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Address: P.O. Box 37185-178, Qom, Iran

Tel: +9825 32802610-13

Fax: +9825 32802627

Website: ri.urd.ac.ir

Email: ri@urd.ac.ir

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CONTENT

- 9 Contemporary Shifts in the Christian Doctrine of Hell in Anglo-American Philosophical Theology**
Ramon Baker
- 25 Intentionality, Politics, And Religion**
Mohammad Azadpur
- 33 The Problem of Evil in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau**
Claudio Tugnoli
- 53 Equivalency and Non-equivalency of Lexical Items in English Translations of *Nahj al-balagha***
Mohammad Javad Moafi
- 63 The Relationship between the Continuous Imaginal World and the Discontinuous Imaginative Faculty in Ascending and Descending Arcs according to Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra**
Saeed Rahimian, Erfaneh Mohammad Zadeh
- 79 The Path: Dızgun Bawa, As an Example of Relation Between Belief and Life Style**
Dilşa Deniz

Articles

Contemporary Shifts in the Christian Doctrine of Hell in Anglo-American Philosophical Theology

Ramon Baker¹

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This problem of hell is a specific form of the problem of evil. The possibility that perhaps a great number of people will end up in an eternal hell is a problem for the Christian who also confesses faith in an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God.

In this paper, I shall introduce issuantist views of hell and show that the basic formulations of this perspective do not provide an adequate answer to the problem of hell. Issuantist scholars themselves, however, recognize this weakness and add a wide range of possible supplements to their basic perspective. Some of these supplemented versions succeed in presenting reasonable answers to the problem of hell.

One of the key reasons for the shift in interpretations of hell is a perceived failure on the part of other interpretations of hell to give adequate answers to the problem of hell. It is my conclusion, however, that with the addition of some of the same supplements, versions of annihilationism/conditionalism and hell as eternal conscious torment can be advanced that succeed just as well in presenting answers to the problem of hell as those advanced by issuantist scholars, thus rendering some of their critique of retributive perspectives on hell unfounded.

Keywords: Hell, Eternal Punishment, Free Will.

Introduction

Nobody likes the doctrine of hell. Even among scholars who define hell in terms of eternal conscious torment, there is a certain repulsion at the idea that God would condemn perhaps a large portion of the world's population to everlasting punishment in hell. This tension between belief in a loving, good God and the possibility of eternal damnation is called the problem of hell. The problem of hell has been expressed in terms of a set of seemingly incompatible statements:

1. Academic Dean at CredoAkademin, Stockholm, Sweden, email: ray.baker@credosverige.se

10 / *Religious Inquiries*

1. An omnipotent God could create a world in which all moral agents freely choose life with God.
2. An omnibenevolent God would not create a world with the foreknowledge that some (perhaps a significant proportion) of God's creatures would end up in hell.
3. An omniscient God would know which people will end up in hell.
4. Some people will end up forever in hell.

Within Anglo-American theology, there are four main approaches to dealing with the problem of hell: Eternal Conscious Torment is a perspective that holds that whatever decisions a person makes in this life for or against faith in God are binding. Those who reject God's offer of grace will be punished forever in a conscious state of mind in hell. The issue of disproportionality between offense and punishment raised by the problem of hell is generally answered in terms of either the *status principle* or the *continuing sin* defense. The status principle is the idea going back to Anselm and Aquinas that the severity of the wrongdoing is measured not by anything inherent in the action itself, but by the status of the offended party. Since God is infinite—the being a greater than which cannot be conceived—all sins against God warrant an infinite punishment. Traditionalist defenders of the continuing sin defense, on the other hand, recognize that the harm done by the sins of a finite lifetime does not warrant everlasting or infinite punishment. They maintain however that people in hell continue in their rebellion against God forever and thus deserve to be punished forever.

Universalism is another major perspective in the history of Christian theology. Universalists emphasize God's sovereignty and God's loving desire that no one should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Although some people may experience hell after death, the fires of hell serve a remedial and purgatorial function such that no one persists in rebellion against God forever. All of creation is eventually reconciled to the loving God that created it.

A third historic perspective on the doctrine of hell is conditionalism or annihilationism. Conditionalist scholars reject the idea of the inherent immortality of the soul. They believe that only God is immortal and that God only grants immortality to those who place their faith in God. Those who reject God's offer of eternal life will eventually cease to exist as an expression of God's final judgment and as a consequence of

the natural mortality of the soul—something the Bible calls “the second death” (Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

Issuantism

In the past thirty years, a number of British and North American philosophers of religion and philosophical theologians have developed a new approach to answering the problem of hell. Scholars such as Richard Swinburne (1983), Jerry Walls (1992), Stephen Davis (2010), Jonathan Kvanvig (1993), and N.T. Wright (2008) have not been content with the solutions to the problem of hell presented by defenders of eternal conscious torment, universalism, or conditionalism. They seek to “lower the temperature” of hell by reinterpreting hell along non-retributive lines. Instead of being an expression of God’s wrath, hell is seen both as an expression of the love of God for created beings and as the natural consequences of a person’s free choice to reject God.

As a fairly recent innovation in the history of theology, there is no scholarly consensus as to what such views should be called. Some scholars call these views *issuantism* or *issuant views of hell*, because of their insistence that both heaven and hell must issue from the same divine quality—the love of God (Walls 1992; Buckareff; Plug 2005). Other scholars use the term *choice model of hell* (Kvanvig 2011), because of their emphasis on a libertarian definition of human freedom. Still others call this perspective the *natural-consequence view* (Murray 1998) or a *separationist view of hell* (Seymour 1998; 2000), because of their rejection of retributive justifications for hell. Other suggested names include the *weak view of hell* (Hall 2003, 12; Hartman 2014, 72) and a *progressive understanding of hell* (Reitan 2003, 125-42).

In this paper, I shall use the terms *issuantism* and *issuant views of hell* for this family of perspectives. By this choice, however, I do not mean to give priority to the idea that both heaven and hell must issue from, or have their grounding in, the love of God. Indeed, I define *issuantism* as a category of non-universalistic views of hell that distinguishes itself from non-issuant views of hell by three *sine qua non* trademarks: the integration of divine motivations for heaven and hell in the love of God, a libertarian definition of human freedom, and a rejection of retributive interpretations of hell.

In regard to the first trademark—i.e., the integration of divine motives in the love of God—issuantists contend that there is a

12 / *Religious Inquiries*

fundamental inconsistency to most retributive perspectives of hell implicit in the claim that eternal life issues from the love of God and that hell is an expression of a different divine character quality such as God's justice, holiness, or wrath. Issuantists argue that both heaven and hell must issue from the love of God, since love is a more foundational character quality than justice or wrath. Love is an intrinsic quality in God, whereas wrath only expresses itself as a response to sin.

Regarding the second trademark—i.e., metaphysical libertarianism—issuantist scholars believe that only a libertarian definition of human freedom is capable of preserving the concept of human moral responsibility. Issuantists contend that any form of determinism, including the soft determinism of compatibilism, eliminates moral responsibility. If a person's actions can be at least partially determined by outside causes while claims of freedom and moral responsibility are asserted, then God would be morally culpable for not creating the world such that all people would freely choose salvation while at the same time being determined to do so.

Regarding issuantism's third trademark—i.e., the rejection of retributive interpretations of hell—not all issuantists state explicitly what they believe to be the purpose of hell. They are united, however, in uniformly rejecting retributive interpretations of hell in favor of other theories where hell serves the purpose of restitution or reparation, deterrence or prevention, incapacitation or quarantine, or rehabilitation or restoration. It is worthwhile to note an important corollary to the issuantists' rejection of retributive interpretations of hell. It would be possible to claim that a non-retributive interpretation of hell is consistent with the view that Jesus Christ took the punishment of the world's sins when he died on the cross. Very few issuantist scholars, however, accept penal substitution as a model for understanding what happened on the cross. If Christ was not punished on the cross for the world's sins, then neither should people be punished for their sins in hell.

These three trademarks—the integrations of divine motives for heaven and hell in the love of God, a libertarian definition of free will, and the rejection of retributive interpretations of hell—together form what I call basic issuantism. But how well does basic issuantism succeed in answering the problem of hell?

There are four main objections that can be raised against this basic form of issuantism. First, even if one conceives of hell as the natural

consequence of a person's free rejection of God, one may still blame God for setting up a system where the natural consequence of one's choices is everlasting mental and possibly physical suffering. One could compare the doctrine of hell to a school principal who rules that any students caught fighting would be forcibly sodomized by the school janitor. This example presupposes a retributive interpretation of hell; there is no natural connection between the act of fighting and the punishment of being sodomized. According to issuantism, there is nonetheless a natural connection between a person's choice to live life without God and the natural consequences of those choices, being eternally separated from God and all the goods with which God wishes to bless people. Maybe a better example would be to say that if you cheat on your wife, she will leave you. Yet the disproportionality of an everlasting hell with a sinful lifetime of at most one hundred years would seem to have greater similarities to the disproportionality of being sodomized by the school janitor than it does with the natural consequences of marital unfaithfulness. Thus, it would seem that God would still be morally culpable for establishing a system whereby some people will suffer eternally, even if people can only blame themselves for ending up in that situation.

Second, the issue of finality can be a problem for basic issuantism. If human free choice is the deciding factor for determining one's postmortem destiny, then what is there to say that one cannot freely change one's mind? If God allows people to end up in hell in deference to their free choice, then people in hell must still be free. If they are free, then they must be free to leave hell. Likewise, it must be possible for the godly to freely leave heaven. If people are free to leave heaven or hell, then one's destiny has no sense of finality that is an integral part of any Christian understanding of the final judgment. One can easily picture a lift eternally shuttling people up and down between heaven and hell. If people are not free to leave hell, then what would be the point of God deferring to human freedom in allowing people to freely send themselves to hell if they then cease to be free? If people are no longer free, then it would certainly be better for God to save everyone, even if it means overruling their free rejection of God.

A third issue relates to gratitude. According to some forms of issuantism, God gets the credit for those who are saved, but not the blame for those who are damned. If humans cannot take credit for their salvation, how can they be blamed for their damnation? If the ungodly

14 / *Religious Inquiries*

bear the sole responsibility for their infernal fate, then why aren't the godly responsible for their eternal life? This asymmetrical view is a corollary to the view that heaven is an expression of God's love while hell is an expression of God's wrath—a view that issuantist scholars patently reject.

One option would be to say that God is ultimately responsible for both the salvation of some and the damnation of others, an option found in Calvinism. Another option is to say that God is not responsible for either salvation or damnation. This option not only flies in the face of the Christian belief that salvation is a gift of God that one receives through faith, it also makes God largely redundant. It is on this basis that Moltmann calls issuant views of hell “atheistic”:

The logic of hell seems to me not merely inhumane but also extremely atheistic: here the human being in his freedom of choice is his own lord and god. His own will is his heaven – or his hell. God is merely the accessory who puts that will into effect. If I decide for heaven, God must put me there; if I decide for hell, he has to leave me there. ... Free human beings forge their own happiness and are their own executioners. They do not just dispose over their lives here; they decide on their eternal destinies as well. So they have no need of any God at all. (Moltmann 2001, 45)

It has not been my desire to create a straw man which I have now swiftly destroyed. Basic issuantism by itself does not harmonize the ostensibly inconsistent premises of the problem of hell. But as a rarefied construction, maybe it was never intended to fulfill this purpose. Because of its failure at solving the problem of hell, most, if not all, issuantists seek to strengthen basic issuantism with the addition of one or more supplements.

Supplements to Basic Issuantism

The first supplement is the Not-so-Nasty Thesis, where the people in hell are content with their situation, since they have received what they genuinely want. This is an idea hinted at by C.S. Lewis (1974 [1940], 127) in his claim that the doors of hell are locked from the inside, and that the residents of hell are “successful rebels to the end.” On Lewis' conception, the denizens of hell may be objectively unhappy while subjectively believing themselves to be happy. Lewis' “ghosts” in *The Great Divorce* who return to hell after their excursion to the outskirts of heaven illustrate this warped sense of well-being (Lewis 1945).

The Not-so-Nasty Thesis is a common feature in many contemporary issuantist accounts of hell. Stephen Davis writes, “Having lived their lives apart from God, they will choose – eternally – to go on doing so. So it is not a bad thing that they do not spend eternity in the presence of God” (Davis 2001, 87). He believes that the ungodly will nonetheless be aware of the consequences of their choices: “Though they freely choose hell and could not be happy in paradise, I believe they will clearly understand what they have chosen to miss” (2001, 87).

Other issuantists who posit forms of the Not-so-Nasty Thesis are Andrei Buckareff and Allen Plug,¹ Jerry Walls,² and Richard Swinburne.³

A second supplement to basic issuantism is the Less-than-Human Thesis. The loss of the goods with which God blesses people includes the ultimate loss of humanity for the formerly human denizens of hell. This supplement also has its roots in C.S. Lewis. Lewis (1974 [1940]) called the people in hell ghosts or ex-men, the remnants of what once were humans.

For Bishop N.T. Wright, the suffering of hell is the loss of the image of God. He sees the image of God as a gift given to humanity. However, when people worship other gods (i.e., commit any kind of sin), there is a certain atrophy of the image of God. “Those who persistently refuse to follow Jesus, the true Image of God, will by their own choice become less and less like him, that is, less and less truly human” (Wright 2008, 95-96).

A third supplement to basic issuantism is the Nearly-Empty Thesis—hell will be populated by only a small number of irredeemably evil beings. Although the Nearly-Empty Thesis is neither a necessary nor an adequate supplement to issuantism, it is sometimes added as a way of showing that God is not to blame if a small number of people

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1. “While on escapism it is the case that the denizens of hell enjoy positive (quantitative) well-being and so there is a sense in which hell is not bad, we are hesitant to say that hell is good for persons who reside there without qualification” (Buckareff and Plug 2010, 79).
 2. “[Hell] holds no genuine happiness, but those who prefer it to heaven may savor a deformed sense of satisfaction which faintly resembles real happiness” (Walls 1992, 128). Walls subsequently revised his view on this point without totally abandoning it.
 3. “If someone does form their character in such a way as to be unalterably bad and if that involved their having no residual desire for the good which they cannot choose, they do not then desire the Vision of God; and so it is not a bad thing that they do not get it” (Swinburne 1998, 121).

choose to reject God forever. Eleonore Stump comments, “So long as some such speculation is not incompatible with Christian doctrine, it is not at all clear that the majority of people end in hell” (Stump 1985, 412). Without expressly affirming the Nearly-Empty Thesis, Walls gives the example of a military commander whose strategy includes being willing to sacrifice a small number of soldiers in order to achieve a greater military goal (Walls 1992, 102-03).

Perhaps the most helpful supplements to basic issuantism are various forms of Extra Chance Theses, where, in order to counteract the disadvantages of religious bad luck, God provides people with one or more postmortem opportunities to be saved. There are a number of different forms of Extra Chance Theses. Jerry Walls posits one possible opportunity for people who have not had adequate exposure to God’s optimal grace in this lifetime to make their choice for God (Walls 1992, 88). Eleonore Stump¹ and Stephen Davis (2010) admit the possibility of at least one, but probably not an endless number of opportunities. Other issuantist scholars leave the door open for many postmortem chances to receive God’s grace, either in purgatory (Swinburne 1989, 197) or in hell itself (Buckareff and Plug 2005, 39-54; 2009, 63-72; 2010, 77-90).

A fifth supplement commonly added to basic issuantism is the Fixed Character Thesis, where the formation of an evil character explains how people can chose to remain in hell. Issuantists affirm a libertarian definition of human freedom. As such, they do not believe a person’s character is determined by God or other external forces. A person may, however, through her free choices, gradually develop a character that may finally become fixed for good or for evil. Once a person’s character becomes fixed, she is no longer free in the libertarian sense, even though she remains morally responsible for her actions through the transitivity of moral responsibility.

An example may help explain this point. Suppose that Stefan is a successful businessman. On Monday, he will fly to London to negotiate an important deal that could mean millions of euros in profit for his company. Sunday afternoon, Stefan receives a call from an old

1. “As for those who live and die without the religious knowledge necessary for redemption from evil, it is not incompatible with Christian doctrine to speculate that in the process of their dying God acquaints them with what they need to know and offers them a last chance to choose” (Stump 1985, 412).

university buddy whom he hasn't seen in years. The friend is only in town for the day, so they decide to meet up. One drink leads to another and by the time Stefan crawls into bed at 3:30 a.m., he is in a drunken stupor. When he awakens at 9:30 Monday morning, he discovers that not only has he missed his early morning flight to London, but the important meeting is about to start in half an hour. In this case, Stefan is not free to attend the meeting; even if he wants to be there, it is not physically possible. Regardless of whether one is a compatibilist or libertarian, Stefan is not free. He is neither able to be at the meeting nor to act according to his desires to be at the meeting. According to the transitivity of moral responsibility, Stefan is nonetheless morally responsible for what does or does not happen as a result of his not attending the meeting. Although he is not free, he is still morally responsible, since he not only placed himself in a situation whereby he could not attend the meeting, but was in a position where he could reasonably have predicted the outcome of his actions.

The Fixed Character Thesis, as posited by issuantist scholars like Swinburne (1989, 177, 180-181) and Jonathan Kvanvig (2011, 21; 2012), succeeds in providing the sense of finality that is lacking in basic issuantism. Its power in contributing to a solution to the problem of hell is perhaps weakened by the fact that very few people succeed in developing a purely good or evil character in this lifetime. Most people are simply a mixture of good and bad.

One final supplement I have discerned in the literature of issuantist scholars is the Irrationality Thesis. In the Irrationality Thesis, God allows people to make irrational choices, even if those irrational choices entail that they end up in hell. In issuantism, people must have the freedom to make irrational choices, even with full knowledge that the effects of their choices will be harmful to themselves. Moreover, people must make the choice to reject God, even when they have no motivation to do so, and every motivation not to do so. This is an irrational choice that, on some accounts of issuantism where extra chances are granted, a person must continue to make forever. Davis comments, “[P]eople who continue voluntarily to choose hell ... will not be sensible. Their hatred of God will have overcome them” (Davis 2010, 96). Other scholars who posit forms of the Irrationality Thesis include Swinburne (1998, 206) and Walls (2004, 203-16).

One possible question raised by the Irrationality Thesis is why anyone would choose to go to hell if the person were truly free to decide. In other words, is it an intelligible notion to believe that some people could freely choose to do evil or to damn themselves if they really knew what they were doing? What could possibly motivate anyone to make such a choice? The only motivation a person would have for making an irrational choice with such eternal repercussions would be ignorance; one would simply not know what the natural consequences of his/her choices would be. Yet such ignorance would seemingly be at odds with belief in a loving God, who would not allow people to remain ignorant if it meant they would end up in hell. Swinburne and Walls agree that God leaves a certain “epistemic distance” between himself and humanity because a full-disclosure from God’s side would so overwhelm humans as to render free choice impossible (Walls 1992, 131; Swinburne 1998, 206). Full insight is given only to those whom, according to Swinburne, God grants the beatific vision or who, according to Walls, have given an initial positive response to God’s grace.¹

A second question raised by the Irrationality Thesis is why a good and loving God would allow people to make such irrational choices, especially if the natural consequences have such eternal significance. Walls answers that if God is willing to allow the freedom for humans to hurt themselves and others in this life, why should God not allow us to do so in eternity? (Walls 2004, 212).

I have now presented six common supplements used by issuantist scholars to strengthen the case for issuantism as an answer to the problem of hell. Most combinations of these supplements are possible. However, not all combinations are helpful. For instance, a combination of the Not-so-Nasty Thesis and the possibility of escape from hell is logically possible, but what would be the point? Why would anyone want to leave a hell where one gets exactly what one wants?

The Less-than-Human Thesis is a supplement that has much potential at helping issuantism answer the problem of hell, but it is not compatible with views where people are allowed to escape from hell. The Less-than-Human Thesis may be applied to the inhabitants of hell, but does not work with purgatory; why would God make people (or

1. “In my view, the knowledge that God is the source of happiness, whereas sin is the source of misery, is acquired in its full clarity only through free response to God’s grace” (Walls 1992, 130).

allow people to become) less than human if they are only to be restored to full humanity through the sanctifying processes of purgatory?

The Fixed Character Thesis is compatible with the possibility of one extra chance after death (in particular as an antedote to bad religious luck) and may explain how a person can make a persistent choice to reject God, but at the possible expense of losing true libertarian freedom. This, however, need not be an insurmountable problem if one also posits the transitivity of moral responsibility.

The Extra Chance Thesis is perhaps one of the most helpful supplements to basic issuantism. In its escapist version (where a person can escape hell itself), it is nonetheless incompatible with the Less-than-Human Thesis and the Fixed Character Thesis.

Some supplemented versions of issuantism succeed in presenting coherent answers to the problem of hell through a redefinition of some elements of the duration, quality, purpose, and finality of hell.

One of the main objections issuantists have raised against conditionalism and the view that hell is eternal conscious torment has been the charge that retributive conceptions of hell fail at providing satisfactory answers to the problem of hell. It is my conclusion, however, that the question of retribution is not the main factor in determining whether an answer to the problem of hell is successful or not. I believe it can be argued that all non-retributive explanations of the purpose of hell—with the possible exception of restoration—appear to presuppose certain notions of desert and retributive justice that are inconsistent with the issuantist rejection of retributive interpretations of hell.

Conclusion

I began this paper by outlining what can be called the problem of hell: the idea that the possibility of perhaps a great number of people ending up in an eternal hell is a problem for the Christian who also confesses faith in an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God.

I have shown how in the past thirty years, a number of British and North American philosophical theologians have sought to answer the problem of hell by redefining hell in non-retributive terms. Hell is no longer seen as a punishment meted out by an angry God, but as the regrettable, natural consequence of a person's free choice to live without God.

However, simply recasting hell in non-retributive terms does not by itself solve the problem of hell. God is somehow still morally culpable for having set up a system where the natural consequences of a person's choice are so disproportional to the severity of the choices one can make. If hell is only the natural consequence of a person's free choice to live without God, then God becomes largely redundant and Jesus' words "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:31) are reduced to the level of a child who asks his parents if he can be excused from the table after a meal.

These shortcomings have led issuantist scholars to posit a number of supplements to basic issuantism. Some of these supplemented versions of issuantism begin to approximate an adequate solution to the problem of hell.

The main question for all scholars seeking to provide a coherent answer to the problem of hell would seem to be whether God can be justified in condemning some people (or allowing some people to exile themselves) to hell. Although time has not permitted me to develop this line of thought further,¹ it is my conclusion that even scholars who hold to retributive interpretations of hell as eternal conscious torment or annihilationism/conditionalism can take advantage of the same supplements and develop coherent systems that succeed just as well at answering the problem of hell as the supplemented versions of issuantism. I name just a few examples. William Lane Craig supplements his belief in eternal conscious torment with the Fixed Character Thesis and a molinist interpretation of divine omniscience (Craig 1989). Charles Seymour is another molinist scholar who adds the Extra Chance Thesis, the Not-so-Nasty Thesis, the Fixed Character Thesis, and the continuing sin defense to his views on eternal conscious torment (Seymour 1997; 1998; 2000). Clark Pinnock strengthens his defense of conditionalism/annihilationism with the Extra Chance Thesis and the Nearly-Empty Thesis (Pinnock 1992; 2004).

It would thus appear that the decisive factor in determining success at answering the problem of hell is not the question of whether one construes hell in retributive or non-retributive terms, but the supplements one includes in one's system. Thus the issuantist critique of non-issuant views of hell is not warranted in every case, especially

1. For a more detailed treatment, see Baker (2014).

where eternal conscious torment and conditionalism are supplemented along similar lines as supplemented issuantism. It would thus appear that it is the supplements and not the larger categories of eternal conscious torment, conditionalism, or issuantism that make or break the theory.

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Intentionality, Politics, And Religion

Mohammad Azadpur ¹

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The idea that intentionality is the distinctive mark of the mental or that only mental phenomena have intentionality emerged in the philosophical tradition after Franz Brentano. Much of contemporary philosophy is dedicated to a rejection of the view that mental phenomena have original intentionality. In other words, main strands of contemporary philosophy seek to naturalize intentionality of the mental by tracing it to linguistic intentionality. So in order to avoid the problematic claim that a physical phenomenon can in virtue of its own physical structure mean exactly one thing, they adopt a form of holism. Nevertheless, contemporary philosophers are attracted to a naturalist story about the emergence of the logical space. In this work, I am interested in the naturalism and the holism advocated by Wilfrid Sellars and developed by the Pittsburgh school. It is not only a view that I find theoretically attractive but I also admire it for its fecund engagement with the history of philosophy, especially the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and, as I will argue, Abū Nasir Muḥammad al-Fārābī (Alfarabi).

Keywords: Intentionality, politics, religion, Franz Brentano, Wilfrid Sellars.

Introduction

Franz Brentano, in his influential *Psychology from An Empirical Standpoint*, claims that every mental phenomenon is characterized by intentionality—that is, by the inclusion of an object within itself (Brentano 1995, 88). From this formulation, the subsequent tradition of philosophy has extracted three main characteristics of intentionality:² (1) A mental phenomenon is about or directed toward an object. (2) Objects of mental phenomena are characterized by intentional inexistence. (3) Intentionality is the distinctive mark of the mental.

1. Professor, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, USA, email: azad@sfsu.edu

2. I have isolated these with the help of three sources: Jacob (2008), Black (2010), and Haugeland (1990).

In this short essay, I begin by considering the third characteristic more carefully. There is a naturalistic tendency in contemporary philosophy to reject the traditional interpretation of this characteristic—that is, the view that mental phenomena have intentionality intrinsically and other phenomena (e.g., a sentence) have it derivatively. In other words, some strands of contemporary philosophy seek to naturalize intentionality of the mental by deriving it from linguistic intentionality. But in order to avoid the problematic claim that a physical phenomenon can, in virtue of its own physical structure, mean exactly one thing, they adopt a form of holism; to put it less controversially, they claim that the intentionality of an individual verbal state or occurrence depends on the naturally emergent pattern into which it fits, and this pattern is that of the logical space (and distinguished from that of the space of natural sciences) (Haugeland 1990, 386). In this work, I am interested in the naturalism and the holism advocated by Wilfrid Sellars and developed by the Pittsburgh school.¹ More specifically, I would like to consider the continuity of this position with the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and, as I will argue, Abu- Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fa-ra-bi (Alfarabi).

For Sellars and the Pittsburgh school, intentionality is a result of acquiring an autonomous standing in the logical space of reasons, which is in turn made possible by initiation into a language. I submit that both Hegel and Alfarabi claim that a certain political order, anchored in religion, is presupposed for the emergence of, and our proper situation in, the logical space. Hegel's historical account identifies the required order with the political appropriation of Christianity by the later Roman Empire. Alfarabi, on the other hand, draws on Islamic theories of prophecy to advocate an ideal state governed by a philosopher-prophet-ruler. I will conclude that whereas Hegel's view remains constrained by the development of thought within the borders of Europe, Alfarabi's position is more inclusive.

Intentionality and the Logical Space of Reasons

In “Being and Being Known,” Sellars celebrates a form of abstractionism he finds in Thomas as a precursor to his own view that

1. Haugeland (1990) discusses several possible approaches to intentionality in contemporary philosophy and distinguishes Sellars's neo-pragmatism from neo-Cartesianism of Fodor, Field and Pylyshin, and the neo-behaviorism of Quine, Dennett and Stalnaker.

the intentionality of mental states is inherited from those of overt linguistic utterances (Sellars 1963, 49-50; 57-58); nevertheless, Sellars suggests that Thomas remains committed to a problematic account of the relation between the intellectual order and the real order.¹ Sellars then argues that to extirpate himself from this problematic view, Thomism needs to abandon the idea that sensations have intentionality (1963, 45-46). To be sure, Sellars embraces an isomorphism between sensations and the external world, but that isomorphism, Sellars thinks, is non-intentional (1963, 56-57). Therefore, for Sellars, intentionality is non-relational and is determined by the normativity of the space of significances (i.e., the space of reasons) (1963, 58).

Sellars's central thesis, which he calls "psychological nominalism" elsewhere,² is that the intentionality of mental states (i.e., the aboutness of thoughts) is derived from the meaningfulness of overt linguistic utterances. In other words, Sellars offers a naturalist account of the emergence of the intentionality of mental states from the proprieties that are a feature of overt linguistic utterances. John Haugeland refines this account by showing that it presupposes a natural conformism, which is "not mere imitativeness (monkey see, monkey do), but also censoriousness—that is, a tendency to see that one's neighbors do likewise, and to suppresses variation" (Haugeland 1990, 404). Such "wired in" conformism produces patterns of cultural propriety (normativity) which legitimate the proper use of linguistic expressions. The intentionality of mental states is, in turn, inherited from the normativity of overt linguistic utterances.

Despite their insistence that norms emerge from a natural/linguistic basis, Sellars and Sellarsians advocate an absolute autonomy for the normative order. Haugeland, for instance, maintains that the norms which regulate moves in the space of reasons are not causal regularities nor social conventions. In regard to the latter, he says: "The difference between norms and conventions lies in this explanatory appeal: conformism (to norms) does not presuppose any prior beliefs or preferences on the part of individual conformists, and hence the

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1. On the merits of Sellars's criticisms of Aquinas, see King (2010, 25-44). Also I am not suggesting that the treatment of the relation between Avicenna's account of intentionality and that of Thomas Aquinas is not interesting itself; it is just beyond the narrow scope of this short paper.
 2. "[A]ll awareness... is a linguistic affair" (Sellars 1997, 63).

persistence of norms cannot be explained in terms of agents' interest maximization or rational choice" (Haugeland 1990, 407). John McDowell, another Sellarsian, also echoes this account of norms when he calls the space of reasons *sui generis* and identifies it as the realm of freedom (McDowell 1994, 5). Norms do not cluster into independent spaces but they hang together holistically by virtue of their logical connections.

Méditations Hégéliennes

In his seminal work, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars calls his philosophical project a *Méditations hégéliennes* (Sellars 1997, 83), and his successors also manifest a deep interest in the philosophy of Hegel. Hegel is interesting to the Pittsburgh school partly because of their commitment to psychological nominalism—the view that all awareness is a linguistic affair (Sellars 1997, 63). Assigning original intentionality to language conforms to Hegel's view that reason is embodied concretely in human life. Another less explored reason for the attractiveness of Hegel is his account of how an initiation into language, a potential rationality, is fully realized in human freedom. Freedom for Hegel is action in accordance with reason; he writes that "man is an object of existence in himself only in virtue of the Divine that is in him, that which was designated at the outset as *Reason*, which, in view of its activity and power of self-determination, was called *Freedom*" (Hegel 2001, 48). To act rationally is to act from norms or prescriptions that have a purely rational grounding, or to put it in Sellarsian terms, it is to be responsive to the norms of the space of the reasons. Only when one acts from the laws of reason, then one is raised from the determined state of being an animal and enters on the path of freedom: "Only that will which obeys law is free ... When the subjective will of man submits to laws – the contradiction between Liberty and Necessity vanishes" (Hegel 2001, 54). For Hegel, achieving the status of a fully rational agent is mediated by submission to the laws of the state. Hegel writes: "In the history of the world, only those people can come under our notice which form a State. For it must be understood that this latter is the realization of Freedom, i.e. of the absolute final aim, and that it exists for its own sake ... all the worth a human being possesses – all spiritual reality, he possesses only through the State" (Hegel 2001, 54). By being loyal citizens of the State, human beings become spiritual beings, participating in the highest freedom. Furthermore, for Hegel, religion is integral to the foundation of the state: "the position thus assigned to Religion supposes the State already to exist;

and that subsequently, in order to maintain it, Religion must be brought into it – in buckets and bushels, as it were – and impressed upon people’s hearts” (Hegel 2001, 67). For Hegel, the practice of religion serves the state because it fortifies the citizen’s resolve in being dutiful and that ultimately facilitates freedom, the ability to abide by rational laws.

Alfarabi on Initiation into the Space of Reasons

As we have seen, to occupy an autonomous standing in the space of reasons requires responsiveness to norms or prescriptions that are categorical—that is, empirically unconditioned. This, for Alfarabi, is cultivated by a religious training, because religion’s unshakeable laws “imitate” the categorical norms of reason:

Now when one acquires knowledge of the beings or receives instruction in them, if he perceives their ideas themselves with his intellect, and his assent to them is by means of certain demonstrations, then the science that comprises these cognitions is *philosophy*. But if they are known by imagining them through similitudes that imitate them, and assent to what is imagined of them is caused by persuasive methods, then the ancients call what comprises these cognitions *religion*. (Alfarabi 2011, 68)

Religion, then, provides the novice with an appropriate orientation in the space of reasons by persuasion and the use of imagination. As the initiation proceeds, the knower gets closer to the real:

Now these things (God, world, human beings, and politics) can be known in two ways, either by being impressed on their souls as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity and symbolic representation. In that case, symbols arise in man’s minds, which reproduce them by imitation. The philosophers in the city are those who know these things through strict demonstration and their own insight; those who are close to the philosophers know them as they really are through the insight of the philosophers, following them, assenting to their views and trusting them. But others know them through symbols which reproduce them by imitation, because neither nature nor habit has provided their minds with the gift to understand them as they are. Both are kinds of knowledge. (Alfarabi 1985, 280)

The grasp of religious knowledge prepares the knower for the actualization of her intellect, so that she is not merely responding to the unarticulated content, given in unrefined experience, for the sake of animalistic concerns. Religion helps the knower to look away from such concerns.

Alfarabi also relates religious norms to the apparatus of the state. For him, the ideal philosophical sovereign is also a religious lawgiver:

When this [perfection] occurs in both parts of his rational faculty, namely the theoretical and the practical rational faculties, and also in his representative faculty, then it is this man who receives Divine Revelation, and God almighty grants him Revelation through the mediation of the Active Intellect ... Thus he is ... a wise man and a philosopher and an accomplished thinker who employs an intellect of divine quality, and through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his faculty of representation a visionary prophet: who warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present. This man holds the most perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of felicity ... This is the sovereign over whom no other human being has any sovereignty whatsoever. (Alfarabi 1985, 245-46)

For Alfarabi, philosophy precedes religion in time (Alfarabi 2011, 45), and the initiation into the philosophical mastery of the space of reasons is reflected in the political and religious norms (instituted ideally by a philosopher-prophet-king), such that everyone within the community is given a chance to acquire such mastery.

Conclusion

Reflection on Hegel and Alfarabi in the context of the approach to intentionality advocated by the Sellarsian Pittsburgh school, allows us to appreciate the depths of the latter in its ability to retrieve the insights of the past masters. In this short paper, I have examined briefly some of the political and religious dimension of these insights. I presented two conflicting accounts. Hegel, as we saw, maintains that human capacity for reason is a divine spark within him and is actualized by means of his participation in a state, anchored by religious law. For Hegel, the evolution of the state achieves a culmination in the Roman appropriation of Christianity, and the latter bears its fruit in the modern European political culture. Alfarabi, in agreement with the Hegelian view, maintains that the state and its appropriation of religion are necessary conditions for the realization of the human capacity for reason and the attainment of the philosophical life. However, he is more inclusive in that he—in keeping with Islamic principles of a prophetic state—gives an outline of an ideal state instituted by a charismatic philosophical ruler, yet remains just aloof enough to accommodate other possible actualizations of the ideal. This pluralism is what I find more appealing than Hegel's Eurocentric vision.

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The Problem of Evil in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Claudio Tugnoli ¹

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Throughout all of Rousseau's works there is tension between reason and conscience. Reason binds men when they think correctly, but divides them when they place it at the service of self-interest. Conversely, the universality of conscience is immediate and transparent: it transmits the truth of the existence of God and of the universal principles that underlie human action, despite the differences of particular legislations. Mankind possesses an innate and intuitive conscience of the fundamental principles by which its conduct must be inspired. Were we to consider human actions only according to the criterion of physical need, of causality, and of movement, vices and virtues would disappear, and terms like morality and honesty would have no meaning. But each one of us perceives from within that this is not the case. We feel that moral good and evil are more real than anything else, without any need whatsoever to prove it. To obey the conscience one has of good and evil without human mediation means to reject the dogmatic formalism of religions, as well as the vanity of philosophical disputes. Every human being, however, is situated in a national community. What should the state's attitude be vis-à-vis religion? Rousseau indicates two paths. The first consists in establishing a purely civil religion that admits only those dogmas that are truly useful to society. Rousseau highlights the contradiction of a Christian religion that, although it is the religion of peace par excellence, fuels continuing bloody clashes among men due to a dogmatic theology that is totally alien to the essence of the Gospel and extremely hazardous for the life of the state. The second path consists in allowing Christianity to retain its authentic spirit, its freedom from any material constraint, without any obligations other than those of individual conscience. The Christian religion cannot but benefit the state, as long as one does not make it part of the constitution.

Keywords: Rousseau, Voltaire, reason versus conscience, moral evil, physical evil, Lisbon earthquake, unforeseeability of God, Job, free will.

1. Independent Researcher, email: tugnoli53@virgilio.it

The Fragment *On God*

According to Pierre Burgelin, one should accept Théophile Dufour's theory that the fragment was composed in 1735, when Rousseau was about 23 years old (Burgelin 1952). The fragment *On God* demonstrates that, for Rousseau, the existence of God is not an abstract speculative issue; rather, it is closely connected to the problem of evil and of freedom. Our conviction that a God exists, Rousseau argues, is incompatible with the principles that in fact inspire our conduct in this life.¹ The notion of God is inseparable from the idea of eternal and of infinite. What else is infinite in God other than intelligence, wisdom, justice, and power? Rousseau believes that it would be much easier to eradicate from one's inner self the feeling of the existence of God rather than conceive it without assigning to it the attributes mentioned above—the attributes that, taken all together, represent the only way in which we can conceive God Himself. Thus, if the power of God is infinite, it follows that this power necessarily extends to the entirety of our being. And since God is the source of all wisdom, He will expect men to govern themselves according to the principles that He has placed in their spirit as the basis of virtue and of religion (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1033).

Had God used His infinite power to force men to act according to His principles, He would have been legitimated in doing so by His own infinite wisdom, since men's obedience of His decrees would have made them virtuous. If, instead, one looks at how men actually behave, one sees immediately that they do not follow the divine orders that God Himself has placed in their hearts. The obvious conclusion is that God has not used His infinite power to force them to obey His decrees; otherwise, no one could have evaded His will, because God's power is infinite. Rousseau implicitly argues that if God had forced men to follow His decrees, moral perfection would not have been the result of their effort and commitment; they could not have claimed merit for the virtue they would have given proof of, and therefore they would not have been virtuous either. However, the obstacle to virtue could not be external (only the help in becoming perfectly virtuous could come from the exterior), since the impossibility of overcoming the obstacle in

1. Masson attributes an autobiographical meaning to this statement, which he finds banal. In fact, in the same year (1735), Rousseau wrote to his father (X, 12): "J'ai de la religion et je crains Dieu; d'ailleurs, sujet à d'extrêmes faiblesses et rempli de défauts plus qu'aucun autre homme du monde, je sens combien il y a de vices à corriger chez moi" (Masson 1970, 91).

doing good would have excused and removed the vice as such. Thus, the obstacle would have had to be internal and subjective. It was necessary for the difference between the divine decrees and the principles inspiring the actions of men to be exclusively a result of their free will. Evil is nothing but the existence of evil beings, to the point that one can say that, already in this fragment, Rousseau better specifically defines evil “*in se*” with the exact term of *moral evil*. The existence of wicked men does not disprove the existence of God or His infinite power. In just a few words, Rousseau shows that, instead, evil beings, with their very existence, show God’s will to allow mankind to make the final decision—that is, absolute autonomy in the intended use of their freedom.

The Two Prayers

Dufour’s theory that the two prayers dating back to Rousseau’s youth were written in Charmettes in 1738 or 1739 was taken up by Courtois (1969, 1763-64). Pierre-Maurice Masson provided a commentary (1970, 120-28). In a passage from the *Confessions*, Rousseau tells us that, when he was in Charmettes, he would rise before dawn and take a walk, elevating a prayer to the author of the beautiful sights his eyes were enjoying. Rousseau confesses he never prayed in his bedroom, because he felt that the walls and everything else made by man acted as an obstacle between him and God. His desire was to relate to God directly (Rousseau 1969, I, 236). In his prayers to God, Rousseau expressed more his admiration and contemplation than requests, because he knew that to obtain the true gifts from God, it was not enough to request them, you had to deserve them (Rousseau 1969, I, 236). Rousseau asks God for what he already knows he possesses within him, what he knows he has received from Him. Indeed, God has placed in his heart the principles of His wisdom and the freedom to be inspired by them in his actions. Man alone is responsible for taking the initiative in realising virtue. So, in actual fact, Rousseau’s prayer is an expression of praise of God.

Innocence and virtue are attained by sacrificing the artificial status in which man finds himself in civil life. All that mankind has built in the centuries is nothing but a tragic and fatal shift from the original perfection in which men and nature find themselves when coming out of the hands of God. In the *Prayer*, we find confirmed the affective tonality that Rousseau expresses in the *Confessions*: the prayer to a God

that is both to be feared and merciful is essentially a way of expressing thanks for all the good received (i.e., in the right order): birth, the rational soul, and the knowledge of God. God is also thanked, however, for having seen to human needs, for having cured infirmity and finally for having united the ones with the others. Rousseau especially asks God to point him in the direction of virtue and not to make him so unhappy as to doubt the very existence of God (1969, IV, 1034).

His acknowledgement of divine providence is reiterated in the second prayer, in contrast with the negation of divine intervention in history that he states elsewhere. The God Rousseau turns to with this prayer is at the same time infinitely powerful and good. With respect to this God, the existence of evil men is not at all a contradiction, precisely because, according to Rousseau, the only evil worthy of being taken into consideration is moral evil, subject only to the free will of men. Rousseau praises God for having created him from nothing (God can create from nothing a living being that by itself is incapable of giving itself life or of coming from nothing), for having given him a rational soul, and for having impressed in his heart laws that, when put in practice, are a guarantee of eternal joy and tend to bring joy in this life too (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1037). In this second prayer, for the most part a praise to God, Rousseau once again asks for mercy for his weaknesses and for help in fighting the vices in which his weaknesses have dragged him. He confesses that all of the pleasures to which his abandonment of wisdom has led him turned out to be painful and hateful illusions (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1037). Most of all, he asks for forgiveness for not having been able to put to good use his life, his freedom, and all of the means God has given him, including reason, in order to acquire virtue and to become worthy of eternal joy. Repentant, Rousseau promises to follow righteousness, relating all of his actions to God Himself, to meditate Him, to bless Him, to serve Him, and to fear Him. He also promises to love his neighbour, to help the wretched and the unfortunate. Rousseau promises moderation and purity in his every action and control of anger and of speech. The only pleasures he will allow himself will be those allowed by virtue. He shall detach himself from the world and from its comforts, in order to dedicate himself only to divine perfection. With an evangelical purpose, he shall forgive everyone, and stay away from offending anyone. Finally, in submitting himself to God and to His supreme will, Rousseau states his intention to prepare himself for death and for the judgement to which his conduct

will be subjected. In preparing himself to live his life in the most perfect obedience of divine law, Rousseau declares that he is aware that, without the grace of God, no project can be accomplished and any intent is destined to fail.

Letter to François-Marie Arouet dit Voltaire (18 August 1756)

Why is it that the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 has stuck in mankind's memory more than any other disaster before and after it? Why did it strike the contemporaries as something absolutely "unique and surprising"?¹ Just ten years before, in October 1746, a terrible earthquake had flattened the city of Lima, the capital of Peru, killing twenty thousand people, while the Chinese earthquakes of Qili and Peking that had occurred a few decades before then had claimed the lives of two hundred thousand people. The earthquake, to this day declared the bloodiest of them all, that hit China in the mid-sixteenth century, killed eight hundred and thirty thousand people, according to the chronicles of the time. What made the Lisbon earthquake so memorable was its position. It became unique and unrepeatable, because it hit Lisbon; namely, Atlantic Europe. It was not an exotic cataclysm, the more extreme the more marginal. News of the Lisbon earthquake spread like wildfire throughout Europe and caused a vast multitude of writings. The earthquake, which struck on the day of All Saints of 1755, produced objectively disturbing effects. Walter Benjamin refers that it was felt in the whole of Europe and all the way to Africa. The tsunami was experienced from Finland to Indonesia (Tagliapietra 2004, XIII). It has been calculated that with its farthest waves it covered a surface two and a half million kilometers wide.

Voltaire learned about the Lisbon catastrophe on November 23rd. Deeply perturbed by the news, he wrote off in less than twenty days the 234 verses of his *Poem on the Lisbon Disaster* that, published on April 1st, 1756, was enormously successful and underwent many reprints in a very short time. Voltaire's poem is an accusation against God and a lecture against optimism. The topic is the Epicurean dilemma, frequently discussed by philosophers in anti-theologian terms. Epicurus' *formidolosum argumentum* (*formidable argument*) was presented by Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius in chapter XIII of the *De Ira Dei* (*About the wrath of God*) (Migne 1841-1864, 7, coll. 77-146,

1. According to the definition by Walter Benjamin (Tagliapietra 2004, IX).

121A-B) and can be schematically illustrated as follows (Tagliapietra 2004, 37):

	<i>God does not want to remove evil</i>	<i>God wants to remove evil</i>
<i>God is unable to remove evil</i>	God is neither benevolent nor omnipotent	God is not omnipotent
<i>God is able to remove evil</i>	God is not benevolent	Then why does evil exist?

By picking up Epicurus' *formidolosum argumentum*, Voltaire is filled with indignation before this image of a God that remains indifferent to the death and suffering for which He should feel responsible. Voltaire simply cannot tolerate this merciless, calm, and indifferent God. God's silence seems unacceptable to him, just like he cannot stand "Job's friends"; that is, all of the optimists of every era that explain divine inaction with man's guilt. Voltaire asks that all of "Job's friends" be silent, so that all of the unfortunate, the victims of catastrophes, may lift their innocent cry.

In response to Voltaire's sending him his two poems *Sur la loi naturelle* and *Sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, Rousseau writes to the author of *Candide* a subtle letter that certainly must have surprised the recipient. In his *Poem on the Lisbon Disaster*, Voltaire uses the earthquake as an argument to ridicule the optimism professed by Pope and by Leibniz, who say that all is good despite the most overwhelming evidence to the contrary. But, Rousseau objects, in this manner, mankind's misery is exacerbated to such an extent as to become unbearable. Considering that Voltaire had displayed irremediable pessimism—almost as if in this way the unhappy may set their minds at rest thanks to the demonstration that all is evil—Rousseau warns Voltaire that exactly the opposite happens: "This optimism which you find so cruel yet consoles me amid the very pains which you depict as unbearable" (Rousseau 1997, 233). Rousseau finds Voltaire's poem unacceptable, because it does not allow the suffering man any hope vis-à-vis an evil that God Himself does not remove from the world despite His omnipotence. Rousseau admits to having represented human misery in the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (published in Amsterdam in 1755), but he did so not to prove its inevitability, but rather to teach men that they are the ones responsible for their misfortunes and to show them how to overcome this state of affairs. Rousseau once again makes a distinction between

physical evil and moral evil. The origin of moral evil must be sought for in the free man who has achieved a certain degree of perfection and at the same time of corruption.¹

Ultimately, man is also responsible for natural evil. Physical pains are inevitable when they are generated by the structure of matter, but some of them are apparent, such as death, which is an evil only for the way in which it is awaited and one prepares for it, and some are evitable, just like most illnesses, which are the consequences of the enfeeblement of the organism caused by our abandoning the simple and solitary lifestyle of our origins. Following a line of reasoning that later would have been adopted by Kant and that today represents the fundamental principle of prevention in the field of civil defense, Rousseau argues that, though the Lisbon earthquake was inevitable, its effects would have been drastically reduced had the residential housing been more carefully planned (lower buildings, better distributed over the land, etc.). Moreover, one must consider that premature death is not always an absolute evil. To the contrary, many of the unfortunate who died under the rubble may have avoided greater misfortunes, such as dying pestered by notaries and heirs, or killed in their beds by arrogant and unscrupulous physicians. The natural miseries that we suffer, Rousseau concludes, are much less cruel than those we cause ourselves with our choices. The miseries caused by man could be much worse (Rousseau 1969, 1062-63). Life becomes an unbearable weight for those who have moved away from nature, mostly men of letters, the most sedentary, the most inclined to reflection, and, in consequence, the most unhappy. The

1. "Je ne vois pas qu'on puisse chercher la source du mal ailleurs que dans l'homme libre, perfectionné, partant corrompu" (Rousseau 1969, 1061). Job could not have known that in the coming centuries all those who had aspired to an absolute power, next to the divine omnipotence, would have easily utilized the unforeseeability and capricious discretion as massy efficient tools to obtain obedience and submission amongst their subjects (Bauman and Dessal 2015, 81-82). The Lisbon earthquake of 1755, with its earthquakes, fires, and tsunamis in rapid succession, would have signalled the beginning of the modern philosophy of evil, which implies the clear separation between natural disasters and moral evil: the former conceived as being dominated by a blind coincidence that depends neither on God, nor on men, whereas the latter conceived the only evil that humans have the capacity to avoid being characterized by intentionality (Neiman 2002 and Dupuy 2005, cited in Bauman – Dessal 2015, 83). According to Neiman, starting with Lisbon, natural evil is devoid of intention, as opposed to moral evil that is characterized by being intentional and deliberate. According to Dupuy, the most modern amongst the participants of the debate was Rousseau with his open letter to Voltaire.

philosophers, because they have lost the capacity to feel the joy of living, slander life with the argument that death is inevitable. Cato shows with his own life that the wise man can decide to give up life with dignity, but that the misfortune that comes our way does not make life a “bad present” (Rousseau 1969, 1063).

Voltaire’s mistake, Rousseau believes, consists in the claim that mankind’s future is dearer to God than that of any other being, intelligent or not, dispersed in the universe. Voltaire’s anthropocentric view is the expression of a vaniloquent egocentrism that fails to take into account the *totality* of the universe and expects to judge everything based on the subjective condition of a few individuals. Instead, nature should be considered in its entirety: without the totality category, the comprehension of both nature and society is destined to fail. From the viewpoint of totality, even the most catastrophic of events is capable of causing positive effects: “If, in the system of the universe, it is necessary to the preservation of mankind that there be a cycle of substance between man, animals and vegetation, then one individual’s particular evil contributes to the general good: I die, I am eaten by worms, but my children, my brothers will live as I have lived” (Rousseau 1997, 240). Rousseau makes a distinction between general and individual evil. Although the latter has never been denied by any philosopher, when it comes to the former it is necessary to state whether the existence of the universe is a good thing per se. The addition of an article is therefore justified: we will not say *all is good (tout est bien)*, but rather *the whole is good (le tout est bien)* or *all is good for the whole (tout est bien pour le tout)*.¹

1. The modern conception of evil as an essentially and exclusively moral evil, however, has not solved the question as far as the optimism with which it was inaugurated is concerned. The distinction between man and nature represents a success, but their separation, as Auschwitz has shown, is neither easy nor definitive. The identification of human responsibilities does not determine automatically the prevention of either moral evil or of suffering that nature can scatter at will with total indifference (Bauman and Dessel 2015, 84). In Lisbon, humankind loses faith in himself. With Lisbon the awareness of the futility of the traditional theodicy began, according to which natural disasters that fall upon humanity are the same punishments inflicted by God (at the same time supreme ethical legislator, final court of justice and executive branch of moral law) to sinners (Neiman 2002; Bauman and Dassel 2015). The blind frequency with which evil pervaded the world could not be reconciled with the combination of the omnipotence and benevolence attributed to the Creator and Sovereign of the world. It did not add up, but to make it do so, one tried to load the shoulders of human beings with the entire responsibility of the evils that affect them.

Rousseau accuses priests and the devout of having promoted a faulty type of theology of nature by attributing to divine Providence, rather than to nature, effects that would have occurred even without divine intervention. By interpreting nature's phenomena as beneficial for the good or damaging for the wicked, priests favour an egotistical and anthropomorphic perception of nature and Providence. Philosophers are scarcely more reasonable than priests when they accuse God for every little thing, like when they "cry out that all is lost when they have a toothache, or are poor, or get robbed, and hold God responsible, as Seneca says, for looking after their luggage" (Rousseau 1997, 241). Whichever the facts nature gives rise to, priests and philosophers express their views in opposite manners: "Providence is always right among the devout, and always wrong among the philosophers" (Rousseau 1997, 241). No one dwells on whether it is right or wrong, because everything in nature occurs according to a single law that makes no exceptions whatsoever. According to Rousseau, in the eyes of God, the particular has no value, in the same way as the particular will does not and must not bear any weight compared to the general will. One therefore must free God from the misunderstandings and accusations the devout and the philosophers soil Him with, because one cannot state the existence of God and then attribute to Him actions unworthy of Him. In this manner, Rousseau's theological coherence comes full circle: "If God exists, He is perfect; if He is perfect, He is wise, powerful, and just; if He is wise and powerful, all is good; if He is just and powerful, my soul is immortal; if my soul is immortal, thirty years of life are nothing to me and are perhaps necessary to the preservation of the universe" (Rousseau 1997, 242). But God exists. His existence cannot be proven definitely by reason, by the objections and by the answers to those objections, because disputes are based on the knowledge of things about which men have no true idea. And if reason is insufficient, faith must take over, because "the state of doubt is too violent a state for my soul" (Rousseau 1997, 242).

The finitude, pain, and death ceased to be considered as evil, given that a justification could be found in the context of universal nature, as opposed to the theodicy that aimed to identify the cause of death and suffering in the original sin and individual sins. Max Weber would have removed the contradiction of the theodicy through his concept of disenchantment or loss of divinity that strips nature of her divine cloak, of subjectivity capable of benevolence or malignancy. However, warns Bauman, Nature was not stripped of her subjectivity in order to restore and safeguard the subjectivity of God, but rather to prepare the way for a deification of his human subject (Bauman and Dassel 2015, 85).

Rousseau certainly concedes that Voltaire is right on many points. Like Voltaire, he says that he is indignant about the fact that each one's faith is not perfectly free and that someone may claim the right to subordinate reason to authority, acknowledging the right of the state to control consciences. Anticipating the theories championed in the last part of the *Social Contract*, Rousseau admits that governments should limit their sphere of influence to civil duties and have no right to prescribe any positive precepts on how each one must serve God. Laws may impose a sort of profession of faith, but, with the exclusion of the principles of morality and natural law, this profession must be purely negative; it must defend society from religions that attack its foundations and threaten the peace of the state. The profession of faith includes several dogmas that should be prohibited: intolerance and fanaticism (the intolerant imagines that it is impossible to be a good man without believing what he believes). A state can exist only if several positive social principles are complied with; these are listed in the *Social Contract* IV, 8: "The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent divinity, possessed of foresight and providence; the life to come, the happiness of the just and the punishment of the wicked; the sacredness of the social contract and the laws."

The lack of comprehension between Rousseau and his contemporaries is largely due to the singularity of his position regarding the revelation and, more in general, the question of religion. Unlike most of his peers who contested religion on the basis of theoretical motivations and who, by rejecting dogmas on the grounds of irrationality, also do away with religion as such, Rousseau places in the foreground the *natural religion*—the religion each one of us feels in his/her own heart in the immediate and universal form of duties to be accomplished. Dogma is worth nothing, morality is everything, and God demands that man, in charge of his own actions, pursue virtue (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1077).

God immediately reveals Himself to the human conscience as the indisputable source of the notions of good and evil that each one of us learns within himself without the need to think. The relationship between man and God is primary, it precedes any specific cult, and it represents the reference by which one judges every historical revelation. The subjective starting point is not an abstract principle or a rationally demonstrable truth, but rather the immediate, instinctively irrefutable certainty of one's own freedom: man feels he is the author

of his own actions and thus is free from the moment in which he feels within himself (and cannot but feel) the discrepancy between the action he commits and the principles to which he should conform. The moral sphere in which God reveals Himself immediately to the heart of men subtracts itself a priori from any analysis by the formal reason and cannot be subjected to any skeptic criticism. Men shall have to answer for their actions, not for what they have believed in or thought, since they possess the intuition of good and evil but not an infallible knowledge of truth and untruth (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1077). In fact, what could be more unjust than to expect perfect knowledge in mankind when they cannot achieve such a goal, because they have not been endowed with the faculty to achieve it? So, undoubtedly, if one were to choose between being virtuous without believing in anything, and having a dead faith without results, one should select the former (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1078).

The religion of the heart, therefore, has precedence over positive revelation. The former is synthetic, the latter analytical. The former is all one with man's sensitivity and action, the latter distracts from good and from virtue, demanding the manifestation of a purely exterior faith, of arbitrary cults and formal behaviours, more suitable for gratifying and reassuring the hierarchy of the Church and the political powers than for generating peace in the heart, true wisdom, authentic virtue, and the salvation of humanity. No authority can perform inspections or expect individuals to conform to some revealed religion. Governments must restrict themselves to demanding the performance of civic duties. In contrast with Thomas Hobbes, Rousseau argues that when a man serves the state well, he owes no one an account of how he serves God (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1078).

The Moral Letters

The year 1757 marks Rousseau's irrepressible passion for Countess Sophie d'Houdetot. It is a well-known fact that Rousseau wrote the *Nouvelle Héloïse* precisely in the attempt to overcome the subjective and objective difficulties of his unrequited love (Forni Rosa 2012, 7-17). Rousseau must resign himself to enjoying the Countess' friendship, because this is the only way in which he can settle the dispute between passion and virtue without giving up Sophie (Forni 2010, 183-93). The six letters that illustrate the evolution of the relationship between Rousseau and Sophie d'Houdetot probably were

never mailed, but they are written with care, probably with an eye to publication (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1787). The fourth and fifth letters are especially important for the history of the *Profession of Faith*, since Rousseau has inserted passages from them into the Vicar's speech.¹

In the fifth letter, Rousseau begins by remarking that the entire morality of man is in his *intention*. No action is good and just if the person doing it does not *feel* he must do it because it is good and just. Good actions leave in the actor a feeling of happiness and generate an instinctive inclination to approval in those witnessing their performance. The opposite is true for bad actions. This proves that the principle of goodness is present in the hearts of all men. In fact, authors of crimes in other circumstances generally show they possess a sensitive and good heart. Despite the "prodigious variety" of customs and cults in the nations of the world, one will find the same principles of justice and honesty everywhere (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1107). Rousseau shows, against the inertia and immorality deriving from scepticism, that among the pagans, vice was not admitted in the Olympus (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1108).

In their intellectual judgement, men are influenced by fortuitous conditionings and associations, by custom and by the knowledge they have acquired, but in the field of morals, they are absolutely autonomous: in this case, the power of the innate maxims is such as to drive us in any case to judge our actions and those of others based on the same principles that God has given mankind. However, Rousseau laments, this proof regarding the original and innate aspect of moral conscience is overshadowed by the interventions of many philosophers who assert that the mind is a *tabula rasa* and that it contains nothing but the contents corresponding to the ideas acquired through experience. Thus, they are forced to deny the irrefutable proof of a conformity that is striking and contrasts with the diversity of customs. The feelings that nature has given us protect us and guarantee our very survival: love of oneself, fear of pain and of death, desire for well-being (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1109). Now, since man is a sociable being by his nature, or at least made to become so, he can be so only by means of innate feelings relative to his species.² In conclusion, the original moral

1. P. M. Masson added the last two letters as an annex to his critique of the *Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard* (Masson 1914, 479-499).

2. Here Rousseau implicitly contradicts his statements on the state of nature and on sociability we find in the second *Discourse* and in the *Social Contract*.

conscience stems from the moral system that forms by means of the double relation of each human being to himself and to his fellow humans (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1109).

Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar: The Internal Miracle

Profession of Faith is the confession of an itinerary in search of truth. The starting point is a state of doubt and uncertainty that, although Descartes considers it indispensable in the investigation of truth, Rousseau finds extremely disquieting, even immoral, because it is “only the self-interest of vice or laziness of soul which leaves us in it” (Rousseau 1998, 23). As in the *Moral Letters*, Rousseau confesses that he feels that the doubt regarding what is most dear to him is “too violent a state for the human mind” (Rousseau 1998, 23). Permanent doubt is a pathological condition that the spirit spontaneously abandons to decide to take a direction. Rousseau confesses that he has found in the books of philosophers all of the misery of men driven not by the love of truth but by feelings of conceit, by the wish to show off, because in the general system of opposing theses, “the most essential point is to think differently from the rest of the world” (Rousseau 1998, 25). The guide of philosophers once again proves itself to be inconsistent, unreliable, and even harmful when it hinders the acquisition of urgent and essential decisions. One must therefore choose a different guide. The first truth that Rousseau perceives and to which he feels he must submit is the following: “I exist, and have senses whereby I am affected” (Rousseau 1998, 26). Immediately after having stated a starting point based on Condillac’s sensism, however, Rousseau once again proposes the Cartesian distinction between active and passive, inner life and the external world. The existence of others external to me is provided to me by the senses, such that I am certain of the existence not only of myself but also of the universe, and I perceive I am endowed with an active power capable of comparing objects and therefore of judging.

The inanimate bodies of material nature act only if moved by a will, such that it is necessary to hark back to the first cause, a will that animates the universe: this is the *first* article of faith. But the order by which matter is moved by will, the fact that everything happens according to certain laws, brings me perforce to believe that that will also displays intelligence: this is the *second* article of faith. The two articles are all I know about the world with certainty (Rousseau 1998,

37). The *third* article of faith states the spiritual character of man and his freedom.

Freedom is the determination of a being to act by virtue of a principle it gives himself. Freedom implies obedience to a law that the agent enforces upon himself. Therefore, the evil a man commits must be ascribed exclusively to himself. Indeed, moral evil is the most important of all evils, because physical evil derives from man's errors or vices, or can even become a good when related to totality (Rousseau 1998, 44-45). God is not at all responsible for the evil committed by man. He has given man freedom but is not responsible for man's abuses. Virtue has such a great value that the joy it brings is above any other. The immaterial soul may survive the body and this justifies the desire of the just man to find in the afterworld the joy he has deserved. There are many things that the man's reason cannot grasp, such as the infinite, for example, or the survival of the soul after death, and God's essence. The Vicar laments the incapacity of his soul to embrace the idea of infinity and eternity (Rousseau 1998, 50-51). The knowledge of good, however, does not depend on an abstract search for the foundations of morality, but rather on the intuitive certainty, on the immediate evidence with which each one of us finds within himself the universal and unchangeable precepts of conduct.

Here as elsewhere, Rousseau reminds of his *Moral Letters* to Sophie d'Houdetot: the morality of our actions is not taught us by an authority or by philosophical arguments, but is established solely by our judgement, since the decisive element of the moral action is its intention. Every action accomplished is good and just if one *feels* one should accomplish it for the only reason that it is good and just (Rousseau 1998, 52-53). The notions of good and evil are impressed in the hearts of all men, the voice of conscience speaks incessantly also to the wicked and to all those who, driven by ambition and by vanity, are less inclined to listen. As in the *Moral Letters* before, Rousseau once again opposes the endless variety of customs, cults, and usages to the substantial identity of moral maxims, a sort of moral instinct or feeling that demonstrates the fundamental unity of the human race in every era and at every latitude (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1108). The existence of an "innate principle of justice and goodness, by which, in spite of our own maxims, we approve or condemn the

actions of ourselves and others” (Rousseau 1998, 56)¹ definitely refutes the radical moral relativism that certain scholars insist on adopting as a criterion for judging not only exterior customs and cults but morality as well, therefore negating the singleness of conscience. The vanity of human opinions and the desire to show off transform the search for truth into a pretext for triumphing over their adversaries, in a confrontation where the prize is not achieving truth but rather fame and distinction. The difficulty in achieving virtue depends on the yoke of the senses and of the body, to which man’s soul is chained. The submission of the soul to the body, given the heterogeneity of the two terms, is inexplicable, because we do not know God’s plans, but it is a very well founded theory that, should man have remained entirely freed of any conditioning and should his existence have been perfectly compliant with moral order, he would have been happy, although his happiness would have been without “the glory of virtue.” In this way, instead, the man that attains virtue by overcoming the adversities that drag him in the opposite direction shall be superior to angels (Rousseau 1998, 62).

The need of an obstacle for the achievement of virtue and moral order in the world transforms the dependence of the rational soul on the body, per se incomprehensible, into the necessary condition for achieving that morality, which is at the same time essential to and specific to humanity. In this, Rousseau anticipates Kant: without the obstacle of sensitive inclination, which is per se the negation of morality, it would be impossible to achieve any virtue. The world is as it should be and the only evil that the Vicar can disapprove of is that which he himself would commit. The Vicar feels that he has absolutely nothing to ask a God that has given him a priceless gift, freedom, because this would mean wanting to change that perfection, which he himself recognizes in creation. The miracle by which God could intervene to gratify those who implore Him assumes that the world is imperfect and that God wishes to and can fix it with an *ad hoc* action, making an exception to the laws of nature according to an entirely arbitrary criterion, totally unworthy of divine majesty. For this reason the Vicar, in a converging manner with respect to Voltaire’s analysis,

1. Knowledge of good and evil is not demonstrative but intuitive. The notions of good and evil are universal and necessary, evident and cogent. Intuitive knowledge, which John Locke places above demonstrative knowledge, is as immediately certain as it is unobjectionable on a theoretical level.

clearly sees the inconsistency between the perfection of God's work and God's miraculous intervention in support of anyone (Rousseau 1998, 64).

The letter to Monsieur de Franquières

The letter to M. de Franquières, a character of whom we know practically nothing, is dated January 15th, 1769 and seems to be the reply to a previous letter sent by the recipient to Rousseau. In it, Rousseau confesses his skepticism with regard to his correspondent's still ongoing inquiries about the Author of things. Rousseau reiterates here his distinction between physical evil and moral evil. The physical evils which men lament—physical pain, the fear of death, death itself – are naught but the consequence of the institutions and of the weakness that civilization has artificially introduced into the life of every individual. Physical evils are the work of man, of the process of civilization, and therefore are nothing per se. Even moral evil, the only deformity of the universe worthy of being taken into consideration, is exclusively the work of man, since God simply created man free and cannot be held responsible for the abuses man makes of his freedom. God-ininitely good, wise and powerful-has no part in the evil of the world. Rousseau implicitly picks up here the considerations he used in the fragment *Sur Dieu* and in the *Lettre à François-Marie Arouet dit Voltaire (18 août 1756)*.

Man is entirely responsible for the only true evil, *moral* evil. The origin of evil finds its explanation if one admits the eternal coexistence of two principles, an active one, that is God Himself, and a passive one, that is matter. God combines and changes matter with all of His power—a matter that, however, God has not created and cannot destroy (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1142).¹ The very existence of God has a decisive moral significance. It is true that all cult forms seem unrighteous, false, hypocritical, and tyrannical, but this does not disprove the existence of God, and indeed it makes it all the more true and necessary, because to remove the belief in God from the hearts of men means to destroy all virtue (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1142). God is the interior witness of each

1. The same dualism is anticipated in the *Profession of Faith*. Here Rousseau takes up a position with regard to an issue, whether the world was created or is eternal, that in the *Profession of Faith* he had declared he would ignore (Rousseau 1998, 37). In the *Letter to M. de Franquières*, the independence of matter from God Himself is declared, within the context of an ontological dualism that could however, in turn, pose many unresolved problems.

one of our actions, He in whom one can acknowledge the power to read within our heart the intention of putting to good use the freedom that He Himself gave man (Rousseau 1969, IV, 1144).

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Equivalency and Non-equivalency of Lexical Items in English Translations of *Nahj al-balagha*

Mohammad Javad Moafi¹

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Lexical items play a key role in both language in general and translation in particular. Likewise, equivalence is a controversial concept discussed so widely in translation studies. Some theorists deem it to be fundamental in translation theory and define translation in terms of equivalence.

The aim of this study is to identify the problems of lexical gaps in two translations of *Nahj al-balagha* in order to look closely at what possible difficulties translators may undergo. It also seeks to explore the strategies applied accordingly. Some pieces of *Nahj al-balagha* and two English translations for them are selected, and religious items of the source text and also the strategies applied by the translators to transfer these items are extracted.

Keywords: Lexical gaps, equivalence, religious items, conceptual strategies.

Introduction

Language is a means of communication through which its speakers express their feelings and ideas. It influences the way the speakers perceive the world. This principle has a far-reaching implication for translation. Translation is an activity comprising the interpretation of meaning of a text in one language, the source text, and the production in another language of a new and equivalent text, the target text. The goal of translation is to establish a relation of equivalence of intent between the source language (SL) and target language (TL); that is to say, to ensure that both texts communicate the same message.

Catford (1965, 27) states that translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another

1. PhD Candidate in ELT, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Iran, javad.moafi@gmail.com

language. In this definition, the most important thing is equivalent textual material. Yet, it is still vague in terms of the type of equivalence.

In the definitions appearing in 1960s to 1970s, some similarities have been found: (1) there is a change of expression from one language to another; (2) the meaning and message are rendered in the target language; and (3) the translator has an obligation to seek for the closest equivalent in the target language. It seems that the equivalence has been a principal and indispensable concept in translation.

It is mostly the type of text that determines the type of equivalence; that is, each type of text requires its own proper type of equivalence. For example, form-focused equivalence is proper for poetry translation, whereas content- focused equivalence is preferable in translating prose. In the case study of this research, which is related to the lexical items of a religious text, particularly *Nahjul Balagha*, these problems have been indicated very clearly. Due to the religious nature of the text, no unique equivalence could be used and the translator should follow some strategies to tackle the problem of equivalence.

This general problem may be expressed more specifically in the form of the following research questions:

Statement of Research Questions

This study aims at answering these questions:

1. What type of equivalence, target-oriented or source-oriented, is more proper to be produced in translating a religious text?
2. Is it possible to achieve total equivalence in translating a religious text?
3. What strategies have been most frequently applied by the translators of *Nahj al-balagha* as a religious text?

Statement of the Hypotheses

In order to investigate the above-mentioned research questions, the following hypotheses are stated:

1. There is a relation between the text type and the type of the equivalence to be produced.
2. There is no total equivalence in translating a religious text.
3. Conceptual strategies have been mostly applied in the translation of religious texts.

Literature Review

The comparison of texts in different languages inevitably involves a theory of equivalence. Equivalence can be said to be the central issue in translation, though its definition and applicability have caused many debates, resulting in various theories of the concept of equivalence in the past fifty years.

If a specific linguistic unit in one language carries the same meaning encoded in another specific linguistic unit, then these two units are considered to be equivalent. Hence, finding equivalence is the most problematic stage of translation.

After centuries of circular debates around literal and free translation, theoreticians, in the 1950s and 1960s, began to attempt more systematic analysis of translation. The new debate revolved around key linguistic issues, especially meaning and equivalence. Over the following twenty years, many further attempts were made to define the nature of equivalence. Below, we will review the theory of equivalence as interpreted by some of the most innovative theorists in this field, Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Jakobson (1959), Catford (1965), Nida and Taber (1969), House (1977) and finally Baker (1992). These theorists have studied equivalence in relation to the translation process, using different approaches and providing useful ideas for further studies on this topic.

These theories can be substantially divided into three main groups. First, there are those translation scholars in favor of a linguistic approach to translation, who seem to forget that translation in itself is not merely a matter of linguistics. In fact, when a message is transferred from the source language to the target language, the translator is also dealing with two different cultures at the same time. This particular aspect seems to have been taken into consideration by the second group of theorists who regard translation equivalence as being essentially a transfer of the message from the source text to the target text. Finally, there are other translation scholars that seem to stand in the middle, such as Baker, who claims that “equivalence is used for the sake of convenience; because most translators are used to it rather than theoretical status” (Kenny 1998, 77).

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) view equivalence-oriented translation as a procedure which replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording. According to them,

equivalence is therefore the ideal method when the translator has to deal with proverbs and idioms. However, later they note that glossaries and collections of idiomatic expressions can never be exhaustive. They conclude by saying that the need for creating equivalences arises from the situation and it is in the situation of the source language text that translators have to look for a solution (Munday 2008, 58).

Roman Jakobson's (1959) study of equivalence gave new perspective to the theoretical analysis of translation, since he introduced a different notion of equivalence. According to his theory, translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes. Sometimes the translator may face the problem of not finding a translation equivalent or there is non-equivalence.

Both theories stress the fact that, whenever a linguistic approach is no longer suitable to carry out a translation, the translator can rely on other procedures to do that (Munday 2008, 37).

Nida (1964) argues that there are two different types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence consists of a target language item which represents the closest equivalent of the source language word or phrase. Nida and Taber (1969) make it clear that formal equivalents are not always found between language pairs. Dynamic equivalence is defined as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the target language wording will cause the same impact on the target language audience as the original wording did upon the source language audience. According to their theory, sometimes the transformation in the receptor language may occur because of formal non-equivalence; the message is preserved and translation is faithful (Munday 2008, 42).

Therefore, Catford's approach to translation equivalence clearly differs from that adopted by Nida, since Catford had a preference for a more linguistic-based approach to translation. His main contribution in the field of translation theory is the introduction of the concepts of types and shifts of translation, which are mostly used when there is a problem of equivalence or non-equivalence.

As translation studies gains momentum day by day, it is inclining in favor of semantic and pragmatic equivalence, because both the source text and the target text should match one another in function. This

theory of equivalence in translation seems to be much more flexible than its predecessors, like that of Catford, since it relates linguistic features to the context of both the source and the target text.

An extremely interesting discussion of the notion of equivalence is provided by Baker (1992, 6), who offers a more detailed list of conditions upon which the concept of equivalence can be defined. She distinguishes between equivalence that can appear at word level and above word level: grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence. Baker acknowledges that equivalence is the first element to be taken into consideration by the translator. The role of translator is to recreate the author's intention in another culture in such a way that enables the target language reader to understand it clearly.

In an attempt to transfer meaning from one language to another, the translator faces linguistic, stylistic, and even cultural problems. Untranslatability is a property of a text or of any utterance for which no equivalent text can be found in another language. There are words which are more or less hard to translate. In this regard, translators witness that this transfer is not performed directly and is not without its difficulties. This means that the act of translation can be analyzed along a range of possibilities, which brings about a number of shifts in the linguistic, aesthetic, and intellectual values of the source text. Shifts should be redefined positively as the consequence of the translator's effort to establish translation equivalence between two different language systems: that of the source language and that of the target language.

It is clear that religious texts have a spiritual relationship with human beings. Therefore, when dealing with such texts, we must be considerate and respectful. Accordingly, the translation of religious texts requires more thought and a high degree of respectfulness. In addition, the translation of one language into another must be done both lexically and meaningfully. Therefore, translators should be extremely aware of selecting target language words that are literally and semantically equivalent to the words of the source language. This task of finding a completely equivalent word in the target language cannot always be carried out. Occasionally, we may come across words in the target language that are literally similar to the source language; however, they give a totally different meaning.

It can be concluded that the translation of religious texts has gone through a remarkable, religious, cultural, and linguistic revolution. Such a process has enhanced increasingly and peacefully the religious and cultural exchange between different nations. Linguistically, this kind of translation has dealt with the socio-culture of language through different time and/or different people. It has also handled grammatical and semantic features of language in order to correctly absorb and interpret the exact meaning of the text before and after translating.

Every dialogue, including translation, has a cultural context. The instrument of translation is a language and therefore its referents are not uniform. So it may happen that the difficulty in finding equivalence results in the impossibility of a good translation. But we should take into account that whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan translation, adaptation, borrowing, calque, compensation, paraphrase, neologisms or semantic shifts, translators' notes, and finally by circumlocution.

Case study

In this study, a comparative and critical analysis of different English translations of a piece of *Nahj al-balagha* will be conducted. Apart from my personal interest in this book as one of the earliest and best expositions of Islam's explicit and implicit instructions concerning the government and its role in society, I chose *Nahj al-balagha* from among other important texts, because the availability of different English translations for this text makes it suitable for a comparative analysis aimed at understanding the rhetorical diversities involved in its translations.

This study starts with a semantic analysis of the target text to provide the reader with a way of checking on the real meaning. For this purpose, the following translations of Letter 53 by William C. Chittick and Ali Reza will be compared and analyzed:

Infuse your heart with mercy, love and kindness for your subjects. Be not in face of them a voracious animal, counting them as easy prey, for they are of two kinds: either they are your brothers in religion or your equals in creation Error catches them unaware, deficiencies overcome them, (evil deeds) are committed by them intentionally and by mistake. (Chittick 1981, 69)

Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough

to devour them, since they are of two kinds: either your brother in religion or one like you in creation. They will commit slips and encounter mistakes, they may act wrongly, willfully or by neglect. (Reza 2005, 566)

We can see the differences in equivalents chosen by the two translators in the following table:

First translation	Second translation
infuse	habituate
love	affection
animal	beast
voracious	greedy
be not in the face of them	do not stand over them
count as easy prey	feel it is enough to devour
equal	like
error catches	commit slips
deficiencies	mistakes
overcome	encounter
intentionally	willfully
by mistake	by neglect
evil deeds are committed by	act wrongly

In the process of transfer in translation, the translator must preserve the content of the message at any cost, because it is the meaning which is of prime importance. Therefore, a translator may often be obliged to transform the form in order to preserve the content, though it is much better if one can convey the same meaning in the target language. Nida and Taber (1969) say that in any translation, there will be a “loss” of semantic content, but the process should be so designed as to keep this to a minimum. Considering the two translations of the original text here, we see that in the first translation, the translator limits himself just to the words which come to his mind first; he focuses on the form more than the content, and also the words are used in their general meaning. But the translator of a religious text should consider the words and equivalences, which are suitable and specific to this field.

If a translator attempts to preserve the linguistic features of the source language in the process of transfer, it may result either in unnaturalness or in obscurity. Therefore, some structural adjustments are necessary in translating in order to avoid unintelligibility and awkwardness.

According to Nida and Taber (1969), the structural adjustments affect the entire range of linguistic structure. It is obvious that the first translation is more structure-oriented than the second one. The second translator uses precise equivalents and is semantic-oriented. In order to elaborate more on this point, it is better to have a look at the other aspects of this matter. Consider the following translations of Quran 4:59:

O believers, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you (Arberry 1964, 87).

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the prophet and those vested with authority from among you (Ali Reza 2005, 571).

In the second translation, the translator has used redundant words or compensation to make the meaning clear for the reader.

Consider also the following translations of another part of Letter 53:

For each of them God has designated a portion, and commensurate with each portion He has established obligatory acts (*faridah*) in His book and the *Sunnah* Of His prophet—may God bless him and his household and give them peace—as a covenant from Him. (Chittick 1981, 72)

Allah has fixed the share of every one of them and laid down His precepts about the limits of each in His book (the Koran) and the *sunnah* of His prophet by way of a settlement which is preserved with us. (Ali Reza 2005, 569)

As we can see, both translators use certain strategies to transfer the meaning; strategies such as borrowing in the case of the words *sunnah* and *faridah*, and compensation as in the addition of “the Koran” after the expression “His book” to make the meaning more clear.

Another case is the following translations of saying 1 in Nahjul Balaghah:

During civil disturbance be like an adolescent camel who has neither a back strong enough for riding nor udders for milking (Ali Reza 2005, 604).

During civil disturbance adopt such an attitude that people do not attach any importance to you - they neither burden you with complicated affairs, nor try to derive any advantage out of you. (Sayings of Imam Ali [A.S.], n.d., #1)

As can be seen, the second translator renders the passage more verbosely. He prefers to explain more by over-translating the text under question (e.g., “adopt such an attitude that people do not attach any importance to you,” instead of simply “be like an adolescent camel” in the first translation and the original Arabic).

Conclusion

Each translator has undoubtedly a specific approach to lexical items in the field of translation studies. For a successful translation, one should analyze, evaluate, and extensively discuss the notion of equivalence. Finding equivalence, specially for religious texts, causes difficulties for translators. Hence, conceptual strategies come into play when translating.

The first category that translators must take into consideration is the type of text. Then, they should think about its relationship with the type of equivalence to be produced. The second category is that the type of strategies that translators should utilize in order to grapple with the problem of non-equivalency of lexical items in religious texts. They consist of loan translation, adaptation, borrowing, calque, compensation, paraphrase, neologism or semantic shifts, translators' notes, and circumlocution.

Based on the findings of the present study, although the translation of religious texts in general and that of *Nahj al-balagha* in particular seems a far-fetched challenge and, in some cases, only possible with partial semantic and stylistic loss, it is by no means totally impossible. The evidence of other achievements indicates that a skilled translator with a religious taste can achieve this end with the necessary and related device of the source text kept intact.

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The Relationship between the Continuous Imaginal World and the Discontinuous Imaginative Faculty in Ascending and Descending Arcs according to Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra

Saeed Rahimian¹

Erfaneh Mohammad Zadeh²

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One of the most important issues for Muslim philosophers is the continuous imaginal world and its relationship with the discontinuous imaginative faculty. The continuous imaginal world is a perceptive faculty of the soul known as the faculty of imagination. The discontinuous imaginative faculty is the order of the universe called the imaginal world, which Muslim philosophers have portrayed in ascending and descending arcs. Linking the discontinuous imaginative faculty in descending and ascending arcs occurs through the continuous imaginal; however, in order to link to the discontinuous imaginative faculty, which enjoys intermediate immateriality, this faculty should also enjoy intermediate immateriality. Suhrawardi explicitly introduced the discontinuous imaginative faculty, but he was not able to explain the relationship between the discontinuous and continuous imaginal world and the discontinuous imaginative faculty correctly, since he does not believe in the immateriality of the continuous imaginal world. Nonetheless, his intellectual efforts paved the way for Mulla Sadra. Proving the immateriality of discontinuous imagination, Mulla Sadra could truly explain its relationship with the discontinuous imaginative faculty by means of ascending and descending arcs. Thus, through the ideas of Mulla Sadra, the revelations of mystics and prophets are made sense of by descending arcs, and all the promises of divine religions are justified in ascending arcs.

Keywords: continuous imaginal world, discontinuous imaginative faculty, intermediate immateriality, descending and ascending arcs.

1. Associate Professor, Department of Theology, Shiraz University, Iran, email: sd.rahimian@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)
2. PhD Degree in Philosophy of Religion and Modern Issues of Theology, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, I.R.I., email: em1517@yahoo.com

Introduction

The term *imagination* is a common term whose notion has been identified with the qualifications *continuous* and *discontinuous* in philosophy. “Imagination” with the qualification *discontinuous* refers to a perceptive faculty of the soul known as the faculty of imagination; however, using “imagination” with the qualification *continuous* refers to an order of the universe which is called the imaginal world in philosophy. This world is not material, though it possesses some features of the material world, such as shape, position, and dimension. Islamic theologians have presented the *discontinuous* imaginative faculty (imaginal world) in ascending and descending arcs. The imaginal world in the descending arc is located between the pure immaterial world and the pure material world and acts as an inductor to transfer the divine grace to the material world. This world is not purely material, nor is it absolutely spiritual and rational; it possesses the features of both material and spiritual worlds, and revelation takes place here. The imaginal world in the ascending arc is the same as the intermediate world where human souls will dwell after their separation from the body, and this is the contour between this world and the hereafter.

Connecting to the *discontinuous* imaginative faculty (imaginal world) becomes possible through the *continuous* imaginal world (imaginative faculty). The relationship between the imaginative faculty and the descending arc is such that the imaginative faculty in human beings is the reflector of imaginal forms in the imaginal world. In his imaginal perception, the human being connects to the descending imagination, which is actually the tablet of all truths. Therefore, people who have a degree of spiritual perfection receive revelations and perceive truths that ordinary people cannot. These are the results of connecting the *continuous* imaginal world or human imaginative faculty to the imaginal world in the descending arc. There is also a relationship between the imaginative faculty and the ascending arc of the imaginal world. After death, the imaginative faculty, which becomes immaterial, journeys to the intermediate world along with its imaginative body and perceives everything. Thus, the imaginative faculty explains revelations in the descending arc and proves the intermediate or imaginal world in the ascending arc.

It is important to note that the *discontinuous* imagination, as one of the internal perceptive faculties of the soul, should be immaterial to be

able to connect with the imaginal world possessing intermediate immateriality. If one believes in the materiality of the imaginative faculty, connecting to the imaginal world will make no sense, because the material imaginative faculty is not compatible with, or relevant to, the imaginal world, which has intermediate immateriality. Scholars who believe that the imaginative faculty is material are in effect denying the imaginal world. There is a disagreement among proponents of the imaginal world regarding this issue.

Generally, there are three views about the materiality or immateriality of the imaginative faculty and the acceptance or rejection of the imaginal world:

1. Peripatetic philosophers believe in the materiality of the imaginative faculty, and thus reject the imaginal world.
2. Suhrawardi and his followers believe in the materiality of the imaginative faculty and accept the imaginal world at the same time. However, these two beliefs are incompatible and irreconcilable.
3. Mulla Sadra believes in the immateriality of the imaginative faculty and accepts the imaginal world. Mulla Sadra objects to the idea that imagination and other perceptive faculties have a location in the brain, because this idea entails the problem of placing something in a container smaller than itself, which is impossible. He considers the internal faculties of the soul as the dignity and grandeur of the soul and believes that just as the soul itself is abstract and immaterial, its internal faculties are also immaterial. The imaginative faculty is thus also considered to be immaterial, though its immateriality is not rational but intermediate. In his *al-Asfār*, Mulla Sadra has attempted to prove the intermediate immateriality of the imaginative faculty and has responded to the objections of his opponents and predecessors in a very convincing manner.

In this article, while discussing about discontinuous and continuous imaginations and their components (ascending and descending imaginal worlds), the relationship between the first world and the two parts of the second world will be examined.

The Discontinuous Imaginative Faculty according to Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra

To better understand the imaginative faculty and its functions, let us first introduce the faculties of the soul. According to Suhrawardi, humans have external and internal senses, but all internal faculties, except the estimative one (*al-quwwa al-wāhima*), are specific to human beings; they include:

1. Common sense: this faculty acts as a pond into which the streams of the five senses flow.
2. Imagination: a faculty at the bottom of the first cavity of the brain, which is the treasury of the common sense.
3. Estimation: this faculty gives directions to animals with respect to things such as escaping from their predators.
4. Fantasizing: it is located in the middle cavity in the midst of the brain. It governs combinations and divisions. It is this faculty which infers things and creates imaginal concepts and ideas.
5. Memory: the store of estimative propositions.

Suhrawardi does not accept the faculty of memory in his *Wisdom of Illumination*, and explains remembrance in terms of human connection to the lights of celestial Lordly lights. According to Suhrawardi, all faculties of the soul are the products of credits of such Lordly lights. He believes that perception is a Lordly light and the imaginative faculty is simply a manifestation of, and a medium for seeing, the imaginal form. Since he believes in the materiality of the imaginative faculty, and since the impression of the imaginal form in the faculty of material imagination means placing something in a container smaller than itself, he considers the imaginative faculty as a means of connecting the rational soul to the spirits of the discontinuous imaginative faculty world and not as a prehensile of the imaginal forms. He believes that the soul, as a preceptor of physical forms and spirits, observes these forms in the world of discontinuous imaginative faculty; however, it has been argued against him that if the imaginative faculty was material, it would be incompatible with immaterial imagination forms which become its symbols (Mulla Sadra 2003, 365).

According to Suhrawardi, the soul meets imaginative forms in the discontinuous imaginative faculty world. On the other hand, Mulla

Sadra takes all forms of imagination to be located inside the soul, because the forms which the soul itself invents cannot be located in the imaginal world (Mulla Sadra 2002, 237; Ashtiani 2001, 336).

Following the viewpoint of peripatetic philosophers, Suhrawardi believes in the materiality of the imaginative faculty. He explains the imaginal world with the discontinuous imaginal world and does not illustrate the human continuous imaginal world. He even imposes some laws of the continuous imaginal world on the continuous imagination, which has led to confusion between the two. This is one of the shortcomings in the system of Suhrawardi. The fact is that imagination has two origins: one is that of the discontinuous imaginative faculty world, and the other one, which is in us, is called continuous imagination (Yazdanpanah 2010, 210).

Mulla Sadra has said that one of the shortcomings of Suhrawardi's theory is the ignorance of the continuous imaginal world and the confusions of issues related to it from those relevant to the continuous imagination. According to Mulla Sadra, issues such as false dreams, exorbitant fantasies, and obscene forms, which may be incompatible with a person's actions, are untrue and cannot have a reality in the discontinuous imaginative faculty world, and so they must be placed in the microcosm. In other words, these forms are created by the soul and dependent on it, and as soon as the soul forsakes them, they cease to exist. Thus, it can be said that the imaginative forms are not in the world of imagination, as Suhrawardi believes, but they exist in the world of the soul and form a stage of the soul's gradation (Mulla Sadra 1981, 1:304).

According to Mulla Sadra, there are five faculties: nutritive, growing, reproductive, locomotive, and perceptive. The perceptive faculty, whose task is to perceive the truth of things, is divided into two kinds:

- a) External senses, which perceive external tangible forms
- b) Internal senses, which perceive the forms of senses and their particular meanings

Some of these internal senses are exclusively receptive, such as fancy and common sense. Others are responsible for maintaining forms and their meanings, such as memory. The imaginative faculty deals

with explication and compounding of detailed forms and their meanings. Through this faculty, the soul is also able to create and invent many things (Mulla Sadra 1989, 8:56).

Internal faculties such as the imaginative faculty are characteristically instruments of the soul; that is, they are the instruments by which the soul creates some forms in the microcosm. With this portrayal of the relation of the faculties to the soul, the problem of the relationship between the great forms and the imaginative faculty is solved (Mulla Sadra 1981, 1:299).

The Continuous Imagination Faculty or the Imaginal World according to Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra

Unlike materialists, Islamic philosophers and mystics believe in worlds beyond the material world. To mention a few, al-Farabi, Avicenna, Mirdamad, and Lahiji believe that the realm beyond the material is limited to purely immaterial beings. On the other hand, scholars like Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra believe that there is an intermediate world beside the pure immaterial world, which serves as the connection between the world of nature and the pure immaterial world. The beings of this world are not material as they were in the world of brain, but, because of possessing specific shape and size, they are similar to the beings of the natural world (Mesbah Yazdi 1375, 475-90).

Peripatetic philosophers completely deny such a world within the order of the universe and consider the universe to be twofold: the pure immaterial world, which is considered to be the world of intellects, and the material world, which is called the natural world. They rule out the possibility of an intermediate reality which stands between these two existential ranks. According to them, everything possessing size is a material entity.

Contrary to the peripatetic philosophers and mystics, there are philosophers who have defended the existence of such a world. Suhrawardi is apparently the first to speak explicitly of this world. He postulates a world beyond the sensible world and under the rational world, which he calls the imaginal world or the eighth district. Suhrawardi believes in four realms for the universe:

1. **The World of Dominant Lights:** This includes all the immaterial intellects which do not depend on anything. These rays are of divine dignity and God's Archangels.

2. The World of Regent Lights: These Lights are responsible for devising the cosmos and the human world.
3. The Intermediate World: This includes the stars and simple and compound types of material objects.
4. The World of Dark and Luminous Pendent Forms: This is the world of the discontinuous imaginative faculty. He places the imaginal world as an independent rank of the universe, between the two worlds of immaterial intellects and nature. Since the beings of this world are from the imagination of material beings, he calls them spirits or imaginations, and because of their immateriality and dependence, he has called them immaterial or pendent.

The discontinuous imaginative faculty has also been mentioned in Islamic mysticism. Mystics believe in a world between the world of intellect and the world of matter, called the imaginal world. This world is not purely material, but includes material properties such as shape, size, and position. Since this world is between the pure rational and pure sensible worlds, the beings of both worlds are represented in it. According to mystics, the sum of all worlds is five presences, which manifest the divine nature. Sadr al-Din Qūnawī states:

Worlds are five, and the order is [the following]: the pure absence, the spirits' world, the perfect human, the imaginal world, and the world of matter and human, which is located at the center of the universe, encompassing all the worlds. (Qūnawī 2002, 10)

In this classification, the imaginal world is observable and available as an order between the pure immaterial world and the world of nature. Mystics, especially Muḥ yi l-Dīn al-‘Arabī, after accepting the imaginal world, have mentioned some of its features and discussed it in wider dimensions, but they have declined using arguments and reasoning in these discussions.

Mulla Sadra, among other philosophers, has presented a philosophical and systematic explanation of this world. He believes in a vertical hierarchy of three worlds: the sensible world, the imaginal world, and the pure world of intellects. In accordance with these three worlds, there are three perceptive stages in human beings:

70 / Religious Inquiries

1. Sensory perception: there is a percipient form in the matter, and the percipient perceives the form by its specific sensible features.
2. Imaginal perception: the perception of the object is with the same characteristics and qualities of perception, but the object is not present to the external senses.
3. Rational perception: the perception of an object according to its nature, regardless of its material features

These three ranks of perception, according to Mulla Sadra, are compatible with each other and connected to the ranks of external existence; thus, the worlds of existence have three ranks corresponding to human senses (Mulla Sadra 1989, 1:333; 1991, 3:394):

1. The sensible world is accidental, objective, and perishable. In this world, both the object and its prerequisites exist.
2. The extrasensory mid-world, called the imaginal world, is the world of quantitative forms, identical to senses but devoid of substance and physical limitations.
3. The world of intellects, God's angels, where there is no trace of the object or its physical features.

Mulla Sadra, in explaining the worlds of existence, believes that a mid-world is required for creating a relationship between the pure immaterial world and the pure material world. This mid-world is the imaginal world, which is similar to the material world in that it possesses shape and size, but is nonetheless immaterial.

Based on what has been mentioned so far, it can be concluded that the imaginal world is the intermediate between the worlds of sense and intellect and forms the mid-world. As humans perceive imaginal forms, they actually connect to the discontinuous imaginative faculty world through the continuous imaginal world of form.

Types of Continuous Imagination

According to Islamic philosophers, the universe is composed of two arcs: the ascending arc and the descending arc. The grace of existence first reaches the world of intellect, then the imaginal world, and finally the world of nature. The rational beings of the world of intellect are the mediums through which grace is transferred to the beings of the

imaginal world; and the beings of the imaginal world are the mediums through which grace is transferred to the beings of the world of nature. The imaginal world, which is the means by which God's grace descends from the world of intellect to the world of nature, is called intermediate or descending imagination. As God's grace reaches the natural world, since the matter has the capacity of achieving perfection, the grace will start rising again and return to its origin through the same stages from which it descended. Thus, the reality of existence inevitably has the rank of imagination in its ascending path. The imagination which intercedes in the ascent and perfection of the world of nature towards the world of intellect is called the intermediate or ascending imagination. In other words, humans evolve and move upwards in the material world by the substantial motion and in the ascending arc: they first enter the imaginal world, and then by advancing in their perfection, they enter the rational and immaterial world.

It should be noted that since Suhrawardi rejects the immateriality of the imaginative faculty, he cannot prove the ascending arc of the imaginal world, because its proof is based on the acceptance of this immateriality.

In the descending arc, rational beings in the world of intellect are the first to receive divine grace, then the beings of the imaginal world, and then the beings of the world of nature; and all these worlds are the effects of the nature of reality and the subject of divine grace. The imaginal world which is the medium of the descent of God's grace from the world of intellect to the world of nature is called the descending intermediate world. After that, the sequence of existence in the ascending arc returns conversely to the source and the target point, since the matter is the potentiality of existence and capable of indefinite perfections, with the assistance of divine grace, it goes toward perfection. (Mulla Sadra 1998, 1:45).

Mulla Sadra believes that the intermediate or descending imagination is different from the ascending imagination. The intermediate or imagination of existential descendants is the intermediate world before this world, which is interpreted as the descending imagination, but the intermediate world or imagination after this world is the ascending intermediate (Mulla Sadra 2002, 227). He states:

It must be understood that our coming from that world to this one is not similar to our returning from this world to that one. That is, all people are equal in their descending path from the original world to this one and no one has superiority; but, in the ascending path, at each moment we move from an inferior world to a superior one by our knowledge and actions. Thus the difference between ascending and descending arcs is that of potentiality and actuality or that of the succinct and the delineated. Therefore, human beings are potential in the descending path and are actual in the ascending path, or they are like succinct words in their descending path, capable of various meanings, but their meanings can only be clear once they are delineated. Therefore, human beings are at first (in the descending path) united and are eventually (in the ascending path) different with respect to their states, attributes and actions. (Mulla Sadra 1987, 321)

The descending intermediate world is called the unseen possibility—because its creatures can appear in the natural world—but the creatures of the ascending intermediate imagination cannot return to the world of nature, so it is interpreted as the unseen impossible (Mulla Sadra 1989, 9:46).

The Relationship between the Continuous Imaginal World and the Discontinuous Imaginative Faculty in the Descending Arc

The imaginative faculty can lead the soul to one of the two directions: it can make the rational soul a puppet of the material world, indulging in sensual forms and physical imagination, or it can lead him to the unseen world (the descending imaginal world) and transmit him to perfection (Suhrawardi 1994, 2: 231). According to Suhrawardi, perceiving the descending imaginal world and its forms is made possible through the imaginative faculty. Man can connect to the descending imaginal world while awake or asleep through this faculty and can be exposed to its truths by means of revelations and true dreams (Suhrawardi 1994, 2:240). According to Suhrawardi, if external senses recessed, this faculty would be the manifestation (representative) of forms that are in the world of imagination, like a mirror which represents the forms of the imaginal world which, according to him, possesses intermediate immateriality (Suhrawardi 1995, 2:211-12).

To criticize this theory, it can be said that given that there should be homogeneity between the perceiver and the perceived, this faculty must have intermediate immateriality to be able to observe the forms which have intermediate immateriality, because the material imaginative faculty cannot endure receiving immaterial forms.

With regard to the relation between the imaginative faculty and the descending arc, Suhrawardi believes that the descending imagination is the place of motifs and forms of the universe and that its events and circumstances have images in this world. It is through these images and the connection between the imaginative faculty and the descending imaginal world that revelations occur and knowledge about the future becomes possible (Mulla Sadra 1989, 9:46).

The immaterial imagination is, therefore, the place of the particular forms perceived from the unseen world (the descending imaginal world), and its connection to the descending arc plays an essential role in mystical intuitions, revelations, and inspirations.

The Relationship between the Continuous Imaginal World and the Discontinuous Imaginative Faculty in the Ascending Arc

Illuminationist Theosophers, including Suhrawardi, accept the imaginal world in the descending arc, but since they deny the intermediate immateriality of the continuous imagination, they do not accept the ascending arc of the imaginal world. They believe that the particular faculties of the soul are part of the faculty of material imagination and do not exist after the decay of the body. If nothing remains for the connection to the ascending arc after death, the connection between the discontinuous and continues imaginal worlds in the ascending arc cannot be explained. The acceptance of the discontinuous imaginative faculty in the ascending arc becomes problematic and thus the question of resurrection remains unanswered.

Suhrawardi, in *Hikmat al-ishrāq (Wisdom of Illumination)*, views the soul as the administrator of the body and states that the soul uses the body in order to attain perfection; and after achieving the complete perfection in resurrection, it gets rid of the physical body completely and joins the world of pure light and the rows of archangels in the outstanding imaginal world (Suhrawardi 1998, 223).

From this, it can be understood that Suhrawardi believes in spiritual and physical resurrection but does not take physical resurrection to be true for all souls. According to him, perfect individuals in knowledge and practice have only a spiritual resurrection and not a physical one, because the perfect souls are devoid of all material possessions and physical dependencies. The souls with less perfection are deprived of joining the world of lights and are transferred to the imaginal world.

Suhrawardi does not directly admit the physical resurrection but interprets and justifies the physical resurrection, which exists in the tradition, by the descending imaginal world (Suhrawardi 1998, 354; Heravi 1979, 194).

Suhrawardi understands the physical resurrection in terms of the dependency of the soul on the imaginal forms, and elaborates the resurrection of bodies in terms of imaginal bodies (Ashtiani 2001, 88), while Mulla Sadra believes that the dependency of the soul on the imaginal and intermediate bodies and physical resurrection makes no sense without there being an appropriate way of dependency, which is the immateriality of the imaginative faculty, and it prevents the physical resurrection of the continuous imagination that is annihilated after death, for Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophers unanimously hold that the rational soul, in the first stage of its incipience, is immaterial and survives after the body's death and the particular faculties of soul are mortal after death. Therefore, after the annihilation of the particular faculties, the imaginative faculty and the habits and attitudes and intentions dependent on these faculties, among other faculties, will not survive and so they would not be able to cause pains and pleasures after death (Mulla Sadra 2002, 86).

Suhrawardi interprets all the promises of the prophets regarding physical pleasures in the heaven and sufferings in the hell and the resurrection of bodies in terms of pendent forms (Mulla Sadra 1996, 181). However, after separation from the body, the soul will be resurrected by the forms of its actions, which are located in organs and faculties of the rational soul, and not its imaginal form (Mulla Sadra 2002, 144). Therefore, the realization of the above promises and the resurrection of souls in the descending arc (the immaterial world of souls) is not possible. It is impossible that the criterion for the questioning in the graves and the resurrection—the imaginal body—be in the descending arc, because punishments and rewards come from actions and intentions (Shaygan 1992, 247-49). It is said that the imaginative faculty is a substantial faculty which does not reincarnate in the body and its parts, does not consolidate into it, and is not located in the direction of the material world, but is immaterial (Mulla Sadra 1981, 9:191).

Mulla Sadra states that the human imaginative faculty is immaterial which means that the particular aspects of the soul are not material, and

that the soul is self-substantial, rather than being immanent in the matter; otherwise, it would not exist independently of the matter and potentialities, and would thus be perishable.

His theory of the immateriality of imagination clarifies all states of the human soul after death mentioned in the Qur'an. According to Mulla Sadra, questions in the grave, rewards and punishments, and the issues related to hell, physical resurrection, and particular perceptions after death are all issues which can be explained in terms of the imaginative faculty and the proof of its immateriality (Mulla Sadra 1989, 8:214).

According to Mulla Sadra, human imaginative faculty is quintessential and does not have a connection with the material body. It uses the body as a means to attain perfection and leaves it as soon as this has been achieved. It then enters the first origin of the worlds of the hereafter. Since the imaginative faculty survives after death and does not decay along with the body, it travels to the intermediate world along with the imaginal body; and as it imagines in this world, it also perceives everything after death (Mulla Sadra n.d., 299; 1962, 36). Thus, it imagines its essence while separate from the world and finds itself with the same body and face which were buried; and so, it perceives the sufferings and pains of the body (Mulla Sadra 1962, 102-104).

To conclude, the reality of everything obtained in this world is manifested through the imaginative faculty. Since human beings are not equal in their level of imagination, their intermediate worlds are not equal either; some are in the intermediate heaven and some are in the intermediate hell. This bliss or torment is from a special ability of the imaginative faculty to invent and create imaginal forms. When the physical nature of a human being is strong, his imaginative faculty is weak in composing imaginal forms and creating the trance of the other world; however, when the physical nature is destroyed, the soul's faculty can create more powerful imaginal forms. With the help of this faculty, the soul can create the pleasures and pains of the hereafter without the elemental material. That is, blissful people, due to their morality and deeds, can cause all kinds of otherworldly pleasures. This is an ability which the people of dignity and God's saints have in this world, and others will only attain in the hereafter. When an individual exists in this world and is bound to the senses, the imaginative faculty cannot create anything, because of sensorial engagement and impacts

of the organs and parts of the body. After death, when the physical senses are shut down, the imaginative faculty becomes powerful and creates powerful forms which allow him to feel greater pleasures and pains than those of the material world. Thus it can be said that in the Hereafter, people are tormented and blessed by their imagination; other than that, there is no reward or punishment (Mulla Sadra 1962, 151; 1985, 99).

Conclusion

1. The continuous imaginal world is the same as the perceptive faculty of the soul, which is called the imaginative faculty. The discontinuous imaginative faculty is a level of the universe which is between the material world and the pure immaterial world and is the connection of these two worlds. It is called the imaginal world in philosophy.
2. Some mystics and Islamic theosophers have discussed the discontinuous imaginative faculty or the imaginal world in the descending and ascending arcs. The imaginal world in the descending arc is different from the imaginal world in the ascending arc.
3. The descending arc of the imaginal world is the abode of revelation, true dreams, and unseen inspirations. It is through the descending arc that knowledge of the unseen and knowledge of the future may be accessed. The ascending arc is the land of the after-death souls.
4. Connecting to the discontinuous imaginative faculty world in the descending and ascending arcs is possible through the continuous imaginal world or the imaginative faculty only if this faculty possesses intermediate immateriality. This is due to the fact that the discontinuous imaginative faculty possesses intermediate imagination.
5. Since Suhrawardi has not accepted the immateriality of the imaginative faculty, he cannot explain the connection between the continuous imaginal world and the discontinuous imaginative faculty correctly. Mulla Sadra, on the other hand, has proven the immateriality of the imaginative faculty and has managed to explain the connection between the discontinuous and continuous imaginations in the descending and ascending arcs.

Establishing the immateriality of the imaginative faculty and its relation to the discontinuous imaginative faculty in the descending arc has allowed us to make sense of the revelations and inspirations of mystics and saints. Furthermore, understanding the immateriality of the imaginative faculty and its relation with the ascending arc can explain the promises of the prophets, because issues such as the intermediate world, the futility of bodies, and physical resurrection can then be understood.

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The Path: Dızgun Bawa, As an Example of Relation between Belief and Life Style¹

Dilşa Deniz²

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This article is an anthropological examination and analysis of a Dersim-based mythical story, focusing on its meaning and function in belief and the practice of daily life. Within this scope, the Dızgun Bawa myth, revolving around a central sacred figure, is broached and analyzed here as a text comprising a basis for the construction of collective discourses giving way to socially functional meanings and forms of behavior. This mythical story serves as a vehicle for a discussion of its repercussions over history, contemporary discourse, and daily life. Discussions in the article also center upon a stateless society's effort to protect itself from the central state and its forces, the construction of the discourse of this effort, and its function in its implementation. With the hermeneutic and anthropological method pursued here, the ultimate aim of the article is to approach the effects of the story's content over the identity, personality, and eco-politics of the society in question.

Keywords: Dızgun Bawa, belief, life style, Dersim, eco-politics.

Introduction

The decoding of myths has to be evaluated as the oral archeology of human history. They are significant semantic categories, worldviews, and the operation of sociological institutions and rules. More importantly, they are treasures for social norms and memory. Myths are thus a crucial subject of discussion and research in anthropology. This study aims at decoding the Dızgun Bawa (mountain's) mythical story, which is the "dominant symbol" (Turner 1967) of Dersim, thus analyzing its meaning and function in belief and the practice of daily life.

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2. Assistant Professor, University of New Hampshire, US, email: Dilsa.Denis@unh.edu

The Dızgun Bawa myth, revolving around a central sacred figure, is here broached and analyzed as a text engendering socially functional meanings and ways of behavior, and generating the construction of discourses of collectivity. Therefore, this mythical story is dealt with in terms of its repercussions over history, contemporary discourse, and current daily life. The discussions here also center upon a stateless society's effort to protect itself from central state and its forces, the construction of the discourse of such an effort, and its function in its implementation. Analysed with a hermeneutic and anthropological method, this story is dealt with in terms of its effects on daily life, the configuration of personality, and politics within the semantic world of society.

Before proceeding with an analysis based on an eclectic use of anthropological approaches, a few theoretical words might be necessary. In his examination of myths, Claude Lévi-Strauss, a prominent spokesman for structuralism, points to the binary opposition molded on knowledge or meaning by the specific operation of human thought, which has long been known to be a characteristic of the Homo Sapien brain.¹ Victor Turner, a prominent scholar of symbolic interpretation, talks about the dominant symbols in myths and their function to the service of society. Clifford Geertz, on the other hand, focuses on the traditional performance of cockfighting, through which he decodes the symbolism in the reproduction of the hierarchical relations of society. And Mary Douglas centers her discussion on the impurity/purity symbolism, especially in Jewish culture, leading the social to take a distance against hybridity in order to intervene in merging with others. Drawing from similar analytical methods, this article aims at deciphering a story about the Dızgun Bawa mountain, which is a central sacred space in Dersim.

As mentioned above, the myth covered by this article is essentially a story about the Dızgun Bawa mountain, a central space in Dersim with sacred characteristics. The belief system espoused by people in Dersim is known as the Alevi belief, but it is locally articulated in the dialects of the region as Re/Raa or Reya Heq/Raa Haq. This belief system has

1. Viewed from the way Lévi-Strauss looks at the fiction of mythical meaning, one within the structure of this myth a series of symbols of polarization, such as mountain vs. plain, father vs. son, verticality vs. horizontality, old age vs. youth, impurity vs. purity, death vs. immortality, shepherding vs. agriculture

its own philosophy, law, rituals, and social organization. And it is a structure in which the adoration of nature (i.e., sacred geography) takes on importance, thereby religiously unifying nature and humans with the ancestor cult. This structure is supported by two institutional pillars, which are the customs of *kirve*¹ and *musâhip*,² and is put into practice by way of an internal commitment or contract, known as *ikrar*, and the ensuing organization of social rights and responsibilities.

Apart from the last decades, all beliefs about social mechanisms have been conveyed in Dersim via oral culture. In this respect, oral communication is what determines the formulation, and handing down from generation to generation, of social rights and responsibilities—that is, social law, philosophy, social solidarity, and daily life practices. Mythical stories, which are cornerstones for oral record, continue their function in daily life in the form of songs (conveying the philosophy of the belief), elegies (enabling the continuity of historical record), and so forth. In this sense, mythical stories usually appear as sacred stories or rather as the settlement stories of sacred ancestors. Hence, the contents of such sacred texts incessantly make themselves felt in daily life, and a considerable portion of them serve as a certificate in terms of the organization of belief within the scope of ancestor cult. Miracle (*keramet*) stories are important in that they function as evidence determining the status (thus, rights and responsibilities) of the tribes defined as *Ocak*,³ who provide religious service to society, and also of

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1. Kirve is the name given to the person playing a symbolical part in the circumcision ritual and thus constitutes an important fictive kinship institution called *kirvelik*.
 2. *Musâhip* is the name of an important fictive kinship institution in Alevi belief, by which a sacred brotherhood starts.
 3. *Ocak* is a kind of tribe that has a miracle story for their ancestor. Having these miracle stories, which connect all ancestral tribal lines, proves their sacredness; in a sense, “ranking” the tribe among the *Ocaks*. The people who belong to these tribes are accepted as *Seyid*. They are considered to be genetically linked to the Prophet. The male members of such tribes have the right to perform religious services in society. As *Seyid*, they have the respect of all members of society and as such, are named and act as *Pir*, *Raywer*, and *Mursid*. These three names are the name of the sacred ranks for *Seyid* people. They have different duties. *Raywer* is the person who introduces people in the religion and ceremonies, and also assists *Pir* and *Mursid*. *Pir* is the person who leads ceremonies and makes leadership decisions when problems arise. *Mursid* acts as the *Pir* of the *Pirs* who can act as a secondary decision maker, considering misjudgements made by *Pirs*. In Dersim, these *Ocak* have a circle. They also have their *Pir*, *Raywer*, and *Mursid*.

Every *Ocak* has several tribes they serve. This never changes. When you are born in a tribe you know which *Ocak* is your *Pir*, *Raywer* and *Mursid*, no one is without. If

other tribes and the relations between each of them. Taking into account the fact that such stories have an important function, especially in designating the proper and secure way of conveying, from generation to generation, of sacred mythology, one needs to broach them as significant social and historical contents with long temporal paths.

Mythology is a kind of cultural record system and a kind of language. The particular significance of approaching myths as a language is underpinned by the fact that myths mediate a symbolical narrative and, at the same time, protect the historical context. In its synchrony, a historical discourse is located in an updated language, and the demands and discourses of the past are thereby carried to this day by way of using a series of meanings related to contemporary conditions. Hence, a main symbolical essence is formed with a series of symbolic discourses or forms acquainted by the local mass, or such an essence is borrowed from another source for the same purpose, with modifications and updates required by the specific condition. This updated version enables multiple semantic stratum from the past to be located within the current semantic stratum, so that the accumulated symbolic discourse, simultaneously coming from the past, is also perpetuated. In other words, on the one hand, such myths continue historicity by locating the traces of contemporary history into this diachronic flow; on the other hand, they feed this historicity but also use it as a means of social education.

With its myriad overlapping semantic stratum, this *accumulated-symbolical* (*yiğimsembolik*)¹ form is often transformed into a collection of messages that can be read or communicated only by the society in question. This historical and contemporary message is constructed on the specific semantic stratum of the society, thus paving the way for a sort of social/group fiction/history of privacy. Forming a specific oral history curriculum for such an “us” is also a necessity in this framework. And this points to the significance of a kind of “subterranean/secret” language for a collective entity in search of molding and maintaining its difference. Therefore, this symbolical language and message are transformed and reproduced as intergenerational educational material. And even if the story has other

you do not have one, then you are not Alevi or Reya Heqi (the True Path) people.

There are several Ocaks who serve more than one hundred tribes in Dersim. These names are in Kurdish; some of them are in Turkish as well.

1. Conceptualization made by the author; see Deniz (2012).

versions in other places, what is communicated through the secret specific language/meaning is the social essence/message/discourse, and this is how privacy is maintained.

The transmission of discourse is part of social education and a significant activity continued from generation to generation. By nature of their structure, mythical stories are, as also pointed out by Lévi-Strauss, the main materials for the education of generations, especially of oral cultures. Therefore, oral educational material becomes functional as part of a curriculum, espoused by elders, who are the most important carriers of such material, “helping to keep young generations under an order and discipline” (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 44). Hence, in those societies lacking written history, the mythical record becomes the main record system and thus serves as a prominent means in the construction and survival of the identity of “us.” The mythical stories of Dersim dramatically contain such characteristics too. And so, as mentioned above, they serve as means for transmission with its own socially secret meanings.

Dersim and Mythology

Dersim has always been positioned at a distance from central administrations in pre-Ottoman times, throughout the Ottoman era and as well as during the Republican period. There are a variety of reasons for this; the main reason has two separative elements: ethnicity and religion. Unlike the Sunni Kurds’ existing, albeit shifting, relations between the Ottoman administration, this region, which is in fact ethnically Kurd, has always been a place that has tried to protect itself from the central administration, due to their belief in Rê/Raa Heq. As a matter of fact, this has not been an option but a mandatory situation for survival. Located directly in the center of the power conflict between the Seljuks and the Safavids, it was continually made to pay the price of a trauma with the victory of the latter and persistently encoded as a potential threat.

As known, the Ottoman state is a governmental entity emerging after the collapse of the Seljuk state at the hands of Ismail I (also known as Shah Ismail), the warriors of Ardabil and its Dervish tradition. Owing its existence to the conflict between the Seljuks and the Safavids, the Ottoman state, which was, in fact, the successor of the Seljuks, directed its rage to Alevis, the most prominent representatives of the dervish tradition, with the fear that they might succumb to the same outcome.

Alevi are a social group forced with fear and pressure to conversion—a process which has been largely accomplished. But they are also the embodiment of the most long-standing and deeply rooted resistance tradition of the region. This violent hunt against Alevi continued until the end of the Ottoman era (Şener 2003; Gündoğdu and Genç 2013). Despite some small quantitative modifications, this campaign has also continued during the Republican period.¹ Therefore, virtually all Alevi tried to survive in high locations, to which it would be difficult for central powers to reach, and to which they could escape and take refuge in when a danger appeared. These locations are generally high mountains, unapproachable valleys, and forestlands. Dersim is just such a region adorned with sheer slopes, high mountains, dense forestlands, caves, valleys, cliffs without clear paths or markings. As such, it is a protective “sacred geography.”

In Dersim, the relation between humans and geography is made through common belief and daily life practices. It is precisely for this reason that mythical stories, providing the historical record of this commonality, gain such an importance, for this is a region in which, except for the last fifty years, there was no writing technology, and thus experienced ensuing problems. As such, it strived to record all its past and present through oral communication. Being the most typical of these oral record systems, mythical stories marked with holiness offer us information about the relation between humans and nature in Dersim and Dersim’s history, thus playing an enormous role in the formulation of daily life. These appear before us as structures in which social knowledge, norms, and demands are inscribed following a concentrated process of distillation. Hence, they have always been functional in the transmission of society, its structure, and discourses. In this regard, the central mythical story of Dızgun is a part and carrier of an essential discourse in this society.

Dızgun Bawa

Dızgun Bawa is a mountain near the village of Qıl/Kıl in the district of Nazimiye, with an approximate height of 2,090 meters. It is one of the few mountains where there are almost no trees. We cannot know how it was in the past, but unlike how it is presented in the legend, only sporadic

1. The massacres of Dersim, Çorum, Maraş, and Sivas, three provinces in Turkey, are dramatic examples of this violence. There are also some discriminatory and violent practices.

trees are located in its foothills. Dızgun, which also serves as a basis for the foundation myth of the Kurêşan tribe/Ocak, is a shepherd in the legend, a young boy who takes goats to the mountains at the coldest time of the winter, enabling the trees to turn green only with a touch of his stick, thereby feeding the animals. Seeing everyday that the goats return with full stomachs, his father begins to wonder how this happens. So one day he secretly follows his son and thus witnesses Şaheyder's miracle.

When a goat notices him, it sneezes in order to inform Şaheyder about this situation, upon which Şaheyder asks, "What's happened? Have you seen the deaf Kurêş?" and notices his father. This makes him ashamed; he escapes to the mountain and never comes back, and thus he becomes a *secret (sır)* in the mountain. Although the narration has various versions, this is the basic setup of the story (Deniz 2012).

At first glance, this story offers us a series of data about the ecological and social life of the society. As also pointed out by these data, Dersim is a high location, covered in snow five to six months of the year, a geography ruled by cruel winter conditions. There is very little farm land in this region, and the arable lands are often rugged, high, and covered with forests. Therefore, the economic activity most appropriate to this environment has often been sheep and mostly goat breeding. Hence, in the other two important mythical stories (that is, the *Mızur* story), we see the goat as the most appropriate animal to breed in this geography, and shepherding as the most appropriate economic activity. This is not only because there are no domestic animal species other than goats that can adapt itself to this steep slope, but also because there is no pasture to be used for the breeding of animals in long winter months. The only existing flora is oak trees spread all over the mountains as a green layer. Therefore, virtually the only source of food for animals is the leaves of oak trees, and it is goats that can afford to bear the winter season with less food. The miracle in the story, as presented in the form of trees turning green with a touch of a stick, is primarily evidence of the daily life of the region, especially of the hardship experienced in long winters.

Therefore, one of the most important activities in Dersim for people preparing for winter is to cut, especially in September, branches of oak trees and store them for winter. They are brought in winter to where animals are located, or animals are taken where stored branches are located and fed. Leaves are consumed by animals, and the remaining

branches are used for heating and other domestic tasks. All these activities—cutting down branches, carrying them, and feeding off animals—are predominantly carried out by the young male members of households. This is also the case in our mythical story. The Dızgun character in the story is mainly an animal keeper—that is, a shepherd whose tasks also include the above-mentioned chores, which appear in the story as non-sacred activities executed by Dızgun.

Miracle Stories and Belief System

The most important features of the belief system in Dersim are the miracle stories serving as a basis for social organization and the laws of solidarity. In this regard, one can speak of three miracles worked out by Dızgun: first, traversing a six-kilometer road with just three steps and coming to the mountain known today by his own name; second, his touching the trees with his stick and turning them green at the coldest time of the winter; and third, becoming a secret in the mountain upon seeing his father. On the other hand, Kurêş, who is here characterized as the father of Dızgun, has an independent narrative and also has a series of miracle stories.¹

A scientific analysis of this subject shows that it would be logical to argue that Dızgun is not, contrary to what is claimed, the son of Kurêş, but a strategy used by a religious leader and his followers coming to the region from outside in settling down in the region. Hence, attaining a sacred and popular personality—with the claim that he is the father of Dızgun—facilitates settling down in the region in a more secure and prestigious way. This is a clever strategy for guaranteeing one's existence in the region. One may even argue that this is perhaps the only

1. In the context of these miracles, involving the circle of the maxim “Hand in hand, hand to God” in Dersim belief system, the Kurêşan tribe/Ocak gains holiness, taking its place within the system as a Pir (sage) Ocak. There are some miracle stories about it, but in comparison to Dızgun, it has a lesser importance in the Dersim belief system. The space belonging to him—i.e., the site where he used to live—is located within the village, and it is still frequented by his own circle of talips (aspirants). On the other hand, as a mountain, Dızgun Bawa is still the most central and popular sacred space not only in the whole of Dersim, but also for the Dersim-based Kurdish Alevism. Unlike the village Zevê, the space of the father Kurêş, which is only occasionally visited by aspirant, Dızgun Bawa is frequented by hundreds of people especially in the summer, and almost sixty animals are sacrificed for its sake. One may think, however, that Kurêş must be more important as he has more miracle stories. Another interesting point worthy of discussion is that the one having more miracles (i.e., the father) is mortal, whereas the one with less miracles (i.e., the son) is immortalized as a “secret.” For an extensive discussion, see Deniz (2012).

secure way of settling down in the region. In this case, one can postulate the following thesis: There are internal monitoring dynamics in the region, and the most salient feature of these dynamics is that they concretize in the figures regarded as the sacred leaders of the region, most of whom are shepherds. A series of settlement stories and attribution of these stories generally to those coming from outside offer us remarkable data about the settlement, power relations, and religious history in the region. Departing from this point, it is possible to assert that a new external religious approach is associated with the existing religions in the region. Thus, without being much intertwined—but also without excluding each other—a concensus is attained, ultimately taking on a completely new form.

Land: Shepherds and Fathers

The fact that Dızgun moved away from Kurêş, his alleged father, and disappeared as a secret in the mountain is a matter of fundamental importance, which needs to be analyzed for its underlying reasons. This is too specific of a detail to be just explained away, as is done in most interpretations, as just an act of “embarrassment.” One can logically infer that this is in fact a kind of reflex shown towards those coming from the outside, for, in as much as we see in the myth, the father lives below in a place relatively more suitable to agriculture and gardening. Settlement also invokes the rise of land property on the basis of ancestor cult and the tribal system organized around it. Today, in Kurdish society in general, and in Dersim Kurds specifically, there exists a land property in conformity with the tribal system. This seems to be a serious crisis occasioned by the disappearance of Dızgun in the mountain, a fact primarily corresponding to the death of shepherding culture as a consequence of the distribution of land with personal/communal property. The distribution of land means the restriction, or even the liquidation, of shepherding activities. In this regard, it is quite likely that Dızgun’s behavior is in fact a harsh response to the expropriation of the lands below by newcomers.

This is, therefore, a clever strategy, aiming at preempting a possible objection against settlement, by claiming the fatherhood of Dızgun. Such a potential threat seems to have been staved off thanks to good strategy, but Dızgun Bawa’s positive and strong influence over the neighboring peoples could not be vitiated. However, by looking at the situation in favor of the people below and his disappearance in this

mountain, one can also infer that he and others engaged in shepherding were isolated and stuck in the mountains, but still continuing their lives. This is because a similar situation appears again in Mızur, which is also a central myth and sacred figure. Mızur is also a shepherd, disappearing as a secret in mountains after escaping from a landowner.¹ This theme invoking the encounter between shepherding and agricultural culture can be read not only on the basis of the sacredness of the whole mountain where Dızgun disappeared as a secret, but also on the basis of the symbolism of the Kurêş Ocak, where the only sacred place is the Ocak itself, himself mortal. The landowner in the Mızur myth, who is a kind of father, is also mortal and points out to Mızur as sacred.

The Dızgun Bawa mountain, referred to in the Kurmanci dialect as Kevirê Dızgunê and as Kemero Dızgun in the Kurmancki dialect (the rock of Dızgun), is wholly stamped with sacredness. The people going on a pilgrimage to this mountain visit symbolic points on their journey, light candles, and pray. The mountain has two entrances. The first is the entrance from the site near the village of *Gerê* in the district of Nazimiye, where there is now located a *cemevi*, a place of assembly for Alevis. And the other entrance is on the central road to Dersim, in the Qıl village of Nazimiye. A *cemevi/cemxane* has recently been built here too, and a visiting route circling the mountain starts from this spot. Here, visitors are welcomed by a rock, spontaneously transformed into a monument in time, with the piling of the horns of sacrificed animals. This is where the candles are first lit. If one begins to climb the upward slope, one of the first destinations is Henia Xaskar/Kaniya Xaskarê (i.e., the Haskar Fountain). Haskar is one of the sisters of Dızgun. What is called a fountain is just a meagre source of water flowing in a small cave. People drink this water with a spoon for healing.

This tour continues on a long trail winding toward the peak. There is a plane between the two slopes, where people can also sacrifice

1. Here is the similar theme also at stake in Mızur's story, a narrative of the origin of the Mızur/Munzur river, which is the most important water source today. Mızur is a shepherd working for a Sunni landowner. He realizes that his master, who has gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca, craves for halva, so tells the wife of his master that, if she cooked halva, he could take it to his master before it gets cold. And his miracle is only understood when his master returns from pilgrimage. Upon the revelation of his secret, Mızur feels ashamed and thus disappears as a secret in the mountains. While running away, he slops around the milk from the churn, and this scattered milk wells out as water.

animals and light candles. One needs to pass through steep cliffs in order to move up to the slope. It is such a narrow passing that it even resembles an initiation rite. Having passed through this quite narrow passage, one encounters a site alleged to be Dızgun's tomb, which has apparently only recently taken the form of a grave. This is a point of contact where people used to light candles. It has now become part of a ritual, in which people circle the tomb barefoot for three times in a way reminiscent of what is referred to as the "invention of tradition."¹

Following this ritual, people pass to another site called Topê Dızgunê (meaning Dızgun's Balls), where they witness stones resembling balls; then they begin to climb down towards the other face of the mountain. Here, people first come to the cave where Dızgun used to lie. Visitors drink from the leaking water inside the cave, light candles, visit the site believed to have harboured his *saz* (i.e., a stringed musical instrument), and his bed, and finally reach the main place called Mığara Çile. *Çile* means the very hard time of winter in Kurdish, particularly February. The basic importance of this place is that it used to be the location where dervishes used to enter a forty-day novitiate at the coldest time of winter before admission into their order. People were required to spend at least one night in this cave as the main space of the ritual, but with the recent escalation of military control, the surrounding area has been transformed into a de facto forbidden area, especially in the evenings, thus bringing this religious practice to a standstill. Therefore, people nowadays try to sleep here for a shorter span of time in order to continue the practice. This is done because it is important to have a dream here, and having a dream is regarded as a fundamental communication with Dızgun, the sacred power. For example, wishing for a child is of prime importance here—which is why there are many stories about such wishes and the miracle whereby these wishes were reciprocated by a hidden power. After such wishing, one of the customs is to give the name Dızgun to boys, and Xaskar to girls.

In daily life, Dızgun is a salient sacred form and a holy place where people visit to pray for a child. That is why there is a considerable number of males with the name Dızgun. Though not at the same proportion, Xaskar is also one of the widespread names. One of the main reasons for the prevalence of the name of Dızgun is that people

1. This terms was first suggested by the Eric Hobsbawm.

go to Dızgun and sleep in the Cave of Çile especially in order to pray for a boy. Demand for a male child is a “natural” consequence of the patriarchal society in Dersim. Men are “valuable,” so their supply is high. Therefore, people going to Dızgun not pray only for a child, but a male child. Female children are wished for usually when people have difficulty in having a child. And the female child thus seeing the light of the day is given the name Xaskar.

The importance of wishing a child from Dızgun lies for the most part in the fact that he is a young, miraculous shepherd/protector/power. As the physical power of society, the kind of power necessitated by economic conditions and environmental difficulties, and as a kind of military power against external threats, a young man refers to resistance. In this regard, the fact that Dızgun is a young man and a shepherd also shows that he has all requirements necessitated by the reference to protectiveness. When all these qualities are coupled with faith, it takes on the identity of “us” with a socio-psychological impetus. And this means the construction and consolidation of a socio-psychological resistance required for survival. This is what responds to the social psychology of a community always living under a threat. The existence of a protector or a guard, his disappearance as a secret within the *precious geography* where he could continue to live—his trace in every part of this geography—is a symbolic emphasis on a sacred geography, a whole territory to which the community owes its existence. This can be read either as a debt of gratitude to this geography or a construction of a symbolic discourse demanding people to step up to protect their own spaces marked with their most sacred values, their geographies consecrated by a secret power to which they owe their social existence. Hence, as a protective “ancestor,” Dızgun guards and protect them, and the people, for their part, regard themselves obliged to protect and guard the sacred space where Dızgun disappeared as a secret—their homeland with all the creatures living in it. This situation is best described as *herda bav u kalan* (the land of father and ancestors). It, therefore, refers to the origin of the law of land property, still maintaining its effect in no small measure.

Tribe, Land, and Property

The land property in Dersim has a specific law. Though under the external scope of state laws, it keeps its internal law to a large extent. In the predominating system in Dersim, there are lands belonging to

tribes. These lands belong to the whole tribe, but they are distributed as individual properties. In other words, they are registered with a title deed given to individuals, and treated as private property. However, the tribe continues to hold rights and authorities over them. What is at work here is the principle forbidding the sale of land, especially of land belonging to the tribe symbolizing the continuity of ancestors, to those who are not part of the tribe. An individual can sell his property, but one has to do it in deference to the internal legal laws of the tribe. In the scope of this law, one can first sell it to a tribe member. One has to bargain first with the closest relatives, and if no agreement can be found, proceed to the most distant ones until an agreement is reached.

Tribal boundary is the last boundary. If no one within that tribe purchases the land in question, it is then not possible to sell it anymore. Supposing that one set one's mind on selling a piece of land and has found a purchaser, this would be a cause of conflict within the tribe. This is an unacceptable act in the eyes of the tribal law, stipulating that its "ancestral" land cannot be sold to foreigners. Therefore, in such a case, any member of the tribe has the right to engage in conflict and other members have also to take the same position. In the end, "ancestral" land is at stake, and all tribal members have a right and authority in this context.

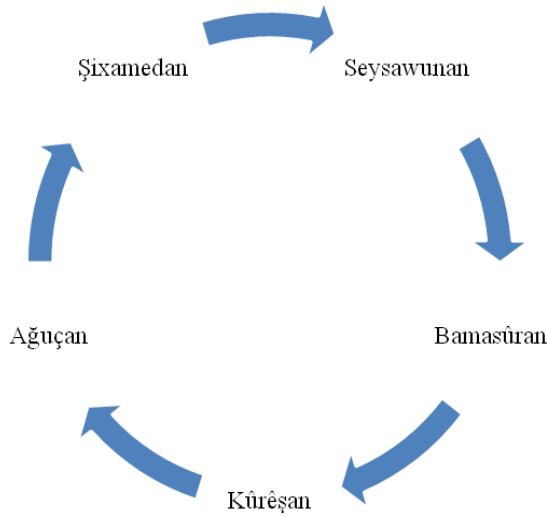
As a matter of fact, this also points to a collective unconscious, shedding light onto the still effective perception of the people of Dersim regarding their homeland. In this sense, we see, as configured in the context of Dersim and people from Dersim, a very special example of the concepts of "country" and "homeland," because each of them, as it were, has been entrusted to each other. Dersim is where their ancestors, potential might, and most precious entities are blended. This is a land where there is an embedded potential might that touches them and protects them. The reason underlying the fact that the local figures regarded as sacred do not have any grave and that there is a widespread belief that all these figures are a "secret" is that there is a particular kind of land which is blended with ancestor cult. Thus, the figures included in the ancestor cult do not have any grave. And the natural places where they disappeared as a "secret" strengthens the perception that all land is communal property.

Property, Shepherding, and Agricultural Cultures

Within this configuration, shepherds, as those charged with protection and watching over, appear as the objectors of an interim period evolving from shepherding culture into an agricultural one and also into another form of the establishment of property. There must be a relation between the newly-formed agricultural culture, registration of land into ancestors' property, and the fact that Dızgun, a representative and symbol of shepherding culture, disappeared into a nonarable mountainous region. Departing from this, we can speak of a new perception in the division of land, the defeat of shepherding culture at the hands of agricultural culture, a process whereby shepherding and shepherds themselves were reduced to a dependent position. But we can also argue that this was not a categorical defeat, a product of a long and painful process, leading to a forced reconciliation on a certain line and thus enabling the continuation of the adoration of Dızgun as the "arch-shepherd."

The land in shepherding culture is a relation under the control of a mobile, provisional, and seasonal calendar. It has a continuity, but it does not have the rigid perception of a boundary. The boundary is only the boundary of the physical or an insurmountable natural thing or suitable ecological conditions. With its permanent, human-determined, and imagined boundaries, it was probably hard to understand and accept this newly instituted property. Hence, land property and surplus value as a consequence of agricultural culture did not lead into a substantial transformation in the form of deep social stratification due to the influence of shepherding culture. And this reduced the hierarchical sequencing, at a very simple level, to a level where there were a protective leader and other equals. Therefore, along with the adoration of Dızgun, this horizontal hierarchy appears as a significant characteristic in the configuration of the belief system in Dersim. Here we see horizontally organized tribes, and again horizontally organized *seyid*¹ Ocak tribes, which are non-economic in nature, but considered, to a certain extent, higher than tribes in sacred terms. Within this sequencing, horizontal circularity precludes a vertical hierarchy. This situation, on the other hand, maintains the ancestor cult, which is the organizing factor of agricultural culture.

1. See footnote 7 above.



Picture 4. *Hand in hand, hand to God (El ele, el Hakka, this is not the exact one is an example)*

This original form is also at work in the relation between *Pir* (sage) and *Talip* (aspirant), indicated as the higher position of belief. The sage and the aspirant always sit at the same table, eat the same food, have a seat in the same place; they are thus in an equal relationship. The hierarchy determined through *kissing the hand* does not go beyond being a tribute paid to the institutionality in the person of a particular individual. Nevertheless, Ocaks have also their horizontal and internal organizations. As they are also horizontally organized, it is very hard to see an obvious verticality. Within the system, being a sage corresponds to a higher position in comparison to being an aspirant. However, a sage is always an aspirant of another sage. Therefore, being a sage ceases to be a static position of superiority and transforms into a positional situation. And this ensures that people do not remain within a rigid hierarchical position. Although it seems that it gains its authority from the ancestor cult, the agricultural culture's belief system, shepherding culture does not allow deep hierarchies, and it is apparent that it gave way here to a different configuration. Thus, as in the case of Kurêş, no matter how many miracles they had worked through, Dızgun and Mızur, the two shepherds of Dersim, continued to be the collective sacred leaders of society. And this still has its daily repercussions. In

this sense, the tribal system in Dersim appears as a community, as a common action for survival, rather a strict land feudalism. The internal relations within tribes are also supported with this characteristic. The continuous state of vigilance for the purpose of protection from neighbouring communities and especially from central powers has led to a coalescence of the tribe in the form of segments. This segmentation enables a swift dissolution and action, thus a rapid diffusion and fusion in the face of a threat. Consequently, the tribal leader again appears as the “shepherd,” charged with protecting and watching over the tribe, and thus takes the lead in decision-making processes.¹

Thus, the hierarchy in the Dersim pantheon is as the following (with increasing order of importance): visits at the lowest strata, the places of Ocaks, Dızgun and Mızur, Xızır, and Xwadê/Heq. It cannot be a coincidence that these two “sacred shepherds” serve as the interconnection between the ancestor cult at the bottom, and Xızır and Heq, which transform into abstract forms, at the top. On the contrary, they are the signs symbolizing main points of contact in the formation of the idiosyncratic belief in the region. With the ancestor cult and its subject settling on land at the bottom and sacred shepherds escaping to/taking refuge in mountains, we can thus see the monotheistic transformation of divinity, which first appeared in concrete forms and then took abstract forms. Despite this sequencing, the living conditions in the region, the continuous state of vigilance due to environmental threats, and the fact that goat raising is an economic and cultural activity appropriate to this dangerous way of living have always maintained the importance of shepherding and shepherd gods. The form of land property in the ancestor cult must have been adapted to shepherding; that is, to a social structure configured in accordance with mobility. And this must be a fact rendering “shepherd leaders” more important and taking them to higher ranks of holiness.

In this sense, Dızgun appears not only as a stereotype of protective sacred leader, but also as an invitation to young men to become the shepherds of society and thus to protect and watch over other people. As a sacred form of a sort of collective shepherding, Dızgun is thus also encoded as a young asexual man,² manifested as a form of collective holiness, as the totality of a young man’s tasks with regard to society

1. For an extensive discussion, see Deniz (2012).

2. See Deniz (2012).

and its belief in daily life. He belongs to everyone as the ideal son of society and he is the protector of all.

In addition to the responsibility of protection, Dizgun is regarded important also as the young *ideal son* of society. Being a secret serves as a reference to a personality beyond the mysterious and all “bad” habits. The reason for this is that his merit (i.e., being a “secret”) reaches the highest ideal, which is the eternity of society and its belief. In this regard, being a “secret,” a very important factor within belief, points out to a significant moral purity (*pakî*). One of the most important elements within belief, being clean refers not only to physical cleanliness, but, more importantly, to moral/internal cleanliness. First of all, this refers to the application of social rules with respect to sexuality, which is one of the moral standards of society. This corresponds to abstaining from all sexual activities unapproved by society—the part referring to “waist” in the maxim of “be in control of your hand, waist, and tongue,” which is the most fundamental discourse of Alevi belief, also covers Dersim. In this sense, non-marital affairs are very rigidly rejected in Dersim and its belief of Rê/Raa Haq.

This state of control corresponds not to an external monitoring, but to an internal one. This is why the rate of sex crimes and non-marital affairs in the Dersim region is quite low. One should also consider that this is a society in which women and men do not lead rigidly segregated lives. In Dersim, a particularly rural area, economic and social activities are largely carried out by women and men together. Adultery is rarely seen here, and unlike other Kurdish communities where adultery can lead to murders, such violent dealings are seldom observed in Dersim.

What is practised here is to exclude, on a large scale, those participating in such acts, for one of the codes of belief is the prohibition of murder. As each individual is deemed *a semblance of God*, every attack against him or her is regarded as an act against God and thus a sheer crime. Therefore, during the legal process of the belief, no sage can issue an order for murder. For inflicting the heaviest crime, one is charged with the heaviest punishment, which is being ostracized from society/driven into an excommunicated state. What this means is that no one talks to the person in question; no one can take one’s animals into theirs; and that person cannot participate in any social celebration or ritual like religious meeting, wedding, association, funeral, or circumcision feast. This is a socially paralysing punishment, and no one

can endure such a situation for long in a rural society. Given that social mobility was also low in the past, one can understand that this situation becomes all the more difficult to bear.

Excommunication is not a revocable punishment either, for the most important elements of the declaration of excommunication are sexual crimes and murders. There are different punishments for crimes other than these two. In consequence of the execution of punishment, this has to be declared. And this declaration can be annulled only by the sage authorized with imposing a punishment. No one other than him can annul this punishment. There is only one exception: counterappeal by the sage of a sage. But such an appeal is made only when the guide is certain that the said punishment is not just and incompatible with *the law of path*. Within the law of path, crimes are personal. In other words, if a crime is perpetrated by an individual from a family comprising ten people, the punishment is inflicted only on the said person, not to the family in general. Even if the families of the said people are naturally affected by this exclusion, reaction is shown not toward the family but towards guilty individuals. And this is the natural consequence of accepting crime as a “personal act.”

Secondly, being open and honest to everyone is a fundamental vector in society, and its opposite, lying and deceitfulness, is an impurity in the eyes of the belief. Therefore, individuals are obliged to tell the “truth,” no matter what happens. This obligation to *tell the truth* is again positioned within an internal monitoring. It means that every lie is witnessed by a series of surrounding potential powers—Xızır, Xwadê/Heq, Dızgun—which are ultimately partners, and other latent sacred forms: “Whatever lie you say, you will surely get your comeuppance.” This comeuppance is not in the form of going to hell in the afterlife, but, as the occasion requires, in the form of a series of worldly sanctions. If this crime continues, and if some other negative attitudes accompany it, one gets his or her comeuppance on the basis of the form one would take in the afterlife. In other words, a sanction is imposed through metempsychosis. Therefore, by force of the Kurdish and Alevi belief, a Kurmanc is obliged not only not to tell a lie, but also to *tell the truth one knows*.

This is, therefore, a fact that explains why one can so frequently see a Kurmanc from Dersim in all dissident segments in society. It is because Dersim, a region where a Kurmanc mass lives, is a social

location where dissident/leftist viewpoint has always predominated. Therefore, even before the extermination attempt in 1938, it was encoded, not only in the Ottoman era, but also in the Republican period, as an alterity, as a region that continually needs “discipline” (Gündoğdu and Genç, 2013). Transmitted from generation to generation, this cultural genetic code has always kept its distance from central powers. In spite of all acts of domination and extermination, this act of *telling and doing the truth* directed by belief has been configured as the distinct characteristic of Kurmancs from Dersim (Deniz 2012). Hence, Kurmancs from Dersim not only continue to feed all dissident organizations throughout the country, but also offer substantial support to either the survival or formation of internal oppositions within these dissident organizations themselves. In this regard, as *the opposition within opposition itself*, they always articulate a demand for justice on the basis of being “pure/pakî” required by their belief and culture (Deniz 2012). As such, they become the target of all forces and powers in society. However, especially considering the case of Turkey, they also become the most important dynamic of all democratic processes, no matter how imperfect and problematical these processes are.

Since they have all these characteristics, they are led to become victims of a systematic and surreptitious discrimination with regard to public resources. Moreover, in a society where all resources are distributed in accordance with Turkish-Islamic understanding and the Hanafî sect of Islam, this palpable discrimination at work in daily life operates with heavier costs for Kurmancs from Dersim.¹ In other regions, Alevi can hide their identity; but as Dersim is a place predominantly populated by Alevi, one cannot hide his or her identity if one is from here. Under these circumstances, no matter where they are located in the country, they find themselves in a potential state of threat as members of a mass excluded from public resources. This state of affairs once again consolidates their dissident identity. Yet this is an interactive relationship, in which they also become the object of discriminatory practices due to having a dissident identity.²

1. For discrimination practices against Alevi in Turkey, see Massicard (2005), Şahhüseyinoğlu (2001), and Shankland (2003).

2. For example, they are kept out of high level posts, tasks requiring confidentiality, police and university cadres, civil service, and especially of high ranks requiring promotion

Towards a Conclusion

The Dızgun Bawa story appears as a myth in which a society, all sociological norms, and anthropological discourses, are focused on the unity of social life, and this is such a myth defined by Victor Turner as a *dominant symbol* (Turner 1967). It is possible to conceive this story as the reflection of a process whereby, as Leslie White points out, the zoomorphic gods (totemism) of hunter-gatherers evolved into anthropomorphic characteristics as a result of the development of the human capacity to produce its own food—that is, the rise of the agricultural and shepherding culture.¹

Mary Douglas defines impurity as a “matter out of place” (Douglas 2002), and in the Dızgun Bawa myth, “being in place” attains a practice related to the usage of the geographic site and land. In a society where violation of rules is regarded as impurity, the violation of land or boundary is also perceived as an impurity or a threat against the purity of society. Being at a distance from those out of place—that is, from those coming from outside—is symbolized by his escaping to mountains and becoming a secret. And this mythical story is conveyed from generation to generation to draw attention to those “things to be avoided,” all with an eye to the continuation of the specific social organization. Within a spectrum of polarized semantics, wishing a child—the continuation of society—from rocks or a naked mountain, which are symbols of inertness or death, has a figurative emphasis for the reproduction of society. Hence, both Mızur and Dızgun are encoded as “higher” immortality. Consequently, the law, social solidarity and philosophy of surviving as a stateless society are rendered continuous via a mythical discourse.

Briefly stated, as a central symbol and sacred form, Dızgun Bawa occupies a significant place in the operation and signification of the society of Dersim, which is a *stateless society*. As the phases of the development of the capacity of such a society to produce its own food, as the transitional period between production processes, and as the socially significant discursive and practical form, Dızgun Bawa is a critical narrative for its own society, and as such, it has become immortalized.² Therefore, this mythical discourse and its form of

1. This is an informal translation from Kottak (2001, 479) in Turkish version.

2. F. C. Wallace (1966) argues that societies with states are more powerful thanks to the functionality of their religions over the administration of a stratified society, but

eternity gain importance as the DNA or core of the identity and general existence of this society. An attentive analysis will suffice to decipher the fact that they continue to be treasures for society's past and today. Thus, in this regard, Dızgun Bawa is a central or dominant symbol enciphering, through a series of polarities, the codes of belief and society in Dersim. As such, it will continue to exist as long as it is required.

that stateless societies have a communal type of religion where some gods are in partial control of society (see Kottak 2001, 479).

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