forgotten ways.

The 'Job' effect
that will always be,
is the shadow that
lies deep in me

So I shall seek the
Archetype,
to come to know
the shadows type.

But until then when
all is said
I shall turn
and find ahead.

Or Behind or
right beside,
the shadow I
see, but feel inside.[16]

The differences and similarities are created by the evolution of a universal community that is no longer isolated to the divides that once kept us unaware of each other's existence. However, it is the poet seemingly there writing of the

very essence of humanity so in history we never forget the resounding sentience and consciousness of human society. Our very display of human nature and our ability to respond in this world is recorded by the poets.

BOTTOM COUNTRY

White wash river boats pilot through muddy waters.
breaking currents of time as the southern Cape Fear River
relinquishes her resistance to the inevitable changes.

The cotton boats of human sweat slaved to the market
now hold passengers, vacationers n' history seekers
of the what once was, now romanized for money.

The tempo of the wind blows the same summer
heat squelching the backs of the strollers seeking
lemonade stands and frozen custards.

It is a newer time now in the bottom country
of the river where grits are still served
but under kinder, gentler circumstances.

Places called Elijah's sing of the songs
once sung from the souls of strapped backs
and hopeful hopeless...

Walking along the river you can still hear
the echoes of the pilgrimage of the dared to dare,
and she moves in the wind; reminding, so not to forget.

River bottom country where struggles are different,
repression is more subtle but the sultry air in the evening
still brings rest to weary back of global confusion.

The cicada lullaby will sonnet the past
reminding the future to never stay still,
remaining restless in the currents of the river.

Rivers ridden with restless movements
constant change, calling for the people of
bottom country; listen up[17]

Streets everywhere linger with the past, still existing on for the present, but only existing today because of the past. The past still needing to belong to the ones who claim it, as it is so needed to be allowed to be a part of them.

PRAYER BEADS

Beads hang in finger tips
held behind his back. . .
Fingered one to another,
'Prayer Beads' of ancient promises'
Ishmael's beginnings

Footsteps on earliest streets,
silently pound from broken birthright,
as the powder settles from ruins
divided brothers of
long ago beginnings.

He walks as the desert winds whirl,
stirring feelings of old wars.
His robes layer in muted beige
veiling the fingering beads of prayers,
spoken silent, held behind his back. . . [18]

We will continue to seek the mystery of consciousness and the relationship as to human functioning.

"THE DOOR"

Decisions bring forward
the quondam, reminding of
moments, even if
the import renewed is
simply noticing the door. . .[19]

CONCLUSION

We continue to search the answers from an Anthropological and Psychological scientific reasoning into human behavior and the mind. All-the-while the poet walks quietly observing, and transcending the poignant moments in verse. Poems to be recorded in time and read in open forums for others in the future to try to understand the society it represents, at a time when poets, like tuning forks of the soul picked up a pen to write.

THE SEA AND ME

I know that if God returned me back to earth to be,
he would decide to return me back within the sea.

There where life is motion, smell, wind and air,
then among the seashells you will find me there.

I will be mystery of change within the sand;
you will hear me as the water reaches the land.

Across the waves haunting seagull will sing,
The symphony of sounds I will bring.

Safely on the grass, spotted on the beach,
you will see my human steps, the lessons they teach.

Teaching you although for a moment gone by
the sounds of the ocean, you will hear my sigh.

It is now your turn to capture the essence of you,
to share this essence your purpose; be true.

Deep in life's cycle with yesterdays and me,
I see a familiar reflection within the sea.

As it will mirror the beauty of what is left to say,
and look no further than your own gifted way.

Leaving behind with you the love that is divine,
this love that will transcend beyond the shore of time.[20–22]

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NOTES

Books

[2] Gordon Allport; *The Nature of Prejudice,* Theories of Prejudice, Chapter: 13, Historical Emphasis-Sociocultural Emphasis-stiuational Emphasis-Psychodynamic Emphasis—Phenomenological Emphasis—Emphasis on Earned Reputation—Final Words: Perseus Books, Cambridge, MA.

[9] Gordon Allport; *The Nature of Prejudice,* (1979), Limitations and Horizons; 31: 507: Perseus Books Publishing, L.L.C.

[15] Shannon Moffett (2006): *Three-Pound Enigma",* Mind and Body, Pg. 271: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27515, Division of Workman Publishing, 708 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.
[5] Stephen Pinker; *How the Mind Works*, "The Meaning of Life", pg. 563.
[6] Stephen Pinker; *How the Mind Works* "Meaning of Life", (chap. 8, pg. 561).
[7] Stephen Pinker; *How the Mind Works* "Meaning of Life", chap. 8, pg. 561).
[3] Michael Vlahos PhD, John Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory, Opening statements under 'Africa Round Table', (Conference on 'ASMEA', "War and Peace" 2008) http://www.asmeascholars.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=21
[11] Michael Vlahos PhD, John Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory, Opening statements under 'Africa Round Table', (Conference on 'ASMEA', "War and Peace" 2008) http://www.asmeascholars.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=21
[13] Dr. Michael Vlahos, John Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory, Opening statements under 'Africa Round Table', (Conference on 'ASMEA', "War and Peace" 2008). http://www.asmeascholars.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=21
[21] Jonathan F. Matteson, University of Kansas, asst. editing.
[22] Dr. Richard Holinger, Marmion Academy, Il., asst. editing.

Music

Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, "Haiku, Tuning Forks of the Soul", (haiku first presented) The World premier of "The Unity of Energy" was a collaboration project with the University of Kansas School of Fine Arts faculty Kip Haaheim, Janet Davidson-Hues and DMA graduate Keith Wright. The composition focused on the haiku of the University of Kansas, psychology student and poet, Christine McNeill-Matteson. Sound was used as energy unfolding in time, which is universally felt and transformed at KU through the voice, images, flute sounds, and the natural resonance of Swarthout Recital Hall.

Poetry

[1] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2007)"Ethereal Moments".
[4] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2003) "Dichotomy".
[8] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2006) "Gray Walls".
[10] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2006) "It Is Not".
[12] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2006) Poetry, "In the Beginnings".
[14] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2005) Poetry, "Un-Resolved".
[16] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2004), Poetry, "Shadow".
[17] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2003), Poetry "Bottom Country".
[18] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2006), Poetry "Prayer Beads".
[19] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2003), Poetry "The Door".
[20] Christine McNeill-Matteson; Poet, (2001) Poetry "The Sea and Me".

ANNA-TERESA TYMIENIECKA

THE SONG OF THE "PROMISED ONE"

A Christian "Song of Songs"
(A poetical fragment)

God is the greatest passion of the soul

Abstract: Oh, *beloved of my soul*, I search for you high and low. I may not enter within you through your eyes which follow me awake and in sleep—I awake in the darkness of the night and there from the subliminal threshold beyond which my own being ceases to be myself, beyond which I feel awakening merged with all and nought, there from your searching eye emerges a light and my whole being is pierced anew. I feel at once at loss—you pass through me incessantly with your gaze and do not stop for an instant; I seek you, I beseech you not to go away but whereas I think you shine through my brain, my heart sees its bounds. I seek to swing my loftiest feelings into your gaze to seek you out, but like an airy wing it swings through the air and passes through. And there I stay left alone all longing.

I.

I charge you,
daughters of Jerusalem,
not to stir my love, nor to rouse it,
until it please to awake. (Song of Songs 8.)

The Maiden

Oh, *beloved of my soul*, I search for you high and low. I may not enter within you through your eyes which follow me awake and in sleep—I awake in the darkness of the night and there from the subliminal threshold beyond which my

A-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), Sharing Poetic Expressions, 229–238.
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0760-3_20,

own being ceases to be myself, beyond which I feel awakening merged with all and nought, there from your searching eye emerges a light and my whole being is pierced anew. I feel at once at loss—you pass through me incessantly with your gaze and do not stop for an instant; I seek you, I beseech you not to go away but whereas I think you shine through my brain, my heart sees its bounds. I seek to swing my loftiest feelings into your gaze to seek you out, but like an airy wing it swings through the air and passes through. And there I stay left alone all longing.

And yet, never alone, since you pass—come and traverse—like a flame that burns and does not lose the ardor. The ardor of all in me brought to one point: to be one with you—you who are always and never there.

And yet how could it be? Is this tremor emerging from the subliminal depths of my being always nothing but the wind that agitates all, brings all into focus and does not yield anything of itself? Is there nothing in yourself—such that I could cling to, or adopt, or transform, or appropriate? You come and leave me, you whom my soul loves. The beloved who is never lovely there but is naught while being away. Whose sweetness, fervor, ardor, embrace, beauty are present just in this devouring nostalgia. The presence in a void for which our soul longs for with her very kernel so that it marks her, works her up, transforms her, prepares her towards the meeting with the beloved that is always expected, present in this transport of longing will be at last come?...

Or, Maybe the lover of my soul is rather emerging from within me and although I am not capable to retain him more that I might be capable to retain the flow of my blood, the flux of my experience, the length of a thought, yet he is in this ceaseless passing through my being its order itself, that dwells in each living cell-seed, feasting on my flesh until it is put aflame and not only becomes a burning torch but turned by contingent self to ashes. Yet a beloved something is retrieved from this fire through which you enter deeper within me. You do not only go through like a storm but in ways of your own throw balsam upon the forfeits the tempest brings. My deepest, wildest desire of you finds in your passing a filling of the very needs through which I crave for you so. This craving of all the zones of my being after you might be so dolorous—and yet are not all this balsam with which by bloody wound of life does heal? Are you not beauty and elevation above the corrupt and ugly, without which my own being would sink into the bottomless morass? Don't you answer by the reconciling smile by the tenderest of gestures, each pain, humiliation, abasement through which my deeper being is furrowed? In fact, is it not through each pore of your translucent nakedness that you caress, embrace, love my body corroded by the leper of human indifferences and by my own pride? You caress my eye blinded by hate and you reconcile me with the lack of love; your airy swing of arms

touches my neglected head and I do not feel lost any more with the inimical world of men.

II.

I should lead you, I should take you
into my mother's house, and you would teach me!
I should give you my spiced wine to drink,
juice of my pomegranates.
His left arm is under my head
and his right embraces me.

The Father

You are, also, the one that brings me back to the lost world anew. Who opens a new door and offers me life. Are you not, in fact, *fathering* me into a new existence? A father would be this final instance in the world that stands still, while all might move away, someone who stands behind you, on whom you count to defend you no matter what; to take your side whether you are guilty or not, to be your last protection against the enemy and a roof to hide from danger. And yet, someone who remains at a distance, who does not enter into your pulp of existence, who stays aloft of it and if you may throw into his arms for comfort, his arms always waiting open, from which, however, once comforted, refreshed, encouraged, would cheerfully tear myself from to start the life-struggle on your own again.

But the soothing I would find in your arms would it be of this just comforting nature, or of an exultation in joy?

No doubt, it is a father's faith in us that gives confidence in the value of our risky enterprises and their success, but would confidence be enough to release our latent, dormant forces into spontaneous desire towards growth? The parental inspiration in our growth from childhood to adolescence did we not use it up?

Why did Magdalene seek to anoint Christ's body, why did she seek to emphasize its beauty, its immortal but, also, earthly charm? The presence of the lover of the soul enhanced by beauty. . . The passing oil of divine love caught for one instant by a reminiscence, by a fragile and fugitive fragrance, devotion, an act of adoration. Such instances enter into eternity itself since the tempest that carries the mystery of the Divine love works its way through, uses all resources of our being from the waking to the threshold of the bottomless sleep of the senses; throws all into the game! And in each instance the lover of the soul, the *fatherly lover* works through our own craving deeper and deeper his

way, closer and tighter his embrace, more and more intense and significant the encounter of his gaze. The beloved or the father? A strange paradoxical position. Both? But is not the Promised One the soul seeks so wildly, the lover? The aspiring to meet him at last in all its fullness as the other self, while her own self—even if same, cured from the leper of life, is lacking all felicity, happiness, and honey of the Promised Land. Does not the dream of the "Promise" spring from a maiden's breast? In fact, a maiden, a virgin expects her ultimate fulfillment in getting her breasts full of the milk of Paradise; not a passing step in the order of nature's cycle of life, but a telos of life itself.

But how to seek this fulfillment of the Virgin's being: all expectations, all promise, all virtual acts, as in the usual metaphors; all budding and not a crystallized blossom yet, if not in an endless listening to the polyphonic tunes of the beloved being, who answers in his own expectation and potentiality of the communion. Of what quality, on what most intricate terms of the orchestration of their respective inward experience, both changing constantly with each new tune started by one, responded to by the other; and each a novel chord of feeling struck with *such* a nuance by one and responded to with a sound of *such* and no other pitch or a silence of *such* and no other possible depth or thrill by the other. How many new tongues have to be improvised by our being to conduct this polyphonic discourse?

It is more to it than, beloved of my soul, all flames of already passed wings still flapping in the air and yet no more within the reach of longing arms. It is the pledge of the beloved Himself to my soul in the most intimate and all absorbing commitment, listening to, calling forth and responding with all the pitches and silences—all tuned to *this only* and *unique genuine self* that nothing could deceive, deform, deviate, impress or influence—because we play our finest tune on the threshold of the ultimate destiny of life and death, of the vanishing with oblivion and timelessness of the instant being adequate. Each cipher of our "discourse" has to be invented anew by both partners in their, and only their *unique experience in common*. They seek more and more ahead for a new key to each experience, act, feeling in order to inscribe it in the great text. They start with each nuance of expression of their tenderest of care, dearest of endearments, sweetest and loftiest of caresses of the soul, under a common spell of the search after the master key to this oneness.

III.

The Father – Not Enough. The Son / The Mother

Could anything of what nature so marvelous outfitted us with be omitted from this mystery? Could anything be left out or a hindrance?

That would deny the final wisdom in Creation and the Creator. All is meant to take part of this; each and every element in its place and at its time. Creation supports no waste.

Mary, under the Cross called on Magdalene for support, she, the real mother, the one initiated into the mystery of it. The crucial point of it is that in her real motherhood, on Magdalene she leaned for support. But don't we know that the man a woman gives her heart, her body, her soul for ever is her first son as well?

Mary, the Mother when helpless in the last phase of Christ lost in agony called upon Magdalene. She called upon a woman who, not a mother—loved; loving, she understood. The woman's first son—her Promised one. The beloved does not only give—like a father—all freely and without account. Does not a beloved of the soul, also, in turn nourish himself of the love and sweetness of the mother? Expectation, the mysterious expectation of a body/soul taken out of the trivial course of events/nourishment, health, physiology, procreation, but the son's creation to a mystery of creation between the woman and her "betrothed" as such. The great mystery of the creativity of nature; all the wondering, all the exchange of the tiniest secrets of life among them—each enigmatic, in a language that could not be put in any grammar nor taken out from the lexicon of creation—an exchange of communications so secret, and the utmost secrecy of this intimate communion that is undetermined, all in expectation of the unknown—from the expression of the eyes, the disposition, the response... till the outline of a life's destiny is spun. Neither the tempestuous passing and absence of the "beloved" of the soul, nor the presence of an accomplished fact, expectation and projection of the mysterious play already started and in full run to which our whole being is committed. It grows its roots in every realm; the mystery of this anticipated creation from the feeling and flesh that only motherhood knows; of passing from within what is most precious to her and yet what by its very nature and preciousness remains unknown—towards the reception of all, (rationally), irretrievable nuances of the other being—our very own and yet other, our sameness which we ourselves do not comprehend—with the otherness whose consecration to us poses even a greater mystery. The beloved of the soul, her son and master and the soul's ultimate very self of her being caught into a mysterious, most sacred interrogation? "Who are you? You, the one my whole being carries within? Carries all of you within and yet you remain an "other". What is your feeling of existence? What is your innermost commitment in life to friends, to life situations, to questions? What would be the final cause upon which you would throw all the cards?" I feel it all in you as you are a friend of my whole self. I feel I encompass it all and yet you escape me altogether in you selfness. So I ask your answer; I wonder and we seek for a tongue to transmit it. We fail, so we

seek for devises to bring this into light or into experience to make us participate in. In all, we seek to become as we are in all these ways meant to be the betrothed of the soul with the Divine... And you will never leave me again. Nothing could ever take you away from me again. Nothing could ever take you away from me. But this is only a projection of our innermost longing.

IV.

Ah, why are you not my brother,
nursed at my mother's breast!
Then if I met you out of doors, I could kiss you
Without people thinking ill of me.

The Brother Is Not Enough

Oh! has he been in our mother's house!

What wistful games would you have played there with my pigtails and I would tease you endlessly in contests of snowballs, or speed, rushed our sleighs downhill among the carriages full of wood?!

And in late summer each day we would be watching the progress of the plums behind the barn getting fatter, plumper, painted purple by the heat of the sun and ready to melt within our mouths.

Or, perched on the shaky branch of a black cherry tree run a contest who will pick more and make melt of the bloody-blackish flesh under his tongue.

What lovely tunes would you have played for me to listen upon the grass leaf! So lovely, that no grasshopper could imitate but would join you in this musical harmony. We would thus leap through elements sharing the progress, maturation and fading of the seasons in one common cycle, in one nature's song, hand in hand in one thought and feeling "reading one another's thoughts from a gaze; the state of our world from a wink".

But would this have done?

And hiding in a sunflower or corn field we would count with wonder the seed of each heavy golden head; the profusion and the promise of nature. We would wait for the tomatoes to ripe—the orange glowing suns—for the return of school, hand in hand together—for the first frost to come—the promise of the winter toys at the warm hearth and in snow again, sharing the sap of life equitably in each of us.

But this would not have done.

And yet had we tasted all the juices of life together, seek all the saps, honey sweet and lemon bitter of life together, sung all the rarest tunes the wind plays

in the leaves in one voice and driven all the passions out of the horses we would mount bareback to break them together to break them—all the life hindrances and—had the mysteries of our souls been inscribed into the whole game of the universe together, it would not have done. The closer we would grow together in our inward progress the stronger the seed of the longing planted before all times within my soul after the Promised one would grow. All I would share with you in enchantment would only intensify the nostalgia after the enchantment of the Promised one. All the beauty, the charm, the communion in which we would share the life would divide us deeper, put us aside by making the expectation after the indivisible Promised One stronger and more urgent. He alone could answer this ultimate call which everything else just intensifies.

V.

The Promised One

But the beloved of the soul—a Renaissance angel flying on the wings of celestial harmony, on the whispers of a mezzoairy tune, leaves the soul in its utmost weakness and helplessness, thirsty unto death. And yet without this thirst and this exaltation of the absence, the soul would not unfold. The virility of the father, "Who knows", "who chooses his moment to speak", who chooses the tone of scolding, scorching reprimand and scorn, who chooses his time to embrace, to cuddle in the softest corner of his arms and to soften the sorrow hides our head in the softest curb under his chin. The father who cherishes above all, is precious above all, but alone would be outgrown and helpless. We have seen that the roots of nostalgia reach deeper and deeper to match the projection beyond the present giveness towards the "Promised one."

The Promised One is all this but he is, also, the virile man who chooses the maiden of his heart, *that one and no one else*, who expects from her all *he* in this plan foresaw and meant *her* to fulfill. The virile man who has the right to expect, to demand and to demand all—not only a set of essentials, but a total preparation of her being to meet his needs and first of all "to keep the garden clean". How could the rarest of orchids enter by the most exquisite of gardens? And if the gardening maid is just no better than a goatherd's daughter or one of those "foolish virgins" who burned so quickly their oil that when the bridegroom came they had no fuel for the bridal flame left, she should at least clean the garden from the poisonous weeds of ingratitude, hatred, selfishness, deceit, hypocrisy, double games played by empty, twisted men. It has to be at least on decent soil weeded and furrowed by honor and dignity of heart, charity and selfless devotion.

Is it then not the beloved of the soul himself that let her in masterly fashion make sprout all the latent germs of a paradisiac garden? Who with an unique know-how makes the soul turn over her very soil to become fertile for budding richness of beauty which never before existed? Would "the masterly gardener" that having once accomplished his work be ready to leave it for the next?

Or, on the contrary, if the soul turns over the very soil over and over again, it is on the account of the common task the lover of the soul and herself mean to each other before having discovered even a hint of it; because they have entered together into the most intricate creative project and *themselves alone*; and none other ever before, although they could not know that such a project might be latently within them—and yet written before all times, like a stone thrown by the sea's tide to the shore shows a heart engraved within another heart. So it may seem as if it be by this latent creative scheme for themselves alone foreseen, for its sake, that the soul propelled from within and always carried by the tide of the ardor flowing through her to grasp, to seize the Divine lover, forges by herself the very wing to match the one of His. This wing which carries him above all by the spirit; the wing to which she then, half ready, joins within hers and follows in total abandon, not asking where it leads, while knowing too well that there is no cipher there ready to write a next text.

It is the task of the Promised One to write such a text together in order that the wing of the soul grows to take off from the ground.

It is not in Rembrandt's vision of the "Betrothed" brought to light this intimate project that is manifest through the communion of feeling, the quiet and infinite silence of each reposing within the other's thrust? But thrust in what? It is not a social life agreement they conclude; it is not the higher moral union they pledge each other within the world alone. It would be nothing but a commitment to an empty life ideal had it not been the glorious swing in unison into a work of creation of the spirit's reaching for beyond the world's contracts and pledges. There lies the infinite silence of the thrust. Not a protective or defending arm to struggle in futile life cases or to be defended against trivial difficulties. The real task is not to stretch a strong arm to protect the fragile budding flower of love and sweetness, but to hold an iron shield against all that would not match the text to be written together for the wings to take off. *This thrust once unfolded and all the rest is solved in eternity*.

And yet, the strangest of all is it, to see the virile arms around the bride. The bridegroom who has the wing far above her spirit which is meant to unfold, to join it; it is his virile strength that is meant not to lift her from her maiden unreality of dream, hope, nostalgia, straight above, but to give her, on the contrary, the strong root in the common, real brute soil of life and the world.

Not a flight into heavens of felicity; not an evasion from the soiling trivia of contingency but the strong foothold within them. He is the throng of real life through which frame her flimsy and flowery cloud she will, "outgrow", "into the Real", through him she might accomplish what alone she was too fragile and unsteady to undertake. (Since lonely, the great wing cannot obviously take off from a cloud).

In the antithetic tension which tears the soul apart, her empirical side towards the turpitude of life, her loftiest spheres turning against life towards the spiritual mirage, the union with the *Promised One* brings her back to life, *but a life transformed*, the *true Reality*. Not a renunciation, evasion, spiritual complement of the missed life, on the contrary, there is need of the solidified ground of the world and life to accomplish the creative design.

The Reciprocal Abandon

Purity of heart of the inexpressible belonging to an enmeshed thread of a symbol in an unknown text; of a silent walk together on an un-trodden path. Uniqueness of the treasury which can only be walked slowly towards and opened at the end only be the master key of all ciphers, purity of heart of the total and yet uncertain response to a call; call and response of the total questioning without a possible answer other than a next question probing deeper into the heart of the interrogation between two unknown spheres; of the personal beings on the one hand and the virtualities of the latent texture embroidered together. Each word might mislead, each assumption might be a false claim, each gesture a preposterous advance—each step forward a false step, each claim a presumption. . .

Nothing but a silent, speechless, barefoot and gesture-free piety in the softest and enamored abandon of the heart. Lips too tender to be sucked by a mouth of flesh, the clasp of fingers too softly entwined with our own to felt but as timeless communion of the very heart; one and unique which we inhale in one breath—the hour of the beginning of times.

Each woman who did not left her human potential underdeveloped, suppressed by the triviality of life and worldly "wisdom" and attraction of play, becoming toughened beyond her natural measure, merciless for her own softest feelings and deeper nostalgia; cruel to her own self and to others; who did not deafen to the softness of her beauty, mildness of heart, a women who did not murder her truly human aspiration to inherit the highest good of generations and to pass it on—becoming like a snail in his shell instead of a flower to unfold its petals and radiate nature, a fearful, clumsy oyster ever at odds with any claim to give, keeping the law in all its useless emptiness to herself—in short, each woman who did not murder herself, her genuine self, for the sake of

empty-headed social necessity or cultural fashion, remains all her life a maiden at heart. This influx of aspiration to accomplish taking above our fragile self the influx of faith in life that this weak self might break its way through. This dynamism carrying us in a creative effort that makes us transcend our narrow boundaries—where then this great INSPIRATION comes from? How is this accomplished indeed?

Not from a distance but from within.

World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning, and, The Center for the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Understanding, Hanover, NH, USA
August–September 1978

NAME INDEX

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Left to right:
Herbert Coyne

Louis Tymieniecki Houthakker

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– First Conference –

Poetic Expressions: Saying the Same in Different Ways
Beauty, Sublime, Creativity in Islamic and Occidental Culture

August 13 and 14, 2009, at Radcliffe Gymnasium,
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Program Director: Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, The Center for the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Understanding, United States

Secretary General: Nazif Muhtaroglu, University of Kentucky, United States

P R O G R A M

Thursday, August 13, 2009
REGISTRATION, 9:00 – 9:30 AM

9:30 AM *WELCOMING ADDRESS*:

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, The Center for the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Understanding, United States

Thursday, August 13, 2009 ***SESSION I:***
10:00 AM Chaired by: Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Siena College, United States

ON GENEROSITY
Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Siena College, United States

A POETRY OF MYSTICISM: SOLOMON IBN GABIROL, MAULANA JALAUDDIN RUMI, AND RANIER MARIA RILKE
Bruce Ross, Independent Scholar, United States

MUSTAFA SAID AND JULIEN SOREL: DIVIDED SKIES, COMMON HORIZONS
Mahmoud Jaran, University of Udine, Italy

THE SUBLIME IN IZET SARAJLIC AND JACQUES PREVERT'S POETRY
Lejla Marijam, University of Georgia, United States

1:00 – 3:00 PM **Banquet at the Harvard Faculty Club**

3:00 PM ***SESSION II:***
Chaired by: Detlev Quintern, Bremen University, Germany

THE BEAUTY AND ITS PROJECTION IN ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION
Habip Turker, Duquesne University, United States

MULTICULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN ISTANBUL; COMMON GROUNDS OF POETIC CREATION
Gul Kale, McGill University, Canada

EAST AND WEST: CANCELING ALL DICHOTOMIES AND THE SUFI PATH
Chryssi Sidiropoulou, Booazici University, Turkey

Friday, August 14, 2009
REGISTRATION, 9:00 – 9:30 AM

9:30 AM ***SESSION III:***
Chaired by: Gul Kale, McGill University, Canada

CROSSING THE SPATIOTEMPORAL DIMENSION OF HUMAN CULTURE MORAL SENSE OF JUSTICE IN THE FABLE OF THE RINGDOVE
Detlev Quintern, Bremen University, Germany

WOMEN AND THE VEGETABLE KINGDOM: LOVE METAPHORS IN CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC MEDIEVAL POETICS
Claudio G. Antoni, University of Udine, Italy

A PRESCRIPTION FOR SPIRITUAL HEALTH IN THE CONVERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC ECOPOETRY, OR, WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM WENDELL BERRY AND JELALUDDIN RUMI
Clint Jones, University of Kentucky, United States

TOO FAR SKETCHED: REDISCOVERING THE SYSTEM OF MEANING WITHIN A COMPLEX OF VERBAL AND PICTORIAL SYMBOLS
Chad Kia, Columbia University, United States

1:00 – 2:30 PM **Lunch at the Cronkhite Cafeteria**

Time 2:30 PM ***SESSION IV: IN OUR POETS' OWN WORDS***
Chaired by: Habip Türker, Duquesne University, United States

POETIC EXPRESSIONS IN SUFI LANGUAGE (BASED ON AL-NIFFARY'S "KITAB AL-MAWAQIF")
Ruzana Pskhu, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

Christine McNeill-Matteson, University of Kansas, United States

Roxana Cazan, Indiana University, Bloomington, United States
THE CHRISTIAN SONG OF SONGS
Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, The Center for the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Understanding, United States