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4. When the publication date of an item is not available an approximate date should be given, where possible, preceded by 'circa' e.g. 'c. 1921'.

In the Name of Allah

Religious studies have a rich history of valuable material from which to draw, an extensive scope and diversity in method and approach. Although much of the work that has been done in religious studies has been to explain, clarify and defend opinions on various topics, descriptive studies about the comparison of different religions and faiths have had a long history.

Of course, there is no doubt that the study of comparative religion has been growing in recent decades. In particular, University of Religions and Denominations in Qom has had a key role in expanding the research about world religions in Iran, especially within the seminaries of Qom.

We are now proud to present you with the first issue of our English-based journal aptly titled *Religious Inquiries*. The publication of an English-language journal of comparative religious studies, however, was slow to start but praise God, for now, the results of the scientific research done in this area by scholars and university professors and other scientific religious research centers in Iran are going to be published.

Scholarly articles about the philosophy of religion, as well as ethics and theology, and field studies about various religions, will be published in our journal.

We hope that by publishing the accomplishments of Iranian scholars and professors in the form of an international academic journal in the English language that it will pave the way for further engagement and research in the field of comparative religious studies.

Religious Inquiries welcomes articles by foreign professors and researchers. By publishing their works, a forum will be provided in which critical approaches will be encouraged for both Iranian and international researchers.

I would like to thank Ms. Fatima Tofighi for help with the translation of "Islam and other Religions" and Dr. Reza Bakhshayesh for help with the translation of "The Shiite Pluralistic on Human Cloning" and "On the End of Mystical Journey".

Mohsen Javadi

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Hegel's Ethics

Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen¹

Abstract

My purpose in this article is not to offer any original insights into Hegel's ethics, but merely to provide a brief overview that draws upon the most reliable secondary sources. In order to help organize the material, I compare Hegel's views with the communitarian critique of liberalism. Following this, there is a brief account of the relation between Hegel's ethical and religious thought. Hegel's philosophy is one of reconciliation. He is both a follower of Kant and a sharp critic of Kant. With Kant, he affirms the idea of moral autonomy, that moral agency requires us to think for ourselves and impose moral obligations upon ourselves. Unlike Kant (at least as usually interpreted), however, he does not think that this means that the only motivation for moral behavior should be the will to do one's duty. Because of the antinomy of free will and determinism, Kant concluded that agency springs from a noumenal realm beyond the phenomenal world. Hegel seeks to reconcile freedom with causal constraints in a form of compatibilism that differs fundamentally from the soft determinism of the empiricist tradition. Kant argued that morality must derive from reason. Hegel agrees, but he understands reason as a process in which the finite self overcomes itself through its identification with others. My indebtedness to Robert Wallace's recent book on this topic will be obvious; my gratitude to him should be, as well.

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Introduction: The Development of Hegel's Ethical Thought

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle introduces the notion of the supreme good as that which is sought for its own sake and as that which is comprehensive rather than subordinate. The end sought may be an activity, or something beyond the activity. Everything that is desirable must be desired, either directly or indirectly, for the sake of this supreme good, which is the end or *telos* of man. The supreme good for man is the activity of the soul (rather than something beyond activity) that expresses virtue.² In Christianity, the question of the ultimate good of man was discussed in terms of man's vocation or calling, *die Bestimmung des Menschen*. Ancient Greek ethics and Christian teachings were the basis of the moral thinking of Hegel when he attended the seminary (*Stift*) in Tübingen, and together with his roommates, Hölderlin and Schelling, read Plato and Aristotle.³

For the Romantics and the young Hegel, this vocation was understood to be the achievement of a harmony, wholeness and unity in life, including the inner life, the social life, and one's life with nature, so that one will be at home in the world (*in die Welt zu Hause*). This harmony is threatened by division (*Entzweiung*) and alienation (*Entfremdung*). Division and alienation can only be overcome through freedom: freedom to develop one's potential, freedom from any conflict or disproportion in this development, and freedom to bring about this integrated realization of potential in one's own unique way. This ethics of authenticity was championed by the Romantics as an alternative to Bentham's (1748–1832) hedonistic ethics and to Kant's (1724–1804) ethics of duty or deontology. Utilitarianism was rejected as having a superficial view of the human being as a mere consumer or recipient of benefits and harms, while deontology was rejected for confining its moral vision to an intellectual sovereignty of duty without taking into consideration human sentiments and their

2. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a; 1098a.

3. Beiser (2005), 37.

improvement. Schiller (1759–1805) advocated an ethics of love as superior to an ethics of duty because it enables us to act in accord with duty in harmony with inclination rather than despite one's natural desires. In *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal* (The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate),⁴ Hegel proposed an ethics based on love as its fundamental principle, which alone, he argued, could overcome the dualities inherent in Kant's ethics. Thus, Hegel's early writing on ethics blends themes derived from the study of Plato, Aristotle, Christianity, and Romanticism.⁵

Later Hegel came to think that it was unrealistic to attempt to found a social and political ethics with love as its sole principle. He also would not accept the Romantic overemphasis on the value of unique individuality. By the time the *Philosophie des Rechts* was written in 1820, love was confined to the family.⁶ In Hegel's later writings, instead of the focus on love, the legal and moral relations in ethical life gain more prominence, although even here, love is not cast aside, but expressed through the elaboration of legal and political relations.⁷ The shift is already evident in the discussion of mutual recognition in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* of 1805, and begins to emerge in the even earlier discussions of the distinction between the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) and morality (*Moralität*).⁸ Hegel introduces the term *Sittlichkeit* for the sort of morality and moral reflection that is integrated with one's social life, and whose paradigm was an idealized view of the ancient Greek *polis*. He uses *Moralität* for the private concern with duty that seemed to characterize modern society, and the moral philosophies of Kant and Fichte.⁹

4. The translation of which can be found in Hegel (1971), 182–301; the original was not published during Hegel's lifetime, and was written in 1798–99.

5. Beiser (2005), 37.

6. Beiser (2005), 120.

7. Wallace (2005), xviii.

8. Beiser (2005), 122; Wood (1993), 215.

9. Wood (1993), 215.

Like many of his generation, Hegel was very enthusiastic about the French Revolution, and, subsequently, about Napoleon, and in both cases the hopes of the intellectuals of Hegel's generation were disappointed. Neither the Revolution nor Napoleon would bring about the realization of the ideals they sought. Disappointment nurtures realism, and Hegel came to believe that a realistic view of modern society would show that the ideals of the Romantics were unachievable dreams. The conditions of modern society seemed to foster division and alienation. The increasing specialization of labor prevented people from developing all their talents. The natural sciences were taking a form in which nature became disenchanted and was seen only as a challenge to be conquered. Modern economic relations were impersonal and divorced from other areas of human concern. The wholeness sought by the Romantics seemed to be undermined by irresistible currents of modernity. Hegel's philosophy may be seen as an attempt to provide the philosophical equipment needed to meet these challenges of modernity.

The equipment Hegel sought to provide did not merely consist of a theory of ethics, but an entire system of philosophy, including ideas about metaphysics, epistemology, politics, history, action, aesthetics, and ethics.¹⁰

Despite his early Romanticism, Hegel did not reject Kantian morality in favor of a pre-modern form of ethical life. Indeed, he considered himself a Kantian, despite his criticisms of Kant, and as headmaster of the Gymnasium in Nuremberg (1808-1816), his lectures display many points drawn from the Kantian theory of morality.¹¹ Beginning with the Heidelberg *Enzyklopädie* of 1817, morality is seen as a stage in a process that leads from abstract right to the ethical life, which is no longer the lost ideal of the Greek *polis*, but the social life characteristic of the ideal modern state, which receives

10. Beiser (2005), 48-49.

11. Wood (1993), 216.

its most fully developed treatment in the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* in 1820.¹²

Central Themes of Hegel's Ethical Thought: Freedom and Autonomy

Central to Hegel's mature ethical theory is the concept of freedom. In Kant's philosophy, our direct perception of our own freedom is presented in contradiction with the causal determinism of the phenomenal world to demonstrate that freedom must belong to a realm beyond phenomena, the noumenal world of the *Ding an sich*. Hegel's criticism of this Kantian view of freedom and the formulation of his own view is presented in his *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1812-13). This provides the foundation for the ethical views elaborated in the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*.

Like Kant, Hegel prizes the value of moral autonomy. In the *Philosophie des Rechts*, he asserts that moral autonomy requires that one be able to evaluate one's own desires and inclinations:

The human being, however, stands as wholly indeterminate over the drives and can determine and set them as his own. The drive is in nature, but that I set it in this 'I' depends on my will, which therefore cannot appeal to the fact that it lies in nature.¹³

If one acts directly on the basis of one's desires, one is not autonomous, i.e., not self-governed, for when one is called upon to give a reason for an action, one must provide a reason for one's free choice of the action; to say that the action was performed because of one's nature is to place it outside the range of that for which reasons can be demanded and provided. Hegel is in agreement with Kant on

12. Wood (1993), 216.

13. Hegel (1820), §11A: "Der Mensch steht aber als das ganz Unbestimmte über den Trieben und kann sie als die seinigen bestimmen und setzen. Der Trieb ist in der Natur, aber daß ich ihn in dieses Ich setze, hängt von meinem Willen ab, der sich also darauf, daß er in der Natur liegt, nicht berufen kann." See Wallace (2005), 6.

the general point that action based solely on desire is not autonomous. Where they depart is at Kant's insistence that the autonomous agent is motivated purely by the good will, the will that acts from duty alone.¹⁴ Hegel's theory does not require that duty should predominate over all other motives in an act of a morally autonomous agent, and the moral worth of an act is not determined entirely by its conformity to duty. As long as one does one's duty and wills to do so, non-moral incentives will not detract from the worth of the act or the goodness of the will.¹⁵

Human autonomy is not restricted to the private realm of motivation and will, however, but is to be understood in the context of social and economic relations. Hence, the *Philosophie des Rechts* begins with discussions of property, contracts, and civil society after introducing the abstract notion of right.

Human autonomy is not a condition that describes man, but is an ideal to be achieved. As such it may be understood through the process of its realization, which begins with basic moral choices and ends in an affiliation with reality as a whole, a going beyond one's own finitude to the infinite and divine. Perfect autonomy is to be found only in God.¹⁶

While Kant argued that the antinomy of freedom required the positing of a noumenal realm beyond phenomenal causal determinism, Hegel sees the antinomy as showing two poles in a dialectical relationship; indeed, the Hegelian dialectic is a direct response to Kant's treatment of the antinomies. For Kant (at least as Hegel read him), reality is divided into phenomenal and noumenal realms: in the former, human actions are determined; and in the latter, human agency is free. For Hegel, however, freedom is to be achieved through a dialectical development that begins with the conditioned and moves toward the unconditioned.¹⁷ Hegel agrees with Kant that human

14. For reservations about this standard view of Kant's ethics, see Wood (2006), 33.

15. Wood (1990), 150.

16. Wallace (2005), 8-9.

17. Beiser (2005), 166 f.

freedom transcends the finite conditions of the agent, but not because the freedom of the agent belongs to another realm—the noumenal—divorced from the physical world in which our actions are realized; instead of being opposed to nature, freedom is seen as a consummation of nature, for nature is only properly understood when room is made in it for free actions that cannot be adequately understood through causal laws.¹⁸ The contradiction Kant saw between the causal determinism of the phenomenal realm and the direct apperception of freedom is discussed at length in Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*.¹⁹ He gives a summary in the *Logic* of his *Enzyklopädie*:

...when the antinomy of *freedom* and *necessity* is more closely considered, the situation is that what the understanding takes to be freedom and necessity are in fact only ideal moments of true freedom and true necessity; neither of them has any truth if separated from the other.²⁰

Hegel may be said to uphold a form of compatibilism, but he is far from the compatibilism of the empiricist tradition.²¹ Very briefly, the main idea is that freedom of agency is neither to be analyzed as the possession of some causal power nor as being able to make arbitrary choices,²² but as being in a position to offer appropriate reasons for one's actions with reference to the normative structure of one's social community. While "soft determinism" allows for moral responsibility despite determinism when an action occurs *through* an agent, the sort

18. See Wallace (2005), 51.

19. Hegel (1832), Vol.II, Sec. 2, Ch.3, "Teleology", 734-754.

20. Hegel (1830), §48, 94: "...von der Antinomie der *Freiheit* und *Notwendigkeit*, mit welcher es sich, näher betrachtet, so verhält, daß dasjenige, was der Verstand unter Freiheit und Notwendigkeit versteht, in der Tat nur ideelle Momente der wahren Freiheit und der wahren Notwendigkeit sind und daß diesen beiden in ihrer Trennung keine Wahrheit zukommt."

21. See Beiser (2005), 75. The most extensive discussion of this issue is to be found in Pippin (2008), Ch.5. Pippin argues that although Hegel should be considered as a compatibilist, his compatibilism is unlike the standard form that defines freedom as absence of coercion. This idea is also endorsed by Wallace (2005), 82-83.

22. Hegel (1820), §15.

of compatibilism advocated by Hegel focuses on what it means for an action to be one's own.²³

One acquires increasing freedom as a moral agent as one becomes increasingly able to take responsibility for one's acts. A first condition of this responsibility is the realization of the Enlightenment ideal of thinking for oneself, at least to some degree, so that responsible contractual arrangements can be entered into, one can participate in civil society, and finally become a free citizen of a modern state.

Social Norms and the Critique of Kant

The manner in which social norms enter into Hegel's ethics are a departure from Kantian moral theory, and are prompted by perhaps the most famous of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's ethics, that it results in an empty formalism.

However essential it may be to emphasize the pure and unconditional self-determination of the will as the root of duty—for knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy—to cling on to a merely moral point of view without making the transition to the concept of ethical life reduces this gain to an *empty formalism*, and moral science to an empty rhetoric of *duty for duty's sake*.²⁴

Hegel is unfair to Kant in this passage, but as he reads him, Kant is committed to the view that moral autonomy is attained simply by making sure that one's maxims do not contain contradictions and are not contradictory with one another. To the contrary, on Hegel's view,

23. Wallace (2005), 26.

24. Hegel (1820), §135: "So wesentlich es ist, die reine unbedingte Selbstbestimmung des Willens als die Wurzel der Pflicht herauszuheben, wie denn die Erkenntnis des Willens erst durch die *Kantische* Philosophie ihren festen Grund und Ausgangspunkt durch den Gedanken seiner unendlichen Autonomie gewonnen hat, so sehr setzt die Festhaltung des bloß moralischen Standpunkts, der nicht in den Begriff der Sittlichkeit übergeht, diesen Gewinn zu einem *leeren Formalismus* und die moralische Wissenschaft zu einer Rednerei von *der Pflicht um der Pflicht willen* herunter." See Wallace (2005), 20.

moral autonomy can only be achieved through due regard for *Sittlichkeit*, the moral norms embodied in a social tradition of taking responsibility, providing reasons for one's actions and asking for reasons, where appropriate, for the actions of other moral agents.

The main themes associated with Hegel's attack on Kantian formalism have reappeared in the communitarian attack on liberal individualism. Indeed, all of the major objections raised by communitarians to liberal political theory are prefigured in Hegel's partial endorsements and criticisms of the moral and political philosophies of Kant, Rousseau, Fichte, and others. However, Hegel should not be assumed to side with the communitarians against the liberals in this debate, for he consistently attempts to formulate a position that goes beyond liberalism and the objections to it.

It is testimony to the contemporary relevance of Hegel's moral and political thought that his position can be outlined with reference to the modern debate between liberals and communitarians. However, these issues are controversial, and have played an important role in how Hegel has been portrayed by his commentators. After World War II, a number of writers (most notably Karl Popper) portrayed Hegel as a proto-fascist, largely because of the authority he accorded to the ideal of the modern state. In reaction, commentators who defended Hegel emphasized the more liberal elements of his political thought. The portrayal of Hegel changed dramatically with the publication of Charles Taylor's work on Hegel,²⁵ in which Romantic themes in Hegel's work are emphasized, such as organic unity, wholeness, and alienation. Taylor's "communitarian interpretation" of Hegel has been corrected by more recent commentators, such as Allen Wood, Robert Pippin, and others who seek to understand both the continuities and divergences from Enlightenment thought in Hegel's ethical philosophy.²⁶ Most of these writers, however, have tended to stress how Hegel's ethics and

25. Taylor (1979); Taylor (1975).

26. See Franco (1999), x-xi.

political philosophy may be understood in a manner compatible with a naturalistic outlook, and have not focused on Hegel's religious thought.²⁷ So, when we compare Hegel's criticism of Kant with the communitarian criticism of liberalism, we should seek to understand three factors: (i) what Hegel appropriated from Kant, (ii) his criticism of Kant, and (iii) how he sought to overcome what he saw as the flaws in the earlier view while keeping the truth in it.

According to Mulhall and Swift, the communitarian criticisms of the liberalism of John Rawls may be summarized under five headings:

1. the conception of the person;
2. asocial individualism;
3. universalism;
4. subjectivism/objectivism;
5. anti-perfectionism and neutrality.²⁸

1. Communitarians have argued that the liberal notion of the self is so abstract that rational moral decisions cannot be based upon it; instead, they have argued that moral and political reasoning must take into consideration how individuals are embedded in cultures and traditions. Objections to the liberal view of the self could be found in the Romantic ethics of authenticity that were current in Jena when Hegel wrote the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*; but Hegel is satisfied with neither the liberal nor the Romantic view of the self.²⁹ In Hegel's dialectical method, one must begin with a vague and abstract notion, and then study the successive realizations of that notion in order to discern the movement through which the direction of advancement toward the Absolute may be grasped. So, Hegel begins his *Philosophie des Rechts* with a discussion of the person that is abstract, formal, individual and private. At this level, right means only to respect others as persons:

27. The rectification of this problem is the object of Wallace (2005).

28. See Mulhall and Swift (1996), 157-160.

29. See Pinkard (2000), 214-216.

Personality contains in general the capacity for right and constitutes the concept and the (itself abstract) basis of abstract and hence *formal* right. The commandment of right is therefore: be a person and respect others as persons.³⁰

In order to understand the respect that is due to persons, however, beyond this abstract and formal claim, persons must come to recognize one another as embedded in such social institutions as the family and civil society, and it is only with such mutual recognition that they can enter into contractual relationships.³¹ The state, however, cannot be justified through the device of the social contract, according to Hegel, not because the persons who are assumed to be parties to the contract are too abstract to make informed choices, as in the communitarian critique, but because the idea of the social contract reduces the state to a product of individual wills and neglects the spirit of the whole.³²

Like the communitarians, Hegel rejects the atomic notion of the person that would seek to understand the person independent of all social relations; but this does not mean that he denies that there is any sovereign self at all, as suggested in some post-modernist writing. For Hegel, the self is to be understood as a work in progress, and one whose progress depends essentially on its relationships with others.³³

2. Communitarians have argued that liberalism is committed to an asocial individualism that assumes that individual interests, values and identity can be determined independently of the communities of which they are a part, and that there are no human goods that are inherently social. Both of these points are clearly Hegelian. For Hegel, spirit is at once social, but has a value over that of the interests of the members

30. Hegel (1820), §36: "Die Persönlichkeit enthält überhaupt die Rechtsfähigkeit und macht den Begriff und die selbst abstrakte Grundlage des abstrakten und daher *formellen* Rechtes aus. Das Rechtsgebot ist daher: *sei eine Person und respektiere die anderen als Personen.*" See Williams (1997), 137.

31. Hegel (1820), §71.

32. Hegel (1820), §75; Williams (1997), 307-308.

33. See Wallace (2005), 65.

of any society,³⁴ and membership in the state, through which spirit expresses itself, determines the identity of its members. As Charles Taylor puts it: “Hegel... believed himself to have shown that man reaches his basic identity in seeing himself as a vehicle of *Geist*.”³⁵ But despite the liberal criticism of individualism, Hegel endorses individualism as a starting point to be preserved through the developments that lead to the state. What he opposes, is a reductive individualism that fails to recognize the emergence of social norms that are not the mere sum of individual values or agreements among individuals.³⁶

3. Michael Walzer has criticized John Rawls for his universalism, that is, for the idea that the universal reason common to humanity is sufficient to ground a theory of justice.³⁷ Walzer contends that a just distribution of goods in a society must take into account social and cultural peculiarities and so can only yield a variety of spheres of justice. More recently, however, he has modified his critique of liberalism by emphasizing the place of universal moral values and political rights that need to be recognized alongside the particular culturally dependent factors that are needed for the establishment of a just society. Hegel’s position on this issue is similar to Walzer’s. He also sees a need for both *thin* or universal rights, such as the right to property, and *thick* rights and duties that depend on the historical contingencies in which civil societies and states emerge.³⁸

4. Hegel’s own discussions of the universal and particular in the *Philosophie des Rechts* are more closely related to the issue discussed by Mulhall and Swift under the heading of *subjectivism/objectivism*, where they point out that communitarians have criticized the liberal assumption that individual goals are

34. Hegel (1820), §257-258. See the discussion of institutional rationality in Pippin (2008), 247-252.

35. Taylor (1975), 373.

36. See Wallace (2005), 5-9, 27-31.

37. See Walzer (1983); and for a more recent statement of his views see Walzer (1994).

38. See Hicks (1999); Mullender (2003); Peperzak (2001), especially Ch.10; and Williams (2001).

arbitrary and cannot be subject to rational criticism. One way to overcome this opposition between the subjective and objective is given by Kant. Moral autonomy requires that one be self-governing, that one seek the greatest good however one sees fit. The ends of the self-governing agent are not arbitrary, according to Kant, because those ends should be attainable within the bounds of practical reason. The difference between Kant and Hegel is that Hegel's account is developmental instead of formal and social instead of confined to the individual will. For Hegel, individual ends begin as subjective, but they are modified as they become objective in interaction with others. A person's own individual desires are modified insofar as one considers oneself as a particular member of a family. One's aims are further modified as one engages in civil society, and still more as one acts as a citizen of a state. At first the end is only subjective and internal to the self, but it should also become objective and throw off the deficiency of mere subjectivity, Hegel explains in the Introduction to the *Philosophie des Rechts*.³⁹ The end must be posited objectively so that subjective and objective may be united in freedom and will. In the beginning of the section on civil society, he explains:

The concrete person who, as a *particular* person, as a totality of needs and a mixture of natural necessity and arbitrariness, is his own end, is *one principle* of civil society. But this particular person stands essentially in *relation* to other similar particulars, and their relation is such that each asserts itself and gains satisfaction through the others, and thus at the same time through the exclusive *mediation* of the form of *universality*, which is *the second principle*.⁴⁰

39. Hegel (1820), §8, Addition.

40. Hegel (1830), §182, 220: "Die konkrete Person, welche sich als besondere Zweck ist, als ein Ganzes von Bedürfnissen und eine Vermischung von Naturnotwendigkeit und Willkür, ist das *eine Prinzip* der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, - aber die besondere Person als wesentlich in Beziehung auf andere solche Besonderheit, so daß jede durch die andere und zugleich schlechthin nur als durch die Form der *Allgemeinheit*, das andere *Prinzip*, *vermittelt* sich geltend macht und befriedigt."

Indeed, Hegel's entire philosophical system may be viewed as an attempt to show how the duality of the subjective and objective is to be overcome.

5. The final criticism of liberalism by communitarians mentioned by Mulhall and Swift is the charge that liberalism must rely on a more substantial concept of the good than its theory allows. While liberalism advertises itself as neutral between opposing views of ultimate goods, it surreptitiously takes sides. Hegel makes essentially the same point in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* in which the charge of empty formalism is levied against Kant. Hegel argues that while the principle of non-contradiction may be sufficient to rule out some proposed activity, such as not returning a deposit, the contradiction will only arise on the assumption that there is a convention of trusts or deposits. Without this assumption, no contradiction arises, and there is no contradiction involved in the supposition that trusts, or even personal property altogether, do not exist.⁴¹ In the *Philosophie des Rechts*, too, Hegel maintains that one may arrive at particular duties only because "One may indeed bring in material *from outside*," that is, because one can smuggle something in from outside the merely formal considerations.⁴² So, Kant's claims (as Hegel and many others understood him) that particular duties are determined by formal reason alone are seen to illicitly bring in assumptions that go beyond the need to avoid practical contradictions.

With regard to the more political conception of justice, with which the communitarians have been specifically concerned in the form of Rawls' procedural account of justice, we again find Hegel making a comparable complaint against Kant. To limit freedom or arbitrary will in such a way that it may coexist with the arbitrary will of others in accordance with a law provides only a negative concept of freedom, one that is purely formal or empty, and because of this, it can have the

41. See Hegel (1807), §428-436§, and the discussion in Franco (1999), 214-215.

42. Hegel (1820), §135, "man kann *von außen* her wohl einen Stoff hereinnehmen."

most appalling consequences, such as the Terror that came in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In order to determine a system of rights that can avoid such outrages, a positive view of freedom needs to be advanced in a developmental fashion in such a manner that right and duty will be understood to be *sacred*.⁴³

Ethics and Religion

Theological criticism of Kant has often accused him of reducing religion to morality. Discussions about the degree to which this criticism is justified need not detain us.⁴⁴ At the very least, the main focus of Kant's religious thought was ethical. Hegel initially (that is, in his twenties) followed Kant not only in elements of his moral theory, but also in the belief that the existence of a personal God may be postulated on moral grounds.⁴⁵ However, even at this time, Hegel differed with Kant by emphasizing love over morality and duty; and his study of the life of Jesus (peace be with him) raised doubts about how much of Christianity could be given a moral justification. By the time Hegel writes his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), he had come to the conclusion that God and religion must be understood within the context of a metaphysical system, that it must also be understood by elaborating its relations with art and ethics, and that this elaboration must proceed historically.⁴⁶

Recall Aristotle's discussion of the supreme end for human beings: it is not something that is reached outside of the realm of human activity, but, rather, it is the active expression of virtue. For Hegel, our finite efforts aim at the infinite which is to be realized in this very activity of making efforts to approach the infinite. The autonomous agent is not subject to external commands, regardless of whether these

43. Hegel (1820), §29-§30. Franco (1999), 174-178.

44. See Firestone (2009) for a refutation of the view that Kant reduces religion to the ethical.

45. Jaeschke (1990), 100.

46. Jaeschke (1990), 127; 186.

commands are issued by pure reason, by religion, by one's own desires, or by one's society. This does not mean that the autonomous agent needs to ignore the demands of reason, religion, desire or society, and make arbitrary decisions, but that one must consider all factors critically, and go beyond one's own drives and prejudices, until one finds the ability to govern oneself as one identifies oneself with what goes beyond any limited and merely subjective viewpoint.

Kant took an important first step in this direction by showing how the moral ought has its source in reason and not in any authority outside the self. Kant, however, was not able to adequately explain how the self could identify with reason, and how reason could go beyond empty formalism. Another failing of Kantian ethics is the role played in it by God, who, like a *deus ex machina*, is brought in merely to resolve the conflict between private interests and moral duty. Hegel overcomes the flaws in the Kantian system by reformulating the problem of ethics in such a manner that God is central, although God is not understood as standing over and above the world, and the divine role is not merely to make sure what is sacrificed in this world for a life of virtue will be compensated in the afterlife.

Human beings become truly free, according to Hegel, only in God. Human freedom requires a person to go beyond one's own limitations in concert with others. The identification with others in the social enterprise is also required if we are not to treat others merely as means, but, as Kant said, as ends in themselves, and yet to avoid being constrained and limited by others. It is the self-imposed *ought* that makes possible the transition from necessity to freedom, for it is through this *ought* that one overcomes the limitations of one's own subjectivity and identifies with a more comprehensive whole. Hegel generalizes on this point as a sort of metaphysical principle in his *Wissenschaft der Logik*: the finite only has reality as it transcends itself and becomes infinite.⁴⁷

47. Hegel (1832), 145.

The Notion of the infinite as it first presents itself is this, that determinate being in its being-in-itself determines itself as finite and transcends the limitation. It is the very nature of the finite to transcend itself, to negate its negation and to become infinite. Thus the infinite does not stand as something finished and complete above or superior to the finite, as if the finite had an enduring being *apart from* or *subordinate to* the infinite. Neither do *we* only, as subjective reason, pass beyond the finite into the infinite; as when we say that the infinite is the Notion of reason and that through reason we rise superior to temporal things, though we let this happen without prejudice to the finite which is in no way affected by this exaltation, an exaltation which remains external to it. But the finite itself in being raised into the infinite is in no sense acted on by an alien force; on the contrary, it is its nature to be related to itself as limitation,—both limitation as such and as an ought—and to transcend the same, or rather, as self-relation to have negated the limitation and to be beyond it. It is not in the sublating of finitude in general that infinity in general comes to be; the truth is rather that the finite is only this, through its own nature to become itself the infinite. The infinite is its *affirmative determination*, that which it truly is in itself.⁴⁸

According to Robert M. Wallace, it is this understanding of how the infinite is present in the finite that is the key to understanding the

48. Hegel (1832), 138: “Es ist die Natur des Endlichen selbst, über sich hinauszugehen, seine Negation zu negieren und unendlich zu werden. Das Unendliche steht somit nicht als ein für sich Fertiges *über* dem Endlichen, so daß das Endliche *außer* oder *unter* jenem sein Bleiben hätte und behielte. Noch gehen *wir* nur als eine subjective Vernunft über das Endliche ins Unendliche hinaus. Wie wenn man sagt, daß das Unendliche der Vernunftbegriff sei und wir uns durch die Vernunft über das Zeitliche erheben, so läßt man dies ganz unbeschadet des Endlichen geschehen, welches jene ihm äußerlich bleibende Erhebung nichts angeht. Insofern aber das Endliche selbst in die Unendlichkeit erhoben wird, ist es ebensowenig eine fremde Gewalt, welche ihm dies antut, sondern es ist dies seine Natur, sich auf sich als Schranke, sowohl als Schranke als solche wie als Sollen, zu beziehen und über dieselbe hinauszugehen oder vielmehr als Beziehung-auf-sich sie negiert zu haben und über sie hinaus zu sein. Nicht im Aufheben der Endlichkeit überhaupt wird die Unendlichkeit überhaupt, sondern das Endliche ist nur dies, selbst durch seine Natur dazu zu werden. Die Unendlichkeit ist seine *affirmative Bestimmung*, das, was es wahrhaft an sich ist.”

relation between Hegel's ethical and religious thought. Many commentators have misconstrued Hegel because they have thought that if the infinite arises out of the finite, what we are presented with is really a form of atheistic naturalism. Others, such as Feuerbach, have thought that what Hegel presents under such labels as *the Absolute*, *infinity*, and *Spirit*, is an entirely otherworldly and traditional view of deity based on a dualism between the immanent and the transcendent.⁴⁹ In fact, Hegel's view is that if God were to be understood as an entity that could be placed alongside and in exclusive opposition to finite entities, then God would be misunderstood as limited by the finite. If God and creatures stood in opposition to one another, then the opposition would make God into what Hegel calls a *schlechte Unendlichkeit* (*spurious* or *bad infinity*). Instead, Hegel draws on the mystical tradition (especially of Meister Eckhard and Jakob Böhme⁵⁰) to develop a view of divinity whose embrace is more encompassing than what is found in more orthodox theologies.

In keeping with the mystical tradition, Hegel views God as what is most fully and completely real, and presents this understanding as an "ontological argument," although not one like Descartes' that begins with a definition of God as including all perfections and tries to make God real by definition by considering existence to be a perfection. Instead, Hegel's ontological argument is that Absolute Spirit must be understood as that which is most truly real, and then seeks to derive other perfections from this conception.⁵¹

The connection between the mystical theology and metaphysics and ethics goes back to the idea of how the finite cannot be properly understood without reference to the reality of the infinite. The finite is overcome when a person seeks to step back from oneself and look critically at one's own drives, desires, and motivation. For Kant, it is

49. Wallace (2005), 99.

50. See Wallace (2005), 104, 106, 256.

51. Wallace (2005), 101-102.

this ability to purify the will that establishes that the self has a noumenal being beyond the sensory world and the causal necessity that governs it. For Hegel, the experience of freedom does not show that there is another world of things-in-themselves or a standpoint from which the phenomenal aspects of things may be abstracted; rather, it shows that reality itself includes the infinite, that is, that the single reality in which we live and make decisions includes that which goes beyond what can be understood as determined by selfish desires and causal factors behind motivation. The single real world includes within it the “space of reasons” (to use the phrase of Wilfrid Sellars that has been taken up with such enthusiasm by recent exegetes of Hegel) and the normativity that governs it.⁵²

Normativity consists in the recognition of *oughts*. For Kant, this is entirely a matter of practical reason and is completely separate from the theoretical. Hegel, however, sees the separation of fact and value as only a stage in a development by which they are unified by divine providence.

Unsatisfied striving vanishes when we [re]cognize that the final purpose of the world is just as much accomplished as it is eternally accomplishing itself. This is, in general, the outlook of the mature person, whereas youth believes that the world is in an utterly sorry state, and that something quite different must be made of it. The religious consciousness, on the contrary, regards the world as governed by divine Providence and hence as corresponding to what it *ought* to be. This agreement between is and ought is not rigid and unmoving, however, since the final purpose of the world, the good, only *is*, because it constantly brings itself about; and there is still this distinction between the spiritual and the natural worlds: that, whilst the latter continues simply to return into itself, there occurs in the former certainly a progression as well.⁵³

52. See Sellars (1963), 169; Pinkard (2002), 220; Pippin (2008), 236.

53. Hegel (1830), §234: “Das unbefriedigte Streben verschwindet, wenn wir erkennen, daß der Endzweck der Welt ebenso vollbracht ist, als er sich ewig vollbringt. Dies ist überhaupt die Stellung des Mannes,

The normative is present in the world precisely because it is through the presence of norms that the good is promoted. Even if the goal of what ought to be is not fully realized, the very presence of the ethical demand and the activity it instigates is the factual realization of value and the present goodness of the world.⁵⁴

The norms that are expressed in the *ought* are not arbitrary, but result from one's going beyond oneself and finding identity with the other. Through successive identifications with expanding groups—family, civil society, state—the atomic individual overcomes exclusive individuality and identifies with the universal. The private person participates in welfare-promoting mutual aid institutions, such as municipalities and churches, to discover a greater freedom there than in the restrictively individual sphere of private interests, and expresses this freedom in conscious activity aimed at a relatively universal end.⁵⁵ The individual steps beyond the self and becomes aware of its universality as identification with the other. This is Hegel's refutation of moral egoism, which is expanded upon in one way in his discussions of mutual recognition (in his *Philosophy of Spirit*),⁵⁶ and in another way in his lectures on *Religionsphilosophie*.

The practical element of the knowledge of God finds expression in the *cultus*, the religious life. The first form of the religious life is devotion and worship. Secondly, it involves sacraments and sacrifice. Finally, Hegel describes the highest form of religious life:

während die Jugend meint, die Welt liege schlechthin im argen und es müsse aus derselben erst ein ganz anderes gemacht werden. Das religiöse Bewußtsein betrachtet dagegen die Welt als durch die göttliche Vorsehung regiert und somit als dem entsprechend, was sie sein *soll*. Diese Übereinstimmung von Sein und Sollen ist indes nicht eine erstarrte und prozeßlose; denn das Gute, der Endzweck der Welt, *ist* nur, indem es sich stets hervorbringt, und zwischen der geistigen und natürlichen Welt besteht dann noch der Unterschied daß, während diese nur beständig in sich selbst zurückkehrt, in jener allerdings auch ein Fortschreiten stattfindet."

54. Wallace (2005), 258-260.

55. Wallace (2005), 305.

56. See Wallace (2005), 263.

The third and highest form within the cultus is when one lays aside one's own subjectivity—not only practices renunciation in external things such as possessions, but offers one's heart or inmost self to God and senses *remorse* and *repentance* in this inmost self; then one is conscious of one's own immediate natural state (which subsists in the passions and intentions of particularity), so that one dismisses these things, purifies one's heart, and through this purification of one's heart raises oneself up to the realm of the purely spiritual. This experience of nothingness can be a bare condition or single experience, or it can be thoroughly elaborated [in one's life]. If heart and will are earnestly and thoroughly cultivated for the universal and the true, then there is present what appears as *ethical life*. To that extent ethical life is the most genuine cultus. But consciousness of the true, of the divine, of God, must be directly bound up with it.⁵⁷

In his lectures of 1831, Hegel's discussion of the cultus includes a section on the relationship of religion to the state, which begins with the statement:

When this cultivation of subjectivity and this purification of the heart from its immediate natural state has been thoroughly elaborated and made an enduring condition that accords with its universal purpose, it is then consummated as the ethical realm, and by this route religion passes over into *ethics* and the *state*.⁵⁸

With this statement, Hegel does not mean to endorse the domination of the Church over the state. To the contrary, Hegel is convinced that the emergence of the modern secular state is one of the major benefits to mankind that resulted from the Protestant reform movement.⁵⁹

57. Hegel (1827), 194; Hegel (1984), 446.

58. Hegel (1984), 451: "Diese Bearbeitung der Subjektivität, diese Reinigung des Herzens von seiner unmittelbaren Natürlichkeit, wenn sie durch und durch ausgeführt wird und einen bleibenden *Zustand* schafft, der ihrem allgemeinen Zwecke entspricht, vollendet sich als *Sittlichkeit*, und auf diesem Wege geht die Religion hinüber in die *Sitte*, den *Staat*." Perhaps the last clause would be better translated as, "and by this route religion passes over, in the ethical norms (*Sitte*), to the state."

59. Hegel (1820), §270. This section is the most important statement of Hegel's views of the relations between religion and the state, and warrant extended study, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Nevertheless, religion and the state are both forms of the self-knowledge of the spirit and its freedom.⁶⁰

Hegel rejects the Romantic view that the state should grow organically out of religion, for the sort of self-knowledge attained in religion and the state differ: the former is immediate and subjective, while the latter is discursive and objective. The spiritual and ethical content of religion and state coincide, but are understood by different routes.

If Hegel rejects the control of the state by the Church, he also rejects liberal secularism that cuts off the mutual support of state and religion. His discussions of religion in this context, however, accord privilege to a Protestant view of religion, whose distinctive principle is taken to be subjective freedom.⁶¹

In any case, he argues that the state requires the support provided by religious sentiments that endorse respect for the law, and that religious sentiment provides the ultimate anchor to the institutions of the state, even when there is a fully developed constitutional system in place.⁶² Plato is faulted for trying to establish the political community on the basis of philosophy alone without religion.⁶³

Wallace summarizes Hegel's ethical views as making the following points.

1. Reason requires us to push our own desires beyond themselves. In doing so, reason and desire are united and become free;
2. Human beings achieve freedom in God, by going beyond themselves and reaching Absolute Spirit;
3. The duality of knower and known is overcome as the full reality of the known is understood through self-knowledge;

60. Jaeschke (1990), 261.

61. See Franco (1999), 296-306. Wallace suggests that Hegel may have exaggerated the unique features of Protestant Christianity, and that parallels may be found to Hegel's statements about revealed religion that would apply to the more sophisticated forms of Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. Wallace (2005), 316.

62. See Fulda (2004), 27, where Hegel's remarks on the July Revolution of 1830 are discussed.

63. Hegel (1820), §185.

4. Self-consciousness occurs through mutual recognition, by which we find ourselves in one another and in God. The other is not a limitation on one's freedom when one surpasses oneself by identifying with the other;

5. Evil may be overcome as the good is found in a distorted form in evil.⁶⁴

It is on the basis of such principles that Hegel seeks to ground human freedom, the ethical life, and religious commitment.

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64. Wallace (2005), 319-320.

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Islam and other Religions

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Abstract

Any student of comparative religion will notice - and seek to identify as well - the points of similarity and difference between various religions. One might even claim that the discipline of "influence studies" has its roots in these discussions of comparison and contrast. However, these discussions persistently fail to address the nuances of particular faiths. Here, I intend to shed some light on the similarities and dissimilarities among religions. The point of departure and the framework for the study will be Islam, with a relatively strong focus on Judaism and Christianity.

Obviously, no study of this sort can be comprehensive enough since monotheists all over the world may perceive even a single shared concept (such as One God) differently. Moreover, the processes of translation and subsequent transformation of language affect the understanding of generations of believers, distancing them even from their religious predecessors. Thus, I hope to mention more practical issues, leaving a more detailed work to further specific research on the subject.

I also do not intend to examine the history of ideas, beliefs, or practices. Rather, my study will only concentrate on them as they are in their present form, without delving into occurrences of cultural exchange, interactions, and influences.

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This essay discusses the details of the belief in God and the prophets within a comparative perspective. In each part, theologically relevant issues will be examined as well. Now, let us have a look at the relation of these religions with each other.

Jewish and Christian Beliefs from a Qur'anic Point of View

To begin with, religions may be divided into two major groups: monotheistic and polytheistic. While the former religions emphasize God's unity, the latter do not deny the possibility of lordship in other material or non-material beings.

Within the monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam have similar belief systems. The many conflicts between Muslims and Jews since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s) resulted mainly from a discord in their social interactions rather than their beliefs. Yet it should be remembered that the Qur'an calls the Jews the "first group to disbelieve" (*'awwal kāfir*) (Qur'an 2:41).²

Following this, Muslim exegetes of the Qur'an have interpreted the epithet "the condemned" (1:6) to refer to Jews and "those who have gone astray" (1:6) to signify Christians, although both attributes could equally have referred to any of the two groups. This distinction is because: (1) *surah* 1 is considered to be the *'Umm al-Kitāb* (lit., Mother of the Book), or a summary of the Holy Qur'an. (2) Upon examining many verses in the Qur'an, we realize that God has become furious with the Jews and has condemned them because of their evil deeds (Qur'an 2:61, 90; 3:112; 5:60; 7:152) and has counted the Christians as among those having gone astray because of their belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ (as) (Qur'an 4:171; 5:17, 72-73, 77, 116). Further, the Qur'an considers Jews and idol-worshippers to be the worst enemies of the Muslims, while it presents

2. The quotations from the Bible come from the New Revised Standard Version. The English versions of the other works (Qur'an, hadiths, etc.) are the translator's, unless otherwise stated.

the Christians as their best friends (Qur'an 5:82). The last verse of *surah* 1 has, then, been interpreted in this light.

The Holy Qur'an attributes a number of false beliefs to the Jews and reproaches them for those beliefs: (1) "Ezra ('Uzair) is the son of God" (Qur'an 9:13); (2) "God is poor and we are rich" (Qur'an 3:181); and (3) "God's hand is shackled" (Qur'an 5:64). All these beliefs - as well as the animosity to Gabriel which has implicitly been attributed to them (*ibid.*, 2:97) - are denied by the Jews. Therefore, exegetes of the Qur'an have argued that these beliefs must have been believed by certain Jews and that God has attributed them to all Jews because of their consent (Tabātabā'ī, *al-Mīzān*, 9:30).

On the other hand, the Holy Qur'an attributes certain false doctrines to the Christians as well, reproaching them for their beliefs: (1) "Christ is the Son of God" (Qur'an 9:30); (2) "God is the same as Christ, the son of Mary" (*ibid.*, 5:17, 72); (3) "God is one of three" (*ibid.*, 5:73). Christians accept all of these ideas, insisting upon their veracity, and only deny the attribution of divinity to Mary (*ibid.*, 5:16).

Besides sharing a similarity in the concepts of the unity of God, prophecy, and resurrection, Judaism shares a number of rules with Islam as well. Moreover, the Qur'an tells the idol-worshippers that the agreement between its content and the knowledge of the Jewish scholars attest to the truthfulness of the Qur'an (26:197). In addition, Muslims should be aware of Jewish tradition in order to be able to interpret some of the Qur'anic verses.

Eponymity Versus Arbitrary Designations

The ancient names of most nations, tribes, households, cities, and countries are designated naturally and over a period of time, without anyone intending to bestow their names upon them. This is the case for many religions: the name "Judaism" refers to the faith of the people whose progenitors were called Jews (*Yehudim*) because of dwelling in

the territory of Judah (*Yehuda*). Christianity refers to the convictions of the people who were called “Christians,” that is, the followers of Christ. The word “Christian” was first used after Easter (Acts 11:26), however, the early Christians called their faith “the way” (Acts 9:2; 22:4).

The words “Judaism” and “Christianity” do not occur in the Bible, while the word “Islam” and its derivations are repeatedly seen in its holy book, the Qur’an.³ Islam flourished at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and has therefore been given an arbitrary name in order to be distinguished from other religions.

Unlike eponymous names, arbitrary names have a decisive meaning, such as the word “Islam” which means “submission.”

Finality or Prediction of a Subsequent Religion

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which are called Abrahamic or Revealed Religions, are interrelated in regards to their ancestry. All of these religions, initially attribute their own truth to that of the previous religion and seek the good tiding of their appearance in them and secondly, consider themselves to be the final revelation of God and reject the other faiths.

First, Judaism considers itself to be the fulfillment of God’s covenant to Abraham, whereas Christianity calls itself the heir to that covenant and seeks to find predictions about Jesus and God’s “new covenant” in the Hebrew Bible. Islam has also been attentive to the Israelite prophets and sacred texts, declaring that the predictions of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (s) may be found in the Torah and the Evangel (Qur’an 7:157).

Furthermore, Judaism denies the possibility of its abrogation and Christianity does not expect any further covenants with God.⁴ Yet

3. Some Muslims claim that all monotheistic religions were called by the name “Islam” in the beginning, the names “Judaism” and “Christianity” being later inventions. This claim is not historically verifiable.

4. Christians deny the possibility of abrogation, saying that the Hebrew Bible has simply been a “preface” to the New Testament. Therefore, the annulment of the rules of the Torah is not called abrogation, but

both the Qur'an (33:40) and the hadiths attest to the finality of Islam and Muslims consider it to be an essential component of their doctrine.

Messianic beliefs do not contradict belief in finality because, according to believers, the promised one appears only to confirm the veracity of the religion and does not seek to establish a new faith.

Belief in finality blocks the way for new religions to arise. The latter, in turn, seek to find the predictions of their religion from their own particular interpretations of previous scriptures. Accordingly, Christians find the predictions of the coming of Jesus in their reading of the Hebrew Bible, which is of course not acceptable to Jews. Muslims, in turn, find the predictions of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (s) in their interpretations of the Old and New Testaments, which the Jews and Christians obviously do not consider to be valid.

The discovery of the name and exact epithets of the coming savior and final prophet goes no further than fantasy; and these predictions are related to far-fetched names: Christians (cf. Matt 1:23) refer to the birth of Immanuel (Isaiah 14:7) and Muslims point to the coming of Shiloh in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 49:10) and the Paraclete in the New Testament (John 14:16, and others). Later religions demonstrate the same attitudes to the Bible and the Qur'an. Thus, the sacred scriptures are read and interpreted without recourse to the interpretation of their original followers.

In this manner, every religion claims that previous religions have been terminated (or abrogated) and that later religions are mere impostures. Thus, every nation only sanctions salvation for itself. This idea is closely connected with missiology. Judaism is an ethnic religion with no mission and most Jews call upon others to support

is instead considered a process which follows a special plan. As Paul says, "Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith" (Gal 3:24-26). Muslims argue that this is indeed nothing but abrogation.

Zionism. Christianity and Islam, on the other hand, do have missions. In Christianity, it is called evangelization (literally, “giving good tidings”), while in Islam it is called *da‘wah* (literally, “call”).

It should also be noted that the titles “prophet” and “apostle” (such as the Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul) which were given to the ancient propagators of those religions do not signify the establishment of a new religion.

Theological Systems

In actual fact, interfaith dialogue and, more generally, any other kind of dialogue with polemical purposes, will not lead to any kind of remarkable results. In such polemical dialogues, both sides believe that they have found the ultimate truth and that the other party, intentionally or otherwise, refuses to understand. Since the human spirit becomes accustomed to familiar concepts and considers them to be universal, both sides of the polemical dialogue imagine that their only task is to match their own concepts with particular instances in another religion in order for their whole idea to be proved. It should be kept in mind, however, that religious concepts are not universal in any way; therefore, we cannot compare something from our religion with that of another in order to prove that our doctrine is correct.

If there is any necessity for polemics, we should know that even if our speech is the same as the prophets, it is doomed to failure in convincing the other side. For, if they are from the laity, they must refer to an expert in the case of failure; and if they are already well-informed, they remember more knowledgeable people who have taken the same path.

Evidently, every religion arranges its theological system in such a way as to prove both its own truth and the falsity of other religions. One such arrangement is the development of “banned discussions” so that problematic issues may not be scrutinized. For instance, the examination of the issue of the Trinity is banned in Christianity,

whereas criticism of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (s) may not be discussed in Sunni Islam.

The followers of every religion consider themselves “investigators” and call the followers of other religions “emulators,” justifying and rationalizing their own texts without giving the other party the smallest room for justification.

Usually, beliefs are not tested against the (textual) sources. Rather, people tend to believe in something because of their own feelings and emulations and then subsequently interpret and justify the texts based on those beliefs.

In every faith, foreign concepts are cast out as meaningless and false. For example, when a Roman Catholic says that she “consumes God” in her religious life, her statement sounds meaningless to a non-Christian. It does, however, have meaning for her because she believes (1) that the bread and wine of the communion are, in the proper sense of the word, the flesh and blood of Christ respectively and (2) that Christ is properly God. Therefore, the person who consumes the bread and wine of the communion does truly consume God. A Roman Catholic consumes God in order to unite with Him, however, this behavior seems to be mere superstition in the eyes of both Jews and Muslims alike. Shared concepts and stories are acceptable only to the extent that they are actually shared. For instance, Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe that humans can change God’s will by prayer. Another example may be found in Abraham’s “task” of killing his son. Theologians feel obliged to elucidate these propositions in such a way as to make them more acceptable.

The Fall of Man and the Doctrine of Salvation

Different religions have talked about the fall of man and his need for salvation. In the Qur’an (95:5) God clearly speaks of the fall of man and his transformation to “the lowest of the low.” With the emergence

of modern humanism, the fall of man lost its previous significance and religions focused on other aspects of human condition. Today, Jews and Christians emphasize that humans have been created “after the image of God” (Gen 1:27; 9:6), while Muslims highlight the role of human beings as God’s deputy – *khalifat Allah* – (Qur’an 2:30) and the importance of human dignity (Qur’an 17:70).⁵

Every religion sanctions salvation as only existing within itself, demonstrating this by appealing to both reason and canonized texts. (In times of necessity, nonetheless, these faiths distance themselves from their own exclusivism in order to satisfy and attract people.) Christians have long believed “there is no salvation outside the church.” Peter is quoted to have said about Jesus, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Muslims must also believe, based on Islamic teachings, that final salvation is guaranteed only for them: “And whosoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it is not accepted from him and he is among the losers on the Last Day” (3:105).

Spiritual Purification

All religions demand that their adherents live a righteous life and their ethical instructions are meant for the rectification of humankind. Thus, people acquire some sort of purification by following these instructions. It is true that humans have ascribed divinity to almost every animal that exists (from beetles to elephants) and have worshipped them as divine beings, but at the end of the day, religious life has benefitted from a certain type of morality, as it does today.

The confession of sins to a priest in Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism is intended to reduce sin within society. Each and every

5. According to a Prophetic hadith, “God created Adam after his own image.” For commentaries on this hadith, cf. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol.4, pp.11-14; Imam Khomeini, *Chihil Hadith (Forty Hadiths)*, Hadith 38.

one of these Christians, even the priests, bishops, and popes have performed the rite of confession many times. The confessing of sins to other human beings is not allowed in Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism. In these faiths, sins should be confessed to God alone and He should be asked directly for forgiveness.

Almost all religions have described this world as small and dark.⁶ Religions have invited people to some degree of seclusion from others, and thus the idea of monasticism has penetrated into all religions. Islam itself does not accept monasticism.⁷ Some Muslims, however, since the very early days of the religion, have inclined towards monasticism and have been reproached by religious leaders.⁸

It is said that Christianity does not have any formal law. Evidently, Christianity, as well as other faiths, do not allow moral sins like murder, theft, adultery, lying, gossip, false accusations, etc. Nevertheless, comprehensive legal systems, such as Jewish law, are not found in Christianity or various other religions.

Yet Christ's atonement for sins is also not a license for sinning, just as God's forgiveness and mercy or the intercession of religious leaders does not allow sinning either.

Abstinence from moral sins has purified some Christians in a surprising manner. In a speech delivered in his final days, and posthumously published in a book entitled *Haq va Bātil* (Truth and Falsity), Shahid Motahhari regards Christians and their clergy as pious and worthy of heaven:

If you look at this perverted Christianity and go to villages and cities, is any priest you see a decadent and corrupt person? By God, seventy-to-eighty percent of them are faithful, pious, and sincere people who have provided their community with justice,

6. Nonetheless, many religions have financial resources for different purposes. Quite remarkably, it seems that when people give money for the advancement of their religion, they are more attracted to their faith. Thus, apparently, the religions that receive money from people are more successful.

7. Prophet said, "The monasticism of my 'ummaḥ is jihad in the way of God" (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol.8, p.170).

8. Cf. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Khutbah 209.

piety, and purity in the name of Christ and Mary and they have no fault. They go to heaven and their priests go to heaven as well (*Majmu'e 'Āsār/Collected Works*, vol.3, p.439).

Conversion

A glance at the geographical distribution of religions shows that religion is attached to a person in a similar way to skin color. Thus, leaving a faith and converting to another one is both uneasy and rare.

Faiths are like oceans of believers, and have been established by social, political, military, and emotional events in history and geography. Converts may be compared to the drops of an ocean, which may sometimes penetrate another ocean. The receiving oceans consider these drops to be like pearls and are proud of their presence in the sea.

An examination of the background of converts reveals that most of them are from the laity with almost no qualification in the “native” and “target” religions – those which they have left and converted to, respectively. Therefore, the conversion of a religious scholar from his inherited religion to another faith occurs very rarely. The Jesuit priest Thomas Michel writes:

In fact, as it can be understood from history, the Christians and Muslims who have been devout in their religion and spirituality and have then converted to another faith are very few. It is true that in the past or present some people have converted for some reasons like marriage, job, cultural improvement, or social coercion, hardly can we find converts who have formerly been fully faithful and strict in their previous faith (*An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Rome, n.p., 1987, p.8).

Undoubtedly, such an interfaith explanation for leaving one faith and converting to another is totally unacceptable for theologians. The process of conversion is explained in every faith in such a way as to prove the truth of one's own religion and the falsity of other religions.

Those who are attracted to a new faith cannot usually give a good reason for their conversion; the original followers of the faith want to know what has encouraged their conversion, while most converts cannot give an adequate response to this question because of their ignorance in both the “native” and “target” religions.

While most faiths accept converts, there are some exceptions, such as the Druze and the Mandaeans. These faiths contend that only those who are born into a believing family truly deserve the faith. Among the religions that accept converts, some have missionary activities and some do not. An example of the second category is Judaism.

Since its inception, Christianity has been a missionary faith; its missions have gone throughout the world and have had great success. Christian missionaries are very active in learning the languages of different nations, translating the Bible, and producing different missionary pamphlets. Colonial governments have usually supported these kinds of missionary activities.

Most Christian missionaries are Protestants. They invite people to their religion through establishing hospitals, teaching the illiterate how to read, and managing entertainment centers. Attractive media programs are also used for this purpose as well.

Conversion from Judaism is not possible because it is an ethnic faith and one cannot deny one's own ethnicity. Thus, even if someone converts from Judaism to another faith, from the Jewish perspective, they continue to be Jewish, although they are accountable for this sin. It is possible to leave Christianity through will or coercion because it does not allow religious assimilation. Leaving Islam is possible only through will and, because of the rule of religious assimilation, it is not possible to leave it even under coercion. The Eastern religions permit their followers to embrace a variety of faiths, without leaving the original one.

God and His Name

In Muslim theology (*kalām*), the term “*tawhīd*” refers first to knowing God and second to monotheism.

Most religions (and perhaps all religions today) believe in the existence of God and most religions believing in God, call Him by certain names. Sometimes within a religion, or among its followers, God’s proper name is relegated to the background, and even forgotten. God’s proper name in Hinduism is Brahma, in Judaism YHWH (Jehovah), in Zoroastrianism Ahura Mazda and in Islam Allah. Christianity does not give a proper name to God; in the New Testament, the common name “God” (in Greek *ho theós*) is used to refer to Him.

When a people’s religious and native languages are not the same, it is possible for the native language to face such a problem. In Persian, the common name *khudā*, which is actually an equivalent of the Arabic common word *ilāh* (god), refers to Allah as well, seemingly because the first Persian-speaking Muslims did not want to use the proper name Ahura Mazda for Allah. Thus, translating the Arabic confession of faith, *lā ilāha illa-llāh* (There is no god but Allah), into Farsi is problematic. (In fact, it would be translated as “there is no *khudā* but *Khudā*,” the former *khudā* being common and the latter proper.) In Turkish, the word *tanrı* is used for *ilāh* and the word “Allah” refers to the proper name of God. Some other languages, such as those from Europe (and Christianity itself), do not have a proper name for God. For instance, the English word “god” is both a common and a proper name, with the difference that, in the latter usage, the first letter is capitalized. This strategy, however, does not always work because oral usage is more frequent.

Honouring the ineffable name of God has created some taboos. Based on the third commandment of the Decalogue (“You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God”), the Jews forbid pronouncing the word YHWH even during recitation of the

Torah or the liturgy. On these occasions, the word *adonai*, meaning “my Lord,” is substituted, and on other occasions, the word *hashem* is used, which means “the name.” This taboo has extended to every name referring to God, even in other languages or scripts: some Jews write the Farsi word *Khudā* as *Hudā*, the Arabic *ilāh* as *i-lāh*, and God as G-d. Christians, as well as the followers of some other faiths, have had similar practices. The Oxford English Dictionary shows about 20 different variant spellings for the word “god,” which it attributes to such taboos.

God – One or Many?

People believe in god in two major ways: monotheism and polytheism. Of course, any of these two views can be put in such a manner so as to conform with the opposing view. On the one hand, in Christianity, the unity of God is associated with the Trinity. Christians attempt to organize their beliefs in such a way so as not to damage any of the Unitarian or Trinitarian aspects of their conception of God. Because this is not possible, they end up by saying that the Trinity is a mystery.

On the other hand, believers in multiple gods usually express the relation of these gods in a manner that one of those gods (for example, Allah for pre-Islamic Arabs) is so high that the other gods serve as the angels for his grace (also called henotheism). The belief that idols (unlike angels) cannot be the medium for the grace of God and an intercessor for humans is specific to Abrahamic religions. The Qur’an opposes this belief: “God has not sent down power through them [i.e., idols]” (Qur’an 12:40). Without reliance on revelation, humans cannot determine the borders between monotheism and polytheism: “Who can intercede before Him save with His permission?” (Qur’an 2:255).

The monotheists believe in a God who transcends human imagination. They believe that God’s knowledge and power are infinite and if they happen to find anything against this view in the religious texts, they reinterpret it.

Some polytheists say that God is so great, pure, and transcendent that He has no relation with this material world. So, according to this view, we should refer to his partners for our needs. These partners were considered to be the agents of the world orders and reference to them was deemed necessary. The monotheist prophets told people that these partners had not been appointed by God and were therefore without power and should not be worshipped or appealed to.

Anthropomorphism

None of the Abrahamic religions embraced philosophy in their earliest days. The writer of the Epistle to Colossians warns the Christians to “see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8). One of the Church fathers, Tertullian, has said, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” (*Against the Heretics*, 7).

Before long, however, the followers of Abrahamic religions pursued philosophy and the discipline eventually attained harmony with their religions. Philosophy first led to the emergence of *kalām* and caused anxiety for the Muslims.⁹ Then philosophy came to the fore independently. With the emergence of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophies, there was intellectual unrest. Subsequently, many of the followers of Abrahamic religions inclined towards philosophy in their discussions of God. Finally, philosophy gave way to mysticism.

One of the most important philosophical questions is regarding the materiality of existence. Human beings can only imagine matter and nature, and even if they believe in the non-material and supernatural world, it is only based on confirmation without imagination or, at most, they talk about that mysterious world with negative

9. Salafis continue to be annoyed by the emergence of *kalām*.

propositions. Wherefore, a discussion of God and spiritual or intellectual issues ends up with a shortage of words. In fact, we have to use the words of everyday human language, something which leads to other problems.

In fact, every thought about God (like imagining His existence), every behaviour in relation to Him (like worshipping Him), and every word (like the titles “lord and servant” and “father and son” for an explanation of His relation with humans) presuppose anthropomorphism. Thus, speaking about divine affairs is only possible through the language of worldly affairs.¹⁰

Thus, if the Hebrew Bible attributes wrestling to God, the Qur’an ascribes cunning, guile, deceit, and vengeance to Him (4:142; 3:54; 86:16; 3:4), saying that those who fight with Him (5:33) or offend Him (33:57) will be punished, that the believers should help Him (47:7), lend money to Him (64:17), and avoid disloyalty to Him (8:27). Other expressions, like God sitting on a throne, His presence in heaven, God’s arrival, viewing Him on the final day, and the attribution of hand, eye, face, and side have been deployed in anthropomorphist contexts. The Ahl al-Hadith have accepted the literal meaning of these Qur’anic expressions and have openly declared that whatever does not have a body, does not exist at all. Inspired by Imam Ali (as), the Shiites and Mu‘tazilites have rationalized such expressions and have found proper and rational meanings for them.¹¹ The Ash‘arites have, over time, distanced

10. Facing the natural phenomena of the world (like joy and sadness, happiness and misery, fame and notoriety, need and needlessness, health and illness, shortness and length of life, largeness and smallness of sustenance, flood, earthquake, famine, insecurity, etc.), the human mind cannot interpret them independently without recourse to God’s words in a manner in which God and human relations is entailed. The Bible and, even more forcefully, the Qur’an, emphasizes that these events are rewards, punishments, trials, *‘imlā* and *‘istidrāj*. Thus, these religions have used this interpretation of world events to improve morality and spirituality among people.

11. The opponents of Ahl al-Hadith have only denied materiality to God and accepted the materiality of other beings even the angels. The verses related to resurrection and afterlife also seem to require rationalization and *ta’wīl*. The majority of Muslims, however, have avoided *ta’wīl* in these contexts

themselves from the beliefs of Ahl al-Hadith and have, to some extent, become closer to the beliefs propounded by the Shiites and Mu'tazilites. Of course, all of these beliefs can be seen in Islamic theology and scholarship today.¹²

Further, God is called "fire" in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 4:24), "spirit" in the New Testament (John 4:24), and "light" in the Qur'an (24:35). In order to remove these anthropomorphical ideas from their transcendent God, monotheist theologians have tried to interpret them in new ways by appealing to reason and other texts. Among textual evidences, the biblical expression "God is not man" (Num 23:19) has been used by the People of the Book, while the Qur'anic expression, "There is nothing like unto him" (42:11), has been cited by Muslim scholars.

The first century Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, interpreted the Hebrew Bible by recourse to allegorical interpretation. The scholarly heritage of Philo was passed on to Christianity by his fellow citizen, Clement of Alexandria (d. 215). Later, Origen (d. 254), another member of the School of Alexandria, organized it.

The issue of transcendence has such importance for theologians that they have claimed that, instead of "what God *is*," we should talk about "what God *is not*." This view has led to the emergence of Negative Theology in Judaism and Christianity. According to this theology, human attributes are not ascribed to God, so that even the words "existence" and "existent" cannot be used in relation to Him. On the other hand, because God has revealed Himself to humanity, negative theology does not result in agnosticism.

We can conclude from the above that one should not criticize the scriptures of other religions because of their linguistic limitations.

and have accepted bodily resurrection. Belief in the resurrection of the spirit has always been condemned in Islamic history.

12. For further information on Ahl al-Hadith, cf. Dimashqiyyah, Abd al-Rahmān, *Mawsū'ah Ahl al-Sunnah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Muslim, 1997). In this book the interpretation of the "hand of God" as "power of God" has been called false and heretical (vol.1, p.567).

Moreover, from an Islamic point of view, because they are composed by human beings, Muslims have no obligation to justify those passages. They should, nonetheless, be fair, especially since the Qur'an commands that in dialogue with the People of the Book the best kind of speech should be followed (Qur'an 29:46).

Mysticism and Sufism

As mentioned above, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe in the finality of their respective religions. It should be added that the finality of religion does not mean the end of divine grace and in each of these religions, there are grand spiritual figures who are supposed to continue to convey the grace of God to the world. These figures may be different from scholars, theologians, and interpreters because the latter group are simply specialists with learned knowledge, while the former are role models with intuitive knowledge. Even children and laypeople can reach these positions as we see such instances among the leaders of different faiths.¹³

In Islam, and especially in Shiism, various leaders, most notably the Imams, have imbued the suitable souls with spirituality and have continued in the way of the Prophet Muhammad (s), without having studied with anybody. The ninth, tenth, and twelfth Imams reached Imamate in their childhood, just as the Qur'an says that John (*Yahya*) attained prophethood in his childhood and Jesus declared his mission in the cradle (19:12, 30).

One strand of innate knowledge is mysticism, which is a reaction to jurisprudence and philosophical reasoning. Mysticism rises from aptitude, it is not subject to denial or approval, and has close ties with the arts. Mysticism is delicate like fire, consuming everything in its constant advance. The Indian and Far Eastern religions are altogether

13. The eighth Sikh guru attained this position at the age of five and died three years later. Aga Khan III (d. 1957) became an Isma'ili Imam at the age of eight and was in this position for about 70 years. A huge group of Sufi leaders were from the laity as well.

mystical, and in our age, with a little missionary activity, they have attracted many American and European converts.

Mysticism means a shift of attention from the exterior to the interior, from form to meaning, from letter to spirit, from the name to the named, from body to soul, from the beginnings to the end, from the law to the way, from presence to absence, from closeness to oneness, from reason to love, and so on.

All devout people accept this shift of attention and do not deny its necessity. However, there is disagreement on whether one should be concerned about both the exterior and the interior or if one should ignore and even oppose the exterior in order to be attentive solely to the interior.

All of us know that the greatest mystics, the Prophet Muhammad (s) and Imam Ali (as), observed the exterior of faith, even while they were more than mindful of the interior. Their speech conveyed their humility to God and was far from the utterance of lengthy and superfluous claims. Many mystics in the Muslim world have followed their model, choosing a sincere spiritual path. Allameh Tabātabā'ī writes:

The gnostic (*'ārif*) is the one who worships God through knowledge and because of love for Him, not in hope of reward or fear of punishment.

From this exposition it becomes clear that we must not consider gnosis as a religion among others, but as the heart of all religions. Gnosis is one of the paths of worship, a path based on knowledge combined with love, rather than fear. It is the path for realizing the external form and rational thought. Every revealed religion, and even those that appear in the form of idol-worship, have certain followers who march upon the path of gnosis. The polytheistic religions and Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Islam all have believers who are gnostics. (*Shiite Islam*, trans. S. H. Nasr, 112-113)

Every mystic conforms to the religion into which she/he is born. Andalusia belonged to the Islamic world for eight centuries, giving

rise to mystics like Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638/1240). The whole land converted to Christianity in 1492, bringing forth mystics like Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1556), the founder of the Jesuit order. Apparently, if Spain turns to Hinduism one day, the land will give birth to idol-worshipping mystics.

Islamic mysticism is a heritage from Imam Ali (as) and all the Sufi orders trace themselves back to him.

The terms mysticism (*‘Irfān*) and Sufism are used synonymously in the major Islamic sources, as well as in the Muslim world. Thus, Ibn ‘Arabi, Rumi, and Imam Khomeini may be called both mystic (*‘Ārif*) and Sufi. In Iran, the word “Sufi” is used derogatorily for groups with a claim on mystical experiences, who wear moustaches and have cult-like organizations.

Jewish mysticism is called Kabbalah. Early Christianity resembled a sort of Jewish mysticism and the original Christians called it “the way” (Acts 9:2; 22:4) before it turned into an independent religion. But Christianity itself, which we can call a mystical order within Judaism, enjoys a rich mysticism with many great leaders. The Indian and Far Eastern religions, with their mystical character, have their own mysticism and mystics. Christian mysticism is associated with monasticism, while the mysticism in India and the Far East is replete with asceticism and contemplation. Some religions highlight theoretical mysticism, whereas others emphasize practical mysticism.

Revelation

Revelation, as the most manifest relation between God and humanity, is found in any religion that adheres to God.

The Islamic term *wahy* is to some extent different from its Christian counterpart “revelation.” *Wahy* (Arabic for “pointing”), in Islamic terminology, refers to divine direction. The Qur’an has used it on several occasions to signify innate direction, legal direction, and other divine directions. Examples of which are the bees (16:68), the

angels (8:12), the prophets (4:163), and Moses' mother regarding the protection of her child (28:7).

Revelation (from the Latin "revelare" meaning "to manifest" or "to unveil") signifies God's self-manifestation in His salvation plan. Besides the created world as a manifestation of God, the passage of the Israelites through the divided sea, their salvation, the laws of the Torah, and the life of Jesus can be called instances of Christian revelation.

The concept of revelation in Judaism is almost similar to Islam. According to Jewish belief, both revelation and prophecy ceased almost four centuries BCE.

Most religions contain some type of revelation and the question whether indigenous religions possess revelation depends upon our definition of the concept.

Scriptures

The material aspect of revelation, which has been preserved for later generations, is the written scriptures which contain divine revelations. These books, such as the Vedas, Tripitaka, Avesta, Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur'an are considered to be sacred by the followers of each respective religion. The style and language of these books vary and their sacredness depends on the understanding of the followers of each particular religion. Yet the sacred scripture of a religion can sometimes sound superstitious and ridiculous to others.

Some scriptures remained in oral form for centuries, being written down only after the passage of a long span of time. Other scriptures existed in the written format from the very beginning.

The Qur'an and the Bible

Many scriptures were first written down for purposes other than providing a scripture for the believers. Later, they were canonized as

sacred. The Qur'an, however, is, quite exceptionally, conscious of its own sacred and divine character and refers to it, time and time again.

A comparison between the Qur'an and other scriptures will reveal that the former contains more monotheistic and didactic messages. Such examples can be found in the Joseph narrative in the Qur'an (12) and Genesis (37-46), the stories of Abraham and Moses as narrated in both versions, let alone the outrageous story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11).

Clearly, the followers of Judaism, Christianity, and other religions have received moral messages from their own sacred texts, just as Muslims have.

Furthermore, the Qur'an is the basis for Islam, while the Gospels and other books of the New Testament were composed several decades after the emergence of Christianity, and this religion existed without these books.

Pre-Existence of the Word

The pre-existence of the Word of God (Torah) in Judaism culminated in the belief in the pre-existence of Jesus in Christianity as stated in the Nicene Creed. Similarly, in Sunni Islam, the pre-existence of the Word (the Qur'an) prevailed.

The Jews believe that the Torah existed even before creation and was written with black fire upon white fire. Then, God dictated it and Moses wrote it down with his tears (Jerusalem Talmud, "Sheqalim" 6:1).

The Authorship of the Scriptures

The Old and New Testaments, as well as the Qur'an, are very different with respect to their genres. Moreover, none of these books contains a uniform genre. The Qur'an, which reached its final form in a shorter span of time, is divided into Meccan and Medinan sections which are different, not only with respect to their time of appearance, but also in

their content and style. The books of the New Testament were written by various authors over the span of a century (50 CE as a relative date for the composition of the First Epistle to Thessalonians until around 100 CE as a relative date for the Second Epistle of Peter). Yet, a collection of different genres – gospels, epistles, apocalyptic narrative, and the unique “historiography” of the Acts of the Apostles – are seen in the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, some ancient sections like The Song of Deborah (Judges 5:1-31) were presumably composed as early as the eighth century BCE. The composition of the different parts of the book continued until the mid-second century BCE (the Book of Daniel). Between these two dates, a collection of mainly historical writings found their way into the Jewish canon, which also contained moral and legal instructions, psalms, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, and other writings.

Nowhere in the Old and New Testaments do we encounter a consciousness in these books which is aware of its status as a sacred scripture. That is, the authors of these books do not seem to have imagined that their writings would become part of the sacred canon. The Qur’an, on the contrary, refers to itself as a scripture. It is, thus, replete with didacticism. Even when it comes to story-telling, the Qur’an follows each story with a moral message.

In regards to authorship, Jews, Christians, and Muslims have each had their own conception of the author of the scripture in such a way as to make it correspond to both their ideal view of an author and to the “historical” data of the tradition. According to Jewish orthodoxy, Moses is the author of the Torah. Christians attest to the authorship of the books of the New Testament by the early apostles of the Church, some of whom had not even met Jesus. This belief is not far from the Jewish view of their own scriptures if one sees it from another angle – Jesus is considered God and the relation of the apostles to Jesus resembles the relation between Moses and God. But the People of the Book do not consider their scriptures to be a divine dictation from the Lord, a view which is quite unlike the Muslim understanding of

scripture. The Islamic belief, hence, considers the Qur'an to be a divine inspiration of the word of God to the Prophet Muhammad (s), while the latter simply conveyed those words faithfully and accurately. Thus, in the process of inspiration, the message "Say: God is one" (Qur'an 112:1) has been preserved even with the word "say" without any alteration of the original during the transfer. Muslims continue to read the word "say" in their recitations of the Qur'an. For Muslims, the Qur'an, because of its messages and style, is a miracle of God, which, in keeping with its written nature and by the power of God, uniquely survives the ages.

Modern historical scholarship, which has achieved remarkable results in determining the dates of the compilation of different parts of the Bible, as well as the sources of the present final scripture, cannot verify its origin from the time of Moses or Jesus.

The Qur'an, however, has a clearer history. It took a relatively short time (22 years of the Prophet's mission) to emerge to its first audience; and shortly afterwards (in the first/seventh century) its different versions were unified and canonized. Quite exceptionally, some manuscripts of the Qur'an, from as early as the first/seventh century, are available to us. This is mainly because Islam flourished during the lifetime of the Prophet, thus beginning a world power based upon its sacred text. The history of Islamic civilization begins almost at the same time as the most important turning point in salvation history (compare this with the difference of time between the incarnation and the beginning of Christian empire).

Qur'an on the Bible

The Qur'an testifies to the truth of the Torah and Evangel, which have been sent down to Moses and Jesus (2:3-4 and others), while the People of the Book consider the Torah to be authored by Moses and the Gospels as simply a report of Jesus' life and ministry, not a collection of revelations which were received by him. This belief does

not harm the sacredness of the books for their addressees. The divergence mainly results from the fact that Jews, Christians, and Muslims do not have a single definition of what constitutes a sacred scripture.

In addition, the Qur'an says that the Prophet Muhammad (s) has been mentioned in the Torah and Evangel (6:157). The People of the Book, however, say that the manuscripts of the Bible originated in the pre-Islamic period in order to deny the claim of any reference to the Prophet (s). They do not accept the reinterpretations of Muslim scholars or Muslim converts. The most tentative theological explanation for the Qur'anic view of the *tawrāh* and *injīl* seems to be that they are unavailable to us, like the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham (mentioned in the Qur'an 87: 18-19).

The most well-known Qur'anic view of the Bible is related to the question of *taḥrīf* – alteration. This means that, according to Islamic belief, the *tawrāh* and *injīl* which God revealed to Moses and Jesus have been altered, resulting in the omission of references to Prophet Muhammad (s) and the addition of anthropomorphic images. Muslims believe that the issue of alteration has already been mentioned in the Qur'an and hadiths.

It should be recalled here that alteration presupposes a change in a divinely inspired book, which cannot be the case in what is considered by the Jews and Christians to be a human composition. The issues of the absence of the coming promise of Islam, as well as the addition of anthropomorphism, have been discussed above. Now let us examine the Qur'anic verses which Muslims cite as proof of alteration.

1. “Do you expect that they believe you, while a group of them hear the word of God and then alter it after they have understood it and they know [what they were doing]?” (2:75)

2. “There is among them a group who twist their tongues as in reciting the book so that you may reckon it from the book while it is not from the book, and who say that it is from God while it is not from

God, and who say false things about God and they know [what they are doing]” (3:78).

3. “From among the Jews, there are who alter the words from their places and say, ‘We heard and we disobeyed’ and ‘Hear that thou may not hear [our response]’ and ‘*Rā’inā*’ that they may twist [the truth] with their tongues and mock the religion. And had they [instead] said, ‘We heard and we obeyed’ and ‘Hear’ and ‘*Unẓurnā*,’ it would have been better for them and stronger. But God has damned them because of their disbelief; so they do not believe but a few” (4:46).

4. “Because of their violation of their covenant, we have damned them and hardened their hearts. They alter the words from their places and they have forgotten some of the things which have been reminded to them and you continue to hear about a disloyalty from them, save for a few among them. So, forgive and pardon them. Surely God loves the good-doers” (5:13, cf. 5:41).

It can be seen here that in these verses alteration is attributed only to the Jews. Therefore, even if, as it is often assumed, these verses do indeed prove the alteration of scripture, it may only be with respect to the alteration of the Torah and not to the Evangel.

The Qur’an has said nothing about the alteration of the Torah or Evangel, as will be explained below.

a) In these verses, “alteration” is limited to a transformation of words which are spoken or heard, not written: “They hear the word of God, but alter it” (2:75), “They twist their tongues as in reciting the book” (3:78), “that they may twist [the truth] with their tongues” (4:46).

b) None of the verses talk about the alteration of the Torah and the Evangel. Only one of the instances cited above speaks about “the word of God” [*kalām Allah*] (2:75). All of the Muslim exegetes believe that this verse refers to the behavior of the contemporaries of Moses and is not concerned with the alteration of the Bible after the rise of Prophet Muhammad (s). It can also be assumed that the verse deals with the behavior of the Jews at the time of the emergence of

Islam. The word of God can thus mean the Qur'an, which the Jews heard but subsequently related to others in an altered way in order to reduce its validity. (This is similar to their conversion to Islam in the morning and their reconversion to Judaism in the evening in order to divert the Muslims, as related in the Qur'an - 3:72.)

Three other verses talk about the alteration of "words" [*kalim*]. Several of the altered words, together with their original forms, are mentioned in a passage (4:46): "*sami'nā wa 'ṣaynā*" (We heard and we disobeyed) instead of "*sami'nā wa 'ta'nā*" (We heard and we obeyed). Some Jews abused the Hebrew word "*'senū*" (We did it) and transformed it to "*'ṣaynā*" - "We disobeyed." They said "*'isma' ghayra musma'*" (Hear that thou may not hear (our response)," instead of "*'isma'*" (Hear). They pronounced the expression "*rā'inā*," instead of "*'nẓurnā*" because in Hebrew "*rā'*" means "evil one" and "*rā'inā*" would mean "our evil one."

These kinds of wordplays and changes in meaning for certain purposes have been common among the Jews and examples may be found in the Talmud. Some biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (s) report that instead of saying, "*Assalam 'alayk*" (Peace be upon You), the Jews said "*Assam 'alayk*" (Death upon you), receiving the response "*'Alayk*" (Back to you).

Therefore, the Qur'an does not expressly talk about the alteration of the Torah and the Evangel. Rather, only the alteration of "words" (certain words in the daily language) is indicated in these passages. These kinds of alteration have not gone beyond the area of speaking and listening to the realm of written words. The question of alteration should, then, be discussed with the help of evidences other than the Qur'an.

Theologically, a Muslim cannot discuss alteration of the books which the People of the Book offer since their words have no theological value for Muslims. A Muslim can believe, just like the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham (Qur'an 87: 18-19), the Torah and the Evangel have been lost and that the present Bible composed by humans has merely

replaced the original. The occurrence of some parts of the original Torah in the present Torah is not enough evidence since some Qur'anic verses are found in the biographies of the Prophet (s) as well.

The Qur'an says, "So, woe unto those who write the book with their own hands and then say that this is from God so that they may sell it with a low price! So, woe unto them for what their hands have written and woe unto them for what they gain!" (2:79). The Prophet Muhammad (s) says, "The Israelites wrote a book and followed it and put the Torah aside" (*Sunan al-Dārimi*, "*al-Muqaddamah*," hadith No.480).

Understanding the Sacred Scriptures

The study of the sacred texts can be undertaken in four different ways, which are here enumerated according to the rising degree of their complexity, objectivity, and popularity, as follows:

1. Translation - an attempt in transferring the content of the sacred text from the original literary language to another language.
2. Commentary - an explanation of the different aspects of a sacred text and removing ambiguities and paradoxes with the help of other parts in the same text and other intellectual, religious, and scholarly sources.
3. Allegorical interpretation - justifying, qualifying, deepening, and generalizing the sacred texts, regardless of their literal meaning, for the purpose of solving certain epistemological problems or gaining certain transcendent understandings. In allegorical interpretation, concrete everyday words are given abstract symbolic meanings.

It is not possible to draw a sharp distinction between these methods. For on the one hand, the simpler methods are not independent of the more complicated ones. For example, translation often requires commentary and occasionally allegory, while commentary may lead

to allegory. On the other hand, the more complex methods do not deny the simpler ones, although they claim to perfect and deepen them.

There was no such systematic method for studying the scriptures at the time of their emergence because they were completely within the understanding of their first addressees and therefore no one had any problem in understanding them (not even for something like the short letters in the beginning of some Qur'anic *surahs*). As it will be shown below, the problematic *mutashābih* (ambiguous) verses (mentioned in Qur'an 3:7) was the fulfillment of the promises given in the verses rather than their meaning. Only later generations from a different time and space (and who, consequently, had a different understanding) noticed the problems and clung to translation, commentary, and allegorical interpretation in solving their problems.

Upon examining the interpretations, it can be observed that commentary and allegorical interpretation overlap. Thus, based on one's presuppositions, one may derogatorily call certain outcomes of allegorical interpretation as commentary and amplify some allegorical interpretations to be mere commentaries of the message.

One can simply claim that the oaths at the beginning of the *surahs*, namely, "By the night" (92:1), "By the dawn" (89:1), "By the forenoon" (93:1),¹⁴ and "By the afternoon" (103:1), are references to various times of the day. According to some traditions, the order of the revelation of these *surahs* was identical to the emergence of different times of the day. From this point of view, "By the afternoon" (103:1) is only an oath by that time and other suggested meanings for the word '*asr*' (mostly meaning "afternoon," but other meanings like "time," "the time of the Prophet," "the time of the coming of the hidden Imam," "the afternoon prayer," "night and day," "pressure," "an extract of the created world," etc. have also been suggested) are mere allegorical interpretations, however beautiful they may seem.

14. Actually, *surah* 94 was revealed after 93 and before 103. But it is agreed that this *surah* is the sequel to *surah* 93.

On the other hand, commentaries are sometimes called allegorical interpretation. The many metaphors like light and darkness, life and death, wake and sleep, sobriety and drunkenness, vision and blindness, hearing and deafness, etc., are mentioned in the sacred texts for rhetorical purposes and understanding them is not difficult. In other words, no one becomes confused upon reading the verse which says, “Deaf, dumb, and blind. Then, they do not return” (Qur’an 2:18). Here the distinction between metaphorical language and allegorical interpretation becomes clear.

Allegorical interpretation and the Scriptures

In Islamic literature, *ta’wīl* stands for allegorical interpretation.¹⁵ Surprisingly enough, it is not used in the Qur’an in this sense. With 17 occurrences in the Qur’an, the word refers to the fulfillment of things which have been prepared beforehand, like the fulfillment of the promises regarding reward and punishment (3:7; 6:53; 10:39), the interpretation of dreams (12:6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 45, 100, 101), the outcome of al-Khidr’s deeds (18:78, 82),¹⁶ and the results of the deeds of this world in the other world (4:59; 17:35).

Although the term *ta’wīl* has come from verse 3:7, it is clear that the significance of the word, in this context, differs from what is seen in later Islamic tradition.

Allegorical interpretation is necessary because the language of religious texts belongs to the era of the simplicity of the religion. The factor of time – that is, the increase in human knowledge and experiences – as well as the factor of place – i.e., the expansion of a religion in different parts of the world – change the clear parts of a text into ambiguous expressions. Here the simplicity of a religion ends and certain deep and delicate concepts emerge which should, at any cost, be supported by the major text so that it may gain value and

15. In the first centuries of Islam, the word *ta’wīl* meant commentary.

16. Al-Khidr is commonly supposed to be the name of God’s “servant” in the Qur’an - 18:65.

validity in order that the contents of the sacred text may be harmonized with the mentality of later audiences.

The cultural heritages of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic societies clearly show that the elite of those societies observed that these texts, which are considered to be highly genuine and sacred for their followers, have occasionally spoken contrary to their expectations.

A number of those intellectuals turned away from the texts at the cost of public outrage. The behavior of these scholars finally cultivated hostility to philosophy among generations of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

A majority of those scholars, nonetheless, patiently endeavored to raise the level of public mentality. They directed the attentions to the inside of the scriptures, and, with the help of allegorical interpretation, found proper answers to their questions. Finally, these scholars transformed philosophy into mysticism. By these endeavors, later generations of Abrahamic faiths were reconciled with philosophy.

Thus, it may be understood that because of the absence of support from the letter of the scripture, allegorical interpretation is highly subjective, whereas commentary, which may be supported by the letter of the text, is more objective.

Due to the absence of a literal support, the supporters of allegorical interpretation argue that the outcome of their activity is merely an addition to commentary. However, it can be seen that the majority of them were disappointed with exoteric interpretations and offered their allegorical interpretations with the hope that someday after the developments in public mentality it would be considered the correct and fixed interpretation.

In this manner, the public mentality gradually developed and found a greater capacity. The Jews and Muslims learnt that when interpreting the material images of God and angels and other concepts such as Judgment Day, Paradise, and Hell, some tinges of immateriality should be added through allegorical interpretation. The

belief in the immateriality of God was the first step in this path, although some scholars did not go further than this.¹⁷

A group of Muslims have rejected the idea of the immateriality of God and other beings. They are variously called *Ahl al-Hadīth*, *Mujassimah*, and *Mushabbihah*. Modern day *salafis* are the remnants of this group.

With the progress in the sciences, people had heightened expectations about discovering the mention of science within their sacred texts and many of them came to believe that different sciences like advanced modern mathematics, physics, and chemistry might be found in their holy books. New questions were posed and allegorical interpretation helped the religious elite find convincing answers to those questions.

The development of social ideas also provoked religious thinkers to harmonize their sacred texts with those ideas by interpreting them allegorically.

Opposition to Allegorical Interpretation

However useful, necessary, and popular allegorical interpretation may have been, it has been marginalized because of the lack of support from the letter of the text. The fear of illegitimate (and hence ungodly) interpretations or accusations of this sort never left these interpreters and, as a result, some of them gradually put this method aside. Some of them have also repudiated their own allegorical interpretations at the end of their lives and have occasionally, by this rejection, paid their debt to their sacred texts in their wills.

In fact, only in a few cases, a group could, like the Isma'ili Shiites, bluntly defend allegorical interpretation and found their school upon such an understanding.

Allegorical interpretation has always had its own opponents. Regardless of the allegorical interpretations they themselves offered,

17. "From the hadiths, the existence of no immaterial being except God the Almighty is proved" (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol.1, p.101).

these opponents considered allegorical interpretation to be an incorrect and immoral process whereby one places one's own words on the lips of someone who is more acceptable. The proponents of allegorical interpretation, in turn, answered that the immutability of religious texts implies that the concepts indicated in them will evolve together with the evolution of ideas, considering allegorical interpretation a by-product of this process of evolution.

The great Jewish philosopher and theologian Maimonides says:

Accordingly, with regard to the Midrashim, people are divided into two classes: a class that imagines that the Sages have said these things in order to explain the meaning of the text in question, and a class that holds the Midrashim in slight esteem and holds them up to ridicule, since it is clear and manifest that this is not the meaning of the (biblical) text in question.

The first class strives and fights with a view to proving, as they deem, the correctness of the Midrashim and to defending them, and they think that this is the true meaning of the biblical text and that the Midrashim have the same status as the traditional legal decisions. But neither of the two groups understands that the Midrashim have the character of the poetical conceits whose meaning is not obscure for someone endowed with understanding. At that time this method was generally known and used by everybody, just as the poets used poetical expressions (*Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, Chicago University Press, 1963, 3.43).

When Maimonides used allegorical interpretation to interpret those verses of the Torah which he considered contrary to reason and thus created valuable and eternal works for the world of Jewish scholarship, a group of rabbis led by Judah b. al-Fakkhār (d. 1235) opposed his readings. This Andalusian rabbi, who led a hearty opposition against the allegorical interpretation school of Maimonides, argued that only those verses which openly contradict the Torah could undergo this process.

Although Christianity itself is rooted in *ta'wīl* (especially with the historical emphasis on allegory), some opposed “excess” in this regard. It is said that St. Jerome (d. 420) made the authoritative Latin translation of the Bible (known as the Vulgate) in order to oppose the “excessive” allegorical interpretations of his age. In the Middle Ages, some Christians opposed the allegorical interpretations of St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274).

In his last book, *Iljām al-'Awām 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām*, al-Ghazālī has warned against the risks of allegorical interpretation. Averroës, in turn, offered a detailed discussion in *Faṣl al-Maqāl* on whose allegorical interpretation in which matters of the Qur'an and traditions is incumbent and whose allegorical interpretation in which matters in the Qur'an and traditions is forbidden and also on the points where using or not using allegorical interpretation will lead to disbelief.

In the same vein, Rumi says:

Thou hast interpreted (and altered the meaning of) the virgin
(uncorrupted) Word: interpret (alter) thyself, not the (Divine)
Book.

Thou interpretest the Qur'ān according to thy desire: by thee the sublime meaning is degraded and perverted (*Mathnavi*, trans. R. Nicholson, 1.1080-1081).

Moreover, Mulla Sadrā, in his various works, attempted to interpret the ambiguous parts of the Qur'an by rejecting the allegorical interpretations of the Mu'tazilites as well as others. Nevertheless, he may have been far from reaching his goal of avoiding allegorical interpretation altogether. In approving of body resurrection, he criticized the allegorical interpretations of Avicenna in the latter's *Risālah Aḍḥawīyyah*, saying:

One of the Muslim philosophers has opened the way of allegorical interpretation to his heart and has done it by interpreting the clear verses on body resurrection. He has referred the corporeal things of the other world to the spiritual and has said that these words were addressed to the uncivilized

Arab and Hebrew public, who did not know anything of spirituality and that the Arabic language is full of metaphors and other rhetorical figures.... (*al-'Asfār al-'Araba'ah*, vol.9, pp.214-215).

The great seventeenth century Shiite scholar Allameh Majlisi quotes a Hindu in reproaching allegorical interpretation. The Hindu had said that allegorical interpretation is an altogether false approach because if the outcome of allegorical interpretation is not intended by the speaker, allegorical interpretation simply means falsely attributing something to him; if, on the other hand, the outcome is intended by the speaker, he may have had a goal in hiding it which will be negated in allegorical interpretation.

In the preface to *al-Mizān*, Allameh Tabātabā'ī also criticized allegorical interpretation, claiming that his exegetical method would leave no room for allegorical interpretation (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol.58, p.153).¹⁸

Imam Khomeini complained of a one-dimensional view of Islam and rendering the temporal verses as spiritual and vice versa:

For a long time we were entangled among mystics; Islam was entangled among mystics. They offered great services, but the entanglement was because they referred everything to the other [spiritual] world, everything and every verse which came into their hands.....Another time we were entangled among others who referred the spiritual to this [temporal] world and had nothing to do with the spiritual.... (*Sahifeye Noor*, vol.8, p.71; also cf. vol.1, pp.235-239).

Opposition to allegorical interpretation inspired society to fits of outrage against Maimonides (in Judaism), Aquinas (in Christianity)

18. The supporters of *ta'wīl*, however, claim that their activity does not contradict the intention of the speaker. From their point of view, since in the past the minds of people were not developed and audiences were unable to receive the subtle concepts in the message, the speaker hid the treasure of meaning under the plain words so that future audiences, with their developed minds, would understand it and so, finally, the speech would find its "real" audience.

and al-Ghazālī, Averroës, Ibn ‘Arabi, and Mulla Sadra (in Islam) and even excommunicate them.

On the other hand, these allegorical interpretations proved the vigorousness, timelessness, and richness of religions as well as their conformity to the needs of different times. In this manner, these scholars performed a great service to ethics, spirituality, thought, civilization, and culture. In all these religions, later generations, after knowing of these grand thoughts, valued those thinkers greatly and honoured them.

Conclusion

In the above discussion, we tried to demonstrate the points of similarity and dissimilarity among the three Abrahamic religions. The major issues which were explored related to two elements of theology – God and the prophets. We noticed that these faiths share many things with each other. Yet, it was also observable how, even within these points of similarity, the Abrahamic religions show signs of difference and sometimes one concept does not have the same meaning in each Abrahamic faith. A more detailed comparison may take any of the above points and illustrate the subtleties of any religion. This essay will be followed by another study on leadership, eschatology, and religious practice in different religions.

The Religion of Islam: The Qur'an's Essential Notion of *Din*

Mahmoud Khatami¹

Abstract

The overall aim of this paper is to highlight a transcendental usage of the Religion of *Islam* in the Qur'an. I will show that the notion of Islam as a unitary Religion is used in the Qur'an as a genus for religions (*adyan*) which have appeared throughout human history. This usage will show that there is a sense of Religion which guarantees the essential unity of all religions and prepares us to understand the apparent plurality and conflicting diversity of world religions; however, it is essentially different from the sense which has emerged within the modern discipline of religious studies in Western scholarship which interprets religion as a cultural phenomenon and considers the myriad variety of religions to be mere socio-historical events. In this paper, I will first briefly provide a background on the difficulty faced within this modern Western concept of religion, then I will progress to the Islamic concept of Religion to illustrate a model for understanding the plurality and the diversity of religions, which apparently have their own individual boundaries, yet at the same time enjoy a unitary reality.

Keywords: Din, type-Religion, token-religions, Islam, Qur'an, unitary Religion

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I. Introduction

In regards to the history of the word “religion,” it appears quite difficult to integrate different concepts of religions under a universal notion of religion. This problem has led Christian thinkers to posit either an exclusive absoluteness of Christianity² or an acceptance of the plurality of religions.³ The word “religion,” in Western thought, was initially derived from the Latin word *religio*, which Cicero took to be from *relegere*, “to re-read,” indicating that “tradition” is that which is “re-read” and therefore passed on; and with Lactantius from *religare*, “to bind fast,” with the indication of that which binds people to each other and to the gods in the Roman state.⁴ In both cases, *religio*, as does the derivative “religion,” has the indication of a border, a limit or a horizon which is a decisive constraint upon belief, values and behaviours. Though the early church separated itself from the Christian faith as a “religion,” which Paul associated with “false” Paganism,⁵ by the seventh century, the term *religio* referred to communities whose members (the *religiosi*) dedicated themselves to the service of God. By Luther's time, the word had acquired a more general indication as the source of truth,⁶ and with the Deists and the Enlightenment, it became an abstract concept.⁷

2. See, for instance, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); also see Pannenberg, W. *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), v.1, pp.129-136.

3. See, for instance, Menshing, G. *Structures and Patterns of Religion* (Delhi: Banarsidass, 1976), pp.317-324; also Smart, N. *The World's Religions* (Cambridge: CPS, 1998), ch.25, pp.572ff.

4. For the history of this word in the Western tradition, see Bianchi, ed., *The Notion of Religion in Comparative Research* (Roma: L'erma, 1994). Also Despland and Vallee, eds., *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality* (Waterloo: WLUP, 1992); Harrison, P., *Religion and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); Lash, N. *The Beginning and End of Religion* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). For a discussion on modern religious studies as ideology, see Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially Part I, pp.3ff.

5. Bianchi, ed., *The Notion of Religion*, pp.3-9.

6. Despland and Vallee, eds., *Religion in History*, p.32.

7. Peter Harrison has shown how the modern Western concept of “religion” (and thus the roots of the scientific study of religion) originated with the Deists and developed during the Enlightenment out of a

However, there is no continuous development from the concept *religio* as meaning the “careful and even fearful fulfillment of what man owes to God,” to the Deist's understanding of *religio* as embracing principles “which derive from universal truth itself and represent the truth that can be found by understanding and intellect.”⁸ But while there may be no linear continuity from Luther to the Deists, what is significant is that the abstract concept of religion in modern times develops in harmony with the methods of reason designed for its investigation.⁹

Religion, according to this line of reasoning, did not precede the methods of its research but rather the methods of investigation defined as well as explicated it.¹⁰ The abstract notion of “religion” originated in the context of the critique of Christianity in the Enlightenment and the rise of the modern individual, which has since become an etic concept in being applied outside of Christianity.¹¹ While it does not of course follow that the concept cannot be applied outside of Christianity, it is nevertheless the case that it is difficult to translate the word “religion” into non-European languages.¹² Therefore, there are indeed difficulties and objections in extending the concept to “Judaism,” “Islam” or “Hinduism,” which thereby become part of a single unified field.¹³ An important question here is whether the word “religion” has semantic

Lutheran tradition. Harrison, *Religion and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

8. See Feil's “From the Classic Religio to Modern Religion,” in Despland and Vallee, eds., *Religion in History*, pp.32, 41.

9. For details, see my work “Impact of Modernity on Religious Studies” in *Contemporary Philosophical Trends in the West* (Tehran: IHCS, 2007).

10. Saler, *Conceptualising Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), p.1; also Harrison, *Religion and the Religions*, p.14.

11. Lash, *op cit.*, pp.166-71.

12. Sharpe, *Understanding Religion* (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.39; also see Cohen, “Religion in Non-Western Cultures” in *American Anthropologist* 69, 1, 73-76.

13. Lash, *op.cit.*, pp.3-25.

equivalents in other languages and cultures.¹⁴ To answer this question, it seems that such a usage is restricted to Western culture, as there are no strict Western semantic equivalents of religious terms indigenous to non-Western culture which denote certain kinds of discourse and practices concerned with social ethics, transcendence, narratives and ritual.

As regards Islamic traditions, there are no direct English semantic equivalents for the technical terminologies which developed as part of the self-descriptions of those traditions, though a number of Islamic terms have some pragmatical conceptual overlap with the concept. The term *din*, for example, is often taken to be an Islamic equivalent of the word “religion,” a Western term which points towards the idea of social virtues. The situation becomes worse with terms such as *shari'ah*, *madhhab*, *minhaaj*, and *sunnah*. Islamic terminology is much richer than the European languages in this regard. Indeed, these brief examples show how the translation of these terms into European languages is extremely difficult, if not impossible, because of the connotations of each respective word.¹⁵ None of the Islamic terms hinted at here could be a direct equivalent of the concept “religion,” though some of the features within the semantic field of “religion” are encompassed by them. In the rest of this paper I will try to show the meaning and usage of *din* in the Qur'an, and reconsider the concept of religion in light of the text in order to meet the second difficulty we find in modern religious studies - the possibility of a universal notion of religion which integrates token-religions.

14. Some, such as Michael Pye (“The Notion of Religion in Comparative Research” in *Selected Proceedings of the XVI IAHR Congress*, 1994, pp.115-22) citing examples from Japan, have argued that there are such parallels; while others, such as Frits Staal (*Rules Without Meaning* [New York: Peter Lang, 1989], p.401), would wish to restrict its use to the Western monotheisms.

15. The word *din* in Islamic literature is the Arabic form of the Avestan concept of *Daena*, which in its original use, means, among other things, *nomos* or the basic law of life.

II. The Islamic Notion of *Din*

The word *din*¹⁶ is mentioned in many verses in the Qur'an. Its use in the Qur'anic text imparts different meanings, the most important of which are:

1. Subjugation, Authority, Ruling and Having Charge;
2. Obedience and Submission Due to Subjugation;
3. The Method and Means of Life;
4. Punishment, Reward and Judgment.¹⁷

These four meanings constitute the concept of the word *din* as used in the Qur'an where it implies a comprehensive system of life. *Din* is a submission, following and worship by man for the Creator, Ruler, and Subjugator in a comprehensive system of life, with all its creedal, intellectual, moral and practical aspects. As claimed in Islamic literature, all these aspects are embodied in a unique reality which is meta-historical by nature but has appeared as different forms of religions throughout the spiritual history of human beings. In the following delineation of this notion, I will first start with some quotations of Qur'anic verses to show this specific notion in the text and then progress to a description of the notion. In this context, I will use the word "religion" regardless of its European and Christian background.¹⁸

a) *The Qur'anic Conception of Din*

The Qur'an claims that *Din* is a unitary notion which is only one truth in itself; a type-Religion, or a unique divine reality which is the depth

16. This may be mentioned here again, as already hinted, that it is incorrect to translate the Qur'anic word *din* as the English word "religion"; nevertheless, I will use the word religion for the reader's convenience.

17. Tabataba'i, M.H. *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Quran* (Tehran: Intesharat-e Islami, 1984), vol.1, pp.24ff; *Al-Qamoos*, under the word *Din*.

18. Though I realize that, in considering the history of the word "religion," it may be wrong to translate the Qur'anic word *din* as "religion," I will use the latter term solely for convenience in this paper while enlarging its meaning and indication in light of the Qur'anic idea of *Din*.

of all revealed truths, embodied and developed in specific forms of token-religions. Historically speaking, each token-religion is a stream of that unique primary *Din* (type-Religion) and is called *shari'ah* (literally, way or path) in the Qur'an. While all divine religions do truly mirror one and the same reality, some of them are more expressive of that reality and stand above some of the others. However, each one reflects one eternal truth. Therefore, we read in the Qur'an:

“Lo! This your religion is one Religion and I am your Lord, so worship Me.” (21:92)

This unitary type-Religion is called *Islam*.¹⁹ The word *Islam* here is used in its general sense, which refers to the unitary true Religion. In this sense, *Islam* means submission to God. *Islam* is the Religion itself and is not the religion of Islam proper, which indicates a very specific token-religion that appeared in a certain geographical and historical circumstance.²⁰ *Islam* is spoken of here as type-Religion and all other religions are seen as *tokens*. In this sense, the Qur'an says:

“Surely the (unitary type-) Religion with Allah is Islam.” (3:19)
 “Do they seek for other than the Religion of Allah, while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed (*aslama*: submitted) to His Will (i.e., accepted *Islam*), and to Him shall they all be brought back.” (3:83) “He it is Who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth (*Din al-Haqq*),²¹ that He may make it the conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse.” (61:9) “He it is Who hath sent His

19. The type-token terminology was originally used in the fields of linguistics and psychology. I am applying this terminology here to show that the word “*Islam*,” in the Qur'an, is considered to be a universal and unitary Religion (which I call type-Religion), while other religions are its historically appeared instances (which I refer to as token-religions). My usage of this terminology here has no implication derived from its usage by other scholars in different fields.

20. Meanwhile, the Quran says that the specific appearance of the religion of Islam (which was revealed to Prophet Mohammad) is the most perfect form of that unitary type-Religion *Islam*. (“Today I accomplished the Religion for you...and approved Islam to be the religion for you.” [5:3])

21. The Holy Qur'an, 48: 28, 61: 9.

messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth (*Din al-Haqq*), that He may cause it to prevail over all religion. And Allah sufficeth as a Witness.” (48:28)

As we can see, there is only a unitary type-Religion under which all forms of historical religions have appeared: “He has made plain to you of the Religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus to keep to obedience and be not divided therein.” (42:13) “And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them out of envy among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed term, certainly judgment would have been given between them; and those who were made to inherit the Book after them are most surely in disquieting doubt concerning it.” (42:14) “Then We put thee on the (right) Way of Religion: so follow thou that (Way), and follow not the desires of those who know not.” (45:18) “He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in Religion any hardship; the faith (*mellat*) of your father Abraham (is yours). He hath named you Muslims of old time and in this (Religion), that the messenger may be a witness against you.” (22:78)

This unitary type-Religion is an innate (*fitri*) Religion which is privileged as upright (*hanif*) and encompasses submission and peace (*Islam*). All forms of religions are but manifestations of this truth: “Do they seek for other than the Religion of Allah.” (3:83)

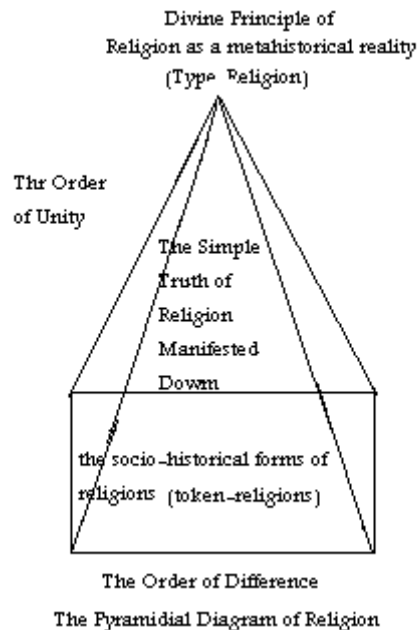
“There is no compulsion in Religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error.” (2:256) “Allah speaketh the truth. So follow the Religion of Abraham, the upright. He was not of the idolaters.” (3:95) “Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was an Upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not one of the Polytheists.” (3:67) “And, (O Muhammad) set thy purpose resolutely for Religion, as a man by nature Upright, and be not of those who ascribe partners (to Allah).” (1:15) “And who forsaketh the Religion of Abraham save him who fooleth himself? Verily We chose him in the world, and lo! in the Hereafter he is among the righteous.” (2:13) “And be thou

upright as thou art commanded, and follow not their lusts, but say: I believe in whatever scripture Allah hath sent down, and I am commanded to be just among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. Unto us our works, and unto you your works; no argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and unto Him is the journeying.” (42:15) “So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for Religion as a man by nature Upright - the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right Religion, but most men know not.” (3:31) “Say: O People of the Scripture! Stress not in your religion other than the truth, and follow not the vain desires of folk who erred of old and led many astray, and erred from a plain road.” (5:77) “Of those who split up their Religion and became schismatics, each sect rejoicing in what they had with them.” (3:32) “But they (mankind) have broken their Religion among them into sects, each group rejoicing in its tenets.” (23:53) This is because “those to whom the Book had been given did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves.” (3:19)

Therefore, according to Qur'an, *Islam*, as type-Religion, is the code of real life and “all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed (*aslama*: submitted) to His Will (i.e., accepted *Islam*), and to Him shall they all be brought back.” (3:83) There is only one Religion of Truth, which conflicts with all man-made forms which are called religion. “Those whom ye worship beside Him are but names which ye have named, ye and your fathers. Allah hath revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah only, Who hath commanded you that ye worship none save Him. This is the right Religion, but most men know not.” (12:4)

The true Religion is mistaken by human beings - as their social conditions affect their knowledge of truth, and they therefore interpret the truth according to their needs, benefits and worldly policies, and change the manifested forms of the unitary Religion into utilitarian ones: “And forsake those who take their Religion for a pastime and a

jest, and whom the life of the world beguileth. Remind (mankind) hereby lest a soul be destroyed by what it earneth.” (6:7) “And they differed not until after the knowledge came unto them, through rivalry among themselves. Lo! Thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they used to differ.” (45:17)



b) The Description of the Qur'anic Idea

As a matter of fact, what has been mentioned in the Qur'an can be illustrated by a pyramidal diagram referred to here as “the pyramid of Religion.”²²

In this perspective, the truth of the type-Religion flashes out from God at the vertex all the way down to the socio-historical forms of religions. While all token-religions emanate from the simplicity of the

22. The description of the Qur'anic idea of Religion presented here is based on inspirations from the Illuminative philosophies of Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra. It must be noted that the ontological system developed by the Persian Illuminationist philosophers is presupposed in this illustration and its description.

type-Religion, they all enjoy the strongest essential connection and unity with their Divine Principle at the top. But they are, on the other hand, widely diversified when they are considered at the specific socio-historical conditions where the horizontal levels converge into an absolute unitary simplex.

Within this pyramid, the relationship between type-Religion as a meta-historical reality and token-religions as its historical manifestations can be considered in two different ways: vertical and horizontal. Considered as vertical, this relationship is that of “unity in difference,” while considered as horizontal, it is that of “type-token.” The type-Religion manifests its unique reality in token-religions according to the degrees of importance they may have (depending upon the needs and conditions of a society within the spiritual history of human beings). Token-religions are also actually separated and diversified in format as well as in individuation, etc.; but since this separation and diversity which occurs in the socio-historical (horizontal) order does not happen in the vertical order (that of unity), it has no impact on the inner system of their continuity and unity with the reality of the *only* Religion. In other words, the multitude of the horizontal order has no bearing upon the unitary connection of the vertical order.

This pyramidal diagram of Religion, together with the distinction between the vertical and horizontal lines within itself, must be taken into serious consideration in understanding an Islamic notion of Religion. It is of fundamental importance to understand the “inner unity” in relation to the “outer diversity” of this diagram when one meets the paradoxical statements of religious experiences. It is also vitally important in helping us to know how religious pluralism indicates a different understanding of the unitary truth.

This “unity in difference” is taken as the major axiom in the idea of the “univocity” and “gradation” of the reality of Religion; and indicates a hierarchic (*tashkiki*) structure for Religion. Token-religions are pyramidally emanated from the reality of the unitary type-

Religion. A token-religion is entirely dependent upon this reality. This reality will, in its turn, have been dependent, with all its depending content, upon its own tokens, as they are all reduced to, and fuzzy in, the reality of that unitary type-Religion. Thus no matter to what extent there is a multiplicity of token-religions, it appears quite certain that the whole multitude is designed as but one manifestation of the type-Religion.

There is an unbroken vertical line connecting all manifested religions to the unitary type-Religion in a strictly essential unity.²³ And there are also horizontal lines along which the manifested token-religions are to be regarded as different from one another and characterized by multiplicity in rank, culture, and individuation. All these belong to the factual texture of the unitary type-Religion *itself*. For the sake of distinction, the vertical lines are called the “inner order” of Religion, while the horizontal lines are called the “outer order” of Religion. The former is that which religious experiences and meditative apprehensions are concerned with, and the latter, which is called *shari’ah* (way) and *menhaaj* (path), contains rituals and practices, and is what the scholastic sciences account for. In dealing with the former, all scholarly study can do is to account for the interpretation and conceptualization of religious experiences, customs and social traditions. These interpretations and conceptualizations will fall into the order of the horizontal line, whereas the depth of the factual unitary type-Religion always remains in the vertical dimension and belongs to the inner order of reality. It is not, strictly, representational.

In regards to this notion, it is possible for the token-religions, with all their characteristic multiplicity, to have emanated from and be reduced to the unitary type-Religion as the ultimate source of

23. The notion of vertical and horizontal lines are obtained from the Avicennian principle of the “nobler possibility” (*al-imkan al-ashraf*) together with Suhrawardi's principle of the “more posterior possibility” (*al-iakan al-akhass*), *Kitab Hikmat al-ishraq*, pp.154-157.

religions. This is made possible without the intermediary role of history, geography, culture, social condition or any other element of disruption and discontinuation in the unitary system of Religion. At the level of historical appearance, the reality of Religion, by its very nature, is a continuously “fuzzy” one. For a token-religion to exist means that it can never be detached from its principle and stand by itself as an independent entity, either in the mind or in the world of reality.

It is therefore true to say that a token-religion is but a manifestation of the type-Religion and thus its truth is dependent on it. This interpretation would mean that a token-religion was possible when, and only when, it comes into consideration of being a revealed version of the type-Religion. But as soon as that same token-religion was to come into reality, it would change its basic status to the form of a self-sufficient religion due to the socio-historical condition in which it appears. Whatever a self-sufficient religion might be, it becomes a self-grounded religion for the socio-historical condition in which it manifests. This religion then, even though it is at that very moment a form of the continuing type-Religion, is subject to be interpreted by human individuals according to their specific socio-historical conditions and their capacity of knowledge and research. This is obviously a transmodification of Religion from its pure reality to its interpretive format. Meanwhile, this latter form of religion (the token one) is a form of type-Religion.

This does not, however, indicate by any means that the ultimate reality of the type-Religion is changed into a human interpretive format and is relegated to certain social and historical conditions. For one thing, the vertical nature of the type-Religion is undoubtedly immanent and thus can never be transitive. Furthermore, when we are speaking of the type-Religion, we are not dealing with a religion constituted by custom and culture, but rather with that very simple indivisible and unitary entity. The token mode of Religion, appearing in a specific period and culture, refers to the dependent state of the

horizontal forms of Religion which occurred in particular historical and social contexts. It would indeed be false, if we were to visualize a token-religion in itself as an independent by-product of human culture or psycho-biological nature.

What happens in the horizontal (socio-historical) line is that man approaches the reality of the type-Religion and makes it accessible to himself.²⁴ This effort can be performed within a wide domain - from profound interpretation to very superficial dogma and custom. But all these different ways appear in the horizontal line. The vertical reality of Religion might be somewhat apparent in some human-created forms while it might be absent in others as it is dependent on the conditions in which it appears.

It is only in this sense that, one may say, token-religions are different ways of responding to - and as paths for individuals to follow which point towards - an ultimate, transcendent reality which is the core content of the type-Religion.²⁵ Thus, only in this sense, the Moslem "Allah," the Christian "God," and the Hindu "Brahman" are all terms for the same ultimate reality towards which the various token-religions are climbing. In itself, then, the type-Religion is ineffable and transcendent, yet human beings respond to this reality through the token-religions. In this horizontal (socio-historical) line, we experience the type-Religion in different ways according to different dispositional states. Although religious meanings are diverse in this sense, we have the cognitive state to believe and to live on the basis of its experience in our socio-historical norms. The religious plurality and the diversity and mutually exclusive claims of the

24. This an extension of what Sadra argues for in his principle of hierarchic gradation (*tashkik*); see Sadr ad-Din Shirazi, *Kitab al Asfar, Journey I*, vol.I.

25. John Hick's pluralistic approach to religions as presented in his book, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1989), can be interpreted in light of this theory. However, his major problem is that he does not logically justify all religion as comprising one and the same reality. Presupposing that the religions respond to transcendence in divergent ways, he supposes the oneness of the transcendent as a *noumenon* in its Kantian sense. He is not able (and apparently does not intend) to show the unitarity of the type-Religion or that all religions are manifestations of the one and only type-Religion.

traditions, then, appears in the various forms of human interpretative and linguistic systems and it is only possible to rationally access the principal uniqueness of Religion within the different cultural ways of being human. The human experience of this uniqueness is structured in the different traditions. Incompatible doctrinal schemes within diverse religious traditions cannot be resolved by human concepts and do not therefore threaten the overall hypothesis that token-religions manifest the eternal truth embodied as the type-Religion and that token-religions represent different historical examples of the same reality and evoke parallel transformations of human life.

III. Conclusion

The above interpretation, so I think, outlines the general elements of the Islamic notion of Religion (*Din*) and the analysis of the connection of the token-religions to the type-Religion. This connection, as mentioned, is fuzzy (as we consider Religion to be one and the same reality which manifests as a “continuity in difference” through the vertical line) and token-type (as we consider Religion as type and every specific religion as token through the horizontal line). According to this notion of Religion, we have a model for understanding the diversity of religions which have their own individual boundaries, yet at the same time enjoy a unitary reality and have one identity and reality in spite of their appropriate socio-historicity.

The Shiite Pluralistic Position on Human Cloning

Seyyed Hassan Eslami Ardakani¹

Abstract

With regard to human cloning or artificial human reproduction – and contrary to the opinions of Sunni scholars - Shiite thinkers have not held a unified position. After having surveyed a number of Shiite fatwas and analyses on the subject, this essay will classify them into four groups. The first group states that we are granted absolute permission to engage in human cloning; while the second group believes that there is limited permission; the third group argues that cloning as such is primarily permitted but because of its consequences and secondary grounds it is prohibited and unlawful; and the fourth group is of the view that cloning as such and by itself is prohibited and unlawful. In what follows, the author has examined these four views, ending in support of the permission theory.

Preface

Contrary to the consensus which exists among Sunni scholars on the issue of human cloning, we may come across a considerable discrepancy among Shiite scholars; there evidently are as many Shiite proponents of the issue as there are opponents. In their individual fatwas, official assemblies, and through a statement from the Majma'-u al-Fiqh-i al-Islami (the Islamic Jurisprudence Society) in 1997, Sunni scholars have put forth a decisively

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negative position towards human cloning by prohibiting it as unlawful.² However, there is no such consensus among the Shiites. What has paved the way for such a discrepancy is the lack of a concentrated authority for issuing fatwas on novel issues as well as the religious authority that each Shiite jurist must assume for himself in order to issue *fatawa*, as it is unlawful for him to follow the fatwas of other jurists.

By cloning, scientists mean the application of “Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer” (SCNT), or creating a fertilized egg or zygote without the use of sperm. This technique was first introduced by the Scottish embryologist, Ian Wilmut, to create a sheep in 1996, which led to the creation of “Dolly the sheep” in 1997. Although no documented account has been reported about human cloning so far, its theoretical prospect could be enough of a reason for many scholars, in particular those from the important world religions, to formulate a specific position against it by declaring it as illegal and unethical.

The issue of human cloning, however, has not found an extensive response among Shiite scholars. Although the body of writings on the topic is quite small, the overall academic literature on the issue is considerably informative. This issue has been proposed for critical examination by Shiite scholars in the three major seminaries of Qom, Najaf, and Beirut. Referring to the primary permissibility of all things, the majority of Shiite scholars have declared plant and animal cloning as lawful and permitted.³

The Four Shiite Points of View

Having not reached any consensus on the issue of human cloning, Shiite scholars have issued different, and sometimes contradictory,

2. For further information about the Sunni point of view, see *Shabih Sazi Insan az Didgah-e Ain-e Katolik wa Islam*, (Human Cloning in the Light of Catholicism and Islam) by Sayyid Hasan Islami (Qom: University of Religions and Religious Schools).

3. For consulting different fatwas on the issue, see *Majmu'a Araye Feqhi-Qada'i dar Umure Huquqi* (A Collection of Juridico-Judicial Opinions on Legal Issues), compiled by the Research Center of the Judiciary for Legal Studies (Qom: Markaz Tahqiqat Fiqhi, 1381 A. H.) vol.1, pp.233-134.

fatwas. When studying Shiite fatwas on human cloning, one may come across four theories:

- a) absolute permission;
- b) limited permission;
- c) secondary prohibition;
- d) primary prohibition.

a) Absolute Permission

Due to the lack of a clear-cut religious text signifying the illegality of human cloning and referring to the rule which states, “Everything is lawful, unless you know it is itself unlawful to be forsaken,”⁴ and to the principle of primary permissibility, some Shiite jurists have authorized human cloning. Among the proponents of this theory are: Ayatullah Sistani,⁵ Musawi Ardebili,⁶ Fadel Lankarani,⁷ and Sadiq Rohani.⁸

From the very beginning, ‘Allama Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Fadlullah has regarded cloning as a move towards a deeper understanding of the hidden laws of nature. Calling for rationality and asking scholars to refrain from calling each other apostates, ‘Allama Fadlullah stated that if an indisputable piece of knowledge contradicted the *prima facie* texts of religion, those texts are to be interpreted.⁹ Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Sa’id Hakim is also of the view that human cloning is permissible and that there is no evidence from the *shari’ah* to ban it. He has asserted that human cloning is similar to the practice of divine laws which express God’s great omnipotence. Therefore, as long as cloning does not lead to any

4. Tafsil-u Wasa’il al-Shi’a ila Tahsil Masa’il al-Shari’a (تفصيل وسائل الشيعة إلى تحصيل مسائل الشريعة), Sheikh Hurr al-‘Ameli (Qom: Muassasat-u Alilbait li Ihya’ al-Turath, 1412 A. H.), vol.12, p.60.

5. Ganjina, p.2.

6. Majmu’a Araye Feqhi-Qada’i, p.231.

7. “Hamanandsazi Insan az nazar-e Maraje’ Adyan-e Asmani wa Baresi an az Nazr-e Fiqh-e Islami,” Mahmud Sadeqi, in Akhlaq-e Zisti az Manzar-e Huquqi Falsafi wa Elmi, p.79.

8. Ibid.

9. al-Istinsakh: Jadal-u al-Elm-i wa al-Din-i wa al-Akhlaq (الإستنساخ: جدل الدين و العلم و الأخلاق), pp.99-100.

unlawful practice it is permissible.¹⁰ Not only did Ayatullah Hakim hold that human cloning is permissible, but he also criticized anti-cloning arguments one by one considering them insufficient in proving the prohibition theory.¹¹ Having proposed different alternatives on the issue, Sayyid Musawi Sabzewari proceeds with an analysis of the related law in order to issue his fatwa. Human cloning, Sayyid Musawi Sabzewari holds, may logically be found in three cases: the first case is essential prohibition meaning that the nature of the action is regarded as unlawful because it entails a type of genetic modification in the creation of God. The second is primary legal prohibition such as the prohibition of sins like adultery and drinking wine. The third is secondary legal prohibition meaning that human cloning as such and by itself is lawful but due to its consequences and secondary grounds it becomes unlawful.¹² Having reported and criticized these three cases, he infers that human cloning as such and by itself is permissible, because it is in fact the application of science and divine laws already there in the dispositions of things.¹³ According to this view, those who claim it is prohibited are required to offer their reasoning since the permission theory complies with the primordial principles and hence its proponent is not compelled to offer an argument.¹⁴ In his 1996 answer to the same question, Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Shirazi said that the primordial principle here implies permission.¹⁵

After proposing eleven legal and non-legal arguments for examination and criticism, Ayatullah Mo'men has shown the

10. Fiqh-u al-Istinsakh-i al-Bashari wa Fatawa Tebiyya (فقه الإستنساخ البشرى و فتاوى طبية), Sayyid Muhammad Sa'id Hakim, 1999, p.18.

11. Ibid.

12. al-Istinsakh bain al-Ta'niyat-i wa al-Tashri' (الإستنساخ بين التقنية و الشريعة), Sayyid Ali Musawi Sabzewari, pp.124-125.

13. Ibid., 125.

14. Ibid., 126.

15. al-Istinsakh fi Ray-e al-Imam al-Shirazi (الإستنساخ فى رأى الإمام الشيرازى), prepared by Sadiq Ja'far al-Hasan, Question No.1, also available at the <http://www.annabaa.org>.

inaccuracy of several of them, while for others, if the argument is indeed accurate, then it could succeed in the prohibition of only certain kinds of human cloning. He at last concludes that to embark on human cloning is allowable on the whole, however, it is necessary to observe the *shari'ah* laws of matrimonial relations such as looking or touching a stranger (any woman for whom it is prohibited to have intimate relations).¹⁶

b) Limited Permission

Relying on the extant texts and the related primary principle in this case, some other jurists have held that human cloning is allowable; however, they are of the view that the widespread performance of human cloning may lead to problems such as the creation of identical people and the difficulty of telling them apart. As a result, they say that while it can be allowable on a case by case basis, it is impermissible on a large scale. Hasan Javaheri has proposed such a view.¹⁷ He not only considers human cloning allowable case by case, but he also says that it is unlawful to claim that it is unlawful. That is, nobody has the right to prohibit lawful acts as unlawful by issuing the fatwa of prohibition unnecessarily.¹⁸ This is because the very act of prohibiting lawful acts is illegal, contrary to *shari'ah* and to the verse of the Qur'an which reads: "Do not say, asserting falsely with your tongues, this is lawful and this is unlawful." (و لا تقولوا لما تصف ألسنتكم (الاستقام والاستقام), Hasan Javaheri, pp.19-20.¹⁹ As a result, in his view, although it is lawful, a legal authority may prohibit human cloning as a governmental ordinance according to his discretion for some expediencies. Such a prohibition is temporary and can be changed.²⁰

16. al-Istinsakh, p.21.

17. al-Istitam wa al-Istinsakh, (الإستقام والإستقام), Hasan Javaheri, pp.19-20.

18. Ibid.

19. Nahl: 116.

20. Ibid., p.21.

c) *Secondary Prohibition*

Some Shiite scholars hold that human cloning as such and by itself is allowable, nonetheless, it inevitably leads to some evils. They therefore prohibit it as a precautionary measure to prevent those evils. Thus the ruling is given on secondary grounds. Jurists such as Yusuf Sane'i,²¹ Sayyid Kadim Ha'iri, Sayyid Sadiq Shirazi,²² and Nasir Makarim Shirazi²³ are among the proponents of this view. In his professorial lectures, Ayatullah Makarim has set forth his views and arguments in detail. In those lectures, he proposes several issues: first, he explains the mechanism and process of human cloning; second, the related *shari'ah* law; third, the criticism of anti-human cloning arguments from *shari'ah*; and fourth, he explains the related *shari'ah* rules with regard to the cloned person in relation to the laws and the consequences of the issue. As far as *shari'ah* rules are concerned, in terms of permission or prohibition, human cloning may be surveyed from three different angles: its consequences; the mentioning of human cloning in *shari'ah*; and its secondary grounds in *shari'ah*.²⁴ In regard to the first angle, he says that human cloning entails a number of prohibited acts, such as the unlawful matrimonial relations of looking or touching a stranger, except for the case in which the performer of the act is the husband.²⁵ As for the second angle, he says that the principle here is permission because there isn't any text from the Qur'an or from the traditions or consensus, nor is there an intellectual reasoning which prohibits

21. "Afkar-e Umumi wa Wakuneshhay-e Siyasi, Mazhabi, wa Farhangi Dakheli wa Jahani be Pishrafthay-e Bashar dar Hamgunsazi Insan," Kasra Isfahani and Muhammad Hussein San'ati in Majmu'-e Maqalat-e Kungerey-e Bainulmelaliy-e Akhlaq-e Zisti, pp.138-139.

22. شبكة النبا المعلوماتية، الخميس: ٢٠٠٣/١/٢ - ٢٨/شوال/١٤٢٣، at the following website: <http://www.annabaa.org>.

23. The answer to the questions posed to Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi on 1382/1/12 A. H. in the collection of Twelve Istifta' existing in his office.

24. Didgah-e Fikhiy-e Ayatullah Makarim dar barey-e do Mas'aley-e Shabihsazi wa Rahhaye Farar az Riba (دیدگاه فقهی آیه الله مکارم شیرازی درباره دو مسئله شبیه سازی و راههای فرار از ربا), p.25.

25. Ibid.

human cloning as it is a novel issue.²⁶ In regard to the third angle, he mentions some unacceptable ethical, legal, and social consequences, concluding, “As far as secondary grounds are concerned, human cloning is hazardous for human societies, so all peoples and nations throughout the world have regarded it as unethical, so that even many governments have passed some law in order to ban it.”²⁷ He then summarizes his discussion. “Because there is neither text from the Qur’an or tradition or consensus nor any intellectual reasoning to ban it, as the primary ground of *shari’ah* requires, human cloning is allowable, but the secondary ground requires it to be prohibited.”²⁸

d) Primary Prohibition

In contrast to the above three theories which regarded human cloning as permissible, although they differ in regard to its secondary grounds, the fourth theory principally holds that human cloning is, according to primary grounds, prohibited and unlawful. This theory has a small number of proponents who have offered several arguments in its favor. There are a few short statements, as well as some fatwas, from the late Ayatollah Muhammad Mahdi Shams-u al-Din upholding this theory.

From among the other proponents of this theory is the late Ayatollah Sheikh Javad Tabrizi who holds that human cloning is not permissible because divine wisdom requires there to be a distinction and difference among human beings in different societies. Allah says: “و من آياته خلق السموات والأرض واختلاف ألسنتكم وألوانكم” (“Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors.”)²⁹ He also says, “و جعلناكم شعوباً وقبائل لتعارفوا” (“And indeed We made you nations and tribes so that you may know

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., pp.26-29.

29. al-Rūm: 22.

one another.”³⁰ This is because the general system of the world depends upon this distinction and difference, while human cloning entails a type of chaos and disorder in the organization of nature. Furthermore, it entails other illegal acts such as unlawful matrimonial relations, such as touching a non-mahram or looking at her private parts. As a result of the issue of marriage, there is a possibility of confusing the wife with a non-mahram woman or a mahram woman with a non-mahram so that one cannot distinguish between the two parties, namely the passive [wife] from the active [husband].³¹

Both human and animal cloning are held to be unlawful by Muhammad Mahdi Shams-u al-Din.³² Nonetheless, he did not have a clear and fixed position towards animal cloning. After one page affirming that human cloning is unlawful, for example, he goes on to write: “Human cloning is undoubtedly unlawful, but animal cloning requires more examination and as such we cannot prove that it is lawful.”³³ In his interview with *al-Shira*’ magazine, he said that the chief argument for the prohibition of human cloning is that humans are not the real owners of their bodies and thus it is also an alteration in the creation of Allah.³⁴

In brief, Shiite scholars maintain four positions in regards to human cloning: some of them hold that it is allowable in all cases, while others hold that it is allowable case by case and in a limited way. The third group believes that it is allowable upon its primary grounds, but by the requirements of its secondary grounds, and due to its evil

30. al-Hujurat: 13.

31. Sirat-u al-Nijat fi Ajwebat-i al-Istifta’at (صراط النجاة في أجوبة الاستفتاءات), Sayyid Abulqasim Khui ma’a Ta’liqat al-Sheikh Javad Tabrizi (Qom: Madyan, 2006), vol.2, p.564.

32. “إستنساخ البشر أمر غير مشروع قطعاً و يقيناً” in al-Istinsakh bain al-Islam wa al-Masihiyya, Maqalat-un wa Abhath-un wa Muqabilat-un likibari Rijal-i al-Din wa al-Mufakkirin wa al-Bahethin min Mukhtalaf-i al-Adyan wa al-Madahib (Markaz al-Dirasat wa al-Abhath al-Islamiyya-al-Masihiyya, Beirut: Dar-u al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1999), p.132.

33. Ibid., p.133.

34. “إستنساخ البشر أمر غير مشروع قطعاً و يقيناً” in al-Istinsakh bain al-Islam wa al-Masihiyya, pp.131-135.

consequences, it is unlawful. The fourth group is of the view that as such, and by its primary grounds, human cloning is unlawful.

The Examination of These Theories

From among these four theories, three of them somehow promote anti-human cloning. We shall begin with the weakest theory which regards it as unlawful.

a) The Examination of the Primary Prohibition Theory

Muhammad Mahdi Shams-u al-Din has frankly defended this theory by offering two major reasons, with one somehow reducible to the other. The first reason is an argument about alteration in the creation of Allah and the second is that humans are not the real owner of their bodies or those of others.

1. The Argument About Alteration in the Creation of God; The abstract of this argument is that human cloning entails some kind of alteration in the creation of God, which, according to the Qur'an, is unlawful. The detail of his argument is that human cloning results in the creation of several reproductions of the same body, which creation as such and by its primary ground in *shari'ah* and the Qur'an, declares unlawful. Referring to the verse, "وَلَا ضَلَالَنَّهُمْ وَلَا مَنِينَهِمْ وَلَا مَرْنَهُمْ فَلْيُبْتِئْنَ أَذَانُ" "وَلَا ضَلَالَنَّهُمْ وَلَا مَنِينَهِمْ وَلَا مَرْنَهُمْ فَلْيُبْتِئْنَ أَذَانُ" (And I will lead them astray, and give them [false] hopes, and prompt them to slit the ears of cattle, and I will prompt them to alter Allah's creation,")³⁵ Muhammad Mahdi Shams-u al-Din claims that all exegetes say, that by "the alteration of Allah's creation," the Qur'an means any kind of change or action which can lead to the undue modification of the nature of the human body.³⁶ In the course of his argument, he has offered two premises: first, he has interpreted "alteration of Allah's creation" to mean any

35. al-Nisa': 119.

36. al-Istinsakh al-Jeini, p.58.

kind of undue bodily alteration and second, he has considered human cloning to be a kind of undue bodily alteration.

The former premise is unacceptable. If by “alteration of Allah’s creation” he means undue physical alterations which may deform the body, it cannot be applied to human cloning. This is because, through the process of human cloning, scientists attempt to produce a being which is 97% genetically similar to the original. As a result, from the cell nucleus of a healthy individual, a healthy similar individual may be produced - this is a process far different from the deformation of creatures - unless someone argues that for the time being it is impossible to produce cloned humans. This argument, however, may be valid *pro tem*, i.e., as soon as scientists reach the perfect techniques for cloning a healthy human, this argument fails. The unlawfulness of cloning will, consequently, be limited to the present and confined to the so-called “deformation of creatures.”

The latter premise is questionable as well. By the “alteration of Allah’s creation,” he means the non-natural changes in the body, and he also claims that all exegetes of the Qur’an, regardless of their sects and schools, have the same interpretation. Here, not only is it an unfounded claim, but we also have arguments proving otherwise. If he meant that all exegetes of the Qur’an interpreted the “alteration of Allah’s creation” as merely bodily change, then it is obviously inconsistent with the views of many exegetes. In regard to this verse of the Qur’an, there are two major interpretations. Viewing the context of the verse, i.e. “to slit the ears of cattle,” some exegetes have followed the interpretation of Muhammad Mahdi Shams-u al-Din. Some others, however, have explicitly stipulated that it means the alteration in the religion of Allah and his commandments rather than physical changes. In his *Interpretation*, for example, ‘Ayyashi narrates from Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq who have said that by the phrase “alteration of Allah’s creation,” Allah had meant “alteration in religion and Allah’s

commandments.”³⁷ Ali ibn Ibrahim has also interpreted the phrase “to alter Allah’s creation” as “to alter Allah’s command.”³⁸ Having reported the above views on the issue, Sheikh Tusi writes: “The strongest view is that of those who say that “to alter Allah’s creation” means “to alter Allah’s religion,” because of the verse, *فطرة الله التي فطر*”³⁹ (The origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind, there is no altering Allah’s creation; that is the upright religion.”)⁴⁰ Tabarsi has also interpreted “the alteration of creation,” saying: “By this He meant to change the lawful into unlawful and the unlawful into lawful.”⁴¹ Further, in his *Jawami’-u al-Jami’*, he writes: “And it is said that the origination of Allah is the religion of Islam and His commandment.”⁴² Thus contrary to what Shams-u al-Din has claimed, many Shiite exegetes have taken “the alteration of creation” to mean “the alteration of religion” and some have regarded this as the strongest interpretation. The case is true as well with the Sunni scholars who have mostly assumed two views. The only apparently Shiite scholar who referred to this verse in order to prohibit cloning is Shams-u al-Din. However, not only do other Shiite scholars not refer to this verse when discussing the issue, but they have also tried to refute such a reference. For example, Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi, who is amongst the opponents of cloning, has undermined this reference for two reasons.⁴³ Having mentioned the two views on the interpretation of “the alteration of creation,”

37. Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi (تفسير العياشي), Muhammad Ibn Mas‘ud Ibn ‘Ayyash Samarqandi (Tehran: Maktabat-u al-Ilmiyyat al-Islamiyya), vol.1, p.276.

38. Tafsir-u al-Qummi (تفسير القمي), Ali ibn Ibrahim Qummi (Qom: Mu‘assasat Dar-u al-Kitab, 1984), vol.1, p.153.

39. al-Rum: 30.

40. al-Tebyan fi Tafsir al-Qur‘an (التبيان) Muhammad Ibn Hasan al-Tusi, researched by Ahmad Habib Qasir (Qum: Maktab-u al-A‘lam-i al-Islami, 1409 A. H.), vol.3, p.333.

41. Majma‘ al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur‘an (مجمع البيان في تفسير القرآن), Fadl ibn Hasan Tabarsi (Beirut: Dar Ihya‘ al-Turath-i al-Arabi, 1379 A. H.), vol.2, p.112.

42. Jawami‘-u al-Jami‘ (جوامع الجامع), Fadl ibn Hasan Tabarsi (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1412 A. H.), vol.1, p.288.

43. Didgah-e Fikhiy-e Ayatullah Makarim, p.27.

Ayatollah Sanad proves such a reference false, too.⁴⁴ After his report and examination of this argument, Ayatollah Mo'men proves it "false altogether."⁴⁵

Taking for granted the argument of Shams-u al-Din, there appear many objections and difficulties; for example, he must show why plastic surgery is an exception to such a prohibition, or he must prohibit this kind of surgery, too. So as far as *shari'ah* and legal rules are concerned, it is reasonable to dismiss this verse altogether, seeking another argument.

2. The Argument From the Fact that Humans Are Not the Owners of Their Bodies; There are a few points to be mentioned concerning this argument:

First, this argument is in fact another account of the same anti-cloning ethical argument put forth by the Sunnis; they say that "humans are trusted with their bodies as a deposit." A man therefore according to this argument is not the owner of his body, rather he is entrusted with it, and Allah is its owner. In view of this, any kind of usage of the body requires the permission of the owner.

The scope of this argument is not well defined, and thus one cannot infer the desired result from its premises. From the fact that one is not the owner of one's body, we cannot infer that one cannot use one's body. General permission is given to everyone to utilize their body for any common and general usage; therefore it is not necessary for someone to obtain permission for such usage, but rather it is impossible to abide by the consequences of such an argument. We naturally and continuously make use of our bodies in ways which are considered lawful by Shams-u al-Din, too. Therefore, instead of highlighting the fact that humans do not own their bodies, Shams-u al-Din is expected to show why this particular usage - human cloning, for example - is prohibited. From the celebrated premise which says,

44. Fiqh-u al-Tibb wa al-Tadakhum-u al-Naqdi (فقه الطب و التضخم النقدي), p.115.

45. al-Istinsakh (الإستساح), Ayatollah Mo'men, p.12.

“We do not have the right to use our bodies as we wish,” we cannot logically infer the conclusion, “Therefore, we do not have the right to use our bodies at all.” As it were, the denial of an A-proposition does not imply the acceptance of an E-proposition. Nonetheless, Shams-u al-Din has acquired such a deduction by inferring some broad conclusion from a sound and narrow premise. The logical conclusion of the above argument is the denial of ownership in general rather than the denial of all kinds of right of use. Hence, the acceptance of the argument is reconcilable with the limited right of use.

Second, contrary to the principle of permissibility celebrated by all Shiite scholars in *Ilm-u al-Usul*, Shams-u al-Din has began the course of his argument with the principle of prohibition. The former principle suggests that very thing is permissible in the first place unless it is proved to be unlawful, but the latter principle suggests that very thing is prohibited in the first place unless it is proved to be lawful. Among the Shiites it was the *Akhbariyyun* (traditionalists) who would follow the principle of prohibition in the first place.⁴⁶ It is noteworthy, however, that such a view cannot be accepted by the *Usuli* leanings of Shams-u al-Din, who was educated in the school of Najaf.⁴⁷ He is expected here to clarify two points before he discusses human cloning. First, he ought to undermine the *Usuli* reasons for the principle of permissibility, and second he should offer his irrefutable arguments to prove the principle of prohibition. Further, the mere refutation of permissibility does not imply the application of prohibition, for it is still possible to apply the principle of suspension of decision.

46. *Usul-u al-Istinbat* (اصول الاستنباط), Sayyid Ali Naqi al-Haidari (Tehran: Islamiyya, 1364 A.H.), p.174.

47. The Akhbari course of argument stands against the Usuli course. The Akhbari scholars, for example, rely on the traditions, but the Usuli scholars rely on human intellect first and then on the traditions. And because intellect suggests that everything ought to be allowed in the first place unless it is proved to be prohibited by shari'ah, Usuli scholars normally hold that cloning is to be permissible unless it is proved to be unlawful by shari'ah. So it is strange that such a person who was educated in the Usuli school refers initially to the principle of prohibition on this issue.

Third, supposing that Shams-u al-Din could prove the principle of prohibition to be correct, he may not propose it as the general Shiite view but as his own private opinion, for the majority of Shiite scholars have explicitly or implicitly accepted that all human beings are the owners of their own bodies. Referring to this ownership, not only have some scholars agreed that man can make use of his body, but have also claimed that he can sell his organs; indeed, selling is the best evidence or indication of ownership. In his *Tahrir-u al-Wasila*, for example, Imam Khomeini holds that on one occasion in life one may sell an organ from one's body by letting it be removed.⁴⁸ When talking about the dominion of the owner over his properties and body, Imam Khomeini has also pointed to the current custom of allowing one's body to be used for medical experiments after death or selling one's blood while still alive; he has based this idea on the intellectual rule of one's dominion over one's body.⁴⁹ Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi has allowed for the receiving of money for the donation of one's organs, with a juridical precaution of receiving money for the practice, rather than for the organ itself.⁵⁰ Ayatollah Sane'i even holds that it is most likely allowed for one to sell all of one's organs.⁵¹ Contemporary jurists have, accordingly, argued that one can sell an organ from one's body. One cannot sell anything unless one is the owner of the property, because selling is a possessory right; and according to the rule which says, "There is no selling unless in possession," we may demonstrate the

48. *Tahrir-u al-Wasila* (تحرير الوسيلة), Ruhullah Khomeini (Tehran: Mu'assasah Tanzim wa Nashr Athar Imam Khomeini, 1379 A. H.), vol.2, p.595, No.7; *Tawdih-u al-Masa'il* (توضيح المسائل), Imam Khomeini, p.700, No.2884.

49. *al-Bay'* (البيع), Imam Khomeini (Tehran: Mu'assasah Tanzim wa Nashr Athar Imam Khomeini, 1379), vol.1, p.42.

50. *Risala Tawdih-u al-Masa'il* (رساله توضيح المسائل), Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi (Qom: Hadaf Publication), p.503, No.2446.

51. *Risala Tawdih-u al-Masa'il* (رساله توضيح المسائل), Yusuf Sane'i (Qom: Meitham Tammar Publication, 1379 A. H.), p.484, No.39.

ownership of one's body. This is why Ayatollah Mosawi Ardebili has stipulated that humans are the owners of their bodies.⁵²

Fourth, supposing the principle of prohibition⁵³ in new cases where there is no previously established law, there are many traditions from the Holy Shiite Imams which give precedence to the principle of permissibility.⁵⁴ Thus despite the fact that Allah is the first and real owner of our bodies and we have no possessory right to make use of His possession without His permission, there are many verses of the Qur'an and traditions from the Holy Imams suggesting that everything is allowed for us unless a specific prohibiting law exists.

Fifth, the consequence of Shams-u al-Din's theory is the prohibition of the possessory right of one's body, including the donation of one's blood and kidneys, and even less questionable parts of the body. If we were not the owner of our bodies, and the first principle for disputable cases was prohibition, then we would be in need of a particular permission for any case of possessory use, such as kidney donation.

In a nutshell, it is implausible to defend the prohibition of human cloning; and because it is inconsistent with the Shiite methodology of *fiqh* and *usul*, very few Shiite scholars have ascribed to the primary prohibition theory.

b) The Examination of the Secondary Prohibition Theory

Although the majority of pro-cloning jurists allow for human cloning according to the primary principle of permission, they prohibit it on secondary grounds due to its evil consequences. From among these scholars, and despite its permissibility on primary grounds, Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi has proposed this theory in detail, giving his three arguments from the standpoint of ethical, legal, and social issues.

52. Istifta'at (استفتاءات), Abdulkarim Mosawi Ardebili (Qom: Najat Publication, 1377 A. H.), vol.1, p.413.

53. al-Usul al-'Ammah lilfiqh-i al-Muqara (الأصول العامة للفقهاء المقارن), Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Hakim (Beirut: Dar al-Andulus, 1963), p.501.

54. Kifayat-u al-Usul (كفاية الأصول), Akhund Khurasani, p.348.

1. Argument from Ethics; Human cloning, Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi says, challenges many ethical issues. “If we pave the way for human cloning [by] letting cloned children be born, then it would gradually put an end to the institution of marriage [and] destroy the foundation of family life; many unmarried women would become pregnant by a cell, whether of somebody else or of herself, which apparently gives rise to a mother and a child, but they may be twins in a sense! The global ethics would not stand such an environment, for it may cause the destruction of family life and human societies.”⁵⁵

Is it really possible to issue a prohibiting fatwa for a new technology by the mere supposition of something occurring?! Is there not such a supposition for prophylactic medicine? Don't we have the argument that “if” it were not for prophylactic medicine, some people may perform immoral acts in order to abort a pregnancy? Is it not due to such arguments that some scholars have banned prophylactic medicine? Is there any logical relation between human cloning and the collapse of the family? Is it not the case that human cloning may logically lead to the avoidance of marriage? Is it not possible nowadays for unmarried women to conceive a child? And is such a technology so cheap and widely available that anybody can make use of it? This theory needs to answer such questions. It must be noted that there is no logical tie between human cloning and marriage or abstinence from marriage, nor is the possible pregnancy of unmarried women the outcome of cloning. A full analysis of the logical consequences of this theory has yet to be performed.

Having relied on some future misuses of cloning, Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi infers the prohibition of human cloning. This is nothing but the very concept of the *Usuli* rule of *sadd al-zara'i*, which means the blocking of the means that may lead to an evil end.

There is no room for this rule in Shiite *usul al-fiqh*. In brief, this rule suggests that an action can be allowed but is banned because of

55. Didgah-e Fikhiy-e Ayatullah Makarim, p.25.

future evils and misuses. The *Usuli* rule of *sadd al-zara'i*, according to Sunni scholars, is less important than *qiyas* (analogy). It is by far evident that there is no room for *qiyas* in Shiite *usul al-fiqh*, let alone the rule of *sadd al-zara'i*. The rule of *sadd al-zara'i*, Shiite scholars argue, may only result in invalid conjecture which “indeed is no substitute for the truth.”⁵⁶ Shiite scholars do not issue the prohibiting fatwa as a lawful preliminary action for an unlawful end, however logical a connection they may have, let alone human cloning and its so-called consequences which entail no such logical correlation. They say that prohibition does not extend from the end to the preliminary means, and thus they follow up the chapter of “*Muqaddama Haram*” (“A Preliminary for the Unlawful”). The Shiite scholars of *usul* say that the preliminary action for an unlawful end is not unlawful, because after those lawful preliminaries, the agent still remains free whether or not to do the unlawful action. It is thus that, as Akhund Khurasani holds, the prohibition or repugnance of the ends do not extend to the means.⁵⁷ However, it must be noted that if the case was such that, after the preliminaries, the agent had no choice but to do the unlawful action, as scholars like Akhund say, the prohibition of the end extends to the means. Nonetheless, there are other scholars such as Imam Khomeini who are of the view that the prohibition of the unlawful ends does not extend to the lawful means at all, whether the agent is forced by the lawful preliminaries to do the unlawful end or not.⁵⁸

2. Argument from Law; The second argument for the prohibition of human cloning on secondary grounds comes from law. According to this argument, “a cloned man has no father or mother because he is not made from a sperm and ovule, nor has he a sister or brother or even a family. He has been developed in an artificial womb, a

56. Yunus: 36

57. Kifayat-u al-Usul (كفاية الأصول), p.128

58. Tahzib-u al-Usul (تهذيب الأصول), Imam Khomeini's lectures on *usul* prepared by Ja'far Subhani (Qom: Dar al-Fikr, 1367 A. H.), vol.1, pp.222-3.

substitute for a real mother. In one word, he is an individual of no lineage.”⁵⁹

The abstract of the above argument is: “A cloned man has no lineage and this is unlawful.” Now let us examine this argument.

First, according to the established principle of the majority of Shiite scholars, everything is allowed unless a clear-cut text suggests that it is unlawful. Accordingly, wherever there is a type of prohibition we may demand a reason for it because prohibition is contrary to the prior principle of permissibility. In the above argument, it is claimed that a cloned man has no lineage, i.e., he lacks a father, mother, sister or brother. Who has claimed that a cloned man has no lineage? Instead of a comprehensive survey of the issue, we shall take the indisputable case of human cloning, which is regarded as lawful by a number of other scholars. We may suppose that cloning is performed within the scope of a married couple with no unlawful action. Let’s begin with the missing mother of the cloned man, as Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi has claimed. In his argument, Ayatollah Makarim suffices to say “because the ovule has not been mingled,” i.e., the ovule of the mother is not fertilized by the sperm of the father. The analysis of this phrase suggests that there are two prerequisites for somebody to become a mother: one is the donation of the ovule and the other is the role that this ovule plays in genetic characteristics. In the cloning process, the former condition exists but not the latter “because the ovule has not been mingled.” As a result, this mother is not recognized as a legal mother. It is then necessary to inquire which legal text has included such conditions in the definition of the mother. This kind of discussion and the role of a mother’s ovule, however, is a totally new debate. Impressed by their own particular understanding of the topic, however, previous jurists have barely considered a role for the mother’s ovule in the process of reproduction.

59. *Didgah-e Fikhiy-e Ayatullah Makarim*, p.26.

Second, the concept of the mother is not one which has been established by the divine legislator. This concept is a customary one which requires us to see what type of person is customarily called a mother by this conventional concept so that we regard her as a mother. If that were the case, we should only see whether such traditional concepts apply to a woman who gives birth to a child developed from a missing nucleus ovule. The answer to this question is more likely to be positive. The glossaries have also defined the mother as somebody who gives birth to a child.

Third, jurists have undoubtedly agreed upon the attribution of a child to the woman who has given birth to it. For it is legally sufficient for a child to be born of a lawful relation in order to be ascribed to the mother.⁶⁰ This ascription was practiced regardless of the ovule being mingled or similar issues, and there is no reason to make an exception to this customary rule here. It simply suffices us to know, for example, that Ayatollah Hakim has regarded the customary practice here as the only principle to be followed.⁶¹

Fourth, some jurists have gone as far as to say that in order to be considered the mother of a child it is not necessary to be the donator of the ovule because giving birth to a child is sufficient evidence of motherhood. Ayatollah Khui, for example, holds that if a woman donates her ovule to be implanted in another woman's womb, the owner of the womb is the mother rather than the donator of the ovule.⁶²

Fifth, the fosterage of children, providing its specific prerequisites, may give rise to the relations of motherhood and childhood between the foster mother and the suckling infant, so much so that they become

60. al-Istinsakh bayn al-Taqniya wa al-Tashi' (الاستنساخ بين التقنية و التشريع), p.139.

61. Fiqh-u al-Istinsakh-i al-Bahsari wa Fatawa Tibiyya (فقه الاستنساخ البشرى و فتاوى طبية), p.22.

62. Masa'il wa Rudud Tibqan lifatawa al-Maja' al-Dini al-Sayyid Abulqasim al-Musawi al-Khui (مسائل و ردود طبقاً لفتاوى المرجع الدينى السيد ابو القاسم الموسوى الخوئى), compiled and prepared by Muhammad Javad Radi al-Shihabi (Qom: Dar-u al-Hadi Publication, 1412 A. H.), vol.1, p.100; Fiqh-u al-Tibb wa al-Tadakhum al-Naqdi (فقه الطب و التضخم النقدي), p.87.

maharim (very close relatives whose marriage is forbidden). Now a woman who has developed an ovule of hers in her womb for nine months must *a fortiori* be regarded as a legal or formal mother. This is based on the priority argument which is put forth by Shiite scholars. Note, however, that the legal standard of fosterage, namely “the development of flesh and hardening of the bones,” can be found more in the case of the woman who has developed a child in her womb.

Sixth, many jurists believe that the concept of motherhood can be applied to such a case. Whether proponents or opponents of human cloning, these jurists are of the view that if the ovule belongs to a woman and the child is developed in her womb, she is undeniably the mother. However, an opponent of human cloning, Ayatollah Sayyid Kazim Ha’iri, has referred to the customary concept of motherhood in order to claim that the owner of the ovule is the mother and the owner of the cell nucleus is the father.⁶³ In his answer to the question “What relation may a cloned person have to the husband and wife?,” the cloning proponent Ayatollah Shirazi writes: “If they are married the child belongs to both of them, but if they are not he is treated as an unknown child.”⁶⁴ Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Sadr also argues that if an embryo is developed in a woman’s womb in compliance with *shari’ah*, she is the mother whether the ovule belongs to her or to someone else.⁶⁵ He has also issued a fatwa stating that the woman is still the mother even if the donator of the ovule is unknown since it is received from a specific bank of ovules and developed in the woman’s womb.⁶⁶

Seventh, on some occasions two women may be involved in the case. For example, the ovule of one woman is developed in the womb

63. Ma Huwa Ra’y al-Shari’at-i al-Islamiyya min Amaliyyat al-Istinsakh (ما هو رأى الشريعة الإسلامية من عملية الاستنساخ؟)

64. al-Istinsakh al-Bashari fi Ra’y al-Imam Shirazi (الاستنساخ البشرى فى رأى الإمام الشيرازى), No.2.

65. Fiqh-u al-Mudu’at al-mukhtalifa (فقه الموضوعات الحديثة), Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa Publication, 1419 A. H.), p.26, No.31.

66. Ibid., No.39.

of another. Who then is the actual legal mother? Here the opinions of jurists differ: some jurists regard the donator of the ovule as the mother while others regard the owner of the womb as the mother, whereas others consider both to be the mother of the embryo.⁶⁷

The first group, who considers the donator of the ovule to be the mother, may argue that inherited characteristics belong to the ovule, rather than a surrogate womb. They may also argue that the child belongs to the seed, rather than the area in which the seed may grow. Further, they argue that as an artificial womb is not regarded as a mother, a natural surrogate womb cannot be considered to be a mother either.

The latter group, who consider the owner of the womb to be the mother, rely on the following verse of the Qur'an,

"إن أمهاتهم إلا اللاتي ولدنهم".

("Their mothers are only those who gave birth to them.")⁶⁸ Some jurists, however, consider none of them to be the mother of the child, but there are others who consider both of them to be the foster mother because the ovule is from one woman and the womb from another. Not only is this discussion still going on among both Shiite and Sunni scholars, but also lawmakers of positive law have not yet come to a decisive decision. Ayatollah Khui is among those who consider the owner of the womb to be the mother;⁶⁹ He argues:

Only the woman who gives birth to the child is the mother, this is required by the verse of the Qur'an which reads:

"الذين يظاهرون منكم من نسائهم ما هن أمهاتهم إن أمهاتهم إلا اللاتي ولدنهم".

As for those of you who repudiate their wives by *zihar*, they are not their mothers; their mothers are only those who gave birth to them.") The owner of the sperm is the father, but his wife is not the mother of the child.⁷⁰

67. Fiqh-u al-Tibb wa al-Tadakhum al-Naqdi (فقه الطب و التضخم النقدي), pp.86-7.

68. al-Mujadalah: 2.

69. Fiqh-u al-Tibb wa al-Tadakhum al-Naqdi (فقه الطب و التضخم النقدي), p.87.

70. Masa'il wa Rudud Tibqan lifatawa al-Maja' al-Dini al-Sayyid Abulqasim al-Musawi al-Khui, p.100.

Having analyzed the concept of giving birth to a child, other scholars intend to attribute the child to the owners of the ovule and the sperm, saying that, although the owner of the womb is commonly regarded as the mother, she is not included in the above verse which says, "Their mothers are only those who gave birth to them."⁷¹ Most Shiite scholars tend to hold this opinion. In his analysis of this issue, for example, Ayatollah Mo'men has likened the natural womb to an artificial one concluding that the actual legal mother is the owner of the fertilized ovule.⁷² Allowing for a surrogate womb, Ayatollah Shirazi also considers no relation between the child and the owner of womb.⁷³ In the human cloning process, Mr. Jawaheri has also regarded the owner of the ovule as the real mother.⁷⁴

There is also a more complicated case where the ovule belongs to two people. What is to be done here? Suppose that the ovule nucleus of one woman is put in another woman's ovule because of the deficiency of its cytoplasm. In this case, some scholars hold that both of the women are the mothers of the child. In his answer to the legal question, for example, Ayatollah Sayyid Kazim Ha'iri writes:

The owners of the ovule and cytoplasm are both embraced as mothers, for the customary concept of "mother" is applicable to the owner of the ovule, and these two women are both the owners of the ovule. Did the common usage not supposedly embrace the plurality of mothers, it is because of its lack of full knowledge of all cases of the extension, rather than of the rejection of this particular case. And any mistake as to the extension by the common usage is not to be followed.⁷⁵

In this case, Mr. Jawaheri has also said that because the child is made of both the nucleus and cytoplasm it has two mothers. If they raise an

71. al-Istitam wa al-Istinsakh (الإستتام والإستنساح), p.18.

72. al-Istinsakh (الإستنساح), Ayatollah Mo'men, pp.34-35.

73. al-Istinsakh al-Bashari fi Ra'y al-Imam Shirazi (الإستنساح البشري في رأى الإمام الشيرازي), No.22.

74. al-Istitam wa al-Istinsakh (الإستتام والإستنساح), p.23.

75. al-Istiftah, No.1092, Ayatollah Sayyid Kazim Ha'iri.

objection that customary usage would not accept two mothers for the same person, we answer that the customary usage has made a mistake in distinguishing the extensions of the concept.⁷⁶ Further, Ayatollah Musawi Ardebili has embraced the plurality of mothers,⁷⁷ and Ayatollah Sanad has offered a few arguments for it as well.⁷⁸

As a result, not only have the majority of jurists taken for granted the presence of the mother in the process of human cloning, but they have also embraced the plurality of mothers as reasonable in a few new cases which were unknown to our predecessors, such as the surrogate womb. Thus the belief in the presence of the mother in human cloning both complies with the principles and is backed by the linguistic rules of *shari'ah*, consistent both with the customary concept of motherhood and with the customary mind of the faithful; furthermore, many jurists have issued their fatwas according to it already. This is while the denial of the mother from the cloned person is contrary to the principles and the linguistic rules of *shari'ah*, the customary concept of motherhood, and the fatwas of many jurists.

Eighth, if we recognize the presence of the mother in the process of human cloning, we naturally recognize the presence of brothers, sisters, and all other relatives through such a mother. A cloned person will accordingly have a tie of brotherhood or sisterhood with all those who may be born from the same womb, and all the relatives of this mother will truly be his relatives. The main part of the objection to the lack of lineage would thus disappear. In brief, the above claim that the cloned person lacks a lineage is unacceptable and contrary to customary understanding and to the rules of *shari'ah*, particularly if what is meant is the denial of all relatives altogether.

Ninth, the major premise of the above argument is seriously objectionable. Taking for granted that a cloned person has no family

76. al-Istitam wa al-Istinsakh (الإستتام والإستنساح), p.24.

77. Istifta'at (استفتائات), Musawi Ardebili, vol.1, p.407.

78. Fiqh-u al-Tibb wa al-Tadakhum al-Naqdi (فقه الطب و التضخم النقدي), p.87.

or lineage, who said that it is forbidden to produce a man of no lineage or parents? This argument is required to first prove that a cloned man has no lineage or parents and then to subsequently prove that producing a man of no lineage or parents is forbidden, then it may conclude that human cloning is forbidden. The latter claim, i.e., the major premise, is open to question. The author of this argument has taken this major premise for granted, when it actually calls for argumentation. According to Ayatollah Mo'men, even though we may embrace the fact that a cloned child has no parents, there is no reason to proclaim that producing such a child is forbidden, but rather the principles of *usul* require the permissibility of such a measure.⁷⁹ Now that we ought to begin with the permissibility, the burden of the argument for prohibition is with those who regard that such a measure is forbidden.

3. Argument from Social Issues; The third argument to prove the secondary prohibition comes from social issues. This argument suggests that human cloning gives rise to social disorders that could undermine the foundations of society; it is thus forbidden on secondary grounds. It says that "human cloning may cause many discrepancies and disorders in the organization of the society, for it is inconsistent with the spirit of the verse, "And We made you nations and tribes that you may know one another"

"و جعلناكم شعوباً و قبائل لتعارفوا".⁸⁰

By the process of human cloning, similar people with similar desires and standing may come into being which may ruin social diversity.⁸¹

The abstract of this argument is that human cloning undermines human diversity and this is not compatible with Allah's command or the social system. The argument is based on erroneous presumptions. The first presumption is that a man is not but his genes, which implies

79. al-Istinsakh (الإستنساخ), Ayatollah Mo'men, p.20.

80. al-Hujurat: 13.

81. Didgah-e Fikhiy-e Ayatullah Makarim, p.26.

that the similarity of genes entails the similar characteristics of their owners. A man, however, may act far beyond his genes, i.e., a man's character is not always determined by his genes. This assumption, which derives from some sort of genetic pre-determinism or biologism, is unacceptable. It does not distinguish phenotype characteristics from genotype ones either. Supposing the possibility of similar people, it is a mere formal or biological resemblance rather than an ethical or spiritual one. The second presumption is that this argument proceeds as if all proponents of cloning intend to follow one identical design or they all want to practice cloning in order to produce a specific person or people, so that within a few decades or a century all human beings will be copied repeatedly in compliance with design A or B, for example. This presumption, however, is unfounded. The third false presumption is as if there is only one overwhelming power on the earth which predestines the future of human cloning and who is to be cloned. The fourth false presumption is that human cloning leads to absolute resemblance, which biologically is unattainable. There may be up to a 3% difference between the cloned man and the person from whom the nucleus cell is taken, which means that their resemblance is less than identical twins. The fifth erroneous presumption is that human cloning, if allowed, will change into the predominant method for reproduction. Although thousands of people may engage in human cloning on earth, it cannot affect human diversity for people will keep following the natural method of reproduction.

Having failed to consider the biological facts, particularly the difference between phenotype and genotype, they propose the issue of cloning Hitler, saying: "If we paved the way [for this to occur], all criminals in different societies would clone such people as Hitler and Hajjaj."⁸² A more thorough survey and consideration will show that not only is a cloned Hitler logically not identical with Hitler himself, but it is also impossible to redevelop the phenotype characteristics in

82. Didgah-e Fikhiy-e Ayatullah Makarim, p.26.

the process of human cloning. Furthermore, the future and potential misuse of a certain technology is not grounds for its banning, unless somebody believes in the rule of *sadd al-zara'i*. Having reported the future and potential misuse of cloning, Ayatollah Hakim gives a sound, precise, and juridical answer:

Although crimes are forbidden, it is possible for an act beneficial to the criminal to be lawful. How many technologies made by the modern world are more beneficial to the criminals than to human cloning! Still, nobody has even thought of forbidding them. How much more benefit criminals may have of operations such as plastic surgery than they do of human cloning! Is it reasonable to forbid plastic surgery for that reason?⁸³

The conclusion here is that there can be found no convincing judicial argument against human cloning.

c) The Examination of the Limited Permission Theory

Although this theory allows for human cloning because of the first rules of *usul*, it limits cloning due to its possible evil consequences when practiced on a large scale. As far as its grounds are concerned, this theory is acceptable. The problem with it, nonetheless, is its simplistic conception of human cloning. The permission element in this theory is judicial and according to the established grounds of Shiite *fiqh* and *usul*, however, it suffers from the current simplistic conception of human cloning as envisioned by science fiction literature and works such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, thus they have limited permission in order to supposedly save the world from disorder. Yet if we take into consideration the scientific facts of human cloning, such as the lack of absolute resemblance of cloned people, the impossibility of phenotype cloning, the high cost of cloning, the possibility of distinguishing cloned people, and the fact

83. *Fiqh-u al-Istinsakh-i al-Bahsari wa Fatawa Tibiyya* (فقه الاستنساخ البشرى و فتاوى طبية), p.20.

that the presence of identical twins, who constitute a considerable population of the world, we can see that it would not cause any disorder in the world. It is noteworthy that human cloning could never substitute for natural reproduction, just as extra-uterine pregnancy has never been a substitute for natural reproduction since it is merely a subordinate technology. Thus, in view of the scientific findings, and upon judicial grounds, there remains no basis for limiting permission.

d) The Examination of the Absolute Permission Theory

According to the bases of Shiite jurisprudence, there seems to be no well-founded ground to prohibit human cloning. It is thus lawful and does not go against any Shiite theological or judicial doctrines. As a result, those jurists who promote this theory have proceeded in compliance with the undeniable and celebrated principles of Shiite jurisprudence. If, nonetheless, someone wants to survey this theory, he is expected to examine the bases of this theory which requires more space than we have here.

Instead of a general discussion on human cloning, it is more reasonable to distinguish between different probable cases of cloning in order to expand our treatment in a more precise and well-organized way. Sometimes, for example, cloning may take place between a married couple, between two women, or even from one woman. Since the confusion of treating all such cases in the same manner may lead to the mystification of judicial bases and their different laws while cloning is still a new technology, this confusion is not reasonable. It is thus crucial here to begin with the permissibility of cloning in general, leaving its different cases and branches to more detailed discussions which seek to clarify the related law and fatwa of each case.

It is at this point that many jurists have decided on the prohibition of all types of human cloning from an unlawful action or problem seen in one or two cases. On the contrary, some other jurists have granted permission to perform all kinds of cloning based on the principle of permissibility which again has been observed in only one or two

cases. In these cases, as we can see, the claim goes far beyond the argument. In what has been discussed in this essay, the author has attempted to develop his discussion within the limits of a married couple with no genetic modification in the nucleus cell.

In conclusion, some Shiite jurists, according to their judicial analysis of the subject, have at the very least allowed for human cloning within the limits of a married couple. They have thus diverged from Sunni scholars who have unconditionally banned cloning in any form.

On the End of the Mystical Journey: Ibn Arabi and Adi Śankara

Abolfazl Mahmoodi¹

Abstract

This paper will compare two of the most prominent mystics of Islam and Hinduism on what may be called the “end of the mystical journey,” or *mokṣa* in Hindu spirituality and *fanā* in Islamic mysticism. The interpretations of these two mystics are naturally developed according to their own epistemological and ontological bases. Thus, referring to their most significant principles of thought, the author has tried to examine three aspects of those concepts, i.e., the nature of *mokṣa* and *fanā*, how these states can be attained, and whether or not religious obligations still need to be practiced after they have been attained. Having compared and summed up *mokṣa* and *fanā* within the above contexts, the author has shown some striking similarities and considerable differences between them, both in their principles and in the three above aspects relating to their nature, attainment and obligations.

Keywords: *fanā* (annihilation), *baqa'* (subsistence) after *fanā*, *mokṣa*, *jivanmukti*, and the abolition of obligation.

Both Ibn Arabi and Adi Śankara are two prominent monist mystics within two different schools of Islam and Hinduism respectively. Not only have they left invaluable works on the principles of their ideologies, known in Islam as theoretical mysticism, but they were also people of spiritual wayfaring and of mystical experiences and stations. In Hindu

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mysticism, the end of the spiritual journey is usually referred to as *mokṣa* (lit. to release or let loose; normally translated as liberation), which is the ultimate ideal for all Hindu mystical and religious schools. Hindu scholars and mystics, however, have different interpretations of this final aim, with different prerequisites and results which significantly depend on their ontological and epistemological principles. We may come across dissimilar versions of *mokṣa* even within the same school or *darśana*. A celebrated case of this issue can be seen in the school of *Vedānta* which introduces three different accounts of *mokṣa* - the most important of which comes from Śankara, who was the most eminent intellectual of the absolute unity school or “*Advaitā Vedānta*.” In Islamic mysticism and theosophy, this ultimate goal is construed as *fanā* (annihilation or absorption). Despite their description of *fanā* through a set of common characteristics, Muslim mystics have given different accounts of the concept, and have spoken of its different grades. One of the most eminent monist Muslim mystics who has discussed *fanā* is Ibn Arabi, the founder of theoretical mysticism. While studying Śankara’s theory of *mokṣa* and Ibn Arabi’s concept of *fanā*, we may come across some considerable points of similarity and difference between the two mystics. In what follows, I will go on to deal with the issue in its three dimensions: the definitions of *mokṣa* and *fanā*, how they can be achieved, i.e., the phases of the mystical journey, and the consequences of such a station - particularly whether mystics at this station can be exempt from their religious duties, which has been a prolonged dispute among scholars of the two traditions.

1. Bases

Adi Śankara, the founder of *Kevalādvaita* (the school of absolute unity), emphasizes in all of his works that “... only unity is the supreme truth.”² When we ponder the things around us, we notice their continuous change

2. Śankara, *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, I 1.1.

and their mingling and interaction with the categories of time and place. This shows that they are unstable and dependent in their very essence which in turn demonstrates the existence of one absolute unity which maintains its unique entity through all those various manifestations.

Having referred to a handful of phrases from the Upanishads, such as “This whole world has that as its soul. That is reality. That is *Ātman*,”³ “Being (*Sat*), one only without a second,”⁴ “Aught else than Him is wretched,”⁵ and similar phrases from Hindu holy scriptures, Śankara draws the conclusion that it is only the Absolute that really exists and other things are mere manifestations; therefore distinctions and differences are the results of *nāma* (name), *rūpa* (form) and *upādhi* (any limiting thing), which are the consequences of *māyā* or cosmological illusion, namely *avidyā* or ignorance. This unique truth is not only imperceptible, indefinable, and indescribable but also unreachable through reasoning and argument. This truth, Śankara holds, is *nirguna Brahman* (निर्गुण ब्रह्म, the supreme reality without form, quality or attribute), and is of the nature of *sat* (being), *cit* (cognition), *ānanda* (joy and bliss), and which can only be known through negative phrasing.

Our real self, he says, or the deepest part of our existence - which he calls *Ātman* - is radically different from our other aspects, such as our body or psyche. Like *Brahman*, it is of the nature of *sat* (existence), *cit* (cognition), *ānanda* (joy and bliss). In other words, the real selves of human beings and *Brahman* are consubstantial. Referring to the celebrated phrases of the Upanishads, which have been emphasized by the *Brahmanic* character of *Ātman* and *Brahman*, Śankara expresses this doctrine as his most significant one: “*Tat Tvam Asi*”⁶ (That art thou) and “*Sarvam Idam*

3. *Chandogya Upanishad*, VI, 15.3.

4. *Ibid.*, VI, 2.1.

5. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, III, 4.2.

6. *Ch. Up.*, VI, 9.4.

Brahma”⁷ (This whole world is *Brahman*). Accordingly, the deepest part of our existence is of the same essence as the universe.⁸ Śankara likens the relation between *Ātman* and *Brahman* to the relation between a ray and fire, a river and a sea, or the space of a container and universal space.⁹ To know that *Ātman* is identical with *Brahman* is to know that the supposed duality between the real self and *Brahman* comes from ignorance; this is the key for deliverance and the culmination of knowledge. “He who has realized that he is the very *Brahman* would never belong to this transient world like before.”¹⁰

Ibn Arabi, in his school of thought, analyzes everything - whether speaking about Allah, human beings or the world itself - according to existence and its modes and affairs. As set forth by him on many occasions, real existence is the Truth:

He is the origin of all origins and that is Allah, because these grades [beings] came into appearance by Him and these entities are determined by Him.¹¹

As such, this entity is beyond name, description, absoluteness, condition, particularity or generality; it is at the highest simplicity and unity, unattainable, beyond perception, and is pure good. So within the world of existence, there is only one true entity, which is the very Truth. This pure Truth or pure Existence, however, has different modes, affairs, and manifestations which constitute all beings of the universe whether material or incorporeal. Accordingly, the plurality of all beings in the universe is not but different modes and manifestations of that unique identical Truth, i.e., they are construed as the plurality of Names and infinite perfections of Allah Almighty.

7. Ibid., III, 14. 1.

8. See Śankara, op. cit., I. 2. 8; I. 3. 19; Rādhākṛishnan and Charles A. Moore, A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy, p.507.

9. Śankara, op. cit., I. 1. 5.

10. Ibid., I. 1. 4.

١١. هو اصل الأصول و هو الله، إذ به ظهرت هذه المراتب و تعينت هذه الحقائق (ابن عربي، فتوحات المكية، ج ٢، ص ٣٠٩).

Existence is not but the very Truth [identical with the Truth], there is nothing in it except for Him...then within existence nothing appeared except for the Truth, thus existence is the Truth and He is unique.¹²

Although he holds existence to be a single identical truth, Ibn Arabi considers its manifestations to be various and to comprise different grades. The universalities of these grades are those which are known in his school as the Five Presences, which, according to some commentators such as al-Qunawi, are as follows: the First Presence, including the grade of Absolute Unity and of Plural Unity; the Second Presence or the World of Pure Spirits; the Third Presence or the World of Images; the Fourth Presence or the World of Nature; and the Fifth Presence or the World of Perfect Man. Every one of the grades of existence or beings is the epiphanic form of one of the Divine Names, while the Perfect Man is the theophanic form of all His Names, or the All-Embracing Name. Thus, we may consider beings from two points of view, one with regard to their origin, essence, and existence, according to which they may be called Truth:

The essence and nature of the universe is the All-Merciful Breath within [through] which the forms of the world have appeared. Thus the whole world, as to its essence and nature, is noble and there is no difference in that.¹³

The other point of view is in regard to their forms or how they appear in the world, by which they are limited and various, and may be called creatures:

Everything that we perceive is the *wujūd* (being) of the Real within the entities of the possible things. In respect of the He-

٢١. إذ الوجود ليس غير عين الحق، فما في الوجود شيء سواه، ... فما ظهر في الوجود إلا الحق، فالوجود الحق هو واحد (Ibid., pp.516-517)

pp.452-453)

ness of the Real, it is his *wujūd*, but in respect of the diversity of the forms within it, it is the entities of the possible things...¹⁴

2. What is *Mokśa* and *Fanā* ?

Śankara and “*Mokśa*.” Similar to other Hindu scholars, Śankara says the aim of theoretical contemplations and practical asceticism is to reach *mokśa* or salvation which gives rise to the deliverance of human beings from the pains of repeated lives and the fetters of *samsāra*, or transmigration of the soul, and from the imposition of the inevitable rule of *karma*. This need, in Śankara’s view, can only be met through knowing *Brahman*.

The complete comprehension of *Brahman* is the highest end of man, since it destroys the root of all evil such as *avidya*, the seed of the entire *samsāra*.¹⁵

Such knowledge implies the identity of the Self and *Brahman*, and that is the key to salvation, which in more precise phrasing is called *mokśa* or deliverance. *Mokśa* may, therefore, be defined as knowing the identity of the Self and *Brahman*. As implied here, this event, referred to in Śankara’s works as non-dual realization (absolute monism), is not an ontological change but rather an epistemological one happening within the perception of the wayfarer by means of which he becomes aware of his true self which had previously been buried by the shroud of ignorance. In his introduction to the *Commentary on the Chandogya Upanishad*, Śankara stipulates that “the non-dual realization [that *Ātman* is identical with *Brahman*] is a mere mental modification.”¹⁶

This true self, in Śankara’s ideology, is identical with *Brahman* or the Absolute Truth, which is usually referred to as “the transcendent Self” (*Paramātmān*). Therefore, the identity of the Self with *Brahman*,

١٤ . فكل ما تدركه فهو وجود الحق في أعيان الممكنات. فمن حيث هوية الحق هو وجوده، و من حيث اختلاف الصور فيه هو أعيان الممكنات (Ibn Arabi, *Fusus-u al-Hikam*, *Fass of Yusuf*, p.104).

15. Śankara, *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, I. 1, p.14.

16. Śankarācārya, *Commentary on Chandogya Upanishad*, p.5-6.

the knowing of which is *mokṣa* or absolute freedom, is not a new state of affairs achieved by the wayfarer, rather it is the knowing of what has already been there, an essential characteristic of the individual buried by the shroud of ignorance or negligence. The analogy proposed is that of a prince who was missing and detached from his royal family and grew up as a hunter unaware of his royal heritage and the royal blood in his veins; however, at last, he realizes the truth. While detecting the truth may not change him into someone else, it makes him know what he really is.¹⁷

Our true Self is like that prince who, in the commotion of material life, has confused his true Self with his body and its accompanying matters and instincts, while ignorant of his true and divine nature. As soon as we discover the truth, all previous illusions fade away, and the Self “appears with his own form.”¹⁸

Another analogy we can use to explain the difference between identity with *Brahman* as a new ontological event and identity with *Brahman* as an epistemological change is the difference between a solar eclipse and a lunar eclipse. In the case of a lunar eclipse, the light of the sun does not reach the moon because of the earth standing between them. A change in the event of a lunar eclipse is indeed a real change in the position of the moon in order for it to receive light from the sun in the darkness. In a solar eclipse, however, the case is different; the light of the sun continuously shines before and after the eclipse. We cannot see the light of the sun, simply because of the moon’s position between the sun and the earth. A change in solar eclipse is not a real change in the position of the sun or of its light, rather it is the removal of the sight of the moon, which is an obstacle that does not let us see the light of the sun. *Mokṣa*, in Śankara’s ideology, is similar to the latter case; what a wayfarer needs is merely the removal of the obstacles and veils which

17. Śankarācārya, Commentary on Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, II. 1. 20, p.210; Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p.378.

18. Ch. Up.VIII, 12.3.

do not let us see the truth and which is nothing but our own selves. In *Brahma Sutra*, the situation is stated thus:

“(On the soul’s) having entered (into the highest light), there is manifestation (of its own nature.”

In his commentary on this phrase, Śankara writes:

It manifests itself through its Self, not through any other attribute.¹⁹

Referring to some phrases from the Upanishads, Śankara describes the opposite state before *Mokṣa* as follows:

Seemed to have become blind...seemed to be weeping...
seemed to have undergone destruction.²⁰

In such a state of achieving unity, or, more accurately, realizing the unity with *Brahman*, all pluralities fade away in the mind of the wayfarer, who is thus liberated from all kinds of miseries and pains of this world, the consequences of ignorance and its various limitations. The Self manifests itself in its true features as identical with the essential features of *Brahman*, i.e., *sat* (pure existence), *cit* (pure cognition), *ānanda* (pure joy and bliss), and all other things disappear as illusions.²¹ As mentioned before, the preparation for this state is to know *Brahman*. At the beginning of its occurrence, this is a state of knowledge of such strong quality and power that it annihilates everything as soon as it appears. Because knowledge is based on the distinction of the knower from what is known, this very state of knowledge itself disappears. What remains is only the absolute infinite *Brahman* who glitters in his true light. It is thus said that it is just like a flare which may set a whole city or forest on fire, destroying them while perishing itself. In its last phase, the knowledge of *Brahman* would annihilate this phenomenal world while at the same time perishing itself.²²

19. Śankarācārya, *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, IV. 4. 1.

20. *Ibid.*, I. 4. 2.

21. See Dāsgupta, S., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol.I, p.491; Śankarācārya, *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, IV. 4. 2.

22. See Dāsgupta, *loc. cit.*

This knowledge, Śankara holds, may be achieved through various means and by different methods and conditions in this life or another. However, when it is obtained, it contains no grade, intensity or moderation:

The state of final release is nothing but *Brahman*, and *Brahman* cannot be connected with different forms...Nor does, in reality, knowledge admit of lower or higher; for it is, in its own nature, high only, and would not be knowledge at all if it were low. Although therefore knowledge may differ in so far as it originates after a long or short time, it is impossible that release should be distinguished by higher or lower degree. And from the absence of difference of knowledge also there follows absence of definite distinction on the part of the result of knowledge (viz. release).²³

Ibn Arabi and Annihilation

Fanā (annihilation) and *baqā* (subsistence), in Ibn Arabi's ideology, as in the majority of Sufi thought, are the ultimate end of the mystical journey. These two concepts, Ibn Arabi says, are two sides of the same coin; *Fanā* means the annihilation of the creational and not-He (لا هو) aspect of man, but *baqā* means the subsistence of the Divine and He (هو) aspect of man. By *baqā*, as a mystical term, Sufis mean what is termed "*baqā ba'd-a al-fanā*" (subsistence after annihilation), "*sahw ba'd-a al-mahw*" (sobriety after obliteration), or "*al-sahw-u al-thani*" (the second sobriety).²⁴

As mentioned before, Ibn Arabi holds that all beings are the manifestations of Being. The true existence is the One Who is *Haqq* (the Truth). Through the Breath of the Merciful, which is the essence and substance of all beings, it is Him Who manifests Himself and is Omnipresent everywhere in everything. To the extent of its capacity,

23. Śankarācārya, *Brahma Sutra Bhāṣya*, III. 4. 52.

24. Qeisari, *Rasail-u Qeisari* (رسائل قيصرى), *Risalat-u al-Tawhid wa al-Nobowwa wa al-Wilaya* (رسالة التوحيد و النبوة و الولاية), p.8-9.

everything represents Him. From among all beings, it is man or rather, the perfect man, who can be actualized as the all-displaying mirror and the perfect epiphany of the attributes of existence. Therefore, all beings, particularly man, have two facets: one, with regard to their origin and essence, which is He (هو) or the Truth, and the other with regard to their determinations, characteristics and earthly limitations, which is untrue and not-He (لا هو). *Fanā* is a process through which all these earthly limitations and characteristics disappear, leaving behind the perfect and pure manifestation of Being. All ascetic disciplines practiced by the wayfarer are indeed the efforts which are made in order to remove such earthly determinations and material realizations, which like dark clouds, have concealed the sun of existence, thus it may come into appearance.²⁵

A wayfarer who has won such a level of spiritual journey cannot see anything but Him:

Shadow cannot be established when there is light. The cosmos is a shadow, and the Real is a light. That is why the cosmos is annihilated from itself when self-disclosure occurs. For the self-disclosure is light, and the soul's witnessing is a shadow, since the viewer for whom the self-disclosure occurs is annihilated from the witnessing of himself during the vision of God.²⁶

Following the Sufis, Ibn Arabi describes seven stages of *fanā* in his *al-Futuhat*:²⁷

1. *fanā* from disobedience and sins.
2. *fanā* from the activity of the creature, and seeing the hands of Allah at work behind the scenes of all events.
3. *fanā* from the attributes of the creatures, and seeing all attributes everywhere as belonging to Allah.
4. *fanā* from seeing oneself by seeing, whether the Truth or other than the Truth, through the evidence of Allah; This in turn may have a

25. Chittick, W. *Imaginal Worlds*, p.61.

26. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat-u al-Makkiya*, ch.198, vol.2, p.466.

27. *Ibid.*, ch.220, vol.2, pp.512-514.

few subdivisions. In the state of *fanā*, the annihilated self is safe from the consequences of that from which one is annihilated .

5. *fanā* from seeing the whole world through the seeing of Allah, just like the previous case in which one is annihilated from seeing oneself.

6. *fanā* from all things except for Allah through Allah. In this state, one is annihilated from everything, from oneself, and even from one's own observation, for nothing has been left of him to be observed by him. The most perfect state of this stage is that one is able to observe Allah, the *Haqq*, in His perfect sufficiency and richness rather than His affairs.

7. *fanā* from Divine attributes and their relation therein. This is the observation of the world as appearing from Allah; this is not possible by means of reasoning, such as causal relation, i.e., regarding Him as the cause and the world as His effect, but rather by seeing Him as the Truth appearing in His epiphanic forms. Such an observation would make one annihilated from Divine attributes.

Having introduced some modifications in his other works, such as *Risalat-u al-Anwar*²⁸ (رسالة الأنوار), Ibn Arabi refers to some stages of *fanā* which he called *mahw* (obliteration), *ghaibat* (absence), *fanā* (annihilation), *sahq* (perdition), and *mahq* (effacement). Ibn Arabi in *al-Futuhāt*²⁹ and *Istilahat-u al-Sufiyya* (اصطلاحات الصوفية), and his pupil 'Abdu al-Razzaq of Kashan in *Lata'if-u al-A'lam*, (لطائف الأعلام) have defined those terms as the following:

Mahw (obliteration): the removal of one's normal features and qualifications and usual awareness.

Ghaibat (absence): that one is unconscious of what is happening to the creatures because one is busy with the inspirations coming to him from Allah.

28. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa'il-u Ibn Arabi*, *Risalat-u Anwar*, p.129.

29. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhāt*, ch.73, pp.129-135.

Fanā (annihilation): that one considers nobody but Allah as the cause of everything, including one's own actions.

Sahq (perdition): the perdition of one's figure and entity as a result of the Divine overwhelming sovereignty.

Mahq (effacement): the effacement of the wayfarer in the very existence of Allah Almighty.

It seems as if, in this order, that *fanā* in one narrow sense is used as one of the grades of *fanā* in its broad sense.

From what has been said so far, it has become evident that *fanā* is a relatively gradual process of grades through which the wayfarer progressively becomes annihilated from his selfishness, personal identity or his nature of servitude, to the extent that Divine Attributes and *Forma Dei*, upon whom man is created, are manifested in him.

What is noteworthy here, however, is Ibn Arabi's particular definition of *baqā* (subsistence) and its role. As mentioned above, Ibn Arabi holds that these two concepts (*fanā* and *baqā*) are two interdependent facets of the same coin. In another words, every grade of *fanā* requires a relative grade of *baqā*. At every phase of *fanā*, the wayfarer is subsisting by virtue of something that has annihilated him from its opposite. On one side, we have not-He, creation, everything other than God, and the inferior grades from which the wayfarer becomes annihilated through the process of *fanā*. On the other side, there is He, Truth, and the superior grade with which the wayfarer is subsisting. Unless one is annihilated from the former facet, one cannot be subsisting upon the latter one. The annihilated wayfarer has thus two relations: one to the untrue and earthly facet from which he is being annihilated, and the other to the Truth upon which he is subsisting. The latter is superior to the former which becomes valuable only through its accompanying correlative facet of *baqā*:

It is to be known that in Sufism the relationship of subsistence (*baqā*) is more valuable with us than that of annihilation..., subsistence is your relationship with the Real..., but annihilation is your relationship with the engendered universe...Your relationship to

the Real is higher. Hence, subsistence is a higher relationship, since the two are interrelated states. In the relationship of subsistence is the witnessing of the Real, while in the relationship of annihilation is the witnessing of the creation...Hence the state of subsistence is higher than the state of annihilation...This is so because when you see the cause of every sort of annihilation which has annihilated you from the previous grades, you will realize that that cause is the same thing on which you are subsisting...³⁰

This journey, in Ibn Arabi's thought, is to reach the station of no station, or of being characterized by the characterization of no characteristic, a station above beauty and glory.³¹

3. The Way of Spiritual Journey

Śankara. One can reach *mokṣa*, Śankara holds, only through perfect knowledge or, the total realization of unity. This knowledge, which is a certain kind of immediate intuition, is the only provision for *mokṣa*. No practical ascetic discipline, theoretical contemplations, ethical values or religious practices lead to such deliverance. However necessary, these are merely the means for reaching knowledge, or *jñāna*, rather than for *mokṣa* itself to come into being. This means that a morally impure man cannot seriously be in search of such deliberate knowledge.³²

Knowledge having once sprung up requires no help towards the accomplishment of its fruits, it does stand in need of something else with a view to its own origination.³³

These other factors, referred to by Śankara here, are a set of disciplinary rules, practical austerities, and theoretical contemplations

30. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, ch.221, vol.2, p.515: See also Chittick, W. *Imaginal Worlds*, pp.61-62.

31. *Ibid.*, ch.73, p.133.

32. See Hiriyan, pp.378-379.

33. Sankarācārya, *Brahman Sutra Bhāṣya*, III. 4.26, vol.2, p.307.

to be precisely practiced by the wayfarer until the sun of knowledge rises within him and leads him to deliverance.

This set of disciplinary rules or oughts and ought-nots, which a wayfarer in the school of Śankara is required to embrace, is indeed the practical mysticism of this school. It is divided into two stages: first is the preliminary stage, which, upon passing through, the wayfarer is well qualified to enter the next stage, a serious research of the non-dualist school of *Vedanta* (*Advaita Vedānta*), or of Śankara himself. This stage is parallel to the way of practice (*Karma yoga*) mentioned in the *Gita*. Second is the main stage, which begins with entering the non-dualist school of *Vedanta*, and ends in perfect knowledge and deliverance after one has committed oneself to certain conditions and passed through both stages. Each of these two stages has some obligations and provisions:

In the first stage, the wayfarer is expected to observe a few preliminary practices by which he can create certain virtues within himself. The preliminary practices are:

1. The acquisition of the *Vedas* and perfect knowledge of its related studies, such as grammar and the like.
2. The observance of all *Vedic* obligations, including daily duties such as prayer, reciting prayers, or rites on different occasions like the birth of a child, marriage, and so on, as well as the abstinence from anything related to carnal desires and from religious prohibitions such as lying, murder, etc. Thus he must cleanse his mind from all actions, whether good or evil, leaving no trace of *karma* and no room for new *karma* to originate.
3. The virtues to be acquired in this stage are:
 4. Knowing what is permanent and what is temporary and transient.
 5. Showing no interest in the enjoyment of this life or in the heaven of the next life.
 6. Hating all kinds of pleasure, but longing for the acquisition of sound knowledge.

7. Concentration, in such a way that he becomes unmindful of anything but the means of acquisition of knowledge. This in turn has a few aspects:

8. Acquiring such mental power that it no longer allows him to be mindful of anything within the realm of worldly pleasures.

- a) Acquiring the ability to bear maximum levels of heat, coldness and so on;
- b) Directing the mind towards the acquisition of knowledge;
- c) Belief in the master and in the *Upanishads*;
- d) Ardent desire for reaching deliverance.³⁴

In the second stage, a wayfarer who has observed the above provisions and acquired its virtues, and may thus be well qualified for the study of *Vedānta*, may now deal with the other stages:

The first stage is listening, or audition (*śravaṇa*), by which the wayfarer is to listen to the instructions of a master or Guru in order to understand the true meanings of the *Upanishads*. This helps to achieve two objectives: one is the insistence that one can only learn the Ultimate Truth from the revealed texts, or *śruti*, and the other is to remind the wayfarer that he must follow a qualified master who has already passed all the stages. This means that he cannot achieve anything solely by his personal study and without the instructions and guidance of the master.

The second stage is thought (*manana*), i.e., to consolidate ones beliefs about the accuracy of what the *Upanishads* propose. This includes monologue and arguing with oneself in relation to the perfect knowledge of the doctrines of the *Upanishads*. The objective in this stage is not to discover the ultimate aim, for it has already been seen in the previous stage. The aim is, nonetheless, to achieve firm beliefs in these doctrines and to eliminate any doubt or hesitation regarding their inaccuracy. Concerning the aim of this stage, the wayfarer is expected to adapt what he has learnt as his own personal belief.

34. See Dāsgupta, op cit., vol.I. pp.489-490; Sankarācārya, *Brahma Sutra Bhāṣya*, I. 1. 1.

The third stage is to contemplate the identity of the Self with *Brahman*, which is part of Śankara's key doctrines. The objective of this stage is to remove whatever hindrances are in front of the wayfarer, which may be left as a result of earlier psychological relics in the unconscious mind, and which appear from time to time to contradict the new doctrines. All the rules and principles of yoga meditation are used in order to reach such an objective. This stage goes on until the sun of knowledge rises from inside the wayfarer, who then experiences his identity with the transcendent Self (*Brahman*). When the illuminating sun has risen in his spirit, he has indeed reached the stage of deliverance, or as Śankara puts it, he has become *jivanmukta* (a free living one).³⁵

A *jivanmukta*, or a mystic who has reached the stage of union, is living in two different states. One state is referred to as *samādhi*, or rapture and absorption, in which he is free from himself, as well as everything else, while absorbed by *Brahman*. The other state is called *vyutthāna*, or returning back to the usual life. In such a state, contrary to the others in his midst with whom he is accompanying in the world, in dealing with the plurality of things and the world of illusionary phenomena, the wayfarer may not be deceived by them because he knows for certain that they are illusions. This is like the *prima facie* movement of the sun in the eyes of someone who knows for sure that it never moves. Like other people, a *jivanmukta* experiences both pain and comfort, however, he believes that they are not real. It is not necessary for a *jivanmukta* to abandon the requirements of daily life, as Śankara continued to exert himself in effort and activity up to the last days of his life. The works and activities of a *jivanmukta*, however, do not stem from his personal motives or from his obligation and duties towards others; rather it is general affection and all-inclusive love that motivates him to work.³⁶

35. See Hiriyanna, pp.379-380; Dāsgupta, loc. cit.

36. See Hiriyanna, p.381.

The base of such all-inclusive love is the same doctrine of the *Upanishads* where it says, “This whole world is *Brahman*,”³⁷ or where it says, “Now, he who on all things looks as just in the Self (*Ātman*) and on the Self as in all beings, He does not shrink away from Him.”³⁸ Performing good works and (acquiring) virtues, for such a person, implies no conscious effort, for it has become part of his second nature to be so.

When, at the end of this earthly life, a *jivanmukta* leaves his body, he will not be born again and will be annihilated in *Brahman*; in this state, Śankara calls him *videha mukta*. Śankara thus differentiates between *jivanmukta* and *videha mukta*, however they are identical in their expression of the principle of freedom from worldly attachments.

Ibn Arabi. In his various works, such as *al-Futuhāt-u al-Makkiya*, *Risalat-u Hilyat-i al-Abdal*, and *Risalat-u al-Anwar*, Ibn Arabi has discussed the method of the spiritual journey, its requirements, the different stations of the wayfarers, and the variety of gifts and intuitions which occur at each station. Because of different interlocutors, Ibn Arabi’s recommendations are not entirely consistent and well-compiled; however, the above-mentioned works provide rich references to infer some generalities about his preferred method of journey.

From the very beginning of their coming into existence, Ibn Arabi holds, human beings are wayfarers³⁹ of a spiritual journey that aims at the annihilation of one’s human name or characteristics in order for them to be exposed to divine epiphanies. “Allah will manifest Himself only to those who are annihilated from their names and characteristics.”⁴⁰ (إنما يتجلى الحق لمن انمحي اسمه و رسمه). Reaching the Truth and achieving human perfection is a journey which may be passed through by awareness of God and obtaining spiritual stations of cognitions and experiences. As mankind is “the totality of the world,

37. Ch. Up., III. 14.1

38. Iśa. Up., 6.

39. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa’il Ibn Arabi*, *Risalat-u al-Anwar*, p.124.

40. Ibid., *Risalat-u Hilyat-i al-Abdal*, p.388.

divine copy of the Presence of Allah, and endowed with His Essence, Attributes, and Actions,”⁴¹ the journey across different worlds, and seeing their wonders and knowing their secrets and mysteries, is an internal and subjective voyage in the course of *shari’ah*.⁴²

Ibn Arabi has defined the spiritual journey:

In its meaning, the spiritual journey is to move from one rank of worshipping to another, and in its form it is to move from one lawful act to another in the course of proximity to God by means of doing and undoing..., and as a technical term it is to move from one station to another, from one name to another, from one manifestation to another, from one self to another. The traveler is a wayfarer of bodily austerity and spiritual asceticism who refines his morals...⁴³

The right path is one - however, in viewing the different states of the wayfarers, their lofty or low aspirations, and the perversion or restraint of their temperaments, it may appear in different guises and various facets. What, nevertheless, a wayfarer is expected to know is that this journey entails adversities, tribulations, and great dangers; There is no room for security nor for usual pleasure along its course.⁴⁴

The first step in the spiritual journey is to learn the rules of *shari’ah*, such as those of ritual purity, prayers, fasting, and so on, in order to observe them and be God-conscious.

In the next step, the wayfarer ought to find a qualified master or sheikh to guide him to the right path. If he can manage to find such a master, he should follow his instructions and obey him so as to get the proper result. If, however, he could not obtain a suitable master, he ought to bind himself to nine instructions which are as many as the simple numbers (1 to 9) and 9 heavens. These are: seclusion, silence, vigilance, hunger, honesty, trust in God, patience, resolution, and

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., ch.189, vol.2, p.380.

44. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa’il Ibn Arabi*, Risalat-u al-Anwar, p.124.

certitude. The first four instructions deal with esoteric acts while the remaining five deal with exoteric ones.⁴⁵

According to a report from *al-Futuhat* and some other *Rasa'il*, Ibn Arabi seems to have borrowed the first four instructions from Abu Talib Makki's *Qut-u al-Qulub* (قوت القلوب). These four instructions constitute Ibn Arabi's base of practical journey; he considers them to be the waystation of his sound and original Sufi way.⁴⁶ There is no temporal priority among these instructions and thus they can be taken into consideration and practiced simultaneously. If we look at these instructions two by two, however, we discover that they are interrelated; hunger and seclusion are active but silence and vigilance are passive, for seclusion paves the way for silence and hunger for vigilance.

Seclusion. This principle stands at the apex of the four instructions. In order to enter the phase of seclusion, Ibn Arabi specifies two prerequisites: first one must be dominant over his fantasies, rather than vice versa. If the situation is otherwise, he must reconcile the issue under the supervision of a knowledgeable master or sheikh. Second, before choosing seclusion, he must have experienced austerity for a while - in the form of purification of his morals, abstinence from selfishness and carnal desires, and being able to bear the disturbances of others.⁴⁷

Seclusion has two parts: the first part relates to isolation from the body, by which they mean isolation from low people and vices; this is the seclusion of the willful (مریدین). The second part concerns the seclusion of the heart, which is actually the superior seclusion, and by which they mean isolation of the heart from worldly affairs, including properties, social status, children, or anything that separates the wayfarer from God. There must be no room in the heart of the

45. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, Chap.53, vol.1, p.277.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa'il Ibn Arabi*, *Risalat-u al-Anwar*, p.135.

wayfarer for anything but knowing God; this is the seclusion of verifiers (محققين).⁴⁸

The condition of seclusion, particularly in the beginning, can be met by remaining in the house or by going to the mountains or to the coasts, as an act of isolation from people or from anything to which one has become accustomed.⁴⁹ The person in isolation must consider a few points: First, one should not let any visitor in the house, keeping his door locked to everyone - for receiving visitors may expose him to an immense error or blight. Second, one should be watchful of false illusions lest they overcome him and separate him from the mindful heart of God. One is expected, by utilizing any means necessary, to have a continuously mindful heart of God. Third, he should be determined to seek nobody but Him.⁵⁰ Seclusion provides for the knowledge of the world.

Silence. As a result of seclusion, silence or reticence is of two kinds: verbal silence, and that of the heart. By the former, we mean talking to no one but God and by the latter, which is one characteristic of those brought near to Him, we mean allowing nothing in the heart but God. As a whole, silence means the preoccupation of the heart with the evocation of God and with the speech of the mind instead of the tongue. The wayfarer, however, must watch out lest his silence evokes what he may expect from God, for such an evocation may prevent him from a true remembrance and theophany.⁵¹ The wayfarer ought to content himself with the rosaries and invocations said in the prayers and the recitation of one sixtieth of the Qur'an each night. He should not extravagagate with the invocations, but he may keep his heart busy with secret evocations. Silence brings about knowing God.⁵²

48. See Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, loc. cit. and *Rasa'il Ibn Arabi*, *Risalat-u Hilyat-i al-Abdal*, p.390.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa'il Ibn Arabi*, *Risalat-u al-Anwar*, pp.125-126.

51. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, ch.53, vol.1, p.277.

52. Ibid.

Hunger. By hunger, we mean temperance in eating only as much food as necessary for performing our religious obligations.⁵³ It is of two kinds: one is voluntary, for those wayfarers who willingly choose to abstain from food, and the other is involuntary, for the verifiers whose food may vary instinctively in proportion to their spiritual states of intimacy and dread. When used in moderation, hunger can leave a decisive influence on the journey of the wayfarer, providing the discretion of sheikh. Hunger brings about knowing Satan.⁵⁴

Vigilance. As a product of hunger, vigilance is of two kinds: The vigilance of the eyes and the vigilance of the heart. By the latter, we mean watchfulness of distractions and carelessness in seeking for mystic vision. The former, along with its provisions, may help the heart with the acquisition of insight. Keeping vigil leads to self-knowledge.⁵⁵

The wayfarer who has retained the correct observance of these four exoteric pillars, while actualizing the above five characteristics, may gradually, in the course of the spiritual journey, enjoy divine gifts, diffusions, and unveilings. If he does not content himself with any of those gifts at each stage, he may receive more transcendent and extensive and deeper bestowals, until at last he may reach the stations of *mahw* (obliteration), *ghaibat* (absence), and different stages of *fanā*, such as *sahq* (perdition), and *mahq* (effacement), ending in “subsistence after annihilation.”⁵⁶

In his various works, Ibn Arabi considers the above instructions to be the provisions which help the wayfarer achieve the station of *Abdal* or the Substitutes (Advanced Saints). These Substitutes are the Advanced Seven Saints, who, in the hierarchy of saints, come after the *Qutb* (Pole), or the deliverance; the two *Imams*; and the *Awtad-u al-Arba’a* (the Four Pillars); having passed the above chain of stages, one

53. Ibid.

54. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa’il Ibn Arabi, Risalat-u Hilyat-i al-Abdal*, p.391.

55. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhat*, ch.53, vol.1, p.278; and *Rasa’il Ibn Arabi, Risalat-u Hilyat-i al-Abdal*, p.392.

56. Ibn Arabi, *Rasa’il Ibn Arabi, Risalat-u al-Anwar*, pp.126-129.

of them may ultimately ascend to the station of Pole, i.e., one single individual who, in each era, may become the “Divine viewpoint in the world.”⁵⁷

4. *Mokṣa*, *Fanā* and Religious Obligations

From among the issues which have long since been under discussion by both Hindu mystics and Muslim Sufis is the relation between *shari’ah* (divine law) and *tariqa* (mystical way) or *haqiqa* (truth). More precisely, is there, in the course of the mystical journey, a station or position for the wayfarer where he can be exempt from religious obligations? In other words, does reaching Truth, or whatever it may be called, exempt the wayfarer from the obligations of *shari’ah* law thus making him able to dispense with its restrictions? This is one of the points of dispute between Śāṅkara and two rival movements within the *Vedānta* school. It is also one of the cases in which Muslim Jurists have raised objections against the Sufis because of their strange conduct and the esoteric meaning of their words.

Śāṅkara. As his many descriptions imply, Śāṅkara seems to believe that the observance of religious obligations, i.e., the commandments and prohibitions of the holy scriptures, is a necessary provision for the mystical journey, thus when the wayfarer reaches the ultimate destination of liberating knowledge, he will no longer be in need of those obligations. They may apply to the wayfarer as far as he suffers from the illusionary duality of his self and *Brahman* because of his ignorance or *avidya*. When such an illusion disappears and the wayfarer realizes his identity with *Brahman*, he will go beyond the sphere of the commandments and prohibitions of the holy scriptures, thus leaving them behind as they may not apply to him any longer.

For him who has obtained perfect knowledge, injunctions and prohibitions are purposeless...since to him who has obtained

57. Ibid., *Risalat-u Istilahat-u al-Sufiyya*, pp.408-409.

the higher aim no obligation can apply. For obligations are imposed with reference to things to be avoided or desired; how then should he, who sees nothing, either to be wished or avoided, beyond the universal Self, stand under any obligation?⁵⁸

In his introduction to the *Commentary on Chandogya Upanishads*, Śankara has solved this issue by explaining the difference between ordinary believers and those wayfarers who have reached the knowledge and state of deliverance. In regards to the observance of religious rites and the rewards of the hereafter, he writes:

The objects with which a man competent for rites is occupied and the natural ideas about being an agent and an enjoyer, are demolished by texts like “existence alone, only one, without a second” and “All this is but the Self.” Therefore, rites are enjoined only for those who have such defects as ignorance, etc., but not for one who is possessed of non-dual knowledge. Hence, the *Upanishads* will declare, all these become attainers of the virtuous worlds, but the man established in *Brahman* will attain Immortality.⁵⁹

Upon examining the reasoning, frankness, and generality of Śankara’s words cited above, and in similar cases, he seems to hold that the mystics of union are out of the sphere of *shari’ah* commandments and prohibitions. In regards to these statements, he does not differentiate between the state of *samādhi* and *vyutthāna*.

Ibn Arabi. Like other Sufi Muslims, Ibn Arabi holds that the wayfarer in the stage of *fanā* may be in one of these two states: the state of *mahw* (obliteration) and unconsciousness, or the state of *sahw* (sobriety) and consciousness. The former state is either temporary, by which the wayfarer may be restored to the state of consciousness, or permanent, by which he may be deprived of his consciousness and reason by a sudden rapture or theophany so that he cannot be restored

58. Sankarācārya, *Brahman Sutra Bhāṣya*, II. 3. 48, pp.66-67.

59. Sankarācārya, in “Introduction” to *Commentary on Ch. Up.*, p.5.

to his normal state. In both cases, the unconscious wayfarers are divided into two groups: the secure wayfarers and the insecure ones. A secure wayfarer is the one who, while unconscious, is protected by God so that he can perform his religious obligations in their due times; an insecure wayfarer, however, is one who is totally deprived of his faculty of reason so that he is not able to do anything for himself.⁶⁰ Concerning the latter group, whom they call *muhayyamin fi jamal Allah*, “the ecstatic with beauty of God,” or *walihan-e tariqat* “the love-mad of the journey,” and *majazib*, “enraptured,” Ibn Arabi and his followers says that they are exempt from *shari’ah* rules, just like animals and the insane, or, rather that their particular *shari’ah* rule is permission. This is the fatwa of all jurists and saints regarding the insane - “Anybody who is deprived of the faculty of reason like animals, the insane, and the enraptured are not to be responsible for any case of courtesy unlike the wise and sane who are required to follow rules of courtesy.”⁶¹

Ibn Arabi’s words may apply to both those who are permanently deprived of their reason and to those who have been deprived of their reason temporarily as long as they are not restored to their normal states. Nonetheless, as it appears from the above phrases, and their parallels in chapter 44 of his *al-Futuhāt*, he does not seem to believe in the same rule for the people of sobriety whose consciousness is secured at this stage. They are thus required to observe religious obligations and courtesy, however they might have reached the highest spiritual stations, that of *fanā* or subsistence after annihilation.

In his other descriptions, where he discusses different kinds of spiritual stations, Ibn Arabi considers the station of repentance and the observance of religious obligations as the station enduring up to death whereby they disappear; ...“and there from among the stations is that

60. See Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhāt-u al-Makkiyya*, ch.44, vol.1, pp.247-250.

61. Ibid., for further information, see also Ibn Arabi, loc. cit., pp.247-250; Qeisari, *Rasail-u Qeisari* (رسائل قيسري), pp.33-34; Lahiji, *Sharh Golshan Raz* (شرح گلشن راز), pp.253-254.

which may endure up to death, and thereby it disappears, such as repentance and the observance of religious obligations...”⁶²

Ibn Arabi's view on the issue is further stipulated by his followers, as his pupil, Badr Ibn Abdullah Habashi, writes on the issue:

Sheikh (peace be with him) says:

Despite reaching the highest station possible, a servant is not exempt from *shari'ah* texts on the religious obligations, unless one is predominated by a state that makes him like the insane or the unconscious people. In such a state, religious obligations are suspended pending a normal state, when he ought to say: O Lord, Glory be to Thee. I now return back to Thee. But he who consciously claims that he has reached a station exempting him from *shari'ah* duties, is talking nonsense which may lead him to Hellfire.⁶³

Ibn Arabi regards *shari'ah* and *haqiqah* as two sides of the same truth, with *shari'ah* being the exterior and the latter as the interior. In his *al-Futuhāt*, when explaining the reason why *shari'ah*, according to the Sufis, is distinguished from *haqiqah*, and quoting from their ideas, Ibn Arabi writes:

They have used (the phrase) *shari'ah* for the exterior rules of *haqiqah*, but (the phrase) *haqiqa* for the interior rules of *shari'ah* ...⁶⁴

Accordingly, Ibn Arabi does not seem to exempt the wayfarers from *shari'ah* obligations in the highest stages of their journey of reaching the Truth unless they are in a state of unconsciousness – a fact which is agreed by all jurists and scholars.

62. Ibn Arabi. *al-Futuhāt-u al-Makkiyya*, ch.193, p.386.

63. Badr Ibn Abdullah Habashi, *al-Inbā' an Tariq-i Allah* (الإنباء عن طريق الله), (a hand written text), quoted in Mohsen Jahangiri, *Mohy-e al-Din Ibn Arabi*, p.551; and see also Sheikh Makkie, *al-Janib-u al-Gharbi* (الجنب الغربي), p.218; Dawood Qeisari, *Rasā'il Qeisari*, *Risalat-u al-Tawhid wa al-Nobowwa wa al-Wilaya*, pp.33-34; Lahiji, *Sharh Golshan Raz*, pp.253-254.

64. Ibn Arabi, *al-Futuhāt-u al-Makkiyya*, ch.244.

Conclusion

From what has been discussed in the summary and in the comparison of the two mystics, the following points are worth mentioning:

1. The *essentia* of man and the world in Śankara's view is *Brahman*, *Ātman* or *sat* (truth or pure existence), but in Ibn Arabi's view, it is seen as *Nafas-u al-Rahman* (the Breath of the Merciful) which is called *al-wujud al-munbasit* (expanded existence) and second determination. It is the manifestation of existence rather than existence itself. This is one important difference between the two mystics.
2. *Mokṣa* according to Śankara and *fanā* according to Ibn Arabi are both realized when individual desires and identities are removed. However, what remains in the process, says Śankara, is *Brahman*, *sat*, or pure existence, but for Ibn Arabi, what remains is only the appearance of pure existence.
3. Śankara's concept of *mokṣa* is an epistemological event, but Ibn Arabi's theory of *fanā* is an ontological-epistemological development.⁶⁵
4. To abide by *shari'ah* - particularly at the beginning of the journey - holding fast to the Holy Scriptures, and following a guru or sheikh, are common elements of the two mystics' methods of practice. In Śankara's method, Karma yoga is somewhat comparable to Ibn Arabi's four principles. Nonetheless, in his practical methodology, Śankara's insistence on *manana* (contemplation) cannot be seen in Ibn Arabi, although Ibn Arabi's concept of *nutq al-naḥs* (invocation with the soul), or *secret invocation*, may suggest some sort of contemplation.
5. The states of *samādhi* and *vyuttāna*, which emerge for a dedicated *jivanmukta*, can be compared to those of *mahw* (obliteration) and *sahw* (sobriety).

65. For further study on this issue, see the introduction of Qaisari on *Fusus al-Hikam*, chap.11, with commentary by Sayyid Jalal-u al-Din Ashtiyani.

6. Contrary to Ibn Arabi and other Sufis who state that there are different grades of *fanā*, Śankara explicitly denies the existence of grades of *mokṣa*, however, an individual, or *mukta*, may reach salvation in terms of life or death, which, in the context of Hinduism, is divided into *jivanmukti* and *vidhamukti*; yet we cannot observe such a thing in Ibn Arabi's works.
7. Śankara stipulates that the state of *jivanmukti* is beyond religious obligations, i.e., *shari'ah* commands and prohibitions; however, we fail to witness such a thing in Ibn Arabi's works for the mystics who have attained union and who may reach the highest level of *fanā* and *baqa* (subsistence) after *fanā*. Rather, there are signs in the works of Ibn Arabi and his followers that acknowledge a position opposite to Śankara, unless, of course, if a person has become insane or lost control of their senses, then, in this case, the ruling would be different.

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Farsi Abstracts

فلسفه اخلاق هگل

حاج محمد لگنهاوزن*

در این مقاله نویسنده بر آن نیست تا شناخت اصیلی از فلسفه اخلاق هگل به دست دهد، بلکه صرفاً می‌کوشد بر اساس معتبرترین منابع دست دوم (و نه خود آثار هگل) شرح مختصری از دیدگاه وی عرضه کند. وی با هدف سامان دادن به مطالب، دیدگاه‌های هگل را با نقد لیبرالیسم از منظر جماعت‌گرایان مقایسه می‌کند. بدین ترتیب شرح مختصری از ارتباط میان اندیشه اخلاقی و دینی هگل به دست می‌دهد. فلسفه هگل مصداقی از وفاق و سازگاری است. وی هم پیرو کانت است و هم منتقد صریح کانت. هگل نیز همانند کانت، ایده خودمختاری اخلاقی را می‌پذیرد که بر اساس آن، فاعل اخلاقی بودن مستلزم آن است که استقلال رأی داشته باشیم و الزامات اخلاقی را بر خودمان تکلیف کنیم. اما برخلاف کانت (دست‌کم چنان‌که معمولاً تفسیر شده)، هگل تصور نمی‌کند که چنین چیزی به معنای آن باشد که تنها انگیزه رفتار اخلاقی باید اراده معطوف به انجام دادن وظیفه باشد. کانت در نتیجه تعارض میان اراده آزاد و جبرباوری نتیجه می‌گیرد که فاعلیت و رای جهان‌پدیداری و از ساحت نومن ناشی می‌شود. هگل می‌کوشد آزادی و زنجیره علی را در صورتی از سازوارگرایی با هم آشتی دهد که اساساً متفاوت با جبرباوری ملایم سنت تجربه‌باور است. کانت اظهار می‌کند که اخلاقیات باید از عقل استنتاج شود. هگل با کانت هم‌عقیده است، اما عقل را فرآیندی می‌داند که در آن، خود متناهی از طریق احساس یگانگی با دیگران بر خودش فائق می‌آید. این مقاله تحت تأثیر کتاب اخیر رابرت والیس راجع به همین موضوع، نگاشته شده و نویسنده وامدار و قدردان اوست.

کلیدواژه‌ها: هگل، کانت، عقل، فلسفه اخلاق، خودمختاری، جبرباوری، فاعل اخلاقی.

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اسلام و دیگر ادیان

حسین توفیقی*

پژوهشگران دین‌شناسی مقایسه‌ای باید توجه داشته باشند - و نیز بکوشند - تا وجوه افتراق و اشتراک ادیان مختلف را بشناسند. حتی چه بسا کسی مدعی شود که رشته «مطالعات تأثیرات ادیان» نیز ریشه در بحث مقایسه ادیان و تقابل آنها با یکدیگر دارد. با این حال، این مباحث همواره در پرداختن به تفاوت‌های ظریف ادیان ناموفق بوده است. در این مقاله، نویسنده می‌کوشد شباهت‌ها و عدم شباهت‌های ادیان را کمی روشن‌تر کند. نقطه عزیمت و چارچوب این بررسی اسلام است و تمرکز نسبتاً جدی‌ای نیز بر یهودیت و مسیحیت خواهد داشت.

کلیدواژه‌ها: دین‌شناسی مقایسه‌ای، اسلام، یهودیت، مسیحیت.

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دین اسلام: مفهوم گوهری دین در قرآن

محمود خاتمی*

هدف کلی این مقاله این است که بر نوعی کاربرد مفهوم «دین اسلام» در قرآن تأکید کند؛ مفهومی که از مصادیق خود فراتر می‌رود. من نشان خواهم داد که مفهوم «اسلام» به عنوان یک دین وحدانی در قرآن به مثابه جنس ادیانی به کار می‌رود که در طول تاریخ بشر ظهور کرده‌اند. این کاربرد نشان خواهد داد که معنایی از دین وجود دارد که وحدت گوهری تمام ادیان را تضمین کرده و ما را مهیا می‌کند تا کثرت ظاهری و تنوع تعارض‌آمیز ادیان جهانی را فهم کنیم؛ اما این معنا اساساً متفاوت با معنایی از دین است که در رشته مدرن مطالعات دینی در فضای علمی مغرب‌زمین ظهور کرده است؛ زیرا رشته مزبور دین را به عنوان پدیداری فرهنگی تفسیر می‌کند، و تنوع بی‌شمار ادیان را صرفاً رویدادی اجتماعی - تاریخی به شمار می‌آورد. در این مقاله، نخست به اجمال پیشینه مشکل موجود در چارچوب این تصور غربی جدید از دین بیان می‌شود. سپس به تصور اسلامی از دین می‌پردازم تا مدلی برای فهم تکثر و تنوع ادیان ترسیم کنم؛ در این مدل، گرچه ادیان در ظاهر حد و مرزهای خاص خودشان را دارند، اما در عین حال از واقعیتی وحدانی بهره‌مندند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: دین، دین نوعی، ادیان خاص، اسلام، قرآن، دین وحدانی.

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دیدگاه متکثر شیعه در باب شبیه‌سازی انسانی

سید حسن اسلامی اردکانی*

عالم‌ان شیعه در برابر امکان شبیه‌سازی انسانی، یا تکثیر غیر جنسی انسانی تازه، برخلاف عالم‌ان اهل سنت، موضعی یکسان نگرفته‌اند. این مقاله با بررسی فتاوی و تحلیل‌های این عالم‌ان نظرگاه آنان را در چهار گروه دسته‌بندی و تحلیل کرده است. گروه اول قائل به جواز مطلق این کار شده‌اند. دومین گروه آن را در سطحی محدود مجاز شمرده‌اند. سومین گروه آن به خودی خود مجاز اما به دلیل پیامدهایش و به عنوان ثانوی حرام اعلام کرده‌اند. چهارمین گروه آن را عملی فی نفسه حرام دانسته‌اند. نویسنده در این نوشته با تحلیل این دیدگاه‌ها از جواز آن حمایت کرده است.

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غایت سلوک عرفانی: ابن عربی و ادی شنکره

ابوالفضل محمودی *

این مقاله دیدگاه دو تن از برجسته‌ترین عرفای اسلام و هندوئیسم را درباره آنچه «غایت سلوک عرفانی» نامیده می‌شود، یعنی همان موکشه در معنویت هندو و فنا در عرفان اسلامی، مقایسه می‌کند. تفاسیر این دو عارف طبیعتاً بر اساس مبانی معرفت‌شناختی و وجودشناختی‌شان شکل یافته است. بدین ترتیب نویسنده با اشاره به مهم‌ترین اصول فکری آنها می‌کوشد سه جنبه از تصوراتشان را بررسی کند؛ یعنی سرشت موکشه و فنا، نحوه وصول به این مراتب، و اینکه آیا عمل به واجبات دینی پس از وصول به این مراتب باز هم لازم است یا نه. نویسنده پس از مقایسه و جمع‌بندی موکشه و فنا در دو بستر فوق، پاره‌ای مشابهت‌های چشمگیر و تفاوت‌های قابل توجه میان آنها را نشان می‌دهد؛ این مشابهت‌ها و تفاوت‌ها هم در اصول و هم در سه جنبه مذکور، که مرتبط با سرشت آنها، نحوه وصول به آنها و نیز واجبات دینی هر یک از آنهاست، به چشم می‌خورد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: فنا، بقای بعد از فنا، موکشه، جیوان موکتی، نسخ احکام واجب.

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ابوالفضل محمودی

۱۳۷ چکیده‌ها



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