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Articles

Mohsen Araki
Causality and Freedom

Fatima Modarresi
A Tale of Occidental Estrangement

Mas'oud Oumid
A comparative study of the epistemology of Suhrawardi and Allamah Tabataba'i

Vida Ahmadi
Philosophical and Mystical Approaches to the 'Dialogue of Civilizations'

Book Reviews

Robert McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001
(Oliver Leaman)

Valérie Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture*, London, I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001 (Nader El-Bizri)

Ali Benmakhlouf, *Le vocabulaire de Frege*, Paris, Ellipses, 2001 (Oliver Leaman)

A. de Libera, A. Elamrani-Jamal & A. Galonnier (eds), *Langages et philosophie: Hommage à Jean Jolivet, Études de Philosophie Médiévale LXXIV*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin 1997, pp. xx + 426, paper, FF 342 (Sajjad Rizvi)

A. Maurières & Eric Ossart, *Paradise Gardens*, London: I B Tauris, 2001 (Oliver Leaman)

Nader El-Bizri, *The Phenomenological Quest between Avicenna and Heidegger*, Binghamton: Global Publications, 2000 (Ronald Bruzina)

Oliver Leaman, *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1999, pp. 199, paper, £12.95. (Sajjad Rizvi)

Books Received

Causality and Freedom

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Abstract

According to Mulli `adri's theory of necessity, a determined causal law governs the relationship between cause and effect, a relationship that encompasses human behaviour. There is no contrast between this determined causal law and free will. This theory will be examined and contrasted with the Sayyed Mu`ammad Biqir al-`adr's exposition on free will. Al-`adr's theory of al-salṣana or mastery suggests that free will is not compatible with the determined casual law. Free action and moral agency is led by the power of mastery. In this study, these two theories will be explained briefly. We shall attempt to evaluate which one of the two is more reasonable and preferable as a theory of human agency.

One of the earliest problems in philosophy that has occupied minds of great philosophers and has been debated in different philosophical ages is the problem of causality and its relation to freedom.

Depth of philosophical problems pertaining to causality and freedom on the one hand and the close relation between these two notions, theoretical and practical systems of man and also many problems in philosophy, theology and humanities such as law, ethics and psychology on the other hand, has made this discussion very important and vital.

In Islamic philosophy, the great Muslim philosopher, Sadrul Muta'llihin, known as Sadra, has made one of the most profound studies of "causality" and its relation to "human freedom".

One of the controversial problems among Muslim philosophers and theologians that led to some of the most heated debates in philosophy and theology is the very problem of "causality" and interpretation of "freedom" on its basis. These debates were marginalised after the decline of traditional theology and its inclusion in philosophy, mostly after the appearance of transcendental philosophy of Sadra. For a short period Sadra's philosophy managed to be the dominant and governing trend in the history of Islamic thought. This situation did not last for a long time, because simultaneous to the decline of "theological thought", the science of the principles of jurisprudence tremendously developed in Shi'a thought and replaced "the theological current" in its intellectual debates with the philosophical thought. In this way, some of the earlier disputes between Muslim theologians and philosophers were revived in another form and a new school with a new way of thinking merged against the philosophical thought, which was embodied in the transcendental philosophy of Sadra. This new school can be called, "The School of Modern Usuliyun", those who became experts in the principles of jurisprudence.

Among the modern usuliyun, Akhund Mulla Muhammad Kazim Kurasani represents Sadrian Islamic thought. Defending principles of "Sadrian philosophy", Akhund greatly supported the Sadrean view in the interpretation of causality and its relation to freedom.

On the other side, his intelligent and insightful pupil, i.e. Mirza Na'ini was one of the strong critics of Sadrian view. In a new way and method, he criticised the Sadrian philosophical thought and presented a new viewpoint on the relation between causality and human freedom.

Na'ini can be considered as the one who started a new way of dealing with the problem of causality and its relation to human freedom. Although his idea was not developed into a complete theory, it opened the way for a new and complete theory that was developed by the great contemporary thinker and

philosopher Ayatullah Sayyed Muhammad Baqir al- Sadr. This theory was called the theory of Saltanah, sovereignty.

In this essay, after explaining briefly the philosophical theory of Sadra on the relation between causality and freedom which we shall call later the theory of necessity (wujub) and martyr Sadr's theory of sovereignty (saltanah), we will compare these two theories with each other. We will also criticise and analyse them.

The Theory of Necessity (Sadra's theory in the interpretation of causality and its relation to human freedom)

Before explaining the theory of necessity, it is noteworthy that the reason beyond calling this theory "The Theory of Necessity" lies in the fact that according to this theory the relation between cause and effect is both the relation of existence and that of necessity.

The dispute between Muslim philosophers and theologians on all types of cause on one hand and between philosophers and modern usuliyyun on voluntary agent or cause on the other hand does not concern bringing of the effect into existence by the cause, but rather granting necessity to the effect by the cause. According to the theory of necessity, the effect not only depends on the cause for its existence, but also for its necessity.

Early theologians took the cause in a general sense and the mainstream of modern usuliyyun take the voluntary agent in a particular sense just as the originator of the effect and not as the necessitating.

To give a comprehensive account of "necessity" containing its philosophical grounds in Sadra's view requires a long and broad discussion which is beyond the scope of this short essay. Here we are concerned with three subjects that we will study in the following order:

short explanation of "The Theory of Necessity" in Sadra's thought
an account of the hypotheses of philosophical contradiction between this theory and the principle of free will
method of philosophical solution of the above-mentioned contradiction according to Sadra and the theory of necessity.

1- Short Explanation of the Theory of Necessity

According to the theory of asalat al-wujud (principiality of existence), natures (quiddities) are conventions of our mind and what is really there is just "being" or "existence". In other words, among all concepts and mental images, the only concept that can describe the external world and can genuinely represent the reality outside our mind is the concept of "being". Therefore, the key to know the universal laws and rules that govern the universe is the universal principle of asalat al-wujud. The general structure of philosophical knowledge of the world is based on this principle, from which the universal philosophical laws governing the world have to be derived.

The most important philosophical principles of cosmology derived from asalat al-wujud are:

A- Graduation (hierarchical structure) of Being

According to *asalat al-wujud*, the differences that we understand among things in the world are all rooted in their "being" and can have no root other than the reality of 'being'. Therefore, all things in the world differ in "being", just as they share 'being'.

The reality of being [in contrast to the concept of being] is a reality that admits differences and multiplicity of types and every type of being is a level of being which is different from other beings in intensity and weakness, and unlimitedness and limitedness.

Different types of being differ from each other in that one is weaker, that is, more dependent and more needy and the other is more intense, that is, more independent and less needy. The difference of being in degrees of dependence on and need for the other which is the same as the difference in weakness and intensity is the source for all differences and varieties in the world.

The peak and the most intense being is the self-independent being which is absolutely free from need, that is, the eternal self-necessary being. The self-necessary being has no need for any condition and is the absolute being and enjoys the ultimate existential actuality. The self-necessary being is the originator of the hierarchy of being. All other levels of being are manifestations of self-necessary being, on whom they entirely depend. Despite its total dependence on the self-necessary being, the first being created by the self-necessary being has no need to other levels of being and therefore in relation to other levels of being enjoys independence, freedom from need and absoluteness. Other levels of being depend for their existence on self-necessary being and on the first creature as well, since through it the grace of being extends to other levels. Thus, the highest being is the completely actual independent absolute self-necessary being and the lowest is the being that has nothing other than potentiality of being.

In his *Mabda' wa Ma'ad*, Mulla, Sadra says:

And beings do not differ in their essence except in intensity and weakness, perfection and imperfection, priority and posteriority. Being accidentally differs because of those notions that are subordinate to them, i.e. their different natures.

Also in the discussion on potentiality and actuality in his *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, Mulla Sadra says:

Surely the thing which is liable to movement is potential either in this aspect or in all aspects, and the mover is actual either in this aspect or in all aspects. Inevitably, those aspects of actuality will end in something which is actual in all aspects, otherwise it would lead to vicious circle or infinite regress. Similarly, those aspects of potentiality will end in something which is potential in all aspects except in being potential, since it has this potentially in actuality and this is what make it distinguishable from absolute nothingness. So it is proved that there are two sides for the being: one side is the first real and the absolute being, May His name be glorified, and the other side is the *materia prima*. The former is absolutely good and the latter is bad and has nothing good except accidentally. It is accidentally good, because it is the potentiality for all beings, in contrast to nothingness which is absolutely bad.

B- Independent Being and Relational Being

According to what was said earlier, the difference among beings is the difference in levels and degrees of existence starting with the self-necessary being and ending with the potential being.

Reflection on the reality of "being" leads to the conclusion that apart from self-necessary being which itself is "the reality of being" and the peak of the hierarchy of being, other levels of being have no reality other than belonging and relation to self-necessary being. Any thing apart from the divine essence is nothing other than relation and belonging to Him.

Therefore, the universe of being consists in an independent and self-necessary being; other levels of being are His manifestation and belongings. Manifestations and belonging of necessary being or levels of dependent beings have no being without relation to the necessary being. If someone thinks that in addition to the source of the being which is the self-necessary there are or may be other beings that have reality more than belonging and relation to self-necessary being he has made a mistake and has not understood the reality of being and *asalat al-wujud*.

The being which essentially and by itself deserves existence is the self-necessary being which is the reality of being itself. From this necessary being, another being emerges which is His *amr* (command) and is nothing other than relation to and dependence on him. This relational (dependent) and command-based being is just one, since it is originated by the Absolute One ("and our command is not but single"-the Qur'an) and since Divine grace is infinite and all are simply relation and belonging to the One Necessary being. Mulla Sadra says:

O you who are seeking for the truth! The truth has appeared from this account that you have heard: the reality of being because of its simplicity and having no nature, no constituent and no limiting part is the necessary being itself that deserves ultimate and infinite perfection, since every other level of being lower than level in intensity is not absolute reality of being".¹

Elsewhere he says:

Therefore, the effect by itself, since it is effect, has no reality other than reliance and dependence and has no meaning other than being effect and subordinate, without having an essence subject to these meanings, as the absolutely originating cause has no essence and reality other than being the principle and source of everything and all relations and dependence go back to him. So if it is proved that the chain of beings -including both causes and effects- originates from an essence which is a simple luminous primary existential reality free from multiplicity, deficiency, contingency, short coming and unclarity, free from anything accidental or additional to Him, internally or externally and it is also proved that He is gracious by Himself and luminous by His reality and illuminating heavens and earth by His entity and the source of the origin of the universe of creation and command by His existence, the conclusion is that all beings have the same origin and are of the same kind which is the reality and the rest is His affairs. He is the essence and the rest is His names and attributes. He is the principle and the rest is His states and affairs. He is the being and the rest is His aspects and features.²

C- Cause and Effect

From what has been said before, the concepts of causation, cause and effect become clear. Cause is an independent being which has no need for its effect, originating and necessitating the effect. Effect is a totally dependent being which is nothing other than relation to and dependence on its effect and has no

identity other than this. Causality is not apart from the essence of the effect and the cause. The essence of cause in the context of influence and origination is its causality and the effect itself is nothing other than causality in the context of receptivity.

In a mental analysis, there are three concepts: 1-the cause, i.e. the originator 2-the effect, i.e. the originated 3-causality, i.e. the origination. These three concepts can only be separated by a mental assumption or metaphor. They are not separable from each other even in the mind and with an intellectual analysis, except in an intellectual metaphor.

Cause, causality and effect are interrelated concepts that are not detachable from each other neither in reality nor in our understanding. Mulla Sadra says:

The effect by itself is a simple thing like the cause by itself and that is when the attention is limited to them. When we abstract the cause from whatever does not bear on its causation and influence, that is, when the cause is considered as such and when we abstract the effect from whatever does not bear on its causedness it becomes clear and certain that what is called as effect has no reality other than the reality of its originating cause so the intellect cannot refer to the entity of effect disregarding the entity of its originator... Therefore, the effect by itself has no reality in its causedness except that it is dependent and relational and has no meaning other than being an effect a-subordinate without having an essence exposed to those meanings, just as in the case of the absolute originating cause being principle, source, origin and followed is the same as its essence.³

Causality in the way explained above implies certain principles and rules, whose denial would be equal to the denial of the principle of causality itself. The first principle implied by the principle of causality is the principle of necessitation of effect or the relation of necessity between the cause and effect. Mulla Sadra says:

Having proved that no contingent comes into existence without something making its existence outweighing its nothingness and does not become annihilated without something making its nothingness outweighing its existence, so both sides have to be preponderated by an external cause, now we say: that preponderator will not be preponderator unless its preponderance reaches the level of necessity. Therefore, unlike what most theologians have thought if the preponderance caused by an external cause does not reach the level of necessity it will not be sufficient for the existence of the contingent, because as long as the contingent conveys both possibilities it will not exist. Is this not the case that if its existence is not made necessary by something else its both existence and non-existence would be possible, so no side is determined and to would still need something to preponderate either existence or non-existence.⁴

In this way, Mulla Sadra takes the principle of necessitation of effect as a result of the principle of causality itself and its denial to be identical with the denial of causality, because the principle of causality is based on needs of the contingent for a cause that puts an end to the state of equality of both existence and non-existence which is implied by causedness. As long as the cause does not necessitate its effect, it has not removed the state of equality.

Principles such as impossibility of separation of the effect from its cause and necessity of resemblance of cause and its effect in their generic reality are some other important principles derived from the principle of causality.

On the basis of *asalat al-wujud*, to conclude the above-mentioned principles from the principle of causality is more obvious and more decisive. For example, to draw the necessary relation between cause and effect from the principle of causality on the basis of *asalat al-wujud* a little reflection is enough to understand the concept of causality and necessity of originating effect by cause.

According to *asalat al-wujud* necessity is an inevitable implication of 'being' and all its levels, states and belongings. The essence of the first cause and whatever is created by it is being and necessity. Dependence on the self-subsistent is the essence of effect and also causation, influence, generosity and graciousness of the first cause is its essence, so the necessity of the existence of the effect is the same as its essence on the one hand, and the same as the essence of the cause on the other hand. According to this fact, cause necessarily and essentially requires creation of effect and effect also necessarily and essentially requires dependence on cause and creation by cause. Thus, the principle of necessity of creation of effect by cause is a necessary and inevitable result of the principle of causality.

Another important philosophical law which is derived in the light of causality from *asalat al-wujud* is the problem of criterion of need for a cause. This problem is one of the supreme problems discussed in Islamic philosophy and is exclusive to it. Muslim theologians take non-eternity (*huduth*) as the criterion of need for cause, that is, they believe the reason for having need for a cause is non-being and then coming to be. Since the existence is preceded by non-existence, there must be a cause that led to this transition from nothingness into being.

Muslim philosophers prior to Mulla Sadra developed strong arguments against the theory of theologians and proved that non-eternity cannot be the reason for need, because it is possible to suppose a being which is eternal and at the same time in need of a cause on which it eternally depends. Philosophers before Sadra held that the criterion is contingency. In other words, the main reason for having need for a cause is the fact that the thing by itself possesses no necessity for existence and non-existence and has equal relation to both existence and non-existence. This logically results in the necessary relation of effect to cause, because as mentioned above as long as the main reason of need for cause is contingency (non-necessity of existence and non-necessity of non-existence), what the cause of existence has to grant the effect is necessity of existence and what the cause nothingness has to grant is the necessity of nothingness.

Mulla Sadra in his excellent studies viewed the theory of his predecessors imperfect and appropriate for the universe of natures. In his studies, he proved that when we consider the relation between nature of something and existence or non-existence the view of previous philosophers is true, because nature of a contingent being has equal relation to both existence and non-existence and none of them is necessary for it. Therefore, to become existent or non-existent it needs a cause that grants necessity of existence or necessity of non-existence to it.

However, according to *asalat al-wujud* and subjectivity of nature, what is created by the cause is the existence of effect. Existence has no equal relation to existence and non-existence, so the view of previous philosophers cannot be true. Therefore, the criterion of need of being of effect for cause is not the equal relation of existence and non-existence to the existence of effect or contingency. The criterion is existential poverty or in other words dependence or relationality of existence. If we reflect on the existence of effect we will find it dependent and subordinate. This dependence and non-self-subsistence have made the effect in need of the cause. Therefore, need for cause is the same as the essence of effect and identified with its existence.

As mentioned earlier, the essential dependence of effect on its cause results in the necessary relation between cause and effect. According to this philosophical analysis, the essence of effect is an inseparable result and outcome of the essence of cause and impossibility of separation of effect from cause is another expression of necessitation of effect by cause.

2- An Account of Hypothesis of Philosophical Contradiction between the Theory of Necessity and Free Will

Early theologians and modern usuliyyun who seriously oppose the theory of necessity or necessitation of effect by cause or in other words the necessary relation of cause and effect, take this theory in conflict with free will and believe that even if we accept its truth in respect to non-voluntary causes, it cannot be accepted in respect to voluntary causes, because voluntariness of an act in voluntary causes contradicts necessity of that act and since voluntariness of acts in voluntary causes is admitted necessity of effect in voluntary causes must be wrong.

To explain the alleged philosophical contradiction between the theory of necessity and freedom or free-will in the case of voluntary agents we will clarify the main point of contradiction analysing briefly two sides of the alleged conflict:

Causality

If we limit the principle of causality to the 'need of effect in its existence for a cause' and consider the effect as something that depends in its existence on the originator there seems no contradiction between causality and free-will. In the first sight it seems possible to have something dependent on something else without any necessary relation between them. This means that cause would have equal relation to existence and non-existence of its effect and effect would remain contingent and unnecessary. This type of relation between voluntary cause and effect is in accordance with the viewpoint of early theologians and modern usuliyyun. In this way, there would be no contradiction between causality of a voluntary agent and his freedom and free will.

However, as we discussed earlier, causality in the way presented by philosophers cannot be limited to the existential relation between cause and effect. It rather involves necessary relation as well. Existence and necessity of the effect are not separable. Cause cannot bring the effect into existence without necessitating it; otherwise it would lead to groundless preponderance and we know that impossibility of such preponderance is the basis of the principle of causality.

The core of the alleged conflict between causality and free will is the very necessitation of effect by cause. It has been assumed that if the existence of effect is preceded by necessity of existence there would remain no place for free will. In other words, free will or freedom is only possible when the effect has the possibility of both being originated and not originated by the cause. Necessitation of effect is equal to determinism.

Free Will

There are three elements involved in every voluntary (free) act:

prerequisites of willing the act
willing the act

the act itself.

There are two relations between these three: the relation between (a) and (b) and between (b) and (c).

It is usually assumed that after the completion of all factors bearing on the existence of a voluntary act its existence becomes necessary as soon as the agent wills it. Thus, there is a necessary relation between willing the act and act itself.

Not only there is no conflict among this necessary relation between act and will of the agent and free will, but also there can be no free will without this necessary relation. To suppose that there can be will of agent and all requisites without having the act would contradict the free will and power of the agent. For the same reason, it seems that the dispute between philosophers and modern usuliyyun (and also some early theologians) mostly concerns the first relation, i.e. the relation between prerequisites of willing the act and willing the issuance of act from the voluntary agent and not the relation between act and the will. Modern usuliyyun and some early theologians believe that relation between willing the act in the voluntary agent and its prerequisites is necessary there would be no free will and it would result in absolute determinism.

In any case, the debate between philosophers and their opponents on the necessary relation of cause and effect can be conceived in both aspects of the relation of a voluntary act to its prerequisites, i.e. the relation of the essence of act and will of the agent and the relation of will of the agent and prerequisites of its existence.

Among modern usuliyyun, Mirza Na'ini (d. 1355 A.H) distinguished four main elements in a voluntary act:

prerequisites of will
will (iradah)
decision (ikhtiyar)
essence of the act.

He meant by ikhtiyar the instant movement of the soul towards the act (the embarking of the soul on the act) and took it as a result of iradah, will.

Mirza Na'ini takes the first two elements to be involuntary subject to the necessary relation of cause and effect, but he takes the third element, i.e. ikhtiyar which sits in between will and the act to be outside the domain of cause-effect necessity. He takes this to be the key point in voluntariness of act.⁵

In any case, for Muslim philosophers, especially for Mulla Sadra, the relation of a voluntary act to its prerequisites (iradah or ikhtiyar) and the relation of iradah (will) to its prerequisites is a relation of necessity and the principle of necessary relation of cause and effect is exceptionless. Mulla Sadra says:

The criterion for willingness is to have the will as the cause for the act or non-act. And surely a willing agent is the one that if he wills he acts and if he does not feel he does not act, even if the will [itself] is necessitated by itself or by the other or is impossible by itself or by the other.⁶

Modern usuliyyun believe that the relation between voluntary act and its prerequisites is by no means a necessary and determined one and that the cause-effect necessity does not include the relation between the voluntary act and its prerequisites. Therefore, even if all prerequisites of a voluntary act were available the act still would not be necessary to be issued by the voluntary agent and it still

remains contingent. This contingency or the possibility of acting and not acting or the equal relations of the agent to act and non-act is the core of will and voluntariness in a voluntary agent. Na'ini says:

If you say: is the fourth idea on which you built al-amr bayn al-amray (the state between two states) and the negation of determinism and made it something between the will and the movement of the muscles contingent or necessary?

I would say: No doubt, it is created and contingent, but it is the ikhtiyar itself, an act of the soul and the soul itself bears on its existence, so there is no need for a necessitating cause whose effect is never detached from it, because causality of this type is only there for non-voluntary acts.⁷

Some modern usuliyyun have noticed a problem here and tried to solve it. The problem is that if after completion of all prerequisites of a voluntary act including the will itself the act still remains unnecessary it would imply denial of power and will of the agents since the will of the agent would have no role in the emergence of the act and origination of the act falls out of agent's power. Therefore, if ikhtiyar is taken to mean contingency and unnecessary of existence and non-existence it would imply negation of ikhtiyar.

To respond to this problem usuliyyun have distinguished between two types of necessity: (a) the necessity prior to ikhtiyar, i.e. the necessity which is source of decision or in other words necessity of cause of ikhtiyar (b) necessity after ikhtiyar, i.e. the necessity whose source is ikhtiyar or in other words the necessary relation between ikhtiyar itself and its effect: the voluntary act. They maintain that the former is in conflict with ikhtiyar and they deny it, but not only do they accept the latter, but they also take it to be compulsory, because there will be no ikhtiyar without it and there is no conflict between necessity which is caused by ikhtiyar and the ikhtiyar itself.

3-Philosophical Solution of Contradiction between Necessary Causality and Free Will according to Sadra and the Theory of Necessity

The solution relies on three main points:

A- To distinguish between necessity and determinism and between contingency and free-will. According to Sadra, critics of the theory of necessity have failed to distinguish between ikhtiyar and contingency or between determinism and necessity and therefore they have thought that necessary relation of cause and effect would lead to determinism, so to deny determinism which is against our conscience and rational arguments, one has to deny the theory of necessity. However, necessity does not imply determinism and has no conflict with ikhtiyar, just as contingency does not mean ikhtiyar and is not implied by voluntariness of the act.

Necessity and contingency are two mental concepts that are abstracted by mind from the relation between the thing and existence, while determinism and free-will are two real qualities attributed to the act outside mind.

Acts of a voluntary agent are characterised as necessary whether or not they are voluntary, because if the voluntary agent is a self-necessary existent his acts also are necessary and if he is self-contingent he

and his acts are necessary by the other. Therefore, voluntariness does not imply contingency, just as necessity does not imply determinism.

B- The reality of free-will and freedom consists in choosing out of consent and not under an external force imposing an unpleasant choice. Accordingly, every act arising from agent's consent that is not chosen because of an imposing external factor is a free and voluntary act. Therefore, the main criterion for voluntariness is not contingency; rather it is the consent of the agent and lack of an imposing external factor. Mulla Sadra says:

When the source of originating something is knowledge and will of the agent, whether knowledge and will are the same or different and whether knowledge and will are the same as the essence of the agent in the case of God or different in other cases, the agent is voluntary and the act is issued from the agent because of his will, knowledge and consent. Such agent is not called by the public or by the elite "involuntary agent". Neither its act is said to be issued out of determinism, though it is necessarily issued from the agent out of his will and knowledge.⁸

The criterion for qualifying a voluntary agent as a free agent is that whenever he wills he acts and whenever he does not will he does not act. According to this definition, it makes no difference whether the agent necessarily or unnecessarily wills, because truth of a conditional proposition is compatible with the necessity of the condition or the conditioned. Therefore, although will of the agent is subject to the principle of necessary relation of cause and effect and its realisation or non-realisation is necessary, the agent is still voluntary and enjoys complete freedom.

Mulla Sadra rejects the theologians' definition of the free agent as the one who may act or not. This definition implies the possibility of voluntary act. He says:

There are two well-known definitions for power, al-qudrah: First, possibility of act and its opposite, i.e. non-act, and second a state for the agent in which he acts if he wills and does not act if he does not will. The first interpretation belongs to theologians and the second to philosophers.⁹

He also says:

The criterion for willingness is to have the will as the cause for the act or non-act. And surely a willing agent is the one that if he wills he acts and if he does not will he does not act, even if the will [itself] is necessitated by itself or by the other or is impossible by itself or by the other.¹⁰

C- A voluntary act is the one whose existence derives from the free-will of the agent, but free-will itself is voluntary in essence, that is by definition. Voluntariness of free-will is not separable from it, though the free-will may be caused by causes which are the origins of the necessity of its existence. In other words, the fact that ikhtiyar itself is governed by the principle of necessary relation of cause and effect and its existence is necessitated by its cause does not turn it into non-ikhtiyar... Ikhtiyar is ikhtiyar by definition, whatever its cause might be and however it is issued from its cause.

On the basis of the above three points, there is no conflict between free-will and the principle of necessity. Although the act of the voluntary agent is subject to the principle of necessity and the will of the agent becomes necessary after the completion of prerequisites, the act of the voluntary agent is free because it derives from his will.

The Theory of Sovereignty in the Interpretation of Causality and its Relation to Human Freedom

Mirza Na'ini, one of the founders of modern principles of jurisprudence, was the first one to develop and defend this theory. According to an exposition of the lectures of Na'ini (*Ajwad al-Taqrirat*), this theory can be traced back to Mirza Muhammad Taqi Isfahani, the author of *Hidayat al-Mustarshidin* (a commentary work on *Ma'alim Al-Usul*). After Na'ini, our great master, the martyr Sadr, reconstructed this theory to meet the problems raised against the theory and, in an innovative way, developed it and called it "The Theory of Sovereignty". In what follows, we will briefly present the ideas of Na'ini and then will focus on the theory of sovereignty.

Na'ini starts his argument with two common sense laws that both can be affirmed after a short reflection:

First Law: Will (*iradah*) of the free agent itself is not voluntary. Reflecting on the process of decision-making inside ourselves, we realise that after conceiving the act and affirming its benefit our will automatically comes into existence. Will is an inevitable outcome of conceiving the act and affirming its benefit. Na'ini says:

Surely, all those qualities that belong to the soul such as will, conception and affirmation are not voluntary.¹¹

In respect to God, it can be demonstrated that His will is not voluntary, because his essence is simple and free from any attributes accidental and additional to it. Therefore, will cannot be accidental to His essence, since it is in conflict with the simplicity of the essence. Will of God is identical with His essence and this implies that the Divine will is essential and it is self-evident that essential attributes are not voluntary. We find in an exposition of Na'ini's lectures that:

surely the will that is the complete cause of the existence of the effects is the same as His essence, and self-evidently His essence, the Exalted and the Glorified, is not voluntary for Him.¹²

Second Law: Human soul has complete sovereignty and authority upon its voluntary acts. In other words, man always feels very clearly that has complete power to make his decisions regarding his voluntary acts. Na'ini writes:

surely, the soul has complete effect and authority on muscles without facing any obstacle in exercising its sovereignty.¹³

Na'ini concludes that there must be something between the will (*iradah*) and act. He calls this element "ikhtiyar". *Ikhtiyar* is an act of soul that takes place after the formation of *iradah* and its prerequisites. In this way, Na'ini argues for his position and adds that it is the only solution for the well-known objection of Fakh al-Razi, who asserted that voluntariness of an act implies its involuntariness, since voluntariness of an act means to be caused by the will, but the will itself is determined by causes that produce it necessarily. Na'ini responds to this objection by saying that the voluntary act is not caused by the will; rather it is caused by something which occurs between the will and act, i.e. *ikhtiyar* (or *talab*). *Ikhtiyar* is not caused by the will; it is originated from the essence of the soul.

Na'ini believes that there is no necessary relation between ikhtiyar and the soul. Human soul in making ikhtiyar just needs some preponderating factor. For this it would suffice that the agent pursues an end or goal in the act.

There are many objections to Na'ini's theory. First, the difference between iradah and ikhtiyar is not known. If the ikhtiyar can escape cause-effect necessity why cannot iradah do this?

Second, Na'ini has not solved the problem in relation to the Divine acts, because ikhtiyar also cannot be additional to His essence and according to Na'ini himself the Divine essence is not voluntary for God. Now the question is: Does Na'ini believe that Divine acts are voluntary?! How does he treat the decisive and certain belief in His power and His willingness?

Third, is ikhtiyar or talab which is the basis of Na'ini's theory on voluntariness of acts contingent or necessary? Na'ini does not accept its necessity and takes it to be contingent. Therefore, it must have equal relations to both existence and non-existence and according to the law of impossibility of preference without a preponderant, it would be impossible for ikhtiyar to exist. There is no solution for this problem in Na'ini's account.

Sadr and the Theory of Sovereignty

The difficulties in Na'ini's theory led the great Ayatullah Sadr to reconstruct the theory and revive Na'ini's claim with a new argument. To develop his theory of sovereignty Sadr first mentions some premises:

First premise- Equal relation of act to existence and non-existence is a clear fact that no intuition or argument can disprove it. Every one of us clearly feels that after the completion of all prerequisites he still may or may not act. This is something that we understand clearly by our conscience and no argument can bring it into question.

Second premise- Necessity of prerequisites of an act leads to denial of free-will and philosophers' answers are not able to solve the problem. Their answers are just some linguistic rationalisations (such as saying that ikhtiyar means the agent's consent or that the voluntary agent is the one that acts whenever he is willing and does not act whenever he is willing to do so) that cannot solve the conflict between reality of necessity and reality of ikhtiyar.

Third premise- The principle of causality is not demonstrated. So it cannot be said that it cannot have any exception, because it is rationally proved. This principle is indeed an intuitive and evident principle. To find the scope and extent of it we have to investigate its origins in our conscience.¹⁴

Based on the above premises, he argues that rationally any contingent being to come into existence needs an external factor. This factor can be either a cause that necessitate its existence or a voluntary agent that makes the act by his sovereignty. Having such an agent besides the act does rationally justify its existence. It is certain that the essential contingency does not suffice the existence of something. However, there might be something other than necessity that can preponderate the existence of a contingent being such as sovereignty.

The Definition of Sovereignty

Sovereignty or salatanah is an internal quality that we all understand. It is what we know by presence ('ilm huduri). To conceptualise it we can use the expression: "The agent may or may not act". There is no necessity to act or not to act.

Sovereignty is similar to any of necessity and contingency from one aspect and different from each from the other. Sovereignty similar to necessity in being is rationally enough to justify the existence of a contingent being and leaving no need to look for something else. The difference between sovereignty and necessity is that with necessity an act loses its equal relations to existence and non-existence and necessity of existence takes its place, while with sovereignty the contingency remains the same. Necessity consists in the fact that the agent has to act or not to act, but sovereignty means that the agent may or may not act.

Sovereignty is similar to contingency in preserving the equal relations of the contingent to both existence and non-existence, but sovereignty is different from contingency in being rationally enough to justify the existence of a contingent being while with contingency the question remains why it must come into existence.

Having known that the sovereignty of the agent may substitute necessity and suffice the existence of a voluntary act which is the question at issue, reflection on our conscience and the way voluntary acts are issued from us shows clearly that the relation between us and our voluntary acts is one of sovereignty and not necessity. We as voluntary agents find that we have sovereignty upon our acts. We clearly understand the fact that even in circumstances in which all prerequisites and conditions of a voluntary act exist, it is not necessary to act. What we find deep in ourselves is this sovereignty upon our acts. It is up to us to act or not act and we are not compelled to do so.¹⁵

Evaluation

The theory of Na'ini as explained above seems to suffer fatal problems. It seems also that the martyr Sadr's theory of sovereignty despite its beauties and firmness still has very important problems. Of course, this does not mean that Sadr's theory of necessity is free from fundamental problems. In what follows, I will explain problems of both theories of Sadr and Sadra and then there will be a conclusion.

Objections on the Theory of Sovereignty

Granted that sovereignty suffices the existence of the act, would that also suffice its non-existence as well. If so, the problem would be that it leads to having both the existence and non-existence of the act at the same time. And if not, it would mean that the non-existence of the act must be impossible and its existence must be necessary, because non-sufficiency of sovereignty for non-existence and its sufficiency for existence damage the state of equality of existence and non-existence in the essence of the contingent and change contingency into the necessity of existence.

To interpret sovereignty as "may or may not act" is just a linguistic account that does not solve the real problem. In any case, with sovereignty the existence of the act as a contingent effect either remains possible or becomes necessary. If it remains possible, the question still remains why will it exist? Why did not contingency suffice the existence of the act in the first place? If it becomes necessary the problem with the theory of necessity would repeat.

Although the principle of impossibility of preponderance without a preponderating factor is not demonstrated and it is just self-evident, there must be a reason why something becomes self-evident. The reason here is the essential need of the contingent for a cause, that is the contingent as such is

rationally impossible to exist or not to exist. The impossibility of existence and non-existence for the contingent as such is an essential judgement of our reason whose subject matter is non-necessity of existence and non-existence. This is a universal and essential judgement of the reason that has no exception like any other proved universal and absolute judgements.

What is the meaning of sufficiency in saying that the sovereignty is sufficient for the existence of a voluntary act. Our master, Sadr, uses the expression "may or may not act". If it means possibility of existence the problem is that this is something which has been already there and if it means necessity the problem is that this is the same idea involved in the theory of necessity.

Objections on the Theory of Necessity:

This theory is against our intuitive feeling that both sides of the act even after the completion of all prerequisites are still equal to us as voluntary agents. We feel no necessity. This can be replied by saying that it is indeed an essential feature of ikhtiyar that at no stage the agent feels compelled or forced from outside, but this does not mean that his decisions are made arbitrarily and are not subject to any rational rules.

If our will and decision and all prerequisites are subject to the principle of cause-effect necessity how can we justify Divine reward and punishment. The answer to this is that in any case our acts are voluntary and this is rationally enough to make Divine reward and punishment just. There is no evidence for our reason or conscience that demands ikhtiyar itself must be voluntary. The other way to answer is to say that voluntariness of acts depend on their emergence from a voluntary agent (an agent that has ikhtiyar), but the voluntariness of ikhtiyar is essential and cannot be removed. Even if a superior cause originates ikhtiyar it cannot remove its voluntariness. Thus, ikhtiyar is ikhtiyar, even if it is necessarily brought into existence by its cause. The essence of ikhtiyar (like any other thing) neither can be given to it nor can be negated. Therefore, a voluntary act is voluntary, though all its prerequisites are governed by the principle of causal necessity, and has all the characteristics of voluntary acts, such as appropriateness of reckoning and punishment.

Conclusion

There is no way to deny the universality of the principle of causality and cause-effect necessity just as voluntariness of our acts cannot be denied. What Muslim philosophers, especially Mulla Sadra, have argued for the universality of the principle of causality and its necessity and their responses to the objections are sound, but further points have to be made:

1. The relation of the essence of cause to its effect is a comparative contingency, imkan-e bil-qiyas. Cause cannot be made necessary by its effect.

As explained before, the effect is nothing other than belonging to and dependence on its cause. The effect receives necessity of existence from its cause and, therefore, the relation of the essence of effect to its cause is necessity caused by the other, darurate bil-ghayr.

2. In the material world there is no real originating cause (al-'illah al-fa'iliyyah) that grants existence. All material causes are preparatory causes ('illat- i'dadi) or material causes (i.e. potentiality for existence or recipients of existence). In immaterial world all originating causes are voluntary.

3. In the immaterial world where the voluntary originating causality exists the relation of the essence of cause to the effect is that of a comparative contingency, while the relation of the effect to its originating

cause is that of necessity, since the effect is nothing other than belonging to and dependence on its cause.

4. Our mind abstracts the notion of sovereignty from the mutual relation of cause and effect which is from one side *imkane bil-qiyas* and from the other side *darurate bil-ghayr*.

Therefore, the theory of sovereignty can be somehow reduced to the above-mentioned mutual relation. According to this account, there is a special relation between a voluntary agent and its effect that is a combination of comparative contingency of the cause and necessity (caused) by the other of the effect. This very relation is the one from which notions of sovereignty and *ikhtiyar* are abstracted. It is also the same relation that accounts for the appropriateness of reckoning, punishment and reward.

In this way the problems raised against the theory of necessity or the theory of sovereignty as discussed above or more generally against the relation of cause and freedom can be solved. Further explanation of this point needs a separate discussion.

Notes:

1-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 6, pp. 23,24.

2-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 2, p. 300.

3-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 2, pp.229-30.

4-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 1, pp. 221,222.

5-Mirza Na'ini, *Ajawad al-Taqrirat*, p. 91.

6-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 6, p. 319.

7-Mirza Na'ini, *Ajawad al-Taqrirat*, p. 91

8-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 6, p. 332

9-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 6, p. 307.

10-Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah al-Arbi'ah*, vol. 6, p. 319.

11-Mirza Na'ini, *Ajawad al-Taqrirat*, vol. 1, p. 91.

12-Mirza Na'ini, *Ajawad al-Taqrirat*, vol. 1, p. 91.

13-Mirza Na'ini, *Ajawad al-Taqrirat*, vol. 1, p. 91.

14-Sadr, *Mabahith al-dalil al-Lafzi*, Vol. 2, p. 36 and handwritings of his lectures by Ayatullah sayyed Kazim Ha'iri, P. 418.

15-Sadr, Mabahith al-dalil al-Lafzi, Vol. 2, p. 37 and handwritings of his lectures by Ayatullah sayyed Kazim Ha'iri, pp. 419 & 420.

A Tale of Occidental Estrangement

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Abstract

A Tale of Occidental Estrangement is one of Suhrawardi's treatises, which represents his thoughts and ideas of the Philosophy of ishrâq. He wrote this tale, after he studied Avicenna's Hayy ibn Yaqdhân and realized that it did not contain the final stage as he described as 'the great calamity'. This is one of the most symbolic treatises of Suhrawardi. This article is about to accompany us to Suhrawardi's thoughts about human soul, speculative faculty, *sensus communis*, through his A Tale of Occidental Estrangement.

The precious history of Iranian Islamic culture reveals a truth that the method of illuminative thinking was never absent from philosophical thoughts and ideas of Iranian pious and thinkers. Cultural uniqueness, natural and social circumstances in this region shaped some sort of illuminative methods of thinking in the Iranian hearts in a way that mysticism and illumination became their dynamic essence throughout centuries and ages. So that in revealing the truth, our philosophers spoke about revelation as well as philosophical methods and rational demonstrative argumentations. They believed that if mysticism comes to help demonstrative argumentation, it would be immune from inaccuracy. Thus, in all of their opinions, from the most Aristotelian to the most mystic and illuminative, the role of Plato is observable. Our most argumentative philosophy has a scheme of revelation and illumination and at the same time, the scent of Mysticism is tangible.¹

Thus Shaykh Shahâbuddin Suhrawardi, the martyr of freethinking, with all his zealously towards philosophy and rationality, he did not disregard revelation and intuition. In order to reveal the truth, at the same time, he took advantage of both conceptual knowledge and mystical experience. He believed that argumentative philosophy is an opening for intuitive philosophy. The seeker of illumination and intuition must first master argumentative philosophy and surpass that phase and then carry out intuitive philosophy.²

Suhrawardi is one of few theorists (concerning his short lifetime and brief opportunity) who had the most inspiration in every thinker's intellectual life after him. He, as a valuable link, had blended ancient Iranian thoughts into Islamic age. He had connected between argumentative thinking and mystic intuition. In the meantime, he had revived ancient Persian philosophy, believing it had come to Sufis like Dhul-Nûn al-Misri and Sahl al-Tustari, and ancient Greek philosophy that has been received by Sufis like Bâyezid al-Bastâmi, Mansûr al-Hallâj and Abol-Hasan Kharqâni and under the light of the Holy Koran he had given meaning and value to Khosrawâni philosophy.³

One point worth considering is that thoughts of Suhrawardi are a conclusion of three magnificent Islamic schools of thoughts:

-Rational method of Peripatetic

-Mystical intuitive method of Neo-Platonic especially from al-Ghazâli

-Divine thought of ancient Persian philosophy.

When Suhrawardi proposed his ideas, he set up a new horizon in the history of Iranian thoughts. Moreover, his thoughts were in harmony with Islam, allowing Moslem scholars to accept them later on. However, in his time, he was accused of impiety and atheism.

Pity, this great man grew and lived in an age where there was no sign of The Samanids intellectualism and freethinking. Instead, it was custom in Islamic region to hate and fight scholars and philosophers. Obviously, this had made an irretrievably major damage to the structure of rational and conceptual knowledge.

One of the exasperating results of such behaviour was to insult and to confine Shahâbuddin Suhrawardi in a castle in Aleppo (Halab). It has been reported that this 'boundless' prisoner had not drunk nor eaten and kept fasting until he became united with his Beloved One and love shall remain and the legitimacy of love, which is not other than the principle of freedom, once again been proven.⁴

Some believe he was killed because some people were envious of his status next to King al-Zahîr. Others said that Shaykh had been murdered for religious causes and probably for political reasons as well. Seemingly, with a proposition of a utopian idea he wanted to encourage King al-Zahîr to implant a just government in Halab in which, the structure of wealth is not so important.⁵

This thinker had named his school 'illumination' (ishrâq). Ishrâq (Though it means a place, in which light bursts) it must not be translated into Geographical horizons. In Shaykh's perspective, it observed through three landscapes:

1) It means intellect or divine philosophy, which is based on illumination. Therefore, in the world of rational concepts, ishrâq means the first appearance of existence, as well as in the sensible world it means light, dawn, and the light of morning.

2) Philosophy that came from illuminative orient leads to direct presence that is the orient itself, since it is an illuminative knowledge. This knowledge differs from formal and acquired knowledge of Peripatetic. Since the subject of knowledge in presence is not a logic matter but a continuously intuitive matter.

Therefore, the illuminative philosophy is a philosophy based on internal intuition, mystical and practical knowledge as well as ascending journey of the soul. Based on this philosophy, an ascender will become more prepared to accept light as much as he is released from the material world. The peak of existence hierarchy is the light of the light (nûrul-anwâr), because it produces the luminosity of khurneh, which ancient Persians believe causes the priority of any thing it has.

3) Philosophy of ishrâq has been stated for Persian divine philosophy, not only because it was related to Persia, but also because their knowledge is illuminative and having come from intuition and has not been mediated by any sort of acquired knowledge.⁶

Suhrawardi, even if he is legitimately the founder of ishrâq philosophy, this philosophy is apparent in Avicenna's mystical symbols in a clear captured way and not only as an elementary articulation. This is most likely the reason Suhrawardi thought of himself indebted to Avicenna. In the meantime, he bravely

criticized Avicenna for not acquiring the real fountain of illumination, the ancient mysticism, lacking the mystical experience and being careless towards 'the great calamity' (thâmmah al-Kubrâ).

The true basics of Suhrawardi's ishrâq philosophy are clearly evident in A tale of occidental estrangement.

This tale, in one hand, combined peripatetic philosophy of Avicenna with spiritual experience based on mysticism and in another, mixed ancient Persian with ancient Greek philosophy (conceptual knowledge with spiritual experience), so that the fallen occidental estranged after breaking the definition and essence (mâhiyyah) moves to the oriental state. This is the most mysterious tale of Suhrawardi, which is only comprehended when interpreted by verses from the Holy Koran. This tale's extra ambiguity made it appear like an explanation of a vision or a certain reality.

Suhrawardi covered A tale of Occidental Estrangement and the rest of his works with metaphors, to conceal them from the sight of incompetents and fanatic scholars of that period. A Tale of Occidental Estrangement is a metaphor and an apparent form of reality of the spiritual world, which cannot be touched by the exoteric sensors. Only when exoteric sensors transform into esoteric and spiritual sensors, it will be possible to reveal its secret truth. He had said once:

When the inner eye is opened, the outer eye shall be closed. Then, it will be able to continuously observe the secrets of the spiritual world, reach celestial stage, wake the esoteric body, and to substitute the imaginative world with ideal world and concisely, to be angels' journey-mate.⁷

In his introduction to A Tale of Occidental Estrangement, Suhrawardi wrote:

When I saw the tale of Hayy ibn Yaqdhân, I was struck by the fact that, although it contained marvels of spiritual words and profound allusions, it was devoid of intimations to indicate the greatest stage, which is the 'great calamity' that is stored away in divine books, deposited in the philosophers' symbols and hidden in the tale of Salâmân and Absâl put together by the author of Hayy ibn Yaqdhân, that is, the mystery upon which the stages of adherents to Sufism and the apocalypitics are based. It was alluded to in Hayy ibn Yaqdhân only at the end of the book, where it is said: "Sometimes certain solitaries among men emigrated toward Him".⁸

Therefore I desired to mention some of these things in the form of a tale for some of our dear brethren, and I have called it A Tale of Occidental Estrangement. And in God do I put my trust for what I wish".⁹

This philosopher's cause for compiling this mysterious tale was (as he described) to explain the greatest stage, which is the great calamity, the psychological experience that an ascender faces in his journey. Divine books and philosophers heritage indicated this stage, but Avicenna in his tale Hayy ibn Yaqdhân had not mentioned it, except at the end.

Thus, Shaykh al-Ishrâq accepted the call of Avicenna for an inner ascending journey when he said:

If thou wish to come with me, then do come.¹⁰

And expecting to step behind the elder one, he set off the tale from which Hayy ibn Yaqdhân ends. In the brief introduction, mentioning the tale of Hayy ibn Yaqdhân and Salâmân and Absâl, indicates that Suhrawardi had considered Avicenna's late days intentions towards illuminative philosophy.

The event that Suhrawardi intended to narrate in his tale is an experience of an ascender in the phenomenon world of spirit, the world beyond materialistic world. The narrator, who is the ascender of the tale himself said:

When I travelled with my brother Âsim from the region of Transoxiana to the lands of the Occident in order to hunt down a flock of birds on the shore of the Green Sea. We suddenly fell into a town whose inhabitants were wicked, that is the town of Kairouân. When the people perceived that we had come amongst them unexpectedly, we being sons of the elder known as al-Hâdi ibn al-Khayr al-Yamâni, they surrounded us and took us bound in shackles and fetters of irons and imprisoned us at the bottom of an infinitely deep pit. Above the unused well, which was built for our presence, was a lofty palace on which were numerous towers.¹¹

The narrator is a symbol of 'speculative soul' or human soul that manifested into an ascender. Literally, Âsim means 'prohibitor of sins'. In this tale, it is like a speculative intellect that understands universal concepts, a part of 'speculative faculty' (quwwah 'âqilah). In the beginning, it is associated with the body and conquered by carnal faculties, but with passing stages of perfection, it will be able to reach the level of the beneficial intellect ('aqlul-mustafâd).

Transoxiana: an oriental part of the Moslem world. Like 'oriental' itself, it is a symbol of the sublime world and the world of angels, the place of intellects and the most intimate angels, with controller (mudabbira) and victorial lights (anwâr al-qahira), that is located beyond the Great Sphere. Suhrawardi himself also called it as 'nowhereland'.

Flock of birds on the shore of the Green Sea is one of the symbols for the realm of sensibles (mahsusât) and acquired knowledge (ilm al-husûli).

Land of the occident, where the sun sets down, can be understood as a symbol of Kairouân, the dark realm of matter (hayulâ).

Town can either mean the realm of matter or the existence of a man called 'microcosm' since anything had been created from whether the simplicity or the complexity of Man and he

had been combined from thick material body and subtle spiritual soul",¹²

Kairouân is in Tunisia, the occidental part of the Moslem world. It symbolizes occident and the dark realm of matter. The description of "a town whose inhabitants were wicked, that is the town of Kairouân" is taken out from the noble verse of the Holy Koran;

Among men and women and children who are crying: Our Lord! Bring us forth from out this town of which the people are wicked!¹³

This town whose inhabitants were wicked is the realm of matter and the world of opposition.

The ascender and his brother are sons of the elder known as al-Hâdi ibn al-Khayr al-Yamâni from Yemen. In Yemen, which means right side, there is a valley in which God spoke with Moses (p.b.u.h). Yemen is a representation of the orient and the sublime world,

traditionally engaged with the wisdom of Prophet Solomon and ancient philosophers while the left side usually connected to the matter and darkness.¹⁴

"They took the ascender and his brother bound in shackles and fetters," means the materialistic interests and engagements or the shackles and the fetters of time and space. The infinitely deep pit is the pit of matter and darkness of the body.

Lofty palace is the skies of the realms beyond the realm of matter.

Therefore, the human soul represented an ascender along with his brother the 'speculative intellect', coming from the realm of perceivables to achieve the acquired knowledge; fell down onto the land of Occident that is the realm of matter. There, the inhabitant of the lands of Occident perceive his identity as sons of the elder named al-Hâdi ibn al-Khayr al-Yamâni coming from Yemen, they put him into shackles of materialistic interests and imprisoned him at the bottom of a pit, that is the dark realm of the body.

Thus, the imprisoned ascender continues his tale:

Then we were told, "You are permitted to ascend to the palace by yourself when it is evening, but by morning you must sink back down to the bottom of the pit. At the bottom of the pit was layer upon layer of darkness. When we put our hands forward, we could scarcely see them. However, at night we ascended to the palace and looked out over the void by peeking through a small window. Sometimes doves would come to us from the bedecked thrones of the Yemen to tell us of the condition of the beloved abode. Sometimes Yemenite lightning-flashes would visit us, winking from the eastern, right side, and inform us of the highways of Najd; and the Arak-scented breezes made us more and more ecstatic, so we pined and yearned for our homeland.¹⁵

At nights, the two estranged were allowed to leave the dark pit of the body and ascend the roof of their prison only when they have disengaged from their sensors. It means soul or 'speculative faculty', which is imprisoned in the dark realm of the body is able to have opportunity to walk in the sublime world through a vision and in the state between awareness and sleepiness when sensors do not function and their dominion over the existence weakens. Walk into the realm of intelligibles, to observe the forms of ideals and the forms of imaginatives, which are empty of matter but contain all of matter's purposes. When this condition ends, he must descend to the lower world that is the world of sensible recognition. In the nights, the palace to which the free of interest ascender can go is the world Suhrawardi called, 'nowhere land'. That is the space merely for the mind and (after a physical asceticism) it becomes accessible when the body strength fades in the state between awareness and sleepiness. In other words, it is accessible by breaking away from geographical horizons of the material world. This world to some extent may adjust with of sub-conscious part of the soul in Jungian psychology.

In most of his works, like in Tablets of Imâd al-Dîn, Shaykh recalled sleep as one of the ways to grasp the metaphysical world.

The aspiration of all is that the spiritual substances can be pictured in some things, and our souls may join them sometimes as when in the state of sleepiness, and illustrate some forms of existence and realize the unseen (ghaib), because the duties of sensors reduce. If there were not any disturbance from the faculty of imagination, it would be simple to understand the unseen. But even in the state of sleepiness itself it still occupies. And if its dominion weakens, the soul will illustrate unseen things.¹⁶

Urafâ (Mystical Scholars) certify the existence of such world, which after breaking away from carnal interests soul can enter it. Maulana Jalâluddîn al-Rûmi called it 'incomparable desert'.

In mornings, the ascender must sink down to the pit, which layer upon layer of darkness was there. When they put forward their hands, they could barely see them. This pit symbolizes the dark realm of matter, land of Occident. Because the realm of matter is in its lowest level of existence considered to the arc of descent and it is the most isolated from the 'light of the light' and the prime emanation, its darkness was layer upon layer, and it is the darkest part of existence.¹⁷

Those two ascenders were succeeded to ascend up to the realm of speculatives, after an abstraction from the values of the material world. However, in the mornings, they were urged to sink down to the bottom of the dark pit of matter. On those nights, sometimes, Yemenite lightning-flashes from the sublime world, which is their origin, would illumine them. These flashes, though they passed rapidly, caused them to recognize themselves, remember their homeland and realise that they are captive in the dark prison of the realm of matter. Then, they could feel estranged and consequently, desire to leave the pit bottom of dark world would emerge and they would develop anxiousness to return to the homeland of Oriental light.

To accept the fact that the soul is originally from the sublime world and imprisoned in the body is the first stride to self-recognition. The imprisoned soul will then know his world, realise his true sublime origin and feel estranged in this world. The estrangement is the feeling of all 'urafâ and philosophers who have reached the level of self-recognition. The feeling of estrangement certainly needs a previous presence in another realm that is the true homeland of soul from which he had been exiled.¹⁸ As Suhrawardi said:

The purpose of abstraction is the pace towards returning to the true homeland and linking to the sublime world. What the Holy Prophet has said: "to love the homeland is distinguished as faith" and what God has said in a noble verse of the Holy Koran: "But ah! Thou soul at peace! Return unto thy Lord, content in His good pleasure!" are indicating to this point. Because returning needs a previous presence and can not be said: "Return to Egypt!" to someone has never before seen Egypt.¹⁹

Realising the philosophy of illumination is based on human self-recognition. The most superlative of Suhrawardi's treatises are the parts concerned on the subject of the soul. Shaykh's discourses on the elements and natures reminded him of peripatetic philosophers' opinion. Nevertheless, Shaykh's idea of the soul and the realm of the soul are wholly different with Moslem and Greek peripatetics philosophers. They consider the realm of the soul as a part of physic, while Suhrawardi drew it near divine knowledge and mysticism. Because Suhrawardi's knowledge of the soul is an outcome of esoteric mystical ascent, an opening of a precious horizon and realising the 'selfness' of one's self, that is the inner 'I' and believing of the realm of ideas.

In A Tale of Occidental Estrangement, after realising 'self' and 'the origin', the desire to unite with the origin emerges in the ascender, as he recited:

"When we saw the hoopoe enters through a small window and bring us greetings on a moonlight night. In his beak was a letter sent from the right side valley.

He said to us, 'I have brought your deliverance. I have come to you from Sheba with assured news, and it is explained in this letter from your father.'

We read the letter, which said: 'From al-Hâdi your father, and it is in the name of God the Compassionate The Merciful. We have [tried to] make you yearn [for us], but you have not longed. We have summoned you, but you have not set forth. We have shown you the way, but you have not understood.' And he indicated me in the letter, saying, 'If you desire to be delivered along with your brother, do not put off travelling. Cling to our rope. When you come to the Valley of Ants, shake your skirt and say, 'Praise be to God who has given me life after causing me to die!' and 'Unto Him shall be the resurrection.' Then kill your woman, for she shall be one of those who remain behind. Go wherever you are commanded and embark on the ship and say, 'In the name of God while it moves forward.²⁰

'Hoopoe' is a sharp-eyed bird, which from high sky indicates water deep down in the earth. It was he who brought a message to Solomon from Sheba and its queen. In A Tale of Occidental Estrangement, Hoopoe is the messenger of revelation or the revelation itself, which came from Sheba (the sublime world) and once speculative soul achieved self-knowledge it brought the message of freedom from the Father to imprisoned estranged couple in a moonlight night. In the first letter, father –angel or the transcendental 'I'- complained about the sons, that they desired to make a journey from the earth to the sublime world. Afterwards, he encouraged them to a dangerous journey and said:

if you wanted the deliverance from darkness of the Occidental estrangement (the realm of matter) move out at once towards the Orient which is not the Orient of this material world. But, this journey will not be possible without clinging to our rope (guidance).

In the beginning, Father introduced the sons the obstacles and disasters of the journey (crossing through the macrocosm and microcosm) and explained to them how to eliminate them.

Father's first lesson was

When you come to the Valley of Ants, shake your skirt.²¹

One of the biggest obstacles for the 'speculative faculty' to ascend to its origin and the main cause for its suspension to the microcosm (human life) is the carnal faculties. Therefore, father guided the sons that when they reach the valley of Ants which symbolizes the 'carnal soul's faculties', they have to get rid of it and they have to keep away from the indecent qualities such as ant's gluttony and then he advised

Then kill your woman, for she shall be one of those who remain behind.²²

Woman in this tale represents 'corporal strength' or 'carnal soul's faculties' that causes 'speculative faculty' to incline towards carnal lust and anger. Thus, the ascender must destroy it and then get on the ship and in the name of God start his spiritual journey back.

The ascender continued:

We embarked on the ship and we wanted to go up onto Mount Sinai in order to visit our father's hermitage. Then the waves came between me and my son, and he became one of those who are drowned. I realized that the prediction of my people's punishment would be fulfilled in the morning. Is

not the morning near? I also realized that the city, which committed filthy crimes, would be turned upside down and the stones of baked clay would be rained down on it.

When we reached a place where waves clashed together and the waters rolled over themselves, I took my wet-nurse and threw her into the sea.

Since we were travelling in a vessel composed of planks and nails, we ripped open the ship out of fear of a king behind us who took every ship by force.²³

There are three main parts of this tale:

The imprisonment and the deliverance,

Sailing on the ship of Noah, which is the returning journey,

Reaching the Sinai of 'irfân (Mysticism),

This striking tale is a model of a trinity exists in a tale's concept, Unity of the narrator, events and the hero.²⁴

'Speculative faculty' once achieved self-knowledge will continue its journey to reach the Mount of Sinai and father's hermitage. The line of ascent is human life, inclusive being (kaun al-jâmi') or the microcosm. Mount of Sinai which the ascender desire to reach is a mountain in the Sinai of 'irfân in the threshold of the sublime world in the direction of the empyrean or 'the eighth climate'. This climate cannot be found in the geographical atlases. This realm is the world between the Celestial Kingdom and the realm of observables (shahâda). It has been named: the realm of ideals, the realm of imaginatives, the realm of ideals and imaginatives, the realm of pendent forms, corps of astral, the medium realm between intelligibles and sensibles and finally, the eighth climate.

This realm has been mentioned in the heritage and texts of Zoroaster, works of Suhrawardi, Muhyiddîn ibn al-'Arabi, Dawûd al-Qaisari, Abdulkarîm al-Jîli, Shamsuddîn Mohammad al-Lahîji and Sadruddîn al-Shîrâzi.

View of Peripatetic scholars divides the existence into two parts, abstract and material. They do not believe in the realm of ideals.

Since the form, entity and quantity will never occur without the matter. Avicenna insisted in his works the impossibility of the separation from the matter."²⁵

Shaykh al-'Ishrâq who is the true founder of the realm of ideals confirmed its existence through numerous evidences such as the 'possibility of direction' (imkân al-ishrâf).

The illuminationists believed the existence of a medium realm between the realm of matter and the realm of abstracts is a necessity, whether in the 'descending arc' (qaus al-nuzûl) where it demonstrates 'eternal forms', or in the 'ascending arc' (qaus al-'urûj) where it embodies the realm of emblematic forms of acquiring afterlife subtle substance. This specific realm, in which the soul undergoes the afterlife realm, is not the world of Platonic ideas (muthul al-Aflâtûni); instead, it is the realm of forms and suspended ideals (muthul al-mu'allaqa). These forms are not eternal in their natural forms. They have suspending manifestations like objects reflecting in the mirror. This is the realm where all the reserves and diversity of the sensible world are, but there, they all have their subtle condition. This is the realm where the idol city of Corps Astral and Jabersa are.²⁶

The imaginative faculty guides the speculative faculty to religion and life. It is always within the soul and it is a spiritual faculty that cannot be observed with external eye and does not disappear when body dies out. The speculative faculty comprehends the ideal forms through the imaginative faculty. The father's hermitage, the Mount of Sinai and Suhrawardi's 'nowhere land' in this tale is the realm of ideals, in which soul transforms sensible phenomenon with psychic phenomenon and unconsciously reveal its reality.

Father represents an angel or an elder one appears in ascender's horizons of sight and with his tuitions he awakens the soul of the fallen estranged and encourages him to return to his origin. The explaining of father is the esoteric unseen world of existence behind the world of sensibles. They name him with various names; Gabriel, the red intellect, the absent elder one, the perfect nature in Hermetic tradition, heavenly twin in Suhrawardi's thoughts, the elder one in the 'irfân tradition, heavenly spouse in the school of Time, De'na in the belief of Zoroaster, Hayy ibn Yaqdhân or the 'alive awake' of Avicenna and the transcendental 'I' in Psychology.

This angel is the one who learned philosophy and tried the mystical experiences, which is the asceticism (riyâdha) and struggling (mojâhada).

The hero, after performing asceticism embarked on the ship to depart to the Mount of Sinai beyond the mountains of soul and horizons, in order to visit his father, his heavenly twin. In the meantime, his son will be drowned and he knows that the morning is near and the city, which committed filthy crimes, would be turned upside down. In this tale, the story of the son, which is conformed to the son of Noah, represents the carnal soul that its drowning is an opening for entering the Mount Sinai of 'irfân, and –in the Hermetic tradition- visiting the father. Thus, its destruction stated as 'the nearness of the morning'.

As appeared in the Arabic version of A Tale of Occidental Estrangement, the condition of the ascender in every level, matched with one of the prophets. In the beginning, he is in the same level with Noah and alike him he is separated from his son. Since this separation, he knew that the morning of victory is near. The town whose inhabitants were wicked (the realm of matter) under the orbit of the moon (the dark reality of material Man) that exists through combining elements will turn upside down, in which 'vegetal and carnal faculty' (like the people of Noah) are doing evil. Continuing his seafaring in Noah's ark on the ground of the world of ideals, the ascender throws and drowns his carnal wet-nurse in the middle of where waves clashed together and the waters rolled over themselves.

"Travelling in a vessel composed of planks and nails," 27 means organs and natures that the matter combined from, he had no choice but to rip it out "of fear of a king behind us who took every ship by force"28 probably it means the authority of the king of fate and death that ruins the material corpse.

The Hero, speculative faculty or the transcendental 'I' of Suhrawardi resumes his tale:

Then our laden ark took us to the mount of Gog and Magog, there were with me djinn who worked for me, and I had command over a fountain of molten brass. I said to the djinn, "Blow into it until it becomes like fire." Then I made a dam so that I was separated from them.29

Gog and Magog represent deceitful thoughts and fantasies that is one faculty of the carnal world and bother Man with the realm of matter and darkness so that he overlooks ascending to the realm of truth and returning to the origin. However, what to worry if the ascender confronts the mount of Gog and

Magog? Since he has djinn under his command to alter brass into fire and (alike Alexander) builds a dam between himself, Gog, and Magog.

At this point, when the faculties of the carnal soul work under the authority of the speculative faculty, they become djinn and with their assistance, the speculative faculty alters the brass (speculative knowledge and sapience) into pure fire (true knowledge and sapience) clean from grime of the carnal world.

Worthy of note, due to the motion, heat and similarity to the nature of the life, Suhrawardi paid special attention towards fire in the world of nature. Amongst the elements, fire is the most akin towards the sources of light. He believed that the light is the thing causes the priority of fire. Ancient Persian philosophers considered fire as the spell of Ordibehesht and it is an emanating powerful light.³⁰

Suhrawardi reckoned fire as the brother of the speculative faculty. It is because fire alike the speculative faculty is bright, seeker of the higher level and always illuminating other things and matters. Another similarity between the essence of fire and the speculative faculty is supremacy and authority over others and they both turn other things into themselves. ³¹ On the other hand, the intellect first emanates and then attaches to other things.

Finally,

The promise of my Lord is true, and on the road I saw the skulls of 'Âd and Thamûd empty on their thrones.³²

The promise of Lord comes true and in this part of his esoteric journey, the speculative faculty eliminated a number of the obstacles made by the carnal soul and its faculties and moved into the rest of the obstacles:

I took two dependents along with the spheres and put them into a spherical vial I had made and on which were lines. Then, I cut off the rivers from the ember of the sky, and when the water was cut off from the mill, the building fell to pieces, disappeared unto thin air and became ether.³³

In this tale, 'the two dependent along with the spheres' are the symbols of 'the soul prone to evil' (al-nafs al-ammâra) and 'the soul which accused itself' (al-nafs al-lawwâma) along with their motivations and appetites. ³⁴ They may also be attributed to the sensitive faculty (hiss), the retentive imagination (khayâl) and the estimative faculty (wahn) through which it recognizes the particulars. In the ascending journey, they abandon the soul because of ignorance of the speculative faculty towards them.

The vial is the brain, the mind of the human spirit (rûh-i nafsâni) and produces motions and senses. The rivers, which the ascender cut off from the ember of the sky, symbolise the spiritual soul and the motive faculty, one faculty of the carnal soul. Shall be remembered that the carnal soul has two branches, one faces the brain and called 'spiritual soul', it produces the motion and sense and the other goes to liver and produces the 'vegetal faculty' (al-quwwa al-nabâtiya) and it is called the 'natural soul'. The ascender cuts off these rivers from its original source in the brain. Caused by that stop, the mill of material substance made from the four elements of fire, air, water and earth will soon be wrecked.

The ascender knows that as long as the faculties of carnal soul are in power, the cage of corpse will be intact and he himself will still be in prison. He messes their balance in order to ascend to the realm of

spirituals and intellectuals. Thus, the building fell to pieces and disappeared unto thin air (gauhar). Gauhar is the fifth element or the ether from which the spheres came. 35 In this order, the soul of spheres joins the particles of sphere. Interesting, that spheres are away from any sort of generation and corruption and made out of the fifth element or ether (athîr), which is beyond the four element of nature. They move like a living thing and they live. The relation between the souls of spheres and the particles of sphere is like the relation between human soul and human body. In both cases, motion occurs by the will of soul, beside the difference that in the case of spheres, 'souls' have a celestial status.

After the soul of spheres joins the particles of sphere, the narrator says:

And I cast the sphere of spheres onto the heavens until the sun and moon and stars were crushed, then I was rescued from fourteen coffins and ten graves.³⁶

Islamic astronomers believe that Earth stands in the centre of the universe. While around it, several spheres revolve. These nine spheres from top to the bottom are:

The Great Sphere (sphere of the sphere),
The Sphere of Fixed Stars,
The Sphere of Saturn,
The Sphere of Jupiter,
The Sphere of Mars,
The Sphere of the Sun,
The Sphere of Venus,
The Sphere of Mercury,
The Sphere of the Moon,

The most distant is the Sphere of Spheres. Some part of universe beneath the sphere of the Moon is called 'sub-lunar realm' or the realm of generation and corruption (âlam-i kaun wa fasad).

The Sun signifies the 'intellectual faculty', the Moon stands for the speculative faculty. The relation between speculative faculty and the intellectual faculty is the same relation between the Sun and the Moon. The speculative faculty as it goes through the throat takes the meaning of its word from the intellect and describes them with twenty-eight alphabetical letters. As the Moon, while it is going through twenty eight stages, takes its luminosity from the Sun. the twenty-eight stages stand for twenty-eight alphabetical letters.³⁷

The meaning of fourteen coffins in this tale is the fourteen faculties of 'the vegetal soul' that have been mentioned in 'the realm of soul', a part of illuminative philosophy. They are four humours (hot, cold, dry, wet) and ten faculties of attractive, retentive, digestive, expulsive, nutritive, generative, formative, augmentative, irascible (ghadhab) and concupiscible (shahwat).

Ten graves are five external senses and five internal senses of 'the perceptive faculty'. With these five external senses, Man connects to the sensibles and material world and with five internal senses, he links to the esoteric and immaterial sensibles and recognises particular concepts. The five external senses are sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. The five internal senses are sensus communis (hiss al-mushtarak), formative (musawwara), imaginative (mutakhayyala), estimative (mutawahhima) and the recaller (hâfidha). Avicenna believed that the faculties of soul divided into three: vegetal soul, carnal soul and human soul.

In the treatise of Partawnâma, after Suhrawardi clarified the vegetal and carnal faculties from the faculties of irascible and concupiscible, as well as the external and the internal senses, he continued:

The bearer of all these faculties is the carnal soul. This soul is a hot subtle substance (jism) and produced by the subtleness of the humours of the body. As from its thickness the organs came. This spirit came out from the inner left part of stomach, and they call it carnal soul. While the horn that goes to the brain and than stabilized by the chill of the brain, they call it spiritual soul. This horn produces motion and sense. The other horn that goes to liver produces vegetal faculties, such as nutritive and so forth and they call it natural soul. If this soul could not find a way to somebody's organ, both of the soul and the organ will die. Moreover, if they strangle an organ it will decay, caused by the soul not succeeded to find a way to infiltrate. The definition of speculative soul is an essence that is not 'substance' and not in 'substance'. But, in contrary, it manages the substance and recognizes the intelligibles.³⁸

In this stage, the ascender conquers the faculties of vegetal soul and those of carnal soul, external and internal senses, the faculties of irascible and concupiscible, which prevents the forms of intelligibles to emanate and to illuminate the speculative faculty. Then, he reaches the stage of discovering the path of God that is the Straight Path, and says:

Then I encountered the path of God and I realized that this my right way. And I took my sister and overwhelmed her with a cover of a punishment from God, and she spent the night in a portion of night darkly, and she had a fever and a nightmare that resulted in a violent headache.³⁹

Sister resembles the active intellect, which is the sister of speculative faculty. The speculative faculty or human soul has two potencies; one is the conceptive intellect and in this tale called as 'Âsim (guide) the companion to the ascender, the other is the active intellect. When the faculties of irascible and concupiscible ruled the active intellect it will perform evil things, when the speculative faculty leads and overcomes the faculties of irascible and concupiscible, it will produce moral acts. Here is when the speculative faculty the very hero and narrator of the tale press this intellect in order to make it obey and follow him.

In the illuminative philosophy, subduing and struggling against the faculties of vegetal and carnal soul will not be possible without the lantern of intellect. Thus, an illuminationist philosopher has to have both of the conceptual knowledge and mystical experiences altogether and his inner subduing must not vacant from philosophical contemplation and argumentation. Regarding this matter, the 'estranged wanderer' after conquering the active intellect sees a lantern 'a lantern that reflects a light, which the household illumined because of it'.⁴⁰

This is the lantern of beneficial intellect, which Avicenna called speculative perfection (kamâl al-nâtîqa). This faculty is like a lantern with which, the speculative faculty recognises the intelligibles. In this stage, the speculative soul of the ascender grasps the lantern of intellect and through a deliverance from the faculties of soul, approaches the intelligibles, even though he is still in the realm of matter. He, himself, portrays as follows:

I put the lantern in the mouth of a dragon (Draco) that dwelt in the tower [sign of Zodiac] of the water-wheel (Aquarius) beneath which was the Sea of Clysmâ (Red Sea) and above which were the stars the origin if whose rays was known only to the Creator and those who are well grounded in the knowledge. I saw that lion (Leo) and ox (Taurus) had disappeared and that the bow (Sagittarius) and crab (Cancer)

were folded up in the revolution of the spheres. The scales remained balanced (Libra) when the Yemenite Star rose.⁴¹

The ascender put the scale in a dragon's mouth. This dragon is the 'realm of generation and corruption' and the intellect connected to it, because it manages this realm.

The disappearance of Leo and Taurus and the Sagittarius and Cancer's folding up is the deliverance of the speculative faculty from the realm of hypocrisy and contrary. 'The scales remained balanced' symbolises the realm vacant of any sort of hypocrisy and contrary of the realm of matter. In this stage, the ascender voids from external and internal senses, the faculties, continues his journey beyond the celestial levels. There, the Yemenite Star, the symbol of the realm of metaphysics lights him up and gives him good tidings. However, the journey is not yet finished.

With us were sheep which we left in the wilderness. They were destroyed by the earthquakes, and a raging fire fell among them. When the distance had been traversed and the road trod, and the oven poured forth water in the form of cones, I saw the sublime bodies. I joined them and heard their tunes and modes, which I learned to sing, but sound grated on my ears as though it were chain being dragged across granite. My limbs were almost torn to pieces and my joints were almost pulled apart from the pleasure I experienced.⁴²

Under the light of Yemenite Star, the ascender left the sheep, symbol of the remains of the dark carnal, material, microcosmic aspect, and reached the rank of the angels. Then, The Resurrection begins. Water bursts in the form of cones. This is a symbol of the ascending process and the hastening of pluralities to the unity.

Moving from the stage of plurality and reaching the level of unity is that in any perfection and ascending process, the higher levels always cover the lower levels. Now, if a 'from plurality to the unity and simplicity' movement occurs in a thing, all of its perfection can finally be observed in a simple point.⁴³

At this point, the voice of music caresses the heart of the ascender and the effects are so deep that almost tear his limbs and pull his joints apart. Thus, he narrated:

Then I left the caves and caverns and went down from the chambers, headed for the spring of life. I saw the large rock on the top of a great mountain-like hill. I asked the fish that were gathered in the spring of life and were taking pleasure and delight in the shade of the great towering mountain what the promontory was and what the great rock was. One fish took its way in the sea, tunneling. It said, "That is what we sought after, and this mountain is Mount of Sinai. The rock is your father's hermitage.

"Who are these fish?" I asked.

It answered, "Like you: you are the sons of one father. They have had an experience like yours, so they are your brothers.

After overcoming the obstacles of the microcosm and the macrocosm, near the entrance of the realm of abstract intellects, where his father's hermitage was, the ascender found the spring of life. This spring represents the pre-eternal wisdom (philosophia perennis, hikmat azali). If someone drinks from it, he will gain the eternal life. There, he saw fish that gathered around the spring. They are the riders of the path. They had freed themselves from the darkness of the occidental realm of matter, acquired the true

knowledge, and ascended to the realm of light. Now, they presented the hermitage of father to the estranged ones from 'the realm of occidental estrangement'.⁴⁴

He climbs the peak of mystic Mount Sinai, the entrance of the sublime world and reaches father's hermitage. Thus, after a self-recognition, through an endless effort and numerous stages, this originally sublime ascender ends the journey from the city of Kairouân whose inhabitants were wicked to the Mount of Sinai.

The ascender climbs the peak of mystic Mount Sinai. He then saw a rock that is his father's hermitage. There, he saw his father:

An old man from the brilliance of his light, the heavens and the earth were nearly split open.⁴⁵

Father's hermitage where the meeting took place is the realm of ideals or the medium realm between the realms of sensibles and intelligibles, which we have mentioned earlier. The same base where the sublime 'I' (angel) meets the estranged fallen 'I'.

Father is the divine twin (the angel), the tenth intellect, (the perfect nature) of the ascender that in the realm of ideals appears as an old man who embraces him. In this esoteric meeting, the ascender complains about the pains of the estrangement and separation and falling into the well of Kairouân. The old man told him:

It is well. You have escaped. Yet, you must return to the Occidental imprisonment, for you have not removed your bonds completely.⁴⁶

Although he removed the obstacles of ascending to the sublime world, as his father said, it is impossible for the estranged captive to be completely free, as for he not remove his bonds completely. He heard his father's prophesy:

It is necessary for you to return now, but I will give you glad tidings of two things: first, when you return to prison, you will be able to come to us and ascend to our paradise easily whenever you wish; secondly, in the end you will be delivered to our presence by freeing the Occidental lands absolutely and completely.⁴⁷

Then the estranged of the realm of Occidental estrangement realises that beyond the region of light, his father's place, there are other regions as well; each one is more brilliant than the other, until

the king who is the great progenitor without father or grandfather. We are all his servants. We take our light from him and are modelled on him. His is the greatest splendour, the highest glory and the most forceful light. He is above, the light of the light, above light ever and eternally. It is he who manifested to everything, and everything perishes except his face.⁴⁸

As we mentioned earlier, A Tale of Occidental Estrangement, projects the main idea of all Suhrawardi's symbolic tales. This tale displays the stages of ascending journey of Man and the perfection of his existential grades in order to reach the truth, based on the principles of the Illuminative philosophy.

Notes:

- 1-Dâdbeh, Dr. Ali Asghar, Fakhr al-Râzi, Tarh e No, 1374, p. 167.
- 2-Suhrawardi, The Martyr Shaykh Shahâbuddin Yahya, Hikmat al-Ischrâq, Translation and explanatory by Dr. Sayyid Ja'far Sajjadi, University of Tehran Publication, 6th edition, 1377, p. 41 (preface).
- 3-Zarrinkub, Dr. Abdol-Hosseini, The Appendix to Seeking Persian Tasawwuf , Amir Kabir, 1369, p. 295.
- 4-Fakhr al-Râzi, p. 2.
- 5-The Appendix to Seeking Persian Tasawwuf, p. 297.
- 6-to know more refer to: Corbin, Henry, The History of Islamic Philosophy, Dr. Asadollah Mobsheri, Amir Kabir, 1361,p. 276.
- 7-Pour Namdârian, Dr. Taqi, The Symbolic Tales of Persian Literature, Elmi Farhangi Publication, 1364, p. 342.
- 8-All the translation of the original Suhrawardi's tale is liberately quoted from The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treaties, W.M Thackston, Jr., Mazda Publishers, 1999.
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- 10-Ibnu Tufail, The Alive Awake, Badiuzzamân Forouzanfar, Ketab translating and publishing agency, 1360, p. 179.
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- 12-Symbol and Symbolic Tales, p. 287.
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- 18-Ibid, p. 236.
- 19-Complete Works of Shaykh e Ischrâq, p. 70,52.
- 20-The Alive Awake, p. 180.

21-Ibid, p. 180.

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23-Ibid, p. 181.

24-Henry Corbin, p. 300.

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26-The History of Islamic Philosophy, p. 284.

27-The Alive Awake, p. 181.

28-Ibid, p. 181.

29-Ibid, p. 181.

31-Ibid, p. 467.

32-The Alive Awake, p. 181.

33-Ibid, p. 181.

34-Symbol and Symbolic Tales, p. 286.

35-Ibid, p. 278.

36-The Alive Awake, p. 181.

37-To know more refer to: Symbol and Symbolic Tales, p. 286.

38-Complete Works of Shaykh e Ishrâq, book III, p. 31.

39-The Alive Awake, p. 182.

40-Ibid, p. 182.

41-Ibid, p. 182.

42-Ibid, p. 182.

43-The Rays of Suhrawardi's Philosophy and Thoughts, p. 499.

44-The Alive Awake, p. 182.

45-Ibid, p. 183.

46-Ibid, p. 183.

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A comparative study of the epistemology of Suhrawardi and Allamah Tabataba`i

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Abstract

The Master of Illumination (Shaikh al-Ishraq) and Allamah Tabataba`i, two of the great Islamic philosophers, are considered to belong to one intellectual philosophical school. The philosophical range and discourse of these two philosophers are both of a similar state and atmosphere. Of course this matter is not only specific to the intellectual philosophy of these two thinkers, it also applies to most of the Islamic philosophers in the history of philosophy. From another aspect Suhrawardi and Allamah Tabataba`i are considered a part of the superior peak of philosophical thinking.

These two personalities are philosophers who can truly be given the name of founders (mu`assis). The situation of philosophical thought in the history of Islamic philosophy, after these two thinkers, underwent significant conversion and undulation, and the latter philosophical thinkers benefited exceedingly from the philosophical thinking trend of these two philosophers, and they established precise foundations. The presentation of the superb, creative methods of these two philosophers was greatly valued and proved to be fruitful for later philosophical thinkers.

This work aims at propounding and comparing certain parts of the philosophy and thought of these two philosophers in the area of epistemology. This is done in order to clarify both the closeness and the distance of their thoughts in epistemology, and to shed light on their epistemic principles.

1. The definition of knowledge

Islamic philosophers considered knowledge ('ilm), awareness, and cognition (ma`rifah) to be part of self-evident conceptions, and free from a logical genus and differentia. However they did not regard these terms to be needless of a philosophical description, therefore they philosophically and analytically explained them within the notion of knowledge. Suhrawardi in defining knowledge says:

Intellectualising or knowledge is the presence of the thing itself within the self, free of materiality. Or, in other words, the non-absence of something within the self, free from materiality, and this definition is not considered to be the most complete. The reason for this is that it encompasses the perception of the self, and the perception of others.¹

With regard to this, Allamah Tabataba`i say's:

Knowledge is the acquiring of something free from materiality within another immaterial existence.²

It becomes clear from these definitions that they both include acquired knowledge, the knowledge by presence of the self, and the knowledge by presence of others, with the condition that these others are immaterial. However in Suhrawardi's definition of the knowledge by presence of others also includes material matters, because he used the general word 'thing' (shai'). However Allamah's definition of knowledge does not include this part of knowledge by presence, for in his opinion the known must be immaterial, and knowledge cannot pertain to something material.

Another point that must be mentioned is that Suhrawardi believes that the origin of existence and light of lights is the 'agent by agreement' (fa'il bi al-ridha). The light of lights (nur al-anwar), in relation to the world of purgatory, and the material realm, is also the agent by agreement, and amongst the features of the agent by agreement is that its effects are its being known, and it, in relation to others has knowledge by presence. It can be said then that in the viewpoint of Suhrawardi the material world, in relation to the light of lights, can be known by presence, and at the same time it can be material. The material world is, without an intermediary, present for the light of lights, and there is no veil between them.

Allamah Tabataba'i regards the agent of the Necessary existence to be the agent by self-manifestation. In this kind of agent the known is the very same as effects. However, taking into consideration the aforementioned definition of knowledge, the material effects (ma'lulat maadiyah) and the Necessary existence (wajib al-wujud) cannot, within its material state and situation, be known by presence for the Necessary existence without an intermediary. In this state there is nothing else but to say that the form of the simple corporeal world must be known by the presence of the Necessary existence, and therefore we must accept knowledge by presence with an intermediary (wasitah).

2. The manner of the existence of knowledge

Islamic philosophers have also attentively reflected on the ontology of perception. In summary, it is that these scholars believe that perception is an immaterial matter. Islamic philosophers have demonstrated a great deal of evidence to prove or confirm the immateriality of some, or all, perceptions. As an example here are some of the proofs that have been mentioned:

1. The possibility of the division of material matters, but not perceptions.
2. Transformation and change occur in material matters, not in perception.
3. The refusal to accept compatibility in material matters, and not in perception.
4. The existence of particulars in material matters, and not in perception.
5. The existence of potentiality, and then materiality in material matters, and not in perception.
6. The existence of separation and disconnection in material matters, and not in perception.
7. The existence of time in material matters, and not in perception.

A part of the endeavours of Islamic philosophers was in increasing the proofs for the immateriality of perception. From here they offered inventive opinions on the issue of proving the immateriality of

perception. Of these philosophers Suhrawardi and Allamah Tabataba'i have both endeavoured to propound their own inventive ideas. As an example Suhrawardi, by leaning on the principle of 'the non-compatibility of the large within the small', i.e. that the large is not capable of being in little things in material matters, was able to prove the immateriality of imaginal forms. This principle was also used in proving the immateriality of sensual forms (suwar hissiyah). Of course the immateriality of imaginal and sensual forms is considered to be a type of ideal immateriality (tajarrud mithali).³

This principle has been accepted by Allamah Tabataba'i and he has also benefited from it in his own philosophical works. Furthermore, similar to Shaikh al-Ishraq, he has made an innovational effort in presenting unique evidence to proving the immateriality of perception. In addition to him mentioning the traditional evidence in proving the immateriality of perception he also invented unique and new ways in solving this issue. He brought these proofs and methods in order to respond to Marxism, which interprets perception as being "tezz" "anti tezz" and "san tezz", or 'the parts of materiality, brain, and perception'. Allamah Tabataba'i held that the assumption of perception is done only by means of the brain, and it being mere material, will bring nothing other than idealism, scepticism, and relativism. All these three are false, and therefore the idea of perception being material is also false. The summary of his argument can be given in the form of an exclusive syllogism (qiyas istithna'i):

If perception is material it will hence lead to idealism, scepticism, and relativism.

However idealism, scepticism, and relativism are all false and rejected.

Therefore, perception is not something material, it is immaterial.⁴

3. Kinds of knowledge

The universal kinds of knowledge in the opinion of Suhrawardi are considered to be acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence. Acquired, or ideal knowledge, is a kind of knowledge that in it the perceiver obtains within himself the form and idea of the perceived.⁵ The second kind of knowledge is knowledge by presence. Knowledge by presence is the non-ideal perception of something when that something is present, not from the concept and form, but only by the essence and reality of itself in the immaterial knower.⁶

In the viewpoint of Allamah Tabataba'i knowledge is divided into two kinds: acquired knowledge, and knowledge by presence. Acquired knowledge is the presence of the quiddity of the known for the knower, or in other words it is a type of knowledge with which we obtain reality in the form of pictures. Knowledge by presence is the presence of the reality of the known within the knower. ⁷

4. Knowledge by presence

A. Proving knowledge by presence.

Suhrawardi in numerous stages has proceeded in researching the issue of proving and affirming knowledge by presence. This philosopher believes that every person has knowledge of his essence and self, and nobody's essence is hidden from himself. This kind of knowledge is not a kind of conceptual knowledge, nor is it from mental forms or similitudes. The most important matter in this phase is that from where can we know that this knowledge of the essence is not a conceptual knowledge and form, or in other words that it is not knowledge via an intermediary? Meaning someone might say 'my

perception of my essence is the same as the perception of the form and similitude of my essence itself', or the very concept or form of 'me' myself. According to Suhrawardi the answer to this question can be presented as follows: Any perceived form or concept in itself that is taken into the mind is, with respect to itself, in such a way that its truth is applicable to many, or using its technical term it is 'universal'. It never, with respect to its essence, denies the entrance of other applicables.

From another aspect, we observe in perceiving our essence and selves that we see the self in such a way that it does not apply to many, and that it is not universal; rather it is personal and individual. The form and concept of 'I' that we perceive has the features of concepts, and is therefore universal. However the perception of the essence and the self does not have such a state. Therefore the human being has a knowledge that is not similitude (mithali) and not conceptual (mafhum), which is thus knowledge by presence.⁸

In another proof Shaikh Suhrawardi used the evidence of 'otherness' (ghairiyyah) which is perceived by conscience and inner sense between 'my form' and 'I'. He also proves that the knowledge of the self is non-similitude. He believes that there where one finds himself he expresses himself as 'I', and nothing else is found other than 'I'. This matter is indisputable in that the similitude form of 'I' is different than 'I' myself. If the essence of my individual self is myself then my similitude form is something other than myself, and will be the external title of 'him'. Therefore the perception of my similitude form is not 'I', but is considered to be 'him'.⁹

He also believes that that which is self-subsistent and perceives the essence of itself, more generally than it being the self or the intellect, can never be found, by way of matters, added to the self. This is because matters that are extra to something will be regarded as being one of its features. It is certain that when a person perceives himself he considers his features to be extra to his self. Therefore before a person is aware of his features he is aware of his own self, because the awareness of the features of something will always be branching from the knowledge of that thing.¹⁰

Within one of the arguments of Allamah Tabataba'i, roots of which are based on the first proof of Suhrawardi, in proving a special kind of knowledge called knowledge by presence, he holds the opinion that Man's knowledge of his essence and self is individuation (tashakhus) itself and is personal, that it cannot be applied to many, or to many other numerous matters (contrary to mental concepts and forms). From another side we know that individuation is concurrent with existence, and can be obtained through existence. Man, therefore, possesses a kind of knowledge that is from the category of knowledge of existence (the self, al-nafs), and not from knowledge of quiddity and mental forms.¹²

B. The criterion of knowledge by presence.

Shaikh al-Ishraq states numerous components for the criterion of knowledge by presence, such as: the appearance (dhuhur) to the knower, the encompassment and dominance of the knower over the known, the illuminative relation of the known for the knower, the absence of the veil of materiality between the knower and the known (in regards to human being).¹² In the opinion of Allamah the criterion of knowledge by presence is the actual presence of something for something, and this real presence is achieved in a place where the basis of collective existence is used, and the dimensions and divisions of time and space, which are its characteristics, are not employed. The explanation for this is that it is an existence that does not have an existence in time (zaman) and space (makan), and is free from dimensions, length, and divisions, which is the norm of difference and absence (known as the immaterial in philosophy). Therefore, existence is coercively not hidden from itself, and that which is

essentially joint and connected to it is also not hidden. Existence is capable of perceiving itself and that which is essentially connected to it, and can be conceived by presence. In other words, the criterion of knowledge by presence is that the reality of the known is not veiled or hidden from the reality of the knower, and this will only occur when time and space dimensions and extensions are not applicably involved. There is either real unity between the reality of the knower and known, like the present knowledge of the self of itself, or the known is a branch, and existentially affiliated to the knower, like the self's present knowledge of its effects and conditions.¹³

It can be said here that there exists a mutual nearness between these two philosophers on the issue of the criterion of knowledge by presence, and its occurrence. As an example, the illuminative relation of the known in regards to the knower at the end will conclude to the known being branched out from, and existentially affiliated in relation to the knower. Another example is that a part of the encompassment and dominance of the knower over the known happens when the known benefits from the existential affiliation in relation to the knower. Of course, it is clear that encompassment (ihatah) and dominance (tasallut) is more general than existential affiliation.

C. Types of knowledge by presence.

By regarding the standards and criteria that Suhrawardi has explained concerning the acquisition and the occurrence of knowledge by presence, he points to the different types of knowledge by presence, which are:

1. Knowledge by presence of the self, or 'I', because the human being is not veiled from himself.
2. Knowledge by presence of the self (nafs) in relation to its faculties, which are under the illuminative control of the self, and the faculties of the self in regards to the self has an illuminative relation (idhafah ishraqiyah).
3. Knowledge by presence of the body. Shaikh al-Ishraq considers the knowledge of the corporeal body to be knowledge by presence, of the self. This is because the self has control over the body, and is its planner.
4. Knowledge by presence of ideal forms, information, or knowledgeable forms.
5. Knowledge by presence of cause and effect.
6. Knowledge by presence of immaterial matters between themselves. Absolute immaterial beings, that are better than human beings in regards to their ontological rank, have knowledge by presence of their Creator, may His name be exalted, and incorporeal beings superior to themselves.

Suhrawardi believes that the knowledge of the superior immaterial matters (mujarradaat) of the lower immaterial matters is considered to be 'illumination', and the knowledge of low immaterial matters towards the high is 'intuition' (shuhud). In his opinion the impediment and veil of knowledge is materiality, and this veil does not exist in immateriality. Therefore, any immaterial being has knowledge by presence of all other immaterial beings (longitudinal and latitudinal), even though the low light cannot reach (perceive) the true nature of the high light; however the high superior light shines over the low.¹⁴

According to Allamah Tabataba'i the kinds of knowledge by presence are: the knowledge of any substance of itself; knowledge of things that occur within its existing realm; the self's knowledge of its faculties and instruments with which it performs; knowledge by presence of that which corresponds with our sensual faculties; the originating cause's knowledge of its effect; the effect's knowledge of its originating cause; the knowledge of one of two effects, that have one cause, of the other.¹⁵

The conclusions of the opinions of Allamah on the types of knowledge by presence are that: firstly, knowledge of the body is not by presence, rather he considers it to be acquired; and secondly, he added knowledge by presence of effects in regards to the originating cause to knowledge by presence.

D. The strong and weak levels of knowledge by presence.

Suhrawardi believes that knowledge by presence has strong and weak levels, and any self and immaterial being attains, according to its extent of immateriality, perception of its essence and that which is hidden from it. The perception of the essence (dhat) and that which is hidden from it (more general than the different aspects of essence or ontological existence) possesses strong and weak levels, and if the amount of the existing immaterial being's perception increases by any degree, its present awareness will also increase.¹⁶

With regard to the opinions of Allamah Tabataba'i it appears that no mention of the issue of the strength and weakness of knowledge by presence was made.

5. Acquired knowledge

A. The divisions of conceptions and their characteristics.

A part of acquired perception pertains to the conceptual intellectual perception, and one of the intellectual and scholastic efforts of Suhrawardi was the explanation of the divisions and characteristics of conceptual intellectual perception. Shaikh al-Ishraq points to a specific division in the issue of conceptual intellectual perception. He states in his book 'Talwihat' (Intimations): "Things that are extra to quiddity, and are added to it, are either: both mental and objective; or only mental". In another place he writes: "considerations ('itibaraat) are either objective or mental".¹⁷

In 'Hikmat al-Ishraq' (The Philosophy of Illumination) in the divisions of the conceptual intellectual perception he believes that: "Predicates and attributes are both divided into two parts: objective attributes and mental attributes."¹⁸ Suhrawardi considers mental considerations and mental attributes to be 'secondary intelligibles' (ma'qulaat thany).¹⁹

In the opinion of Suhrawardi objective attributes are predicates that, in addition to having an external existence, have a form in the intellect, like being black or white, or having movement. As for mental attributes, they are attributes that do not have an external existence other than their existence in the mind, like contingency.²⁰ The philosopher mentioned in his various works the numerous features of mental considerations and secondary intelligibles that can be regarded as the criteria of diversity between these kinds of intelligibles and objective intelligibles or attributes. These specifications, despite the fact that they can be related or correlative to each other, are however explained here independently:

1. are only in the mind, additional to quiddity, and are added to it.²¹

2. do not have limits other than objective realities that result from them.22
3. do not have objective realities in external existence.23
4. are things that in their occurrence and external existence necessitate the repetition of their specie.24
5. are conceptual, intellectual considerations which are more general than other concepts.25
6. are capable of predicating numerous things.26
7. are only in the mind.27
8. do not have an independent external existence.28
9. are not parts of objective quiddity.29
10. are not able to be pointed to by senses.30
11. are any attribute whose separation from its subject is impossible, upon consideration ('itibari), meaning that it is not possible for the subject of these attributes to exist without the attributes.31

It is certain that the qualities and characteristics of objective concepts or objective attributes will be contrary to the characteristics mentioned above. In order to clarify the viewpoint of Suhrawardi on the issue of the qualities of mental conceptions, these characteristics, in the case of a particular attribute or consideration, i.e. possibility, have been taken into consideration and will now be elaborated:

1. The predicate, depicted by possibility, or possible existence, is acquired in the mind from the analysis of quiddity (mahiyah), and is additional to the concept of quiddity, and added to it. If we take into consideration a particular quiddity, like a human being, we will reach, from analysing it, to the non-necessity of its existence or non-existence, which is equal to the depiction of possibility. This depiction is not additional to the essence (dhat) of the external quiddity, rather, it is additional to the quiddity in the mind, and added to it, like when we say: human being is a possible existence.
2. The depiction of possibility does not have a genus (jins) and differentia (fasl), and its content is its own external and objective subject. 'Non-necessity' is a quality that is a depiction of the external being itself, caused by it, and, as a definition and not a term, is possible.
3. In lieu of the concept of possibility (imkan) the essence of the appointed external being, such as 'what is the opposite to the concept of human being', 'whiteness', etc. does not exist.
4. The concept of 'possibility' is such that if for the objective becoming of it is regarded, in the form of an externally appointed essence and objectively appointed depiction, it will result in the infinite regress of these objective qualities. They must also eventuate into consecutive infinite realities, meaning that if the possibility of appointed depiction and existence is both in one external thing -a depiction that is beside the being and additional to it- then the depiction itself will be one of the existing quiddities of the world, and it can hence be asked, concerning this existing quiddity, about its necessity, possibility, and impossibility (the three matters). This existing quiddity will therefore certainly be possible. Now,

because the supposition is that possibility is an objective depiction it must be accepted that this second possibility is one of the existing quiddities, and is certainly a possible existence (mumkin al-wujud). We now come to the third possibility, and another objective existence and possibility must be assumed, and this state must be repeated consecutively. Therefore the proposition of the occurrence of possibility necessitates the consecutive infinite repetition of the realities of its kind, i.e. possibility.

5. The universality and encompassment of possibility is more general than concepts like human being, tree, and so forth. Possibility is a concept that includes human being, tree, mountain, rock, etc., however a concept like human being only includes individuals like Hassan, Hussain and others of the same kind. A point should be mentioned here, and that is, that even though at the end generality, universality, and encompassment of both the concepts of possibility and human being tends, in potency, towards infinity, however if the 'actual' generality of these two concepts are compared to each other and the aim is the existing individuals of one of these concepts it can be said that the generality of the concept of possibility is more. From another side it can be said that possibility is applied upon numerous kinds (anwaa'), and then on the numerous individual kinds; however human being is only applied onto one kind, along with its individuals.

6. The concept and predicate of 'possibility' is applied to numerous matters. For example, possibility can be applied to human being, tree, rock and so on. These matters are such that, in regards to their quiddity, they are different and contrary to each other; however they are all, in an equal form, the subject (mawdhu') of the predicate of possibility.

7. The concept of possibility does not have a place other than in the mind because it does not have a specific external existence.

8. 'Possibility' does not have a specific independent external existence. 'Human being' has an independent external existence, however 'possibility' does not have such a characteristic.

9. 'Possibility' does not form any part or section of the existing external quiddity. Colour or shape forms a part or section of the objective quiddity, however 'possibility' does not do so.

10. The depiction of 'possibility' cannot be perceived by senses. We relate this depiction to quiddities, but we cannot discover them with our senses because they do not have a sensed external and objective reality.

11. 'Possibility' is a depiction that cannot be separated from its subject, and a quiddity cannot be achieved without the depiction of possibility.

In his numerous works Shaikh al-Ishraq, by analysing concepts, has mentioned some of the intellectual considerations (I'tibaraat 'aqli), and secondary intelligibles (ma'qoulat thani). These concepts are: existence, unity, tangibility, reality, possibility, quantity, necessity, finiteness, infinity, quiddity, form, accident, universality, particularity, generality and peculiarity, genus and differentia, substance, simple matters, numbers, additionals, stillness, prime matter, etc.³²

Suhrawardi, in his al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat (The Paths and the Conversations), propounds numerous opinions concerning these concepts. He then, according to his own points of view already mentioned, gives his belief in which one is the right opinion, also being accordant with his view.

He says:

Intellectual aspects and considerations have created a great deal of confusion in people and have led them astray. Some of them have regarded these considered concepts, like existence, possibility, unity, etc. as matters that are additional to things, believing they exist in the external world. Another group believe that this set of matters and concepts, with regards to its own concept, are additional to quiddity. But these concepts do not have a form and essence in the external world. There also exists another group of common people who say that these intellectually considered concepts are not additional, neither in the mind nor objectively, to quiddities that are added to these quiddities.

The Shaikh then says that the view of the second group of these people is valid.³³

B. The opinion of Allamah Tabataba'i

In the opinion of Allamah Tabataba'i there must be within the four groups of universal concepts difference and distinction: real, or essential, concepts; philosophical and logical considerations. The features of each of these conceptual perceptions are as follows:³⁴

a. Real, or essential concepts:

Concepts that exist both in the mind and outside, like the human being and the tree.

b. Philosophical concepts or intelligibles:

1. Its denotation stature is either external, like existence and its real characteristics, or does not exist externally, like non-existence ('adm).
2. They are concepts that are predicated onto both the necessary existence, and possible existence, like knowledge, life, etc.
3. They are concepts that are predicated on more than one category, like motion.
4. They are concepts that do not have a logical term (genus and differentia), and is not appointed as a genus for quiddities.

c. Logical concepts:

They are concepts the denotation stature of which is in the mind, like genus, differentia, and syllogism.

d. Concepts of social and scientific consideration:

1. They are the product of the figurative activity of the perceptions, which is the borrowing of a real concept and making use of it in the field of work.
2. They have been borrowed and achieved for scientific and living goals.
3. They do not have logical terms, and demonstrative proof (burhan) cannot be applied to them.

4. Contrary to essential concepts they do not have a coinciding external existence.
5. Expressions that are derived from these concepts are not capable of being true or false; rather, in these expressions acceptance (with the securing of the goals) and rejection of them (with the non-securing of the goals) can be stated.

Some comparative points

1. Both philosophers acknowledge the point that conceptual perceptions and the concepts within the perceiving organ of human beings is varied and different, and it can be said that they can be divided into two levels. But Shaikh al-Ishraq puts all the concepts of the second level into one group, and does not consider any difference or distinction between them. In other words he does not separate between the secondary philosophical and logical intelligibles. Moreover, in the works of Shaikh al-Ishraq no specific kind of perceptions by the name of consideration perceptions has been mentioned. However in the opinion of Allamah the secondary intelligibles have been divided into two kinds: philosophical and logical, and are both different to each other, having their own features. Allamah, in his discussions, has specifically pointed out and paid significant attention to the issue of consideration perceptions (idrakaat i'tibari).

2. Some of the characteristics of secondary concepts these two philosophers have mentioned are concordant and compatible, like their generality, the non-existence of external objective notables, that they are not parts of external quiddity, etcetera.

3. Some 'concepts' in the viewpoint of both two philosophers are secondary concepts like existence, necessity, unity, and so forth. However they have different opinions regarding concepts:

The first is that 'movement' in the opinion of Suhrawardi is an objective concept and of the first level; however Allamah considers it to be a 'secondary intelligible'. The second is that some concepts like quantity (miqdar), prime matter (hayula), and amount ('adad) are considered to be secondary concepts by Suhrawardi, but Allamah considers them to be essential (mahawi) and real (haqiqi). The third is that of the concept of existence: whilst both philosophers consider it to be a secondary intelligible, Suhrawardi believes that this concept includes the specification that in its occurrence it will necessitate its repetition. Allamah Tabataba'i, at least concerning the issue of existence, does not accept this, and believes that the occurrence of existence is essential, and hence there is no necessitation of the connected occurrence of existences. He says that existence is essentially existent in itself, and not with an existence additional to it, rather, existence is the very existence itself.³⁵

One of the questions propounded by Islamic philosophers is the issue of the parts of propositions (qadhiyah). In reality, the question that is put forward here is our acquired knowledge, which is found manifested in the form of a proposition, or propositions, composed of a number of parts. Suhrawardi writes in relation to this issue:

Know that it is the right of every categorical proposition to have a subject, a predicate, and a relation between them, suitable to be true or deniable. Upon considering this relation the proposition becomes a proposition.³⁶

From this base Shaikh al-Ishraq believes that this is a proposition on the condition of it being categorical and positive, and composed of three parts: subject, predicate, and the relation between the subject and the predicate.

It can be said that in the opinion of Suhrawardi, in regards to categorical propositions in their positive state, the proposition is comprised of three parts; subject, predicate, and the judgement (hukm), or 'judgement relation'. The concept of the subject and predicate is enough for the mind to be ready to judge, and will also judge the unity of them both in the external. Examples of this are like the literal proposition, in which the stage of the expression of their meanings is 'mental' (e.g. Zaid is standing up), does not having more than three parts. Coinciding with this theory is the idea that the judgement and judgement relation are not two different things; rather they are both the same as each other.³⁷

On the issue of the 'negative' Suhrawardi states: "And the negative is that concept whose negation cuts the copula (al-rabitah)".³⁸ In this sentence the Shaikh considers the negative to be the cutter of the copula and its negation. It might be understood that in the negative it necessitates four parts: the conception of the subject, predicate, judgement relation, and the judgement that there is no relation in the outside. In explaining this, the mind, in the negative proposition, needs the concept of the subject and the predicate, and the concept of the relation between the subject and predicate, and the judgement of the non-union relation in reality and the essence of its self. Therefore the real purport of the negative proposition is neither the copula of the negative nor the copulation of the negative, rather it will become the negation of the copula.³⁹ Allamah Tabataba'i has researched and analysed the issue of the parts of propositions in the two topics of simple and composite 'whether-ness' (haliyaat basitah wa murakabbah). In his opinion any acknowledgement or logical proposition whenever it is in the mould of composite 'whether-ness' (meaning a proposition whose predicate is something different to the existence of the subject, for example: Man is knowledgeable) in the positive state is comprised of only three parts which are: the subject, predicate, and judgement. It must be added that the 'judgement relation', meaning the relation of the predicate to the subject, is not part of the proposition, and the need for it in the proposition is only because the judgement, in the aspect to it being a mental action, needs the relation in order to happen, and not in the aspect that the judgement relation is part of the proposition. However in establishing a proposition the presence of a judgement relation (nisbah hukmiyah) is a must.

In composite 'whether-nesses', in its negative state, the proposition is only composed of two parts; subject and predicate. The mind does not make judgements in negative propositions, and it envisions that non-created judgements are like the mind's created judgements in positive propositions. An imaginary relation is made by the name of 'not' which is opposite to the real relation which is 'is'.

In simple 'whether-nesses' (meaning propositions whose predicate is existent or existence) in its positive state, like the proposition 'Man exists', the proposition is composed of the three parts: subject, predicate, and judgement. In these propositions the judgement relation does not exist, because the relation of an existence is a copula, and there is no meaning that a non-independent existence and copula which is always based on two sides is a separation between the thing and its self (its existence) which is in a state of absolute unity, without dissimilarity. Therefore in these propositions there is no necessity for a judgment relation, even as a necessary (not original) part. In negative simple 'whether-ness' propositions the proposition is only composed of two subject and predicate parts, and does not usually have a judgement or a judgement relation.⁴⁰

The position and place of reality and error in perception

In which position and place, or when, do the stages of (acquired) perception in the matter of reality and error have a meaning, and when can perception be depicted as reality or error?

In the opinion of Shaikh al-Ishraq until the time we take in mind an intelligible or intelligibles without a 'judgement' we can never, in this status, confirm or negate something, nor can we say that these concepts are positive or negative. In other words the confirming or negation of the predicate for the subject, and the reality or falsity of our intelligibles (ma'qoulat) will be established and will have a meaning when we dwell on the status of 'judgement'. It must then be said that the rightness or wrongness of perceptions is related to the judgements, and not to concepts. It is from judgements that knowledge finds its way to the outside, and it is there that knowledge makes its claim, and this claim can be correspondent or non-correspondent with reality.⁴¹

Allamah Tabataba'i also holds the opinion that the rightness and wrongness of perceptions occur in the stage of judgements, to which we ascribe a certain relation to the outside. In clarifying his opinion he has stated four stages in perception, and the reality and error of perception are considered to be related to the fourth. These are:

1. The natural actions of the sensual organs stage, such as the entering of light rays into the eye and their reflection, and so on. In this stage reality and error is not involved, and it is merely the outcome of the sensual organ and an effect occurring there.
2. The accomplishment of sensual perceptions: the particular perception of physical and geometrical matters, which is the single sensual perception, like the sensual perception of a chair or table.
3. The stage of judgement in the content of sensual perception before the correspondence with the outside, in the meaning that we make a judgement that is merely related to the form of the perception, and not regarding the correspondence or non-correspondence of it with the outside. For example it is said in the content of the sensual perception of a chair that its arms are shorter than its legs.
4. The correspondence of the relation and the judgement with the external. We ascribe the relation in perception that we have acquired to the outside, and we compare our perceptions with reality and admit whether this external relation is achieved or not. Reality and error only occur in this stage.⁴²

6. The type and manner of the occurrence of the parts of acquired perceptions in the human being

Suhrawardi's views on the issue of how acquired knowledge and acquired perception is formed and occurs can be explained in an orderly fashion as follows:

A. Sense perception

Shaikh al-Ishraq, in the discussion of sense perception has essentially contemplated on the issue of vision and sight. He has, in the beginning of the theory of the exiting of the ray from the eye, the theory of correspondence (intibaq), and the sketching of things in the eye, criticised them and hence propounded his own opinion.⁴³

The summing up of this philosopher's discussion can be explained as follows: Forms that enter into the eye, mirror, and imagination (especially large forms) all have the same status, in the meaning that none of these forms are imprinted in the very eye, mirror, or imagination (by the proof of the non-imprinting of the large within the small). From another angle the Shaikh also believes that these forms are not actualised in the brain, air, etc. Moreover, mirror forms and imagination, according to him, are the frames and objective ideal forms themselves. From here a conclusion must be made that the visual forms are not actualised in the eye, brain, air, and so on, and they, like the mirror and imaginary forms, are nothing but the suspended objective ideal forms. The definition of the term vision (ibsar), according to the Shaikh, is: "the present illumination of the self of the faculty of sight, and from this faculty the self can achieve the vision of objective ideal forms". The real seer in the action of seeing is the light of the body (isfahbad), or the human self. In the action of seeing, other than the present illumination of the self which is the main factor of vision, it has necessary conditions in order to be acquired, like encountering things and confrontation, the absence of a veil between the seer and the thing, the existence of light and brightness, etc. Therefore, it can be said that in the opinion of Suhrawardi, vision (ibsar) means the seeing of ideal forms (suwar mithali), with the readiness and proper laying down of the conditions of vision. This process can also be generalised in regard to other sensual perceptions, saying that in the opinion of Suhrawardi sense perception is the achievement of present perception and witnessing ideal forms in the 'World of Ideas'.⁴⁴ The reason for this is that the other senses of human beings do not have an essential (mahawi) difference with the sight sense.

B. Imaginary perception

Imaginary forms are not imprinted in the imagination, rather these forms, in reality, are the suspended frames and bodies in the 'World of Ideas' ('alam al-mithal) which do not include the realm of material bodies. These suspended bodies and objective ideal forms have manifestations, even though they are not in these manifestations. The manifestation of the imaginary forms is the imagination of the human being. In reality, imagination is the mirror of the self (nafs) which by it ideal forms can be witnessed.⁴⁵

Therefore, the imagination of the human being is nothing but the witnessing and present perception of imaginary forms in the World of Ideas. In brief, imaginary perception is the present illumination (isrhaq hudhuri) and the mentality of the self (nafsani al-nafs) of the faculty of imagination, from which the witnessing of objective ideal forms can be achieved. This point must be added, and that is that the factors of the human being, and with it the imaginal factor, are the causes of the laying down and preparing for the manifestation of ideal forms.

In achieving this kind of perception the Shaikh put forward some proofs which can be presented in the following manner:

1. We contain very large imaginary forms, like mountains, skies, etc.
2. These imaginary forms do not exceed one of the following states: either they are imprinted in the eye, or corresponded with in the material brain, or imprinted in the imagination which is allocated in the brain (inside the middle of the brain). All these three states are invalid, because they will necessitate the imprinting of the large within the small, which is impossible.
3. These imaginary forms are not in the corporeal and sensual world, because if so all people must be able to perceive and sense these forms: however it is not so.

4. These forms are not absolute nothingness, for they have objective effects, like shape, colour, size, and so on. Moreover, they can be perceived; therefore they exist, and are not non-existent.

5. Neither do imaginary forms exist in the world of the intellect (more general than the longitudinal and latitudinal intellects), because the high intellects ('uqul) and lights (anwar) are free of corporeal features, therefore these forms exist in a special world by the name of "ideas" (mithal).⁴⁶

It must be said that this argument on one side clarifies the quality of imaginary perception, and on another affirms the existence of a particular world by the name of 'ideas'. Something else must be added, and that is that this proof can be used in other perceptive senses in such a way that, in the opinion of the Shaikh, seeing and witnessing will be acquired by the 'self', and the form that is in the self cannot be witnessed anywhere else, nor can it exist in the corporeal and natural world.

Sensual forms can only be present within the realm of the "lordly" light (al-nur al-isfahbadi).

C. Intellectual perception

In Suhrawardi's opinion intellectual perception can be acquired by dependence on the ideas of light (muthul nuri), or the masters of images/idols (arbab asnam) and immaterial intellects.

The subject of knowing in intellectual perception is not derived from matters already sensed from which the intellect is able to disengage (tajareed) forms, rather, it is from contemplation of objects of sense and....is the reason for the readiness of the self for witnessing (mushahadah), and present and mental illumination (ishraq hudhuri wa nafsani) in regards to the masters of species. The intellectual perception of human beings is acquired with the support of the self (nafs) and its present illumination in relation to the perception of the intellect.⁴⁷

However, in the issue of how the shape of acquired knowledge is achieved, two viewpoints can be found in the works of Allamah Tabataba'i:

a. The first viewpoint states that the senses are firstly attached to the body, and thus the soul (nafs) is united and joined with the body; therefore, the soul is also united with them (objects of senses), and they are found by knowledge of presence. After this stage a particular faculty by the name of "imagination" (khayal) changes this found presence and the objects of senses into acquired and formed knowledge, and then given to the memory. Again, after this stage, i.e. the shaping of sensual and imaginary forms, the mind, with specific operations like comparing, disengaging, etc. makes universal and intellectual forms.⁴⁸

b. In the second viewpoint the activity of the body, in contact with things and sensed objects, prepares the self (nafs) for weak perception by presence in relation to the world of ideas ('alam al-mithal) and the world of intellect ('alam al-'aql). After this the self, out of urgency and necessity, changes (for theoretical and knowledge activities) this found presence (for theoretical and knowledge activities) into acquired knowledge, and shapes them into sensual, imaginal, and intellectual facts.⁴⁹

In general, in the opinion of Allamah Tabataba'i, the general process of the shaping of acquired knowledge can be divided into three stages:

1. The existence of a series of external factors.

2. The occurrence of specific activities in the nervous system and other systems in the body.

3. The occurrence of a series of spiritual (ruhi) and mental (nafsani) laws and actions. 50

Comparative reading

As can be seen in the thoughts of Suhrawardi and Allamah Tabataba'i, the viewpoint of Suhrawardi on the issue of the manner of the occurrence of acquired knowledge is concordant with and the same as the second viewpoint of Tabataba'i. Both philosophers say here that acquired knowledge is obtained because of interference from and relations with the worlds of ideas and intellect. In other words, this kind of knowledge - perception, imaginary, intellectual - is the production of the connection of the human self with higher existential worlds, meaning the world of ideas, and the world of intellect. Of course it must be mentioned that first of all, Allamah states, because it is necessary to do so, the proof of the conversion of knowledge by presence to the worlds of ideas and intellect, and to acquired knowledge; however Suhrawardi does not mention this issue. Secondly, Allamah propounded another what is in effect two viewpoints concerning the clarification of the shaping of acquired perceptions; however, Suhrawardi disregards these two issues.

The attentiveness and observance of the self (nafs) is the main factor in the shaping of knowledge. With regard to the shaping and occurrence of acquired knowledge, Suhrawardi states that if Man - the human self - does not become aware in an acquired way, then acquired knowledge will not be obtained. In other words knowledge is not simply the forming of self and mental forms, but is rather the awareness of the self in regards to the forms in the condition of acquiring and actualising knowledge. The Shaikh writes about this issue:

Sometimes in vision a form is acquired of which, because the seer is deep in thought, he will remain unaware. However, once he comes out of this state of unawareness, and becomes aware of the acquired form, he will witness the form clearly .

Therefore, perception will be acquired only by the awareness and attentiveness of the self.⁵¹ On the basis of such a thought any perceived form, whether it be sensual, imaginary, or intellectual, can be in such a situation, meaning that although at the same time the mental and self's form has been shaped, knowledge has not been acquired, and we need the awareness and attention of the self so knowledge and thought in its exact meaning will be obtained. Therefore the axis of knowledge and thought is the human self itself.

Awareness can be acquired when, first of all, the known is present in the self, and secondly the self is aware and attentive in relation to it.

Allamah Tabataba'i has not mentioned such a condition or supplement concerning the issue of acquired perception.

Notes:

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2. Tabataba'i, Allamah Muhammad Hussain, Nihayatul Hikmah. Qom: Islamic Publications Centre, 1983, 24.
3. Shirazi, Qutb al-Din Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq. Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1951, 47.
4. Tabataba'i, Allamah Muhammad Hussain, Usul-I falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, Shahid Murtadha Mutahhari. Qom: Islamic Publications Centre, 61, footnotes of pages 63,143.
5. Suhrawardi, Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, 2, 15.
6. Ibid., 77-71, 111, 484.
7. Tabataba'i, Allamah Muhammad Hussain, Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, Shahid Murtadha Mutahhari, 97, footnotes of pages 63, 190.
8. Suhrawardi, Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, 2, 70-71, 484.
9. Ibid., 111, 1, 484.
10. Dinani, Ghulam Hussain Ibrahimi, Shu'a`i andisheh wa shuhud dar falsafa-ye Suhrawardi. Tehran: Hikmat Pub. 1985, 550-551.
11. Nihayatul Hikmah, 250-260, and: Allamah Muhammad Hussain Tabataba'i, A Collection of Treatises. Islamic Culture Publications Centre, 1991, 280.
12. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 485, 488-489. al-Talwihat, 72-73. Volume 3, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 140-152. Shark Hukmat al-Ishraq, 355. Shirazi, Sadr al-Din, al-Asfar al-Arba'ah, Vol. 6, al-Mustafawi, 1368 (solar year), 68, 251. Fana'i, Muhammad, Article: Knowledge by Presence. Islamic thought awareness, Year 3, Numbers 7-10.
13. Usul-I falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, 195-198.
14. The same sources mentioned in 13.
15. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, 194, 195, 197. Nihayatul Hikmah, 260. Collection of Treatises, 277, 287, 288.
16. Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, 1, al-Talwihat, 72.
17. Ibid., 25.
18. Ibid., 2. Hikmat al-Ishraq, 71.
19. Ibid., 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 361.
20. Ibid., 2. Hikmat al-Ishraq, 71.
21. Ibid., 1, al-Talwihat, 21.

22. Ibid., 25.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 364.
25. Ibid., 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 64.
26. Ibid., 64.
27. Ibid., 71.
28. Ibid., 72.
29. Ibid., 30.
30. Vol. 3, Bustan al-Qulub, 358.
31. Dinani, Ghulam Hussain Ibrahimi, Qawa'id kulli falsafi, Vol. 2. Islamic Sciences and Cultures Research Centre, Principle 98.
32. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Talwihat, 18-22, 25. al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 363, 364, 369, 370, 413. Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq, 298. Hikmat al-Ishraq (Vol. 2), 64-74, 109-110.
33. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 343.
34. Nihayatul Hikmah, 243, 256-259. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, 194, 195, 197.
35. Nihayatul Hikmah, 10.
36. Opera Metaphysica, 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 25.
37. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, 202.
38. Hikmat al-Ishraq, 26.
39. Ibid., 204-205.
40. Nihayatul Hikmah, 251-252. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, 202-205.
41. Opera Metaphysica, 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 30.
42. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alim, 147-149, 151-162.
43. Opera Metaphysica, 2, Hikmat al-Ishraq, 99-101. Shu'a'i andisheh wa shuhud dar falsafa-ye Suhrawardi, 357-358.

44. Opera Metaphysica, 2, 153-211, 216. Misbah Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi, Amuzesh-e falsafeh, vol. 2. Qom: Islamic propagation centre, 1365 (solar year), 165.

45. Opera Metaphysica, 2, 212-215.

46. Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq, 470.

47. Shu'a'i andisheh wa shuhud dar falsafa-ye Suhrawardi, 631. Abu Rayyan, Muhammad Ali, Mabani falsafeh-ye Ishraq az didgah Suhrawardi. Persian translation: Muhammad Ali Shaikh, Beheshti University, 1993.

48. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alism, 199-201. Collection of Treatises, 278-279.

49. Nihayatul Hikmah, 239.

50. Usul-e falsafa wa rawesh-e-ri`alism, 74.

51. Opera Metaphysica, 1, al-Mashari' wa al-Mutarahat, 485.

Philosophical and Mystical Approaches to the 'Dialogue of Civilizations'

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss the importance of man as the most sublime creation whose uniqueness leads to the formation and cultivation of civilizations. One hopes that this discussion will constitute a modest contribution toward the success of the 'dialogue of civilizations'. The article focuses on man's ability to speak, or the logos that manifests itself thereof, and of the motif and theme of the Perfect Man that is critical in Islamic mysticism. Speech is a manifestation of wisdom and love. Man is a responsible creature, as a result of his possessing love and wisdom, and for this reason he is a being that deserves to be connected with God, the source of Being. Religion is the most powerful source that draws man to philosophy and mysticism. Philosophy, using the concept of dialectics and dialogue as its result, and drawing upon the concepts of 'unity in diversity' and 'diversity in unity', makes an attempt to reconcile the contradictions within the life of man so that he may achieve perfection. Mysticism, with the unity of being as its central principle, reconciles the contradictions of man's life by initiating a friendly dialogue and inspiring man with a movement inspired by love.

Introduction

History repeatedly points to the painful fact that the two parts of the world, East and West, have always been in contact with and influenced each other as a result of wars and the consequences of wars. Are civilizations to be judged merely in terms of their ability to bring mass destruction upon its rivals? Is war the only way, the ultimate way? Must one act as a mere onlooker as history takes its 'inevitable' course? May one not believe that this course may be wondrously altered? Is there no choice but to surrender to the wheels of the chariot of history's pitiless gods? Must one watch helplessly wars, conflicts and blood

shedding and allow man, the supreme and intellectually most powerful creature, to be a spectator in the midst of this tumult?

What helps man to find the courage and daring to believe that he can sculpt history into a different shape is his dynamic nature and creative mind, a mind whose best attributes are its faculties of reason or speech. Speech, a strange and thought-provoking attribute, is often taken for granted. Speech is not the mere use of words, but a language that is inspired by thought and reasoning. We all know that natural scientists, philosophers and mystics believe that, besides man, all beings produce voices of their own. But these voices are different from speech, which in fact is the most sublime form of sound and unique to human beings. The Holy Qur'ān testifies that 'Nothing exists unless it hymns His praise,'¹ but man is a different account. The value of speech from a religious point of view is worth considering, and references to language and speech in the Bible and the Holy Qur'ān are testimony to the importance of this matter. Essentially, creativity is a result of God's utterance of words. 'Be! And it is!' 'God spoke and the universe appeared,' 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.'² All these point to the importance of speech in human culture and religious thought.

The world in which we live, think and engage in various creative activities is a complex combination of contradictory phenomena and conflicts. It is these conflicting phenomena that form the basis of man's knowledge of himself and others, and of the mysterious phenomena surrounding him, instilling in him a dynamic and continual urge to know. Man, whose greatest attributes are thoughtfulness, rationality and creative speech, has continually been investigating, learning about, criticising and even taking advantage of these conflicts in order to improve his lot.³ Man has also invented dialectics for this purpose. Dialectics is, according to Hegel, in spite of being a struggle between opposites, not a way of marking time but a means of surpassing and reaching perfection, a surpassing that includes criticism and profound thought.⁴ Thus thought and speech are two human activities that are closely intertwined. That is, perhaps, why certain schools of Islamic thought such as the Ash'arites and Ikhwān al-ṭāfi' (the Brethren of Purity) believed in al-kalīm al-naḥṣ, or 'speech of the self'.⁵ This is a variant upon the connection between the human mind and speech held by thinkers since Plato and well expressed in the sentence, 'thinking is a silent way of speaking'.⁶ Hegel considered dialectics the reconciliation of conflicts in the existence of objects and also in the human mind, and in the writer's opinion, in human actions and behaviour, since the mind has considerable influence on human behaviour.

Such a dialogue is the striving for excellence, borne of the perfectionism inherent in human thought, a perfectionism which seeks the best from among the multitude of conflicting differences and variations, one that would answer the call of his nature for the absolute good. This is a transcendental quest that inspires not only man's mind and speech, but also his subtlest actions. Man owes this to his intellect and creative spirit, and it is this attribute that makes him worthy of aspiring to the source of revelation and godliness, an aspiration splendidly embodied in different ways in religions throughout history. By asking the most fundamental epistemological and truth-seeking questions, religion itself is the first phenomenon that has conjoined the conflicting opposites of terrestrial and celestial existence in the labyrinth of plurality and differences. God has challenged man to the most magnificent dialectic of his existence, a dialectic inspiring life's most dynamic dialogue to a wondrous leap forward. It is for this reason that prophets begin their message with the word 'speak,' a two-sided speaking that involves man's intellect through logic and reasoning.

By presenting a picture of plurality and conflicts, conflicts that can hardly tolerate one another, religion has invited man to a great intellectual-practical round-table discussion. This is only possible because he possesses these splendid attributes, and he is challenged to use all his talents and abilities to find the

right means for a logical reconciliation of these conflicts. Religion urges man to think right, see right and act right in his search for the ultimate unity of existence because dialectics, and its supreme result, logical dialogue, requires critical and meticulous investigation in this search, which teaches man to live life courageously as a challenge. Religion teaches man the ability to engage in a creative and effective dialogue. Man must first know himself in order to improve the life of other creatures and himself, and to look at himself and the world at his service with insight.

Religion is the reality that leads man to wander in the universe and ask the ultimate question of existence through the dialectics arising out of his innate nature. It enables man to achieve a reconciliation of all the conflicting plurality so that he can realise the unity, which is the fundamental essence of being and the truth of existence. The great instrument of this dialogue is man's intellect and nature. It is for this reason that sociologists and anthropologists believe that the word 'intellect' is derived from the same root as that of religion, from *religio*, meaning connection. ⁷ In fact, intellect and religion are two very important processes that conjoin man with truth. Even a brief review of the history of religion will reveal that prophets of God chose dialogues and logical argument as the first and foremost method of spreading their message.

By explaining their message, they tried to achieve a wise and at the same time kindly understanding, and such verses as 'speak softly'— and 'discuss things with them in the politest manner' prove this important point. In fact, prophets were among the people who promised peace and amity through godly thought and guidance. Their greatest mission has been to make man face the secrets and mysteries of religion, and to awaken their innate nature through a dialogue. This is a dialogue between the Supreme Being, God, and the most intellectual creature, man, so that he may attain truth by understanding the conflicts of reality. In spite of wars, man ultimately desires peace, amity, love and rational and enlightening dialogue, for this is his innate nature.

But religion's most prominent aspect is its mystery. Yet at the same time, it compels man, through history, into making dialogue, to be ceaselessly exploring and searching through this mystery. The gratification of discovering a hidden truth through thought and self-knowledge has led man to an awakening and a new interpretation of being. If we accept that the word *dḥn*, religion, is derived from the Sanskrit word *daena*, meaning 'spiritual awareness' and 'conscience', we realise more fully how religion is life's greatest invitation to a dialogue in search of the truth. It pursues a dialogue that appeals to the taste of most, if not all, who inherently love knowledge and are open to guidance.

Religion, whose function is to help man towards adjustment and self-awareness in this multi-coloured world of plurality, in order to be in harmony with man's needs for guidance, has been sent to him in different ways and forms through history. W. Cantwell Smith says.

The history of religion reveals that God has spoken in different manners to people of different religious cultures, providing them with guidance and the means of salvation.

In my opinion, the existence of conflicts and plurality ensues from the need for greater understanding, and there is no need for concern or confusion.

By removing all mental contradictions and anxiety, religion becomes the most beautiful way of looking at life and the only right way of discussing the truth. Religion tells man of his mission in life: to distinguish the superior reality from the material world by passing through it and to accomplish this with the power of his creative intellect. In this manner, religion enables man to establish harmony and

reconciliation between mind and matter, heaven and earth, reality and truth, and thus improves makes him worthy of being God's image on earth. Offering such teachings, the great religions have nourished millions of followers and thinkers, establishing great civilizations that bear witness to man's glory.

In fact, civilizations provide man's thoughtful responses to the dialectic of religion and its logical dialogue. When exploring a question, which requires analysis and discovery, man cultivates his mind. Civilization is the manifestation of this mental cultivation, which is made possible as a result of criticism and peaceful and constructive methods. All religions condemn the use of any violent method to challenge the opposition.

Man has experienced two valuable approaches to cultivate his mind within his long historical existence: philosophical and mystic. While some consider the two approaches as distinct, they are, surprisingly, not so distinct. Rather, whenever man has used one approach at the cost of the other, he has deprived himself of the pleasure of attaining the truth. In fact, philosophy and mysticism are two different readings of religion, one intellectual, the other artistic, both aspiring to the evolution of mankind through logic and compassion.

We may not speak of philosophical traditions and mystic experience without first considering religious teachings and beliefs. The study of religion is the study of man and the mysteries of his wonderful life. The future global civilization will depend on qualities and the final truth, and this will not be achieved without familiarity with forms and diversities, dialectics and, consequently, logical dialogue and unity of being (waḥdat al-wujūd). The colloquy based upon compassion, with the help of philosophy and mysticism, paves the way for attaining this sublime goal. Within the context of philosophy and mysticism, geographical borders, cultural, linguistic and racial differences, different living conditions and social and economic situations, all these educate man, far from destroying his creative mind.

Divine religions, having these sublime characteristics, have never imposed themselves on human beings. Rather, they have constantly asked novel and mysterious questions which have aroused man's God-seeking nature, inspiring him with a philosophical and at the same time amorous quest. Religion aims at man's love and intellect and man tries to answer the questions that arise, drawing on his mystic and philosophical faculties. Indeed, religion provides the most logical dialogue throughout man's history, inviting all thinkers and great civilizations to a mutual dialogue with the purpose of attaining truth and peaceful coexistence. This is a valuable goal, which has long been neglected in this world of values and anti-values, subdued to the desires of certain ignoble individuals. Religion teaches man how he may attain this goal by finding logical answers to questions about existence as well as understanding his position within the world of existence and participating in a global and friendly discourse.

Religion and two other valuable disciplines, philosophy and mysticism which derive from it, provide man with inexhaustible power to attain the pure source of existence and to challenge the lower (carnal) self. The desire to attain the source of existence is compatible with man's nature, and man has been gifted with such a passion that he fears nothing in his quest. This can be the foundation of a unique universal civilization to which man has been looking forward impatiently, even though man today has forgotten his true position in the world of existence. In spite of all love and logic and reason, in spite of the fact that he is expected to act as the image of God on the earth, man commits all kinds of crime.⁸ Man, though experiencing great civilizations in history, and in spite of his recognition that he can attain immortality by returning to his very nature, is now surrendered to a world of diversities and contradictions. Lacking sufficient knowledge, he has taken this world as the ultimate destination, and

created wars and bloodshed. Man, in other words, has disregarded the unified nature of existence, and all these wars and differences are due to his narrow-mindedness.

The truth is that religion, reason and emotion, which are manifested as religious knowledge, philosophy and mysticism, invite man to reasonable thinking based on understanding and love. They give man the courage to criticise and struggle, both of which are essential to creativity in thought and in practice. Using these valuable gifts of nature, man creates civilizations. Civilizations are not the products of wars; they are the results of thinking, love and tolerance. Man begins to build a civilization when he tries to show others that he has a more creative mind, and ideal-seeking spirit and delicate emotions. Civilizations, in fact, are manifestations of man's reasonable and compassionate perfectionism.

As an approach toward perfection, mysticism asks questions about the why of existence and man's ultimate purpose, thus inducing the human mind to seek knowledge and explore truth. Like philosophy, mysticism, by offering the theory of the unity of being and God's permanent casting of light over creation, establishes a relationship between the creator and the created like that between a source of light and the rays it emits. It inspires the truth seeker to embark amorously on the Way. As the rays of light reflected from a source of light wish to join the source, so does the traveller seek to return to his origin. The unity of being holds that there is only one truth and this is the source of all existence, and the whole of existence is a manifestation of the One Being (al-wujūd al-wiḥīd al-ʿaqq). He is the absolute truth and existence and perfection depends on attaining Him and being with Him. The mystic considers existence as a unity, even though it is so diverse.

These diversities, to the mystic, are artistic manifestations of a unique existence. For this reason, the aspiration to light is the central aim in mysticism. Light symbolises knowledge, as many scholars maintain, but this knowledge is different from all other kinds of knowledge.⁹

Attaining this knowledge, man can mystically reconcile his outward and inward contradictions. This is the call of his divine nature, the same path that Lao Tzu calls Tao, believing that anyone keeps along the natural track, or the way of nature, as the Qur'ān states, will attain truth.¹⁰ In this context, the amorous dialogue which mysticism holds between man, his nature and God is very important. This dialogue is the story of man's attaining consciousness and a real and permanent existence by knowing various manifestations of existence and diversities. But under what conditions is it possible to attain this knowledge?

Mysticism invites the traveller to a practical dialectic and a discourse of friendship and agreement, which leads to unity in the world of existence. Participating in this dialogue are two apparently contradictory aspects of man's existence: love and reason, logic and compassion. In fact, the logic of mysticism is the logic of love, and it is a quest and motion for attaining the best. The evidence for this logic is derived from man's spirit, kindling in him the fire of joining light, so that man is filled with the passion to know, to seek and to experience true pleasure. For mysticism considers love and motion as the substance of existence.¹¹

Mysticism acknowledges the differences and contradictions as it maintains that it is these very differences and contradictions that make it possible for man to attain knowledge and the pleasure of seeking truth. To attain unity, one has to go beyond diversities. True mysticism respects the supreme position of man as image of God on earth, a principle that must be taken into consideration in the foundation of the world future civilization as well as in social relations. It is a principle that religion and

philosophical systems have confirmed, defining man not as self-centred, arrogant, and whimsical but as humble, God-seeking, thoughtful, and reasonable.

Mysticism teaches man that the diversities in the world of existence are abundant, but that they are all rays reflected from the light of truth. Monotheistic belief that 'there is no god but God' is not exclusive to Muslims. Followers of all religions also hold this conviction, which, in mysticism, is reflected as a unity. A person believing in this unity seeks one thing only: unity with the never-dying source of existence, or logos, the word that the ancient Christians used. Logos, or the 'Perfect Man' in Islamic mysticism, is a man who, based on his unitary belief, considers no credibility for diversities and contradictions.¹² These contradictions, to him, are only tools of knowledge, not agents of pride and oppression. He views God as the firm foundation of existence to whom everything returns and to whom everything belongs. Such a man will have the tolerance necessary for accepting truth in all its manifestations. He has observed the diversities; he has lived with them, and has himself turned into an existence of diversity without being surrendered to them. It is extremely difficult to be committed to certain people and to judge them justly at the same time.

It is extremely difficult to be wise and to love. The Perfect Man is a blend of contrasts, and this is his greatest achievement in his quest for unity. ¹³ The opposite of the perfect man is a narrow-minded dogmatist, one that has always been condemned by religion, mysticism and philosophy. In fact, mysticism aims at producing a thoughtful, logical, tolerant and compassionate person, and this is the most beautiful dialectic in the history of existence, drawing man from his inward and outward contractions to the realm of peace and understanding.

Mysticism considers man as the supreme manifestation of the divine word or logos.¹⁴ Mysticism too aims at deifying man, so that man, having divine attributes finds life with all its pains and sorrows tolerable and becomes aware of his responsibility. Man is thus freed from ignorance and negligence and embarks, like a prophet, on a daring struggle whose main aim is to subdue the lower self and be kind to other fellow human beings in spite of the fact that he is aware of their wickedness or unkindness. It is for this reason that God says that tolerance is among the most important attributes of all prophets. Prophets were human beings who, living among negligence and diversity, nonetheless had the courage and knowledge to seek unity and invite others to do so thoughtfully and amorously.

If we look at nature and at wildlife, we realise that all animals move toward perfection. This is made possible by inner guidance. But this perfection depends on the principle of the 'survival of the fittest'. But can this be a guiding principle in man's life as well? Is being physically alive the ultimate purpose of man's life or is there a more sublime purpose? Man's dignity is so sublime that he should not give up all thinking and love, resorting to struggle as the only means of survival. Although various groups and individuals have expressed different opinions about the means to achieve peace and understanding, this diversity itself should not lead to wars. Diversities of any kind should never be a justification for any struggle. In fact, this diversity of religions, mystics and philosophical schools are an ornament of the world of existence, which otherwise would have been plain and dull.

We now present a philosophical approach to the question of the dialogue of civilizations. In Hegel's view, dialectics is the result of thought conforming to the evolution of the being. In fact the Absolute Idea moves towards internal perfection; that is, it negates itself to return to the self and by enrichment through this conflict attains its perfect state. Unlike Plato's dualistic and imperfect dialectics, Hegel's is ternary and consequently perfect. Every definition refers to its opposite and finally is transformed in another conflict. In an indirect and general sense, dialectics is the progress of the mind from the present

to a better point in order to reach an enriched state. In other words, dialectics and its greatest result, dialogue, is argument and thought in search of a better choice and progress towards a better being. Dialectics is a dynamic movement that enables man to recognise and reconcile conflicts and to seek the one truth not through wars but through logical, peaceful and epistemological dialogue. That is why dialectics has been translated into Persian as 'journeying of the mind', which is the conscious and critical progress towards the truth. This is how dialectics, born of logos or logic, employs dialogue, which is critical and wise speech, in order to realise among the mass of conflicts, which are sometimes in harmony and sometimes in strife, the value of transcendental spirit.

Philosophical dialectic and the perfect man, both of which emphasise attaining the knowledge of contradictions and diversities by uniting with the real source of existence, teach man that unity is the ultimate purpose of existence. Thus they encourage him to tolerate the difficulties and frustrations, preparing him for a daring struggle against the lower self. They shatter man's arrogance so that he will find the desire to know. Mullī ʿadri Shārizī (d. 1641) states in his valuable *Four Journeys* (al-Asfīr al-Arbaʿa):

Contradictory attributes like blackness and whiteness, bitterness and sweetness, pain and pleasure may not combine in a single entity due to its capacity limitations. But man's nature, while being a unitary entity, is a blend of contradictions and the more man moves away from materialism, the better he is able to combine contradictions.¹⁵

Philosophy, too, presenting dialogue which is manifested through the dialectic, provides man with the knowledge which gives him tolerance and thoroughness. The diversities in the world are like colours of the rainbow broken up by a prism. As the Sufi poet Jīmī (d. 1492) states:

Creatures are like various pieces of glass
On which fall the rays of the sun of existence.
Every piece of glass, red, yellow, or dark,
Reflected the sun in the same colour it was.

All scholars investigating pluralism are of the opinion that philosophy is the product of the diversity of religions, which are pluralistic as well. A civilization, which is based on such a thought, must manifest itself in various forms, sometimes in the form of the civilizations of Iran and Egypt, sometimes in the form of the civilization of India and China, and sometimes in the form of the civilizations of Greece and Rome. But the truth behind all this is man's unique power to live better depending on logical dialogues and friendly colloquies. Philosophy teaches man to think. Dialectics, in fact, aim at reconciling colourful and deceptive contrast. It is the story of passing through diversity to reach unity, the story of the ascension of travellers who find the world a collection of the manifestations of a unique truth, one calling Him God, one World Spirit, one Nirvana, one Ahura Mazda, one Dainichi Nyorai. It is not important how you reach this destination. What is important is the very act of reaching. Great civilizations have drunk out of the same fountain. Religions are diverse. There are various mystic and philosophical schools. But all this cannot justify the superiority of one group over another, and should provide no justification for transgression. This is the law of existence, and it must be like that.

The art of an artist lies in his deployment of an array of colours. If he were to use one colour only, he would not be able to claim that he is an artist. Different civilizations were born and thrived in various geographical areas. For various historical reasons and geographical barriers, they could not have developed under the same conditions. According to the Qur'ān, the difference in colours, languages and

thoughts provide a means to knowing better.¹⁶ Thus all the diversity in whatever area is the product of the experience of various groups of people under various conditions.

In other words, the differences of opinion and outlook result from various social, geographical and cultural conditions, which have formed experience. It is for this reason that differences and plurality would not only prevent destructive rivalry among human beings but must help man draw a more perfect picture of truth. Just because a Jew calls God Yahweh, a Christian calls God Father, and Muslim Allah, does not mean that one religion is superior to another. Philosophy asks man to be tolerant, so that he can bear contrasts and even unkindness, and can himself turn into a set of contrasts. It is the only way he can attain a truth more profound than what he hears and sees. Philosophy teaches tolerance through logical dialogues. The approach that philosophy presents leads to the unique future civilization, a civilization in which men do not fight for survival, but use all their knowledge, which is the shared heritage of all human beings, to live a life which human beings deserve to live. This is going to be a human existence in the true sense of the word; enjoying a dynamic intellect and a heart which has experienced spirituality and faith so that it can go beyond the confines of plurality and repetition, presenting a unitary existence while reflecting contrasts.

All in all, one may say that since civilizations are the products of man's creative efforts in the realms of religion, thinking and love, they are proof of his being a human being. By finding common factors which have influenced the reason and emotions of man, regardless of his religion, nationality, language and race, and depending on man's God-seeking nature in spite of all evident differences and apparent contradictions, enmities will turn to friendships through dialogues. Differences will turn to means for attaining perfection and understanding. Within this context, each civilization, while maintaining its own identity, may derive benefit from the qualities and insights of other civilizations. As they say, truth may be found everywhere, sometimes under a fig tree, sometimes in the mirror of a spring, sometimes on the summit of a mountain, sometimes inside a dark cave. To find the truth, you must have the desire to know it.

The man that religion portrays as perfect is humble, kind and God-seeking, a combination of contrasts. If man acts based on the supreme example that religion, and consequently genuine philosophical and mystical schools present, he will no doubt have a better life than he has now. Modern man has taken advantage of the contradictions and diversities to create brutish wars. What man is meant to achieve is revolutionise within, move away from anthropocentrism toward theocentrism. The man who realises his real status within existence and makes all efforts to attain truth in a mystical and philosophical spirit, he is the real winner. Although knowing is accompanied with suffering, but depending on understanding one may tolerate all suffering and make a bright future. Every civilization, while different from any other, provides a reliable course through which man may realise his ideals. The desire for ideals has sometimes manifested in the west, sometimes in the east, sometimes in Islam, sometimes in Judaism, sometimes in Christianity, sometimes in Buddhism. Platonism, Neo-Platonism, existentialism, hermeneutics, fundamentalism, each has in turn entered the discussion in man's historical and intellectual dialogue. What is important is that all these approaches lead to the same truth: they are all seeking the same truth under whose shadow man will have a better life, a truth man has always found it his mission to seek.

Conclusion

That modern man is not able to create great civilizations is because he has forgotten his true status in creation; he has forgotten what valuable means he has in his power to attain perfection, what his destination is, how to think, how to speak, how to love. His reason and logic and love have been subject to deception and evil, and his life no longer smells of love and faith. God seems to have left the dark world he has made for himself. The man who does not know the way nor the destination, who has no provisions, is so lost that he is not able to create anything, as did his creative predecessors. History seems to have come to its end for him. Turning on the glorious pages of history, he does not find anything of value. All he sees is wars, and the violation of human rights. Contrasts are agents of hostility, not of knowledge and compassion. Knowledge has been replaced with ignorance and prejudice and 'being a human being' has found a mythological and unattainable meaning, which is only to be found in children's bedtime stories.

The world, which was meant to be a means for man's spiritual perfection and advancement, has turned into the burial-place of spirituality. Divine prophets, great civilizations, great mystics and philosophers have kept borrowing from each other; not only have they not been at war with one another, but have brought messages of love and understanding. They have experienced tolerance and reasoning and have always urged man to take one step forward. The most crucial need of the human beings in the 21st century is a civilization based on faith. In a comprehensive dialectic, man has taken a critical attitude toward his life and the world around him, has critically surveyed love and intellect, and has found the courage to participate in the greatest round table in history. He should thus be prepared to provide answers to the vital and basic questions, to start a new era of enlightenment in history by giving an end to the era of ignorance. The modern era is the era of learning and teaching, the era where man is thirsty for faith, a faith that will free him from the sorrows of life and the futility of routines. To start this era, man should know the real status of mankind, that he may not attain knowledge of his true being without faith and honesty. He should return to his very own nature, which is the manifestation of that mysticism and philosophy founded by the dialectic of religion and its grand dialogue. This dialectic language is the language of this very dynamic nature by which man ascends to its supreme status. It is for these reasons that prophets are human beings too.

It is possible to be a human being today and live a prophet-like life. Prophets assign prophecy as a mission to every thinking free individual. It requires an artistic struggle, a revolutionary understanding that urges man to perfection. Is it not the very thing that the modern man is seeking? The feeling of being a prophet and having burdened with a mission will bring about a major change in the modern man's attitude. We must know that paganism is not a name for a specific period in history. We cannot say that it is over now. Today, we witness modern paganism in a very deceptive and oppressive guise. Today we ought to know it and bravely fight it in all its guises.

Prophets, who are human beings, should, based on faith, love and thinking, make a universal civilization, and realise the promise of religion, which is the ultimate goal of history. This is man's conscious attempt to attain perfection as portrayed by religion. What is important is that regardless of our views of religion, philosophy, mysticism and the civilizations based on them, they all share an idea, and that is the link between God and man for attaining perfection and the truth of existence. The logical dialogue and intellectual colloquy give the human civilizations the possibility to know the contradictions free from enmity and experience a happy and exalted life. To do this, they will have to rely on their sense of criticism and their compassion for fellow human beings. This is man's course of action in the future for establishing a universal civilization in the shadow of logic, love and understanding. In spite of all shortcomings, modern man knows well that the caravan of human civilization will lead nowhere if deviated from this course. We must therefore try our best to present happiness and prosperity to the

future as a gift. The following story from Jalil al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1274) represents both philosophical and mystic thoughts in a nice manner:

The Hindus had placed an elephant
In a room as dark as could be.
Many people came to feel it,
For they were full of curiosity.
The hand of one fell on its trunk,
"It's like a water pipe," said he.
Another's hand fell on its ear,
"No, it is a fan, most definitely."
The third one cried: "It's a pillar."
Handling the foot up to the knee.
Said the fourth, patting its back,
"It's a throne, I must disagree!"
Each described the part he touched
For the whole, no one could see.
If each were to hold a candle,
They surely would come to agree.¹⁷

Notes:

1-Qur'ān 17: 44.

2-Qur'ān 16: 40; Genesis 1: 1.

3-Cf. Muḥammad Ḥabīb al-Shaykh, *al-ʿikma al-mutaʿiliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, eds. R. Luṣṣī et al, Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm al-ʿArabī 1981, vol. IX, p. 79.

4-Cf. C. Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1975.

5-s.v. Ashʿarites and Muʿtazilites in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, gen. ed. E. Craig, London: Routledge 1998.

6-Cf. T. Irwin, *Classical thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996, pp. 98-101.

7-At least, this is true of the Arabic ʿaql.

8-Since man in the Abrahamic faiths is created in God's image and is His vicegerent on earth.

9-On light mysticism in Islam, see A. Schimmel, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1975, inter alia pp. 259-63.

10-Cf. T. Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1986; S. Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992, pp. 6-17.

11-Cf. Schimmel, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, pp. 130-41.

12-Cf. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1928; Schimmel, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, pp. 280-2.

13-Cf. Mullî ĩadrij Şhĉrijzĉ, *al-Asfîr al-arba'a*, vol. VII, pp. 181-3, vol. VIII, p. 140.

14-Cf. Mullî ĩadrij Şhĉrijzĉ, *al-Asfîr al-arba'a*, vol. VII, p. 20.

15-Mullî ĩadrij Şhĉrijzĉ, *al-Asfîr al-arba'a*, vol. VII, p. 74; cf. vol. VII, p. 70, vol. IX, pp. 90-105.

16-Qur'ın 49: 13.

17-This is a famous Buddhist parable recounted by the great Persian Sufi poet in his *Mathnawĉ*.

Book Reviews

Robert McKim, *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001

The title of this book accurately describes the contents, it deals with the implications of what the author calls religious ambiguity and diversity. He suggests that religions should reflect on the fact that one could be a perfectly reasonable person and not interpret the world from a religious perspective, or from a different religious perspective. The implication he draws is that no religious belief, nor indeed any atheist belief, should be held firmly, only tentative belief is appropriate here. This thesis is only strengthened, he argues, by the hiddenness of God, which he assumes is deliberate, and so is a fact on which we should reflect. If God wanted us to hold religious beliefs strongly he would have clearly which religion was the right one, and if God wanted us to find it difficult not to believe in him, he would have revealed his existence more clearly. The conclusion is that God has hidden himself for a reason, to allow us to make free choices in what to believe and how to act, and we should react to this by acknowledging that any belief we have about religion has to reflect the ambiguity of God.

Readers will find a lot to learn from in this book, McKim discusses a range of modern views in the philosophy of religion, and he is always clear and accurate in his description of other thinkers' views. The analysis is very focused, and this is one of the most concentrated books I have read recently, the main theme returns time and time again, and it is clearly an important theme. The section on the hiddenness of God is the best, to my mind, and brings out many of the important features of this feature of God's relationship with us, although it also represents something which I found rather puzzling in the book. In the discussion of hiddenness we find no information about how particular religions interpret hiddenness, just the concept of hiddenness in general, as though all the religions adhere to a common concept of hiddenness. I wonder if this is true, it seems to me that different religions often take different lines on this, and it is a shame that the author did not talk about this a bit, it would have added weight to his account.

Perhaps it is here that the main criticism of the book lies. In talking about religion in general we get very little information about any particular religion, and this makes the account rather bloodless. One may say that this is not a problem, since the author is just analyzing concepts, concepts which are entirely unspecific and occur in all religions, but the view of religion which emerges is not necessarily very accurate to those aspects of religion which are not captured by epistemic issues.

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Valérie Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture*, London, I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001

In order to appreciate the scholarly merits of Valérie Gonzalez's engaging new book on aesthetics in classic Islamic art and architecture, we need to highlight some of the particulars of the intellectual context in which it is situated. In the past decade, most scholarly investigations in twentieth century history, theory and criticism of art and architecture, have tended to draw heavily on 'Continental philosophy' (French and German in particular) and critical theory in establishing their theoretical constructs or in advancing their critical interpretations. Many theorists and practitioners of art and architecture have been captivated by the promising possibilities that 'Continental philosophy' and critical theory may offer to the unfolding of their intellectual speculations about the situational character of space and its relation to representation, dwelling, modern alienation, urbanism, gender and politics. In addressing these matters, and in search for sources of intellectual inspiration, many theorists and theoretically-minded practitioners of art and architecture have often appealed to the writings of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, Foucault, Lefèbvre, Derrida, Deleuze, Baudrillard and Virilio. The influence of 'Continental philosophy' and critical theory has been mainly attested in an over reliance on developments within the phenomenological tradition in philosophy in general, and the unfolding of what came to be known under the appellation 'Deconstruction' in particular. As for the majority of pre-modern art and architecture historians, they in general tended to avoid any direct appeal to philosophy. The majority of art and architecture historians, like Martin Kemp, Thomas Frangenberg, Cecil Grayson, Edgar de Bruyne and Joseph Rykwert, mostly rely on well established scholarly conventions that are grounded by philological, textual, descriptive, chronological, stylistic and typological methods of analysis and critique. If theorists of twentieth century art and architecture have approached philosophy and critical theory with an unguarded enthusiasm, historians retained a measured approach to cross-disciplinary works, mainly in avoidance of what they saw as a form of 'anachronism' in interpretation. This has been manifested in a common wariness of methodological attempts that apply modern hermeneutic and exegetical techniques to pre-modern paradigms. This generalised methodological difference, between theorists and historians, is partly based on a distinction that may be drawn between theoretical investigations, that attempt to understand the current situational context of art and architecture, and historical investigations of past architectural and artistic practices and outlooks. Theorists and critics endeavour to unveil concealed tendencies within the complex practices of contemporary art and architecture whilst attempting to situate them within the broader context of our contemporary consumer and capitalist material culture. Such theoretical and critical inclinations are usually assisted by broad appeals to 'Continental' traditions in thought that approach intellectual problems from the standpoint of comprehensive interests in the human condition in general, and its complex cultural manifestations in particular. Many prominent art and architecture theorists have also been historically influenced by pre-1968 avant-garde transgressive manifestos of the twentieth century which sought novelty in artistic and architectural productions. In general, contemporary historians have not shown the same levels of fascination with philosophy and critical theory, given that these disciplines have not yet sufficiently challenged the rather well entrenched conventional scholarly methods. For instance, historians would not tend to use phenomenological methods of investigation in their attempts

to interpret works of architecture in the Renaissance (like the Duomo at Santa Maria del Fiore in Firenze) or to establish a better grasp of treatises written on art and architecture by the likes of Leon Battista Alberti (d. 1472), Filippo Brunelleschi (d. 1446) or the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (1st century B. C.). Likewise, this compelling methodological trend is found in Islamic Studies, and in the works of interpreters of classic Islamic art and architecture, for they too would seldom appeal to contemporary philosophical constructs in their scholarly investigations. However, one should mention that there have been many intriguing accomplishments in the scholarship of Islamic art and architecture that are not methodologically restricted to conventional descriptive, typological, morphological and stylistic modes of analysis and critique. Scholars of the calibre of the doyen Oleg Grabar, or of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Anne-Marie Schimmel and Jos Miguel Puerta Valchez, have presented some appealing theoretically-oriented interpretations of Islamic aesthetics, art and architecture. It is in this context that we should examine Valérie Gonzalez's book, *Beauty and Islam*, which represents a welcome addition to this growing constellation of Islamic art and architecture scholarship.

Although it is customarily held that the visual arts did not occupy a high point amidst the other spheres of knowledge and praxis in classic Islam, Gonzalez's work successfully illustrates the significance of such art within the course of development of the history of ideas and of material culture in Islam. Whilst following the scholarly paths of established historians, Gonzalez approaches classic Islamic art and architecture with the spirit of an Islamist scholar who is well informed by classic theology, philosophy, sciences and aesthetics. Moreover, and like her contemporary art and architecture counterparts, she is theoretically inspired by the intellectual subtleties of 'Continental philosophy' and critical theory. In general, Gonzalez ambitiously faces an intricate intellectual task in her attempt to reconcile contemporary artistic and architectural theoretical tendencies with a proclivity towards conventional scholarly historical investigations. Being well versed in theoretical and practical contemporary movements in art and architecture, her approach to classic Islamic aesthetics is further grounded in an appeal to the classics in Islamic thought. This is evident in her brief and well structured textual analysis of the works of Ibn Hazm (d. 1064), Avicenna (d. 1037), Alhazen (d. 1039) and Averroes (d. 1198). She reveals how aesthetic experiences are articulated in terms of a yearning for the good and the practice of morality, as well as arguing that the objective structuring of consciously perceived beauty is also mediated through feelings of empathy and love. Beauty is thus disclosed as being closely linked to sense-perception as well as being metaphysically and ethically loaded. By relying on phenomenological methods of investigation in aesthetics, Gonzalez is well in tune with emergent interests in speculating about the phenomenological dimensions that pervade some traditions in classic 'Islamic' philosophy. This tendency in scholarship challenges some of the stagnant strains within orthodox methodological practices that do not adequately account for subtle philosophical dimensions that contemporary techniques in interpretation would furnish when approaching classic texts. Unfortunately, it has been usually the case that many scholars in Islamic Studies have been strictly influenced by philological descriptive methods that do not yield thought-provoking interpretations or intellectually-engaging commentaries. This state of affairs may be radically contrasted with the sophisticated inclinations of many philosophers whose interests in the history of philosophy are intricately articulated in view of thinking about the human condition at large and its instances in metaphysics, politics, science, ethics and aesthetics. Perhaps Gonzalez's interest in phenomenological methods of investigation is attributable to her training in the history, theory and criticism of contemporary art and architecture, rather than being readily determinable from her interests in the customary philological conventions of Islamic Studies. After all, her hermeneutic tendencies diverge from the rigid restrictions of dominant philological glosses and commentaries. Influenced by contemporary theories of art and architecture, Gonzalez avoids the projective readings of the history of Islamic art in terms of stressing its links with

Islamic spirituality (as one sees in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's work). In addition, she does not extensively rely on tectonic and typologically oriented methods of analysis (as she discusses in some of the celebrated works of Oleg Grabar). In detecting aesthetic dimensions in the parable of King Solomon, as manifested in surat al-naml (Qur'an 27:44), Gonzalez uses modern techniques of hermeneutics and narrative literary analysis and critique while also being attentive to architectonic details. She thus illustrates with some examples how the tectonically transformed court of the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis, the queen of Saba) paved the way for her conversion into Islam and her submission to God with the assistance of Solomon.

In studying the visual arts, Gonzalez is preoccupied with the notion of representation. This is evident in her dense and intricately argued interpretation of the Comares Hall (the audience-chamber, or 'Hall of the Ambassadors', in the Alhambra palace in Granada, Andalusia). When treating the problem of representation in classic art and architecture, it is not always the case that scholars readily assume that artistic or architectural forms necessarily carry cosmological or theological relevance, nor do they usually imply that such forms are reducible to mere symbolic and semantically loaded interpretations. The structuring morphology and determining architectonics of an architectural space, like the Comares Hall, might indeed reveal a particular tendency in understanding our ontological and phenomenologically oriented relationship with the cosmos at large. However, this does not suggest that the situational quality of the space itself is reducible to a visual translation or displacement of a textual tradition or scripture. The perceptual quality and tectonics of a space, as well as the available construction techniques and the graceful aesthetic and stylistic taste of the period, all contribute to the shaping of architecture without undermining the cultural presuppositions of the Islamic civilisation that has generated it. Any appeal to literal representations and direct artistic expressions is indicative of a veiled iconographic tendency and a concealed bent on metaphorisation. What Gonzalez successfully reveals is that architecture in Islam should be approached from the standpoint of a perception-based itinerary. The symbolic density of architectural spaces would be reduced to suggestive and imaginative associations that are generated by way of a tectonic visual imaging that is set in terms of simulations of visual appearances in scenographic spectacles. The architectural spaces are thus generated to 'represent without representation'. The use of abstract geometry is indicative of a tendency to transcend the world of literal pictorial and spatial representational images without necessarily renouncing their evocative semantics. Geometrical constructs may also be cohesively associated with epigraphic inscriptions which tectonically constitute the texture of architectural spaces and generate their visual and idiomatic particularities. This is also encountered in the eminent significance of graphic symbols and their ocular/optical and non-figurative configurations which are signifying as well as being aesthetic. Nevertheless, although it is the case that conceptual geometry is universal and objective, one could also reasonably argue that it may be saturated with delicate philosophical connotations. Epigraphs and geometrical configurations do produce the multi-layered character of Islamic architectural spaces and their aesthetic virtuosity. For these are aesthetic, situational, sensorial and perceptual, as well as being evocative of conceptual, cognitive and intentional dimensions. Such spaces reveal elegant aesthetic investments, while in their evocative signifying potential they also appear as intentionally religious in scope. However, as Gonzalez shows, the formal character of these spaces is not reducible to a mere textual iconography. After all, as a linguistic sign, graphic trace or plastic object, the epigraphic entity projects its ambivalent nature on the space that receives it or that gets to be enclosed by its multiplied geometric configurations. Perhaps such ambivalence leads to the veiling accretion of indefinite scholarly interpretations.

To sum up, Gonzalez's *Beauty and Islam* successfully articulates the multidisciplinary dimensions that structure her investigation of Islamic aesthetics, art and architecture. Mainly based on a lecture series delivered at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, her book raises some thought-provoking issues

that advance promising possibilities for future scholarly investigations and debates. Being well positioned in the field of art and architecture history, theory and criticism, Gonzalez's work, with its application of philosophy and critical theory, presents innovative contributions to Islamic Studies that challenge received and dominant conventional methods of investigation. Written in a sophisticated, pensive, smooth and clear style, Gonzalez's book is engaging and is an impressive and inspiring addition to the scholarly works in Islamic Studies and art and architecture.

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Ali Benmakhlouf, *Le vocabulaire de Frege*, Paris, Ellipses, 2001

This excellent little book really should be brought to the attention of our readers. It covers the key terminology of the most significant philosopher of language in the last century, and so provides us with a useful amount of information about this vital area of philosophy. But what is worth emphasizing is how useful it is to have a book which deals with the vocabulary of a thinker, and this book is just one of a series. It divides up the key terms into three levels of difficulty, the first being appropriate to the more elementary student of the thinker considered, the second for the more advanced student, and the third is a bit wider in scope and provides the author's understanding of the particular term. This is exceptionally useful, and Benmakhlouf is acute in his analyses and selections of key terms. He has written a book which I am sure French-reading students of Frege will find vital, and it is to be hoped that something similar will one day be available to the English-reading world.

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A. de Libera, A. Elamrani-Jamal & A. Galonnier (eds), *Langages et philosophie: Hommage à Jean Jolivet*, Études de Philosophie Médiévale LXXIV, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin 1997, pp. xx + 426, paper, FF 342

Jean Jolivet is perhaps the most eminent medievalist, at least specialist in medieval philosophy, in France and his expertise and interests range from Latin scholasticism to classical Arabic/Islamic philosophy. This excellent selection of papers that make up a festschrift in his honour is indeed a truly fitting and appropriate tribute to a great scholar. They pay very appropriate homage to his interests in Kindiana, medieval science and the relationship between philosophy and theology in the medieval period. The list of contributors reads like a who's who of the most eminent scholars of medieval philosophy and science. The contributions are in English, French, and Italian.

The opening contribution by Muhsin Mahdi, Emeritus Jowett Professor of Arabic at Harvard University sets the theme by analysing briefly the relationship between the cyclical view of history and the concept of a 'philosophic' religion that he has extracted from his many years of research on al-Firjāb. The collection is then divided into four parts. The first section deals with scientific and textual traditions. Roshdi Rashed looks at applied mathematics and the issue of concave and convex mirrors. Max Lejbowicz discusses Euclidean geometry in the Latin 12th century. Zenon Kaluza considers Jerome of Prague's disputations. Jules Janssens analyses Avicenna's Ta'liqāt and comparing it with the Dīnīshīma-yi 'Alī' suggesting a dating of the late 1020s. Charles Butterworth's essay on the short commentaries on logic of Averroes draws on the new approach to the Averroes corpus suggested by the late Jamīl al-Dīn al-'Alawī.¹ Tony Lévy's piece on the concept of the temporal infinite in Maimonides (d. 1204) and Gersonides (d. 1344) deals with a central aspect of the kalām argument on creation. The contrast in their positions reveals an aspect of the disputed Aristotelian legacy in medieval, especially Jewish, philosophy. Michel Lemoine's paper on the uses of the Timaeus in the Latin West indicates ways in which the Platonic corpus was understood through the tradition of Middle Platonism. It tackles the myth of the near non-existence of the Platonic corpus in the middle ages drawing on the earlier debates of Klībansky and Gersh.² Henri Hugonnard-Roche is the only contributor to deal with the Syriac tradition. He analyses Sergius of Resh'aynī (d. 536) and his teaching of the Aristotelian logic corpus and formation of the organon. He suggests important themes of influence on the Arabic Aristotelian logic tradition.

The second section comprises papers on logic and philosophy of language. Irène Rosier-Catach's paper on the prāta rident problem in semantics looks at some of the approaches of Peter Abelard, Thierry of Chartres and William of Conches to the sophistic elenchi of Aristotelian logic. The context of the discussion is the possibility of theological discourse and the use of analogy in 'God-talk'. Alain de Libera looks at the theory of the distributio in the 13th century in terms of reference and quantification in language. Two papers follow on language, intentionality and signification in the thought of William of Ockham by Joel Briand (in French) and Roberto Lambertini, Constantino Marmo and Andrea Tabarroni (in Italian).

Psychology is the subject of the third section. Jean Michot's article on Avicenna's definition of the soul is a useful translation of the relevant section of the Risāla fī a'wāl al-nafs taking as its cue the famous Aristotelian definition of the souls as the first entelechy of the body. It is appended with an informative Arabic-French lexicon of psychological terms in Avicenna as illustrated in the epistle. Édouard-Henri Wéber analyses the Avicennan tripartite universal, that is the division of the universal into the logical, the intellectual and the natural, in the Shifī' and discussions on it in 13th century Latin philosophy, focusing on Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. Abdelali Elamrani-Jamal's study of the rational faculty in Averroes' commentary on the De Anima looks at textual issues and analyses and provides a translation of the chapter appended with a glossary of terms translated from the Arabic into French.

The final section brings together six papers on theology and exegesis. Alain Galonnier looks at Boethius's de Hebdomadibus. Édouard Jeaneau looks at apophatic theology and theophany. Constant Mews's paper looks at the relationship between 12th century nominalism and the Trinitarian doctrine. Gilbert Dahan analyses textual criticism of the Bible in the 13th century. Lambert-Marie de Rijk's paper presents John Buridan's struggle with theologians opposed to philosophical inquiry. Ulrich Rudolph's paper proposes interesting relationships between Avicennan philosophy and kalām. In particular, he analyses the Ash'arite proofs for the existence of God in comparison to the famous Avicennan proof of the Necessary Being.

As a collection, there is a rich variety in the papers, which are all of a high quality. Current trends in research are well represented and much of the material is fresh and very much on the cutting edge. No one working in the field of medieval philosophy can afford to ignore it.

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Notes:

1-Jamīl al-Dīn al-'Alawī, al-Matn al-Rushdī: Madkhal li-qiri'a jadīda, Casablanca: Tubkal 1986.

2-R. Klibansky, The continuity of the Platonic tradition during the Middle Ages, New York: Kraus 1981; S. Gersh, Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin tradition, 3 vols., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1986-.

A. Maurières & Eric Ossart, Paradise Gardens, London: I B Tauris, 2001

The first thing to be said about this book is that it is very pretty. The gardens in the title are largely those of Arabic and Andalusian origin, gardens which seek to emulate in some way paradise. So we have many breathtakingly beautiful pictures and some wonderful poetry, especially by Rumi and Hafez, which makes reference to gardens and plants. There is also a discussion of the general nature of the gulistan, the bustan, riyad and the use of certain plants and of course water in the garden. The authors also mention briefly the influence of these styles on the rest of the Mediterranean world. and even those living in cooler climates could incorporate many of the ideas here to bring a touch of al-Andalus and the Middle East to their more northern gardens.

That said, on a conceptual level the book is disappointing. We get some vague generalizations about what makes up an Islamic garden, but they are vague. We are told for example that the references to paradise as a garden motivated many in the Islamic world to create gardens which represented their conception of paradise, but it is not clear to me what the difference is between a beautiful garden and a garden based on a conception of paradise. The idea that because paradise is described in both the Bible and the Qur'an as a garden then gardeners within the Islamic (and presumably Jewish?) traditions would try to create gardens in a particular way just seems wrong. Fruit do figure in the Qur'an but surely they would figure in any garden, since they are both beautiful and edible. Roses are certainly mentioned often by Rumi and Sufi poets, but then again one does not need any religious sensibility to appreciate the rose, nor do they claim that one does. On the contrary, they claim that the simple delight which one finds in the rose is an indication of the simple delight one should find in God. Finally, the drawings which the authors presents of the structure of the various garden designs seem to be wonderful patterns, but of no particular religious provenance. The whole area of horticultural aesthetics, which I am sure is an important one, especially for the understanding of what has often been called Islamic conceptions of beauty, remains to be explored, and readers of this book will not find much to stimulate them intellectually here.

That said, the quality of the images included is quite breathtaking. They do indeed hint at the paradise which lies behind what we see before us, and in that sense are true to the title.

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Nader El-Bizri, *The Phenomenological Quest between Avicenna and Heidegger*, Binghamton: Global Publications, 2000

The remarkable flourishing of philosophy in Western Europe in the 12th-13th centuries, in particular its consummation in the teaching the "Angelic Doctor," Thomas Aquinas, owed an enormous debt to the scholarly work of the Arab interpreters of Aristotle. While Aquinas turned Aristotle's vast achievement to the task of understanding of human being and action in the world to the service of grasping the meaning of Christian beliefs—including the sense of mystical practice and vision—the accomplishing of the same by the great Arab masters remained little more than an anecdotal presence off on the edges of the Christian European tradition. Yet with Aristotle as a common ground for Islam and Christianity, a brilliant opportunity for exchange in understanding between them lay unrecognised and untaken. Instead there were Crusades and Muslims and Christians were each "infidel" to the other.

Now, with Nader El-Bizri's study, we have a book that might contribute to a similar exchange of understanding, except that here it is the overcoming of Aristotle, and of the kind of metaphysical philosophy that took itself to follow from his thinking, that is proposed as a term of convergence. It is now the post-metaphysical thinking of being in the work of Martin Heidegger that functions to mediate the understanding of one of Islam's great historical thinkers, Abu Ali al-Husayn Ibn Sina (980-1037), known to Aquinas, and to the philosophy that followed him, as Avicenna. One of the very scholars who interpreted Aristotle for Christian Europe is now brought in to show a power of philosophical insight equal to Heidegger's in explicating, for a very contemporary focus, the human journey through existence, and hence Avicenna is again someone who could show something of the wisdom of Islamic thought to an otherwise often opposing audience. Hence the title of the book, which is at once indicative of its main thesis, and misleading.

The author has given a lot of care to explaining the overall plan, offering both a "Preface" (xiii-xx) and a long "Analytic Synopsis" (xxi-l). It is a wide-reaching and complicated task that El-Bizri has set for himself, and he himself points out a full treatment would be impossible within the limits of the book (xix-xx). That may well be the factor that limits his making fully clear why the link between Avicenna and Heidegger, over the nine hundred years separating them, should be called "phenomenological," yet El-Bizri seems unaware of any need to be cautious; for he shows no hesitation in his use of the term throughout the treatment. It seems clear that for El-Bizri a philosophy can properly be called "phenomenological" primarily if it possesses a sufficient number of basic elements that are basically similar to those found in Heidegger's work, Heidegger here epitomizing phenomenological philosophy. We have to see how well this works out.

The treatment in the book searches out two primary kinds of components in Ibn Sina's philosophy: a complex of philosophic doctrines, and a combination of two intellectual methodologies, that of analytic, conceptual thinking on the one hand, and symbolic presentation on the other. Thus with Avicenna (so,

in clear deference to non-Islamic readers, El-Bizri generally uses the Latin name familiar to European philosophy) "a new tradition in philosophy has been established . . . characterized by phenomenological inclinations in addressing the central question of being (al-wûjûd)" (xiv). It is the way Avicenna treats this question of being, then, that will display the standing of his thought as "phenomenological." In particular, with Heidegger's analysis of "Dasein" as the model, in its revealing of "the existential, phenomenological, and temporal features that characterize his non-ousiological ontology," El-Bizri proposes to show that an analysis equivalent to this is central to Avicenna's philosophical accounts of being; for Avicenna "gives expression to a process/event ontology" in clear contrast to Aristotle's views (xvi). This "process/event ontology" consists essentially in demonstrating the way the paths of thinking and being "converge" in the core of human being. The converging is that "between being and al-nafs," with the latter explained as the "soul-field" that is basically equivalent to what Heidegger's "Dasein." This is how Avicenna overcomes "substance or subject based" ontological accounts (ibid.). On this basis, then, El-Bizri argues also that Heidegger's charge that philosophy prior to his own work has simply laboured in an "oblivion of being" is overstated, for it simply fails to realize the remarkably dynamic character in the thought of the real Avicenna (xiv-xv, xvii, 1-3, and throughout).

It is, then, this accord between the positive assertions about the structure and dynamism of human existence in Heidegger's analysis (basically, his "fundamental ontology"), on the one hand, and what El-Bizri's retrospective interpretation can now discern so clearly in Avicenna's thought, that the latter is deemed "phenomenological." (Cf. 256, where El-Bizri's study is characterized as "address[ing] Avicennism in terms of contemporary philosophic concerns" and is, therefore, "a hermeneutic move that contributes to the undoing of the occlusion and obliteration of the other tradition that underlies Western thought.") This in itself can be legitimated, now, if one takes phenomenology to consist in positive doctrinal positions, to which methodology would be in service as a means. It is, however, debatable that phenomenology gets its identity from the doctrinal theses that can be identified within its work, instead of being defined principally by the methodology of its investigation. This latter interpretation is the dominant one (and I would argue correctly so), even if one would rely on Heidegger's explanation of phenomenology in *Being and Time*, §7, as El-Bizri apparently does without saying so. For in either the Husserlian or the Heideggerian conception of phenomenological method—the latter alone standing in this book as the model—what is determinative of the kind of philosophising one does is the way one proceeds in the analysis-process aimed at the "showing-non-showing" of that-which-appears, at the phenomenon. In other words, the method of getting to, and conceptually articulating, what can be made clear of that which "shows/not-shows" is crucial. Moreover this methodological character of Heidegger's work (and Husserl's, for that matter) makes the work of phenomenology essentially a problematic, a philosophic effort consisting in recognizing the problem-character of both the task and its procedure, rather than a program that uses various instrumental means—methods—for determining the definitive truth of things. While the process character of a philosophic effort is emphasized, this feature of phenomenology as problematic does not get represented in El-Bizri's treatment, or in his use of the term "phenomenology" to characterize Avicenna's thought; and this is what makes for the need to qualify that use. For example, to take phenomenology as an investigative program that retains a problematic character is not compatible with the understanding of it as a quest, as the title of El-Bizri's book has it. "Quest" suggests the sense of personal endeavour, the pursuit of self-realization in a goal that fulfils the intrinsic drive of one's own person and being. This is a connotation more in line with reading *Being and Time* as an existentialist tract, rather than as a radically new conception of and approach to ontology. The latter understanding of it is more in keeping with Heidegger's own stated aims, while the former is more the drawing of doctrinal lessons from Heidegger's thought in order to apply them to the pursuit of meaningful, fulfilling goals in one's own life.

There is, however, another feature to El-Bizri's study in this regard that needs to be emphasized, in fact is perhaps all-important to it. El-Bizri does actually emphasize methodology in another way, viz., in the form of the contrast between, and conjoined employment of, the method of analytic, conceptual thinking on the one hand, and of mystical, symbolic presentation on the other. It is a key feature of El-Bizri's treatment that he includes works by Avicenna in both methodologies in order to represent the full richness of the philosopher's achievement. Indeed, it is in the failure of European scholars to include Avicenna's writings in the symbolic mode (not to mention their reading his works largely in translation, rather than in Arabic, one of El-Bizri's most forceful criticisms) that has contributed to the truncated and distorted conception of his thought.

El-Bizri therefore studies, on the one hand, for example, the "De Anima" part of the "Physics" in Avicenna's Kitâb al-Shifâ, "The Book of the Healing"—termed the *liber sufficientiae* by the European Medievales (9)—for its explication of the nature of al-nafs, the "self" or "soul" (Chapter 6 of *The Phenomenological Quest*). "The Suspended Person Argument" (known more commonly as the "The Floating Man Argument") is a remarkable analysis of the core of human being as a dynamic "soul-field," rather than either a substance or a subject. The al-nafs in El-Bizri's reading, and in distinction from the practice of interpreting Avicenna in terms of the traditionally cast metaphysical reading of Aristotle, is an existential unfolding—essentially a becoming—that, while immaterial itself, requires association with corporeity to take place in its tending toward fullness in being, ultimately in a union with the "Beloved One (*ma shûq*)" (157). This latter feature, the culmination of becoming in "mystic union," is best seen, however, in writings done in the other kind of methodological achievement, Avicenna's trilogy, the "Visionary Recitals" (Chapter 7).

In these "Recitals"—"Recital of Hayy Ibn Yaqzân," "Recital of the Bird, and "Recital of Salmân and Absal"—one has texts written in "symbolism," rather than as rational analysis and explication. Here poetic imagery articulates the idea of the quest of self-fulfilment, which can be said to be "like a vector of potentiality-to-be and anticipation by way of an oriented mystic journeying. Al-nafs tends to be united with the 'Necessary Existent due to Itself' [a formula, *wâjib al-wûjûd bi-dhâtihi*, for that being that is *causa sui* and whose essence is existence (107-15)] through a delineation of the mystic return." (183) It is a "return back home," out of a kind of "exile" (184-85). "The self is thus located between the place of exile, where the self is thrown into existence, and the other place towards which its futural journey leads, as the originary place of its provenance and the continual source of its being." (187)

There are, thus, two points to consider in this reading of the "Recitals." On the one hand, there is the matter of their interpretation, as writings about somewhat that is concealed in ordinary life, but that can only show indirectly, via the appearances that show themselves but conceal the "other" dimension of fuller meaning, self-realization, and being. On the other hand, the "return" is represented in terms of an opposition between this world of one's journeying and the goal beyond it that is to be reached.

Regarding the mystic, symbolic expression of the "Recitals" there are two kinds of interpretation possible of the situation of concealment/unconcealment that structures that mode of expression. In one understanding, this symbolic, intrinsically interpretative situation offers a mode of articulation of its own kind, sufficient to itself and proper to its matter. That is, symbolic expression here would be a mode of articulation for a fundamental situation that can truly only be spoken of in this way; for what is to be spoken of can only be spoken of in hermeneutic mediacy, in the concealing unconcealment of symbolic expression. Symbolic expression would be the only way to present what is ineffable in terms of philosophic, conceptual explanation. In another understanding of the interpretive situation, the

symbolic mode of expression, again here in the "Recitals," would function as an allegorical mode of representing insights that, in this case, Avicenna has also articulated in philosophical analysis and explanation in his other writings. El-Bizri seems not quite to chose between the two (see 208-218, and the summary statement of the alternatives on 245), in that, at first at least, his emphasis is on the way an articulate Heideggerian ontology makes for clear conceptual characterization. This leaves a certain ambiguity in the whole treatment, but one that is not discordant with Heidegger's own work—the mediating factor in rereading Avicenna for the philosophic public. I shall return to this in a moment, but I first want to take up the second point about El-Bizri's reading of the "Recitals."

In either sense of the interpretative situation in the symbolic narratives, one feature of the "Recitals" stands out in stark contrast to Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, namely, the way the journey of the "soul/self" is a return to a "home" other than that of this world. El-Bizri reads Heidegger's analysis of Dasein as laying out the lines of the process that leads to the achievement of one's "authentic" being, that is, the achievement of what one is supposed to be on the basis of the constitutive dynamic of one's being. If "authentic" means "leaving behind" a whole system of concrete conditions and finding fulfilment in something "other" than that system—as the "Recitals" suggest—then Avicenna is advocating something different from Heidegger. In the economy of Being and Time as "fundamental analysis," it is constitutive of Dasein to be in this concrete world, with all the elements constitutive of this kind of being, namely, elements that in fact find their determinate concretisation in the way "anyone" exists, i.e., in terms of "das Man." For Heidegger achieving "Eigentlichkeit" ("[one's] ownness"), then, is the process of transforming the sense of this concretisation from that of an accidental accretion—"it's just what everyone does"—to that of the constitutively existential realization of my own being, marked as "my own" by the finitisation of my being in the finalizing possibility of death. Here is where the translation of "eigentlich" as "authentic" in effect converts Heidegger's ontological analysis into an existentialist one, i.e., one that reads the analysis as an analysis of self-fulfilment in a personal, individual sense; and this is, it seems clear, the way in which El-Bizri interprets Heidegger for purposes of his study.

This, too, would be where it would make some difference which of the two interpretive situations is in fact operating in the "Recitals": are they the authentic mode of expressing the process character of human life in its tending toward fulfilment in union with Consummate Being (my term here), or are they a symbolically expressive mode complementary to philosophic-conceptual explanation? Here one would have to decide if the "Recitals" are offering the definitive insight, and in a mode of its own, viz., in symbolic expression, into the true state of affairs in terms of which to understand human life, or merely repeating in another mode of expression what the work of philosophical analysis and explanation has already made clear. This is relevant to deciding if the "return" to the "other" place, where alone one achieves "authenticity" in mystical union, entails actual and final separation from the world of existential being, or only the transformation of the interpretive sense of one's existence in the world. In the version of the interpretive situation in which the in-itself ineffable can ultimately be expressed only symbolically, the message of the "Recitals," as El-Bizri represents it, is explicit about the kind of break with this world that is enjoined. In contrast, his reading of Avicenna's philosophical treatises makes his thought much more akin to Heidegger's treatment of Dasein as constitutively being-in-this-world.

However, in placing co-fundamental importance on the "Recitals" as intrinsic to the full character of Avicenna's thinking, El-Bizri also suggests a limitation to Heidegger's Daseinsanalyse. He writes: "what eludes Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is a mystic tendency that overcomes the confines of the propositional logical truth and tends towards the truth of an ineffable face-to-face encounter," a truth "of the order of a 'mystic union'." (141) Analogously, in terms of thematic concerns, El-Bizri writes of

Heidegger and Avicenna: "If Dasein's existential movement is that of being-towards-death, Avicenna's self-perfection [existential] movement is that of being towards the Necessary Existent." (194-95, bracketed phrase El-Bizri's.) Accordingly, if the mystic break with this world has an unconditional character, it represents a feature of distinct difference from the Heideggerian program. (It is worth remarking, too, that in this we have a signal instance for El-Bizri of a thinking that does not fall under Heidegger's charge that "oblivion to being" is characteristic of all philosophy prior to his own work.)

Finally, in connection with this same topic, one has to recognize one feature that confirms for El-Bizri the legitimacy of terming Avicenna's thought as "phenomenological," namely, this same interpretive structure of the "Recitals," again given their role as an absolutely essential component of Avicenna's thinking fully as much as his philosophical writings are. Here in the "Recitals" the interpretive—"hermeneutic"—character is all-important; it is the very soul of this kind of writing and lies at the very heart of Avicenna's realizations (see, e.g., 190-92 and 235-43). This, however, is to take "interpretation" in a sense that is much broader than the sense "hermeneutics" takes on in Heidegger's work (or that of his follower Hans-Georg Gadamer, mentioned in Chapter 8). The hermeneutics of symbolic expression in religion is a methodological feature shared by many mystic traditions, and indeed its resurgence in 19th century Biblical critical studies led to its becoming a feature of philosophic interest. But sharing in this long-standing and wide-spread practice is not justification for deeming Avicenna's work "phenomenological"; it lacks the defining specificity that "hermeneutics" in "fundamental ontology" practices and that Heidegger took such pains to explicate. Otherwise put, if Heidegger's work were to be interpreted as essentially mystical, if in the end there were an ineffability to the thinking of being—such that conceptual articulation fails, and poetic expression alone is efficacious—it would fit into this long-standing tradition of practice; otherwise it would seem to have to stand apart from it, even if it could be understood as explicating the ontological framework for the impulse to the mystical. In the end, however, El-Bizri introduces the point that Heidegger, turning from the too-logically conscious methodological concerns of *Being and Time* (though El-Bizri does explain a "turn" of this kind on Heidegger's part), does explain a revealing-concealing that is mystical in character, and therefore homologous with the hermeneutical situation in the "Recitals." It is the Heidegger of the mid- to later 1930s that now allows comparison to Avicenna (243-250), a Heidegger, however, who is not generally regarded as still "phenomenological" in terms of a methodology specific to that kind of philosophic program. Here is a further element of qualification on the term "phenomenological."

There are any number of further points that one could well dwell on, e.g., that El-Bizri shows Avicenna perfectly aware of Heidegger's "ontological difference"—i.e., the distinction between "being" and "a being" (*Sein* and *Seiendes*) (Chapters 4 and 5)—or the gnostic overtones of the relation between truth and mystery and the "mystic path of 'union'" (e.g., 67), or the role of "orientation"—i.e., taking the "Orient" as one's fundamental point—in the conception of progress towards self-fulfilment (e.g., 184, 189-90); but here we shall close with a few summary remarks

Taken altogether, El-Bizri's book offers a fascinating approach to Avicenna, namely, in terms of a towering philosophic figure in 20th century thought, Martin Heidegger, precisely in the aspect of Heidegger's critique of the philosophic tradition and his launching of a radically innovative program of thinking. That a measure of influence worked on Heidegger from his study not only of the major philosophic figures of European philosophy, but also of Christian religious and mystical tradition, gives all the more potential to the idea of rereading Avicenna with the Heideggerian "schema" as an interpretive lens. For Avicenna was also motivated by the double thrust of philosophic interest on the one hand and the compelling message in his religious context on the other—Greek philosophy and Aristotle, and Islam. Much of the book is a successful presentation of this kind of dual reading; yet it has

to be said that some portions are not quite successful. Too much has the character of doctrinal summary, rather than engaging with a fundamental issue and representing analysis and inquiry in terms of that issue, even if it seems clear to me that this latter has motivated El-Bizri's writing this book. Moreover some of the treatment is not clear, or even confusing. But El-Bizri has attempted much, perhaps impossibly much for a compact treatment. To his merit he has at least opened up another way to recover and represent a thinking of high achievement and high importance from an earlier epoch, and of high relevance still today, in a world where Islamic history, tradition, and actuality have a rightful place to be affirmed and better understood.

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Oliver Leaman, *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1999, pp. 199, paper, £12.95.

Oliver Leaman is a prolific and sophisticated scholar of Islamic philosophy. His approach is to consider Islamic philosophical discourse and argument within the wider context of philosophical questions and problems. It is thus refreshing to see someone engage with Islamic philosophy as an intellectual and hermeneutical struggle, to understand that is immediate and living. It is not a medieval artefact that is only of interest to antiquarians. In the Preface, Leaman tells us that his view of the scope of Islamic philosophy has changed. He no longer confines the philosophical enterprise to the 'Greek into Arabic paradigm'. Rather, philosophy in Islamic extends beyond Hellenic speculations naturalised into Arabic. Although most philosophers of the Anglo-American traditions would see philosophy in these terms, he extends our notion of Islamic philosophy to include mystical thought in theoretical Sufism and the subtle and complementary blend of mystical intuition and discursive philosophy in the Ishrīqī (Illuminationist) school. Given recent developments in the philosophy of mysticism associated with the circle of Robert Forman and others, a philosophical account of Islamic mysticism may contribute to the wider discourse and intellectual understanding of the phenomenon of mystical experience. Another significant aspect of his approach is to avoid a reformulation of the 'reason versus revelation paradigm', which assumes an essentialist dissonance between intellectual inquiry and the moral and theological strictures of the Islamic faith. Instead, as Leaman quite correctly says, "Islamic philosophy is really part and parcel of the general working-out of the implications of Islam itself" (page ix).

Chapter One examines a very brief history of Islamic philosophy beginning with Greek influences and the translation movement and moving through a consideration of the role of Neoplatonism(s). It culminates in a brief consideration of the role of philosophy in the contemporary Islamic world. Early Islamic thought focuses upon nascent theology, a developing jurisprudence and discussions on grammar and logic. Given the sophistication of the debates in these areas, perhaps it was, and is, felt by some Muslims that philosophy, at least an alien Greek speculation, was unnecessary. However, in early texts and debates such strict generic divisions cannot easily be made. While exegesis and theology may not explicitly deal with philosophy, they do consider 'philosophical problems'. Leaman makes two important observations on the history of Islamic philosophy. First, he recognises that the assimilation of Greek thought was not a major source of contention because Muslims were confident of their unique identity and had a more productive understanding of their relationship and cohesion with others. There was no strict rupture and location of the self at the periphery of many others. Second, Islamic philosophy

developed mainly on the back on Neoplatonism and pseudo-Aristotelian works such as the *Theologia Aristotelis* (–thēlōjēji) played a major role. Unfortunately, Leaman does not offer any explanation for these phenomena. There are good historical reasons for the adoption of Neoplatonic strains of thought that can be explained with reference to late antique concerns and curricula as well as the nature of theologised and at times monotheistic renditions of the Greek Near Eastern intellectual heritage. Furthermore, one must take notice of the plurality of the Neoplatonic traditions that the Muslims inherited and developed.

Chapter Two rehearses much of the material that Leaman covered in his earlier work on medieval Islamic philosophy and the theological disputes between the Sufi theologian, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and the Aristotelian jurist, Ibn Rushd (d. 1192).¹ These controversies focus upon a set of binary oppositions: creation versus emanation in the account of cosmology, absolute knowledge versus an absence of knowledge of particulars with respect to divine knowledge, existential accounts of ontology versus essentialist accounts, and God's omnipotence versus human free-will. Logic (the Aristotelian organon) was assimilated into Muslim discourse because of the need for a 'neutral' instrument of argument deployed for polemic and disputation. After all, Muslims could not argue with Christians about their faith based on the Islamic revelation, which Christians denied. Thus logic took the place of a common discursive field. One addition to this chapter that is not found in Leaman's earlier work is the inclusion of the positions of Mullī ṭadrī (d. 1641) and other later thinkers. One section, however, that might raise a few questions is Leaman's discussion of the existence-essence distinction and his presentation of Avicenna's metaphysics of radical contingency, as one commentator has described it. Ultimately, all things that exist are necessary for Avicenna because they exist. Thus pure possibles do not exist in any sense, though there is a class of pure conceivables like 'unicorns', for example. Arguably, this leads to an Avicennan espousal of essentialism for which Ibn Rushd took him to task. However, this is, as the late Fazlur Rahman and others have argued,² a major misreading of Avicenna and certainly the later Avicennan tradition by introducing other modes of being such as 'the thing in itself' and 'mental existence' explains the nature of the 'existence' of conceivables that are not actualised.

Chapters Three to Seven discuss areas of interest ranging from ontology to political philosophy and constitute the core of the work. The chapter on ethics is a welcome inclusion given the oft-heard remark that there is no philosophical ethics in Islam, though again a wider consideration would have been useful (recognising, of course, the constraints of the brevity of the work's remit). Of special interest is Chapter Four, which attempts to locate mysticism at the heart of the study of later Islamic philosophy and strives to give a philosophical account of mysticism in Islam, albeit rather briefly. This is significant because much of the later traditions of Islamic philosophy in the East can be regarded as instances and discourses of philosophical mysticism (or mystical philosophical depending on one's emphases). Similarly, the chapter on knowledge considers Sufi epistemology and the doctrine of immediate knowledge by presence (al-ʿilm al-ḥāṣṣ). On the face of it, presential knowledge is susceptible to sceptical objections, the private language fallacy and accusations of solipsism. How does one communicate simple, non-propositional knowledge of the self to others and indeed how can such knowledge of others be possible? Leaman would argue that such knowledge is neither communicable nor useful. However, this account of simple knowledge, like earlier Neoplatonic ones, is predicated upon a unifying ontology in which neither is alterity a stark contrast nor is there a problem of 'other minds'. A student seeking a more detailed consideration of the problem would be advised to consult Mehdi Ha'eri Yazdi's book *Knowledge by Presence*.³

Chapter Five on ontology is arguably the most important, especially if one takes into account the traditional privileging of ontology over other fields of philosophy. It is mainly concerned with the

philosophical insights and method of Mullī ʿadrij and discusses his 'super-realism', his relationship with mysticism and his position on parallel worlds, or realms of existence. One may well criticise, once again, Leaman's portrayal of Avicennan ontology (Avicenna does not uphold a 'real' distinction between existence and essence, nor does he claim that existences are contingent per se and essences necessary per se) and also refute the role assigned to the imaginal realm. For example, existents in motion do not tend towards the imaginal realm; rather, the imaginal realm is an epistemological intermediary, which is explained with recourse to its reification. Existents in the modulated and unified scale of existence move and tend towards, and revert, to the One, their Origin and Principle and Return. The central ontological doctrine of Mullī ʿadrij is *tashkīk al-wujūd*, rendered the equivocality of being by Leaman and his use of an analogy with love is quite apposite and relevant since for ʿadrij, love is a singular *mushakkak* reality.

The final two chapters (Eight and Nine) bring us again back to modern concerns with the transmission of philosophical schools and ideals and an analysis of language and meaning by taking Ibn Rushd as a critical example.

There is much to comment in this short work and much more to dispute in terms of details. The discussions of Avicenna and Mullī ʿadrij at times require serious correction. But it is a delight to read such a brief and philosophically engaging work, though one is also dismayed by the lack of attention to textual detail. At times, one raises an eyebrow at a throwaway remark and scratches one's head at a more outlandish interpretation. Such matters could lead to serious misrepresentation and could mislead the student who picks up the book. Furthermore, the overall portrayal of Islamic philosophy, while in certain ways being rather sympathetic to mysticism, seems to be an contemporary Averroism that is rather popular in modernist, secularising circles in the Middle East. This approach privileges Ibn Rushd's Aristotelianising, rationalising account of philosophy, devoid of mysticism. While Leaman remains critical of Ibn Rushd, the very fact that he concludes the work with a discussion of Ibn Rushd's philosophy of language cannot be a mere coincidence.

One final question remains. Can one recommend Leaman's text as a beginners' introduction to Islamic philosophy? The answer must be a qualified yes. A historicist or philological approach cannot be an adequate replacement for this work, but at the same time much detail is disregarded. Even for beginners, one would have hoped for greater reference to the texts. But then the added problem of the paucity of sufficiently accurate and philosophically readable translations of Islamic philosophical texts remains. A Brief Introduction will hopefully be used in philosophy courses but should be read with a careful and critical eye.

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Notes:

1-An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy, Cambridge: Cambridge University press 1985.

2-Notably in two major articles: "Existence and essence in Avicenna," *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* vol. 4 (1958) pp. 1-16, and "Essence and existence: the myth and the reality," *Hamdard Islamicus* vol. 4 (1981) pp. 3-14.

3-The principles of epistemology in Islamic philosophy: Knowledge by Presence, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992.

Chuang Tzu, Teachings and Sayings of Chuang Tzu, translated by H. A. Giles, introduction by Lionel Giles. New York: Dover Publications, 2001. pp. i-viii, 1-68, paperback US\$4.95.

This is an unabridged republication of the work originally published as Musings of a Chinese Mystic in 1909 by Dutton & Company, New York, in the Wisdom of the East Series. The editors of the series intended the translation of books from eastern cultures "to be the ambassadors of good will and understanding between East and West" (viii). After nearly a century, will this very slim volume really be "welcomed by philosophy students, Orientalists, and readers interested in the thought and culture of the Far East" as the back cover claims?

This edition includes some of the most interesting passages in the Chuang Tzu. The translation still reads well, despite the lapse of more than a century. Most of the passages appear easy to understand, at least on the surface. Many of the anecdotal passages could be read on their own as amusing stories.

For the average person who is a complete stranger to Chinese culture, but who has a curiosity about it, this very affordable book might provide an easy introduction to an important Chinese text, which is interesting in itself and also has considerable influence within that culture. However, it is to be hoped that this curious reader will be inspired to find a more complete translation, as well as read what other scholars have to say about the complexity and the philosophical content of the work; Otherwise, s/he will end up with a rather distorted view of that great work of literature and philosophy.

H.A. Giles did a complete translation of the Chuang Tzu, published in 1889, which he improved on in a second edition published in 1926. This complete translation has a running commentary, and in some cases parallel passages from western literature, interspersed throughout the Chuang Tzu text. The removal of all these additional materials make this republished selection from his translation (with one or two modifications) more readable for a broader audience, but less valuable as a resource for "Orientalists" (if anyone still uses that title today) or even philosophy students.

From a scholar's viewpoint, the greatest setback of this selection introduced by Lionel Giles is hermeneutical. Those who accept the hermeneutical point that translation is interpretation and one cannot understand without interpreting a text will do well to treat any translation of the Chuang Tzu, more than any Chinese text, with caution. It is notoriously difficult to understand, even more challenging to translate. Both H.A. Giles's translation and Lionel Giles's introduction are at best interesting from the history of sinology perspective, at worst no more than the relic of an outdated hermeneutical approach to Chinese works.

The translation of 't'ien' (usually translated as 'heaven') as 'God', perhaps unremarkable in the first decade of the twentieth century, when this selection was first published, can no longer be accepted without comment in the context of subsequent scholarship, including heated debates among sinologists and philosophers about the meaning of t'ien, whether it is anthropomorphic, whether it is transcendental. I doubt if any scholar in the field today would still translate t'ien as 'God'. This is only one example of several problematic choices of English terms (including classical allusions) to translate Chinese terms with quite different associations, if not different meanings.

Given the size of the complete text, and its acknowledged composite nature, there is much to be said for partial translations, which are more accessible. To be useful to scholars and philosophy students, a volume of selections should have references to enable readers to trace the passages back to the standard complete text, especially when Lionel Giles took passages out of different chapters (as organized in the standard Chinese text) for each of his own constructed chapters.

The most serious problem with this selection is not its incompleteness, nor the absence of references to relate selected passages to the standard complete edition, but that it is based on an interpretation that is rather forced, so that the selectiveness further distorts the translation. This judgment is not simply based on a different reading of the Chuang Tzu from H.A. Giles's or Lionel Giles's own; rather what needs pointing out is that Giles's principle of selection attempted to force an extremely fluid text into too tight a mold. This results in a loss of much that is philosophically interesting and profound, as well as obscures important textual and philosophical problems.

From chapter titles like "The Doctrine of Relativity," "Illusions," "Passive Virtue," and "Immortality of the Soul," Lionel Giles clearly organized the selected passages to bear witness to his attribution of a specific philosophical 'position' to the Chuang Tzu. This 'position' is based on various philosophical assumptions, metaphysical and epistemological, of doubtful applicability to the philosophy of the Chuang Tzu – for example, mind-body dualism, subjective-objective dualism, immortality and the soul, among other philosophically loaded notions. Reading Chinese texts with western philosophical glasses is no longer the dominant approach to Chinese philosophy, even for those who do not know the Chinese language. Nowadays, scholars from both east and west tend to expect more sophistication in philosophical comparisons, as well as translations.

Lionel Giles's introduction, despite professed appreciation of the text, showed little sensitivity to the text. Giles described Chuang Tzu as "a natural sceptic yet inspired by boundless belief in his doctrine" (2). He also referred to Chuang Tzu's 'doctrine of inaction' or 'doctrine of spontaneity' and 'doctrine of non-angularity,' even though Chuang Tzu is one of the least doctrinaires of Chinese works. Little wonder that Giles thought Chuang Tzu's 'dogmatism' needed tempering, and that without his irony, Chuang Tzu would be in danger of "a sharp descent into the ridiculous" (11).

Citing a passage that could not fit into his exposition of how t'ien and tao are used in the text, Lionel Giles claimed, "The truth is that neither consistency of thought not [sic] exact terminology can be looked for in Chinese Philosophy as a whole, and least of all, perhaps, in such an abstract system as that of early Taoism." (4-5) Leaving aside the question of whether Taoism of any period is "an abstract system," I don't see how such an attitude to Chinese philosophy could promote the "good will and understanding between East and West" desired by the series editors.

The inane excuse is quite unnecessary in view of the availability of a much more obvious reason for inconsistency (other than the usual human fallibility that afflicts even great western philosophers). It is almost universally recognized that, even if such a person actually lived, Chuang Tzu did not write the entire content of what is now the Chuang Tzu. Other than an aside pointing out that the genuineness of some later chapters may not always be unimpeachable (9), Giles wasted no time on such details of textual history.

Giles's belief that the Chuang Tzu's "immortality is due less to the matter, much of which to modern notions is somewhat crude, than to the exquisite form," misses an important aspect of the text

emphasized by many scholars. "Its protean nature and literary subtlety are inseparable from its philosophical message: one cannot understand its content without careful attention to its multifarious and moving form." One should add that it is not possible to appreciate the beauty and power of 'the exquisite form' without understanding the far from crude philosophical content. If the matter of the text appears 'crude,' 'inconsistent,' lacking in 'lucidity and precision of thought,' it could only be because of Lionel's Giles's own procrustean approach.

Other than not being useful to the research community, be it experts or students, the volume would have served better to introduce a wider audience to the Chuang Tzu without the introduction. Or if it must have an introduction, it would profit more from one that qualifies the translation by elucidating some of the textual and philosophical problems involved, and aims to locate the selected passages in a wider, at times controversial, discourse, brought up to date for the twenty-first century, rather than one that tries to fit them into an old-fashioned straightjacket not of the author(s)' making.

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Notes:

1-Paul Kjellberg and Philip Ivanhoe (eds.), *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. xiii.

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A. Maurières & Eric Ossart, *Paradise Gardens*, London: I B Tauris, 2001.

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Chuang Tzu, *Teachings and Sayings of Chuang Tzu*, New York: Dover, 2001.

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30-Ebrahîmi Dînani, Gholamhosein, *The Rays of Suhrawardi's Philosophy and Thoughts*, Hekmat Publication, 2nd edition, 1366, p. 473.