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Time and Causation in Gödel's Universe

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Abstract

In the models of the universe constructed by Kurt Gödel, travelling into the past is in principle possible. The curious effect this has on causation is discussed.

In 1949 the great logician Kurt Gödel constructed the first mathematical models of the universe in which travel into the past is, in theory at least, possible. Within the framework of Einstein's general theory of relativity Gödel produced cosmological solutions to Einstein's field equations which contain closed time-like curves, that is, curves in spacetime which, despite being closed, still represent possible paths of bodies. An object moving along such a path would travel back into its own past, to the very moment at which it "began" the journey. More generally, Gödel showed that, in his "universe", for any two points P and Q on a body's track through spacetime (its world line), such that P temporally precedes Q, there is a timelike curve linking P and Q on which Q temporally precedes P. This means that, in principle at least, one could board a "time machine" and travel to any point of the past.

Gödel inferred, in consonance (as he observes) with the views of Parmenides, Kant and the modern idealists, that under these circumstances there could be no such thing as an objective lapse of time, that time or, more generally, change, is an illusion arising from our special mode of perception. For consider an observer initially at point P (with time coordinate t seconds as indicated by his own clock). At point Q (with time coordinate $t\zeta$) he boards a time machine and travels back to point P, taking time $t\zeta$ to do so. In that case, according to his own clock, $t\zeta - t + t\zeta > 0$ seconds have elapsed, and yet an identical clock left at P would show that 0 seconds have elapsed. In short, there has been no “objective” lapse of time at all.

Gödel remarks that in his universe this situation is typical: for every possible definition of an “objective” time one could travel into regions which are past according to that definition. He continues:

This again shows that to assume an objective lapse of time would lose every justification in these worlds. For, in whatever way one may assume time to be lapsing, there will always exist possible observers to whose experienced lapse of time no objective lapse corresponds... But if the experience of the lapse of time can exist without an objective lapse of time, no reason can be given why an objective lapse of time should be assumed at all.

Gödel also raises the issue of whether the fact that objective lapses of time fail to exist in his universe has any consequences for the universe in which we live—for us, at least, the real one. He points out that, while our universe differs observationally in certain respects from his model, there might be models containing closed timelike curves which are observationally indistinguishable from ours (a possibility later confirmed). In that case, it is already possible that our universe is one in which objective time is an illusion. And in any event, he goes on to say,

The mere compatibility with the laws of nature of worlds in which there is no distinguished absolute time and in which, therefore, no objective lapse of time can exist, throws some light on the meaning of time also in those worlds in which an absolute can be defined. For, if someone asserts that this absolute time is lapsing, he accepts as a consequence that whether or not an objective lapse of time exists (i.e., whether or not a time in the ordinary sense of the word exists) depends on the particular way in which matter and its motion are arranged in the world¹. This is not a straightforward contradiction; nevertheless, a philosophical view leading to such consequences can hardly be considered as satisfactory.

Such a philosophical view is called materialism. But it would be a bizarre materialism indeed which made the very existence of objective time depend on the distribution of matter!

There are even more disturbing features to Gödel’s universe than the illusory nature of time. To begin with, there is the possible presence of closed causal loops, that is, circumstances in which the relation of causation is symmetric: two events A and B for which A causes B and B causes A. Such a causal loop, one that could conceivably arise in Gödel’s universe, was presented in an ingenious science-fiction story by

William Tenn. A professor of art history from the future travels by time machine some centuries into the past in search of an artist whose works are celebrated in the professor's time. On meeting the artist in the flesh, the professor is surprised to find the artist's current paintings talentlessly amateurish. The professor happens to have brought with him from the future a catalogue containing reproductions of the paintings later attributed to the artist, which the professor has come to see are far too accomplished to be the artist's work. When he shows this to the artist, the latter quickly grasps the situation, and, by means of a ruse, succeeds in using the time machine to travel into the future (taking the catalogue with him), where he realizes he will be welcomed as a celebrity, so stranding the professor in the "present". To avoid entanglements with authority the critic assumes the artist's identity and later achieves fame for producing what he believes are just copies of the paintings he recalls from the catalogue. This means that he, and not the artist, created the paintings in the catalogue. But he could not have done so without having seen the catalogue in the first place, and so we are faced with a causal loop.

While causal loops engendered by trips into the past may be bizarre, paradoxical even, the above example shows that they are not necessarily inconsistent. However, certain uses of time travel into the past do seem to be barred on the grounds of outright inconsistency. Gödel remarks:

This state of affairs i.e., backward time travel seems to imply an absurdity. For it enables one, e.g., to travel into the near past of those places where he has himself lived. There he would find a person who would be himself at some earlier period of his life. Now he could do something to this person which, by his memory, he knows has not happened to him.

Indeed, granted the very possibility of travel into the past, what agency would then actually prevent me, say, from travelling into the past and killing my infant self? Gödel makes the intriguing, and characteristic suggestion that self-contradictory trips into the past of this sort may be prevented by a kind of macrocosmic version of the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics, elevating what would at first sight seem to be a mere practical limitation into a limitation in principle. He observes:

But the practical difficulties in travelling into the past would hardly seem to be trifling² Moreover, the boundary between difficulties in practice and difficulties in principle is not at all fixed. What was earlier a practical difficulty in atomic physics has today become an impossibility in principle, in consequence of the uncertainty principle: and the same could one day happen also for those difficulties that reside not in the domain of the "too small" but of the "too large."

There is, however, an important difference between the limitative principles of physics and any principles (call them "temporal interdicts") invoked to block changes of the past. In the first case it is logically possible that, for example, a body's velocity could exceed that of light or that an electron's position and momentum could be simultaneously measured with pinpoint precision. But any violation of a temporal interdict would involve a logical contradiction. If I was as a matter of fact alive as an adult at a certain time, then I cannot (as a consequence of being murdered as a baby) be dead at that same time. If this were possible, then not only time, but what we call objective reality itself, would have to be counted an illusion.

While closed causal chains are, on the face of it, consistent, and accordingly not excluded as possible outcomes of trips into the past, it is difficult to see how any temporal interdict devised expressly to prevent time travel for the purpose of changing the past would not at the same time also frustrate time travel for the purpose of setting up closed causal chains. For example, suppose that, in William Tenn's story, the critic, insanely jealous of the artist's fame, resolves to travel a little further into the past with the intent of suffocating the artist as an infant in his cradle. This would have to be impossible if, as stipulated in the story, the artist in fact lived to adulthood. So the critic's evil design must be frustrated on pain of logical contradiction. But how? By the critic failing to complete his journey? If the critic's trip into the past could actually be completed in the original nonparadoxical case, it could surely also be completed in the second case: how could the time machine itself distinguish between its operator's intentions in the two cases? In that event, what remains to prevent the critic, once he has arrived at his temporal destination, from suffocating the infant, thereby creating a contradiction? Nothing, it would seem, apart from contrived coincidences such as his dropping dead on arrival, the infant's parents suddenly appearing, leading to the critic's arrest, and the like.

If the critic does succeed in suffocating the infant, then, assuming that reality is not an illusion, it would seem to follow that the "past" into which the critic has travelled is in fact a different "past" from the one in which the critic originated. That is, his actions have "caused" the universe to "split" into two distinct past branches: one in which the artist survived into adulthood, and another in which the artist died in infancy.

We conclude that, if time travel into the past is possible (and feasible), and no restrictions are placed on the purposes to which such travel is put, then the universe must branch. Accordingly we have three possibilities:

1. Time travel is impossible.
2. Time travel is possible, with no "changing of the past".
3. Time travel is possible, and the universe ramifies.

Ramifying universes have arisen in connection with quantum mechanics, in the so-called many worlds interpretation. In this account, when certain types of interaction occur, typically, measurements, the universe divides into different branches, one for each possible outcome of the interaction. Observers branch (or split) as well, and each observer on each branch sees one of the possible outcomes. It is interesting to note that recent work by Deutsch et al. has shown that time travel with no constraints, that is, situation 3, is compatible with the many worlds interpretation. But again observe that here time travel takes place from the present of one "branch" of the universe into the "past" of another branch. Gödel's puzzle arises with the possibility of time travel within a single universe, and for this the problem of devising convincing "temporal interdicts" remains.

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Notes

1 This is because in general relativity the geometry of the universe is determined by the distribution of matter in it.

2 Gödel actually calculated how much energy would be required to make the trip into one's own past and complete it in one's lifetime; it turns out to be vast and apparently far beyond the realm of feasibility.

Mulla Sadra on Causation

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Abstract

Causation in Sadrian philosophy is a complex issue that operates at many levels. This paper will introduce an ontological and epistemological approach on cause and causation. and describe some of the divisions of causation. We shall conclude with a consideration of some implications and consequences for understanding the relationship of causation to key Sadrian philosophical doctrines.

In Islamic Philosophy terminology, the word "cause" is used in a general and in a specific sense. The general concept of cause is applied to an existent upon which the realization of another existent depends, even if it is not sufficient for this realization. The specific concept is applied to an existent which is sufficient for the realization of another existent. The following two diagrams illustrate the Ontological and Epistemological approach on Causation in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy.

Mulla Sadra says in Asfar and Shawahed "there are two senses of cause, the first of the two is that thing from whose existence the existence of another thing obtains, and from whose non-existence of another thing obtains. The second sense of the two is that upon which the existence of a thing relies; so its non-existence makes it impossible but its existence does not make it necessary.¹

According to Mulla Sadra Being (Wujud) divided to cause and effect.² But the concept of cause and effect are not quiddity (māhowi) concepts or primary intelligible, because their characterization (ittisaf) is external. Hence, these concepts are secondary philosophical intelligible.

Muslim theologians and philosophers have discussed the subject of the principle of causality. During discussion on the criterion of the need for a cause the Muslim theologians have thought the "emergence" ("hudūth") (coming into existence after being non-existent) is the subject. Contrary to them, the philosophers before Mulla Sadra believed that the subject of the causality is contingency (imkān), that is, every existent which essentially has the possibility of non-being, such that the supposition of its non-being is not impossible, is in need of a cause.³ Thus, it is not intellectually impossible for an existent which is an effect to be eternal.

However, it is to be noted that the contingency (imkān) is the attribute of (māhiyyah) a quiddity. For this reason, the criterion for the need for a cause is regard to be "essential-contingency" (Imkān dhatī).⁴ But Mulla Sadra criticizes them, Ibn sina and Sohrevardi, because essential -contingency is homogenous with the "fundamentality of quiddity" (asalāt al-māhiyyah). However, Mulla Sadra, who establishes the "fundamentality of existence" (asālat al-wujūd), has based his philosophical discussion on Existence. He says that the basis of the need of an effect for a cause is the mode of its existence. With attention to the levels of gradation of existence, in which each weaker level is dependent on a stronger level, the subject of the proposition can be considered "the weak existence" whose dependence on the need for a cause is due to the weakness of the level of existence. So, according to Mulla Sadra the subject of the principle of causality, will be "impoverished existent" (mawjūd-e faqir) or 'dependent existent'.⁵ Hence, according to fundamentality of existence, firstly, the causal relation is to be sought in either the existence of the cause or the existence of the effect rather than in their whatness/quiddity (māhiyyah). Secondly, being an effect and the dependency of an effect are essential to its existence and the dependent existence will never be independent and without need of a cause. On this basis objective existence (Wujūd-i 'eini) divides into two parts, the independent and the relational (mustaqil and rābit).⁶

Every effect in relation to its creating cause is relational and dependent. Every cause in relation to the effect it creates is independent, however much it may itself be the effect of another existent, and in relation to that, it will be relational and dependent. The absolutely independent is a cause, which is not

the effect of the existence of anything. And it is one of the most valuable results of the Mulla Sadra philosophy.

Primary Cause or Absolute Cause

On the basis of three principles of Mulla Sadra philosophy, i.e. "the fundamentality of existence", "the relativity of the effect in relation to the creative cause" and the "graduation of the planes of existence", it follows that every effect is at a weaker level than its creative cause, and its cause, in turn, is at a weaker level than a more perfect existent which is its creative cause, until we reach an existent which has no weakness, failure, deficiency or limitations, and it will be infinitely perfect, so that it will no longer be the effect of something. The distinguishing feature of the absolute cause or cause of causes is the infinite intensity and perfection of existence.

The Reality of the Causal Relation

According to Mulla Sadra the existence of the effect is a ray radiated by the existence of the cause, as well as the relation itself and its very dependence, and the concept of relation is abstracted from its essence, and in technical terms it is said that existence of the effect is an "illuminative relation" (idāfah ishraqiyyah) of the existence of the cause, not relation to be considered as belonging to one of the categories abstracted by recurring relations between two things, such as ventured by Hume and his followers.

The divisions of causes are rational ('aqli) and yield mutually exclusive pairs of terms, positive and negative. A cause understood in its general sense, that is, an existent upon which another existent is somehow dependent, may be classified in various ways, of which the following are the most important:

1) Complete and incomplete causes: A cause may either be such that it is sufficient for the realization of the effect, and the existence of its effect depends on nothing other than it. Or such that it is not sufficient for the realisation of the effect even though that effect cannot be realised without it. The former sort of cause is called a "complete cause" and the latter is called an "incomplete cause".⁷

2) Simple and compound causes: Simple causes include completely immaterial things. A simple cause is one that has no parts, and a composite cause is its contrary. A simple cause is either simple in respect of external reality, or it is simple from the viewpoint of the intellect. The simplest of entities is that which is one composed of existence and quiddity, and that is the Necessary Being, exalted in His Name. Compound causes include material causes composed of different parts.⁸

3) Proximate and remote causes of immediate and mediate causes: A proximate cause is one where there is no mediate between cause and effect, while a remote cause is one where there is a mediate between cause and effect.

4) Internal and external causes: The internal causes are matter and form, whereby the effect is constituted and sustained. The external causes are the "agents" (i.e. efficient cause) and the "end" (i.e.

the final cause). If the effect unites with its cause and the cause remains internal to the existence of the effect, it is called an interior cause while an external cause remains external to the existence of its effect.

5) Real and preparatory causes: Sometimes the concept of cause is applied to that existent upon which the existence of an effect is really dependent, so that the separation of the effect from it is impossible. These are called real causes. In the case of "preparatory cause", or preliminary (al-mu'iddat), the concept of cause is applied to that existent which prepares the way for the appearance of its effects, although the existence of the effect does not have a real and inseparable dependence on it.

6) The four Aristotelian causes, namely, material, formal, efficient and final: The material cause is the ground for the appearance of the effect and remains intrinsic to it. The formal cause is the activity which appears in the matter and which becomes the source of the new effect in it. The efficient cause is the means by which the effect is brought about. The final cause is the motivation of an agent for the performance of the action.⁹

7) According to Mulla Hadi Sabzewari and M.H. Tabātabā'eī Agents can be divided into eight types: "natural agents" (fj'il bi l-ṣab'), "constrained agents" (fj'il bi l-qaṣr), "intentional agents" (fj'il bi l-qaḍd), "compelling agents" (fj'il bi l-jabr), "subordinate agents" (fj'il bi l-taskhḥr), "providential agent" (fj'il bi l-'iniya), "agent by agreement" (fj'il bi l-riḥā) and "agent by self-disclosure" (fj'il bi l-tajallī).¹⁰

The Homogeneity (Sinkhiyyat) of Cause and Effect

The homogeneity between the existence-giving cause and its effect means that this cause has the perfection of the effect in a more perfect form. If a cause in its own essence did not possess a kind of existential perfection, it would never be able to grant this perfection to its effect. In other words, every effect is produced by its cause which has the perfection of its effect in a more perfect form. This subject becomes more clear with regard to the relational nature of the effect with respect to its existence-giving cause and the special gradation between them, which were established in transcendent philosophy. With regard to this topic a problem may be raised, that the solution to this problem became possible by virtue of the fundamentality of existence, and that on the basis of the "fundamentality of quiddity"/whatness there would be no correct solution for it.¹¹

Unity of an Effect for Unity of a Cause

According to a well-known philosophical principle, from a single cause nothing can be produced but a single effect, "the one produces nothing other than the one" (Alwahed la yasdero 'anh elal wahed).¹²

Discussion

According to Mulla Sadra philosophy, since the causal relation really holds between two existences, it is clear that the quiddity (Mahyyat) of something cannot be considered the cause of its existence, for quiddity (Mahyyat) in itself has no reality such that it could really be the cause of something. Likewise, a quiddity (Mahyyat) cannot be considered the cause of another quiddity (Mahyyat).

The Impossibility of Infinite Causal Regress (Mahal boodan-e tasalsul -e 'illal)

In this regard Farabi presents "Burhan-e Asadd Akhsar" ('the firmest and most concise proof') this proof (Burhan) covers all real causes. Mulla Sadra founded a new proof on this subject, on the basis of the principles of transcendent philosophy.¹³ Mulla Sadra's proof is restricted to existence-giving cause and complete causes.

According to the fundamentality of existence and the relatedness of the existence of the effect to 'the existence-giving cause', every effect in relation to its creative cause is just that relation and dependence itself. It has no independence of its own. If a given cause is an effect in relation to a prior cause, it will have that same state (of dependence) to the prior cause. Thus, if a chain of causes and effects is assumed, such that each cause is the effect of another cause, it will be a chain of relations and dependencies. It is self-evident that dependent existence cannot occur without the occurrence of an independent existence upon which the former depends.

Thus, inevitably there must be an independent existence beyond this chain of relations and dependencies in the light of which all of them occur. Therefore, this series cannot be considered to be without a beginning and without an absolutely independent member.

Conclusion

According to Prof. S. H. Nasr

Mulla Sadra accepts the Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes and commentaries upon it by Ibn-e Sina and other earlier Islamic philosopher, but transforms them completely by considering the relation between cause and effect in light of the doctrine of the principiality of wujūd (asālat al-wujūd). He thereby combines horizontal and vertical causes and his discussion of this subject in all his work contain some of his most exalted gnostic ('irfānī) expositions.¹⁴

According to this article, in an epistemological approach on causation, the most important Mulla Sadra doctrines in relation with causation are as follow: 1-the concept of Being¹⁵, 2-fundementality of Existence¹⁶, 3- the gradation of Existence¹⁷, 4- independent and relational Being¹⁸, 5- Poverty Being¹⁹, 6-illuminative relation 7- The One produces nothing other than the One, 8- Identity or union of Being and necessity, 9- Logical necessity of the order of Being, 10- The impossibility of infinite regress²⁰, 11- homogeneity of cause and effect.²¹

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Note

- 1 Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, Vol.2, p121 and *Shawahed*, p 68
- 2 *Shawahid*, p68
- 3 *Asfar*, Vol.1, p403
- 4 *Asfar*, Vol. 2, P389
- 5 *Asfar*, vol. 2, p202
- 6 *Nihayat al- Hikmah*, part2
- 7 *Asfar*, vol. 2, p127
- 8 *Nihayat al- Hikmah*, part8, chap2
- 9 *Asfar*, vol. 2, p129; vol. 5, p27; vol. 6, p127
- 10 *Nihayat al- Hikmah*, part8, chap7
- 11 *Asfar*, vol. 7, p236
- 12 Dinani, *General Philosophical Principles in Islamic Philosophy*, vol., 2, p267
- 13 *Asfar*, vol. 1, pp144-147; vol. 2, pp141-169
- 14 S.H. Nasr, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I, P. 656
- 15 *Asfar*, vol. 1, p35
- 16 *Asfar*, vol. 1, p10
- 17 *Nihayat al Hikmah*, part 1, chap3
- 18 *Nihayat al Hikmah*, part2
- 19 *Asfar*, vol. 2, p202
- 20 *Nihayat al- Hikmat*, part 8, chap 5
- 21 *Asfar*, vol. 7, p236

The Introduction of Avicennean Psychology into the Muslim Theological Discourse
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Abstract

Mullá NadrÁ's thought in the 10th/16th century is characterized by a multitude of influences from earlier Muslim theology and philosophy. Amongst the most important sages that had a lasting impact on his thinking ranks the philosopher Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037). Imamite theology discovered Ibn Sina's works during the second half of the 13th century when Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 672/1274) introduced them into the canon of Shi'i theological literature. In his own attitude towards Ibn Sina, al-Tusi followed the introduction of Avicennean philosophy into the Ash'arite school of Sunni theology. Al-Tusi's main inspiration in this respect was the Ash'arite theologian Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1210), with whom al-Tusi engages in a dialogue in his famous commentary on Ibn Sina's al-Isharat. The chain of transmission (silsila) that later aims at an uninterrupted connection of Mullá NadrÁ's teachings with that of Ibn Sina runs via al-Tusi through Ash'arites like Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and As'ad al-Mayhani (d. 513/1118) to the very last exponent of the direct Avicennean school tradition in Iran, i.e. the Khorasanian Abu l-'Abbas al-Lawkari (d. around 517/1123). During the 6th/12th and the first half of the 7th/13th centuries, the Ash'arite school bridges the gap between the last direct pupils of Ibn Sina and the later reception of his works in Imamite thought.

The role of Ash'arite theology as the first school of Muslim theology to incorporate elements of Avicennean psychology becomes evident already in the work of al-Ghazali (d. 555/1111). To most, al-Ghazali is known as the author of the Tahafut al-falasifa where he condemns three positions of Ibn Sina's philosophy as unbelief. Al-Ghazali's work, however, should also be understood as trying to incorporate a cleansed version of peripatetic philosophy into Muslim theology.

In this paper I shall examine how al-Ghazali introduces Ibn Sina's notion of the psychological process of revelation into Ash'arite kalam. In his late work Faysal al-tafriqa, al-Ghazali expounds a theory that aims to verify the truth of the revelation and the truthfulness of its messenger Mu'ammad by making full usage of the philosophical theory of the inner faculties of the soul. Here, revelation is regarded as a process that involves the representation of the revealed facts in the prophets' soul. The verification of revelation, therefore, does not rely on a belief in prophetic miracles (i.e. the miraculous character of the Qur'an), but on the acknowledgment of representations in the prophet's soul. It can be shown that al-Ghazali's division of the inner faculties in the prophets' soul as well as his ontological concept of representation in the soul go back to Ibn Sina. This result can also be confirmed from al-Ghazali's Madarij al-quds where he presents a psychology that follows most closely Ibn Sina's De anima.

In 1912 the German historian of Muslim philosophy and theology Max Horten described his experience as a reader of the more developed Islamic theology of the 13th and 14th century. If one is used to reading Islamic theology of the classical period between 800 and 1000, he wrote, and reads the later theologians, one observation becomes most striking.

The worldview (die Gedankenwelt) of the later theologians is a Greek one schooled in Aristotelian philosophy, and one might even go so far to call its contents also a Greek one.¹

Today, we disagree with his judgment concerning the content of Islamic theology after 1200. The discussions are clearly focused on issues and problems of Islamic theology, problems that arouse from Qur'anic discussions or from ones that have their roots in the formative period of Islamic theology. But Horten's experience as a reader nevertheless illustrates a striking feature of later theology that indeed cannot be traced down to the earlier years of Muslim theology. Later authors are not only well acquainted with Aristotelian logic, physics, and metaphysics. More, they regard Aristotelian syllogistic as the only yardstick of logic, use the Aristotelian categories in order to develop a scientific view of the physical world, and regard the metaphysics of the Aristotelian, i.e. the peripatetic tradition as the one system Muslim theology has to be compared with. Or, as Horten put it already in 1912:

A mighty revolution (Umschwung) happened in Islamic theology between 1000 and 1200 when Greek philosophy entered Islamic theology.²

Max Horten became the earliest historian of the effects this revolution had on Muslim theology. In 1912 he translated Suhrawardī's *Íkmat al-ishrāq* into German. This translation also takes Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary into account from which Horten quotes freely.³ In the same year Horten devotes the first Western monograph to Mullā Ṣadrā himself, translating Mullā Ṣadrā's discussion of the proofs for God's existence and the knowledge of God from his *al-Asfār al-arba'ya* into German. In the next year 1913, a second monograph including a full paraphrase of Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Asfār al-arba'ya* would follow.⁴ In all these cases, Horten uses lithograph printings of these two philosophers' works published in Teheran at the end of the 19th century.⁵

Being the first Western author who has a clear idea of the nature of this "revolution" in Islamic theology, Horten also has a clear idea about the beginnings of this process. In his 1912 book on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mu'āẓal*, he discusses an objection that by this time had been widespread amongst Western scholars of Muslim theology and philosophy. This widespread opinion holds that al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) cannot be made responsible for having had any part in this revolution.⁶ According to Horten the main argument against al-Ghazālī being part of this revolution is that he used all his power to oppose the introduction of Greek methods in his field. Horten, however, has a very different view on this subject and he regards both al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) as important protagonists in the revolution of Muslim theology. Horten sees evidence for this in the logical and ontological methods of both al-Rāzī and al-Ghazālī. Particularly the way these authors treat being reflects, according to Horten, an awareness of Greek philosophy.

The opposition towards a Greek influence that is so apparent on an exoteric level affects only a limited number of propositions (particularly the pre-eternity of the world), but not the essence of Greek thinking. On an esoteric level the Greek thinking is quite accepted even amongst the orthodox representatives of Islam. (...) A 'destruction' of philosophy through the hands of the theologians therefore did not happen, indeed they were distributors of Greek thought and provided philosophy with a home within their circles.⁷

Horten's analysis of the rôle of so-called orthodox theologians – and here he has al-GhazÁlĪ in mind – in the process of establishing peripatetic philosophic within Muslim theological thinking is today just as adequate as in 1912. Al-GhazÁlĪ is still widely regarded as a destructor of philosophy, or at least someone who was considerably hostile towards it. Or, to quote a most recent publication by Wilferd Madelung, al-GhazÁlĪ

... had kept religion and philosophy strictly apart and in fact distanced himself from philosophy in his religious works.⁸

In the following I shall argue that al-GhazÁlĪ did indeed not keep philosophy and religion apart, but that he introduced the Aristotelian concept of the intellect and an Aristotelian inspired analysis of different levels of beings in the most religious of all subjects: MuĪammad's prophecy. In order to do so, I shall first look at al-GhazÁlĪ's place in Islamic theology and particularly in the philosophical "revolution" mentioned by Horten as it appears from the later perspective of the 10th/17th century. Secondly, I shall analyze al-GhazÁlĪ's interpretation of MuĪammad's prophecy from one of his main writings, the *FayĪal al-tafriqa bayna l-Islam wa-l-zandaqa*, "The Distinctive Criterion Between Islam and Concealed Apostasy".⁹ This will make evident that al-GhazÁlĪ was in fact the first theologian who used the Aristotelian concept of the intellect and of various degrees of existence within Muslim theology.

For later theologians of the ImÁmĪ School like MullÁ ĪadrÁ al-ShirÁzĪ (d. 1050/1640) al-GhazÁlĪ appears as a distant figure in the history of the SunnĪ AshĪarite school. He is mostly remembered through the writing of his *TahÁfut al-falÁsifa*, a book that sealed his fame as being hostile towards philosophy. The "revolution" that Horten speaks about, however, had its first roots in the seminar where al-GhazÁlĪ received his higher education. His teacher at the NiĪĪmiyya School in Nishapur was AbĪ I-MaĪÁlĪ al-JuwaynĪ (d. 478/1085) and he was the first Muslim theologian who studied the books of the *falÁsifa*, i.e. mostly Ibn SĪnÁ (d. 428/1037), during his teaching sessions. Out of this teaching emerge three figures who in the next generation will spread the study of the books of the *falÁsifa* in the most important theological colleges of this time, i.e. the NiĪĪmiyya schools in Baghdad and in Nishapur. During this generation of al-JuwaynĪ's pupils, who lived at the turn of the 6th/11th century, the study of philosophical books will be established within at least a considerable part of the AshĪarite School. These studies are all undertaken at the several NiĪĪmiyya colleges of the eastern Muslim Empire. During the 6th/12th century we therefore have a number of authors in the east who either respond within their works to positions of the *falÁsifa* or who apply philosophical methods. All these authors – with the single exception of the converted Jew AbĪ I-BarakÁt al-BaghdÁdĪ (d. after 560/1165) – can be connected to the teaching activities of the NiĪĪmiyya schools.¹⁰ The most important amongst them is Fakhr al-DĪn al-RÁzĪ who not only wrote a great number of works in theology, but who during his wandering years in Iran was accompanied by a considerable number of students that, we are told, at times exceeded one hundred. Fakhr al-DĪn al-RÁzĪ who lived almost precisely a century after the first generation of philosophical trained AshĪarites from the NiĪĪmiyya in Nishapur, can also be connected to this group. He received his early education from his father, ÁiyÁĪ al-DĪn AbĪ I-QÁsim, who, in turn, was in his youth a student of AbĪ I-QÁsim al-AnĪÁrĪ, one of students of al-JuwaynĪ and a colleague of al-GhazÁlĪ in his seminar.¹¹ There is therefore a straight line from the introduction of philosophical studies by al-JuwaynĪ around 1080 to the teachings of Fakhr al-DĪn al-RÁzĪ around 1200.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī works provide, of course, the link to Shāfiʿī Imāmī theology. His numerous theological writings in which he aims to assemble all previous arguments on a particular topic had a deep impact upon any theologian who followed after him in Iran. The first one to pick up the works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and to measure himself and his own theological thinking against this standard was Khwājah Naḍr al-Dīn al-ʿUṣṣī (d. 672/1274). He introduced this “method of the later philosophers” (ʿArḍqat al-mutaḥakkhirīn)¹² into the Imāmīte Kalām and from here it spread widely. The close intellectual bonds that connect that later thinkers like Mullā Ṣadrā with Naḍr al-Dīn al-ʿUṣṣī are by now well documented.¹³

This silsila is a chain of transmission alongside lines of school theology. Here, the Ashʿarite school is the important place where the philosophical method is first applied, and from where it is spread into Imāmī theology in Iran. This is, nevertheless, not the only way how Islamic theology after 1200 came into contact with a philosophical tradition that goes ultimately back to Greek authors. A second line that connects Mullā Ṣadrā with the great falāsifa of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries, particularly with Ibn Sīnā, does not run through the ordered ways of teacher-pupil relationships, but is provided by the more fragmentary literature of the Ishrāqī theology. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), the shaykh al-ishrāq was not a member of the Ashʿarite school nor much influenced by Ashʿarite theology. His development of a new explicitly anti-Aristotelian philosophical tradition during the second half of the 6th/12th century is nevertheless unthinkable without the previous establishment of Aristotelianism in Muslim theology during the earlier half of that century.

Having established al-Ghazālī’s place within the silsila of philosophical teachings of Muslim philosophy, I would like to turn our attention to the more important analysis of how philosophical doctrines were introduced into Ashʿarite theology. In the following I will take a closer look at al-Ghazālī’s views on prophecy as they are expounded in his *Fayḍ al-tafriqa bayna l-Islām wa-z-zandaqa*. It must be said that al-Ghazālī wrote a number of works in which he expressed his understanding of prophecy, the most explicit is probably the *Maʿārij al-Quds fī madārij maʿrifat al-nafs*, “The Jerusalemian Stairs on the Paths to Knowledge of the Soul”.¹⁴ This book, however, is so much filled with verbatim quotes from the works of Ibn Sīnā that al-Ghazālī’s authorship is contested, although not ruled out. It will become apparent that al-Ghazālī’s view of the soul depends in all its fundamentals on Ibn Sīnā’s psychology, and therefore verbatim quotes from the shaykh al-raḥīms should not surprise us in this matter. The treatment in the *Maʿārij al-Quds*, however, does not focus on prophecy, and thus the theological function of al-Ghazālī’s adaptation of Avicennian psychology does not become apparent. The *Maʿārij al-Quds* will therefore provide helpful clues while the main treatment of the following analysis will be focused on the more theological work of the *Fayḍ al-tafriqa*.

In his *Fayḍ al-tafriqa* al-Ghazālī aims at a most clear and easily to apply distinction between Islam and those teachings that he considered un-Islamic. The first part of the *Fayḍ* contains a long argument in which several fundamental ideas of Ashʿarite theology are combined in order to explain and define “unbelief” (kufr). Al-Ghazālī’s starting point is the Ashʿarite definition of belief. Belief had been defined as “*taḍdīq*”, i.e. the affirmation of God, his Prophet Muḥammad, and the truth of the revelation that he brought. Al-Ghazālī takes up this definition but modifies it significantly. In fact, this modification should already be understood as being influenced by peripatetic philosophy. Al-Ghazālī picks up an important notion from the writings of Ibn Sīnā, according to which affirmation (*taḍdīq*) can only apply to propositions. Ashʿarite theologians before al-Ghazālī have not taken this into account. In the *Fayḍ*, this point is nonchalantly woven into the first pages of the text. Here, al-Ghazālī touches on the issue that the three books of revelation Torah, Gospel, and Koran are different:

These three are different in their essence. How could it be otherwise, since the definition of a proposition (khabar) is: 'That which is subject to affirmation and negation (ta'OdDq and takdhDb).' These two, however, can not be applied to an imperative and not to a prohibition. But how is it possible that one thing is subject to ta'OdDq and takdhDb and at the same time it is not? And how can the negation and the affirmation to one thing be united?15

Since the books of revelation contain in addition to many propositions also imperatives and prohibitions, they cannot be as a whole the objects of affirmation or negation. What al-GhazÁlI implies here, is that in order to verify the affirmation (the ta'OdDq) of a Muslim (and thus verify his faith), one cannot ask whether he affirms the truth of the whole book of revelation. If one wants to verify the faith of a believer one has to verify whether he affirms only the propositions of the revelation.

Al-GhazÁlI now analyzes what it means to affirm a proposition. All this is only stated in a very short passage, and it is striking that al-GhazÁlI does not expound his underlying ideas of ta'OdDq, neither does he refer to a book where he has done so. The text develops a number of wide-ranging ideas in only a few sentences until the reader is confronted with the following sentence:

fa-aqÙlu t-ta'OdDqu innamÁ yataÔarraqu ilÁ l-khabar bal ilÁ l-mukh-bar

I translate this sentence as:

Ta'OdDq does not only apply to the proposition, but also to the object of the proposition (al-mukhbar).

In the next sentence al-GhazÁlI gives a definition of ta'OdDq:

The true meaning of ta'OdDq is to accept the existence of something whose existence the Prophet (...) reports of.16

This sentence is difficult to understand and seems circular. The sentence starts with the assumption that the Prophet both in the revelation and in the îadDth reports of wujÙd, of existence. These existences are the object of the reports that have been mentioned in the sentence earlier (i.e. the mukhbar).17

TaÒdÐq for al-GhazÁlÐ means to acknowledge, or to accept that such objects of the Prophet's propositions really exist. Let me first explain the next step in al-GhazÁlÐ's text, in order to better understand what he has in mind with the "acknowledgment of an existence".

What now follows is a categorization of all existence that the Prophet Muġammad reports of into five categories. It is clear that these five categories of existence (wujÙd) are understood to be the objects of propositions. Al-GhazÁlÐ here applies a theory of representation in which a proposition contains elements of language that represent objects of the outside world. "Outside" here, means outside of language. Such an object outside of the proposition is considered a "wujÙd". This theory of representation applies to all propositions, and therefore it also applies to propositions within both the Koran and the ġadÐth. Although al-GhazÁlÐ does not give an example at this stage of his text, let me illustrate what he has in mind by using Sura 12, the Sura of YÙsuf. When the revelation, for instance, reports the fact that YÙsuf had been thrown into a well from which he is picked up by slave traders that sell him to Egypt (Koran 12.15–20), all the elements of this report like YÙsuf, the well, the slave traders, and Egypt are considered "wujÙd", existence. Each of these elements are existences that the Prophet reports of, i.e. the mukhbar in the above sentence. To believe in this report, and thus to believe in the Koran and in the truthfulness of the messenger, means to acknowledge that YÙsuf, the well, the slave traders and Egypt did indeed exist. This is "to accept the existence of something whose existence the Prophet reports of". The believer who trusts in the veracity of the report affirms these objects and the reported facts, i.e. he affirms the relationship that these objects have to one another. For al-GhazÁlÐ, faith in the Prophet and his revelation is exactly this acknowledgment.

Let us turn towards the five categories of existence. All the elements mentioned in this passage from Sura 12 belong to one category of existence. This is the "real existence" (al-wujÙd al-dhÁtÐ) that comprises all objects of the outside world. Outside, here, means outside of the human mind. Al-GhazÁlÐ writes:

The real existence is the true and firm existence (al-wujÙd al-ġaqÐqÐ al-thÁbit) which is outside of the sensual perception and the intellect. But sensual perception and the intellect take a picture (or form: ÒÙra) of it, and this is called perception. This is like the existence of the heavens or the earth, the animals, plants, and this is outwardly (ÙÁhir). And it is known that most of the people do not know any existence that is different.¹⁸

For al-GhazÁlÐ there are four other kind of existence, and all of them are existences within the mind of a person, or more specifically, existences within the mind of the Prophet Muġammad.

From the examples that al-GhazÁlÐ gives in his distinction of the five degrees of existence, it becomes clear that not all propositions within the Koran and the ġadÐth can be interpreted in the above manner of the real existence (al-wujÙd al-dhÁtÐ). Both al-BukhÁrÐ and Muslim report in their collections the following prophetic ġadÐth:

The paradise (al-janna) was presented to me on the surface of this wall.¹⁹

Al-GhazÁlĪ uses this example in order to explain that the underlying existence of paradise cannot be a “real and firm” one. It is easy to prove that the paradise is much bigger than the surface of whatever wall MuĪammad saw it on. The existence to what the word “janna” refers to is therefore not real, but only perceived through the Prophet’s sense perception. This existence is called a “sensual existence” (al-wujĪd al-ĪissĪ).

Let’s go to the third degree of existence. In the following ĪadĪth, the existence cannot be represented by the senses:

It was as if I saw YĪnis ibn Mattā in two coats of cotton, and he said: Your orders!20

The sentence begins with “it was as if” which indicates that all this happened nowhere else but in the Prophet’s imagination. The corresponding existence of YĪnis is therefore an imaginative existence “al-wujĪd al-khayĪlĪ” within the Prophet’s faculty of imagination.

The fourth degree of existence is the conceptual, or intellectual one (al-wujĪd al-ĪaqĪlĪ). The prime example here is God’s hand. According to al-GhazÁlĪ it can be proven beyond doubt (“Īan burhĪn”) that God does not have a hand like we humans know it.²¹ The existence of such a hand as a real and firm existence, as a perceived existence, and as an imagined existence must therefore be denied. If the existence of such a hand can anyhow be acknowledged, this can only be done as a conceptual existence: the hand exists in order to represent the concept of giving and taking. Al-GhazÁlĪ defines the essence of a “hand” as being “the capacity to hold, to give and to take.” God also has the capacity to give and to take, and this correspondence within the field of essential attributes leads to the identification of the word “hand”, meaning human hand, with God’s capacity to give and take.

Finally, the fifth and last degree of existence is the so-called “similar existence” (al-wujĪd al-shibĪĪ). While in the case of the “conceptual existence” a correspondence in the field of essential attributes leads to the fact that one existence stands for the other, here the correspondence is in the field of accidental attributes. The example would be anger. God is sometimes referred to as being angry. The description of the essence of anger is “that which brings blood to boil because one seeks satisfaction.”²² God cannot be associated with these emotions and is high exalted above this. However, God’s anger is similar to human anger in the sense that it aims to punish. The aim to punish is not an essential quality of anger, but only an accidental one, and this is the only level on which the two kinds of anger can be connected. The word “God’s anger” in the revelation refers on the level of a “similar existence” to God’s will to punish.

The different criteria for the distinction into five degrees of existence go back to the philosophical theory of the inner senses – the ĪawĪss bĪĪina. Following in the footsteps of Aristotelian and late antique philosophy, the falĪsifa divided the human apparatus of post-sensory perception into

several psychological faculties. The *ĥiss* was the place that collects the perceptions of the five “outward” senses, the *khayĀl* would be the place, where the multitude of single perceptions are put together to one object. This is the faculty of imagination. Conceptual knowledge about the definitions of things and their substance would be located in the *Ĥaql*. These three-fold distinction is the most common in Arabic peripatetic philosophy, and al-GhazĀlĪ applies it, for instance, in the 35th book of his *ĤĪyĀb ĤulŪm ad-dĪn*.

The division of the *FayĀl at-tafrĪqa* is most probably inspired by Ibn SĪnĀ’s treatise “On the Proofs of Prophecies”, *FĪ ixbĀt an-nubuwwĀt*.²³ Here, Ibn SĪnĀ divides entities into three kinds of worlds (*ĤawĀlim*): *ĤĀlim ĥissĪ*, *ĤĀlim khayĀlĪ*, and *ĤĀlim ĤaqlĪ*.²⁴ Ibn SĪnĀ applies this division in a key passage that interprets a prophetic *ĥadĪth*, which talks about the different ways that lead to human salvation.²⁵ Al-GhazĀlĪ nevertheless deviates from this model of interpretation, since he adds the “real and firm” world as the very first one. Similarly, the fifth category of *wujŪd shibĥĪ* is not mentioned in this book of Ibn SĪnĀ. But the distinction between *wujŪd ĤaqlĪ* and *wujŪd shibĥĪ* is equally inspired by the writings of Ibn SĪnĀ. In the third and the seventh book of his metaphysics, Ibn SĪnĀ deals with the different categories of union, and here he distinguishes between a union “that is based on substance” and one that is “based on accident”. In his textbook of the philosophical teachings, the *MaqĀĪd al-falĀsifa*, al-GhazĀlĪ faithfully reproduces this distinction. He divides the union “per accident”, and calls a union that is based on an identical *kayfiyya* or quality of two things a union through *mushĀbaha*, which the Latin translation of Domenicus Gundissalinus translates as *unio per simultudo*.

More important than the origin of the several elements of this theory is the overall conception of prophecy. In AshĤarite *KalĀm* prophecy was understood as God’s direct revelation to his prophets. The fact that the prophetic *ĥadĪth* mentions intermediaries in the process of revelation – most notably the Archangel Gabriel – was somehow not taken into account. In his *KitĀb al-ĪrshĀd*, al-GhazĀlĪ’s teacher al-JuwaynĪ writes that prophecy is not caused by any change of the knowledge that a prophet had before he became one, “because the prophet became knowledgeable through his prophecy.” Prophecy goes back to God’s word that he directs to the one he deems fit, when he tells him: “You are my messenger.” Prophecy is thus an *amr*, an imperative that God directs towards his prophets. And by saying “*ifĤal!*” – “Do so!” – God immediately creates all the necessary circumstances that enable the prophets to fulfill this *amr*.²⁶ God creates a new knowledge within the prophets. In the ontological system of AshĤarite *KalĀm*, such knowledge would be considered an *ĤarĀ*, an accident that would be attached to the *jism*, the body of the prophet. Indeed, al-JuwaynĪ refers to this when he says that prophecy is not the change of a previously existent accident into a new accident that may be called “the prophet’s knowledge of his Lord”. This is not the case, since something like this may well be achieved without prophecy. Prophecy, for al-JuwaynĪ, is the *amr* to the prophet and the creation of a very new accident in him, not the change of an already existing one.²⁷

Al-JuwaynĪ’s short treatment of prophecy seems nevertheless representative for AshĤarite *KalĀm* in its discussion of the ontological repercussions of prophecy.²⁸ Al-AshĤarĪ himself is said to have approached the subject of prophecy from two angles. Prophecy in his opinion consists of two components (*wajĥayn*), it is divided first into the information or the tidings (*nabĀp*) which is a proposition (*khabr*), and secondly into prophecy itself, which is the elevation of a man into the state of prophethood. No further explanation is given how God’s tidings come to the prophets.²⁹

One may therefore assume that there was no clear understanding about intermediate stages between God’s word and the ones that came out of the mouth of the prophet. There was, however, an understanding of the difference between God’s word, which was considered eternal, and the

pronunciation of the word. Against the Íanbalites, al-AshÝarÐ argued the revealed pronunciation (al-lafÛ al-munazzala) is only the sign that stands for the eternal word (al-kalÁm al-azalÐ), and the sign (dalÁla) is created in time.³⁰

If we look into the writings of peripatetic philosophy, we find a much more detailed understanding of prophecy. Ibn SÐnÁ, for instance, understands prophecy as the result of a powerful imaginative faculty. The imaginative faculty (al-quwa al-mutakhayyila) separates and combines the sense data, which it receives from the faculty of imagination (al-quwa al-mutaÛawwira). In some persons, Ibn SÐnÁ says, the imaginative faculty and the soul are so powerful that these people have visions in waking life.³¹ If such a vision is the result of a connection between the divine realm, the soul, and the imaginative faculty, one would talk of prophecy.³²

In Ibn SÐnÁ, there is apart from this first kind of prophecy, which belongs to the imaginative faculty, also a second kind that is based on intuition. Intuition (Íads) is the ability to acquire an intelligible form and it depends upon whether the middle term of the corresponding syllogism is obtained.³³ Prophets are blessed with a high degree of intuition and are able to receive all forms (including the middle terms) from the active intellect in almost no time.³⁴

It is clear that al-GhazÁlÐ in his view of prophecy is inspired by the philosopher's position that prophecy relies on the inner faculties of the Prophet. He accepts the role of both the imaginative faculty and the active intellect in Ibn SÐnÁ's understanding of prophecy. In his FayÛal al-tafriqa, the active intellect is called an angel, "al-ÝaqI", and "al-qalam" and thus closely connected to notions within the ÍadÐth corpus.³⁵ Here, al-GhazÁlÐ follows interpretations of these aÍadÐth that had already been brought forward by other philosophers. Al-ÀmirÐ, for instance, had previously identified the active intellect with an angel.³⁶ In fact, the views that heavenly intellects are celestial beings can be traced back to neo-platonic sources of late antiquity. By the beginning of the 6th/12th century this was nothing new.

The new element was the introduction of the Aristotelian intellect theory into the seemingly serried system of AshÝarite theology. AshÝarite theology at the end of the 4th/11th century, i.e. expressed in the works of al-JuwaynÐ, appears as a closed system that encompasses a whole ontology and that seems to provide an answer to every kind of theological question. But particularly this AshÝarite ontology of occasionalism, i.e. the suspension of the necessary relationship of an effort to its cause leads to a number of subjects that were not discussed at all. Prophecy was one of them. God's relationship to his Prophets and the way divine information is passed between the two did never emerge as a subject of AshÝarite theology. This relationship was regarded as beyond human understanding and not subject to an interpretation according to lines of cause and effect. This led to a neglect of this subject in the AshÝarite theological discourse, a neglect not caused by lack of insight, but rather by a lack of willingness to discuss a topic so closely connected to God's actions and attributes. Here, the AshÝarite bilÁ kayf, "without how" prevented any further investigation.

It is these kind of gaps within the AshÝarite system of theology that al-GhazÁlÐ fills with doctrines taken from philosophical literature. Ibn SÐnÁ never had any scruple to discuss even the deepest secrets of God's being. He provided answers where the AshÝarite system did not dare to inquire. These answers obviously fascinated al-GhazÁlÐ, and he found it easy to introduce them within the AshÝarite philosophical system. Subsequent Muslim theologians of the later centuries, and amongst them MullÁ ÑadrÁ ShirÁzÐ clearly felt the same way. The introduction of the falÁsifa's intellect theory into Muslim theology was a successful attempt to shed light on the mysteries of human thinking and of God's involvement therein.

Note

- 1 Max Horten, *Die spekulative und positive Theologie im Islam nach RÁzÐ (1209 †) und ihre Kritik durch Tusi (1273†)*, Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1912, p. vi.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Max Horten, *Die Philosophie und Erleuchtung nach SuhrawardÐ (1191†) übersetzt und erläutert*. Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1912.
- 4 Max Horton, *Das philosophische System von Schirázi (1640†) übersetzt und erläutert*, Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1913.
- 5 The book on *Íkmat al-ishrÁq* and its commentaries is based on a lithography published in Teheran 1313–1316/1895–98 by IbrÁhÐm ÓabÁÓÁbaÐ and the two books on *al-Asfar al-arbaYa* is based on a lithograph printing in Teheran 1282/1865. Horten wrote – amongst other works on *al-FÁrÁbÐ*, *Ibn SÐnÁ*, *al-GhazÁÐ* and *Ibn Rusd* – also a history of Islamic theology of the earlier period (until *al-JuwaynÐ*): *Die philosophischen Systeme der spekulativen Theologen im Islam, nach Originalquellen dargestellt*, Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1912.
- 6 Horten, *Die spekulative und positive Theologie*, vif.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Madelung is his preface to *al-ShaharastÁnÐ, Struggling with the Philosopher. A Refutation of Avicenna’s Metaphysics*, ed. and transl. Wilferd Madelung and Toby Mayer, London: I.B. Tauris in ass. with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001, p. 8f.
- 9 *al-GhazÁÐ, FayÒal al-tafriqa bayna l-IslÁm wa-l-zandaqa*, ed. SulaymÁn DunyÁ, Cairo: ÍsÁ l-BÁbÐ al-ÍalabÐ, 1381/1961. A clear dating of this tract has so far been impossible. It was written in the latter period of *al-GhazÁÐ*’s life between the years 491/1098 and 504/1109, cf. my discussion of the dating in *Über Rechtgläubigkeit und religiöse Toleranz. Eine Übersetzung der Schrift Das Kriterium in der Unterscheidung zwischen Islam und Gottlosigkeit (FayÒal at-tafriqa bayn al-IslÁm wa-z-zandaqa)*, introduction, translation and notes by Frank Griffel, Zürich: Spur, 1998, pp. 43–45.
- 10 On the connection of philosophical studies to the NiÛÁmiyya school and, in fact, the fusion of the school tradition of *Ibn SÐnÁ* with that of the *al-JuwaynÐ* cf. my *Apostsie und Toleranz in Islam. Die Entwicklung zu al-ÇazÁÐ’s Urteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktionen der Philosophen*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000, pp. 350–354.
- 11 George C. Anawati in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, ed H. A. R. Gibb et alii, 12 vols., Leiden/London: E.J. Brill/Luczac, 1954–2002, vol. 2, p. 751; *al-SubkÐ, TabaqÁt al-shÁfiYiyya al-kubrÁ*, ed MaÍmÛd MuÍammad aÓ-ÓanÁÐ and MuÍammad al-Íilw, 10 vols., Cairo: ÝísÁ l-BÁbÐ l-ÍalabÐ, 1964–76, vol. 7, p. 242. On *al-AnÒÁrÐ* (d. 511 or 512/1117–19) cf. *al-SubkÐ, ÓabaqÁt*, vol. 7, pp. 96–99.
- 12 *Ibn KhaldÛn, al-Muqaddima*, Beirut 1900, reprinted Cairo: DÁr al-Fikr, w.d., p. 465; *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, 3 Bde., London 1958, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 21967, vol. 2, p. 51f.
- 13 Cf. Sabine Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im Zwölferschiitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhunderts. Die Gedanken welten des Ibn AbÐ ÉumhÛr al-AÍsÁbÐ (um 838/1434–35–nach 906/1501)* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000, p. 1, 4–10, and index: *NaÒÐr al-DÐn*, cf. also Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-ÝAllÁma al-ÍillÐ* (d. 726/1325), Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1991, index: *NaÒÐr al-DÐn*.
- 14 *al-GhazÁÐ, MaÝÁrij al-Quds fÐ madÁrij maÝrifat al-nafs*, ed. Lajna ÍlyÁp al-TurÁth al-ÝArabÐ, Beirut: DÁr al-AfÁq al-JadÐda, 1401/1981.
- 15 *al-GhazÁÐ, FayÒal at-tafriqa*, p. 132.
- 16 Ibid., Arab. “ÍaqÐqatuhÛ al-iÝtirÁfu bi-wujÛdi má akhbara r-rasÛlu (...) Ýan wujÛdihÐ.”

17 Whether it is mukhbar or mukhbir is obviously not clear from the transmitted text. The above quoted sentence may also be read as "...but also to the one who utters the proposition" (al-mukhbir). From the context it is, however, become evident that this is not what al-GhazÁlĪ is aiming at. The reading al-mukhbar in the sense of mukhbar Ýanhu should be adopted, "the object of a report".

18 al-GhazÁlĪ, FayÒal al-tafriqa, p. 176.

19 Ibid., p. 179.

20 Ibid., p. 179.

21 Ibid., p. 181f.

22 Ibid., p. 182f.

23 Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect. Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect and Theories of the Human Intellect*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1992, 87, note 56 raises doubt about this book's attributed to Ibn SĎnÁ.

24 Ibn SĎnÁ, *FĪ ithbÁt an-nubuwwÁt*, ed. Michael E. Marmura, Beirut: DÁr al-NahÁr, 21991, p. 58.

25 Ibid, p. 55.

26 The creation of all the necessary accidents (aÝrÁĀ) that enable the individual to carry out their acts is a vital element of the AshÝarite doctrine of iktisÁb. It aims to reconcile man's free decision about his actions with God's omnipotence as the cause of changes in the world. Cf. Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-AshÝarĪ*, Paris: Patrimoines, 1990, pp.

27 al-JuwaynĪ, *al-IrshÁd*, ed. MuĪammad YÙsuf MÙsÁ and ÝAbd al-MunÝam ÝAbd al-ĪamĪd, Cairo: Maktabat al-KhÁnjĪ, 1369/1950, p. 355.

28 Fazlur Rahman refers in his book on *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1958, to al-ShahrastÁnĪ's treatment in the *KitÁb al-Milal wa-n-Nihal* in order to present the AshÝarite position on prophecy. Here, like in many books of AshÝarite KalÁm the process of electing the prophet is discussed, but not how the elected prophet receives his message. This element is also left open in the teachings of al-AshÝarĪ himself. (Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-AshÝarĪ*, pp. 453ff.) In Ibn FÙrak's report about al-AshÝarĪ's teachings (cf. the next note) we do not find a reference to the process of prophecy.

29 Ibn FÙrak, *Mujarrad maqÁlÁt al-AshÝarĪ*, ed. Daniel Gimaret, Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1987, p. 174.

30 Ibid., p. 315.

31 Ibn SĎnÁ, *al-ShifÁb*, *al-ÓabĪyyiyÁt*, *al-Nafs*, i.e. Avicenna's *De Anima*, ed. Fazlur Rahman, Oxford: University Press, 1959, p. 173.12.

32 Ibid., p. 178.1–3.

33 Ibid., 249.4.

34 Ibid., 249.13.

35 al-GhazÁlĪ, *FayÒal al-tafriqa*, p. 182.10ff.

36 al-ÝÁmirĪ, *KitÁb al-Amad ÝalÁ l-abad*, in: Everett K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: al-ÝÁmirĪ's KitÁb al-Amad ÝalÁ l-abad*, New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1988, p. 142, 172.

The Puzzle of Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract

That whether knowledge is possible has been always one of the most important philosophical problems concerning knowledge. This problem has been dealt with by philosophers since ancient times. In

discussions about mental existence, and while defining knowledge as the representation of an object or the presence of the quiddity of an object, Muslim philosophers tried to elucidate how perception corresponds with the object perceived. In addition, attempts have been made by some later philosophers, based on the abstraction of philosophical concepts, through contemplation by presence of the soul's events and the formation of primary propositions based on those concepts. And it is maintained that these propositions are surely true, and the truth of what is obtained from them according to logical principles and rules is a function of their logical truth, and thus they are certainly true. In this paper, while investigating the last attempts made in either of the two fields, we are to examine the success of Muslim philosophers in solving the problem of the possibility of knowledge and cognition and achieving reality.

Introduction

The issue of knowledge and perception is one of the most complicated philosophical problems and perhaps there is no philosophical issue as important. The importance of the issue is firstly due to the fact that man is always trying to know the external world, but what he obtains of it is only an image, and secondly, because the first perfection which man expects from receiving those images is the achievement the external world and a reflection of reality. Thus, Muslim philosophers discussed, along with the issue of existence, whether images correspond with reality, or in other words, whether knowledge is attainable.

In the history of philosophical thought, the issue of the possibility of knowledge, taking into account the significance of the destructive power of sceptical attacks on the justifiability of the relation between mental images and realities independent of the mind, has been one of the most important philosophical problems concerning knowledge. So far, various solutions have been offered for this problem. Although epistemology has not been discussed independently within Islamic philosophy, many of its topics have been investigated within the rules of logic, mental existence, the criterion of the truth and falsehood of propositions, knowledge and knowledge of the soul (psychology).

Within the rules of logic, Muslim thinkers defined knowledge, in the universal and absolute sense of knowing, as the acquisition of the image of an object of reason, and divided it into conception and assent. Under the topic of mental existence, their discussion was based upon the relation of perception and the object perceived. Given the definition of knowledge as the representation of the reality of thing or the presence of the quiddity of thing for perceiver and the well-known objection concerning the agreement of substance and accident, they maintained various views. Under the topic of the criterion of truth and falsehood, having accepted the theory of correspondence, they expanded the meaning of reality, and explicated *nafs al-amr*, proceeding to introduce the conditions of truth and falsehood. Under the topic of knowledge, after describing the concomitance of "knowledge" and "presence", they proceeded to describe the types of acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence, and divided acquired knowledge into conception and assent, and discussed knowledge based upon the relation between perception and perceiver, and thus introduced the theory of unity of knowledge, knower, and known. Under knowledge of the soul, they discussed knowledge based upon materiality and immateriality, and its relation with man's soul.

Taking into account the various views offered by Muslim philosophers concerning the above-mentioned topics, in this paper we extract the quintessence of their views about the possibility of knowledge. Undoubtedly investigation of each one of these solutions should begin with the definition of knowledge offered by that solution.

Knowledge and its Divisions according to Muslim Philosophers

According to what is understood from the sayings of Muslim philosophers, knowledge in the general sense of the term as the presence of the known for the knower, is divided into two kinds: acquired and by presence. Knowledge by presence is the direct perception of objective reality, which is restricted to (a) immaterial beings' knowledge of their own essences and states, (b) the sufficient cause's knowledge of its own effect, and (c) the mortal being's knowledge of what happens within it. Acquired knowledge, however, is the reception of the image of objective reality and not that reality itself, and this kind of knowledge is divided into two kinds: conception and assent, each of which, in turn, is further divided into two kinds: evident and acquired. Thus, conception and assent are divided into four kinds: evident conception, acquired conception; evident assent, acquired assent. Evident and acquired, in turn, have divisions, for evident may be primary or non-primary. With conception, acquired is divided into definition and description, and assent is divided into five parts: demonstration, polemic, rhetoric, poetic, and sophistry. Thus Muslim philosophers' views concerning the possibility of knowledge should be investigated separately under the topics of acquired knowledge and knowledge by presence.

Acquired Knowledge and Possibility of Knowledge

Acquired perception, which is knowledge of the mental image and concept, has no guarantee in it for its truth. If the essential known in it corresponds with the accidental known, one can maintain that knowledge of the external being has been realized, but if correspondence between the two is not certain, then the mental image is imagination devoid of reality. Thus, it can be concluded that correspondence between cognitive form and objective reality is the main element of acquired knowledge which ascertains its truth. It is here where the main problem of acquired knowledge arises: how one can be certain of the realisation of correspondence between cognitive form and objective reality?

With the topic of mental existence, while defining knowledge as the representation of the reality of an object or the presence of its quiddity to the perceiver, Muslim philosophers have tried to explain the relation between perception and the object of perception and the mechanism of correspondence between the two. This explication, which has been offered exclusively in the field of quidditative concepts and primary intelligibles, has its roots in works of Ibn Sīnā¹ and Suhrawardī². After them, Fakhr Rāzī³, Khwajah Nasir al-Dīn Tūsī⁴, Dabirān Kātībī⁵, 'Allāma Hillī⁶, 'Allāma Qūshchī⁷, 'Allāma Mīr Sadr al-Dīn Dashtakī⁸, 'Allāma Dawānī⁹, Mullā Sadrā¹⁰ and Mullā 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī¹¹ discussed this issue and each of them tried to solve the problem in his turn.

For those who regarded knowledge, on the one hand, as a category of the known but on the other hand deemed it only an accidental category, the theory of mental existence presented certain problems. This paved the way for the appearance of various doctrines. Some offered a theory which reduced knowledge to a relation, others settled upon the theory of the image, and still others believed in the quidditative theory. Those who believed in the quidditative theory offered various versions of it. According to Mullā Sadrā's innovative view on the knowing of an object, it is the concept of the object and not its individual instance, essence or reality, which is realised in the mind. It is the sensuous, imaginal, or intellectual form which is acquired by the soul. This perceptual form, which is the same as the essentially known, is through the primary predication of the external being and by the common technical predication of a quality of the soul. This theory has been interpreted in various ways. Thus, it should be discussed taking the various interpretations into account.

In addition, some later philosophers also tried to find a way through acquired knowledge to certain perception. In this attempt, which is based on 'Allāma Tabatābā'i's innovation - the abstraction of philosophical concepts through presential contemplation on events of the soul - it is assumed that philosophical concepts constitute the main theme of primary propositions, and since the truth of these propositions, which are formed upon the imagination of subject, predicate, and the relation between the two, is certain, then the truth of that which is deduced from them, while observing the logical rules, is a function of their logical truth and thus its truth is also certain. Thus, the possibility of knowledge should be investigated taking into account the truth of knowledge-by-presence, the abstraction of philosophical concepts and their truth, the formation of primary propositions and finally the reason for their primariness.

Analysis of Mullā Sadrā's View on Mental Existence

As has been mentioned, Muslim philosophers held various views concerning mental existence. These views, which indicate a divergence between them, have been discussed in "Theories of Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy: from Ibn Sīnā to Mullā Sadrā"¹². Thus, after this article, the possibility of knowledge is discussed, based exclusively upon Mullā Sadrā's innovative view, which is the last and perhaps the most perfect on this issue and has been interpreted in different ways.

Mullā Sadrā regarded the presence of the form of the object for the knower to be necessary for the realisation of knowledge. If by this form, the essence of the object and its quiddity (consisting of the object's essentials) are intended, thus it can be maintained that the quiddity of the object is present in the mind in the same way that it is in the external world. And cognitive existence makes no change in its quidditative organisation. Any difference observed between cognitive existence and objective existence stems only from the difference between the objective existence of a quiddity and the mental existence of the same quiddity. Such a relation is a unificatory relation between the mind and the external world (the object) which is even superior to the relation of correspondence, for a phenomenon realised in the mind is the same as the phenomenon realised in the external world. And this means that the same quiddity (*quid est*) has two kinds of existence: objective and mental; in short, the twofoldness of objective existence and mental existence has no impact on the onefoldness of quiddity¹³.

According to this view, not only has Mullā Sadrā not offered any reason in favour of the well-known definition of knowledge as the representation of the reality of the object or the presence of its quiddity for the perceiver, but also he has based his own view on presuppositions such as the possibility of knowing the essentials of objects and the quidditative correspondence between the mind and the external world (the object). Perhaps he has been influenced by mystics' views concerning quiddity and its manifestations on different levels and worlds of existence as well. In addition, in this view in which objective existence and mental existence have been regarded as separate and their quiddities have been deemed as the same, the principality of existence, according to which the quiddity of an object is the limitation of its existence and thus a function of it, is neglected; and for the two kinds of existence, the same quiddity has been assumed for both, despite the differences between them in terms of degree and effect. In this way, one can maintain that his view concerning mental existence lacks a theoretical background and thus is merely a claim. Its truth is a function of the truth of the above-mentioned presuppositions and it can be regarded as a remnant of his philosophy that thinking is in accordance with the principality of quiddity.

But, if by the mental form of an object, he intended, as he himself stipulated, the concept of the object and not its individual instance, essence or reality, his emphasis that the quiddity of the object and its

fixed reality are both in the external world and in the mind means that when a perceptual form is acquired in the mind, the agent of knowing views it from the viewpoint of primary predication and notices the object itself. The agent does not stop at viewing the perceptual form through common technical predication, which is of a quality of the soul¹⁴. According to this view, taking into account that what we acquire through the senses or through reason are mental concepts and forms which we conceive in our selves and these forms are intermediate between the soul of the perceiver and the known external reality, though these forms mirror the external world, and the view of the perceiver is directed at the object itself in the external world without stopping at the form through common technical predication which is of a quality of the soul, it should be seen how their correspondence with external reality can be proved.

Knowledge-by-Presence and the Possibility of Knowledge

According to Muslim philosophers there is no doubt admitted in knowledge-by-presence, in which the known is present with its external reality for the knower and the knower perceives the reality of the known through his own reality. This knowledge is contained neither in the realm of concepts and assents nor in the scope of thought and reason. But if the soul makes an acquired image of its own presential perception, since it encompasses both objective reality and mental image, it will be able to compare the two with each other and understand the correspondence between them; or if the soul makes, through examining two intuitive realities and the relation between them, an acquired assent, since it encompasses both of those two intuitive realities and the relation between them, as well as the acquired assent, it will be able to compare the them and understand, and believe in, the correspondence between the two.

As has been mentioned, taking this characteristic into account, some Muslim philosophers¹⁵ believe that if we assume that philosophical concepts are acquired through presential contemplation on events of the soul and the relations between them, the correspondence between the former and their objective realities becomes evident. And if the formation of these concepts leads to the formation of primary propositions, this guarantees the truth of the primary propositions, and a window will open for the acquisition of certainty in acquired knowledge, and the certainty of knowledge-by- presence will be generalised to acquired knowledge as well. Thus the truth of this theory is a function of the truth of knowledge by presence, an explication offered by Muslim philosophers concerning the abstraction of philosophical concepts, and their explication for the formation of primary propositions and their truth.

Analysis of the Truth of Knowledge-by-Presence, the Truth of Philosophical Concepts, and the Origin of the Primariness of Primary Propositions

1. The realm of knowledge-by-presence is restricted to the immaterial being's knowledge of its essence and states, the sufficient cause's knowledge of its own effect, and the mortal's knowledge of what happens within itself. In addition, it has a personal dimension; in other words, what is known through knowledge-by-presence for one is not necessarily known through knowledge-by-presence for another.

2. In the realm of philosophical concepts, this issue can be explicated through the Muslim philosophers' view concerning the abstraction of philosophical secondary intelligibles. Thus, if we maintain that

philosophical concepts are on the secondary level of intellection and abstracted from the quidditative concepts as the latter's attributes and predicates, whether in this abstraction it suffices to take one quidditative concept into account or at least two concepts are necessary so that reason (intelligence) will be able to abstract the philosophical concepts through comparing the two, then their truth in representing reality is a function of primary intelligibles. But if we assume that philosophical concepts have their roots in knowledge-by-presence and our primary familiarity with these concepts is acquired through contemplation on events of the soul and the relation established between them, so that the mind becomes ready to abstract the philosophical concepts through contemplation on the modes and states of the soul and after abstracting the human characteristics from them, attributes them to their external instances, thus their truth will be a function of the truth of knowledge-by-presence and the way in which the mind turns them to acquired knowledge¹⁶.

3. Primary propositions, which are mentioned as postulates and self-evident knowledge as well, are the propositions to which we assent after imagining elements of the proposition i.e. subject, predicate, and the relation between them in a negative or affirmative way, and come to certainty about them; for example, assenting that "the whole is greater than the part" or judging according to "the law of non-contradiction". In demonstration, the aim of which is to know the truth, primary propositions are of paramount importance. The question which should be answered here is: what is the origin of the primariness of primary propositions?

Propositions such as "there is a reality", "the law of contradiction", "the principle of causality" (every effect is in need of a cause), "the principle of similarity" (a single effect is issued only from a single cause) and "the principle of necessity" (every effect is in a necessary relation with its own cause) are considered to be primary propositions in Islamic philosophy. The important characteristic of these propositions which inform about the existence of the external world, the impossibility of the realisation of contradictions within it, the need for the effect to have a cause in the external world, the similarity and necessity between cause and effect, is that they are existential propositions which suggest not the relationship between imaginary things but the relationship between real things, and at the same time they are deemed to be both primary and necessary¹⁷. This characteristic has caused Muslim philosophers to proceed to examine the world of existence using these propositions. Evidently, if these propositions are considered to suggest the relation between imaginary things, taking the nature of analytical propositions into account, they can be no longer used to know the objective world¹⁸. 30-10-02

The second characteristic of primary propositions is that in these kinds of propositions, according to the definition offered for them in Islamic philosophy and logic, mere imagination of subject, predicate, and the relation between them suffices to judge the relation between them either in an affirmative or in a negative way. This characteristic can be described as follows: In primary propositions, any attempt which enables us to acquire the concepts used within them, enables us to acquire those propositions as well. In other words those propositions do not require any further attempt in addition to the attempt made to acquire the concepts used in them.

According to this view, whether the concepts used in these propositions are acquired in the second level from the primary intelligibles or obtained through contemplation on events of the soul, mere acquisition of them suffices for their formation.

The third characteristic of primary propositions, according to the Muslim philosophers, is that man believes in these propositions in the depth of his essence and they are impossible to be denied. In other

words, their refutation leads to their acceptance. To refute the proposition “there is a reality” requires the acceptance of the denier and the action of “denial” and acceptance of these realities is the same as the acceptance of the proposition “there is a reality”. Denial of the law of non-contradiction, which, according to Muslim philosophers is the basis of acceptance of any belief, requires the possibility of there being the opposite of the same belief, i.e. the acceptance of the principle of the law of contradiction while denying it. Because of the universality of the proposition “every effect is in need of a cause”, it covers all effects, including all beliefs, so that the proof or denial of any belief, since it is a phenomenon, is in need of a cause, and there is no difference between proof and denial. He who denies this proposition should adduce an argument in favour of his denial, and in the same way he who proves it has to offer another argument in favour of his claim, and this means that in every proof or denial and to justify every belief including the proposition itself, this proposition is presupposed unconsciously. This is the case for the principles of similarity and necessity as well.

If one is to deny or prove these principles one has to offer an argument which is similar to one’s claim, and if the argument is acceptable one has to accept the consequence, i.e. that which is claimed, and this is also because these principles are presupposed to justify any belief, including the principles themselves. Thus, it can be maintained that the mind of man, when it is to judge a belief, has no way out of the law of non-contradiction, in the same way that in the denying or proving of a belief it has no way out of the principles of causality, necessity, and similarity. These explanations justify the inevitability of these principles.

Thus it can be concluded that if “primariness” means that mere imagination of the subject, predicate, and the relation between the two suffices to judge the relation in an affirmative or negative manner, and any attempt which enables us to acquire the notions used in them suffices to acquire them, then the origin of primariness is the formation of these principles. And if, taking into account the fact that denial of these principles leads to their acceptance, primariness justifies their inevitability, thus the origin of primariness is the locus of the justification of these principles. In other words, the primariness of these propositions depends either upon a characteristic involved in the process of their formation or upon a characteristic involved in the process of their justification, while it is usually thought that their primariness depends upon a characteristic involved in the process of their truth, i.e. their correspondence with reality. Thus, if there is no relation between either of the processes of formation or justification on the one hand, or the process of truth on the other, the existence of a characteristic in each of those two cannot guarantee the existence of a characteristic in the process of truth and explain the truth of primary propositions.

Conclusion

1. According to either of the two above interpretations, the theory of mental existence, even in the last enquiry performed by Mullā Sadrā, cannot explain the correspondence between the mind and the external world (object).
2. The truth and validity of primary propositions (which consist of philosophical notions) are functions of the explication offered by Muslim philosophers for the mechanism of abstraction of the elements of those propositions, i.e. the philosophical notions. Thus, if we believe that philosophical notions are abstracted from quidditative notions, the truth and validity of primary propositions is a function of the truth and validity of quidditative notions and if, in addition, we believe that philosophical notions have

their roots in knowledge-by-presence and are acquired through contemplation on the events of the soul, the truth and validity of primary propositions is a function of the truth and validity of knowledge-by-presence.

3. In addition, since the origin of the primariness of primary propositions is one of the two processes of formation or justification, the truth and validity of these propositions in representing reality is therefore a function of the relation between either of these processes and the process of truth.

4. The explication offered by Muslim philosophers concerning the formation and justification of primary principles seems to cause us to believe the said principles. In whatever manner they are considered, these beliefs have entities within the mind, and if they correspond merely with the thing perceived through knowledge-by-presence from which the philosophical notions are abstracted, since both the said notions and objective reality are directly accessible for man, their correspondence can be examined; but if they are attributed to external realities, since external realities are considered in a way in which their entities are independent of the mind and mentality, the relation between the two is still questioned. One part of this relation, i.e. that of belief, is directly accessible to the mind; but the other part, i.e. that of those things which are independent from mentality, is accessible only through deduction and perception. Deduction and perception, since they are formed within the mind, cannot have a direct relation with things independent from the mind.

I conclude with Suhrawardī's words concerning the definition of knowledge:

The second characteristic of knowledge is that it is divided into conception and assent in the introductions of books on logic, and it is the renewing knowledge which does not suffice to be mere presence, but depends upon the acquisition of the image of the perceived for the perceiver¹⁹.

In these words, as well as the interpretation of them offered by Qutb al-Dīn Shirāzī, acquired knowledge is called 'renewing and changing knowledge'. The changeability of this knowledge is caused by the fact that it is not founded upon mere manifestation and presence, but upon the acquisition of the form of the known in the world of the mind. And evidently, if something is based on the form, it will be ready for any change and renovation²⁰. Thus, to prove the correspondence between acquired knowledge and reality will be more difficult.

In short, in the same way that absolute scepticism is detrimental for mankind, unfounded certainty can be detrimental and destructive as well. Wandering in the barren land of absolute scepticism and stultifying in the prison unfounded certainty are two painful and infernal stages of human thought in which many persons have fallen and been annihilated²¹.

Note

1 Ibn Sīnā, 1403, p. 308

2 Suhrawardī, 1372, pp. 331-332

- 3 Fakhr Rāzī, 1411, pp. 319-327
- 4 Khwajah Nasir al-Dīn Tūsī, 1366, pp. 10-11, p. 1323, and pp. 156-57
- 5 Dabirān Kātibī 1327, p. 16
- 6 ‘Allāma Hillī 1327, p. 16
- 7 ‘Allāma Qūshchī, lithographed version, undated, pp. 13-14
- 8 ‘Allāma Mīr Sadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, manuscript, undated, p. 2, pp. 13-14
- 9 ‘Allāma Dawānī, lithographed version, undated, p. 14
- 10 Mullā Sadrā, 1981, pp. 291-322
- 11 Mullā ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī, lithographed, undated, pp. 51-52
- 12 Hajhosseini, M, “Theories of Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy: from Ibn Sīnā to Mullā Sadrā”, *Transcendent Philosophy*, volume 2, number 4, December 2001, pp. 39-57

13 Dr. Mahdi Ha’irī Yazdī, 1367, p. 11, footnote 12.

14 Mullā Sadrā, 1981, pp. 291-92

15 In his *Usul falsafah wa rawish-i ri’alism* (Principles of Philosophy and Methodology of Realism), ‘Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā’ī has offered this view, which can be understood from his words.

16 In order to describe the mechanism of abstraction of secondary philosophical intelligibles, Muslim philosophers have passed through three stages. In the first stage, they thought that they were on the second level of intellection and believed that, at first, quidditative concepts are grasped and then philosophical concepts are conceived as their attributes and predicates. In the second stage, it became clear that to abstract philosophical concepts it does not suffice to take one quidditative concept into account, but in most cases two concepts are needed, so that reason is able, through comparing the two with each other, to abstract the secondary philosophical intelligible. Thus, most of these concepts are introduced in pairs, such as unity and multiplicity. To understand the concept of possibility, for instance, it is necessary to understand the concepts of Man and existence at first, and then the relation between Man and existence should be taken into account. In the third stage and according to the innovative idea of ‘Allāma Tabātabā’ī, it became clear that most philosophical concepts have their roots in knowledge-by-presence, and our first familiarity with them is through contemplation on the events of the soul and the relation between them. Thus, through contemplation on the modes of the soul and its states, the mind becomes ready to abstract philosophical concepts. Some of these concepts are acquired simply and even unthinkingly by everyone, but their development depends upon conscious contemplation. For further details, see Muhammad Fana’ī Ishkiwarī, 1375, pp. 228-231.

17 Introduced for the first time in this article is the existential characteristic of the primary evidential principles, according to which even the proposition “agreement between opposites is impossible” concerns the world of existence and means that it is not the case that agreement between opposites may happen in the world of existence.

18 According to Mr. Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdī, the proposition “every effect is in need of cause” is an analytical proposition, the concept of whose predicate is acquired from the concept of its subject, for the concept of “effect” is a thing whose existence depends on another thing and the former depends upon the latter; thus, the concept of “subject” in this proposition consists of the meaning of the need of, and dependence upon, the cause, which is the predicate of the proposition and thus it is a primary proposition and needless of argument. Concerning this issue, see Muhammad Taqi Yazdī, *Amuzish-i falsafah*, volume 2, p. 28.

19 Qutb al-Dīn Shirazī, undated, p. 38.

20 Dr. Ibrahīm Dinani, 1360, pp. 43-44

21 Dr. Ibrahīm Dinani, 1360, p. 59.

Persia's Mystic: Rumi's Divan

Gustav Richter (1906-39)¹

Abstract

This is Gustav Richter's third lecture on Rumi's poetry, in which, in language clearly inspired by Rumi himself, Richter analyses the structural and metaphysical aspects of the Divan, as well as the many layers of meaning contained within the imagery. Richter compares Rumi's poetry with that of the German Romantic poets, in order to examine whether classical and Romantic poetry is able to accommodate the spiritual dimensions of the Divan.

After we have tried to understand Rumi's didactic poem, it should not be difficult to find the right stylistic measures for an evaluation of his Divan, too. The religious experiences are the same. It is impossible to talk about the whole Divan, thus we will only look at some selected poems. If we could derive a common style from them that describes Rumi's principle of mystical-lyric form, we could approach a comparison with his didactic poem. In the end we should have a complete picture of the literary Rumi. Since we already have certain knowledge of Rumi's literature, we can start giving some samples of Rumi's poetry.

But then I saw my dearest friend, how he was walking around the house, lifting his zither...

The poem has been extended in its length in the German translation from eighteen to twenty seven verses. The Persian poem has caesuras, thus its overall structure seems more metrical. But much more important is the adequacy of the lyrical milieu and its people in both poems. The poet presents us the most beloved. In front of him the host is standing with a jug, which is filled with the wine of heavenly love and highest spirituality. The image has not been prepared. Vividly and dramatically he suddenly steps in. Through the sudden impact of the image we can also feel a higher spiritual movement, which is pointed to by the "host coming in from the darkness". This is the situation of the poem. Secondly, the characters are moving around themselves in circles. The wish for a symbolic mix-up becomes evident in the beginning:

...he sang to the sound of the Iraqi cither, no he was singing to the heat of the vine.

At this point the visions are still divided according to their concrete value. But slowly the separate poetic strings are becoming tied to each other, as if it was a game.

The Iraqi tone, its somberness together with the stress on the intervals, can be compared to the Doric mood. The fire, the nightly feast, the drunkenness of the singer - all of them are the flames of poetical emotion, which spread quickly and symbolically join to become one pillar of light. The host offers the wine to the singer, this symbol of higher life, and the plot begins magically like a mystery. In this

intertwining of the different parts the poet fulfils his poetic goal. Who is holy now? The longing singer or the host who offers the wine of flames (the paradox is deliberate)? The question is not answered, nor asked. The movements of the characters are as intangible as the characters themselves. The divine-personal is revealed in the wine as well as in the two people. Does the poet empty the characters of their true selves? He forms them into a general type, which he idealizes in the end in the synthetic 'I' of the speaker: I am the light of the truth - in Persian: shams-ul-haqq, which is meant to be Shams-i-Tabrizi in a literal sense and in a wider sense the poet, who identifies himself with the master. The Persian ghazel gives at the end of the poem the name of the poet. It provides the impetus here to combine all the experiences in one holy name.

Rumi seems to have this goal in all his poems, but he always finds new forms to develop the experience. Here is a second ghazel:

I was at the day when there were neither names nor signs...

The different parts have been taken from the theological-mystical doctrine. Their purpose is to stress the exclusiveness of the mystical 'I'. First the poet remains in the resigned skeptical attitude of the searcher for the truth, then he becomes happy, for his soul is looking up to the beloved friend and master in whom the being of God and human beings become one.

The richest part in the events is the first part. He expresses the goal indirectly. With almost epical regularity the poet determines his field. He does not find his luck by the cross, in the Buddhist temples, in Herat or in Qandahar. Also, science does not hide the truth. The Persian text points to Avicenna, who does not recognize revelation any longer. But these observations are not theses in the frame-work of a theological doctrine. They originate there but they are used as scenery only, to take in the observer and lead him to the center, which becomes clearer the longer he looks. The message does not contradict the theological attitude of the poet. But the emphasis is not on this, because the positive lines in the end are as undogmatic as possible. Here the tension is lifted and the listener enjoys the meeting with this intangible self that cannot be expressed with any terminology. How could there be room in this short moment in the mystical world for gradual teaching? The mystical world is being copied so that it might lead us to the final experience. In this manner, each part of the teaching will not lead to an understanding of the logical sequence but to an emotional feeling. Here even more so because the poet is only talking of himself as in time passing. By this intensification of the feeling, which is closely related to the subject, we can take in the unity of the poem. In this stream, symbolical hints like the curl of the friend or the beginning of his name make the symbolic purpose of the speculative language close to the highest experience visible again. The distance of "two lengths of a bow" represents the immediate vicinity to God, a mystical term, which was developed on the basis of a verse in the Qur'an (Sura 53,8-10). That Rumi includes this place in the circle of his negation, shows better than anything else how little he is interested in the meaning of this image. Through excess he wants to reach his goal of experience in which theological hints will lead to the name of the intangible Tabrizi. This way he aspires to connect the pre-temporary eternity at the beginning with the post-temporary eternity there after.

If we look closer at the interweaving symbolism of the separate lyrical parts, we will find that they show a resemblance to the style of the didactic poem. But the relationship is not the same. In the didactic poem the events made up the basis of the composition. Here they are missing. There, we stepped into time and from it into timelessness. In the relation of the secondary to the primary we found the order of the poetry of the didactic poem. Here we cannot find the same effect of the image. Space and time-bound impetus are missing. With a strong rhythmical employment of the senses, the poet puts parables and diction immediately and heroically into empty space. Indeed there are images, characters and

colors, but the connection of space and time is not given in the manner of the didactic poem. Metaphors and histories have the function of a secondary style in the Divan. The poetical tension of condition and uncondition remain thus well-preserved. We can feel the metaphors much more strongly this way. But the lyrical goal is striving for order. This order is simply brought into relation with the participating 'I'. One could also speak of the participating 'Thou'. Something personal is meant in the experience of the poems. We are being admonished, people appear as examples, requests become interwoven with the images. They are not rounded up into one concrete impression. They are organized by the enthusiasm of the subject. We listen to the poet and speak along with him. We do not just accompany his observations. This empathising and imagining is a necessary requirement for the poetical intake. We make the impression of the poem concrete. The poem becomes an act and is thus bound. Where are the final verses sounding to? Are they really a conclusion or just randomly there? Is the poem a truth or just a sum of verses. The subject makes it more than a sum of verses. It seems to lead from timelessness to time. The subject provides space and time. This is the opposite way to the didactic poem. It has to be taken in connection with the needs of the participating society.

We already spoke about this society in the first lecture. It is exclusive, has its own rites and pattern of education for artistic-religious contemplation. We know the dance of the Derwishes. They are turning on their right foot with the sound of certain instruments. Recent travelers speak especially about the flute, violin, drums, tambourine and kettledrum. These special dhikr-exercises represented the peak of life in the order and were thus not practiced very often (maybe twice a month). Only people who had passed a certain time of preparation were allowed to participate. The acceptance into the order was signified with the reception of the dress of the order. The high hat of the Derwish is characteristic here, as you can see them on Turkish coins. On top of the long sleeveless overthrow, jacket and coat were put and a belt attached. After the initiation the members of the order lived in single cells and they gathered together for religious exercises. The aim is to be ecstatically unified with God by the way of meditation, dance and music. It is difficult to judge where the limits are between religious art and esoteric skill. Music and dance belonged together in profane art even before Rumi. People were also dancing to poetry. The exercises of the people of the order were often linked with the local customs. We have evidence that Rumi did the same in Asia Minor. Thus the mystical exclusive society includes some popular traits, too. During the dance the mystics reached a condition of euphoria, which allowed them to take part in the divine unity. Holy people were supposedly able to reach such a state day and night uninterruptedly.²

Rumi's poems from the Divan must have had a relation to these needs of the people of the order. During the ecstatic dance they were not recited. Words could only be used if they completely submitted to the rhythmic harmony. The need for admiration of the verses themselves would have disturbed the concentration. It would be interesting to see if there was an ideal link between the aesthetic-mystical aim of the poetry and the dance of the Derwishes. Mystical contemplation is capable of great tension. Single and joint readings had been common to the people in the order since the beginning. Although they were not bound to a liturgy, they provided a very similar kind of nutrition to the Derwishes. The rhythmical forms of the poems are thus very varied. They have not been brought into one single form as in the didactical poem. They are a content in themselves, which translates the movement of the spirit in time-relations and feelings of form. The first poem we looked at has the Persian meter mudari. It consists of four metrical feet, of which the first one has two long lengths and one short length, whereas the second has one long length, one short length followed by two long lengths. Then there is a caesura, the third and the fourth feet are like the first and the second: (-v/-v-//--v/-v--). Like all poems in the Diwan, this is a ghazal with double verses which rhyme. The first part of these double verses, which does not follow the main rhyme, has a rhyme between its second and fourth foot. Thus the monotonous sound is interrupted by the changing harmony of its inner members, as you have it in a pearl necklace. The meter seems exiting and free. The language flows easily and enthusiastically. This

meter is very popular with Rumi. In most cases there is an alteration, especially on the third foot, which is surrounded by its two long lengths and two short lengths, which slows the movement considerably. Related to this meter is the mudshtath, which Rumi also employs: (v-v-/vv--//v-v-/vv--). It is also divided into two parts by a caesura. Likewise Rumi uses the hazadsh, the basis of the old Arabic verse. In the last poem he used the mutakarib, the epical meter, which we have mentioned already in connection with Firdausi. Its monotony is almost surprising. But the poem is finished before one comes to realize the calmness. I would like to call it a relaxed mystical engrossment as we find it in Rumi's inner emotional world, too.

Thereby the character of community in the Divan is emphasised. Referring to this individuality, it only disagrees on the surface with the impersonal aim of redemption of the mystics. We seem to be hearing the voice of the poet directly and personally. But does he not describe this divan as the one of his master, Shams-i-Tabriz? Is not the subjective aim of dual experience symbolically and actually bound into a group? The subject does not put his demand singularly and for him self. He places himself at the centre generally: it can replace himself with a certain adequate you. Thus the subjective composition not only faces the side by side appearances of the content, as we have felt in the first poem, but is imbued with a kind of objectivised 'I'. The personal exchange between the 'Thou' and the 'I' is a symbol for the impersonal and desired part of the created from the creator, in which, for the mystic, the meaning of the person is necessarily revoked and then transfigured. It is an exaggeration of the self, which breaks the natural bond of cognition of the creature. This is surely a proper analogy to the a-poetic exercises for redemption of the Sufis, such as the dances. All of these display an attitude of the soul that could not be received in such a concentrated way outside of this community.

In the style of these poems, there is generally a sense of community which resonates in everyone who joins the magic circle. This poetry possesses a sense of community and existential power, which we - of course on different grounds - find again in folklore songs. The modest representation of the song and the apparent lack of participation of the subject, has a specific reason: the poetic content becomes so autonomous that it remains intelligible for a certain group of people, whose mental world has been shaped by blood, soil and education. The mental character of this group determines then, as far as it is shared, each component of the style of the poetry. In their number they can be restricted to but a few so that they become meaningless and uncharming. Maybe only in their syntactic change they will remind us of the beginning.

Rumi's poetry is also existential in its group character. The general expansion of the self creates a representation that can be understood by the group. Surely parts of the poetic expressions, just as those of the dances, have been disassociated from the folklore of Asia Minor. Yet they do not deny their social mission, but transform it into a different form of expression shared by the community. The poetry receives its existential force, of course, from the capacity of the particular stylistic device, which according to their degree of popularity, or their rhythmical or syntactical usage, might fade or become submerged, as in every folklore song. The reoccurring picture of the inn, which makes us sit up due to its exotic idiosyncrasy, does not always have the same effect of experience. Historic research should make meticulous comparisons here and in the meantime these fading constructs will remain an excellent and tenacious witness of the existential factor of this style. In the development of the mystic experience, the poet not only uses the method of negation, but with same elegance, also the positive, enthusiastic listing of value-experience. Let us look for that purpose at a translation by Rosenzweig-Schwanau³, which is 100 years old.

I am the king falcon of the creator,
And sit on the hand of the Sultan,
Moved by the hand of his power

I flew over the land.
I flew up from the hand of the king,
I saw seven stars shining,
And ascended to the lap of Keivan.
In the hallowed sanctuary
I laid silently on Huri's chest.
And was, when Adam was not yet born,
Doorman in the grove of pleasures.
High up on the throne of my majesty,
Was I master of div and peri,
Before Solomon ruled the land.
Often I crossed the ember of the fire,
Ember seemed to be roses only.
One was looking for me in the rose garden,
But the roses hid me.
I came just like a pearl into the treasury of this world
I came yearning for the heaven,
Where I was surrounded by glory.
With the voice of the sun of tebris'
Eternity sings this sweet song:
It was to the throne of the eternal god,
To which I the singer was sent.

Here, also, the poet turns upwards, like in the above counterpart. He places the highest richness of all values into his chest from the very beginning, as if in a cosmogony of his self. He enjoyed the proximity of the Sultan, his divine master at a time in which, with the word of another poem, there were no names, nor signs of named things. The beginningless height and power of his self were protected in the heavens, but this process of uncreatedness is still portrayed as an ascent bound by time. This paradox of message and symbolic meaning is the same as the one that we can see in the divine ego of the master and in the divine king.

There appear to be two rows, whilst in reality there is only one. We direct our eyes to a whole group of things that appear quickly in order to transmit the impression of the height of this poetic experience. We follow the flight of the falcon, we find it in Keivan's lap, which is in the circuit of Saturn, on the chest of the heavenly Huris at a time when Adam had not been born, or as in the word play of the original, when he was in the Adam, in the nothing. "I came like a pearl into the treasury of this world". Here already the different sketches are combined into one painting. The processes are so great in imagination that they conjure up a highly singular impression of the stature of the speaker. But here again the subject changes his role with this Tabrisi, just when the self-centredness is at its peak. At that moment, when the process loses the fetters of the time due to the overemphasised value, which is beyond the perception of the natural limits of the speaker, we are faced with this mystical commentary with the incommensurable reference to the eternity. Eternity's mouth is symbolised by the divine Tabrisi. Equally the positive ascendance in the poetic vision is, similar to the negative one of the other poem, not aim in itself, but preparing devotion for the desired dissolution of the limited value-consciousness. But not all poems have the same form and dramatic upswing. Traits of a contemplative mystical feeling are expressed here and there finely and silently like in an idyll. Two ghazels of this kind:

let the stars greet you yesterday...
I am a painter and I see
forms in front of me..

Here we have two explicit love poems, which symbolise, with the methods common for erotic poetry, mystical courtly love. They are two momentary pictures of the eternal poetic expression. The characters, or a simple situation form the framework. The event is then subjectivised when it comes into being. In both poems the poet speaks about the beloved, but not in sheer enthusiasm. He creates with caution and wise structuring a witnessing, pleading song. But he does not remain with the same picture. In the first poem he bows humbly before the sun, then we see the beloved drinking blood from the wounds of the lover. This mosaic leads to an impression that is well intended. The perception of the lover becomes blurred.

With the change of the locality of the picture, our feeling goes back to the poet. But he steps out of the circle and his concrete limitation. The secret of the child and the heart directs the attention of the listener to a different sphere in which the picture of the beloved, as a necessary metaphorical addition, is silently brought in. The event remains unsolved and undifferentiated, and this is how the mystic genre wants to have it. Therefore it does not remain as an erotic, passionate poem, but goes beyond the eroticism into unexpressable relations, that can excellently be imagined in a religious way.

This is no different in the second poem. He sings for his beloved more intensely and more in the style of a hymn. He compares himself to a painter. In the same way the picture of the beloved becomes blurred in his imagination, so the listener's imagination of the value-related limitedness of the two characters becomes blurred and only the feeling of the general elevation remains. Thus these poems share the literary aims of the remainder of Rumi's mystic poetry. But they tend to stay more in the environment that is determined by the erotic situation. They are also not as closely related to the name of Shams-i-Tabrizi as those other poems. However, the allusion to the sun and light in both poems can be seen as direct reference to the master, in order to keep silent about the secret identification with the beloved. These poems are little elegant compositions, which Rumi has composed with the poetic modules of the general lyric and particularly erotic feeling. They seem to correspond with the mystical vision of the Persian in general to such a degree, that they can also be found outside of the mystical compositions. Later on we find the same characters with Hafiz, whom according to his style, we have to see in a completely different light from Rumi. But even in earlier forms, for example in the rubai poems for the rulers, the same forms of poetic expressions are common.

With these occasional poems of Rumi one can see how deeply he is rooted in the tradition of Persian poetry. One very precious characteristic of his poetry is that he purifies the fine and well-known forms of effusiveness and poetic debauchery. The other characteristic is in the more or less emphasised link with the method of mystical expression whose composition and stylistic fundamentals we are familiar with.

Another poem is completely different and distinguished with the power of mystical ecstasy. It expresses the whole paradox of the 'I' and 'Thou'. If anywhere, then here the point of Rumi's mystical poetry becomes directly visible. Therefore the metre is also richer in motion. The poet uses a ramal of as many lengths as shorts (-v--/vv--/vv--/--) and ends every distich with the characteristic syllable 'I' and 'Thou':

“man ve tu”. The faster the tongue tries to reach this ending, the more the final part emerges out of the metre in a harmonious and succinct way.

Surrounded by our happiness,
We reach freedom, You and I

From the analysis of our examples, we should have recognised that the style of Rumi's poetry also had to be called mystical in the most general sense of didactic poetry, with which he shares his fundamental and poetic intention. Yet, the term mystical poetry should not be limited to the didactic poem or the Divan. Mystical poetry with Rumi is a literary genre that reveals the religious subject in a rhythmically inspired and aesthetic vision and changes them for the purpose of a characteristic psychic attitude of the participants. How this attitude is determined and of what kind the psychological condition is, depends upon the genre. We have learned to distinguish the didactic element from lyric element in the didactic poem and the Divan. We find a lot that both have in common. The poetic circles are overlapping, but are not congruent. In the didactic poem, the poet looks at the things external to the person of the not-I, which he can find in the imagination of a certain space. He interprets and compares them and himself with them. With relaxed devotion, he sinks into their richness, which he imitates in the conduct of time and space in the style.

Contrary to this, the poet can be found directly under the unlimited richness of the symbolic facts in the lyric poems. He joins their rhythmic movements, which change according to the situation. But through his insistent presence he endows his object with meaning and structure. In every moment a variation of the subject is mirrored. But also this concrete 'I' escaped the created individuation and becomes objectivised in the 'Thou'. In the didactic poem this abstraction leads to dissolution, here the concrete reaches its own dissolution. The latter effects of the style are thus common to both genres.

If we tried to approach this mystical poetry with our Occidental terminology of style, we would probably find that the didactic poem is closest to some degree to our classical genre. The classical genre seems to have a moderate metre, in which the spirit seems to hover over the subject. Reminiscent of this is also the timeless perfection that takes place in the consciousness in every moment in the picture. Apart from the meaning, the unchangeable rhythm, the sustained expression and movement teaches us about the measured distance, that the feelings are sustained with respect to the classical piece of art.

Surely these comparisons can only be made cautiously and basically only with respect to the lyric, whose intention is not even to lead us into the classical realm, for in the lyric the distance of the onlooker is missing completely, since the subject becomes integrated into the forms and characters. Here the poet remains underneath the waves of the eternal life. This is not about the final meaning and the final development of style, for in this the didactic poetry shares the aim with the Divan. But the classical manner of one form seems to find its counterpart in the Romantic manner of the other form. Having said this, Rumi's poetry has almost two poles, whose wing span is not smaller or less important than the one we can find in the contrast of the classical to the Romantic in the Occident. In this way, of course, we seem to disagree with the German Romantic, namely Jean Paul, in whose opinion Oriental poetry is much closer to the Romantic than to the classical. In reality however, the nurturing soil for the German Romantic as well as for the classical is the Antique (Latin and Greek) style, but the Persian classical and romantic of the mystical genre do not yet share this in any way. The early German Romantics have turned to the Greeks. Does not A. W. Schlegel⁴ also appear as an interpreter of Greek art and poetry?

And equally Klopstock⁵, who boldly broke the classicist verses, used the polyphony of the classical rhythm and thereby got from the Greeks something which the poets of his time, measuring in a classicist way, denied as un-Greek.

The Romantic period did not see man as the centre, instead the never-ending flow of life resounded in the thousand-fold echo of poetry, which was kept alive by the poet like a priest. The Romantic saw this light also amongst the Greek, just as Nietzsche was looking for it with Dionysus. They took their role models from the rhythmical richness of forms in the Greek poetry.⁶ One thought was that the verse epic of old was contradictory to the free, rhythmic urge of the lyrics. These poems are colourful and capable of development. The lyric poem, due to its brevity, is only given a short time, and the feeling of the listener sounds unexpressed, whereas time is so important for the classical principle. One also saw in the classic style the beginnings of free rhythm, which the Romantics and the young Goethe liked. The new interpretation of the Greek tragedy followed suit. These are also two directions of the European intellect, which, with tenacious consequence stick to the classic and find a parallel in the Orient with the Persian mystical genre that keeps the same distance to the classical and Romantic genres of the Occident.

When we say that Rumi's lyrical poetry is bound to the subject, this does not diminish the comparison with the super-personal tendency of Romantic poetry. The subject of Rumi possesses nothing of the Occidental personality. In recognition of his highest value of life and his relationship to the conditionless being of God, the poet leaves the restrictive limitations on the self. But since he has to shape the expression of the experience with known appearances, he splits this self several times. Through this symbolic and concrete grouping, the contrasts attain an existential habit that we can also find in the poetry of the folk song. But here we are not allowed to forget the sociological limitations!

Everybody knows how much the Romantic poets of Germany liked to sing folk songs. Görres⁷ expresses this beautifully in the introduction to his *Teutsches Volksbuechlein* or Arnim⁸ in the prologue to the *Wunderhorn*. Surely from there, it is still a far way to go to the poems of Rumi. We have already said that Persian mystical poetry can only be valid in comparison with the didactic poem. The rhythmic swings here are far more at ease and more similar to the Romantic style, but they are still bound and one cannot say that they have any obvious conduct of free verse. But the richness of the metres shows this restless up and down already, that corresponds to the Romantic sentiment. Typical also is the frequent use of the *rajaz*, this most simple metre and closest to prose, from which the structure of the Arabic poem shall develop. The rhythm, the Romantic echo, which, according to A. W. Schlegel, enables the vision of the infinite, is never missing. But the ghazel does not have the structure of verses that the classical style would demand in the lyric poetry. Goethe, as can be detected in the *Westöstlicher Divan*, classicised the ghazel through a structuring of the verses.

Even though these comparisons are forcing themselves upon us, they can still not make us forget about the strong contrasts that remain with respect to the Occidental poetry. And this distance will continue to exist, as long as the classical times continue to be more important for us than a set of historical facts. The classical period has educated us to this day to approach poetry with reason. Even in the highest yearning for eternity, the consciousness of the unchangeable structure of values never leaves us. This might only become apparent when translated from its aesthetic form into the practical individual and communal life. But in each scientific research and expression, one never forgets about this similarity. The outer and inner form of appearance of the piece of art itself is, for us, probably already in common with respect to reason, and the metaphorical aspect and the language do not step out of this value structure. Our Romantic trends have not done away with this rule either, even though they have given it

its own new, form. The shortcomings also of our Occidental categories have brought about this polarity that is expressed in the tension between the classical and the Romantic. But this has always been an internal expression of the Occidental Bildungscommunity. For the will to structure of the Romantic poets, we can without a doubt point out their preference for the philosophical problems of mathematics and music. A more thoroughgoing approach to this question would certainly reap more and better proof. But those few, who decided to go their own way, so that they renounced the Occidental principle, have been called to justify themselves.

For it is indeed against Occidental and European reason and its history, to strive to follow the will to redemption in forms that escape the terminological and morally (sittlich) identifiable reception. But those seem to be more adequate for the lifestyle of the Near East. The religious-aesthetic aim in Rumi's poetry is subject to a principle that has never been successful in the West. The results from an analysis of the didactic poetry for the nature of the Persian and partly Oriental poetry, cannot be drawn from a contemplation of Western poetry. In the East the poet achieves development of meaning and resolving of meaning only where and when all things are liberated from their restrictions value-wise. We have tried to demonstrate in our paper, how this is achieved and implemented in the poetry. But also with Rumi there is a structure and an architecture in the limited sequence of pictures and groups of meanings. And even here the strange polarity appears, as in the didactic poem and the Divan that appears again on the level of contemplation in the classic and Romantic of the Occident. But the forceful structuring and thereby the breaking through to beauty, stems most likely from the inclination of the Oriental to a special side of the human mind. Is it the exaggerated consciousness of the religious duty? Or the unusual rootedness in sensual contemplation that succumbs so much to the richness of appearance, that it necessarily crosses the borders of self-limitation. In this sense the art of mysticism would be a tiding of the tragedy of the mind, which is aware of its qualitative advantage from nature, but succumbs to its quantitative forces not without melancholy and pain. If one follows this development to the end, then one can only confirm this quotation from the Westöstlicher Divan:

...for when they long for the distant and always further distant tropics, so is it mere nonsense; at the most nothing but the general term remains under which we can subsume the things, a term that annuls all contemplation and thus all poetry. And so their virtues are in reality the flowers of their mistakes.

But mistakes that history has made. And whose enormity and importance justifies their consideration. What knowledge we can get from the last and penultimate things, could be very beneficial for the scientific investigation of our present tasks and their examination. We have only given a sketch of what should be a more intensive research in this field and should be crowned with the best results that can live up to the most noble endeavours of our nation. Not a comparative colligation of single expressions, but an investigation of interrelated groups, which can eventually also elucidate our terminology about ourselves and renew them in a critical way. Maybe in this way we can correct some of our wrongly guided energies that are carried out in cultural forms and those of Weltanschauung, or can be dismissed from the space in which they demand a position. This could be a task in face of the literary mission of Stefan George.

When there the scientific discussion tries to escape from the suppressive terminology, and terminology itself dissolves in an ethereal-literary pathos, so we are asked whether we are considering to Orientalise ourselves or not. Helplessness and weakness, but also ignorance about a broad field of history of

humanity might recommend an answer that does not correspond with our Occidental past. With this reference I have not given the final verdict. We believe that with one look only we can see into ourselves, to explain the closeness of our conscience also when researching the Oriental poetry. For we are trying to live up to the words of Goethe:

Leave it to the common unhelpful masses to praise in comparison, to choose and to dismiss. But the teachers of the nation have to come to a point of view where our general German overview comes to find a pure and unconditional conclusion.

Note

1 This is a translation of Gustav Richter, *Persiens Mystiker Dschelál-eddin Rumi: Eine Stildeutung in drel Vortraegen*, Breslau: Franke Verlag und Druckerei, Otto Borgmeyer 1933, chapter 1. His German translations have been replaced by English equivalents. All the footnotes are the work of the editor as the original has no references.

2 "Such spiritual ecstatic states, which the intimates of Allah enter in performing the movements and whirling of their rituals, are a means to excite and impel their hearts. This is the food of those who love Allah: it gives them energy in their hard voyage in search of the truth. Sayyidna Nabi (saws) says, "The ecstatic ritual of the lovers of Allah, their whirling and chanting, is an obligatory form of worship for some, and for others a supererogatory act of worship – and yet for others still it is heresy. It is obligatory for the perfect man, it is supererogatory for the lovers and for the heedless it is heresy." (Jelani, Abd al-Qadir, *The Secret of Secrets*, trans. Shaykh Tosun Bayrak Al-Jerahi. S. Abdul Majeed & Co., Kuala Lumpur: 1995, p.92) Al-Jelani explains that, while for impure hearts mystical music might sound erotic, for the pure of heart it only sounds deeply spiritual.

3 According to Annemarie Schimmel, Friedrich Rückert's translations of Rumi's poetry have been much more influential in forming Rumi's image in German literary history than those of Vincenz von Rosenzweig-Schwannau (Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 1975, p.310)

4 August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) founded the Athenaeum with his brother, Friedrich von Schlegel. He was one of the first critics to see the importance of social evolution in the history of art. According to Said, Friedrich Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier...* "seemed to confirm his own pronouncement made in 1800 about the Orient being the purest form of Romanticism". (Said, Edward. *Orientalism*, London: 1995, p.137). See *Observations sur la langue et la littérature provençales/ Hrsg. Mit einem Vortwort von Gunter Narr: "August Wilhelm Schlegel, ein Wegbereiter der romanischen Philologie"* (Tübingen: Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik 1971).

5 Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803) was important for his influence on Goethe. His epic *Messias* (1748-73) created a literary storm when it first appeared in the *Bremen Beiträge*. Klopstock's genius was lyrical rather than epic. He also wrote rhapsodic, musical Odes.

6 Edward Said argues that the enthusiasm for "everything Asiatic, which was wonderfully synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound..." was "a later transposition eastwards of a similar enthusiasm in Europe for Greek and Latin antiquity during the High Renaissance". (Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: 1995, p.51)

7 Joseph von Gorres (1776-1848). As a lecturer on philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, he befriended Achim von Arnim. Gorres also investigated Middle Eastern myths.

8 Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) – otherwise known as Joachim – compiled a collection of folksongs with his brother, entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn).

Review Article

Democratic Pluralism in Islam? A Critique

μijj Muḥammad Legenhausen, Qum, Iran

Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 189, cloth, £21.99.

Because I have such deep respect for the author of this work, and because of the great value I place on his friendship, it is rather difficult for me to offer public criticism of his work. Privately, or in the company of other friends, we could carry on a debate freely, confident that our differences would be interpreted as sincere expressions of our respective attempts at understanding. In the public realm of debates about the understanding of religion among Muslims, however, it is an unfortunate fact that criticisms are used as attacks on those branded as deviant by one side and as “fundamentalist” by the other. When disagreements between the traditional religious authorities and modern intellectuals about how to interpret religion turn into political squabbles, they only do harm to the Muslim communities in which they take place. Furthermore, to treat discussions of the issue of how we should understand Islam as if it were a soccer match is disrespectful to the religion. The danger of playing into the hands of those who would fan the flames of enmity among the various sectors of Muslim societies becomes even greater when one would criticize the work of a personality as controversial as Prof. Sachedina. It seems to me that what is needed, especially at the present moment in Islamic history, is more disinterested academic discussion appropriate to those who claim to be genuine seekers of the truth rather than partisans in some political quarrel, and it is in the hope of encouraging this sort of discussion that the following remarks are humbly offered. Although I disagree with Prof. Sachedina about some points made in his book discussed below, I respect him as a sincere scholar whose expertise in Islamic studies is very much greater than my own.

In what follows I will attempt to summarize the main lines of Prof. Sachedina's argument, chapter by chapter, and offer critical remarks along the way; but first, a few prefatory comments are needed about the project of the book. (Page references are given in parentheses after quotations.)

According to the Foreword written by Joseph V. Montville, director of the Preventive Diplomacy Program of the Washington based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the book is intended primarily for non-Muslim Western readers. The project of funding the book grew out of discussions of

the necessity of dealing with the consequences of Western ignorance of the basic values of Islam that contributed to fear and destructive stereotyping. We believed that there was a ‘value gap’ between Islam and the West, and the Jewish people of Israel and the Diaspora in particular. (ix)

I do not think that the arguments in Dr. Sachedina's book provide an effective way of dealing with the consequences of Western ignorance or the 'value gap'. Instead of seeking to acquaint the ignorant Western reader with the variety of political views, moral values, and spiritual currents to be found in the Islamic world today, the author seeks to show how to give a reading of the Qur'an according to which Western ideals of democratic pluralism may be supported. Instead of trying to bring the Western reader in, so to speak, to the world-view of the Qur'an, it is as if various elements of Islam are brought out to demonstrate that they reaffirm the values of the reader.

The impression is given that the differences between Muslims and "the West, and the Jewish people... in particular" are caused by the failure of Muslims to see the roots of democratic pluralism in their own religion rather than by legitimate grievances against American support for dictatorial regimes in the Islamic world, double standards in economic policies, etc., and the occupation in particular. Differences in political values between "Islam and the West" are taken to stem from the fact that Muslims have misunderstood their own religion. It seems more realistic to understand Muslim rejections of Western political values as a reaction against the ways in which the West has used those values as an excuse to attack Muslim political interests. Consider, for example, the opposition faced by Mary Robinson during her tenure as UN high commissioner for human rights.¹ However, even the existence of the 'value gap' should not go unquestioned. Recent polls have demonstrated that people living in the Muslim world and in the West are largely in agreement about basic democratic values. Most of the Islamic world has become quite proficient in the Western language of democracy and human rights to articulate aspirations, even when that language is used to protest against the policies of Western governments. Moreover, the exclusivist attitude considered by CSIS to be the primary factor underlying the value gap seems no less common among Christians than Muslims.

The people at CSIS believe that the teachings of the Qur'an as explained by Prof. Sachedina

are essential in re-establishing the basis for mutually respectful and democratic relationships among Muslims and between Muslims and the non-Muslim world. (ix)

Does this mean that mutually respectful relationships cannot be based on an understanding of the Qur'an more in line with traditional scholarship than the explanations of Prof. Sachedina? If so, it would seem that CSIS is attempting to impose a democratic-pluralist interpretation of Islam on Muslims before it will offer them any respect, thus confirming the point made by several critics of religious pluralism that it conceals an exclusivist agenda.² I do not want to suggest that the views of traditional clerical authorities must be accepted without question as definitive of Islam, but a rejection of their views should not be made a precondition for friendly relations. Mr. Montville claims that

CSIS hopes to contribute to the closing of the psychological gap between Islam and the West (ix),

but by sponsoring a book that the author claims grew out of the his confrontation with the Shi'ite religious establishment in Najaf in 1998 (when Ayatullah Sistani attempted to silence Prof. Sachedina as a way to still the controversy attending his views).³ CSIS is not closing any psychological gaps, but appears to be taking sides against the traditional authorities with one they consider to be a renegade. If a Muslim organization were to propose that in order to understand Catholicism and provide a basis for further relations between Catholics and Muslims it was sponsoring the writings of a theologian who rejected the authority of the Pope and interpreted the Bible in a manner flagrantly inconsistent with the views of Cardinal Ratzinger, the seriousness of that organization's intentions would be doubted, even by those who would take the side of the theologian against the Cardinal. If the Muslim organization prefaced the publication of the dissident theologian with a statement that the views expressed were essential for respectful relations between Muslims and Catholics, I imagine that there would be some protest from the Vatican. Consider another hypothetical example with regard to the Catholic Church. No one would dare to suggest that the Vatican's acceptance of democratic pluralism should be a precondition for respectful relations between Americans and the Vatican. Special standards for Muslims regularly go unquestioned.

Contrary to the intentions of CSIS, the impression given to the Western reader is to confirm the stereotype of Islamic fanaticism, for the message implicit in the book is that unless a radical reinterpretation of key texts is undertaken based on the new methodological principles advocated by the author, Islamic thinking will remain fanatically exclusivist, undemocratic, and dangerous. This certainly seems to be the impression of Andrew J. Bacevich, who after confessing to being unconvinced by Prof. Sachedina's exegesis, reports in his review:

Even if we stipulate that this one academic's imaginative remapping of the Koran ought to invalidate contrary readings, it would remain the height of folly to expect large-scale change in actually existing Islam to result anytime soon. The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism offers readers a vision of the ideal. But their concern is with the real—not theory but practice, not theology as it should be but the Islamic world as it is.⁴

Bacevich goes on to compare Prof. Sachedina to an "honest socialist", who faces up to the evils of socialism as practiced, but continues clinging to an unrealistic utopian ideal. The implication is that Islam "on the ground" is comparable to Stalinism; and this impression is strengthened when the author condemns the Muslim clergy by stating that in the Islamic world legal interpretation has been left

to Muslim jurists whose chief qualities are their narrow-mindedness, lack of depth, and one-dimensionality. (57)

Now, Prof. Sachedina is personally acquainted with plenty of Muslim jurists he undoubtedly considers to be open-minded and multidimensional. His remarks were most likely made with certain authorities in mind, but throwing insults around in such a general way cannot be expected to enlighten the interested Western reader, nor does it promote the sort of tolerance and openness to the other the author advocates.

On the dust jacket of the book, beneath the title, is a phrase from the Qur'an written in handsome calligraphy: "kīna'l-nj̄su ummatan wj̄ | idatan". On the inside back cover, we are informed that the

phrase means, “Humanity is one community.”⁵ While this might make some Westerners look at Islam more favourably, to the majority of Muslims who accept one or the other of the interpretations of the verse given in the standard exegetical works, the display will seem more like false advertising, taking a phrase out of context and translating it in a way that would appeal to the American reader. Even if the intended reader is the Westerner who is unfamiliar with the traditional interpretations, clearly the book will have its Muslim readers as well, and for the majority of them the book will most likely give the false impression of being a strained attempt at assimilation or compliance with the dictates of the new world order. This is unfortunate because it makes it difficult for the book to receive a fair reading among Muslim scholars who might otherwise benefit by serious engagement with the issues raised by the author.

Since so much of the author’s argument turns on the significance of this phrase in the Qur’an, we should examine that issue in some detail. Personally, I find Prof. Sachedina’s interpretation of the phrase rather far-fetched. Not that it is altogether implausible, but it does seem to be stretching things. Although the Qur’an has plenty to say about the primordial unity of all human beings—a message that comes out clearly in a number of verses⁶—it does not seem to be the point of (2:213), and none of the famous interpretations of the verse that I have seen is in agreement with the way Prof. Sachedina reads it. Prof. Sachedina introduces the exegetical work of ‘Allīmah ṭabīṣabī’ċ (d. 1981) as being in many ways exemplary and promises to refer to it frequently for the social and political implications of verses from the Qur’an pertaining to pluralism, yet he does not mention the fact that the sort of interpretation of (2:213) he proposes is explicitly rejected by ‘Allīmah ṭabīṣabī’ċ, nor does he provide any reply to the reasons given by ‘Allīmah in this regard. Of course, he is free to reject interpretations he finds unacceptable and to offer his own, but to defend a novel interpretation of any text one should review the contrary opinions that have been articulated by recognized scholars in the field and show why one’s own reading is to be preferred to them. Before going into these issues, we should have the verse before us in its entirety (alternative translations are given in brackets):

The people humanity were are all one community. Then So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good tidings and warners. He sent down with them the Book with the truth to judge among the people humanity about that in which they differed, and none differed about it except those to whom it was given after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves. So Allah guided those who believed about that wherein they differed over the truth by His permission. And Allah guides whom He will to a the straight path.

On the face of it, this verse does not have a message of equality or pluralism. What it seems to be saying is that people who were originally united disagreed among themselves, so God sent prophets to sort out the disagreements and then they were so contentious that they disagreed about the truth revealed to them. God guides the believers, and the rest have gone astray. The theme is often repeated in the Qur’an that people who wilfully reject the messengers of God go astray. They are the disbelievers. This point is made as people are invited to believe in Muḥammad, may Allah bless him and his progeny. If we want to read equality into it, we could say that all human beings are equally responsible before God and have a duty to submit to His commands. Those who refuse, however, are culpable. Something like this seems to be the interpretation given by the vast majority of exegetes, both classical and contemporary.⁷

±abarç (d. 310/923) argues that the original unity of the people may be found in the submission of Abraham, who was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but about whom Jews and Christians came to differ.⁸ God by his goodness leads those who believe in Muḥammad and his message to the truth concerning the religion of Abraham and other matters about which there were differences of opinion. Thus, the unity of the single community is to be regained through acceptance of the perfected form of religious truth brought by the last of God's appointed messengers.

'Allīmah ±abīṣabī'ç provides a lengthy discussion of the verse in his Tafsīr al-Mūzīn.⁹ He concludes that the people who were one community mentioned in the verse constituted humanity prior to the commissioning of the prophets and establishment of religious law, and that there were two disagreements: one that arose from natural differences prior to the commissioning of the prophets, and one that arose after revelations had been made known to them. The second disagreement was maliciously motivated by envy or rebelliousness. Originally religion was revealed by God to provide guidance with regard to the things about which people had naturally come to differ; then successive revelations were sent to perfect religion and to remove the differences that came about through the rebelliousness of religious scholars. It reaches its final perfection with the revelation given to Muḥammad, as Allah says:

Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets... (33:40).

A more pluralistic reading of the verse is not to be found in Sayyid Quṣb, for although he claims that differences in detail among religions are based on the needs of differing nations and generations, he concludes that the last religious system, that of Islam, was ordained by God for all humanity. None of the commentators expresses any doubts about the common idea that Islam supersedes all previously revealed religions. Where they differ is whether the supersession is by abrogation of the previous revelations or by being successively more complete or perfect.¹⁰

In order to argue against any sort of supersessionist reading of sacred history, Prof. Sachedina argues that the copula in the phrase "The people were are one community" should not be read as past tense. To justify a timeless reading of the copula, he cites a famous Arabic dictionary. However, that is hardly sufficient. The fact that the verb should be given a timeless reading in some cases does not suffice to show that such a reading is permissible in this particular case. 'Allīmah ±abīṣabī'ç mentions that an unnamed interpreter has read the verb as showing a continuously existing reality, so that the phrase would mean that mankind is by nature one community, because people are social by nature, and as cooperation and sociability are their natural disposition, they have to live together in a society. But this togetherness breeds differences and conflicts. Hence, Allah sent the prophets and revealed the Book to judge about the differences. 'Allīmah says that there are three defects in this sort of interpretation. First, it assumes that sociability and cooperation is the primary disposition, while it seems that cooperation arises as much from compromise in the attempts of people to exploit one another as much as from any disposition to sociability. Furthermore, even if one grants a general disposition toward sociability (contrary to the claim of 'Allīmah), this would not be enough to show that it makes of humanity a single community rather than various opposed communities. Second, the fact that man is social by nature would not justify sending the prophets and revealing the Book as stated in the verse "to

judge among the people about that over which they differed”, unless it were admitted that this sociability and oneness also breeds conflict and differences that God sought to adjudicate through revelation, contrary to the assumption of the pluralism implied in the timeless reading of the copula. Third, the fact that there were two conflicts, one prior to the sending of revelation and one after that, would indicate a temporal reading of the verb: first the people were one community; then they differed and God sent revelations; then they differed a second time, and God sent more revelations.¹¹ One who would propose a timeless reading of the verb ought to show how that reading is to be defended against such objections.

In order to get a better understanding of the verse, it would be useful to place before us other similar verses of the Qur’an.

And the people were naught but one community, then they differed, and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, it would have been decided between them in respect to that about which they differed. (10:19)

This seems to confirm the idea that the people are no longer one community because of the differences that arose among them. If God had wanted, He could have decided between them, but He granted them a respite. There are several other verses in which it is stated that God could make the people into a single community if He wanted. The counterfactual nature of the conditional indicates that at present they are not a single community, contrary to the timeless reading of (2:213).

...For every one of you We appointed a law and a rite; and if Allah had willed, He would have made you all one community but that He might try you in what He has given you. Therefore compete in excelling one another in goodness. Unto Allah is the return of you all, and then He shall make clear to you that about which you differed. (5:48)

Here we certainly find a message of tolerance, not, however, based on the proposition that mankind is a single community, but on the realistic admission that mankind is divided into differing communities. Although God ordained a law for each of the communities, the tolerance commanded is not based on the idea that each of the communities is on an equally valid path to God even in what they reject of God’s revelation to Muḥammad, rather, the tolerance is based on submission to the will of God. It is He Who is to decide, He Who offers a respite to those who go astray, He Who will reward and punish. So, the believers are not allowed to punish anyone for not being a believer. Of course, if the Muslims come under attack from disbelievers, they will defend themselves; but this is not to be seen as punishment for disbelief or an attempt to use force to bring all of humanity into the community of Islam. If God had wanted all of humanity to remain a single community, He could have arranged it.

And had your Lord willed, He would have made the people one community, but they will not stop differing/ Except he on whom your Lord has mercy, and for this He created them, and the word of your Lord is fulfilled: Certainly I will fill hell with the jinn and the people, all together. (11:118-119)

And if Allah had willed, He would have made you one community, but He leaves to stray whom He will and He guides whom He will, and certainly you will be questioned about what you were doing. (16:93)

Not only could God have made the people stay together as one community in faith, He could also have allowed them to be one community in disbelief.

If it were not that the people would have been one community (united in disbelief), We would surely have made for those who disbelieve in the Merciful roofs of silver for their houses and the stairs on which they ascend (43:33)

So, humanity has become divided into different communities. The Muslims formed a single community in opposition to which others differed and destroyed the original unity by dividing themselves into sects, each sinfully taking pride in its own particularities.

And verily this, your community, is one community, so fear (Me)/ But they have rent the unity among themselves into sects, each party rejoicing in what is with them. (23:52-53)

Verily the religion with Allah is submission (Islam); and those to whom the Book had been given did not differ until after knowledge had come to them because of rebellion among them. And whoever disbelieves in the signs of Allah, then verily, Allah is quick in reckoning. (3:18)

Those who had been given the Book were not divided until after there had come to them the clear evidence;/ Yet they were not commanded but that they should worship Allah purely for Him, the righteous religion, and to establish prayer, and to pay the poor rate, and that is the upright religion./ Verily those who disbelieve from among the people of the Book and the idolaters shall be in the fire of hell to abide in it forever, and it is they who are the worst of creatures. (98:4-6)

To this we should add that according to Shi'ite narrations, what is meant by "the people" are those who came before Noah. However, even if such narrations are disregarded and it is assumed that the copula is timeless and indicates some ontological level of human unity or equality, or a fundamental common sociability, it would still fail to serve the purpose to which Prof. Sachedina would employ it. He says that (2:213)

has created inordinate difficulties for Muslim scholars uncomfortable with its moral universalism. (30)

If this were the case, we should find Muslim scholars who agree that at first glance the verse indicates some sort of moral universalism and who then give contrived interpretations to avoid this conclusion, or who argue that the verse had been abrogated. But no one seems to have imagined that this verse says anything that would have to be later abrogated. Prof. Sachedina goes on to claim that this verse commands

Muslims to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between the once united human community. (30)

There are other verses that seem to enjoin such bridge building,¹² but not (2:213) and the others that speak of the original single community of mankind and its having been split up over differences that only persist because of rebellious failings to submit to the revealed will of God.

In short, putting the Arabic phrase from the Qur'an translated as "Humanity is one community," on the cover of the book as a kind of banner for democratic pluralism will not encourage respect for Islam among non-Muslim advocates of democratic pluralism nor will it encourage respect for democratic pluralism among Muslims. To the liberal Western reader, it seems to say that the best that can be found as a basis for a tolerant version of Islam is a snippet from a verse of the Qur'an, and this only when provided a controversial interpretation. To the Muslim familiar with the Qur'an and its interpretation, it seems emblematic of the attempt to impose Western values and institutions by force upon what is most sacred to Muslims.

1. The Search for Democratic Pluralism in Islam

Why would anyone want to search for democratic pluralism in Islam? It must be because they are committed to all three: democracy, pluralism and Islam. But that is not enough. One could be committed to the value of all three but hold that they are independent compatible goods. However, if one assumes that one's readers are already committed to the goodness of democracy and pluralism but that they have their doubts about Islam, it might seem a neat way to defend Islam by showing how Islam is based on principles of democratic pluralism. If one wanted to carry out such a project, the first thing that would be needed are adequate discussions of these three main concepts. What does the author mean by democracy? Does his use of the term differ from that common in political philosophy? What is pluralism? There are many types of pluralism that are discussed these days, and Christian philosophers have been debating religious pluralism for more than thirty years, mostly in reaction to the work of John Hick.¹³ Finally, when we talk about Islam are we talking about the divine religion, the cultural phenomenon, the human institutions or what? Unfortunately, the author does not adequately clear up any of these issues.

Let's start with democracy. In the twentieth century, the term democracy became rather honorific, so that completely different systems of government, such as those of East and West Germany during the Soviet era, would both call themselves democracies. Democracy is often rather loosely defined as the rule of the people. Communists argued that since wealth is a measure of power, rule of the people requires the abolition of private wealth. The West Germans argued that rule of the people means that legislation should be enacted by elected representatives in a system that permits the accumulation of private capital. The East German argument crumbled years before the Berlin wall, but even today, Germany's SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) and CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands) acknowledge quite different concepts of democracy.¹⁴ The aura of democracy, however, extends beyond having an elected legislature. To call a government or any other corporate body undemocratic is not merely to state that it has no elected legislature, but that the way it is governed is wrong. This use of the term is rather recent. The founding fathers of the United States were reluctant to endorse "democracy" because they thought of it as implying direct decision making by people organized into small communities; and this was the sense of democracy that was current at the time because of the influence of Rousseau, whose Social Contract had been published in 1762. Bicameral legislatures were introduced in order to curtail democracy and protect privilege. In the twentieth century, however, democracy was the slogan used by the Allies as they defeated fascism, and the same slogan served in the Cold War to provide ideological focus to the opposition against Stalinism. Democracy became the opposite of tyranny. In popular usage, democracy is not merely a system of government with an elected legislature, it is identified with freedom, rights, and liberty.

When the issue of democracy is raised, one might wish to discuss various theories of government, in which case the issue would be one of political science. On the other hand, one might wish to discuss basic Western values, or general opposition to tyranny that uses the slogans of democracy, liberty, freedom and rights. If we want to discuss democracy in relation to Islam, we could investigate what sorts of theories of government seem most appropriate to the teachings of the religion of Islam. Anyone who would undertake this sort of research would be well advised to study Prof. Sachedina's book, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam*,¹⁵ so it is rather surprising that there is no mention of this work in *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. Perhaps the reason is that in the later work the author is not really concerned with political theory, but with showing how to understand Islam in a way that is amenable to basic Western political values. After mentioning how democracy has won nearly universal approval among the nations of the modern world, the author writes:

Notwithstanding the imprecision about the necessary and sufficient conditions for democracy, it becomes ever more crucial to understand the role of religion in a democratic system as an important source of public opinion on matters of state. (14-15)

So, the issue is not what sort of system would best reflect the ideals and values of Islam, but rather, the democratic system is taken as a given and Islamic teachings are sought

to offer modern interpretations that show Islam's adaptations to modernity. (15)

What is meant by Islam here? What is this Islam that changes and adapts itself to modernity? The author responds that he is using Islam in three interrelated senses, religious system, historical

phenomenon, and Civilisational force; but after mentioning these interrelated yet different senses, he leaves it entirely to the reader's discretion to figure out exactly which is meant in any given discussion. Needless to say, in order to avoid equivocation, it would have been preferable to make the distinctions in meaning more explicit. This is especially important when questions of authority are at issue. The fact that Islam, in the sense of Islamic civilization, has often been ridden by tyrannical governments does not mean that such forms of government have any religious authority.

Although Islamic teachings clearly and repeatedly condemn injustice and oppression, one might well ask how the religion of Islam influenced the form that dictatorship took among Muslims when dictatorship dominated the world. When alternatives to tyranny were beyond the political horizons of Muslims, how did Muslims seek to limit the powers of the tyrant where they saw conflict with the teachings of Islam? Marshall Hodgson turns to this sort of question repeatedly in his *The Venture of Islam*.¹⁶ In like manner, one might pursue a study of how Muslims have sought guidance from the religion of Islam in their political confrontations with modern systems of government, from colonial systems to democratic systems. In general, it seems that just as Muslims in ages past sought to limit the powers of sultans through the institution of the religious courts, today they often seek to restrict the powers of democratically elected branches of government through a judiciary dominated by clerics. One might then go on to criticize various aspects of how Muslims have adapted to modern political realities, but it has to be recognized that adaptation to the current situation can take very different forms. The idea that reform-minded Muslims favour adaptation while conservative Muslims are rigid exclusivists is rather simplistic.

The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism is not about how Muslims have in fact adapted to modern political realities, nor is it an attempt to discover which of various theories of government is more coherent with the teachings of Islam, because rival theories are never seriously considered. The only choice seems to be democracy or fantasies about a return to some model of government whose time passed centuries ago. This is unfortunate, because so many Muslims who are interested in political theory or politics are dissatisfied with various aspects of the available Western models and with the assorted forms of tyranny that still exist in many parts of the Muslim world. They want to draw political ideals from the teachings of Islam that could provide an alternative to Western liberal democracy. If they are willing to endorse democracy, they want it to be a distinctively Islamic democracy. Prof. Sachedina's book gives the impression that the only real choice is between democracy, freedom and rights on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other.

The term fundamentalism is a particularly unsuitable term to apply to any segment of Muslim society, because it summons up an entire field of associations that grow out of the mainstream experience of and reaction to militant evangelical Christian groups in America. The author admits that elsewhere he has indicated difficulties connected with adopting the term for "Muslim religious nationalism," yet he retains the term with the excuse that it conveys

to American readers the temperament of religious ascendancy among Muslims. (51)

What the term conveys to Americans is biblical literalism, anti-intellectualism, missionary zeal, and millenarianism, among other things, and this does not convey the spirit of Muslim activists who

advocate a highly politicised interpretation of Islam. There are common features between Christian fundamentalists and Muslim activists, e.g., advocacy of an increased role for religion in social and political life, rejection of various aspects of liberalism and modernism, and especially strong convictions, but this does not justify the use of fundamentalist for Muslims. Prof. Sachedina himself spends nearly a page admitting to how the term might be misleading, but he concludes that none of them should deter us from apply the term fundamentalist to Muslims,

because attitudes similar to those found among other religious groups called fundamentalist are characteristic of many activist Muslims as well. (52)

He then cites a couple other experts who are content to use fundamentalist for Muslim activists. It must be admitted that the term is applied so regularly by the press and by academics to Muslims that there isn't very much point any more in opposing it. I would insist, however, that it is more of an obstacle than an aid to understanding what is going on in the Muslim world. The criteria used for applying the term are completely different for Christians and Muslims. Christian fundamentalists are an identifiable subdivision of evangelicals with a specific history. If fundamentalism is applied to Muslims because of some similar attitudes or ideological tendencies, then the term should also be used for any Christians who display the same sorts of attitudes or tendencies, yet the term is not used for conservative Catholics, no matter how much similarity in mood might be found with fundamentalists. Farid Esack and Seyyed Hossein Nasr also make note of the particularities of Christian fundamentalism that make fundamentalism an inappropriate label for Muslims, yet both redefine the term and continue to use it.¹⁷ It is too handy a weapon to leave alone.

Within the West and especially the United States, there continues to be considerable debate about how religion and politics are related, and about the political implications of the teachings of Christianity,¹⁸ yet liberal Muslims often seem to feel that the only way to make Islam suitable for modern life is to completely isolate it from political affairs. Prof. Sachedina is to be commended for his insistence on the fact that the teachings of Islam do have important political implications. Indeed, there are many people in the West who would be uncomfortable about the idea that in a democratic system Islam should be viewed "as an important source of public opinion on matters of state." The question is how to understand the relevance of Islam to the political realities confronting people today.

By way of contrast to the views of Prof. Sachedina, consider the manner in which Dr. Soroush defends democracy. While both reject secular liberal philosophies and aim to wed religious thought to democratic values, their methods of arranging the marriage differ. For Dr. Soroush, the democratic values come from outside religion altogether. It is scientific reason or its reflection in political theory that requires embracing democracy:

The scientific treatment of society mirrors the scientific treatment of nature.¹⁹

It is the religious understanding that will have to adjust itself to democracy not the other way around.²⁰

The present argument, unlike the writings of some Islamic thinkers, makes no attempt to place the entire weight of the conceptual edifice of democracy upon the frail shoulders of such (intrareligious) precepts as consultation (shura), consensus of the faithful (ijma'), and oath of loyalty to a ruler (bay'at). Rather, the discourse on religious government should commence with a discussion of human rights, justice, and restriction of power (all extrareligious issues). Only then should one try to harmonize one's religious understanding with them.²¹

Once religion is fully rationalized, according to Dr. Soroush, she will willingly and wholeheartedly accept democracy. The notion of reason to which Dr. Soroush appeals here is defined in such a way as to require democracy:

By reason I do not mean a form of isolated individual reason, but a collective reason arising from the kind of public participation and human experience that are available only through democratic methods.²²

This seems to be a particularly weak point in Dr. Soroush's argument, for his opponents will undoubtedly question whether what he is dubbing "reason" isn't anything more than popular opinion in liberal societies. The argument is also circular, for he is trying to defend democracy on the basis of a conception of reason whose authority is dependent on the acceptability of democracy.

It is here that Prof. Sachedina's argument penetrates more deeply, for he tries to find a recognition of moral standards within Islam that are capable of providing the foundation for an acceptance of democratic values. Dr. Soroush could be expected to reply with his own charge of circularity:

It is reason that defines truth, justice, public interest, and humanity, that attributes these properties to a particular religion (or else it would not become a rationally acceptable religion), and that undertakes the task of understanding the teachings of religion. In these tasks, reason would be undermining itself if, eschewing its general principles concerning truth, justice, and humanity, it assigns a different set of interpretations of those principles for religion. This would be analogous to sawing off the limb on which one is sitting.²³

The problem is not a new one. It has been discussed by Muslim thinkers for centuries. One of the earliest debates among Muslim theologians was over the question of whether reason is capable of figuring out what is right and wrong without the help of divine revelation. Sunni theology came to favour the Ash'arite position, that what is just is just because God commands it, while the Shc'ah tended toward the Mu'tazilite position, that God commands what is just because it is just, and that human reason is capable of understanding the difference between what is just and unjust, at least in outline. Prof. Sachedina stakes out a position that does not depend on which side of this debate one takes. The solution is that the basic values within the grasp of reason are inherent to human nature (fiṣrah) and also confirmed by scripture. This means that if one can demonstrate that a given value is recognized by

fundamental moral reasoning, it should be authoritative no matter what theological position one takes on divine justice.

The rather extreme rationalism in morals assumed by Dr. Soroush is not only questionable on theological grounds, many Western ethicists have also come to question the Enlightenment notion that reason can give completely neutral judgments on all sorts of controversial issues, particularly those pertaining to morals. The ideal of scientific reasoning to which Dr. Soroush appeals has been subject to so much criticism by German and French philosophers that it is hardly necessary to cite particular authors, although important thinkers who write in English have also insisted that the methods of the natural sciences cannot be extended to the *Geisteswissenschaften*, most obviously in ethics.²⁴ The answer to the problem raised by Dr. Soroush about cutting off the limb on which one is sitting is that even if unaided reason may be used in order to decide whether a given religion is true and just, the standards provided by reason are indefinite enough to allow details to be filled in with the help of religious guidance.

One final point needs to be emphasized about the views of Dr. Soroush and Prof. Sachedina on democracy. No matter how heretical their views may appear in the context of the Islamic theological seminaries, and no matter how much they attempt to use the Western rhetoric of freedom and democracy, it is ultimately a religious form of democracy they wish to defend, and it is Islamic versions of the basic democratic values of freedom and rights they support. Western liberal thinkers would be suspicious that such Muslim democrats could well end up hijacking democracy. The phrase "hijacking democracy" is usually used in discussions of the FIS victories in the Algerian elections of 1990.²⁵ Samuel Huntington uses the expression "the paradox of democracy" to much the same purpose.²⁶ The idea is that democratic freedoms in a religious society might lead to religious people coming to power and using the power of the state to promote their own religious values, values that could be expected to clash with those that predominate in Western societies. This gives us an added insight into the force of the notion of democratic values. Above I argued that democracy can be used in the sense of a particular type of political theory, or in a more vague sense of general values opposed to tyranny, a belief in liberty and rights. Now we can ask to what extent the vague values pertaining to democracy, freedom and rights are tied to the particular ways that they are understood in Western culture. To what extent can such ideas be cut off from their moorings in Western history so that they could be allowed to take specifically Islamic forms? If the Western ideas are flexible enough to be used to reflect Islamic ideals, would they provide the best way to express Islamic opposition to injustice? One might decide that it is advantageous for Muslims to use the language of Western political values in order to emphasize points of agreement between Western and Islamic cultures. On the other hand, the use of Western rhetoric might have the effect steering Islamic culture away from its own distinctive values so that it is only those aspects of Islam that can be translated into Western politically correct forms of discourse that will be considered rational or moral. These concerns need to be brought out into the open and investigated, and that is something I have not seen done by Muslim thinkers, regardless whether they are considered conservative, reformist, liberal, fundamentalist, traditionalist or whatever. It will not suffice to pick up on some expressions that function as icons for the political values of liberal Western society and say that they reflect basic values that are rooted in Islam as well as Europe and America. This sort of undertaking is unlikely to convince Westerners that they have nothing to fear from Islam, and it is unlikely to convince Muslims that they can pledge allegiance to the icons without compromising their faith.

Before considering pluralism, which is discussed more fully in the second chapter, let's outline the main points made in the first chapter. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section, "The Present State of Scholarship," is a complaint against traditional Islamic scholarship. Traditional scholarship has it

that the guidance provided by God through revelation extends to all aspects of life, and that there are specifically religious laws governing not only prayer and fasting, but including commercial transactions, family law and politics. Against this view, Prof. Sachedina claims that only God-human relationships are governed by divine regulations, while

interhuman relations are within the jurisdiction of human institutions founded on political consensus with the purpose of furthering social justice and equity. (5)

This sounds very much like the sort of view advocated by Dr. Soroush, but I think the similarity is superficial. As one reads Prof. Sachedina's book, it becomes clear that he does not mean to deny that religion can guide interhuman relations; quite the contrary. However, he wants to take interhuman relations out of the hands of the traditional jurists, and allow it to be guided by more general Islamic ethical principles as adapted to modernity, e.g. in the form of democratic pluralism. Dr. Soroush, on the other hand, seems more inclined to base morals and interhuman relations on a secularized conception of reason.

A second complaint of Prof. Sachedina is that traditional scholars treat the

normative textual sources... as timeless and sacred rather than as anchored to a specific historical context. (6)27

Certainly the historical contexts of revelation are important, and likewise for a proper understanding of a ḥadīth, pertinent historical information will be essential. But why should the attention to history be cause to reject the treatment of the texts as timeless and sacred? Any believer will agree that the guidance of God for man that is given through the texts is for today no less than for past centuries; and recognition of the historical contingencies surrounding the revelation of the Qur'an is no reason not to treat the book as sacred. On the other hand, to treat religious texts as no more than historical artefacts is to fail to approach them religiously. Historicism is one of the key issues of modernity, an issue on which Christian theologians have staked out positions as disparate as those of Troeltsch and Barth. The issue is also beginning to be explored by Muslim thinkers,²⁸ but the problems that need to be addressed require much more than attention to the historical contexts in which sacred texts are anchored. We need to consider not only the hermeneutic principles to be used as we approach the texts, but the methods by which history itself is to be understood. The perils of historicism need to be taken into account as much as history itself.

The next section, "Religion in the Global Context," begins with a discussion of the need for "a general religion" in modern society. The author repeatedly warns that he is not talking about a generic religion, which has been subject to criticism by various scholars. However, whatever the differences between general religion and generic religion, both invite the same sorts of criticism. The sort of general religion for which the author sees a need

seeks the realization of a universal global community with a common vision and destiny, (6) is less rigid and opposed to the forms of 'particular' confessional religions, (6) and provides a universal creed derived from the interaction between the conventional, particularistic organized religions and the universal ethics of just human relationships. (6-7)

As evidence for the global movement toward general religion, the author observes,

It is not uncommon to come across a Muslim who professes a strong commitment to Islam's social-ethical dimension, but who never attends public prayers or observes prescribed rituals. (7)

When large numbers of people outwardly profess a given religion, but fail to observe its ritual injunctions, does this mean that a new tolerant general religion is emerging, or that the hold of religion on them is weakening as they fall prey to the distractions of free societies?

Individuals who are rather weak in personal piety may still be generally religious, in that their social and political ideals may be derived from vague principles associated with the religions they used to practice. The author affirms that for religions, especially potentially influential institutional religions, to be neutral on social and political issues would mean "depriving religion of its ethical foundation." (10) Prof. Sachedina concludes that if there is to be democratic freedom of religion, religion must be free to influence politics. He suggests that the key to allowing freedom of religion with peace and justice is religious pluralism, but the vision of religious pluralism advocated is never adequately elaborated. Although the author does not explicitly advocate the integration of religious minorities in society, he does warn of the dangers of communal violence if institutionalised diversity is permitted. It is also unclear whether his recommendations are directed toward predominantly Muslim countries, or all countries in which there are religious minorities, regardless of whether Muslims are in the majority or not. His advocacy of religious pluralism seems to be directed toward Muslims, since it is contrasted with traditional exclusivist interpretations of Islam, but where Muslims lack political power, it is hard to see how their attitudes toward other religions could be "the cornerstone of democratic nation building" as the author claims pluralism should be.

In the section entitled, "The Present Work," religious pluralism is again emphasized, and Muslim states are condemned for attempting to rewrite history. These points are pursued further in the next section, "The Scope and Method." Here the author makes the remarkable statement that

if Muslims were made aware of Koranic teachings about religious and cultural pluralism as a divinely ordained principle of peaceful coexistence among human societies, then they would spurn violence in challenging their repressive and grossly inefficient governments. (13)

Here it seems that it is not Muslim states that are addressed by Muslims who would rebel against them. However, I fail to see the connection between any sort of pluralism and the use of violence against repressive governments. When Muslim rebels use violence to try to overthrow repressive governments, the governments they are attacking are led by other Muslims. One could argue that some sort of pluralism might help stem intercommunal violence, but the issue is irrelevant to Muslim opposition to their dictators. More to the point of his method, Prof. Sachedina testifies to his belief that

ethical reflection supersedes law and theology in this quest for a universal language of human dignity that would adequately mediate the diversity of true pluralism. (14)

I agree with Prof. Sachedina that ethical reflection needs to be given more attention by Muslim scholars, but much more discussion is needed about the relations between ethics, law and theology. I also agree on the importance of ethics for Islam. If statistics is any guide to importance, more verses of the Qur'an address moral issues than those that focus on specific points of law. But, to say that ethics supersedes law and theology gives the impression that Islamic law or theology could be unethical, and in that case should be disregarded in favour of morals. However, if our ethics, law and theology are all grounded in the Qur'an, $\text{ad}\dot{\text{c}}\text{th}$ and reason, there shouldn't be any conflict among them. When apparent conflicts arise, it would seem to show that something was wrong with our understanding of at least one of them. Why should we assume that in such cases our ethical understanding is any more immune from error than our interpretations of the divine law or theology?

The last section of the chapter is "The Exegetical Material on the Koran: Hindrance or Aid to Modern Understanding?" Here Prof. Sachedina briefly sketches some of the main accomplishments of traditional exegesis and expresses his approval of the attention to moral concepts in the commentaries of Sayyid Quṣb and 'Allīmah ḥabīṣabī'ç. Prof. Sachedina discerns three basic approaches to the exegesis of the Qur'an: traditional, theological and mystical. He admits to concentrating his attention on the traditional and theological commentaries because "they yield the most relevant materials." (20) This judgment is rather surprising. The "mystics" have often emphasized moral concerns in their interpretations of the Qur'an. The 'urafī should not only be of interest because of their moral concerns, but because they discussed the hermeneutic principles on the basis of which various passages could be interpreted as allegories for the moral struggle against the base levels of the soul and the movement toward spiritual perfection. Since the express purpose of Prof. Sachedina's book is to seek to uncover ethical concepts from the Qur'an that can be employed in contemporary social-political thought, the 'urafī should not be dismissed.

2. The People are One Community

This chapter contains the bulk of the author's defence of religious pluralism, a defence that is fatally flawed by terminological ambiguity and equivocation. The term pluralism is used by philosophers, theologians and political theorists in different ways. In metaphysics, the term pluralism was first used by Christian Wolff (1679-1754), and later popularised by William James (1842-1910) in *The Will to Believe*. It is pretty clear that Prof. Sachedina is not attempting to defend metaphysical pluralism. A different but related sense of pluralism is moral pluralism. While metaphysical pluralists hold that there is an

irreducible plurality of types of substance, truths, or original principles, moral pluralists hold that there is an irreducible plurality of independent moral values. The two sorts of pluralism, metaphysical and moral, are eloquently linked in the work of Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997). Berlin defended moral pluralism throughout his long career. In his last essay, he condemns metaphysical monism as the enemy of pluralism, and advocates pluralism as a defence against despotism.

The enemy of pluralism is monism—the ancient belief that there is a single harmony of truths into which everything, if it is genuine, in the end must fit. The consequence of this belief (which is something different from, but akin to, what Karl Popper called essentialism -- to him the root of all evil) is that those who know should command those who do not. Those who know the answers to some of the great problems of mankind must be obeyed, for they alone know how society should be organized, how individual lives should be lived, how culture should be developed. This is the old Platonic belief in the philosopher-kings, who were entitled to give orders to others.²⁹

The pluralisms of James and Berlin seem to be at odds with the entire tradition of Islamic thought, which has tended toward a very radical sort of monism, particularly among the Sufis, who sought to reduce the realities of all things to the being of God. The opposition between monotheism and pluralism has also been noticed by Edward Craig:

Monotheists are almost certain to be unfriendly to pluralism, since they will typically hold that there is a uniquely true set of beliefs and a uniquely right set of moral standards—those of the deity—so that any de facto pluralism is just an effect of human incapacity. Hence significant support for any thoroughgoing pluralism acquired real momentum only in the nineteenth century as thinkers, following the lead of D.F. Strauss and Feuerbach, began to view God as a projection of the human mind, or to abandon theism altogether.³⁰

However, it does not seem that Prof. Sachedina really wants to defend pluralism in the sense of James or Berlin, despite the fact that both he and Berlin see pluralism as essential in opposition to intolerance and the dictatorship of religious elites.

When one speaks of democratic pluralism, it would seem that the intended sense of the term is that used by political theorists. Perhaps the best place to look for a discussion of pluralism in this sense is in the more recent writings of John Rawls, particularly in his *Political Liberalism*, which is also listed in Prof. Sachedina's bibliography. Rawls speaks of competing comprehensive systems of thought and value (for example, various religious systems, various theories of socialism, ethical humanism, etc.) whose differences can be expected to persist in democratic societies.³¹ Rawls then attempts to show that reasonable people who hold differing comprehensive views will develop an overlapping consensus with regard to basic procedural principles of justice as fairness. However, Rawls does not speak of pluralism as something to be advocated, but as a fact with which liberal theory must come to terms, while Prof. Sachedina defends pluralism.

Another important sense of pluralism is that of religious pluralism as discussed by philosophers of religion, such as John Hick and Peter Byrne. I have argued elsewhere that the religious pluralism defended by Hick and others is really an amalgamation of distinct independent claims, some of which seem to contradict the explicit teachings of Islam and others of which seem not only consistent with Islam, but clearly endorsed in the Qur'an.

Prof. Sachedina's concept of pluralism seems to combine aspects of the religious pluralism discussed by philosophers of religion, and the political and cultural pluralism that is discussed by numerous political

thinkers and educators. A definition of pluralism that seems to be consistent with Prof. Sachedina's usage can be found in the work of another Muslim defender of pluralism, Farid Esack.

Pluralism can be described as the acknowledgement and acceptance, rather than tolerance, of Otherness and diversity, both within the Self and within the Other. In the context of religion it means the acceptance of diverse ways of responding to the impulse, which may be both innate and socialized, within each human being towards the Transcendent.³²

Use of the terms "Otherness", "Self" and "Other" with capital letters indicates that Esack has fallen under the spell of certain postmodernist writers who are notably absent from Prof. Sachedina's bibliography, but the general attitude that there is a moral directive to accept diversity is shared by both authors.

Since Prof. Sachedina does not attempt to define the sort of pluralism he is advocating, we should take a closer look at the passages in which he discusses pluralism in order to get a clearer idea of what is entailed by his directives to accept diversity. One clue to the author's intentions is that he often contrasts pluralism with exclusivism, which he repeatedly condemns. "Exclusivism" is a term used by philosophers of religion to describe the view that salvation is restricted to adherents of one's own faith, for example, prior to Vatican II, it was a dogma of the Catholic Church that "there is no salvation outside the Church."³³ Prof. Sachedina assumes that exclusivists will be intolerant of others. This is a claim that Christian defenders of religious exclusivism have taken pains to refute. Those who have defended a tolerant Christian exclusivism include both Protestant and Catholic theologians at the highest levels.³⁴ Although Prof. Sachedina writes of "a growing majority in every religious community" that is seeking to move "beyond an exclusionary and consequently intolerant institutional religiosity," and he claims that "There is ample evidence to suggest substantial worldwide growth of a religious consciousness that points beyond particular religious traditions to embrace a pluralistic and tolerant attitude toward other faiths," there seems to be a confusion between an accepting attitude toward adherents of other traditions and theological pluralism. There is no evidence of which I am aware to suggest that there is a growing majority of Christian theologians who accept the possibility of salvation without belief in Christ's redemption. On the other hand, recent surveys show that more than seventy percent of Americans favour the claim that there is an "element of truth" in all religions over the claim their religion is the only true religion.³⁵ Notice that there is no contradiction involved in having an exclusivist theology (i.e., holding that salvation is only possible through the Church), believing that all religions contain an element of the truth (one might agree that there are tiny bits of truth scattered throughout generally false religions that cannot lead one to salvation), and believing that there is a moral and religious imperative to have an attitude of acceptance, tolerance and respect toward other people regardless of their religious affiliation.

Prof. Sachedina goes further than Western proponents of religious pluralism who argue that the moral imperative for the acceptance of others requires a pluralistic theology by claiming that religious pluralism has an "intrinsic connection with democratic governance" (11) and by blaming the alleged lack of interest in religious pluralism for the prevention of

a healthy restoration of interpersonal and intercommunal relations in the Muslim world. (11)

Since Western democracies have flourished for over two hundred years despite the predominance of exclusivism in Christian theology, such statements would lead one to suspect that what Prof. Sachedina means by religious pluralism is not the theological position that salvation can be gained by means of various religious traditions, but a more political notion. A few pages later, for instance, he speaks of

analysing the conceptual development of pluralism or the rights of religious minorities in Islam (13),

but later he returns to the theological definition of pluralism:

Religious pluralism, to recapitulate, means acknowledging the intrinsic redemptive value of competing religious traditions. (36) (Notice how the Christian theological discussion displays its influence here with the term redemptive.)

When he turns to “the anti-pluralist assumptions that are operative in faith communities” he lists the following claims: “Only my religion is genuine”; “Only my religion rests on truths received in revelation”; and “Only my religion possesses the intrinsic religious value for attaining religious perfection”. The first claim is too vague to be worthy of discussion. The second claim is clearly refuted in the Qur’an, and one would have trouble finding any Muslim supporting it, even among those labelled as fundamentalists. Likewise, the third claim would not have very wide support among Muslim exclusivists, who will readily admit that the Law of Moses possessed the intrinsic religious value by which those for whom it was ordained might attain some degree of religious perfection. Furthermore, if anyone has held the anti-pluralist assumptions listed, it would most likely be some Christian fundamentalist groups, although the growth of fundamentalism in the United States does not seem to have had an adverse impact on the growth of democracy there.

Prof. Sachedina, however, insists that it is an exclusivist theology of salvation that prevents some Muslims from recognizing the human rights of others:

The fundamental problem, as reflected in the classical formulation of Muslim political identity, is religious authoritarianism founded on an exclusive salvific claim, which runs contrary to the global spirit of democratization emerging through the acknowledgment of religious pluralism. At the very core of the emerging democratic pluralism is respect for the human rights of the religious and cultural other in Muslim societies. (41-42)

First of all, the political authoritarianism that so often plagues Muslim political institutions has nothing to do with the issue of who gets saved, because authoritarian Muslims are generally busy with imposing their authority on other Muslims. Secondly, whether or not religious minorities are to be afforded some degree of autonomy in Muslim societies or what sorts of rights should be given to minorities as groups is likewise independent of the issue of whether one sees the minorities as saved or lost. Pointing to historical cases of mistreatment of the dhimmis along with exclusivist ideas about salvation is no argument that the latter is a cause of the former. Indeed, if one does examine the historical record of

the treatment of religious minorities in Islamic societies, one will find that whether or not they have been treated well has nothing to do with the theological positions dominant among the scholars of the time, but is directly related to the general level of oppression by the sultans and the degree to which they felt threatened by the minority.

If we restrict ourselves to the issue of the extension of human rights to religious minorities, the issue of soteriological religious pluralism is a red herring. The claim that religious pluralism must be accepted for those of other faiths to be treated with respect implies that equitable treatment cannot be extended to those thought to have damnable beliefs. In the Qur'an, God informs us that there are damnable beliefs:

Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases... (4:48).

Nevertheless, God respites those deserving of chastisement for a term He appoints, and it is not for us to interfere:

And were Allah to punish men for what they earn, He would not leave on the back of it any creature, but He respites them till an appointed term... (35:45).

The pluralism of Islam is to be found in the political recognition of Christians and others as being of protected communities, despite the repeated condemnation of the belief attributed to the Christians that Jesus is the Son of God and their failure to accept Islam.

Surely those who disbelieve from among the followers of the Book and the polytheists shall be in the fire of hell, abiding therein; they are the worst of men. (98:6).

If we use the term "normative pluralism" to refer to the idea that others should be treated in accord with norms of respect and acceptance, and reserve the term "soteriological pluralism" for the theological doctrine that all faiths are equally effective vehicles of salvation,³⁶ then there are ample reasons for us to deny that soteriological pluralism should be seen as a condition for normative pluralism. First, there are religious reasons. Since there is evidence in the Qur'an and a ḥadīth for normative pluralism, but explicit condemnation of some beliefs as damnable, soteriological pluralism cannot be a requirement for normative pluralism. Second, there are moral reasons, the most important of which is that we should not treat those who hold damnable beliefs with disrespect. Perhaps God will forgive them because of some valid excuse, or perhaps the belief in a person's heart is not the idolatry it may appear to be. Whether or not God will forgive them is none of our business anyway. We are obliged to behave equitably regardless of what God decides to do with them in the next world. Third, there are empirical reasons. There is no historical correlation between soteriological pluralism and normative pluralism. People become oppressed for political reasons, because the oppressors seek power over the

oppressed. If they justify their oppression with exclusivist theology, it is merely an excuse, not the cause of the oppression.

The need to distinguish the moral obligation to respect others from theological or philosophical doctrines according to which one faith is as good as another has been elucidated in a collection of essays by a distinguished group of Christian Mennonites. One of the co-editors to this collection, David Shenk, writes that

it is helpful to keep in mind the difference between pluralistic and pluralism. We live in a world that is indeed pluralistic—with many religions and cultures. Pluralism, however, is an ideology or philosophy. This philosophy holds that the only authentic way to live harmoniously in diversity is to become relativists.... A commitment to pluralist societies, however, does not necessarily mean that one embraces pluralism as a philosophy.³⁷

Like Prof. Sachedina and David Shenk, I believe that our religious commitments require “genuine respect for the dignity, freedom, and eternal significance of the person;” and that a confession of faith, given in the spirit of one who sincerely considers himself a mere servant of God, does nurture the respect for the person that is essential to a just society. At the same time, Muslims no less than Jews and Christians, should beware of trends that would erode what is of distinctive value in our religious traditions in the name of democratic pluralism or a general religiosity.

Finally, a few words should be said about supersessionism, an issue that is rather unfamiliar to most Muslim thinkers as it arises out of Christian theological criticism of the Church’s traditional view of Judaism.

Supersessionism is the traditional Christian belief that Christians have replaced Israel as God's Chosen people. In this view, the Jews are no longer considered to be God's Chosen people, since they rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah and son of God. Traditionally, all Christian sects and denominations have held this belief.... Several liberal Protestant Christian groups have formally renounced supersessionism, and affirm that Jews, and perhaps other non-Christians, have a valid way to find God within their own faith. The majority of Christian groups (there are several hundred) still hold supersessionism to be valid.³⁸

Supersessionism (also known as displacement theology and replacement theology) is widely condemned by liberal Christian thinkers and pro-Zionist Christian fundamentalists as being anti-Semitic, or as providing the atmosphere in which anti-Semitism could flourish and lead to the Nazi atrocities against the Jews (the currently politically correct term for which is the Shoah, previously the Holocaust).³⁹ In order for the argument to seem at all plausible, supersessionism has to be interpreted not merely as the idea that the new covenant of God with man through Christ supersedes or displaces the previous covenant through Moses, peace be with them, for by itself, this should not be any cause for bigotry; rather, supersessionism has to be taken as an entire set of attitudes about the continuing culpability of the Jews for not having accepted the new covenant by accepting the authority of the Church. Unfortunately, such distinctions are not often made, and in liberal Christian circles supersessionism is coming to be thought of as the theological foundation of anti-Semitism. No further argument is needed for its condemnation. Christian fundamentalists take this line of thought further by claiming that the

modern state of Israel retains the special covenant with God established through Moses and will play a key role in bringing about the kingdom of God on earth!⁴⁰

The next step to be expected in the discussion of supersessionism is the claim that just as Christian supersessionism is an immoral theology of bigotry against the Jews, Islamic supersessionism is an immoral theology of bigotry against both Jews and Christians. This is apparently the view Prof. Sachedina wishes to expound, with the added twist that Muslims may have learned their supersessionism from Christians among whom it was popular.

It is difficult to gauge the level of Christian influence over Muslim debates about the supersession of the previous revelation. It is not far-fetched to suggest that debates about Islam superseding Christianity and Judaism, despite the explicit absence of any reference to the issue in the Koran, must have entered Muslim circles though the ardent Christian debates about Christianity having superseded Judaism, especially since Christians claimed to be the legitimate heirs to the same Hebrew Bible that was the source of Jewish law. (32)

There is no doubt that the Koran is silent on the question of the supersession of the previous Abrahamic revelations through the emergence of Muḥammad. There is no statement in the Koran, direct or indirect, to suggest that the Koran saw itself as the abrogator of previous Scriptures. In fact, as I shall discuss below, even when repudiating the distortions introduced in the divine message by the followers of Moses and Jesus, the Koran confirms the validity of these revelations and their central theme, namely, submission founded on sincere profession of belief in God. (31)

It seems that there are different meanings of supersession that are being run together here. According to the definition cited above, supersession is a doctrine about who the chosen people are. Christian supersessionists claim that the chosen people used to be the Children of Israel, but are now the Christians. In this sense, the Qur'an is not silent on the issue of supersession at all. It clearly denies supersession where it is written:

Surely Allah chose Adam and Noah and the folk of Abraham and the folk of Imran above the nations. (3:33).

None of the commentators suggests that when one prophet and his descendents or folk (āḥ) were chosen this replaced, displaced, abrogated or superseded the fact that a previous prophet was also chosen. What the commentators stress is that Muḥammad and his folk are to be included among the descendents of Abraham through Ishmael. So, the concept of being the "chosen of God" is different in Islam than in current discussions among Christian theologians about supersessionism.

'Allīmah ḥabīṣabī'ḥ suggests that what makes a people "chosen" is that God chose his prophets from among them. They are not chosen in the sense of any guarantee of salvation:

And they say, 'The Fire shall never touch us but for a number of days.' Say, 'Have you taken a promise from Allah, for He never breaks His promise; or are you saying what you do not know about Allah?' (2:80).⁴¹

If the meaning of being chosen is not that of being an exclusive vehicle of salvation, but rather of having been granted some favours by God, such as being those from whom God chose His prophets, then there can be no sense to any claims of supersession. The commission of the Prophet Muḥammad is not a denial of the prophetic mission of any of the other divine messengers; rather, it is repeatedly stated in the Qur'an that the message given to Muḥammad is a reconfirmation of that given to the previous messengers, peace be with all of them. 'Allīmah comments on (3:33) as follows:

It should be pointed out here that the verse in no way implies any exclusiveness; it simply says that certain named prophets and families were chosen and given excellence over the nations; it does not say that others were not chosen or exalted. It follows that:—

1. There is no discrepancy between this verse (which is silent about the excellence of Abraham himself and of Moses and other Israelite prophets) and numerous other verses that eulogize their virtues and excellence. (The Qur'an contains very many such verses and there is no need to quote them here.) However, as we said, to affirm one thing does not mean to negate or reject the others.

2. Likewise, there is no conflict between this verse and those that bestow similar excellence to the Children of Israel; for example, "And certainly We gave the Book and wisdom and prophecy to the Children of Israel, and We gave them of the goodly things, and We made them excel the nations" (45:16).

3. The fact that two prophets and two families were exalted and given excellence over the nations does not mean that others could not similarly be given excellence over the nations; nor that some others could not be exalted and given excellence over those already exalted. Giving excellence to one or various groups and nations only implies that they were given precedence in some worldly or other-worldly virtue over those below them. It does not say anything on whether some others could be given excellence over them or whether some others too could be exalted over the worlds.

4. They were chosen over all the worlds. This is not in conflict with the concept that some among them were made to excel the others. We know that Allāh chose the prophets over all other people, but at the same time He gave some of them more prestige than others. He says: "and every one of the prophets We made to excel the world" (6:87). And again He says: "and certainly We have made some of the prophets to excel others..." (17:55).⁴²

On the other hand, there is a sort of supersessionism in Islam, in the sense that the prophets were sent in succession, and that the Prophet Muḥammad is given authority to judge among followers of the previous prophets on that about which they differ, offering a middle course, particularly with regard to the status of Jesus, who Islam teaches was not God or God's son, but one of His greatest prophets, and His Word.⁴³ In offering such judgments, particularly with regard to the most special favour of God, walīyah, God completes or perfects His religion through the revelations given to the last of His chosen messengers, Muḥammad. The perfection of religion in the final revelation does not negate the truth of the previous revelations, does not destine non-Muslims to hell nor guarantee salvation to the Muslims. Religion is divine guidance, and we are all to be judged on our own merits granted to us as we seek to follow that guidance and pray for forgiveness for our failings.

And the Jews and the Christians say: "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones." Say: "Why does He then chastise you for your sins? No. You are mortals from among those whom He has created. He forgives whom He pleases and He chastises whom He pleases; and Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and to Him is the destination./ O followers of the Book! Indeed Our Apostle has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the apostles, lest you say: 'There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner,' so indeed there has come to you a giver of good news and a warner; and Allah has power over all things." (5:18-19)

3. Compete with One Another in Good Works

This chapter is divided into ten sections: "Ethical Foundations of Freedom of Religion," "The Islamic Paradigm of Common Morality," "Can Religion Become a Source of Democratic Pluralism?" "Individual Interests versus Collective Good," "Islam: A Comprehensive Social-Spiritual System," "The Koran and History as Sources for the Development of a Civil Society," "Freedom of Conscience and Religion in the Koran," "The Concept of Fiṣra in the Context of Freedom of Conscience," "Freedom of Religion in the Context of Islamic Public Order," and "Is Apostasy a Religious or Civil Offence in Islam?".

Contrary to what one would expect from the title, the first section is more of an historical study than an attempt to argue from certain ethical principles to a right to freedom of religion. The author argues that the so-called Pact of 'Umar, on the basis of which discriminatory laws were established in Muslim lands against the protected peoples or *ahl al-dhimma*, is inconsistent with the spirit of justice found in the Qur'an, the practice of the early Muslim community, the explicit instructions of the Prophet, and other statements that have been attributed to 'Umar. Furthermore, the author points out that the circumstances in which such discriminatory laws came to be considered part of the code of the *sharḥ* are so different from the present day international order as to make them irrelevant. He claims that the anti-pluralist theology of supersession also arose from the universal aspiration of the Islamic political mission, which is out of step with the modern world and was never properly in accord with the basic moral teaching of the Qur'an anyway.

The next section discusses the moral teachings of the Qur'an, and is the most philosophical section of the book. In a mere three and a half pages the author issues his own judgments about some of the most controversial issues in religious moral theory. Needless to say, there is not much argument here, and even less consideration of alternative positions. The basic idea is that there is a universal morality for all human beings grounded in their innate nature, *fiṣrah*. Although Prof. Sachedina cites John Rawls and appeals to his concept of reflective equilibrium as a principle of moral epistemology for which he offers some support in the verses of the Qur'an, he does not really tackle the objection that theories of morals based on concepts similar to that of reflective equilibrium are essentially relativistic.⁴⁴ The point about relativism is an important one, because the author wants to defend a universal ethics, but at the same time

to acknowledge the concrete historical and social conditioning of moral concepts. (73)

Personally, I would favour a view that allows for a limited number of universal moral principles that can be grasped through reliance on the common human nature or *fiṣrah*, so that a more prominent role would have to be played by specifically religious guidance in order to arrive at a more complete

morality. To know humanity, we should accept and be open to the differences among all kinds of people. Recognition of these differences should help us to understand that moral perfection or true nobility can only be achieved through taqwi, the spirit of wariness before God about purity and the observance of our ethical/religious obligations that is taught by religion.⁴⁵ This view seems to me to be more in accordance with the following verse than the universalistic interpretation suggested by the author.

O you people! Surely We created you males and females and We made you ethnic groups and tribes that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you with Allah are those of you with the most taqwi. Surely Allah is all knowing, all aware. (49:13)

The next section raises the question of whether religion can become a source of democratic pluralism. The answer given by the author is surprisingly ambiguous. He begins by lamenting the exclusion of religion from the public arena in modern democracies as he insightfully observes that

religion is clearly seen as a threat to secular democracies when it challenges the secular values that increasingly promote self-gratification as the primary human imperative. (73)

Then he turns to several examples of intercommunal violence, which he blames on fundamentalism, although he admits that

even secularly based imported ideologies like nationalism and socialism could not advance the cause of pluralistic, tolerant political culture. (75)

But instead of turning to an analysis of the social factors that give rise to intolerance in Muslim societies independent of religion, he continues to think that theology is somehow the key, and concludes on the pessimistic note that

Muslim social ethics has not been able to provide the moral and spiritual weapons needed to combat oppressive state force and to generate civic participation or communal cooperation. (75)

In the next section, "Individual Interests versus Collective Good," Prof. Sachedina takes up the enormous problem of how to save the Muslim world from the intolerance that plagues it without giving up the religious imperative to pursue a substantive vision of the common good. Although the author presents his case as an argument for democratic pluralism in Islam as against Islamic fundamentalism, his explicit

rejection of secularism will not be welcomed by Western democratic pluralists. He argues that the secular prescription of Western democracies

delimits the role of conscience to the domain of private faith.... This is the secularist foundation of a public order in which, in pursuit of freedom of conscience, all considerations drawn from belief in God or other sacred authority in one's private life are excluded from the administration of public life. (77)

Hence, he suggests that we should look for

a nonsecularist model of religious tolerance offered by a public sphere founded on religious considerations, a society founded on the belief that God alone provides the centre of gravity for developing a sense of loyalty to a comprehensive political life. (77)

Liberals typically argue that such a model is impossible if it implies the introduction of specifically religious precepts into the public arena, and I do not see how Prof. Sachedina's book will placate them. I don't think that secular liberals will be satisfied with endorsements of human rights and democracy when coupled with statements such as the following:

This ideal of justice in a divinely ordained community is a natural outcome of the belief in an ethical God who insists on justice and equality in interpersonal relations as part of the believer's spiritual perfection. The indispensable connection between the religious and ethical dimensions of personal life inevitably introduces religious precepts into the public arena. In other words, church and state are closely linked, requiring the involvement of the religious community in taking responsibility for law and order. All human beings are called on to support the community, the norms of which—defined as exclusive, comprehensive, universal, and uncompromising—form the boundaries for the individual's spiritual life. There is one true faith represented by the religious body, and all else is false. (78)

What happened? I thought we were being asked to consider a non-secularist model of religious tolerance. The author would have been better advised to respond to John Rawls' "The Law of Peoples," in which it is argued that even well-ordered non-liberal societies with substantive ideas of the good must honour basic human rights.⁴⁶ What is needed here is a blueprint for how religious minorities can be accepted and respected in an Islamic political order without taking on the entire conceptual apparatus of modern liberalism, without, that is, going the route suggested by Rawls, but yet institutionalising legal protections against the sorts of persecution of religious minorities that have taken place during various periods of Muslim rule described by Prof. Sachedina.

The next section contains an historical discussion of the failings of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphates, and of how these failings led political power to be viewed with suspicion so that the Western notion of citizenship would never develop in Islamic thought until introduced through European colonialism. The section ends with a call for rethinking the jurisprudential tradition with regard to social and political issues. This is followed by a section that promises

to articulate the Koranic provisions that reflect a more universalistic political direction for humanity. (81)

The articulation comes in the form of an emphasis on the universal nature of the human *fiṣra*, or basic human nature common to humanity, on the basis of which the author suggests that an Islamic version of natural law theory might be developed. However, there are so many widely varying Western versions of natural law theory that this suggestion is not really very illuminating.

The suggestion of how to ground freedom of conscience and religion in the Qur'an is further elaborated in the section that follows, particularly with regard to (2:256): "There is no compulsion in religion...". As Prof. Sachedina admits, this statement of the Qur'an has been given widely differing interpretations. His own interpretation is that it means that no one is to be denied human rights because of religious convictions, and the autonomy of the individual moral and religious conscience is to be respected. However, he owes his reader more argument in support of his view as against the alternative interpretations. Furthermore, we are also owed a deeper analysis of the reasons behind this injunction. Prof. Sachedina is too quick to explain the verse in terms of concepts drawn from the Western liberal tradition. Especially galling is the attribution of the concept of moral autonomy to the Qur'an. Prior to Kant, the term autonomy was only used in the political sense; there was no concept of moral autonomy as developed by Kant and subsequent moralists.⁴⁷

Prof. Sachedina justifies making use of modern terminology as follows:

There is nothing modern or liberal about such an acknowledgment of individual autonomous dignity and the human need for moral and spiritual nourishment—such yearnings are evident throughout history. A rudimentary terminology or an unsophisticated discourse in theology, ethics, or politics in no way implies that earlier cultures were unfamiliar with notions of civil religion or society based on freedom of conscience. On the contrary, the existence of similar human conditions in other cultures and the universally recognizable laws of nature that regulate interaction between religion and history, faith and power, ideology and politics, suggests the common moral and spiritual terrain that human beings tread in their perennial search for solutions to the problems of injustice, oppression, and poverty. Hence, as I shall contend, the concern for human autonomy—especially freedom of worship (or freedom not to worship)—is as fundamental to the Koranic vision of human religiosity as it is to that of other civilizations. (84)

I've quoted Prof. Sachedina at length here because I think the point on which we differ in this regard is essential, not only for the concept of moral autonomy, but for the use of vocabulary and concepts taken from the modern tradition in general when used to describe other systems of thought. The point is not that the discourse found in the Qur'an is rudimentary or unsophisticated—far from it! As Muslims, after all, we believe that the Qur'an is the revelation of God. I suppose that someone might think that God used rather unsophisticated language in order that His revelation would be understood by the simple minded masses, but that theologians today are free to offer scholarly interpretations of the text using the most advanced and up to date terminology. But this is not the issue. The problem is that the language of moral autonomy, human rights, and all the rest comes with specific historical and philosophical associations. There are no laws of nature that regulate interaction between religion and history, faith and power, ideology and politics. These interactions arise in different ways in different

parts of the world and in different ages because of the different ways in which people in those times and places understand what they do as we understand them through our own concepts of autonomy, ideology, religion, law, and so on.

The issue is one of hermeneutics. I would never claim that in order to understand a text we have to restrict ourselves to the language of text itself in our descriptions of it. We do need to increase our awareness of what is implicit in the moral and political concepts that are familiar to us, and how they differ from those of the text to which we wish to open ourselves. To open ourselves to the text of the Qur'an, we need to have some idea of how the issues addressed were understood by people before the revelation, how that understanding was altered or thrown into question with the revelation, what was taken for granted and what was challenged, the direction to which the divine guidance points through such differences, and how all of this compares to the ways in which modern views of related issues have developed. We cannot simply take the "no compulsion" verse together with reflections on the originally endowed constitution or fiṣrah given by God to man to imply that human autonomy is "fundamental to the Koranic vision of human religiosity." We have to allow ourselves to be led by the text and its associations to discover the significance of the prohibition of compulsion in religion, and how it relates to other themes of the text. For example, the phrase, "There is no compulsion in religion", is followed by "indeed the right way has become clearly distinct from error". 'Allīmah ṭabīṣabī'ĉ takes the latter phrase as giving an explanation for the prohibition.⁴⁸ Does this mean that where right and wrong are not clear to someone, compulsion becomes permissible? Or does it mean to emphasize the extent to which religion must be the result of free choice: not only is no one to compel or use force to get another to accept a religion, but since one's choice will only be free if it is well informed, God sends His messengers to clearly show the difference between right and wrong in such matters, so that the responsibility for accepting or rejecting religion falls entirely on the individual's shoulders. After this he can have no excuses before God that he was compelled or did not know what was what. After we answer such questions and become familiar with the issues related to our topic in the text, we can start to explore the problem of what it offers to us in our modern conditions. What are the similarities and differences between the notion of compulsion in the Qur'an and modern ideas about violations of human liberty? In the end we might well find a way to endorse an insistence on freedom of worship and autonomous dignity based on the guidance found in the Qur'an, but this would require a lot of work. We would need to understand what is distinctive in the modern concepts of autonomy and in the ideas expressed in the language of the Qur'an. We cannot just say that it's all the same thing because of the common moral and spiritual terrain through which we journey.

In the next section there is a continuation of the discussion of the fiṣrah, a review of the types of divine guidance according to Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and a restatement of the case that there is to be no compulsion in religion. The basic idea is that guidance is offered to human beings through reason, perception and conscience in addition to revelation so that they may make informed and free choices. The freedom of choice involved is essential to the nature of the test to which God puts people, and hence no one should use force to try to bring anyone to faith.

This is followed by a section on freedom of religion in an Islamic public order. The author briefly describes the millet system, takes note of some of the abuses in the historical application of the system, and denounces the religious intolerance that arose among Muslims as contrary to the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an. Prof. Sachedina observes that the millet system is one in which legal recognition is accorded to certain communities, and that it is more in accord with a group rights model of political organization than classical liberal models.⁴⁹ In the end, however, it remains unclear just where Prof. Sachedina stands on the issue. Is the sort of recognition of rights and freedoms that he sees

in the Qur'an more in line with classical liberal individualism or is it more communitarian? What is clear is that the millet system as codified in Islamic jurisprudence is unacceptable as such, but whether it is to be scrapped in favour of a system based on individual rights, as in Western models, or whether some sort of reform of the millet system that protects the autonomy of various groups is to be preferred is never made plain.

The last section of the chapter is about apostasy. The basic point is one that has become rather common among Muslim thinkers, namely that apostasy should not be considered a punishable crime when it poses no threat to the Islamic community and results from a sincere, even if failed, effort to find religious truth. The idea that no one should be punished for accepting or rejecting a religion is one of the most important points that the author defends in the book. He defends freedom of religion as a matter of personal conscience and as a pillar of an Islamic political order. Yet he concludes:

The Muslim civil authority has the ultimate responsibility for using its discretionary power to assess the level of discord created by a public declaration of an apostasy and to lay down the appropriate measures to deal with it. (101)

The assumption is that the discretion of the Muslim civil authorities can be trusted and that established legal protections are not needed, despite the fact that history provides more than enough reason to be sceptical. Indeed, liberal critics of Islamic politics have often taken note of precisely this point:

Islamist authors evade any definition of institutions, which they essentially mistrust, in favour of reflections on virtue (taqwi).50

Perhaps Muslims are justified in our mistrust of institutions as well as our emphasis on virtue, for without virtue, no amount of bureaucratic regulations will ensure a just or efficient society; but be that as it may, the point is well taken that more work is needed in the development of legal and other institutional instruments in keeping with Islamic values and ideals.

4. Forgiveness Toward Humankind

This chapter is explicitly addressed to Muslims. Its purpose is to demonstrate that "Islam is the solution" implies a pluralistic ethics based on the Qur'an. We might well ask for which Muslims the author is writing. Liberal or reformist Muslims will not need any convincing. Muslims in Iran, whether of the so-called left or right wings have agreed to a constitution in which citizenship and rights to participate in elections are granted to non-Muslims, and there is widespread agreement among Iranian Muslims of all political persuasions, including the clergy, that there is at least some truth in the religions of the non-Muslim "peoples of the book" and that through His mercy God may grant salvation to those who are

unable to find their way to the acceptance of Islam. Of course, there are other Muslims, especially among those who proclaim adherence to a salafiyyah ideology who might take issue with such ideas.

The chapter is divided into twelve sections, all of which contain discussions of retributive justice in Islam, jihad, or other issues pertaining to violence.

To begin with, it is explained that Islamic injunctions regarding retribution are designed to limit violence and put a strong emphasis on forgiveness. Through forgiveness, injured relationships are repaired and dignity and respect are restored. By seeking the forgiveness of God, faith is restored through which one gains inner peace. The author claims that such teachings of Islam are ignored when religious violence is fuelled by exclusivist fundamentalist pride and jealousy. If the intention is to address Muslims by showing them how violence arises from the vices of pride and jealousy, it is rather unfortunate that the author seems to be so tenaciously uninterested in mystical or 'irfjn literature which is such a rich source for discussions of virtue and vice.⁵¹ If the intention is to calm the fears of non-Muslims, the appeal to religious virtue and the proper understanding of Islamic teachings will not offer much solace.

From retributive justice the author turns to jihid. Prof. Sachedina points out that the use of force sanctioned in the Qur'an is purely defensive; and describes how Muslim jurists perversely extended the concept of jihad to justify the offensive wars that were being carried out by various dynasties against non-believers. He continues with a brief discussion of jihad as a just war theory, and describes the differences between Sunn and Sh'ah jurists on the conditions under which jihad may be undertaken.⁵² Once again, the discussion is unlikely to convince the salafiyyah to change their stance on jihad to the more restricted position advocated by the Sh'ah, and it is equally unlikely to calm the worries of Westerners who feel threatened by the concept of jihad, and don't care about what sect of Islam is more fanatical, and care less that some Muslim professor in America has his own interpretation of Islam that does not seem threatening at all.

Perhaps Prof. Sachedina is most convincing in the section on rebellion, "The Ethics of Self-Determination," and the related discussions that follow it. Here the author displays his command of the jurisprudential literature on the subject, and profound insights into the moral issues related to the relevant provisions of religious law. The question at issue is when people are permitted to rise up against an unjust Muslim government. In the attempt to provide an answer to this question, the author briefly surveys the manner in which a rebel or insurgent is defined and distinguished from mere bandits or traitors. The author discusses how the formulation of Islamic law functioned to limit violence both on the part of the insurgents and on the part of the government, and he then explains how these limitations were weakened through attempts to provide religious grounds for obliged obedience even to an unjust Muslim government. Prof. Sachedina argues that given a legitimate status for rebellion to redress grievances against unjust government actions, while at the same time specifying conditions for the suppression of rebellion by a just government, motivation can be given to both sides for finding peaceful means to solve problems before they would lead to rebellion. He then suggests that just as the penal code is formulated in such a way as to allow retribution, but encourages forgiveness through which human relationships are restored and the community rehabilitated, so too, a proper understanding of Islamic ethics should see it as encouraging an activism aimed at restoration and rehabilitation rather than jihad. In this scheme the possibility of sanctioned (yet restricted) violence serves as a limit to encourage non-violent means to achieve the solidarity within the Muslim community that arises from forgiveness and restorative justice.

Although critics might object that the discussion offered still never passes beyond a call to virtue, it is a highly suggestive call to virtue that could find institutional procedures through which, for example, mediation could be prescribed by courts in specified types of cases with an aim of bringing about the sort of restorative justice at which virtue aims.

Prof. Sachedina then returns to the topic of jihad, and suggests that the same sort of analysis can be applied. The aim of jihad should be the avoidance of violence and the restoration of mutual respect and cooperation among communities. The author expresses this by harping on the evils of exclusivism, but the main point he is making is independent of how we come down on issues of soteriology. It doesn't really matter what we think about the truth or salvific efficacy of another's religious beliefs. We have to learn to accept the humanity of those whose theologies we find unacceptable, and to respect them as our religion teaches us, without regard to how reasonable or orthodox we would consider the ideas they might have on various religious topics. The spirit of exclusivity decried by the author need only be normative for his interpretation of martyrdom to have force:

The use of violence to achieve divine goals, as Islam teaches, could not justify indiscriminate destruction of human life....

Death in the service of divine goals leads to the reward of martyrdom in jihād. However, this ideal death must occur without falling prey to a spirit of exclusivity. The vision of exclusive salvation that finds expression in violent death carries with it a flawed perception of divine truth.

Self-sacrifice through martyrdom in jihād becomes legitimate in Islam when the goal is to publicly heighten personal accountability to God and social responsibility to fellow humans. Its remembrance becomes a source of healing in a community torn by the criminal behavior of some, because through self-sacrifice martyrdom provides moral standards for a right relationship among people. (128)

Caution should be taken with justifications of violence on the basis of the nobility of the goals at which one aims. It is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. There are many ways in which having good intentions or noble goals may fail to justify one's actions. First, there is an obligation to consider the unintended consequences that our actions might have. Second, the goal intended must be commensurate with the means taken to achieve it. Third, one is obliged to seek just means to achieve one's ends. Merely having the goal of publicly heightening personal accountability to God and social responsibility to fellow humans is not enough to justify the use of the word jihad, nor to use violent means to achieve these ends, nor to be considered a martyr if one dies in the effort. The numerous ahādīth to the effect that we are to be judged by our intentions seem to me to be often misinterpreted to mean that just about anything is allowed if done with the intention of nearness to God, while it seems to me that the point of the narrations is that if one's intention to perform an action is proper—not merely in being for the sake of nearness to God, but having all appropriate conditions, such as proportionality, consideration of alternatives, etc.—then, God will accept the deed even if it had unforeseen and unwanted consequences.

The final section of the chapter takes up the issue of how to balance means and ends. The author affirms that a principle of proportionality is needed, and he admits that such a principle is very difficult to formulate in detail. Then he turns to the question of whether attainment of the general good is ever worth the sacrifice of human life, which may be seen as a more specific query about proportionality. Putting the question in this way, however, is misleading, because it suggests that some consequentialist calculus could be used to justify the sacrifice of human life without regard to how the sacrificed life was

to be lost, e.g., through war, capital punishment, the use of unsafe construction methods, budget cuts for medical research, or whatever. Any of these will lead to the loss of life, but surely they are not to be considered equally justifiable or unjustifiable by the goal of some general good. Likewise, we should not assume that there is any universal scale against which all sorts of general social goods can be measured. Unfair hiring practices in a certain government office might be universally considered unjust, but no one should think that that sort of injustice should justify the sacrifice of human life in the effort to rectify the situation. Without so much as mentioning such differences, Prof. Sachedina notes three responses among Muslims to individual cases of injustice: revolutionary activism, quietism, and the response that he himself favours, involving the threat of force, but emphasizing social transformation through individual moral and spiritual reform. The need for greater subtlety in the analysis may be seen in the author's claim:

But Islamic revelation, by its very emphasis on justice and equality on earth, calls upon its followers to evaluate a specific sociopolitical order and to defend and preserve it or to overthrow and transform it. (131)

One should not imagine that Islam requires that every government must only be supported or overthrown! Surely one can imagine other policies. For example, one might decide that one should refuse to defend a corrupt system, even if the corruption would not warrant starting a civil war to remove it. Prof. Sachedina does admit that violence is not necessarily a by-product of social transformation, but there is not much in the way of suggestions for avoiding violence other than condemnations of exclusivism and advocacy of submission to the will of God.

5. Epilogue

The epilogue sums up the main themes that I have already reviewed above. One small detail, however, demands attention. It is only a minor point, but it is fairly representative of much that I find disappointing in this book. After all his disparagement of Muslim fundamentalism as anti-pluralistic, at the end of the book he writes:

It is remarkable that no one in the Muslim world, including the fundamentalist leadership, disputes the need for an Islamic paradigm of civil society in which religious pluralism generates principles of coexistence among different religious and ethnic communities. (133)

If that is so, why does the author repeatedly and throughout the book criticize the so-called fundamentalists for their exclusivism? Perhaps when Prof. Sachedina complains of

the lack of serious analysis about the concept of religious pluralism among religiously oriented Muslim groups (11)

He is merely exaggerating. Although he complains of the lack of serious analysis of pluralism among Muslim groups, he himself cites the special edition of an Iranian journal devoted to the topic. In this footnote to the sentence quoted above from page 133, what is even more remarkable is that he mentions views of Ayatullah Miḩbi¹ and Ayatullah Javīd², saying that they have “clearly conceded Koranic pluralism,” (161) although they reject the sort of pluralism advocated by Dr. Soroush.⁵³ He implies that he considers these authors to be part of the “fundamentalist leadership.” So, he undermines his own claim that the fundamentalist leadership has ignored the issue and is exclusivistic. Indeed, the issue of religious pluralism seems to be a rather popular topic of debate among religious scholars and intellectuals of all persuasions.⁵⁴

The author writes:

Given the logic of divine wisdom in endowing humans with the freedom to believe, it is inconceivable that the foundation of this just society under the ‘best’ community should be based on an exclusionary notion of mandatory uniformity in human religiosity. (136)

Clearly, however, God has mandated monotheism through the messages given to all His prophets, peace be with them. So, the issue is only regarding the extent of the uniformity mandated. Hence, it is not inconceivable that the ideally just society should be founded on a single divinely mandated religion. The divine mandate, however, is also compatible with two sorts of freedom: first is that God has given human beings the ability to understand the truth of Islam. Generally speaking, they are free to believe it; they are not prevented from believing. They also have the ability to reject the divine message; as in other matters God has given human beings the freedom to sin or not to sin. Indeed, the concept of sin presupposes such freedom. The second way in which God has granted humans freedom of religious belief is in His revealed law, which, as classically interpreted, allows that certain communities may refuse to accept Islam, but live as protected communities within the larger Muslim ummah, or may live outside the ummah but at peace with the Muslims through treaty. Of course, there are important issues in this regard that need further discussion: the author may want to criticize the classical understanding of Islamic law; but even if some version of the classical version is accepted, there are also important issues about how it is to be applied in contemporary circumstances when there is no political unity of the Muslim ummah. Regardless of how these questions are answered, the claim that it is inconceivable that the just society envisioned by Islam should be based on a divinely mandated religion can only be viewed as little more than rhetorical hyperbole.

Nevertheless, the main thesis of the book, which is summed up in its final sentence, is one with which the majority of Muslims will concur, provided that the key terms are appropriately understood, provided, that is, that pluralism is understood normatively, in terms of a duty of mutual respect, rather than as a theological doctrine according to which God does not care whether one denies some of His prophets, and democracy is understood in a broad enough way to allow Muslims to seek models of governance that do not merely attempt to replicate what has evolved over the past two hundred years in the West. In that case we should endorse Prof. Sachedina’s thesis:

Islam's overlapping social and religious ideals can inspire the creation of pluralistic, democratic institutions in a best Muslim global community of the twenty-first century. (139)

Although I have found more to criticize in Prof. Sachedina's book than to praise, the criticisms are offered in the hope that they may be found constructive, and they are offered with respect for the author who has the intellectual courage to seek to sort through terribly important issues and offer us his own considered opinions on them. I am grateful to the author for his book, because in working on my criticism of it, various issues discussed have become clearer to me; and I recommend that other Muslims take up the questions raised in it. If anything I have written seems unfair to the author, it is due to my own misunderstandings and shortcomings, and I hope that it may be forgiven.

Note

1 See the interview by Ian Williams, July 26, 2002 published by Salon.com, URL: http://www.salon.com/people/interview/2002/07/26/mary_robinson/.

2 See Peter Donovan, "The Intolerance of Religious Pluralism", *Religious Studies* 29 (1993), 217-229.

3 Professor Sachedina has written on the topics of this book in numerous articles prior to 1998, so no one should accuse him of taking a position for reasons of enmity. Indeed, the intellectual honesty of Prof. Sachedina is of such a high level as to make the suggestion of any such thing absurd.

4 Andrew J. Bacevich, "Encountering Islam", *First Things* 122 (April 2002), 54-57.

5 Even the address for the phrase in the Qur'an is incorrectly given as (10:19), where the wording is somewhat different, (mī kīna'l-nīsu illī ummātan wā'idatan), in Shakir's translation, "And the people are naught but a single nation..." The phrase as it appears on the cover is to be found in (2:213).

6 Probably the most important is (7:172): "And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendents and made them bear witness on their own selves: 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied, 'Yes. We bear witness.' Lest you should say on the Day of Judgment, 'Verily, we were of this unaware.'" Prof. Sachedina discusses this verse in connection with the idea of the primordial human nature (fiṣra) upon which he basis his view of a Qur'anic model of human responsibility and moral commitment. (82).

7 See Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, Vol. 1, Albany: SUNY Press, 1984, 215-218. Also see Helmut Gätje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976, 92-99.

8 "O People of the Book! Why do you dispute about Abraham when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Do you not then understand?/ Behold! You are those who disputed about that of which you had knowledge. Why then do you dispute about that about which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know./ Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian but he was an upright person, one who submits (a Muslim), and he was not an idolater./ Surely the nearest of people to Abraham are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe and Allah is the guardian of the believers." (3:65-68).

9 Al-'Allīmah as-Sayyid Muḥammad ḥusayn al-ṭabīṣabī'ī, *Al-Mcẓin*, Vol. 3, tr. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Tehran: WOFIS, 1982, 167-227.

10 The issue of supersessionism is one that has been debated by Christian theologians over the past decade. I will return to Prof. Sachedina's treatment of it below.

11 Ibid., 186.

12 E.g., (3:63): "Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but Allah and shall not associate anything with Him and some of us shall not take other for Lords other than Allah;' and if they turn back, then say, 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.'"

13 The author neither cites any of Hick's works nor those of his many Christian opponents, although in a footnote there is mention of some Iranian criticism of "John Heck's (sic) version of religious pluralism." (161) The lack of familiarity with the theological discussion of religious pluralism is rather appalling in a work that claims to show that it is at the basis of Islam. A discussion of the historical background of the Christian theological discussion of pluralism and a review of the debate between Hick and other Christian philosophers of religion is given in my *Islam and Religious Pluralism*, London: Al-Hoda, 1999.

14 In its basic policy statement, the SPD calls for "economic democracy" and states, "We want democracy throughout society, including in trade and industry, in factories and at the workplace. We want to limit economic power and to exercise democratic control over it." See the SPD web site: <http://www.spd.de/servlet/PB/-s/1edfy7g1lorz8w1kr3xrw1e44jfm1i2t0mm/menu/1010261/index.html>. To the contrary, but also in the name of democracy, the CDU policy states: "The twin concepts of markets and competition are central to our approach to the economy, and make it possible to achieve freedom through the decentralisation of power. The market is the economic equivalent of a free democracy." See <http://www.cdu.de/englisch/gru-prog/gru-prog.doc>.

15 Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

16 Marshall G. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

17 Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression*, Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, xi; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, London: KPI, 1987, 12-22.

18 See Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate*, Totowa: Roman and Littlefield, 1997.

19 Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam*, eds./trs. Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 57.

20 Ibid., 131.

21 Ibid., 132.

22 Ibid., 127.

23 Ibid. I have taken the liberty of retranslating the last sentence to conform closer to the Persian original.

24 This view has been forcefully articulated by Charles Taylor in numerous articles and books, and it seems to be the dominant view among Christian theologians.

25 See John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 4th ed., Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998, 302.

26 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997, 94.

27 My italics.

28 In Qom, *ʿayyatullih BurEjerdC* is known for having emphasized the importance of the historical contexts of revelation. There is also considerable discussion as to whether texts are to be understood by means of the concepts that were current at the time when they were recorded, to what extent those concepts are available to us now, and how such considerations should influence legal rulings.

29 *New York Review of Books*, Vol XLV, Number 8 (1998).

30 Edward Craig, "Pluralism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

31 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 36-37.

32 Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism*, xii.

33 John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, 31.

34 See John Hick, *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001, which contains statements in defense of exclusivism by William Alston, Alvin Plantinga, Peter van Inwagen, George Mavrodes, Cardinal Ratzinger and others, together with responses in defense of religious pluralism by John Hick.

35 Poll conducted by Religion & Ethics/U.S. News, April 4, 2002.

36 Note that I am using the term “soteriological pluralism” somewhat differently from the way the term is defined in my *Islam and Religious Pluralism*, London: Al-Hoda, 1999, 31f.

37 From the introduction to *Practicing Truth: Confident Witness in Our Pluralistic World*, ed. David W. Shenk and Linford Stutzman (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), 24.

38 From the Wikipedia, on the internet, URL: <http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/Supersessionism>.

39 See Mary C. Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?: Judaism As a Source of Christian Self-Understanding* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000); and Dr. Rosann M. Catalano, “Violence Unveiled: Supersessionism Dangerously Veiled,” in *The Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies*, Vol. 6, 1996.

40 See Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust*, New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1990. For a critique of Lindsey and other anti-supersessionists from an Evangelical point of view, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Israel: The Apple of Scofield’s Eye* (June, 1997), on the internet at URL: <http://reformed-theology.org/ice/newslet/dit/dit06.97.htm>.

41 Also see (62:6).

42, Al-‘Allīmah as-Sayyid Muḥammad ʿusayn al-ṭabīṣabīʿ, *Al-Mʿzīn*, Vol. 5, tr. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Tehran: WOFIS, 1983, 246-247.

43 See (4:171).

44 See Stephen P. Stich, *The Fragmentation of Reason*, Cambridge: MIT, 1990.

45 For the meaning of taqwī, see Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, New York: Paragon House, 1994, 282-285; Imam Jaʿfar Al-Sadiq, *The Lantern of the Path*, Longmead: Element Books, 1989, 27-28.

46 John Rawls, “The Law of Peoples,” in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (eds), *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993*, New York: Basic Books, 1993, 41-82; also see my “The Islamic Righting of Human Rights,” in *Contemporary Topics of Islamic Thought*, Tehran: Alhoda, 2000, 171-191.

47 See J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

48 Al-‘Allīmah as-Sayyid Muḥammad ʿusayn al-ṭabīṣabīʿ, *Al-Mʿzīn*, Vol. 4, tr. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Tehran: WOFIS, 1982, 170-178.

49 Here Prof. Sachedina cites Will Kymlicka, “Two Models of Pluralism and Tolerance,” in *Toleration: An Illusive Virtue*, ed. David Heyd, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, 81-105.

50 Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 62.

51 Envy and jealousy are discussed in *The Lantern of the Path*, attributed to Imam ʿidīq, cited above, and in Ghazālī’s *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, there is a chapter on the harms of anger, hatred and envy, another on the evils of power and show, and another on the evils of pride and self-praise – see *Disciplining the Soul*, tr. T. J. Winter, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995. Corresponding chapters may be found in Fayḍ Kāshīnī’s *Al-Maʿājjat al-Bayḍi*, Vols. 5 and 6, Qum: Daftar Intishārāt Islāmī, n.d..

52 For more on the jihad doctrine as a just war theory see my introduction to Ayatullah Maḥmūd ḥilīqīnī, et al., *Jihād and Shahīdat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, Houston: Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986.

53 He refers to their articles on the topic that appeared in the special edition devoted to the topic of religious pluralism of the magazine *Kitāb-i Naqd*, No. 4 (1998).

54 See for example, ‘Abd al-Karīm Sorush, *ʿIrīṣhī-yī Mustaqīm* (Tehran: ʿIrīṣ, 1370 (1991)); Muḥammad Mujtahid Shabīstarī, *Maḥmūd ʿadrī, Aḥmad ʿadrī, Murīd Farhīdpūr, “Plērīlīsm-i Dīnī”, Kiyān*, No. 28, 1374 (1995); Muḥammad Taqī Miḥjībī Yazdī, “Plērīlīsm,” *Kayhān Havīʿ*, 12/4/1376 (1997); Hīdī ʿidīqī, *Plērīlīsm: Dīn, ʿaqāqat, Kathrat*, Qom: Muʿīvanāt-i Umūr-i Asīṭīd va Durūs Maʿīrif-i

Islāmi, 1377 (1998)); Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Alī Dī‘ānehīd, “Pīrīlīsm-i Dīnī”, Ma‘rifat, No. 32, 1378 (1999). Perhaps the first modern discussion of the issues pertaining to religious pluralism in Persian is to be found in the ninth chapter of Shahḥd Muṣahharī’s ‘Adl-i Ilāhī (Divine Justice), Tehran: Intishārāt-i ‘Adrī, 1375/1996), first published in 1973. This is a work that has been enormously influential, and has been reprinted at least sixteen times. Another noteworthy work that contains a critical discussion of the topic of religious pluralism in Western philosophy of religion is the textbook used in all Iranian universities for the mandatory two credit course in Islamic Studies, Ma‘īrif-i Islāmī, Vol. 2, by ‘Alīrīzī Amīnī and Muḥsin Javīdī (Intishārāt-i Ma‘īrif, 2000); the section on pluralism, 67-78 is by Dr. Javīdī who criticizes the views of John Hick drawing on the work of Shahḥd Muṣahharī and a philosopher of religion at the University of Wisconsin, Keith Yandell, Philosophy of Religion, London: Routledge, 1999. I should also mention that there has been considerable debate in Iran sparked by the views of Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who defends a form of religious pluralism based on the idea of sophia perennis as understood by René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon.

Book Reviews

Abdul Lathief, Philosophical Reflections, Mulberry Publications, Keralam, India: 2002.

In the author’s words, Part I consists of “a humble attempt to analyze some of the metaphysical and philosophical problems.” He begins his discussion with his own classification of the different levels of being, starting with Absolute Existence, which exists prior to space and time. The author briefly traces the three aspects or Logoi of this Absolute Existence (essential existence, self-consciousness and spiritual existence) and then discusses, in an emanationist manner, how the universe of space and time arises from Absolute Existence. According to the author, the world of space and time manifests itself as four levels of existence: spiritual, mental, astral and material. After delineating the four levels, the author proceeds to discuss each level’s subdivisions of existence. The author concludes Part I with brief presentations of creative and conscious evolution and the uniqueness of the human spirit within the cosmos. He notes that complete self-expression of the human spirit can only be realized when one comes to know the truth of his essential nature, whose necessary, albeit not sufficient condition, is the contemplation of the “the master,” the “perfect man.” Although total self-realization depends upon contemplation of the perfect man, it is ultimately a spontaneous happening.

Composed of the author’s own ideas, this reviewer deems Part I, though sometimes difficult to follow, the most worthy part of the work. The author’s combining metaphysical reflection with insights from cosmology, modern physics, and religious traditions primarily interested the reviewer. For example, the author takes the reader from the three Logoi of Absolute Existence, which are identified with Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma and the higher triads from Pythagoreanism, Sufism and Kabbalism, through the manifestation of the physical universe of space and time. The author holds that the physical universe arises after the formation of leptons and quarks from the initial Big Bang point of singularity. This leads to the four forces, which exist as spiritual, mental, astral and material manifestations. He then links these manifestations with the lower Tetrad from Kabbala, Pythagoreanism, and the four Archangels from the Semitic religions.

The author’s own sketches and his brief analyses of Western and Eastern philosophies, human psychology, religious philosophy and mysticism comprise the remaining four parts of the work. Although many of these sketches serve as a helpful outline to the divisions within Eastern and Western philosophies and religions, the sketches themselves are often too cursory to contribute to the overall work. In addition, the author rarely attempts to link his own philosophical-metaphysical viewpoints with

those schools of thought and religion he outlines in the remaining parts of his work. The result is that Part I, the author's ideas, seems to stand alone, while the remainder of the work amounts to little more than superficial sketches, of little benefit to advanced students of philosophy and religion.

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Jonardon Ganeri (ed), *Philosophy, Culture and Religion: The Collected Essays of Bimal K. Matilal – Mind, Language and World*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. xxxiv + 458, cloth, Rs. 975/£27.50.

Bimal Krishna Matilal, trained as a traditional logician of the Nyaya School and under Quine at Harvard, was Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University and Fellow of All Souls' College until his untimely death in 1991. A creative and critical scholar of Indian philosophical traditions (most certainly logic), he was one of the few philosophers equally at ease in the Sanskrit texts of the pandits and the treatises and arguments of Oxford Philosophy. The current interest and coverage of Indian philosophy owes much to his scholarship and training of a generation of younger Indian philosophers. Already in his doctoral dissertation published by Harvard University Press in 1968 as *The Navya-Nyaya Doctrine of Negation*, he signalled his intent and conviction that 'India should not, indeed cannot, be left out of any general study of the history of logic and philosophy'. He felt that arguments and discussions from within the Indian philosophical traditions could provide insights and enrich our contemporary philosophical debates. He saw his role as a facilitator of a dialogue, as a medium through which Western and Eastern schools could fruitfully engage in discussions on mutual concerns. This is most clearly articulated in his seminal, and perhaps best work, *Perception*, published in 1986 as an intellectual offering to his friends (and eminent Oxford philosophers) Sir Peter Strawson and Michael Dummett. It analyses some of the central problems in contemporary epistemology by recourse to a consideration of positions from a variety of Indian schools.

The present work under review is one of two volumes of his papers collected posthumously by his student Jonardon Ganeri, himself an articulate leading Indian philosopher and Professor at the University of Chicago. The other volume entitled *Epics and Ethics* looks at moral theory and discourse that is implicit in literary and religious epics and in the dharmasāstra literature, drawing on the observation (which incidentally is true of Islamic philosophy as well) that there does not seem to be much moral philosophy in the philosophical writings of Indian thinkers. This volume focuses on the three central 'realities' of metaphysics, namely the nature of the mind, of language and of the world and their relationships. The papers are arranged in five parts, which taken as a whole represent a sustained inquiry into the 'rational traditions of India', an inquiry that can and should use common frames of reference not in pursuit of a perennialist ethic of universalism but to avoid the poverty of incommensurability and relativism. They also reveal a curious mind with a wide range of interests, not ignoring or dismissing discourses as irrelevant.

Part I brings together five papers on the theme of mysticism and scepticism in which he deals with vexing problems such as ineffability and the claims of apophasis and attempts at philosophical articulation of the phenomenon of mysticism and 'pure consciousness experiences'. Of particular interest is his paper on The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism, his inaugural lecture as Spalding Professor. He argues that mysticism and mystical claims need to be taken seriously not least because of their logical formulation. The paper takes as examples the discourses of the Buddhist sceptic Nigārjuna and the non-dualist monist (Advaita Vedāntin) Śrīharsa. Central to their method is the use of reductio and negative arguments as fruitful philosophising.

Part II is a collection of pieces on his Nyjya philosophy, specifically on its realism that Matilal explains as a variation of native realism. These papers cover much the same ground as his book Perception, dealing with causal theories of perception, the nature of knowledge, truth and justification. This is the most philosophical satisfying section since this is the ground of his expertise.

Part III comprises papers on issues of Buddhist epistemology and psychology usually, natural given his training, as seen through a Nyjya prism and critique. For 'continental philosophers', his paper Is Prasanga a form of deconstruction? might be especially enticing and cautionary since it considers whether this negative form of argumentation is analogous to the sorts of readings and supplements and iterated understandings associated with Jacques Derrida.

Part IV looks at issues within the semantics and philosophical grammar of the Sanskrit language. The development of early grammar and philosophy were often intertwined (another point of interesting comparison to Abbasid grammar and philosophy in Islam). Grammatical arguments were often predicated upon assumptions about semantics and ontology.

Part V on philosophy in India is the most self-referential and self-conscious section in which the papers address the role and aims of the Indian philosopher today and the possibilities and pitfalls of 'comparative philosophy'. Of what value is the study of the traditional darsanas? How can one study and understand Indian philosophical traditions free of the Orientalists dogmas about the timeless, changeless and mystical Orient? What is the relationship between Indology and philosophy?

There is much to learn, consider and digest in these papers and one is left with avenues of possible inquiry and further questions that one might wish to pose to one's own philosophical positions and to the texts that one studies. It is just a shame that the book is not so easily accessible as it ought to have been. Nevertheless Ganeri (and the Matilal Trust who facilitated it) ought to be congratulated for presenting us with a worthy legacy to Matilal's influential thought.

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Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd Edition, New York: Routledge, 1998 / 2002, pp303.

The second edition of Michael Loux's *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* is a most welcome one. This addition shares all of the virtues of the first addition, and includes some new features (most notably: annotated bibliographies on each of the topics discussed, an expanded bibliography, and a new chapter on the Realism/anti-Realism debate). This wonderful book will be of interest to anyone with an interest in surveying the various topics that are part of the contemporary analytic discussions of metaphysics, and it is an ideal book to use in an introductory metaphysics course.

It is worth enumerating the various virtues of Loux's book. To begin, there is a wide range of topics covered: in addition to the new chapter on the Realism/Anti-Realism debate, *Metaphysics* includes discussions of time, identity over time, modality, propositions, universals, abstract entities, and individuation. Loux's discussions of each of these matters are exemplary: thorough without being overly-bogged down in the details; even-handed in presenting various views; and admirable in the way in which he connects these debates to figures, positions, and arguments from the history of philosophy. What is more, Loux's book is organized on the basis of his helpful characterization of metaphysics as 'category theory', a characterization which then enables him to consider the various 'categories', mentioned above, that are traditionally taken to be the domain of metaphysics. Finally, there is enough material in this book to interest even those students of analytic philosophy who (whether by temperament or training) are sceptical of metaphysics: I note here in particular his discussions of propositions (facts; states of affairs) and modality, which should be of interest to students with a taste for philosophy of language.

My only gripes are minor. First, though the new edition does contain annotated bibliographies, I sometimes found them less helpful than they might have been (for containing fewer references than one might have hoped for). Second, I found it curious that the notion of reference does not play a large role in his discussion of modality and the individuation of propositions. Third, there are topics that one might have expected to be taken up in an introductory metaphysics course, which never show up here: the nature of causation and of disposition-properties being the two most salient ones. But I want to make perfectly clear that these gripes are trifling given the variety of topics he does consider, and the depth of treatment Loux gives those topics.

In short, the publication of the second edition of this book, together with the forthcoming publication by Routledge of *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings* (itself intended to accompany this book), are most welcome additions to the field of books devoted to an introduction to metaphysics.

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Akbar Thub t, *Faylasaf-i Sh rjz  dar Hind*, Markaz-i Bayn al-Milal -yi Guftag -yi Tamaddun-hi Publications, Tehran: Intisharj-i Hermes, 2001 (1380 Shams ), pp. 334, cloth, 3200 Tomjns.

The course of Islamic philosophy in India has hardly been studied (and little understood). Apart from a few stray references in the work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr,¹ Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi² and Francis Robinson³ (and more recently Jamal Malik's excellent work on Lucknow⁴ and the Islamic curriculum there), we have little to go on. So Akbar Thub t's project, of which the work under review is the first instalment, of presenting the influence of the famous 'school of Isfahan' on the development of Islamic philosophy in India is all the more welcome. As a work published by the Institute for the Dialogue of Civilisations, it clearly seeks to address the important relationship between Iran and India from the early modern period, a relationship that was rich in intellectual and spiritual exchange. Thus far some works have addressed the political relationships between the Safavids and the Mughals and the influx of Iranians into the courtly milieu of the subcontinent,⁵ and other have analysed the Persianate nexus within which Islamic and Hindu mysticisms interacted.⁶ A thoroughgoing study of the philosophical relationship and continuities between Iran and India is required, and not just as an exercise in fakhr-i 'ajam to show the intellectual colonisation of India by Iranians but also the impact of India upon Iran and the common intellectual resources upon which they drew. One aspect that the author's project ignores is the related question of Islamic philosophy in India before the Safavid period or at least before the famous figures of Isfahan. This may well be a fruitful propaedeutic to understanding the development of interest in Safavid philosophy. After all, it seems clear that the work of Mulli  adri (d. 1641) would not have been so easily assimilated had it not been for the pioneering influence of M rzi Fat  ulli Sh rjz  (d. 1589) at the court of Akbar.

Thub t sets out a two stage plan for presenting his findings. The first set of questions and inquiries relates to the influence of Indian thought upon significant Safavid thinkers. This inquiry is to analyse whether there are specific elements in the thought of Safavid philosophers that bear the imprint of influence of Indian philosophy, especially concerning doctrines such as the unity of existence. One suspects that Thub t will find this part of his inquiry quite difficult to demonstrate at least at the historical and archaeological level of the inquiry. The second set of questions concern the influence of Safavid philosophers and their work upon the philosophers of Muslim India, more easily illustrated through a considerations of commentaries and curricula in the Mughal period and beyond. This part of the project focuses upon the works of Mulli  adri, in particular his commentary on al-Hidjya of Ath r al-D n al-Abhar  (d. 1265), commonly known in the subcontinent simply as  adri, and his own magnum opus al-Asfjr al-Arba'a. However, the author fails to provide us with a substantial introduction to his projects, the problems and insights of previous scholarships and specific such as what parts of these texts were of particular importance, how was the curriculum in the intellectual sciences formed, how did the Indian 'ulama perceive philosophy and so forth. Instead, we are presented with 3 brief pages in which all we are told is that the influence of Mulli  adri cut across sectarian affiliation and was found throughout the subcontinent but most significantly in Lucknow, and that most of his commentators only wrote brief, unpublished glosses on some aspects of his texts.

The main body of the text is in effect a prosopography of commentators. Thub t provides entries on 90 figures, giving brief biographical details (where available) and some details of their works and where they are preserved. An important source for Thub t is the impressive biographical dictionary of the formidable Lucknow scholar of the turn of the century Mawlaw  'Abd al- ayy Lakhnaw  Farang  Ma all  entitled *Nuzhat al-Khawj sir*. At times, it seems as if he has done little else but quote from this

and other biographical dictionaries. Thus his work is more descriptive than either a real history of Iranian philosophy in India or even an attempt to come to grips with the philosophical arguments and strategies of Muslims in India in the last four centuries. As such, it is useful as a preliminary work of reference upon which other scholars can build and initiate their investigations.

The format of presentation could be improved. A full index would be very useful, as would a comprehensive bibliography of works used and cited as searching through the footnotes to find references can be time-consuming and tedious. The vocalisation and guide to pronouncing Indian place and family names (appended at the end of the volume) is often incorrect due to the unfamiliarity with specifically Indian consonants and diphthongs. In the case of one famous family, the name is Kinturi and not Kanturi.⁷

Thub t's work remains a useful step in the right direction. But much more needs to be done before we can write a comprehensive and sophisticated history of Islamic philosophy in India.

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James Beilby, ed., *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Are human mental capacities the products of natural selection? Although the naturalism that is currently prevalent in the academy holds that the answer is yes, such an answer faces serious difficulties. Natural selection favors a capacity only insofar as it contributes to the ability to survive and reproduce. The ability of our mental faculties to attain truth, in particular, can have been favored only to the extent that it contributes to these ends. This means that there is a gap between the reason our faculties exist (their contribution to survival) and the use to which we put them (seeking truth). Perhaps the gap is not very large; perhaps our faculties contribute to survival precisely because they reliably attain truth. Then again, perhaps not. Suppose either that the gap is large or that its size is unknown to us. Then the naturalist's explanation of our mental faculties faces a serious problem. The explanation itself purports to be true; furthermore, like all explanations, it is a product of these very faculties. If it ends by telling us that our faculties are unreliable, or even that they cannot be known to be reliable, then it is in a position much like that of someone who offers to prove that proofs are unreliable (or cannot be known to be reliable): it is self-refuting.

Such is the line of thought behind Plantinga's "evolutionary argument against naturalism." To complete the argument one has only to show that the size of the gap, given naturalist principles, is large or unknowable. To do so Plantinga adopts a two-pronged strategy. In the first place he argues that, if naturalism is true, the content of beliefs cannot play a causal role in determining behavior. The reason is

that on such a view beliefs are complex physical events, and even if such an event has mental content (which is itself problematic) it is hard to see how the content could make a difference to the event's causal properties. If the content plays no causal role, however, then it is invisible to natural selection, and there is no reason to think that our evolutionary history would have produced mechanisms favoring one kind of content (true) over another (false). The other prong begins by granting for the sake of argument that content does influence behavior. Even so, natural selection must still select for beliefs that are adaptive rather than directly for those that are true. This means that, if it is possible that beliefs can be systematically adaptive but false, there is again no reason to think that natural selection has produced reliable cognitive mechanisms. Plantinga argues that this is a real possibility, on the grounds that (given a Russellian treatment of definite descriptions) the beliefs of someone who holds a global falsehood will be infected by it without thereby losing their adaptivity. For example, suppose there is no God. Then someone who holds that all things are created by God and who recognizes a dangerous tiger approaching will believe that there exists something which is a tiger, and is approaching, and is dangerous, and is created by God—a belief that manifestly contributes to survival, although it is false. The volume under review contains a careful statement of Plantinga's argument (updated from earlier versions in *Warrant and Proper Function* and *Warranted Christian Belief*), followed by eleven attempted rebuttals, followed by Plantinga's response. Some of the critics attack one or both of the prongs I have mentioned. (Unfortunately, not all seem to appreciate that the two are independent and must be dealt with separately.) Others concede the first portion of the argument but deny that naturalism is therefore self-refuting. This strategy leads to complex discussions of conditional probabilisation, the nature of epistemic defeat, and the source of our confidence in our epistemic faculties. I suspect that the latter group of essays will be of more interest to epistemologists than to those who come to the book for what it has to say about naturalism. Nonetheless, although individual readers will undoubtedly find some essays more engaging than others, the book as a whole is thought-provoking and provides a welcome and invigorating exchange.

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John M. Rist, *Real Ethics: Reconsidering the Foundations of Morality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. viii + 295, paper, £15.99.

It is a brave man indeed who, in these anti-foundationalist and post-secular times, will defend a moral realism founded upon transcendent principles, rules even, of morality based upon a theistic modification of Platonic realism. Along with other major Catholic philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Rist proffers a bleak diagnosis of contemporary man and society's inability to function morally, divorced from metaphysical foundations of value. We are in a moral and spiritual crisis because professional philosophy fails to address ethical issues in ways that communicate meaning and prescription for the 'man in the street'. Plato can show us the way out because he 'came to believe that

if morality, as more than 'enlightened self-interest' is to be rationally justified, it must be established on metaphysical foundations' (page 2). As an analytical (and ill-tempered, even intemperate) polemic and an argument that eliminates alternative moralities without really offering a positive account of transcendent moral realism, *Real Ethics* is reminiscent of MacIntyre's *After Virtue*,⁸ a work concerning with showing up the failures of the 'Enlightenment project' not least in its inability to establish a vigorous and robust moral theory devoid of transcendent principles, of God and of metaphysics. It is also a work indicative of one analytical, post-Thomist trend in contemporary Catholic philosophy. Those Catholic philosophers who retain an interest in philosophical theology either attempt to reconcile the demands of revelation and reason and offer an analytical 'recovery' and justification of transcendent principles in metaphysics and ethics as is the case with these two thinkers, or deconstruct the very notion of metaphysics, even of the 'supra-category' of being when talking about God, and permit a hermeneutic of revelation devoid of standard 'reason', ethical realism and metaphysics. The latter trend is represented by the likes of Gianni Vattimo and Jean-Luc Marion.⁹ Rist, however, remains an analytical philosopher profoundly alienated by the main preoccupations and interests of analytical philosophy, and wishes to use analytical tools to criticise and condemn both post-modern shifts against foundationalism and Kantian contractualism.

The nine chapters of the book begin with an exposition of the Republic and the moral choice in that work between Socrates' transcendent moral realism founded upon the metaphysical theory of the Forms, and work their ways through variations on what he describes as 'Thrasymachian' alternatives that are all versions of moral perspectivism or even nihilism, to a recovery of moral realism through theistic Platonism as exemplified by Augustine and Aquinas.¹⁰ The first step in the argument is tendentious. Rist argues that the central point of the Republic is to demonstrate that there are only two options for the first principles of morality: Socratic realist values, and Thrasymachian arbitrary values. He expresses surprise that generations of scholars in ancient philosophy have not picked up on this choice (including most recently Julia Annas)¹¹ but this is precisely because it is highly debatable. A corollary of this step is to say that the core of the Republic is the theory of Forms that provides the metaphysical foundations for moral theory and inspiration for 'how to live the good life'. But Rist is not prepared (quite rightly) to justify the theory because it is so highly discredited. Instead, he attempts to defend theistic platonic realism through a *via negativa* consideration and rejection of some major alternatives.

The Thrasymachian positions that he criticises all engage in 'free-floating' moral language and take in a range of positions from Epicurean pursuit of hedonism, Humean constructivism, Hobbesian contractualism, Straussian communitarianism to Nietzschean nihilism. Moral language, according to Rist, must be 'more or less stable' and have transcendent referents which can be inferred and which inspire moral agency. However, Rist's critique fails to deal adequately with those ethical theories (like Hobbes') that include an account of human nature that constrains choice of agency. Another consistent problem, as he admits (page 37) is deception, both of the self and by those entities that one assumes are transcendent beings (Forms). Rist does not explain how his model of ethics circumvents this problem.

The second step in his argument is to present a Platonic theory of the soul that explains how man acquires moral unity and extracts values from the transcendent principles. This is presented in Chapters 3 and 4. The pursuit of the good life requires one to possess a unified soul/self since we wrong ourselves and become embroiled in immoral activity once our souls acquires extraneous layers and become 'pluralized selves' (page 72). Now, Rist argues that we cannot achieve psychological unity without some external factor, whether that be the pull of love (self-love or the love of transcendent principles that inspire us), or communal filial friendship or God himself. Thus we cannot construct a robust form of moral unity within ourselves. He criticises political forms and attempts at moral unity that are devoid of

ethics, such as Marxism and liberal democratic values. However, nowhere does Rist provide a convincing argument to show that we need an extrinsic metaphysical force for moral unity in our selves and many political theorists and moral philosophers would argue, especially if they are within the Kantian rationalist tradition, that the extrinsic recourse for unity is unnecessary.

Thus far, Rist has completed two steps of his negative argument: first, the need for metaphysical foundations and principles for morality; second, the psychology of the soul that requires unity for moral agency and factors extrinsic to the soul to effect unity. Thus two sides of the moral equation are complete: an account of the moral agent, and of the moral principles. How are they related? Chapter 5 on rules explains this relationship, affirming the need for rules and principles and the drawbacks of theories that try to bypass 'rules'. Of central concern at this third step of the argument is to consider the nature of the 'principled man' and how he may avoid hypocrisy.

The remaining chapters complete the shift to theistic ethics and continue casting asides against the misconceptions and lacunae of thought prevalent in contemporary Anglo-American analytical philosophy. At times, the polemic obscures the argument. Throughout, the inherent weakness of his position is clear: as he himself says, 'the truths of the Platonic moral realist cannot be demonstrated through ordinary methods of philosophical enquiry but this does not mean that they are implausible' (page 192-3). This begs two questions: one concerning standards of 'plausibility' applied to moral realism, and the other 'what are those extraordinary means of philosophical enquiry that might demonstrate the truths of moral realism?' He concludes by stating, in Chapter 9 on God and ethics, that moral obligation remains a utopian dream in a non-theistic universe.

In the end, *Real Ethics* is a disappointing but ambitious work that does deserve engagement. His attacks on neo-Nietzscheanism (much like MacIntyre) might conform to the prejudices of many. But he fails to engage properly and adequately with the Kantian tradition that dominates the discourse of ethics. He is also palpably unfair in his dismissal of 'alternatives' to transcendent theistic moral realism. The persistent claim that there are only two options in moral theory is an unfair, 'fixed' choice, and he offers rigorous critiques to the moral alternatives to transcendent realism without ever applying the same rigour in criticising his own realist position. Rist, thus, never actually makes a positive argument for his case, contenting himself with 'counter-punching' and bemoaning the moral crisis of our times. Whilst many may agree with his diagnosis, few will probably adhere to his prescription. The market of moral ideas deserves a moral rigorous and balanced assessment of positions, and a defence of theistic moral realism really ought to engage more critically and fairly with both its opponents and itself.

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Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazali and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*, London/New York: I. B. Tauris/Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001. Pp. xxi + 128.

The author, currently associated with the University of Victoria (Canada), offers a methodologically sophisticated "study of one text and its author, and their relationship to a specific moment in the history of Islam: "The Infamies of the Batiniyya and Virtues of the Mustazhiriyya"--more commonly referred to as the *Kitab al-Mustazhiri*" (xv). Its author, Muhammad Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111), was then attached to the court of the illustrious Nizam al-Mulk and appointed to teach Shafi'i law at the famous Nizamiyya in Baghdad, from 484/1091 to 488/1095. These crucial years found him thrust into a "territorial and ideological opposition between Fatimids and Saljuks. Both powers had imperial ambitions over the entire dar al-Islam. Fatimid claims rested on the authority of their Caliph-Imam in Cairo, and the Saljuks asserted themselves behind the banner of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. The Baghdad-Cairo rivalry is a rich metaphor pointing to the two contesting visions of Islam. It was this contest which spurred al-Ghazali into polemic. For al-Ghazali, the entire Shi'i Ismaili enterprise of the Fatimids represented the 'wholly other', with whom no compromise was possible. The Shi'i Imam's claim to infallible authority challenged the very premises of the Sunni legal tradition, and hence the *raison d'être* of the Sunni 'ulama'" (21). With this illuminating positioning ("ecology"), the bulk of the inquiry consists in a careful "anatomy" of the work, with extensive translations which allow us to trace how al-Ghazali recounts and refutes the Ismaili doctrine of ta'lim (authoritative instruction or teaching), "to place the challenge and impact of this doctrine as an autonomous category alongside that of kalam, falsifa, and Sufism" (25). For elevating imams to authoritative teachers sets them up to rival the Prophet himself, as well as threatening the elaborate edifice of the sunna, or extended tradition, which constantly returns Muslims to their origins. To this end, the work is organized around three themes. The first, stimulated by his own political position, leads him to represent "the Batiniyya as an organized conspiracy, fuelled solely by the desire for power and domination;" the second underscores their "doctrinal innovation" (37), and the third, focused on their "alleged antinomianism" (38), captured in the very name 'Batiniyya' which emphasized the "hidden meaning" of the Qur'an, available only to the initiated--the purported allure of the Ismaili movement. In a concluding section, Mitha opens perennial issues of orthodoxy and interpretation, revelation and authority in the succeeding community, praising the way in which "al-Ghazali's re-reading of the ta'lim doctrine ... represents a balancing act between individualistic as opposed to communalistic conceptions of religious authority: ... the ta'lim doctrine was, apart from its self-contradictory position on reason, also excessively individualistic. It assumes that every individual could by himself realize the necessity for seeking guidance from an authoritative teacher, and hence completely overlooks the role of the community in nurturing and sustaining the authority of any teacher" (99-100). Even the uninitiated can profit immensely from the astute discernment of this study.

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Christian Jambet, *L'Acte d'être: la Philosophie de la révélation chez Mollâ Sadrâ, L'espace Intérieur*, Paris: Fayard, 2002, pp. 447, paper, 26 Euros.

Any attempt to make philosophical sense of the thought of Mullī ʿadrij Shḥrīzī (d. 1641), the great Safavid thinker and polymath, is a welcome publication that provides us with a basis on which to argue about the merits of Islamic philosophy. Arguably, scholars of Islamic thought have spent too much time excavating the 'archaeology' of texts, decoding their philological sense, historicising them and on the whole ignoring their philosophical import. Jambet, however, as a student of the late (and much criticised as well as revered) Henry Corbin, seeks to understand the thought of a religious philosopher such as Mullī ʿadrij and locates his central philosophy of Being as a religious hermeneutic for understanding the divine presence (parousia) in the cosmos. He argues that Sadrian philosophy proposes a real revival of metaphysics, positing an ontology of the act of being, of the unfolding of the divine presence in the universe and considering the universe as a revelation of the divine act of being. Mullī ʿadrij is for him a revolutionary thinker, a radical metaphysician and a salvific eschatologist. Islamic philosophy is thus for him essentially a soteriology. This is expressed in the threefold division of the text: part one considers the metaphysical revolution initiated by Mullī ʿadrij, part two focuses on the philosophy of being that lies at the heart of that revolution, and part three considers salvation and the salvific psychology that is a culmination of the philosophy of being.

At the heart of Jambet's interpretation is an interiorisation of Corbin's theory that true Islamic philosophy must be a 'prophetic philosophy', a philosophy designed to make sense of revelation and the prophetic experience and to communicate that experience and provide a key hermeneutic for understanding that revelation. Hence the subtitle of the work: the philosophy of revelation. But this approach is also a major weakness of the book since Jambet often talks about the 'ontology of Islam' and of the scripture when he actually means the ontological doctrines and explanations that Mullī ʿadrij proposes, surprising conflation given that he writes in the very first sentence of the book, 'il est présomptueux de dire ce qu'est la vérité d'une religion'. Besides the very phrase an 'ontology of Islam' begs the questions: which Islam, and who defines or articulates that ontology? Does it relate to the agency of individual believer engaged in a metaphysical understanding of their religion or to a certain groups of trained philosophers concerned with deriving a 'philosophy', a rational method of arguing and articulating 'truths' about 'reality' from a contemplation of the revealed text. But the use of the phrase also argues strongly for locating Islamic philosophy within the heart of the cultural and intellectual history of Islam; as Jambet says, 'la philosophie islamique n'est pas plus un épiphénomène de l'islam que celui-ci n'est un épiphénomène culturel' (page 11).

Part one on the metaphysical revolution astutely recognises the central focus of metaphysics in Islamic philosophy, namely the equation of the One, of Being with the God of revelation who is the ground of all Being. Reality is defined and constructed by God's witnessing of it (apud Qur'an 41.53) that Mullī ʿadrij quotes at the beginning of his Kitāb al-Mashj'ir. This witnessing signals the doctrine that all that exists does so as an effect of God, as rays of divine light and manifestations of the divine essence. It also lies at the heart of Mullī ʿadrij's ontological famous proof for the existence of God, the burhān al-ʿiddiqīn (proof of the veracious ones) that draws upon the earlier and more famous proof of Avicenna (who incidentally cites the same Qur'anic verse as corroborating evidence). Thus metaphysics must be an inquiry into the nature of the cosmos as witnessed by God and a hermeneutic of the revelation brought by prophets attempting to interpret and explain the flow of being from the One. Metaphysics cannot fail, then, for Mullī ʿadrij, to address the question of God. But once the origin of existence is considered and understood in all its goodness and purity, it behoves a philosopher seeking to return to his origin to understand and construct a soteriology of return, of salvation from the discord of multiplicity in this

world and return to the pure witnessing of God. The boundaries of theology and ontology are not so discrete that one may compartmentalise one from the other. It is in this context that two central doctrine of Sadrian philosophy are articulated: the unity of being and the modulation (tashkĉk) of being. Since God is witness over everything (including Himself), there is a unity of that which is witnessed and found (mawjĉd). But multiplicity is a direct experience of our phenomenal world and cannot be explained away as mere illusion. Hence the concept of modulation, of a hierarchy of being defined in terms of the metaphor of intensity of light, with God at the apex as the most intense light/being, and the cosmos below in varying degrees of intensity. What defines a particular thing is thus not a question of its quiddity, its what-is-it-ness, but rather the existence that bears it. It is existence that gives it value and meaning and confers upon it its subjectivity and not the elements of its definition that are mere Aristotelian notions about the logical composition of an essence. Yet within this conception of existence there remains a residual scepticism borne of the doctrine of the unity of being, namely that all that exists and identifies its alterity with respect to God does not in reality exist, rendered by the use of the root for doubt (SH-K-K) for the term of modulation (tashkĉk). Concomitantly, this scepticism preserves the doctrine of modulation at the mean between complete association with the deity, the sinful shirk of theology that results from a perfect analogy between God and existence of all that is, and the utter agnosticism (ta'Şĉl) of considering the deity (and even ourselves) to be wholly beyond our experience and ken.

Part two on the existential revolution considers the effect, most importantly soteriological, of Mullij ĩadrij's privileging of being. Three chapters on substantial motion, the nature of the soul and the faculty of imagination and its concomitant ontological realm of the imaginal attempt to explain Mullij ĩadrij's soteriology as an expression of the doctrine of being. The hierarchy of being is not a constant and stable substance but rather the grades of being are themselves substances in constant flux, emerging from the One and once granted their subjectivity and contemplating the beatitude of the presence of the One, seeking to return to the One, both their alpha and omega. The soul is a unified entity but carrying within it varying faculties and propensities and a desire to return to its origin. Much of this section is taken up with a comparison and critique of Avicennan and Aristotelian notions of the soul and how Mullij ĩadrij reverts to a (Neo)Platonic notion that is consonant with his insistence upon the soteriological nature and practice of philosophy. Thus the point of considering the soul is not just to understand how humans function and how they perform as moral agents, but rather more importantly whence they come and whither they return, a realisation which in turn effects a morality. The concluding discussion of imagination thus locates the horizon of the return and the rehearsal of it before its real occurrence. There is much to dispute in Jambet's account of the soul and the imagination but his wider point holds.

Part three is the final stage of the argument about the psychology of the soul and its return and salvation in the One. The psychic man needs to perfect himself through the practice of philosophy, and through the epistemology of integrating his intellect with the active and ultimately divine intellect, he achieves immortality and salvation. Further, in this context, the doctrine of the Perfect Man is introduced, an archetypal figure, represented in the distinctively Shi'i formulation of Mullij ĩadrij as the parousia of the Twelfth Imam. The Perfect Imam is both the ultimate theophany of the One and the ultimate form of the cosmos; thus he is the critical intermediary through which one must pass to attain salvation. This is what makes Mullij ĩadrij a Shi'i philosopher. Thus this concluding chapter show how the various branches and concerns of Sadrian philosophy in its ontology, epistemology and psychology are deployed to produce a soteriological and even eschatological result. The ultimate point of philosophy is thus the salvation of the soul, and all that occurs and is grasped and pondered on the way in terms of the nature of existence, ethical value, theory of meaning and so forth are propaedeutics for the final argument of salvation. However, what I find most disturbing about this section is the excessive

esotericisation of Mullī ʿadrij that is consonant with the incorrect biography and intellectual development given for him in the introduction. The parousia of the Imam for Mullī ʿadrij is not merely an imaginal occurrence, a false interpretation that results from Corbin's Shaykhi understanding, nor does Mullī ʿadrij contest the theological doctrine of bodily resurrection, nor is religion merely an 'interior matter' (whatever that is supposed to mean).

There are no doubt many who will feel that Jambet's work is not to their taste: the influence of Corbin, and even Heidegger, is too nakedly apparent. They may even be appalled at his insistence upon the religious and soteriological aspects of Sadrian philosophy, features which they may feel detract from its value qua philosophy. They may even feel that Jambet is 'letting the side down' in perpetuating odd 'theosophical' renditions of Islamic philosophy that discourage serious consideration from philosophers and historians of philosophy and thought (those trained in the analytic tradition, of course). There is also much in terms of the details of interpretation and translation with which I disagree in *L'acte d'être*. But at times, we do a disservice to thinkers such as Mullī ʿadrij and even Avicenna when we neglect the significance of them as 'religious thinkers' and attempt to force them into false paradigms of analytic or post-analytic philosophy that are just not appropriate to them. Jambet's work is a contribution and one that forces us to question our assumptions about the nature of philosophy. Keeping in mind the background of Neoplatonisms and the concepts of theurgy, soteriology, non-discursive thinking and 'irrational' argument (in the sense of *ana-logos*) that are key to later forms of Neoplatonism expressed by Iamblichus and Damascius, we may better appreciate what sort of 'animal' is the later Islamic philosopher, especially one such as Mullī ʿadrij.

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Note

1 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy*, Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977.

2 S.A.A. Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isnj'asharċ Shċ'ċs in India*, 2 vols., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1986, vol. II, pp. 178-282; idem, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975, especially pp. 339ff.

3 Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001; idem, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, London: Hurst and Co., 2001.

4 Jamal Malik, *Islamische Gellehrtenkultur in Nordindien. Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow*, Leiden: Brill, 1997.

5 E.g. Abolghasem Dadvar, *Iranians in Mughal Politics and Society, 1606-1658*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1999.

6 Most importantly, Daryush Shayegan, *Hindouisme et Soufisme*, Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1979.

7 On this family, see Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History*, vol. II, pp. 164-76.

8 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London: Duckworth, 1985.

9 Gianni Vattimo (and Jacques Derrida), *Religion*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, and *Belief*, tr. L. D'Isanto, Oxford: Blackwell's, 1999, and *After Christianity*, tr. L. D'Isanto, New York: Columbia

University Press, 2002; Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, tr. T. A. Carlson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, and *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and the Limits of Onto-theology in Cartesian Thought*, tr. J. L. Kofsky, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

10 In this, *Real Ethics* continues the work that Rist had already done in *Augustine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, and *On Inoculating Moral Philosophy Against God*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000.

11 Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 17-20, and *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*, Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2000.