Abdul Kadir Riyadi

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF TASAWUF:

On Islam as a Cosmic Religion

Preface:
Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Abdul Kadir Riyadi

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Preface

The concept of religion has been studied from many different angles and approaches all of which have indeed made a very important contribution in the understanding of this highly complicated notion. Some would accordingly look at religion as series of doctrine and dogmas, implying that religion is simply a matter of following and obeying thetenets revealed from heaven. Others would rather understand it as a bunch of rituals and ceremonies, and interpret it simply as holy canons that must be applied in daily live. This group of people often look at religion as identical to ideology and see that applying itin a political life is a matter of necessity.

In the West however, the trend is such that religion is treated mostly as a sociological and anthropological phenomenon. Although this approach is rather reductionist and empties religion from its metaphysical anchorage, it is important insofar as it offers totally different perspectives in the way we may interpret religion.

Apart from the many prejudices that the Western academics have produced in their study of religion, their contribution is nonetheless worth of studying. A deeper look at the academic tradition in the West as far as religious studies are concerned, would reveal that it is rich with streams and currents of thought not found in many other traditions. While sociological and anthropological approaches are predominantly prevailing, one may also come across other streams which may be classified as philosophical. Such approaches as phenomenology, ethnology, and

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philosophical anthropology fall under this last category. This PhD thesis is an attempt to appropriate the phenomenological approach to expose the philosophical tradition of Islam hidden within the schools of Ibn Sina and Muhammad Jalaluddin Rumi.

The author of this thesis is quite aware that Islamic philosophy is a rich reservoir providing vibrant and strong foundation for the study of religion. Although many would indeed ask as to how the study of religion may be undertaken philosophically, this thesis has proven that that task may be successfully done.

What is interesting of this thesis is that, 1) it interprets the Islamic philosophical tradition of Ibn Sina and Rumi phenomenologically, and 2) it understands the "Islamic phenomenology", the domain of what it calls a cosmic Islam, as both the final and necessary development of the Islamic system of knowledge.The thesis holds that knowledge in Islam evolves from being political and ideological, to theological and doctrinal, then ended up in phenomenology. The theosophical philosophy of Ibn Sina and the sufistic thought of Rumi are treated here as part of phenomenology insofar as they look at "things as they are".

Having read the thesis properly and examined it as an external examiner, I am indeed proud to make this note as a sincere testimony that it is worth of reading, and that the effort of the author does deserve respect and appreciation of some sort.

Cairo, April 2006

Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid

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Introduction

This book is originally a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town South Africa in 2004. Its original title is "Show me Things as They Are: Study on the Religious Thought of Muhammad Jalaluddin Rumi".

It has been undergoing some revision since then especially with regard to its materials, approach and method. With the new version, Rumi is no longer the main attention of the dissertation and the focus has now been diverted into what the book calls, "the Cosmic Dimension of Islam".

The basic spirit of the old and new version remains however the same; it explores the complex field of inquiry, namely religious experience and understanding by using the basic and commonly-known theoretical framework which divides religion into the three main aspects, namely ideology, faith and ultimate religiosity. Like its old version, the book puts much stress on the third while not leaving aside the first and the second aspects.

In delving into the problem in hand, the study invokes technical and philosophical argumentation. Since the nature of the study requires abstractions from concrete phenomena and draws attention to the significant aspect of both human experience and religious concepts, it is to a large extent philosophical and academic.

The title chosen for this new version of the study is "The Phenomenology of Tasawuf: On Islam as A Cosmic Religion". The

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words "phenomenology" and "cosmic" are treated here as synonymously intertwining. They mean that Islam should be understood mainly as the ultimate religiosity and be uplifted from its parochial conceptions. In this conception, Islam -and other religions in that matter- cannot be reduced into a mere system of duties and obligations. As the ultimate religiosity, religion is understood as having to do with men's sensitivities and moral values.

In line with this, the "Phenomenology of Tasawuf" which tries to explore the Cosmic Islam is a kind of paradigm that puts much emphasis on the universalistic nature of religions, and that it is -alternatively speaking- a kind of quintessential expression, which patronises the "doxological intimacy" of existence. This paradigm transcends the apparent differences that appear at the surface and necessitates that no body or idea is excluded, and that truth is either an apparent or an allegorical expression of the divine.

The idea of Phenomenology of Tasawuf -alternatively called Cosmic Islam- is based on the very basic tenet of Islam, which is unity. Islam teaches that Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and other prophets were all sent by the one true God as successive messengers to mankind. The book tries to show that this feature of Islam -so important in its ritual- has the greatest significance in its intellectual aspects to the extent that today, it is equipped primordially and intellectually as both the starting point and the basis for what has popularly been known the study of religion.

This however, is not to say that the book is written within the domain of what the Germans have taught us to call Religionswissenschaft, of which the English translation is the "science of religion". This word is puzzling because "science" in English means the "natural sciences"; and the natural sciences, be it astronomy or chemistry or anything else, are concerned with "nature", that is, with extended matter with the whole phenomenal world which depends for its existence on mathematical law.

This is rather to say that the book belongs to the domain of philosophy of religion so long as it is about the reasoned account concerning religion and ground for the understanding of what is divine and what is worldly. The book belongs to this field of investigation because it is about an inquiry that places a special stress on the definition of religious concepts and the justification or appraisal of religious judgment. It is more importantly, about the concept of God.

The System of the Book

Three fundamental perspectives will be discussed in this book. These

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are personal, institutional, and moral. By the first we mean a perspective that looks at Islam simply as a system of ideology, reducing it to a mere set of political slogan and at best political and governmental system. By the second we mean an understanding that interprets Islam partially and solely as a system of faith and belief. We argue that while this second way of understanding religion is correct, it lacks sensitivity of the truth that other religions might hold. By the third we mean Islam as an ultimate religiosity, which captures one's deepest sensitivity and highest moral value.

From the first perspective, we argue that Islam is being expressed in highly personal and emotionally toned statements. Here we note such typical personal expressions of inner attitudes, conviction and especially the obsession to formalize Islam in a concrete political arena, or rather to make Islam the source of political ambition.

From the second perspective, we see that Islam is being expressed in the forms of rituals, dogma, doctrine and belief. At this level Islam is understood as a theological expression of particular models for living. This mode of thinking is a form of particularization of the more universal nature of religion, which disqualifies the view that Truth may be discerned in many kinds of spiritual traditions. It is a kind of natural denial to the heterodox interpretation of the Real as inauthentic. Revelation here is being narrowed down and reduced to a mere discursive partiality.

From the final perspective at the end, Islam is understood ultimately and phenomenologically as a cosmic religion containing comprehensive system of religiosity. We would like to argue that at the deepest level of human experience, religious sensitivities and moral values express more than the subjective and theological forms of a religion. Ideally, religious life expresses a commitment to the value that individuals or groups recognize as the source of their very being. Values such as self-realization, humbleness, fear to God, compassion, sympathy, kindness, tolerance, understanding, respect, and the like are the fullest possible expression of reality that the cosmic dimension of Islam embraces. This ultimate dimension, the book tries to hold, is the highest limit of Islam that makes it possible to rise above any parochial conceptions.

This discourse of ultimate religiosity moves beyond religious formality to a deeper understanding of reality. We try to show that discourse such as this offers an "authentic" religious intuition closer to the true spirit of revelation so long as it discovers things "as they are" in their pure "suchness" and for their own sake in their presentational immediacy.

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What we try to explore is therefore, a kind of deeper reaches of Islam which perceive religion as a dynamic self-engagement rather than as an outward belief. To do this, we would consult the concepts of divine transcendence and immanence as our formal paradigm and not simply as theological propositions.

Hence, the book consists of four parts. The first represents the ideological and political dimension of Islam, the second constitutes its dogmatic and doctrinal aspect, while the third and fourth narrates its moral -alternatively cosmic and phenomenological- impetus.

With regard to the first chapter, the book discusses the political ideology of the Nizamul Mulk on the ground that it represents one of the most vivid set of ideas, while this particular period is considered to be undoubtedly the most vibrant phase in the whole history of the Muslim community.

In the second chapter we discuss the doctrine and dogma of the Ash'arites as far as their understanding of religion is concerned. This group is chosen on the ground that their views are certainly considered to be the most paradigmatic doctrine on the whole Islamic intellectual landscape.

The third part of the book is particularly interested in exploring what it calls the "Theosophical Phenomenology of the Cosmic Islam" by tracing the philosophical insights of Ibn Sina, while the fourth is interested in tackling the "Sufistic Phenomenology of the Cosmic Islam" by referring to the ideas of Muhammad Jalaluddin Rumi. The theosophic aspect of Ibn Sina's philosophy and the sufistic dimension of Rumi's idea are both treated here as the proponents of the cosmic Islam.

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Chapter

The Political Antithesis of the Cosmic Islam

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Chapter 1 The Political Antithesis of the Cosmic Islam

The ninth century of Common Era was the beginning of the great uncertainty in the central caliphate of Baghdad. First, there were prolonged discontent, prevailing misrule, endemic disorder, repeated cruelties, and excess bloodshed and ravages. Then, there was a shift of power from the central caliphate to the independent and semi-independent dynasties. This and other events marked the beginning of the disintegration of the political unity of Islam, which changed its form forever.

This period is the period of the "Abbasid patterns" disintegration, as Marshall Hodgson calls it (1974, 8). It is a period where the caliph became a mere cipher in an empire parcelled out among local dynasties.

At this juncture, the Turkish tribesmen on whom the 'Abbasid caliphs had come to rely, began to exercise ever more power in the capital city and interfered with the process of decision-making. The military Shi'ah in the meantime, began to take control over most provinces; the Buwaihids in the East, the Hamdanids in Northern Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, the Qarmatians in Bahrain and Southern Arabia and the Fatimids in North Africa and Egypt. The new Persian political elite in their turn began to grow their provinces into independent dynasties, having misused the authority given to them by the caliph of Baghdad. Among those new Persian dynasties to have emerged was the dynasty of the Samanids.

This dynasty was founded in 261/875 during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mún of Baghdad. It established its own autonomy over Khurasan and maintained Bukhara as its bureaucratic administration capital. Nasr II

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(reigned 300-329/913-942) was among the most popular and successful ruler of the Samanids. He extended and consolidated his dominions so rapidly. Under his rule, the Samanids reached the greatest power and splendour of its zenith. The Samanid Dynasty flourished for nearly 125 years.

The establishment of the Samanid Dynasty, to speak from the positive side, contributed to the birth of an impressive material culture as markedly displayed in the literary writings of such poet as Firdawsí (d. 410/1020), the author of the famous *Book of the Kings*. In addition, as Ahmad Amín (1945/I, 259) and Edward Browne (1929, 352) have suggested this period marks the really active beginning of the intellectual renaissance. Great philosophers and scientists of Islam, such as al-Rází (d. 312/925) and Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037) were patrons of the Samanid Court. They provided the impetus for the intellectual flowering of the dynasty. Nishapur, the centre of learning during the Samanid era, became a great city.

Prominent in the intellectual life of Nishapur was the Karrámís noted for their ascetic and pietistic practices. Their leader in the later tenth century, the family of Banú Mahmashadh, had for a time the support of the Samanid governor Sebuktigin and then of his son Mahmúd, who had become autonomous sultan of Ghazna (Watt 1985, 79).

Abú Bakr Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Isbahání better known as Ibn Furák was born during the Samanid period in about 330/941. In 372/982 or 374/983 his admirers in Nishapur persuaded the Samanid amir Ibn Simjúr to invite him there as a teacher. A madrasah was built for him, and his presence in Nishapur is said to have led to a great flowering of various studies in that particular dynasty (Watt 1985, 79).

Among the man of letter apart from Firdawsí who lived during this period and enjoyed the hospitality of the Samanid Court was Rudagí (d. 319/930), a famous and celebrated poet. Other man of letter was Daqíqí (d. 362/972), Rudagí's successor. Both Rudagí and Daqíqí received the support from the court that the former reached the height of his renown and popularity. Daqíqí in the meantime flourished in full rigor and revived the Persian literature for the first time since the Sassanian period.

The Samanids provided the key for the revival of Islamic intellectual culture, not only in the Samanid land but also in other parts of Islamic territories. At their hand, the intellectual world of Islam passed from its auspicious infancy into vigorous youth and then strenuous maturity.

However, the impressive material culture coupled with the intellectual flowering that the Samanids had achieved does not soften the ground for the more idealistic and egalitarian value of Islam. That is, the system that

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emerges from that strenuous intellectual maturity does not approximate truly with what Albert Hourani calls "the principle of the *Ummah*". Unlike the 'Abbasid age, the age of these independent dynasties were characterized by the absence of universal law based on the equality of all believers and all mankind. Hourani notes:

> The caliphate had been at least in principle universal, resting on a formal equality of rights and functions as between all believers...its head had been, by his own claim and general recognition, the successor of the Prophet in his political function, and he has exercised his function in accordance with the Shariah. None of this was true of the sultans who had taken over his power. Their rule was territorially limited. The limits, it is true, were de facto only, there was no idea of a legal frontier separating one Muslim State from another, and by maintaining the caliph at their court the Mamlukes legitimized in advance any conquests they might make. Nevertheless, neither they nor any other ruler of the time could claim to be ruling the whole Ummah. Political power moreover, was in the hands of a single ethnic group maintaining itself by co-optation from the same stock. The sultan might be formally invested by the caliph, but there was no concealing that his power rested on seizure or descent, not on what had been regarded by the jurists as the legitimate process of choice (1962, 12).

The early 'Abbasid society, having incorporated the principle of the Ummah into its innate flexibility, developed what might be called, "a sense of community", that is, a sense that Muslims should live together in unity and harmony under the banner of Islam. So too with the Christian and Jewish communities which should continue to live under Muslim rule in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere in peace and harmony.

Unlike the early 'Abbasids, the emerging dynasties did not have this sense of community. What they had is a sense of division and differentiation originated in their interest to pursue and preserve power for themselves. Hourani describes this phenomenon, saying:

> The transfer of power brought with it a change in political institutions. The new States which arose, and of which

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> the Mamluke sultanate of Egypt was the culmination, had a different structure from the caliphate. Power lays in the hands of a military group -central Asian, Turkish, Kurdish, or Caucasian by origin- the sultan, his freedmen, and their dependants. It originated in seizure, its first aim was to maintain itself, and for this purpose it kept in its own hands control of the army and all officials... Where the interests of the State were concerned, its laws were the edicts of the sultan, administered directly by him or his governors and derived from considerations of State interest (1962, 11).

These phenomena are common among the emerging dynasties including the Samanid Dynasty and its two direct heirs; the Ghaznawid and the Seljuk Dynasties.

The Ghaznawid period began with a Turkish ascendancy in 351/962. Sebuktegin's son, known as Mahmúd of Ghazna (reigned 338-370/998-1030) was the most famous ruler of the dynasty. The territory of this dynasty under him stretched from Western Persia to the Ganges valley in India, and included what is now known as Afghanistan.

Mahmúd was known for his administration ability and intellectual acumen. But he was also known for his lawlessness. He was famous for his expeditions to India, which he invaded 17 times.

Early historians of Islam such as Ibn Athír and Ibn Kathir portrayed Mahmúd in an almost unanimous manner. They both treated him mainly as a man of invasion, expansion and greed. The followings are few illustrations from al-Kámil fi al-Táríkh portraying Mahmúd as an irresistible conqueror thirsty for money and status. Ibn Athír wrote:

> Ray was seized by Sultan Mahmúd and Majdúd Dawlah was dethroned in 420 H (1029 CE). It was in the spring that year that Mahmúd entered Ray and took from it a million *dínárs* in money, and a half that value in jewellery with six thousand suits of clothes and innumerable other spoils. He ordered Majdúd Dawlah to be exiled to Khurasan. It was on this occasion also that Sultan Mahmúd crucified a number of the heretical Bátinís or Ismá'ílís, banished the Mu'tazilís and burned their books together with the books of the philosophers and astronomers (1987/VIII, 170).

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Ibn Athír in his obituary notice of Mahmúd under the year 421 H (1030 CE) wrote, "His one fault was love of money and a certain lack of scruple in his methods of obtaining it". "There was in him," he says, "nothing which could be blamed, save that he would seek to obtain money in every way. Thus to give one instance, being informed of a certain man from Nishapur that he was of great opulence and copious wealth, he summoned him to Ghazna and said to him, "I have heard that you are a Carmathian heretic." "I am no Carmathian," replied the unfortunate man. "But I have wealth wherefrom what is desired (by your Majesty) may be taken, so that I be cleared of this name." So the sultan took from him some portion of his wealth and provided him with a document testifying to the soundness of his religious views." Ibn Athír also laid a finger on the sultan as being fanatical and cruel to the heretics as well as to Hindus (1987/VIII, 190).

Reports of similar tone and nature are to be found in Ibn Kathír's *al-Bidáyah wa al-Niháyah*. In principle, Ibn Kathír could not help feeling that Mahmúd was an ambitious conqueror. In a dynasty where a sense of community was lacking, Mahmúd was portrayed –so to speak- as a "war-seeking lion", a "crocodile," or a "raging elephant"; as a warrior who expanded his territory swiftly like smoke, like dust or like the wind; as a combatant who conquered foreign lands like storm, like the towering wave or like the thunderous lightning.

Rumi was disrespectful toward Mahmúd. In *Fíhi má Fíhi*, he narrates a story, which describes Mahmúd as a bigot. He relates:

> Sultan Mahmúd was given a marvellous horse, an extremely fine animal with a wonderful form. On the festival day he rode it out, and all the citizens were seated on the rooftops to see it. A drunkard who was sitting inside his house had to be dragged out onto the roof. "You come too and see the horse," they said. "I am busy by myself," he said. "I don't want to see it. I have no desire at all". But in the end he had no choice. As he teetered dead drunk at the edge of the roof, the sultan happened to be passing by. When the drunk saw the sultan on the horse, he said, "What is this horse to me? If right now a minstrel were to sing me a ditty and that horse belonged to me, I would give it to him"! When the sultan heard this, he grew very angry and ordered the man imprisoned (1994, 201).

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Mahmúd died in 421/1030 and within seven years of his death the kingdom, which he had built up, had practically passed from his House into the House of the Seljuks. The Ghaznawid was officially extinguished when the kings of Ghur wrested from them their last Indian possessions in 578/1186. The end of the Ghaznawid period marks the beginning of the Seljuk era to which we are now turning.

Nizamul Mulk and the Rise of the Political Antithesis of the Cosmic Islam

The legacy of the Samanids and particularly the Ghaznawids was inherited by the Seljuks. This passing down of the Ghaznawid legacy into the hand of the Seljuks is abundantly indicated by Nizamul Mulk who in more than one occasion, speaks in his *SiyásatNáma* of the inherent link between his dynasty and the dynasty of the Ghaznawids. Nizamul Mulk speaks so highly of Mahmúd. He describes him as "just, God-fearing, fond of learning, generous, alert, sound in judgement, orthodox in religion and a gallant fighter for the faith" (1978, 49). He also speaks so highly of the Samanid princes especially Ismá'íl b. Ahmad whom he describes as "wise and great about whom men never cease reading and singing in their praises and blessings" (1978, 61).

The Seljuks were Turkish by origin. They began to serve the central caliphate from the ninth century onwards, not as qualified officials, but as slaves or soldiers. Caliph al-Mu'tasim (reigned 218-227/833-842) was the first to give the Seljuks the militarily strategic positions, and surround himself with Turkish guards. Under him a great number of Turkish officers rose to the high rank, became army commanders or governors of semi-independent provinces. Among those who enjoyed a semi-independent status as a governor was Tughril Beg (reigned 429-454/1038-1063), who after the demise of Mahmúd took advantage of the situation and subsequently founded the Saljuk Dynasty. Tughril was a skilful ruler who within fifteen years of his rule had captured all northern Persia and had even entered Baghdad in 446/1055 (Arberry 1994, 21).

Tughril Beg was succeeded by Alp Arslan (reigned 454-464/1063-1072), under whose rule the territory of the dynasty was expanded into Georgia, Anatolia and eventually the whole Asia Minor. When Malik Sháh (reigned 464-485/1072-1092) took over, the geographical territory of the Seljuk reaches as far as, we are told by Ibn Athír, "the frontiers of China to the confines of Syria, to the utmost parts of the lands of Islam, and to the north unto the limits of Arabia Felix" (1987/VIII, 483). Eventually

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the Seljuks fostered their permanent power in the Caucasus, Aleppo, Damascus, Yemen and Bahrain. "By virtue of his political success", writes Ibn Kathír, "Malik Sháh was given the epithet of "the Glory of the Religion and the State", *Jalál al-Dín wa al-Daulah*" (1985/XII, 151).

The political achievement of the Seljuks opened up the way for a greater intellectual merit and excellence and the blossoming of literary movements. On the positive side, this period is the watershed of the history of Islam and marks the new beginning of the intellectual life of the Muslims. This period produced great thinkers capable of articulating a new and original form of intellectual stratification. Notable among these thinkers were Nizamul Mulk, Imám al-Haramain al-Juwainí and Abú Hámid al-Ghazzálí. These three thinkers form, as it were, the trilogy of both the Seljuk political power and the Ash'arí ideology. Nizamul Mulk represents the political wing of the trilogy, that is the power, while the other two represent its theological front, that is the ideology. In perhaps more accurate terms, Nizamul Mulk is the facilitator of what I have called the vision of political absolutism, while al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí are its systematisers and spokespersons.

Two major political agendas however, brought the three closer together. These are, (1) the ever-present desire of the Seljuks to have a greater political dominion in the whole Fertile Crescent, and (2) the growing resolution to crush the Ismá'ílí threat.

These two agendas are closely interrelated; the Seljuks had to subdue the Ismá'ílís, equally determined to gain more dominance, if they were to succeed in their imperial agenda. The Seljuks, having used all resources that they had, placed a great hope in the power of the trilogy to pursue what appeared to be their ultimate political goal.

In dealing with these agendas, Nizamul Mulk wrote *SiyásatNáma*, al-Juwainí wrote *al-Ghiyáthí* and *al-'Aqídah al-Nizámiyyah*, while al-Ghazzálí wrote *Nasíhatal-Mulúk* and more or less eight books on and against the Ismá'iliyyah.[1]

In this chapter, our aim is to discuss Nizamul Mulk and his legacy of political absolutism by linking him to al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí.[2] To begin with, let us have a closer look at who Nizamul Mulk was.

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[1] In his *al-Munqidh min al-Dhalál*, al-Ghazzálí mentions that he wrote five books against the Ismá'iliyyah. These five books are: *al-Mustazhirí, Hujjat al-Haq, Mufassil al-Khilaf, al-Durj*, and *al-Qistás al-Mustaqím* (1963, 52). However, al-Ghazzálí has also three other books dealing with the Ismá'iliyyah, namely *Fadá'ihal-Bátiniyyah, Qásimal-Bátiniyyah* and *Mawáhimal-Bátiniyyah* (Qordhówí 1988, 60-1).

[2] Our discussion on Nizamul Mulk in this thesis owes much to M Ruknuddin Hassan's *Nizam al-Mulk Tusi*, 1963.

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His full name was Abú 'Alí al-Hasan b Isháq. He was born in 408/1018 in Radkan, a village in the neighbourhood of Tus, of which his father was revenue agent on behalf of the Ghaznawid government. On the defeat of Mas'úd of Ghazna at Dandankan in 431/1040 when most of Khurasan fell into the hands of the Seljuks, Nizamul Mulk's father 'Alí fled from Tus to Khusrawdjird and then made his way to Ghazna. Nizamul Mulk accompanied him and while in Ghazna appears to have obtained a post in a government office. Within three or four years, he left the Ghaznawid for the Seljuks, and it seems to have been now, or soon after, that he first entered the service of Alp Arslan (Bowen 1987, 932). He took over as the vizier of Alp Arslan after the latter dismissed al-Kundurí, the vizier under Tughril Beg. Al-Kundurí was banished –likely under the request of Nizamul Mulk- to Marw al-Rud, where ten months later he died.

During Alp Arslan's reign Nizamul Mulk accompanied him on all his campaigns and journeys, except at the famous battle of Manazgird (Bowen 1987, 933).

Nizamul Mulk did not really come into his own until after the assassination of Alp Arslan in 462/1072. But afterward, for the next twenty years, he was the real master of the Seljuk Dynasty. He succeeded in completely dominating the then eighteen-year-old Malik Sháh, whom Nizamul Mulk assisted a great deal in securing the throne from Kawurd Beg. From the capital of the Seljuks, Nizamul Mulk's influence spread to the capital of the 'Abbasid Caliphate where he was given the title of *Radí'u Amír al-Mu'minín*, never before conferred on a vizier by the caliph (Hassan 1963, 749).

On the positive note, Nizamul Mulk was a celebrity par excellence of the Seljuk Dynasty. His popularity was not only due to his political acumen, but also to his intellectual merit and administrative prudence. He contributed a great deal in bringing his dynasty to the great apogee, and did much to stabilise its power and improve its administration. He was not only a skilful administrator, but also a man of high learning and fine scholarship. Ibn Athír (1987/VIII, 480) and Ibn Kathír (1985/XII, 149) described him positively as having major qualities such as being religious, having an intersection of political, intellectual and religious leadership, an utmost capable administrator, an acute statesman, a liberal patron of letter, and sincere friend to men of virtue and learning. Ibn Kathír furthermore described him as the best vizier (1985/XII, 149) and Ibn Athír described him as the "peerless pearl, which the All Merciful God esteemed of as a great price" (1987/VIII, 479).

He wrote *SiyásatNáma*, which he dedicated to Malik Sháh. The book,

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basically speaking, speaks about the methods and ways of administering the state and organising institutions particularly the institutions of kingship and vizarate, two political institutions of primary importance in his day. The book also offers a political counselling for the kings and sultans. About the intellectual currents, the book speaks of the two *maddhabs* prevailing in his dynasty, namely Sháfi'iyyah and Hanafiyyah. Nizamul Mulk showed his defence for Sháfi'iyyah, and attacked those who supported Hanafiyyah including his former master, Alp Arslan, whom he considers as the "fanatical Hanafi" (1978, 96).

SiyásatNáma received a warm reception from Malik Sháh who commented on the book saying, "all these topics that he has treated as my heart desired are complete and nothing is to be added. I adopt the book as my guide by which I will walk" (Browne 1928/II, 213).

Some of the great dignitaries and intellectuals of the dynasty –Nizamul Mulk writes- were asked by the "Glorifier of the World and the Faith, Malik Sháh, to give thought to the condition of the dynasty" (1978, 1). Among the many treatises submitted, only *SiyásatNáma* pleased the king and qualified to serve the dynasty as the guidelines for its administration.

About *SiyásatNáma*, Iftekhar Mahmood notes that it:

> ...provides advice to the rulers on the art of statesmanship and also educates the princess who would be the rulers. The book advised them on different aspects of royal duties and conduct, such as the selection of the officials for the administrative positions, preventing bureaucrats from abusing their power, management of the Sultan's household and to recruit soldiers and slaves and to maintain their loyalties etc (2002, 89).

However, this observation is good and fine. But *SiyásatNáma* must not be treated simply as a handbook of administration or statesmanship, or as containing principles of conduct to be followed by the king, sultans and other dignitaries. These are only preliminaries and are not all that make *SiyásatNáma* what it really is. It must rather be treated as a canon, which expresses the true ideals of its author and the real nature of his dynasty. Ultimately, it must be regarded as a book of political indoctrination for the state apparatus including the sultans and the ulama. The political maxim, which Nizamul Mulk tried to lay down, was not only the theories or guiding principles for the state, but also the binding generalities,

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which the state apparatus must observe. That is why, Nizamul Mulk writes emphatically in the very prologue of his *SiyásatNáma* that, "every king and emperor must possess and know this book especially in these days" (1978, 2).

Much of political formula, which Nizamul Mulk spoke, had a real root in the ideal of political absolutism. The formula of absolute monarchy for instance, is the closest expression of this ideal. This doctrine of absolute monarchy is designed to achieve two things: (1) the independence of the Seljuk Dynasty from the central caliphate in Baghdad, and (2) the recognition for its king as a divine ruler appointed through the divine interference.

The most important content of this doctrine is to ignore the institution of the *Khiláfah* as the source of legitimacy for the institution of kingship, or the *Khalífah* as the head of the Muslim political community. No where in *SiyásatNáma* can Nizamul Mulk be found mentioning the constitutional relationship between the 'Abbasid caliph and the Seljuk ruler. Nor can he be found using the title sultan for his king. As for the term *amír mustauli* (governor by usurpation), it does not occur at all throughout *SiyásatNáma*. Both term being employed by the jurists to denote the legal superiority of the caliph over the prince. Instead, he generally calls his ruler *pádshah*, a Persian term for king. All this is meant –as a conscious effort- to avoid acknowledging the legal and constitutional relations between the caliph and the prince, and to justify the independence of the Seljuk Dynasty from the central caliphate. Nizamul Mulk is quite explicit in this, and contends for example that while his dynasty does not need the legitimacy from the central caliphate, it stands equipped to become itself the source of legitimacy for other political powers. He diplomatically says:

> Now in the days of some of the caliphs, if ever their empire became extended it was never free from unrest and the insurrections of rebels. But in this blessed age there is no body in the entire world who in his heart meditates opposition to our master, or ventures his head outside the collar of obedience to him. May God perpetuate this empire until the resurrection and keep the evil eye far from the perfection of this kingdom (1978, 11).

His effort to avoid this kind of discussion is significant from yet another perspective. He is seeking to defend his king not only against the practical effort to incorporate him (the king) and his authority into the

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larger body of the caliphate, but also against the theoretical encroachment on his independence by the advocates of the caliph's authority, especially al-Máwardí.

From the outset Nizamul Mulk seems to have taken it for granted that the real source from which the king derives his authority, in theory or in practice, is not the institution of the caliphate (Hassan 1963, 755). But in saying this, Nizamul Mulk has indeed created for himself a dilemma as to what then is the real source of the king's authority. To this dilemma, he finds a solution in the notion of divine right or divine appointment; that the king has the right to rule over his subjects by virtue of divine authorisation or divine appointment. In the very first chapter of *SiyásatNáma*, Nizamul Mulk makes it clear that the nature of the authority of the king is divine, and that this authority is ordained by God. He says "in every age God selects one from among mankind and adorns him with princely skills, and entrusts him with the affairs of the world and the comfort of the subjects" (1978, 9).

The word "select" is carefully chosen to imply the direct appointment of king as God's representative on earth. The king in other word, is the "shadow of God on earth", to use the more popular expression found in the political literatures of the legitimistic theologians; an idea which readily finds an easy parallel in al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí. The three scholars use this idea in slightly different terms but for the same end and conclusion. Nizamul Mulk himself uses the word *Zil Allah fí al-Ardi in his Wasáyá* (Hassan 1963, 763), and al-Ghazzálí uses the word the *Khalífatulláh* in his *Fadhóihal-Bátiniyyah* for a political ruler (Crone 1990, 22). Al-Juwainí in the meantime uses such words as the Heart of Religion, the Heart of Humanity and so on to imply the elevated status of a ruler over ordinary people.

The idea of divine nature of king's authority is made even clearer when Nizamul Mulk states categorically that, "it was by divine decree that one human being acquires some prosperity and power" (1978, 9).

Nizamul Mulk however, does not seem prepared to discuss this idea of divine authority in great length perhaps because he sees it as a self-evident truth. Or else, he does it deliberately so as to leave it open to his more intellectually capable colleagues to have more says on it. In fact, Nizamul Mulk, intellectually speaking, is by temperament much more a matter-of-fact exponent of popular ideas than a real thinker, as Ruknuddin Hassan puts it (1963, 764). He was in other word, less talented than his two colleagues in terms of developing thought into systematic and theoretical concepts.

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After explaining the nature of the king's appointment, Nizamul Mulk moves on to discuss the purpose of kingship in a political community. Here he agrees much with most political theorists including al-Máwardí -the main intellectual rival of the Seljuks- who advocates the theory of the caliphate as superior over the sultanate, and the theory that the legitimacy of the sultanate must be derived from the caliphate. According to Nizamul Mulk –in agreement with most political theories- the functions of the king include: maintaining the religion and administering the worldly affairs; upholding orthodoxy, executing legal decisions, protecting the frontiers of Islam, fighting those who refuse to become Muslim when summoned and so on. More emphatically, the king must function to bring order out of chaos, and maintain peace (1978, 10). He is the imam and the ruler of the whole community and must therefore lead the community in peace and war. He must supervise the application of the Divine Law, and must himself be learned in the Law so as to be able to exercise power of interpreting it. As such, the king must uphold the Shariah, impose the penalties and watch over the performance of all duties commanded by God. Concerning this last function, Nizamul Mulk notes:

> If the people show any sign of disobedience or contempt towards the Shariah, or if they fail to obey God and to comply with His commands, then He intends to inflict punishment on them for their conduct. Due to their sin they bring this wrath upon themselves. Benevolent kings disappear from amongst them. Swords are drawn and bloodshed follows, and whosoever is powerful does as he pleases, till the sinners are perished in those calamities and bloodshed. Ultimately, power goes to one of the people whom God by His grace blesses with success according to his worth, and endows with wisdom and knowledge (1978, 9, 139).

However, Nizamul Mulk differs with al-Máwardí in that in speaking of the purposes of kingship all that Nizamul Mulk aimed was to throw more light on the divine nature of king's authority. Thus, as we might see in the above passage, he tries to show that (1) Shariah must be obeyed; (2) disobedience to the Shariah will result in the disappearance of the benevolent king, and (3) in the cases of calamities resulted from the disobedience to the Shariah, a king will be sent by God to save the people from those calamities.

Here the king is clearly presented as an instrument of God's will, fulfilling

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the divine function in political upheavals. It is a punishment for people's disobedience that they are first deprived by the Almighty of the benevolent king. Then His wrath takes the shape of calamities and upheavals. And it is again by His mercy that a man rises to the position of a sovereign and brings about peace and order. "Thus, in this divine order of political society", says Hassan, "all things proceed from God's will, and it is from His supreme authority that the king ultimately derives his power" (1963, 757).

While speaking about king in a broad generality, Nizamul Mulk is mindful that what he means by the king is the king of the Seljuks. This becomes evident when he says that it is by divine providence that the Seljuk master "has been destined to rule his subjects, and furnished with powers and merits such as had been lacking in the princes of the world before him" (1978, 10).

In effect, Nizamul Mulk is arguing that the authority of the Seljuk king rests primarily on the direct authorisation of God, and perhaps only secondarily on his own ability to govern, or on the recognition from the people.

This treatment of the authority of the king squares very well with Nizamul Mulk's other proposition that, given his divine nature, the king must be obeyed. For Nizamul Mulk indeed, to obey the king is a religious duty. It is not without reason therefore, that Nizamul Mulk lays a great emphasis on obedience as the most essential duty of the people towards their king. Since the king is divine, brings to the people peace, order and prosperity he deserves to be obeyed by his subjects. He states categorically:

> No doubt it is but obligatory to worship the Almighty, and to obey the king. The common people generally and the royal favourites and courtiers particularly, are under the obligation of such obedience, and more especially one who has been entrusted with authority in the matters of administration and finance.[3]

Elsewhere he says:

> Without the aid of God Almighty, an individual can never become a ruler, nor can he bring the world into the bondage of subjugation. Though there might be several causes of his rise to political power, they all refer undoubtedly to the same divine help.[4]

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[3] *Wasdyd*, p. 42. Cited from Ruknuddin Hassan's *Nizam al-Mulk Tusi*, p. 758

[4] *Ibid.*

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From the above passage, one will not fail to notice how central the idea of obedience to king is in Nizamul Mulk's thought. The passage shows that obedience to king comes directly after obedience to God. It means that just as obedience to God is obligatory, so is obedience to king. Naturally, when obedience is taken as the ultimate duty of the people, it means that people must obey their king without questioning the validity of his authority. It means also that the king cannot be wrong. Therefore, Nizamul Mulk likes to explain away any wrongdoing that the king has done so that it may not interfere with the absoluteness of his kingship. "Due to the sin of the people," Nizamul Mulk argues in the citation already mentioned, "they bring God's wrath upon themselves...Swords are drawn and bloodshed follows, and whosoever is powerful does as he pleases, till the sinners are perished in those calamities and bloodshed". Here, any disorder that inflicts upon the people in general and the kingdom in particular is seen as resulting not from the misconduct of the king, but from the wrongdoing of the people. The punishment of God is due to the sin of the people and not due to the sin of the king. If people are sinful, God will inflict punishment upon them, and if they are obedient God will reward them by providing security and order to their society.

Nor one will fail to notice that the whole purpose of Nizamul Mulk in propagating the idea of the absolute obedience to king is to consciously enunciate the doctrine of absolute monarchy in his kingdom. The monarchy that Nizamul Mulk speaks is absolute and its ruler an absolute monarch without reserve. He is the sovereign authority in his realm, and as such, the source of all political power. Says Nizamul Mulk, "God gave him power and dominion as befitted his worthiness and good faith, and made all the world subject to him, causing his dignity and authority to reach all climes" (1978, 11).

Now, all this was bound to arise without doubt, out of two interrelated political agendas that Nizamul Mulk on behalf of the Seljuks pursued; namely the ambition to expand the Seljukid territorial boundaries, and the resolution to crush the Ismá'ílí threat. Conscious that the Ismá'ílís –equally determined to expand their territory and influence- stood in his way, Nizamul Mulk was now concentrating to put their cause to an end. This however, tones up the autocratic temper of his political and religious policy, and makes him some kind of an oppressive despot with considerable depreciation for the principles of the *Ummah*.

Faced with the problem of the Ismá'ílís, Nizamul Mulk consciously utilised the ideology of the Ash'arís as his religious anchorage against

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them, and as a unifying force for the Muslim community. At this juncture, the role of al-Ghazzálí, who as we have said, composed more or less eight books against the Ismá'ílís, was particularly important.

Nizamul Mulk was perfectly aware that the nature of the Ismá'ílí danger was political, but in order to effectively deal with it, he had to use religion as his main weapon. Hence, he transcended the battle against the Ismá'ílís from merely political into religious battle. He implicitly argues that political deviation will result in a religious confusion. In other word, political problem is essentially religious problem. He writes:

> Whenever there is any disorder in the state, there is confusion in the religion of its people also, and the heretics and mischief-makers make their appearance. And whenever religious affairs are disturbed the state is thrown into disorder, the mischief-makers grow strong, and heresy makes itself manifest (1978, 60).

This argument, consistent with the broader agenda that Nizamul Mulk pursued, is apparently based on both religious and political considerations. But while it draws attention about the danger of political disorder in the state, its main aim is to persuade people that war against such heretics as the Ismá'ílís is a religious imperative.

Elsewhere, Nizamul Mulk strongly maintains that the Ismá'ílís must be eradicated for they endanger both the political unity of the Seljuks and the tenets of the religion. He says, "at whatever time they may appear, the ruler of that time will have no more obligatory duty than to wipe them from the face of the earth and make his country free and clear of them" (1978, 164, 189).

It is obvious that the main concern of Nizamul Mulk is to fight the Ismá'ílís both at the political and religious front, while maintaining that the battle is essentially religious. It is not coincidental in this context that he seeks the help of the ulama to assist the government in its battle against them at the religious front. So, Nizamul Mulk was evidently at pains to rally the support of the ulama and to pin his hopes on their power.

As to his ruler, Nizamul Mulk reminds that the ulama are the essential part of his authority. The ruler should therefore consult them and seek their help especially when he is faced with the danger of the Ismá'ílís. In more than one occasion, Nizamul Mulk insists that the ruler is in need of the ulama when he is to execute his religion-related duties (1978, 10, 59).

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In doing this however, Nizamul Mulk –consciously or unconsciously- has enlarged the role of the ulama in politics and paved the way for their greater power in the court. As the ulama held sway, the court saw it necessary that the ulama must now be integrated into the system of its political authority. From here then, a formal alliance between the political authority and religious authority in the dynasty was formed, and a new era of a greater collaboration between the two authorities was now entered.

In the short run this alliance does good for the state; it serves as an aid for the enunciation of the vision of political absolutism. For the ulama in the meantime, the alliance serves as a golden moment to raise their *maddhab* –with the aid of the government- into the status of what Ali Mabrook calls a "sacred ideology" (2003, 45-6). As the alliance develops, the sacred ideology of the Ash'arí ulama emerges as a kind of mechanism to check not only the centrifugal tendencies, but also the so-called "profane ideologies" which might pose a threat to both the state and the dominating ideology. Thus, the As'ariyyah, the official *maddhab* of Seljuks, becomes an ideology with its crude determinism that sees its ideas as the determining force of history. This determinism, borrowing Mabrook's words again, eventually grows not only as a system of belief, but also as a collective psychological purport for the people, which directs their conduct, determines their value, and dictates their norm as well as their way of thinking (2002, 11).

The vision of determinism however, was strengthened as Nizamul Mulk developed a stronger connection with his two Ash'arí leading thinkers, namely al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí.

The Ash'arite Connection

Nizamul Mulk was a Sháfi'í in his jurisprudential *maddhab* and an Ash'arí in his political view and ideological leaning. To understand his political vision, it is necessary to link him to his two Ash'arí mentors with whom he associated himself.

It is first imperative to note that al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí were not the only Ash'arí ulama with whom Nizamul Mulk associated himself. There was a bunch of other ulama with whom he developed a close patronage mainly through the mechanism of the madrasah Nizamiyyah. This madrasah was established by Nizamul Mulk in all over the dynasty as well as one in Baghdad, and was named after him. Among those to have been patronised by Nizamul Mulk through this mechanism, apart from al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí, were Abú Isháq Firuzabádí al-Shírází (d. 476/1083), Abú al-Qásim al-Qushairí

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(d. 465/1072), Abú al-Fadl al-Hamadání (d. 489/1096), Ahmad al-Ghazzálí (d. 417/1126), Abú al-Fath al-Shahrastání (b. 479/1086 or 469/1076), and Yúsuf al-Hamadání (d. 431/1140), to mention just few. Al-Juwainí and al-Ghazzálí were certainly the most prominent among those and indeed the most important to Nizamul Mulk.

Al-Ghazzálí was enrolled to the madrasah Nizamiyyah at the early age. He was intellectually ambitious and energetic. On the other hand Nizamul Mulk, having gathered around him a brilliant galaxy of savants and learned men, added al-Ghazzálí into his bench. Al-Ghazzálí was appointed a Chair of Theology at Baghdad branch in 484/1091. He was then only thirty-four. This was most coveted of all the honours in the then Muslim world and one, which had not previously been conferred on anyone at so early age.

As a professor at Nizamiyyah, al-Ghazzálí achieved a complete success; the excellence of his lectures, the extent of his learning, and the lucidity of his explanations attracted larger and larger classes. Soon all scholars acclaimed his eloquence, erudition, and dialectical skill and he came to be looked upon as the greatest theologian in the Ash'arí tradition. He came to wield influence comparable to the most highly respected scholars at the time. He attained to all the glory, and his advice began to be sought in religious matters particularly those relating to the controversial doctrines of the Ismá'ílís.

Al-Ghazzálí held a very strong opinion against the pretensions of the Ismá'ílís whom he prefers to call the party of *ta'lím*. Theirs was a kind of Muslim popery or Montanist movement. Al-Ghazzálí was against their proposition that truth can be attained only by a submissive acceptance of the pronouncements of an infallible imam (1963, 26, 44). This doctrine was indeed a part of the political propaganda of the Fatimid Caliphate (297-554/909-1160) and thus had its moorings in the political chaos of the day. Al-Ghazzálí, while examining the Ta'límís out of love for the search of truth, was also motivated to do this to make clear his position with regard to an ideology having political strings behind it. Within this framework, al-Ghazzálí became more and more involved in the political debates in his society. Nonetheless, it was the question of the nature and legitimacy of the Seljuk Dynasty that engaged his attention most of all and troubled his mind more than anything else.

Like Nizamul Mulk, Al-Ghazzálí was part of a generation that witnessed the breakdown of the political power of the 'Abbasid Caliphate. He witnessed the transfer of power from Baghdad to other capitals including the capital of the Seljuks. As the power of the Seljuk Dynasty grew, al-Ghazzálí was challenged to define the nature of that power, its

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source, and its legitimacy. From the outset, al-Ghazzálí seems to have been perfectly aware that the Seljuk Dynasty was originated in seizure. But in defence of the dynasty, al-Ghazzálí, like Nizamul Mulk, expounded a view whose aim is to maintain and strengthen the authority of his sultan in the light of his natural interest and that of the state. He refused indirectly to support the idea that the caliph is the source of legitimacy for the sultan's authority. In references scattered throughout his works including in his *Ihyá 'Ulúm al-Dín*, al-Ghazzálí believes for instance, that the caliph is indeed a legitimate ruler, but he is not the actual holder of power (1989/II, 154). The actual holder of power is the sultan (of the Seljuk). In other word, al-Ghazzálí assumes that apart from him being a legitimate ruler, a caliph should not be regarded as a ruler at all, let alone as a source of legitimacy for the authority of the sultan. This assumption carries a prejudice that the caliph should be discarded from his position and be replaced by the actual holder of power, namely the sultan.

The whole argument of al-Ghazzálí in this regard departs from his distinction between the institution of the caliphate and the institution of the caliph.

Al-Ghazzálí is careful in making mention about the institution of the caliphate. He sometimes speaks of an Islamic government, but at the same time seems to have in mind a government other than the caliphate.

When discussing about the caliphate al-Ghazzálí often emphasises, before anything else, the moral necessity of this institution. He argues that from this perspective, the existence of the caliphate is necessary. He observes that the caliphate does indeed have utility, therefore its existence is morally necessary. Among this utility, and certainly the most important one, is the establishment of the religion of Islam. By this establishment of Islam, al-Ghazzálí primarily means the maintenance of external observances of the religion such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage; the execution of the *hudúd* punishments; the maintenance of the Shariah Law in such matters as marriage and inheritance; the administration of Islamic justice by means of Qádís (n.d., 105).

Closely related to this argument is the contention that the caliphate is legitimate insofar as it derived its authority from the Shariah. Al-Ghazzálí always maintains that the caliphate has a *Shar'í* character and even criticises those who deny this character (n.d., 104-09). In this regard, he disagrees with Nizamul Mulk, who as we have said, had always avoided speaking about the legitimate nature of the caliphate.

Speaking about the institution of the caliph, al-Ghazzálí is equally insistent that this institution is necessary. But the question is now, who is qualified

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to be a caliph? The direction of al-Ghazzálí's argument in this issue is clear and relatively easy to establish. He tries to prove that the caliph has become practically dysfunctional as the holder of power, and should therefore be replaced by the actual holder of power, which is the sultan.

There are many elements in this argument, the most important of which is perhaps this: al-Ghazzálí contends that the Ummah is in need of the institution of imámah, if it is to realise the goals of the Prophet (n.d., 105). By this institution, he means the civic religious institution capable of carrying out the provisions of the Shariah. For al-Ghazzálí this implies that a favourably disposed political power must exist, and this political power can only be the Seljuk Dynasty.

The logical result of this argument is apparent; it leads to the contention that the caliph is not functional and should therefore be replaced by the sultan of the Seljuk.

Another element of the argument is to do with the qualifications required for someone to be the caliph. For al-Ghazzálí there are many qualifications including: the ability to defend the Muslims against their enemies and maintain the internal order of the state; the ability to make judgements in accordance with the Shariah; the ability to administer the affairs of the state; and the lineage of the Quraishí descent (1989/II, 153). These qualifications are apparently too great for the caliph to meet. Considering that the caliph has lost his real political power, these qualifications are not for the caliph to meet. It remains therefore, that the sultan, the actual holder of power, is the only ruler qualified to be the caliph.

Al-Ghazzálí's argument is not without prejudice. According to the list of his qualifications, not even the sultan of the Seljuk is qualified to be the caliph for he lacks the lineage of the Quraishí descent. Nonetheless, al-Ghazzálí is insistent that the necessity of having a caliph is so compelling that an alteration of the qualification can be compromised when situations demand (n.d., 107). In other word, al-Ghazzálí is arguing that the sultan of the Seljuk can be exempted from that particular qualification on the basis that he is needed as a caliph.

On the other side of the coin, al-Ghazzálí was aware that the nature of the authority of the sultan was not legitimate insofar as it was originated in seizure. This particular issue raised a serious problem to al-Ghazzálí, for it might interfere with his premise that the sultan is qualified for the caliph. To this he came up with an answer that a ruler can appoint himself as long as he possesses the necessary qualifications. It means that a ruler can usurp the power of another ruler and that that usurpation is justified as long as the usurper is capable of running the office. Al-Ghazzálí

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categorically states, "We are not concerned with an "irresistible force" and an "immovable object" (n.d., 107; Binder 1963, 782).

This thesis is readily parallel to the view of al-Juwaini who, having urged Nizamul Mulk to usurp the power of the caliph, maintains that usurpation of power by a capable ruler is permissible (1401, 317).

The logical consequence of al-Ghazzáli's argument is that the institution of the caliph –not the caliphate- has now lapsed. In more extreme terms, this means that the caliph has practically become non-existent. Interestingly however, al-Ghazzáli maintains that the caliph should be obeyed having derived his authority from the Shariah, hence implicitly –or even explicitly- recognises the caliph as not non-existent. These accounts seem indeed contradictory. But I think these seemingly contradictory accounts can be mediated by putting into consideration the classification of authority as functional, constitutional, and institutional. It may well be that for al-Ghazzáli, constitutionally and institutionally the caliph is not non-existent, but functionally he is.

The idea of the dysfunctional nature of the caliph is more vividly expressed when al-Ghazzáli discusses the ways of electing the caliph. According to al-Ghazzáli, there are three ways of electing the caliph. These are (1) by designation of the Prophet (2) by designation of the ruling caliph, and (3) by designation of the holder of actual power. Among these three ways, al-Ghazzáli emphatically says, the third is the way to be followed in his time.[5] We may yet again ask the question, who is the true holder of the actual power? The answer is already given; it is the sultan of the Seljuk. In concrete terms, this means that the Seljuk must appoint the caliph, and not the reverse. This theory of course stands in totally sharp contrast to other theories commonly held by other political theorists such as al-Máwardí that the caliph must appoint the sultan if the latter is to receive legitimacy in his political authority.

Having explained that the caliph is dysfunctional, and that the sultan is in some measure the authority for the caliphate, al-Ghazzáli at the end of his political project speaks of the role of the ulama in the whole structure of the political establishment. He contends that being the guardians of the Divine Law, the ulama must be consulted in every matter of the state. A ruler cannot be said as legitimate unless he receives the consent of the ulama. This view is in line with Nizamul Mulk's agenda, which seeks to invest the ulama with formidable power in society and politics.

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5 Cited from Leonard Binder's *al-Ghazzáli, p. 782*

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Nizamul Mulk in his SiyásatNáma indicates that the sultan must listen to the ulama, "seek knowledge of religious matters, comply with, and make arrangements to carry out, the commands of God and the traditions of the Prophet, and pay respect to religious scholars" (1978, 59). More specifically, Nizamul Mulk advises his prince to consult the ulama once or twice a week so that, "one day he will become conversant with most of the laws of the Shariah, the commentary of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet, and thus the methods of dealing with temporal and religious affairs would become easy for him" (1978, 60).

This discussion leads us to an important point, namely the pattern and structure of the Ash'arí political thinking. In this school, power consists of two authorities: political authority and religious authority; the sultan and the ulama; politics and religion. In the words of Nizamul Mulk, "the state and religion are two brothers" (1978, 61) and in the words of al-Ghazzálí, "religion and politics are twin brothers, which cannot be separated" (1989/II, 153).

Now, while al-Ghazzálí and Nizamul Mulk constitute the backbone of the Seljukid agenda, nothing is more significant in the whole agenda than the intimate friendship between Nizamul Mulk and al-Ghazzálí's teacher, al-Juwainí. The relationship between them goes beyond the professional and intellectual relationship to psychological and personal one.

Al-Juwainí used to live in exile having been banished by al-Kundurí, a minister of the Seljuk Dynasty before Nizamul Mulk, apparently over a dispute concerning a ministerial post. During his exile, al-Juwainí lived in the two holy cities of Mekka and Medinah, hence the epithet *Imám al-Haramain*. He was called home by Nizamul Mulk and was given a post as the first Head of the madrasah Nizamiyyah in Nishapur.

The close relationship between Nizamul Mulk and al-Juwainí may be illustrated by the fact that al-Juwainí wrote two books in dedication to Nizamul Mulk, namely *Ghiyáth al-umamfíIltiyáthal-Zulam* better known as *al-Ghiyáthí*, and *al-'Aqídah al-Nizámiyyah* better known as *al-Nizámí*. However, the title of the second book is particularly provocative; one is provoked to ask what is the reason behind the author calling the book the Nizamian Creed? While the book is an exposition of the Ash'arí theology it is highly likely that the book is meant to defend what the author himself calls the Nizamian Creed. But what is Nizamian Creed? We will never know the answer because the author himself did not say what it is. But we can speculate that –given the context in which the book is written- Nizamian Creed is Nizamul Mulk's vision of political absolutism, which seeks to establish the absolute monarchy for the Seljuk

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Dynasty. If it is true, and I think it is, then in al-Juwaini's mind, Nizamul Mulk's vision of political absolutism is a creed (*Aqidah*), which must be defended and obeyed.

In the meantime, *al-Giyáthí* is, as al-Juwaini himself said, destined to defend the interest of the Seljukid politics, and more particularly the interests of what al-Juwaini calls the domains of Nizamul Mulk (1401, 12). The book itself is named after Nizamul Mulk whom al-Juwaini calls the *Giyáth al-Daulah* (the Protector of the State).

Having been presented to Nizamul Mulk, the book speaks so highly about the vizier and defends him in everything that he does. It is also a token of loyalty from al-Juwaini to his mentor vizier. Al-Juwaini attempts to show that he is as happy as ever to be at Nizamul Mulk's side. That is why he calls him in various extravagant names and epithets such as the Master of Humanity, the Affirmer of Religion and World, the Servant of Sword and Pen, and the Protector of the *Ummah* (1401, 13). Al-Juwaini also calls him the Heart of Time, the Guardian of Humanity, the Victory of Islam and the Protector of the State, *Giyáth al-Daulah*(1401, 18).

Nowhere can al-Juwaini be found more vigorous in his defense of Nizamul Mulk, than in his discussion about the notion of the usurpation of power. Like al-Ghazzáli, al-Juwaini argues that usurpation of power is justified as long as the usurper is capable of running the office of political leadership (1401, 329). He next states immediately that the leadership of Nizamul Mulk must be supported because it brings beneficial things (*fawá'id*) for the people and achieves the purpose of that leadership. It appears as if al-Juwaini says that the power of Nizamul Mulk is originated in usurpation, but it must be accepted and supported because it achieves the purpose of leadership.

By the purpose of leadership, al-Juwaini particularly means the enjoining of what is good and the prevention of what is evil. He writes:

> That (political leadership) must be supported by means of reason and clear rational demonstration. Once that is achieved, God will show to us the purpose of that (political leadership). Muslims are in full agreement that individuals and collectivities must participate in enjoining of what is good, attempt to uphold it, and do in their power to rescue the honored ones from falling into destruction. Muslims are also in agreement that whosoever sees an oppression, despotism, persecution and coercion, and is able to prevent them, he/she is obliged

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> to prevent them in the best of his/her ability, in the same way that he/she is obliged to defend him/herself. One is allowed to defend his/her wealth by means of his hand, tongue, limb and even weapon (1401, 330-1).

In an attempt to draw more support for the leadership of Nizamul Mulk –as well as the ruler *de jure* of the Seljuk- al-Juwainí like al-Ghazzálí tries to show that the period in which he lived is empty from the 'Abbasid political leadership (1401, 329). In other word, the 'Abbasid political leadership is simply non-existent, and al-Juwainí therefore suggests that it is by all means legitimate for the Seljuk to usurp or to absorb, to say the least, the 'Abbasid Caliphate into the dominion of the Seljuk Dynasty.

Under the heading of Replacing *anImam, al-Juwainí* is diplomatically straightforward in his suggestion that Nizamul Mulk should replace (*yakhla'*) the caliph and take over the leadership for himself (1401, 118).

This is the ultimate purpose of the *al-Giyáthí*; campaigning for the dismissal of the caliphate and the promotion of the Seljuk leadership as the alternative for that caliphate which he has considered as simply non-existent.

In *al-Giyáthí*, al-Juwainí presents a theoretical exposition of leadership (*imámah*). By this concept, he means "a comprehensive leadership over the affairs of the elects (*khowás*) and common people (*'awám*) in matters relating to religion and the world" (1401, 22). Because leadership is comprehensive, a leader must possess several qualifications including physical, intellectual and spiritual. Among the most important qualification is a Quraishí descent, like al-Ghazzálí proposes (1401, 76-91). The physical qualifications include for instance, having good sight, hearing, speech and complete organs. The intellectual qualification includes knowledge; an imam must have knowledge to run his state, and the spiritual qualification includes piety. An imam must also be man, free, adult, sane and brave.

Interestingly, of those qualifications al-Juwainí does not mention justice. He seems to be careful in making statement about justice, for that will interfere with the character of his sultan's authority. Al-Juwainí seemed to have been aware that having seized power, the sultan could hardly be called just. Instead, al-Juwainí recognises the sultan as simply pre-eminent; that he has every right to act as an imam. In doing this, al-Juwainí certainly wants to admit that the authority of the imam is absolute, divine and therefore must be obeyed.

Obedience is the main element in al-Juwainí's exposition of the theory of *imámah*. Because an imam is divinely appointed, he must be recognised and obeyed.

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Al-Juwainí takes it for granted that an imam must be recognised, and not be chosen. In using the word recognition instead of choice, al-Juwainí is essentially motivated to show that an imam is only to be recognised and not to be chosen. Choice does not apply to the imam because he has been appointed by divine interference. What is left for people is to recognise him and to obey him. Obedience therefore should be given to the ruler without reserve. One must, by implication condones his injustice and rather supports him in his duties.

Speaking of duties, al-Juwainí outlines that there are two major duties of the imam; namely protecting the religion, and pursuing things relating to the world (*dunyá*). In other words, the duties of the imam are both religious and temporal. Concerning the temporal duties of the imam, al-Juwainí includes the following: maintaining the safety and security of the state, imposing penalties, solving divisions, and protecting the wealth of the state from loosing. Concerning the religious duties of the imam, al-Juwainí differentiates between his duties to protect the foundations (*usúl*) of the religion and to supervise the application of its details (*furú*) such as supervising the performance of Friday prayers, pilgrimage to Mekka, the Eids and other informal religious ceremonies.

With regards to the foundations of the religion, al-Juwainí includes, among others, watching over the performance of all duties commanded by God, spreading the bounds of the faith by holy war, and defending the *Ummah* against its enemies (1401, 184-238).

Al-Juwainí identifies two groups of enemies, namely the infidels and the diverted group (*firqoh munharifah*). As to the former, al-Juwainí suggests that they must be invited into Islam by means of clear argument and sound reasoning (1401, 184). And as to the latter, al-Juwainí maintains that they must first be compelled to repent, and if refuse, must be fought in a holy war (1401, 185). By saying this (that the diverted group must be fought in a holy war) al-Juwainí is in fact arguing, like Nizamul Mulk and to a lesser extent al-Ghazzálí, that to fight the Ismá'ílís is justifiable and has become religious imperative. For al-Juwainí, as for other agents of the Seljuk Dynasty, the Ismá'ílí problem is indeed political, but political problem is essentially religious problem too. So, on this basis the Seljuks felt justified that they take up arms against whom Nizamul Mulk, al-Ghazzálí and al-Juwainí commonly call the *Zanádiqah*. Hence the political antithesis of the cosmic Islam has resulted in -and therefore identical with- tension and war.

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Chapter

The Theological Antithesis of the Cosmic Islam

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Chapter 2 | The Theological Antithesis of the Cosmic Islam

As may be gleaned from the last chapter, Ash'ariyyah constitutes the most important force to be reckoned with. During and apparently subsequent to the Seljuk era, Ash'ariyyah emerged as a blooming power. It has produced al-Ghazzálí, al-Juwainí, Abú Isháq al-Shírází, Abú al-Qásim al-Qushairí, Abú al-Fadl al-Hamadání, Ibn al-Shabbagh, Ahmad al-Ghazzálí, Abú al-Fath Muhammad al-Shahrastání, Yúsuf al-Hamadání, Fakhruddín al-Rází (d. 607/1210), and many others.

While Ash'ariyyah was growing in a fast pace, something similar was taking place in the mystical strand of Islam, Súfiyyah.[1] Sufism was also undergoing a renaissance during this period, and for nearly a century and half afterward, it entered into the period of greatest bloom. Marshall Hodgson described Sufism during this period as "the most important inward religious experience in the region from Nile to Oxus" (1974/II, 211). During the later part of what Hodgson categorises as the Earlier Middle Period (945/1258), the most important period of activity in the development of Sufism occurred. Hodgson explains, "around the latter part of the twelfth century the reorganisation of Sufism was completed with the establishment of formal Sufi brotherhood or orders (*taríqah*). The distinctive marks of the new Sufism were two: its organisation into these formal "orders" and its concentration on a formal method of mystical worship, the *dhikr*" (1974/II, 211).

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[1] From now on, I would use the word Sufism -instead of Súfiyyah- in this thesis for it is the standard word in English.

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The renaissance of Sufism, Leonard Lewisohn remarks, was due in part to the two major literary figures in thirteenth-century Sufism, namely Ibn 'Arabí and Rumi whose works were to change forever the course of Islamic spirituality (1995, 105). Victor Danner in the meantime explains that "Sufi literary and spiritual fruits of the thirteenth century form, in their ensemble, a veritable spiritual message that would govern the general outlook of Islamic civilisation and affect all facets of society for centuries" (1988, 99). "The philosophical mysticism of Ibn 'Arabí and poetical mysticism of Rumi," continues Danner, "are but two of the different genres used by thirteenth century Sufism to effect a spiritual reanimation of Islam that would be the literary counterparts to the eruption of Sufi orders all over the face of the Islamic world" (1988, 99-100).

Due to its importance and centrality to Rumi however, Ibn 'Arabí's philosophical mysticism will be used somewhat extensively to highlight the most important premises that we uphold.

While this period is characterised by the flowering of both Ash'ariyyah and Sufism, it is also characterised by the tension between the two. This tension has to be explained by several factors the most important of which are the following. First, Sufism –unlike the outward religious idealism- emphasised direct experience of the object of faith. It claimed to lead its adepts to a direct communion with God, a thesis which the outward ulama rejected. Second, the Sufis see the religion as rooted in inner attitudes such as love and compassion, while the outward ulama see it as fundamentally something that pertains to activity, that is Shariah. Third, the Sufis adhere to open and "liberal" approach towards religion, while the outward ulama advocate dogmatic appraisal to religious beliefs and practices.

It is with this tension in mind that we turn to this chapter. Our main aim is to discuss the Ash'arí theological version of *tanzíh*, but in doing so we find it necessary to discuss also the mystical vision of *tashbíh* in the background.

Tashbíh and Tanzíh and the Main Theological Paradigm

The contest between the two discourses concerning the understanding of the nature of religion exposes the most fundamental issue in the study of Islam. This contest is as old as Islam itself, but culminated during the period of what Hodgson called "high culture", and became more and more relevant today as a subject of discussion and debate. This contest is the focus of our discussion in this chapter. Here we want to explore this contest by proceeding for the most part in terms of the *contra*

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inanem mystica (tension between theological and mystical discourses), as manifested in the two basic concepts of *tanzíh* and *tashbíh*.

As a starting point let us cite the following statement by Frithjof Schuon which says:

> Theology is a type of thought which, being founded on the necessarily antinomic and elliptical –but by no means contradictory or insoluble- data of the sacred Scriptures, interprets these data by means of reason and in accordance with a piety often more fervent than enlightened. This results in theories which are doubtless opportune and efficacious in a given psychological or moral connection, but which are restrictive or even unsound from the point of view of pure and simple truth. Muslim theology provides an immediate example of this in the antagonism between "comparison" (*tashbíh*) and "abstraction" (*tanzíh*) (1985, 203).

This statement guides us to two things. First, the debate concerning the sacred Scripture (and by implication concerning God and the nature of religion) seems to be encircling around the two concepts of *tanzíh* and *tashbíh*. Second, *tanzíh* and *tashbíh* are mutually opposing concepts; opposing in the sense that they imply different methodological starting points.

The terms *tanzíh* and *tashbíh* are the key to what I want to explain in this chapter as well as in the whole thesis. They will take us through to the journey of exploring the possibilities of intellectual interpretation of Islam concerning the nature of Islam.

But what are *tanzíh* and *tashbíh*? They are theological terms for the two general attributes of God, which constitute religious concept defining His putative reality. While *tanzíh* and *tashbíh* are originally terms about the basic understanding of God, they are also understood in this thesis as perpetuating the basic understanding of the nature of religion.

As religious concepts, *tanzíh* and *tashbíh* present a profound but somewhat abstract philosophical idea. I am saying abstract because they lead to two totally different interpretations concerning their meaning. According to the first interpretation, tanzíh is understood as divesting God of His attributes (*ta'tíl*), and *tashbíh* as recognizing and affirming His divine attributes by analogy (*ithbát*). According to the second, *tanzíh* is understood as declaring God to be absolutely different and incomparable

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from His creatures, and tashbíh as declaring Him to be "similar" and comparable. These two interpretations have an important implication for the classification and categorisation of a *maddhab* of thought. Thus, Ash'ariyyah for example, is classified as the partisan of tashbíh, if we are to take the first interpretation, and the partisan of *tanzíh*, if we are to take the second. But what about the Ash'arís themselves? Do they consider themselves to be the partisans of *tanzíh* or *tashbíh*?

'Alí al-Qórí al-Hanafí, in his explanatory book of Abú Hanífah's *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, maintains that the people of Sunnah –and the Ash'arís are included of course- regard themselves as the partisans of *tanzíh*. Al-Qórí also maintains that, for the people of Sunnah to negate *tashbíh* does not mean to negate God's divine attributes (1984, 25). That is to say, tashbíh does not mean to affirm God's divine attributes. It rather means that God is comparable (*yushbih*) to His creatures (1984, 25). Al-Qórí then adds that the classification of the Ash'arís as the partisans of *tashbíh* was misleadingly propagated by the Jahmís (1984, 24-5).

On the other hand, al-Ghazzálí -the most celebrated Ash'arí theologian- explained the meaning of *tanzíh* in his *Ihyá 'Ulúm al-Dín* in line with his Ash'arí tendency. To him *tanzíh* means to see God as incomparable (*munazzah*), and not to divest Him of His attributes. He explains that *tanzíh* is:

> To attest that He is not a body possessing form, nor a substance restricted and limited. He does not resemble other bodies either in limitation or in accepting division. He is not a substance and substances do not exist in Him. He is not an accident and accidents do not exist in Him. He resembles no entity and no entity resembles Him.... He is above the Throne and above the Heavens and above everything to the limits of the earth with an aboveness which does not bring Him nearer to the Throne and the Heavens...He is highly exalted above the Throne and the Heavens, just as He is highly exalted above the earth (1989 I/, 108).

On the basis of what al-Qórí and al-Ghazzálí say, I therefore have no doubt that for the Ash'arís *tanzíh* means to declare God as incomparable, and *tashbíh* to declare God as comparable. On the same basis, I have equally no doubt that the Ash'arís are the proponents of *tanzíh*.

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I have to rush to say that in this thesis tashbíh is not taken to mean God's comparability in an anthropomorphic sense because God will remain forever incomparable. In the words of al-Ghazzálí, "His nearness does not resemble the nearness of bodies, just as His essence does not resemble the essence of bodies" (1989 I/, 108). Rather, God is comparable and "similar" only in the sense that He can rightly be conceived in some respect in human attributes and in the characteristics of the universe. That is to say, because everything in the universe is the reflection of God's divine names and attributes, God can be adequately described in terms of the characteristics found in the universe.

Now, the Qur'an is the source for the ideas of *tanzíh* and *tashbíh*. It speaks of *tanzíh* and *tashbíh* at least in two general terms: (a) in terms of God's nature and qualities, and (b) in terms of transcendentalism and anthropomorphism proper.

In terms of His nature and qualities as *tanzíh*, the Qur'an speaks of God as the Ultimate Reality (Q 2/186), the Sole-self-subsisting, the All-pervading, the Eternal, and the Absolute Reality (Q 2/115), the First and the Last, the Seen and the Unseen (Q 57/3). He is also the One who is above all comprehension (Q 6/ 103), the immanent both in the souls (*anfus*) and the spatio-temporal order (*áfáq*). He is the One (Q 2/163), the most High who has no partner (Q 6/22-24).

He is the Omnipotent, the Lord of all the worlds (Q 1/2), and of all mysteries (Q 16/77). He has the power over all things (Q 57/2), to whom belong all forces of the heavens and the earth (Q 47/4). He is the Lord of the Throne of Honour and the Throne of Glory Supreme, the Lord of the dawn (Q 113/1) and all the ways of ascent (Q 70/3). To Him belong the east and the west. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving His creatures. He is the most high and supreme in glory (Q 2/255), exalted in might and wise (Q 3/6).

In terms of His qualities as *tashbíh*, the Qur'an speaks of God as loving (Q 4/28,45), as the One who exercises His love in creating, sustaining, nourishing, sheltering, helping and guiding His creatures; in attending to their needs, in showing them grace, kindness, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness; and in extending the benefits of His unlimited bounty even to those who commit sins (Q 3/150, 174).

God is all good (Q 59/23). He is also the source of all good (Q 16/ 53) and worthy of all praise (Q 31/26). God is the light (núr) of the heavens and the earth (Q 24/35), and His names are most beautiful, *al-*

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asmá al-husná (Q 7/180). He is the Creator who possessed the highest excellence (Q 37/125). Everything created by Him is harmonious and of great beauty (Q 32/7).

In the meantime, in terms of transcendentalism proper, the Qur'an speaks of God as absolutely other, powerful and great to such an extent that hardly any room can be left for any other existence apart from Him. Thus the Qur'an says for example that "none is equal to Him" (42/11). But, just as God in the Qur'an is portrayed as absolutely other, He nonetheless is also described after the image of man in terms of anthropomorphism proper. Thus, God speaks of Himself as having eyes (11/39; 20/39; 23/27), hand (3/66; 23/90; 28/75; 36/83) and so on. There are also verses which speak of God as having face. The Qur'an says, "All on earth passesth away, but the face of thy Lord abideth" (55/27). God also says of Himself as seated on the Throne (7/52; 10/3; 13/2; 20/4; 25/60; 32/3).

This question of *tanzíh* and *tashbíh* explicit in the Qur'an did not begin to thrust itself upon the awareness of Muslim thinkers till toward the second and the third centuries of the Hijra (Watt 1990, 86) when acute differences of opinion arose among the Muslims concerning the attributes and nature of God. The reasons for this late awareness are twofold. First, Islam does not know anthropomorphism on the immediate level of religious consciousness, and rejects - under the notion of hulúl- the form of anthropomorphism typical for Christianity, namely incarnation. Therefore, Muslims were not interested to deal with it. Second, it was only during this period that the transcendentalist and anthropomorphist tendencies were born as a result of Islam having to face new ideas in the new lands that it newly occupied.

Earlier, Muslims were only interested to deal with such issues as predestination, free will and the justice of God. Among the schools of thought to have emerged out of this debate was the Mu'tazilah. The Mu'tazilís adopted the Qadarís' view that man is the author of his own acts. This view is aimed at safeguarding the ethical nature not of man, but of God, and at the same time showing that man is destined to be free to determine his own will.

Later on, the Mu'tazilís become more and more aware of the importance of the issue of God's attributes. The question that the Mu'tazilís dealt with was whether these attributes are eternal or not, vis-à-vis the essence of God. Their answer was to say that these attributes cannot be taken as eternal apart from the eternal essence of God, which is unity, because that will destroy the unity of God. Holding firmly to

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the idea of God's unity, The Mu'tazilís cannot admit this eternal quality of God's attributes unless they were shown to be indistinguishable from the divine essence, from God Himself.

In the face of the issue of God's unity on the one hand, and the issues of predestination, free will and God's justice on the other, the Mu'tazilís adopted for themselves the slogan of the "partisans of justice and unity". This phrase forms the very core of the Mu'tazilí creeds and dogma. Therefore, when the ten creeds of the Mu'tazilah are summarised, we can plainly see that these creeds belong either to "justice" or "unity". These ten creeds, as al-Shahrastání explains, are: (1) the denial of God's eternal attributes; (2) the belief in the createdness of the Qur'an; (3) the assertion that will, hearing, and sight do not belong to God's essence; (4) the denial of the beatific vision; (5) the repudiation of anthropomorphism; (6) the belief in man's free will and denial that God can create evil; (7) the belief that a wise God can do only what is salutary (*saláh*) and good; (8) the belief that those Muslims who die obedient and repentant deserve bliss and those who die otherwise deserve eternal punishment; (9) their belief that knowledge and a good disposition must precede the reception of God's message, that a knowledge of good and evil is necessary, and that the imposition of the law of religion is God's gift; (10) the belief that the *imámah* is a matter of choice (n.d.a, 44-6).[2]

Among these creeds, the creed number five is of particular interest. It shows that at this stage the Mu'tazilís have become aware of the centrality of the question of anthropomorphism. It also shows that the Mu'tazilís are the proponents of *tanzíh*; *tanzíh* in the sense of *ta'tíl* and not in the sense of declaring God as incomparable, as the creed number one shows.

On the other hand, the Mu'tazilís –says al-Ash'arí- are the followers of the Jahmiyyah (1987/I, 106), after Jahm b. Sofwán. The later used to claim that God cannot be heard nor be seen. God is simply the absolute Power. God is not only beyond any form, but also beyond being as such. At the hands of the Mu'tazilís, this notion of the absolute transcendentalism was taken far beyond its embryo. They claim that because God is too exalted, He cannot be said to have eternal attributes apart from His eternal essence, because that –as we have said- would destroy His very essence of unity. Thus, as –al-Ash'arí explains- the Mu'tazilís become the proponents of *ta'tíl* for divesting God of His attributes (1987/I, 106). For the Mu'tazilís in other words, God has no touch of dualism in Him. His essence is

[2] WC Klein's translation (1940, 17).

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self-contained. They denied the attributes of God as anything other than and in addition to His essence (Abdul Hye 1963, 226-7). Al-Shahrastání explains this Mu'tazilí position by saying:

> The adherents of justice say that Allah is one as to His essence, without division (*qismah*) or quality (*sifah*); and that He is one as to His acts, without an associate. Accordingly what is eternal is His essence, and there is nothing which partakes of His acts. For it would be absurd that there should be two eternal beings and two governors to make decisions. This is the doctrine of unity and justice (n.d.a, 42).

Elsewhere he explains:

> The common belief of the sect of the Mu'tazilís is that Allah is eternal and that eternity is the most peculiar description of His essence. They absolutely reject all other eternal qualities, saying, "It is by virtue of His essence that He has knowledge, power and life; not because they are eternal qualities or ideas inherent in Him. For if the qualities should partake of His eternity, which is His most peculiar description, they would partake of His divinity. And they agree upon this, that will and hearing and sight are not ideas inherent in His essence (n.d.a, 43-4).

Al-Ash'arí explains the Mu'tazilí position more accurately saying that the Mu'tazilís distinguish between the essence (*dhát*) and the attributes (*sifát*) of God. Then they say that God is knower for example, not by His attribute but by His essence:

> The Mu'tazilís –like the Khawárij, and many of the Murji'ís as well as the Zaidís- say that Allah is rich, majestic, great, lofty, grand, chief, monarch, seeing, lord, possessor, overpowering, high, but not on account of majesty, greatness, loftiness, grandness, chieftainship, lordship and power. Likewise they say that He is one, alone, existing, eternal, exalted, and that He is not

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described in this way on account of divinity, eternity, uniqueness or existence (1969/I, 244-5).

In addition to the Mu'tazilah, there were at least three other groups that emerged out of this debate, namely the Attributists (*Sifatiyyún*), Anthropomorphists (*Mujassimún*), and Comparers (*Mushabbihún*). All of these groups adopted a clear-cut anthropomorphism and assumed it for God's essence. They maintained that God possesses all the attributes mentioned in the Qur'an including God having hands, ears, eyes and His sitting on His throne.

At this juncture, the position of a man like al-Ash'arí was initially aimed at discovering the middle intellectual ground for what he would consider as the extreme views of the Mu'tazilah and the other three groups (Imárah 1991, 169; Klein 1940, 30). However, al-Ash'arí seemed to have failed and ended up himself being an extremist. He opposed the Mu'tazilí view that God's attributes are identical with His essence, saying that God has attributes inherent eternally in Him and are in addition to His essence (1969/I, 293). To him, these attributes are eternal, but they are neither identical with His essence, nor are they quite different from or other than His essence. God is knowing for instance, means that God possesses knowledge as an attribute, which is inherent in God, and although it is not exactly the same as His essence, yet it is not something quite different from and other than His essence (1969/I, 293-97).

The point of disagreement between al-Ash'arí and the Mu'tazilís here is that for the latter God's attributes are identical with His essence. For al-Ash'arí that is not acceptable because that would mean a virtual denial of God's attributes. Nonetheless, al-Ash'arí did not assert that these attributes are something absolutely different or other than and separate, from the essence of God because that would mean multiplicity of eternals, and go against divine unity. He instead maintained that these attributes are, in one sense, included in and, in another sense, excluded from, the essence of God.

This position is very difficult. It is between the two horns of a dilemma. Al-Ash'arí -and with him are his students- could neither assert the eternal attributes of God to be identical with, nor wholly different from the essence of God. It is common knowledge that the Ash'arís contended that essence (*máhiyah*) and attributes (*sifát*) are two different things and they cannot be otherwise in the case of God, the Supreme Being. The Ash'arís made a distinction between the meaning or connotation (*mafhúm*) of

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a thing and its reality (*haqíqah*). So far as their meaning is concerned, the attributes and the essence of God are not the same and as such the attributes are in addition to the essence of God, i.e., they have different meaning. But so far as their ultimate *haqíqah* is concerned, the attributes are inherent in the divine essence, and hence are not something quite different from or other than the essence of God (Íjí n.d., 59-67).

In support of the above view, the Ash'arís advanced the following arguments. The analogical argument of the Ash'arís of the older generation: God's actions prove that He is knowing, powerful, and willing; so they also prove that He possesses knowledge, power, will, etc., because the ground of inference cannot differ in different things. What is true in the case of a created being must also be true in the case of the Divine Being. In the case of a human being, by "knowing" we mean one who possesses knowledge and even common sense and draws a line of demarcation between an essence and its attributes. On the same analogy, distinction must be drawn between the essence of God and His attributes. The essence and the attributes should not be supposed to be blended in the Divine Being. Hence the attributes of God cannot be identical with His essence (Abdul Hye 1963, 228).

Secondly, they argued that if all the attributes of God are identical with His essence, the divine essence must be a homogeneous combination of contradictory qualities. For instance, God is merciful (*rahím*) and also revengeful (*qahhár*); both the contradictory attributes would constitute the essence of God, which is one, unique, and indivisible, and that is absurd (Abdul Hye 1963, 228).

Thirdly, if the attributes of God are not distinct from His essence, the meanings of the different attributes will be exactly the same, for God's essence is a simple and indivisible unity. The meaning of knowing, willing, and living for instance, will be exactly the same, and thus knowledge will mean power, or power will mean life and so on. This also is an absurdity. These different attributes imply different meanings and hence they cannot be identical with God's essence. His essence is one and He possesses many attributes, which eternally inhere in Him, and though not identical with His essence yet they are not absolutely different from His essence (Abdul Hye 1963, 228-29).

This, in short, is the solution of the question of God's attributes and His nature offered by the Ash'arís in response to the Mu'tazilí proposition. This view, as we have just said, is not without logical difficulties. For the later Ash'arís, it was difficult to understand how the attributes of

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God are neither identical with His essence, nor are they quite different from or other than His essence. Therefore, the latter Ash'arís such as Fakhruddínal-Rází, discarded this view completely and advocated instead the idea of naked *mukhálafah* (1406/I, 138-142; Nasr 1963, 648), according to which God must be understood within the qualifications of *tanzíh*, or absolute otherness. In his *al-Arba'ín fí Usúl al-Dín*, al-Rází expounds this idea of *mukhálafah*. In his *al-Tafsír al-Kabír* in the meantime, he also touches the issue of God within the context of *tanzíh* and *mukhálafah*. Thus he affirms while interpreting the verse "none is like Him" (42/11) that God does have face, but not in the sense of *tashbíh*, or else "one who says that the children of Adam have face, and that pigs, monkeys and dogs have also face, can be said to have compared their faces as similar" (n.d./XXVII, 150). He carries on saying that:

> God is absolutely different (*mukhálif*) from the rest of the world. He is not created, eternal, necessary existent, while the rest of the world is created...if the body of the Lord of the world is similar to the other bodies, then His essence would be the same as the essence of other bodies. This is impossible on the grounds of intellect and text. On the ground of intellect it is impossible because if His essence is similar to the essence of other bodies, then He will be subject to being created, subject to death, distinction and destruction. On the ground of the text, it is also impossible because He says, "none is like Him" (n.d./ XXVII, 152).

Here, there is an apparent parallel between al-Ash'arí's position and al-Rází's. But al- al-Rází differs from his mentor in that he clearly avoids discussing the intricacy of whether God's attributes are identical to His essence or not. He is simply interested in stressing that God is *mukhálif* from the rest of the world.

The position of men like al-Baghdádí (1987, 229), al-Juwainí (1985, 54), and al-Ghazzálí (1988, 16-7) was in the main that of al-Rází, except that they did not consider it worthwhile discussing in detail. In the work of such Ash'arí as al-Íjí, this doctrine becomes almost like the religious creed according to which the opinion we are considering as comparing God to be "similar" is regarded as a heresy (n.d, 429).

Now, the qualification of *tanzíh* that the latter Ash'arís adopted has

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its root in the thinking and legacy of al-Ash'arí. One might question however, whether al-Ash'arí himself is indeed an adherent of *tanzíh*. First of all, we need to say that al-Ash'arí has left no explicit statements whether he was an adherent of *tanzíh* or not. But the statement of 'Alí al-Qórí mentioned earlier in this chapter clearly indicates that al-Ash'arí is an adherent of *tanzíh*, particularly if we put into account the fact that al-Ash'arí is the imam of the people of *Sunnah wa al-Jamá'ah*. Also, an abridged account by al-Juwainí about al-Ash'arí clearly locates the man as adopting the position of *tanzíh*; "Knowledge, but not like human knowledge, power, but not like human power...". He affirms that God will be seen in Paradise without personal appearance (*hulúl*), without limitation, without definition. Regarding God's sitting on the throne he says: "God existed ere there existed anything. Then He created the throne and what encompasses it, yet He did not need any place, and after the creation of the place He was just as He had been before".[3]

Another way of looking at al-Ash'arí as an adherent of *tanzíh* is to see his concept of *kasb* (acquisition), which he propounded to refute the Mu'tazilí idea of free will, and then to propagate the Hanbalí concept of compulsion.

In his *Maqólát*, al-Ash'arí explains that there are two meanings for the term kasb as an intellectual concept. The first is that *kasb* means that man is free to acquire. But his acquisition arises from two agents; namely God who created it, and man who acquires it (1969/I, 339). This is the view of Dirár b. 'Amru. Here Dirár tends to indicate that man's acquisition arises from an intrinsic efficacy of human action, but one which cannot exist without a divine motion operating at that moment.

The second meaning of *kasb* is that human action is divorced from God's will. In other words, human action comes under God's power in the sense that God wills it at the moment that it is accomplished and does not wish it when it is not brought about. Its actual execution belongs to man (1969/I, 340). This is the view of al-Husain b. Muhammad al-Najjár.

The first interpretation implies that there is a mutual interplay between man and God in determining man's action. When this view is taken into extreme, it can imply that human action is not free (*ijbárí*). The second view in the meantime, implies that man is free to determine his own will because ultimately he possesses "power over the *kasb*", he is qádir *'alá al-kasb* (Ash'arí 1969/I, 340).

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3 Cited from A.J. Wensinck's *The Muslim Creed*, p.92

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Al-Ash'arí did not say which view he takes, or what view he himself would like to introduce. Nonetheless, he relates this idea of *kasb* with the notion of *qudrohhádithah* (man's contingent power created by God). Since according to the etymological meaning of the word *qudrohhádithah* man's action is contingent in the face of the divine action, man is accordingly not free to determine his own will. His will and action have been predetermined by God from eternity. This is the position of al-Ash'arí, and this is the constant theme that appears not only in his works, but also in the works of the most leading Ash'arís such as al-Juwainí (1985, 188), al-Shahrastání (n.d.a., 97) Abú Bakr al-Báqillání (Sharastání n.d.a, 97) al-Ghazzálí and al-Jurjání (Gardet 1978, 693).

Apart from that, al-Ash'arí's *kasb* is an heir to the trend of his predecessors whom he likes to call the *ahlul-Haq wa al-Sunnah* (the people of truth and Sunnah). His preoccupation with combating the *i'tizál*, and with allowing man nothing that was not subject to the immediate and sole power of God gave way for al-Ash'arí to open his arms to adopt the method and aspiration of the dogmatic Islam of which Ahmad b. Hanbal is the founding father. Al-Ash'arí was no doubt the psychological and intellectual son of Ahmad b. Hanbal in his battle against the Mu'tazilís. Therefore, it is not without good reason that he -in his *al-Ibánah*- opens his accounts with a passage describing his position and method as adhering to the method of Ahmad b. Hanbal. He says:

> Our opinion which we adopt, and our religion which we embrace consist in: adhering to the book of our Lord, to the Sunnah of our Prophet, and to what is handed down on the authority of the Companions, the generation that succeeded them and the masters of *hadíth* and to the views of Abú 'Abdallah Ahmad b. Hanbal (may Allah make his face resplendent, raise his rank and render his reward considerable), opposing that which opposes him, for he is the excellent and perfect religious leader, the one through whom God shows the truth, conceals the evil, clears the way, shuns the imitation (*bid'ah*) of the imitators, the mischief of the mischief-makers, and the doubt of the doubtfuls. Allah's mercy be upon him as a leader and chief and an honoured and venerated friend (1987, 20).

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Here, al-Ash'arí explicitly states that adhering to the method of Ahmad b. Hanbal is part of his religion. Thus, he would ready of course, to give up his life to defend this method. To the extent that Ahmad b. Hanbal is the founding father of religious dogmatism, al-Ash'arí is nothing less and nothing more than the extension of that dogmatism.

Now, as far as the *Sifatiyyún*, *Mujassimún* and *Mushabbihún* are concerned, al-Ash'arí is in agreement with them in their saying that God possesses attributes in general. But al-Ash'arí warns that those attributes are not to be taken in their true literal sense. Al-Ash'arí asserts that God does possess the apparently anthropomorphic attributes, but these should be believed in *bilá kaif*, without asking "how" and *bilá tashbíh*, without drawing any comparison. If asked, it is a question about that which by its very nature is above existence and therefore the answer, whether negative or affirmative, implicitly denies the nature of God. And if compared, it is a comparison of that which is in principle unique, incomparable and fundamentally different from those of the created beings. Explaining the position of such a man as Hishám b. Hakam, who is branded as a *Sifatí*, *Mujassim* or *Mushabbih*, al-Ash'arí says: [4]

> Hishám b. Hakam was of opinion "that Allah has a body, defined, broad, high and long, of equal dimensions, radiating with light, of a fixed measure in its three dimensions, in a place beyond place, like a bar of pure metal, shining as a round pearl on all sides, provided with colour, taste, smell and touch, so that its colour is its taste and its smell and its touch, absolute colour which does not admit any other colour, and that it moves or is at rest, rises and sits down (1969/I, 106).

Al-Ash'arí rejects this view and asserts that:

> God is upon His throne, as He has said, "The Merciful is seated on the Throne" (Q 20/4). He has two hands, bilá kaif, as He has said, "I have created with My two hands" (Q 38/75), and as He has said, "Nay! Outstretched are both His Hands" (Q 5/64). And He has two eyes *bilátashbíh*, as He has said, "Under Our eyes it floated on" (Q 54/14),

[4] See also al-Baghdádí's al-Farqbain al-Firaq, pp. 215-6, and al-Ijí's al-Mawáqif, pp. 420-1

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> and He has a face, as He has said, "And the face of thy Lord shall abide resplendent with majesty and glory" (Q 55/27) (1987, 125).

This passage conveys two messages. One is that, God does have anthropomorphic attributes because He Himself said that. But, two, these attributes are not to be taken literally. Rather, they must be believed and understood *bilákaif* and *bilátashbíh*. The terms *bilákaif* and *bilátashbíh* are the keys in al-Ash'arí's position. Here again, al-Ash'arí appears as the intellectual heir of Ahmad b. Hanbal, because the notion of bilákaif –and perhaps *bilátashbíh*- is the legacy of Ahmad.

However, by adopting the position of *bilá kaif*, al-Ash'arí adheres accordingly to the literal interpretation of the text. And here he falls into a serious contradiction; having rejected the literal interpretation of the *Sifatiyyún*, the *Mujassimún* and the *Mushabbihún*, he soon contradicts himself by saying that the literal interpretation should be maintained in order to avoid the allegorical one (1987/II, 52).

Hence, al-Ash'arí is between the two horns of dilemma. He is hesitated between accepting and rejecting literalism. Is then al-Ash'arí a man with two faces rejecting and affirming literalism simultaneously? The real answer for this ambiguity is not easy to find. Nonetheless, if we treat al-Ash'arí as an heir to Ahmad's intellectual legacy, we can say with certainty that al-Ash'arí's position is that of literalism considering that Ahmad b. Hanbal is the champion of literalism, as al-Ghazzálí explains in his *ihyá* (1989/I, 123).

Accepting this proposition means that literalism is the very characteristic of al-Ash'arí's school. In fact, the position of a man like al-Ghazzálí is also that literalism. Like al-Ash'arí, al-Ghazzálí emphatically supports Ahmad's literalism, saying:

> Nevertheless, he (Ahmad) forbade allegorical interpretation for the good and welfare of people, since whenever it is allowed matters become worse and go out of control, overstepping the limits of moderation (1989/I, 123).

Al-Ghazzálí even warns that, "when Málik was asked about the sitting on the Throne, he said: the sitting was known, but the "how" is not. To believe in it is obligatory, and to ask about it is innovation (*bid'ah*)" (1989/I, 124).

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It is clear now that literalism is the very landmark of the Ash'ariyyah. Therefore, al-Ash'arí's ideal to become a mediator for the differing views has become rather a psychological semblance without any reality *ab intra*. His ideal has turned to be that of a passive and absolute acceptance of religious text without further question. To ask would be an innovation. This is a corroborated denial of human's will and his voluntary action. And this has been the nature of Ash'ariyyah. It advocates the principles of predeterminism and confines the scope of human's will within the will of the divine omnipotence.

Up to this point, what we have discussed is the background against which the discourse of *tanzíh* is formulated. This discourse, it goes without saying, has both positive and negative aspects. Its positive aspect consists in it being an effort to cling to the Qur'an and the Sunnah without asking further question. It is also an effort to present God in the everyday life of men and an assertion of His will in the running of the world that surrounds them. "Regarded in this way", explains Fritchof Schuon, "such doctrine is a reminder of the Divine Presence, or an introduction of the transcendent -of the marvellous, one might say- into everyday life. Man must feel that faith is something other than ordinary logic and that it sees things in terms of God and not in terms of this world. Faith is not a "natural" thought, but a "supernatural assent" (1986, 220).

Tanzíh has also a negative aspect; the tone of this formula is to consider God as absolutely different, infinitely other and beyond the apprehension of His human creatures. It lays stress on what Sachito Murata calls the *yang*-names (1992, 9), which interprets the nature of God in ways that place His incomparability and difference in the background. At the outset however, there seems to be no negative constituent in interpreting God in this way, but there is a wider logical consequence in it, for, attached to this trend is a tendency to look at things merely in terms of differences and separations. Murata explains, "the experts in jurisprudence and Kalám –that is, those who defend the outward and legalistic teachings of Islam- lay stress upon God's incomparability. They insist that He is a wrathful God and warn constantly about hell and the divine punishment. He is a distant, dominating, and powerful ruler whose commands must be obeyed" (1992, 9). She continues, "those who emphasise God's *tanzíh*, tend to dwell on the world of multiplicity and difference. They stress on the difference between the Creator and the creature, the distinction among things, the reality of these distinctions" (1992, 9).

"To look at reality from the position of incomparability", William

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C. Chittick adds, "is to stress that everything in the cosmos dwells in distance, separation, and otherness from the Real. God is transcendent, far, inaccessible, magnificent, majestic, severe, wrathful" (1994, 167). To dwell in otherness is to live in distance, multiplicity, difference, dispersion, separation, discreteness, disequilibrium, instability, unreality and suffering (Chittick 1994, 167).

In contrast, to look at reality from the standpoint of similarity, that is *tashbih*, is to stress that all things participate in nearness, union and sameness (Chittick 1994, 167). God is present, near, loving, forgiving, beautiful, gentle, and merciful. He is concerned and caring "mother" who desires to help the creatures in every possible way. To dwell in sameness is to live in nearness, unity, union, equilibrium, balance, permanence, reality and joy (Chittick 1994, 167). Similarity demands nearness and mutual love.

In Ibn 'Arabi's discourse this kind of dual paradigm is symbolised in the imagery of the smudged and the polished mirror (n.d.b/I, 48-9). When one looks at the smudged mirror he sees the glass. But when he looks at the polished mirror, the glass becomes invisible, with only the viewer's image reflected. Vision becomes self-vision. The distinction between self and other, "I-ness" and "you-ness" is shifted and transcended. All is about "we-ness".

Ibn 'Arabi's bimodal reference of the smudged and polished mirror -like in theological discourse- is contained in the conception of God, which the Andalusian master prefers to call *al-Haqq*, literally means, "the Real", "the True", "the Reality". The Real has two modes, namely the essence which is absolutely one beyond any dualistic structures of language and thought, and the attributes, which in Ibn 'Arabi's conception represent the entire range of references and predications that can be applied to divine reality. To him therefore, the number of God's attributes is infinite, though he usually has in mind the standard attributes such as will, knowledge, life, perception and compassion. Allah is viewed as the comprehensive divine attributes that include all the others within it.

Ibn 'Arabi was perfectly aware of the ongoing debate among his fellow Muslim intellectuals concerning the issue of God's attributes. He involved himself in the debate, but adopted an approach, which in its nature and application stands out in contrast to that of the scholastic theologians (*mutakallimún*). First, he was particularly dismissive of the theological attempts to explain away the apparent anthropomorphic expressions found in the Qur'an as a figurative reference to God. For him, such an

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explanation fails to do justice to the Qur'anic literary context. Thus for instance, to explain away the word "two hands" in the creation story of Adam, does justice neither to the special quality referred to in Adam as the vicegerent (*khalífah*) nor to the specifically dual grammatical form of two hands (n.d.a/II, 3.28). Hands -he would contend- cannot be taken to mean power (*qudroh*), because of the dual character of the word "hands". Nor can it be taken to mean that one hand is blessing and the other hand is power, since that is true of every existent thing, so there would be no eminence for Adam according to that interpretation. And this would contradict the fact that His words point out Adam's eminence (n.d.a/II, 3.28).

Second, for him the real issue concerning God's attributes is not to ask for example, "what does it mean when Allah is called in the Qur'an "the hearer" or "the seer?" Nor is it to ask whether these attributes are eternal or not; or whether these attributes are identical with His essence or not. The real issue is rather to ask, what is the implication of adopting one position without another. What does it imply when one says that Allah for example, is *munazzah* or *mushabbah*? We will give the answer to this question as we proceed.

The starting point that Ibn 'Arabí departs in involving himself in the controversy over the divine attributes is the prophetic saying that "Allah created Adam in His image" (n.d.a/II, 3-4). The Mu'tazilís -as we have explained- would argue that it is inconceivable that Allah could have an image or form. The Ash'arís on the other hand, would say that this is possible *bilákaif* and *bilátashbíh*. Vis-à-vis these perspectives, Ibn 'Arabí did not attempt to add yet another position. His position is simply to make use of this *hadíth* to exhibit the fact that Adam –to the extent that he was created in His image- is "similar" to God; "similar" in the sense that he shares some of God's qualities. Concomitantly, Ibn 'Arabí wants to show that because Adam was created in His image, it is possible then to conceive God through him (Adam) and through human being in general, provided that one's mirror is polished.

The state in which the mirror is polished is the state of a mystical union. It is the state of God becoming "the hearing with which one hears, the seeing with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, the feet with which he walks, the tongue with which he speaks".[5] For the Sufis, the condition indicated by this hadíth cannot be attained as long as one

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[5] This *Hadíth* is narrated by Bukhári, but I cite it from Ibn 'Arabí's *Fusús*, p. 55

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sees, hears, walks, touches, and speaks for and through himself. Through the quest of life beyond egoism, one arrives at the stage of annihilation in which the ego-self passes away. And when the ego-self passes away, God sees, hears and so on for and on one's behalf. Abú Yazíd al-Bistámí (d. 261/874) offers his version of the experience of this state saying that:

> For thirty years God most high was my mirror, now I am my own mirror and that which I was I am no more, for "I" and "God" represent polytheism, a denial of his unity. Since I am no more, God most high is his own mirror. Be hold, now I say that God is the mirror of myself, for with my tongue he speaks and I have annihilated (Attár 1905, 157, 160).

Although among the Sufis, there are different versions of the experience of this state of the polished mirror, the point to be emphasised here is not who becomes whose mirror, but the result of the quest for a life beyond that cosmogonic mirror. In either case -and when annihilation is achieved- an image would occur in the polished mirror in which the distinction between the eternal and the temporal is displaced. This stage, I contend, is the stage of *tashbíh*, because once the distinction between the eternal and the temporal is displaced, the incomparability between the self and the other is consequently removed. The two become "similar" in a perfect unity and oneness; "similar", not in an ontological or existential sense of course, but in the sense of being united.

It should be made clear that for Ibn 'Arabí the state of union does not occur between human and God's essence, for His essence remains beyond all names and distinctions. The union occurs rather, between human and God's names which are actualised as *a'yán* (existential). Seen from the point of view of transcendence human can never attain union with the Real, for He will remain forever transcendent. Yet, from the point of view of immanence man may achieve that union and ultimately become "similar" to the Real, containing all His attributes. From a mystical perspective, this union with the Real represents an "identity shift". That is to say, the individual, in achieving the union with the Real, is absorbed in Him to the extent that he no longer exists as a separate entity from Him. His identity has shifted from the "I-ness" to the "we-ness", from the self-other relationship to the all-in-one relationship. In the words of Ibn 'Arabí, "if we see Him,

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we see ourselves, and if He sees us, He sees Himself" (n.d.b/I, 53). Here the distinction between the "we" and the "He" is so thin that they become almost identical.

The emphasis put on God's attributes –instead of on His essence- in relation to the state of union is important in another respect. On the one hand, Ibn 'Arabí tries to show that God's essence manifests itself to itself through innumerable forms or images, but insofar as it is one, it is confined to none. On the other hand, he tries to show that insofar as God's attributes are many, they cannot be fixed or reified into one and single form. This brings to an important point; that the Real –to the extent that He has many attributes- is not subject to what the *al-Shaikh al-Akbar* calls binding (*taqyid*). *Taqyid* is to reify the Real into one particular form. It is to fix Him into limited categories and forms (n.d.b/I, 51, 54). Logically, it leads to a world of conflicting beliefs, because in binding one would naturally see the Real which appears in conformity with his/her binded belief as the only true form, and therefore deny the form which appears in other beliefs. It leads to an individual's fixation on a particular belief, viewpoint, conception, or experience.

Ibn 'Arabí moves on to warn that any person is susceptible to the error of binding. Man, says Ibn 'Arabí, is a reflection of two tendencies because he was created by God's "two hands". He reflects for instance, benevolence and anger, fear and hope, intimacy and awe, and so on. Similarly, man has two tendencies when it comes to the way he looks at things, sometime through the polished mirror, and sometime through the smudged one. Insofar as he looks at things through the polished mirror, he will be free from the act of binding. But insofar as he looks at things through the smudged one, he will be subject to the error of binding. Interestingly, Ibn 'Arabí associates the polished mirror with the heart, and the smudged mirror with the intellect (n.d.b, 68, 119). According to Ibn 'Arabí, intellect binds, while the heart integrates. The heart is synthetic. The heart is able to see the Real as embracing all realities, and embrace all forms of the Real's manifestation into its fold. In his famous verse, Ibn 'Arabí explains:

> My heart has become a home of every form
> A meadow for gazelles, a cloister for monks
> A home for the idols and a sacred ground for the Ka'ba
> A tablet for the Torah and a scroll of the Qur'an (1978, 19).

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And concerning the binding nature of intellect, Ibn 'Arabí says, "the mind binds and limits the matter in one characterisation" (n.d.b, 122).

The immediate context of Ibn Arabí's assessment concerning the binding nature of intellect is not his belittling of it, but his critique of its mistaken use particularly by the religious dogmatists. This can be shown by the fact that at the core of Ibn 'Arabí's critique of the mistaken use of intellect, is his call for the redefinition of the doctrinal belief popular among the religious dogmatists. Thus he says, "The God of one's belief has no authority over the God of the other" (n.d.b, 122). More fundamentally, his critique is related to his call, first, for the recognition of the variety of religious belief, and second, for the recognition of the truth of every belief. Because every belief is the image of the Real, which manifests itself into that particular belief, every belief leads to the Real. Ibn 'Arabí emphatically explains:

> The Real, which resides in the belief, is that whose form the heart encompasses, what reveals itself to the heart to be known. The eye sees nothing but the Real of its belief. And there is no secret about the variety of beliefs. Whoever binds Him (in belief) denies Him in any belief other than that in which he has bound Him, and affirms Him in the belief in which he bound Him in His manifestation. But whoever liberates Him from binding, denies Him not at all, but affirms Him in every image into which He transforms Himself (n.d.b, 121).

In this passage, Ibn 'Arabí correlates the act of binding to the denial of the form of the Real in a particular belief, hence of the truth of that belief as such. On the other hand, he also correlates the act of "liberating Him from binding" to the affirmation of the image of the Real in a particular belief, hence of the truth of that belief.

Finally, Ibn 'Arabí also correlates the act of binding to the affirmation of that aspect of the divine which we consider all along as implying differences and otherness, namely *tanzíh*. Ibn 'Arabí explains, "if you affirm *tanzíh*, you bind" (n.d.b, 70). And he correlates the intellect, which as we have explained is the binding intellectual organ of the religious dogmatists, also to the *tanzíh*. He says, "the intellect, if it depends on itself, its knowledge of God is about His *tanzíh*" (n.d.b, 181).

Hence, binding is the product of one's affirmation of *tanzíh*, and *tanzíh* is the position of the religious dogmatists. However, in the context of our

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research, these so-called religious dogmatists are conceived as the Ash'arís. Therefore, in the structure of our thesis, we believe that the Ash'arís are binding because they depend solely on the aspect of *tanzíh*.

Now, to show that the Ash'arís *are* binding, it is necessary to turn once again to their legacy. And there is no better way to do this than to turn to their most binding treatises known as the treatise of *al-Milal wá al-Nihal*, that is, the Science of Religion and Sects.

Religious Antinomics in the Science of Religion and Sects

Speaking of religion in terms of *tanzíh* has become the lofty ideal for the Ash'arís. They developed a distinctive treatise in which they hinge their views upon the dogma of God as absolutely other, and of religion as a wish-fulfilling projection of the ideals of otherness and difference. This treatise, as we have just referred to, is known as the treatise of the Science of Religion and Sects. Among those treatises, the following are worth mentioning: 1) *Maqálát al-Islámiyyín* of Abú al-Hasan al-Ash'arí, 2) *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* of al-Baghdádí, 3) Kitáb *al-Fisal wal-ahwá wal-milal wal-mihal* of Ibn Hazm, 4) Kitáb *bayán al-adyán* of Abú al-Ma'álí, 5) *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* of al-Shahrastání, 6) Kitáb *al-Maqálát wal-firaq* of Sa'ad b. 'Abdallah al-Ash'arí al-Qummí, 7) *I'tiqád firaq al-Muslimín* of Fakhruddín al-Rází, 8) Kitáb *al-ajwiba al-fákhira* of al-Qaráfí, 9) *Al-jawáb al-sahíh liman baddala dín al-masíh* of Ibn Taymiyyah.

As sources for the study of other religions, these works represent highly meaningful documents. Even in modern time inasmuch as religious debates have come to take place, these sources can serve as the bases for the task in this domain. For polemicists, these works are also useful as the methodological basis to substantiate the deficiency of other religions. And for ordinary Muslims, they tend to play an important role in establishing the sense of truth and self-identity.

Much has been done however, to study them. This includes the recently published articles in a collection entitled *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religion*, edited by Jacques Waardenburg. Superficial these studies might seem at the outset, some essays –especially the ones by the editor- provide insightful and critical understanding of the treatises and the views of their authors. Here I am interested to rehearse some information provided by Waardenburg because they are of particular relevance to the purpose of this thesis.

As a general observation, Waardenburg -in agreement with most of

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the contributors- maintains that these treatises are polemical. And like any other polemical works, these treatises take as their starting point the fundamental opposition between religions; that is the opposition between Islam as the religion of truth and other religions. Other religions are held to be outside the truth, therefore are denounced, confronted, and refuted (Waardenburg 1999, 24). The intensity of the denunciation is of course varied from one treatise to another. But in their denunciation, the authors of those treatises use almost the same stereotyped arguments, which function to attack other religions.

Waardenburg moreover, argues that most of the medieval authors are unable to arrive at what he would call "understanding others" from their own point of view. The level, on which the arguments are carried forth demonstrate that in the majority of cases it was only doctrinal and factual issues, which were seen to have any value and which were treated according to established rules (1999, 24). This kind of polemical literature represents a largely negative dialogue because knowledge of other religion is seen primarily as secondary.

Waardenburg also argues that in these literatures, there is a marked tendency to identify and define oneself in terms of contrasts (1999, 24).

In addition to these assumptions, the following sets of values are typical of the medieval authors and their views of other religions:

1. The non-existence of common innate religious disposition among religions.
2. The insensitivity of the authors to the symbolism of other religions.
3. The lack of desire to reconcile the thought of other religions with their own on matters of religious significance.
4. The confrontational nature of the texts.
5. The predominant attitude of being apologetic.

From these sets of values, we learn that the medieval authors are reluctant to look at other religions in terms of "we-ness" and togetherness. They have been persuaded by what in the medieval Christianity would be called the doctrine of *extra acclesiam nulla salus*; that is the doctrine of the absolute superiority of Christianity and the absolute uniqueness of Christ. What is it that led these theologians to embrace this doctrine of *extra acclesiam nulla salus*? The full answer would be of course many-sided. But I think, speaking negatively and in schematic way, the most

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immediate answer would be, that they have been persuaded to accept the validity of the Ash'ari doctrine of *bilákaiyyah* and its counterpart concept of *mukhálafah*.

In modern time however, objections against these doctrines have been raised. Frithjof Schuon for example writes:

> Omnipotentialism, which in practice denies the human mind all capacity to understand Divine motives, and which refers our intelligence to Revelation alone, has the function of suggesting that it is "God alone who knows." But it does this arbitrarily *ab extra* and forgets that, if it is indeed God who is always the thinker, then He is also the thinker in us and in pure intellection or inspiration... But Ash'arism thinks only of one thing: to make the immensity of God concretely present in the world. And it is perfectly realistic in its presentiment that for the average man the acceptance of higher truths passes through the will and not through the intellect and that consequently it is the will that must receive the shock. This shock, both crushing and sacramental, is provided precisely by all but blind omnipotentialism (1985, 221).

He also writes:

> The entire error in this reasoning comes from the equation God = Will and from the fact that All-Possibility is conceived –in accordance with exoteric anthropomorphism- as a freedom to will anything whatsoever. The error here –we repeat- lies in subordinating even the true and the good to the arbitrariness of an unrestricted Divine Will (1985, 209).

Now, when one ponders about the message of Ash'ariyyah, one becomes aware that the most central metaphysical implication of the doctrine of omnipotentialism is the fact that reality is seen in terms of opposition –and not participation- between things. It is as if, in colour for instance, one could see only white and not black, or in a textile, the warp and not the woof. Schuon explains:

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> Theologians know, metaphorically speaking, that a given object is not white, and consequently conclude that it is black as if this were the only choice. And if perfection be roundness, and they conceive of this exclusively in the form of a circle, they will declare that a sphere is not round because it is not a planimetric figure, and so on (1985, 226).

All these of course made the Ash'arís incapable of admitting the mutual relationship between things and of understanding what Schuon calls, "the simultaneity of antinomic relationships" (1985, 26).

Tashbíh and God's Universal Comprehensiveness

While *tanzíh* is a vision that expresses reality on the level of incomparability and difference, *tashbíh* is a vision that expresses it on the level of similarity and sameness. From *tashbíh* point of view, God is close and "similar" in some fashion to His creatures. This vision reverberates throughout the cosmos to the effect that to look at reality from this position is to stress that everything in the cosmos dwells in nearness, closeness and sameness.

Tashbíh is the realm of Sufism. It is a concept whereby it is possible to discern between different ontological stresses in the nature of things. *Tashbíh* ultimately means sameness. Human reality is the same inasmuch as it is the reflection of divine reality, and religious reality is similarly the same inasmuch as it is the manifestation of God's mercy and love over His creatures. In a famous prophetic saying, God is reported to have said, "I was a hidden treasure, and I wanted to be known" (Rumi 1375, 314). That is, I created the whole world and the end of it all was our manifestation. Even those who deny God are God's manifestation. In this connection, Rumi explains:

> One who affirms God's existence always manifests God, but one who denies God's existence is also a manifestor because affirmation is something that cannot be imagined without denial. It is flavourless and flat without it. Proof of affirmation is pleasant only in the face of denial. This world is a gathering for manifesting God: without both affirmer and denier the gathering would be dull, for both are manifestors of God (1994, 184).

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Because *tashbih* is the realm of Sufism, Sufism therefore begins with the knowledge of God, which takes the basic form of declaring Him as "similar". From the perspective of *tashbih*, God is perceived as "similar" through the faculty of the heart, the locus of Sufism. "Similar", not in the sense of anthropomorphism, because God will remain incomparable inasmuch as He is totally different from all things, but similar in the sense that He is known to His creatures through the self-disclosure of His infinite being. In the words of Schuon:

> Obviously there is between God and the world both resemblance and incomparability. This may be expressed by saying that God does not resemble the world, but that the positive qualities of the world resemble God and are only intelligible through Him. God is in no sense an earthly light, but it would be absurd to maintain that physical light does not tell us anything about the Divine Nature, otherwise there would be no point in revealing to us that God is light (1985, 204).

Nor is God similar in the sense of pantheism, since God remains the One and the only One, who is worthy of worship. The statement that God is similar, is intended to signify that whatever God may be beyond our conceiving, He is not always the transcendent Thou, but also the One who is "closer than one own jugular vein" (Q 50/16).

Sufism indeed takes a variety of forms. But centrally when it comes to the interpretation of reality, Sufism interprets it mainly as referring to the ideals of God as similar. Hence, the Sufis speak of the cosmos in terms of *tajalli* (God's self-disclosure) within His loci of manifestation. For the Sufis the cosmos is not totally "other" vis-à-vis God, because it is the sum total of the words articulated in the Breath of the All-merciful, and the Breath is not completely different from the Breather (Chittick 1994, 24).

God displays His universal and particular characteristics and names, through the cosmos. Hence the cosmos is in one sense "other" than God, because God's essence lies infinitely beyond it, but in another sense it is identical with Him, because nothing is found within it that does not name Him. The Sufis recognise this two-sided nature of God and the cosmos. But the premise, either open or concealed that lies behind the Sufi understanding of God and the cosmos is the conviction that similarity should take precedence over incomparability. This is the logical result

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of the precedence of God's mercy, love and forgiveness over His wrath, revenge and punishment.

Tashbih is associated with the names of *jamál* (beauty). These names give rise to the concept of love in which God is hold not only as the Near or the Close, but also as the Beloved. *Jamál* comes with the accent of love, because love is the movement towards beauty. Like *jamál*, love is a divine name. The origin of love is God. In the opening chapter of the Qur'an, we find that God is described as *al-Rahmán* (Creative Love), and *al-Rahím* (Forgiving Love).

Love for and of God is not *eros*, but *agape* to borrow the Greek words. Eros means that love is evoked by the loveableness of its objects. A man for example, loves his women because she is pretty, charming and cute. And a woman loves her man because he is handsome, manly and clever. Parents love their children because they are their children. This is a "desiring love" and this is not love of and for God. Love of God is unconditional, inherent and universal in its range. It is given to someone, not because he has special characteristics, but simply because he *is*, because he is there as a person. The nature of love of God is to value a person in such a wise way as actively to seek his or her deepest welfare and fulfilment. Similarly, love for God is inherent. A person (should) love God not because God has been good to him/her, but simply because He is, because He is there as God. The nature of this love should be to value God as He is in Himself and not for anything else. For Rumi love for God is inherent in human nature:

> Inwardly, in the depths of their hearts, all humans love God, search for Him, and pray to Him. All their hopes are in Him, and they acknowledge no one as omnipotent or in absolute dominion except Him (1994, 101).

God's universal love for his human creatures, a love not rooted in their virtue but in God's own nature as *agape*, is the basis of that side of religion, which knows God as similar. Similarity thus, can be viewed as an expression of divine love, seeking the best that lies potentially within man. Similarity in other word can be subsumed under the love of God. And because love of God is infinite, it implies that similarity is unqualified.

The names of *jamál* also give rise to the concept of God being good and the source of all good. But the goodness of God is neither by definition nor by moral standard external to Him. If God were good by definition,

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it would be a tautology that He would only command good things. Evil then will not exist. This is impossible because good cannot exist without evil. Says Rumi:

> By their opposites are things apparent. To this we say that good is not separate from evil: there can be no good unless there is evil because being good means a cessation of evil. It is impossible for evil to cease without there having been evil to begin with. Joy is the cessation of grief, and it is impossible for grief to cease unless it exists. The two therefore are one and indivisible (1994, 133).

On the other hand, if God is good by moral standard external to Him by which He may be judged, then He is no longer the sole ultimate reality. The goodness of God is therefore circular; God has made human nature in such a way that his highest good is to be found in relation to God. Good becomes good when it is fulfilled in connection with God. Things are said to be good only when they rest upon the characters of God. Since in relation to God everything is good, then whatever comes out of Him is good. Hence whatever human being think to be good in relation to God is good. Rumi explains this circular resolution in the following verse:

> Yes, by God, even such circumstances are from God, but they are good in God's eyes. It is said truly that everything is good and perfect in relation to God, but not in relation to us. Impurity and purity, neglect and attention to prayer, infidelity and faith, polytheism and monotheism, all of these things are good in relation to God. But for us fornication, stealing, infidelity and polytheism are bad, while monotheism, ritual prayer and charity are good. A king may have in his possession gallows, prisons, robe of honour, wealth and property, retinue, celebrations and proclamations of joy, drums and standards. In relation to the king, all these things are good. Just as his kingship is complemented by the robe of honour so also is it complemented by the gallows, executions, and prisons. All these things are complemented to his kingdom, although to the people robes of honour and the gallows are scarcely the same (1994, 32).

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This passage tells us about one important point central to our conception about religious "I-ness" and "otherness". That is, that everything including impurity, infidelity and polytheism is good in relation to God, and not in relation to us. This passage also echoes the call for the necessity of the redefinition of such concepts as infidelity and polytheism, and hence the necessity of reconsidering the truth of religions other than Islam. Indeed, in this passage, Rumi's position is not explicit enough as far as recognising the truth of religions other than Islam is concerned. But in other verses his position is clear when he says for example that "the way may differ, but the goal is one. There are many roads to the Ka'ba?" (1994, 101).

Verses such as this carries the belief that all religions are good because everything is God's manifestation. God's comprehensiveness is universal. It sustains all forms of religion. Therefore all religions are good insofar as they are all embraced in His universal comprehensiveness.

Tashbih as Ens a Se

What then is the real issue? It concerns the two "language-games" of interpretation, theological and mystical languages, concerning the nature of religion.

It seems legitimate however, after making this modest survey on these two language-games, to report the followings:

One: theological and mystical discourses are the major expressions of Islamic thought concerning the nature of religion whose spectrum is running through the aspect of God's incomparability to the aspect of similarity.

Two: in each level, reality concerning religion –as well as God and universe- is defined in terms of the two concepts peculiar to each discourse.

As the concluding remark to this chapter, I am interested to further highlight the character of both theological and mystical discourses, this time by seeking assistance from certain current of Western thoughts. The first and the most satisfactory current in the modern thought is perhaps that of Immanuel Kant's. Kant classically drew the familiar distinction between something as it is in itself, *ens a se*, and that same thing as perceived by human, *ens ab alio est causatum* (Ameriks 1997, 200) with all that the human mind and experience contribute in the process of perception.

In bringing out this basic distinction, I am interested in showing that our awareness –be it religious in its manifold dimensions (theological or

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mystical), cultural, political etc- is an active process of selecting, ordering and interpreting; a process which in turn affect the way we understand the world. We are told that we have a distinctive human selective simplification, which make us virtually different from others in the way we look at the world. Our perceptual machinery demands that we are attuned only to a range of information, concepts and ideas around us that continuously shape our understanding and perception about things. Thus, a large part of reality is partly a formation of our own perception and partly a formation of other factor external to us, such as religion and so forth. In other words, we ourselves partly and partially contribute in the construction of reality that we perceive. This suggests that reality is a joint product of the external factor and our particular formed mode of interpretation.

That there is an element of human interpretative role in reality –including in religion- has surely been undeniable. This is being reinforced by modern studies of ethnology, anthropology and history of religion, which correlate concepts such as God with cultural circumstances, which rest in turn upon a complex of geographical, climatic, economic and political factors (Tylor 2002, 23; Durkheim 2002, 37; Weber 2002, 51; Geertz 2002, 62). We will return to Kant's idea and see how this idea might offer assistance to what we want to explain.

In the meantime, the second current of the Western thought that we want to seek assistance from is that of John Hick's. Hick distinguishes between what he calls objective fact and dispositional meaning. What Hick means by objective fact is more or less something similar to Kant's *ens a se*. And what he means by dispositional meaning is more or less something similar to Kant's *ens ab alio est causatum*. Thus, Hick explains that objective fact is something as it is in itself, and dispositional meaning is a perception of something as it impinges upon us in terms of many kinds and levels of understanding (1993, 17). Hick then maintains that objective fact is the realm of inclusivity, and dispositional meaning the realm of exclusivity (1993, 17-32). Dispositional meaning is exclusive because it consists of the practical difference that it makes, currently and/or potentially to the meaning-perceiver (Hick 1993, 17).

Hick further distinguishes between three kinds of dispositional meaning, namely dispositional meaning of (1) object, (2) event and (3) situation. Dispositional meaning of object is this: for example, I perceive what is before me as an orange. In so doing I am recognising or identifying something by means of the concept *orange*. And my recognising it as

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an orange consists in part in my being in a dispositional state in relation to it which is appropriate (as I take it) to its being an orange rather than something else. Such a dispositional state of course excludes expecting the orange to be mango, apple or something else. Thus when I see something as an orange my total dispositional state is disposed in such a way that it can only accept thing as an orange and not mango or apple. In this instance, something is recognised as *theparticular* object, and not as an object among other objects.

The second kind of dispositional meaning is dispositional meaning of event. It is this: for example, we are in a situation, which we describe as a session of an academic conference. The participants, having been prepared by invitations, programme and other documents, are automatically experiencing what is going on around them as a session of, say a conference on the life and thought of Karl Barth. They are in a dispositional state to behave appropriately by listening to the paper, being ready to raise questions and to discuss after the paper has been read, and so on. And this rather complex readiness to behave in certain kinds of ways and not in others presupposes an extensive network of concepts found in certain circle of community, such as the educated class of community, without the other. If we can imagine a man in the street being suddenly brought into an academic conference, such a person would not perceive what is going on as having the same character or meaning. The man in the street would not have the concepts of conference session the way the university students or professors do, and would accordingly experience the same physical configuration as having some quite different meaning.

The third kind of dispositional meaning is dispositional meaning of situation. It is this: for example, in an academic session we just described, the participants are of course disposed within a different range of situations. One of them would feel that the conference room is convenient, while others don't. Some would think that the room is big enough, but others don't. Also, imagine that suddenly storms strike. The dispositional state of the participants would at once shift to this new context of meaning, evoking a different awareness, expressing itself in appropriately different patterns of behaviour. It is a feature of dispositional states such as these, that Hick believes are more or less mutually exclusive, so that an object, event or situation are effectively disposed in a manner detached from one another (1993, 17-9).

Here we notice that at the level of dispositional state things are

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capable of being understood only in terms of exclusiveness and otherness, whereby life is also understood in terms of the "I" and the "you", instead of the "we".

Religion however, when viewed from the perspective of dispositional meaning is normally lived at this situational level of complexity. But whereas the dispositional meaning of object, event and situation consists in our practical and psychological adaptation to the physical world, the dispositional meaning of religion is largely an intellectual construct; our inhabited world of meaning –corresponding to the *Lebenswelt* of the phenomenologists- depends upon our corporate systems of concepts, which have been formed over the centuries in accordance to our respective belief, understanding and perception.

In the face of this dichotomy between *ens a se* and *ens ab alio est causatum* on the one hand, and between objective fact and dispositional meaning on the other, we may once again return to the dichotomy between *tanzíh* and *tashbíh*, between theological discourse and Sufi discourse. Having explained Kant's proposition and Hick's, I suggest arbitrarily that Kant's *ens a se*, and Hick's objective fact are equivalent to tashbíh, while Kant's *ens ab alio est causatum* and Hick's dispositional meaning are equivalent to *tanzíh*. Indeed, this move will not satisfy everybody's intellectual and linguistic taste. Nonetheless, from my personal point of view, this is fair and scientifically sound. Like *tashbíh*, *ens a se* and objective fact are intellectually perceived as belonging to the world of oneness and similarity. And like *tanzíh*, *ens ab alio est causatum* and dispositional meaning are perceived as belonging to the world of multiplicity and otherness.

Thus, to my perspective the paradigms of *ens a se* and *ens ab alio est causatum*, as well as of objective fact and dispositional meaning correlate with the nature and character of theological and mystical discourses. Theological discourse perceives reality not *as a se* or objective fact, but *as ab alio est causatum* or dispositional meaning, that is, as thought of through its distinctive conceptual lens. To the extent that this discourse sees reality through its distinctive lens, it will lead to the understanding of it, not a se or objective fact, but as perceived partially. It seems to me therefore, that this discourse – seen strictly from the ideals of *ensa se*- is the natural denial of the authentic interpretation of the Real and reality.

Moreover, theology is a type of thought. It is a theological thinking about religion. In itself, theology is not an organ of religious teaching. Indeed, it needs to be undertaken from a religious standpoint, since we

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rarely find a theology outside the established religions. But theology is not in itself part of religion but is related to it as law is related to legal phenomena, or art to the categories of artistic field.

This understanding of the scope of theology leads us to believe that this discipline is particularisation of the more universal nature of religion. This implies that it represents a failure to understand religion and reality in its fullness. Reality is narrowed down and reduced to a mere partiality in the conceptual lens of theology. Accordingly, theology stands at one fairly removed from the full totality of religion, representing only a second-order activity.

Interestingly, all that we have just said concerning theology is also applicable to Sufism. Seen from the viewpoint of Ibn 'Arabi's binding, both theology and Sufism are in fact guilty of *taqyid*. This is true. But let me say the followings. Theology and Sufism may be understood horizontally as being two dimensions, which represents different perspectives of the same reality (Nasr 1991, 105). Within this framework the two dimensions should also, I think, be understood vertically as representing two different levels of meaning; levels in the sense that the one dimension is higher than the other. In this respect, I would argue that Sufism is higher than theology for the following reasons:

One, Sufism is a type of thought that requires us to move beyond religious polite formality to a deeper understanding of reality. Two, Sufism is closer to the true spirit of revelation because inwardness conforms to a large extent, to the very internal logic of revelation.[6] (To the extent that revelation fosters a movement from outside to inside, Sufism is closer to it).

Furthermore, what is discovered in Sufism is a way of experiencing reality phenomenologically as it is in its pure "suchness". Sufism leads to the depth of reality through the experience of transcending the normal ego in which everything is perceived as it is in itself. Reality is experienced for its own sake in its presentational immediacy. Says Rumi, "if everything were as it seemed the Prophet would not have cried out with such illuminated and illuminating perspicacity, "show me things as they are" (1994, 4).

In its ideal form, Sufism is this "seeing things as they are", the realm of Kant's *ens a se* and Hick's objective fact.

In connection with this "seeing things as they are" I would like to mention that *ihsán*, the *prima facie* realm of Sufism is -as the Prophet

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6 Rumi likes to employ the term "revelation" to refer to the knowledge of inwardness (1994, 135).

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himself defined- "to worship God as if you see Him" ('Asqalání, n.d/ viii, 513). The Sufis like to point out that the highest degree of *ihsán* is to worship God without the "as if", that is while actually seeing and recognising Him through His self-disclosures.

If we understand –as I think we should- Sufism as simply the top end of the scale of religious intensity, then Sufism is certainly higher in its degree than theology, hence closer to the true spirit of revelation and to the actualisation of the *ens a se* and objective fact. Sufism centres upon human consciousness, in its intellectual and intuitive modes, and offers a transition from the world of *máya* into the world of *Átmán*, where direct and unmediated awareness of the Real is achieved. Sufism facilitates relationship with the Real in which the epistemic and perhaps "ontological" distance between Him and the subject is transcended. In Sufism, the Real and the subject become one; all in one, and one in all, a situation which leads to the realisation of the Real *a se*.

While Sufism might be partial, its option is closer to the true meaning of reality. Sufism tends to present us with positive knowledge of reality, thereby asserting the similarity of things. Reality is ultimately presented as oneness rather than manyness. It is this that we call here the Phenomenology of Tasawuf.

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Chapter

Ibn Sina and the Theosophical Phenomenology of the Cosmic Islam

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Chapter 3

Ibn Sina and the Theosophical Phenomenology of the Cosmic Islam

In the Samanid Dynasty –as we have indicated in the first chapter- schools of Islamic thought with their variant branches burst upon the intellectual scene and -each in their own way- set their faces as the prevalent outlooks of the 10th century Islam.

This period is characterized by vigorous and brilliant movements of theological, scientific and philosophical thought. Among these movements were Mu'tazilah and Ash'ariyyah whose doctrine concerning the attributes of God we have observed in the second chapter. These two schools have been important in their own way and have substantially contributed in the enrichment of the Islamic intellectual and material culture.

We have also indicated that Ash'ariyyah was initially a moderate response to some aspect of the Mu'tazilí doctrines, and that Ash'ariyyah subsequently underwent a process of evolution from being the middle-path idealism into the radical and extreme absolutism.

While Ash'ariyyah underwent a process of a gradual transition from a moderate idealism into an extreme absolutism, something of an almost similar nature was taking place within the school of Mu'tazilah; it underwent a process of evolution from being a simple speculative movement into a pure rationalism. Under this new impact, Mu'tazilah –having applied the Greek philosophical methods- tended to be purely rational, absolutely unfettered, and in some cases led to a merely negative attitude of thought (Iqbal n.d., 53). Muhammad Iqbal writes, "conceiving religion merely as a

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body of doctrine and ignoring it as a vital fact, the Mu'tazilís took no notice of non-conceptual modes of approaching reality, and reduced religion to a mere system of logical concepts (1986, 4-5). They failed to see that in the domain of knowledge, complete independence of thought from concrete experience is not possible.

The Mu'tazilís, argues Abdul Hye:

> ...made reason the sole basis of truth and reality and identified the sphere of philosophy with that of religion. They tried to interpret faith in terms of pure thought. They ignored the fact that the basic principles of religion are, by their very nature, incapable of logical demonstration or rational proof...The Mu'tazilís, in their zeal to judge everything by reason alone, destroyed the personality of God and reduced Him to a bare indefinable universality or to an abstract unity (1963, 221).

This idea of an abstract God could not appeal indeed to the determinist section of the Muslims. The Ash'arís reacted against the Mu'tazilís and began to consider them as heretics. In this, the Ash'arís were backed up by the *Muhaddithún*, the Záhirís, and particularly the Hanbalís. The whole of the ninth century eventually became a time of reaction and opposition. Ibn Sina was aware of this development (Heath 1992, 20), and must have done something to deliberately and consciously bring about some kind of rapprochement to mediate between the absolute determinists and the extreme rationalists. All along its metaphysical frontiers, Ibn Sina's philosophy reckons with the corresponding religious metaphysics of Mu'tazilah and consciously tries to create points not only of contact but also of coincidence with Ash'ariyyah.

Over against the dogma of creation for example, Ibn Sina upheld the Mu'tazilí doctrine of the eternity of the world, but in order to do justice to the religious consciousness of the Ash'arís, he affirmed that the world was an eternal effect of God vis-à-vis whom it had a unilateral relationship of absolute dependence. In the making of this doctrine however, Ibn Sina sought the help of the Neo-platonic doctrine of emanation by discarding the Aristotelian theory of nature (Brown 1972, 35). Nature, instead of being an existent *per se* independently of God, was derived ultimately from God at the end of an emanation process.

On the basis of the Plotinian idea of the ultimate ground of Reality,

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the One of Plotinus as interpreted by his followers, Ibn Sina and other philosophers reinterpreted and elaborated the Mu'tazilí doctrine of the pure oneness of God (Rahman 1979, 118). According to this new doctrine, God has no touch of dualism in Him, He does not possess any attributes apart from His essence. God is Pure Being without attributes; His only attributes being necessary existence (Rahman 1979, 118).

In many respects, Ibn Sina is unique. He has been paramount right up to modern times, not only in the Islamic world, but also in the West. The reformulation of the Roman Catholic theology particularly at the hand of Thomas Aquinas was in fact influenced by Ibn Sina (Burrel 1986, 60-82). He therefore marks not only the epitome of the tenth century Islamic thought, but also the beginning of a new era in both the Islamic and Western philosophical renaissance. His philosophy with its elaborate and complete system has been dominant in the philosophical tradition of Islam for centuries, in spite of the attacks by al-Ghazálli (1987), al-Sahrastání (n.d,b), and others.

Ibn Sina's philosophy is multi-faceted. First, there is an aspect of *Kalám*. Fakhruddín al-Rází, the champion of the naked determinism, applies Ibn Sina's *Kalám* in his discussion on various theological issues. Second, there is a mystical aspect, and finally there is an aspect of Neo-platonism. This third aspect of Ibn Sina's philosophy is Peripatetic.

Ibn Sina and the Peripatetic Philosophy

The original vision of Islam embodied in the Qur'an and in the Prophetic tradition was relatively free from specific metaphysical or epistemological contents. But like any other religion, Islam had to eventually involve with philosophy in the course of history. This is the way it has been for Islam, that the vision of the Qur'an and the Prophet was inevitably interpreted in terms of philosophical formulations partly in response to some questions about human life and more particularly about the nature of Islam itself. When Ibn Sina encountered the Greek philosophy, particularly the school of Neo-platonism, he found it convenient to make use of it as an intellectual assistance to the explanation of Islam from a philosophical perspective. Islam was then interpreted in terms of philosophical imports, the result of which being that Islam became better equipped to meet the need of explaining reality in its complete picture.

Ibn Sina's philosophy has dealt with various issues, many of which are of such broad relevance to human concerns, and so complex in their ramifications, that they are in one form or another perennially present. In the course of time they yield in part to philosophical inquiry, but they also

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may need to be rethought by each age in the light of its broader scientific knowledge and deepened ethical and religious exposition. In this chapter, we are particularly concerned with finding answers that lie in the depth of his philosophy concerning the issues we are dealing with. Apart from its intricacies, we are convinced that Ibn Sina's philosophy provides clues as to what his thought on these issues is. One in this context must look at the main philosophical programs with which Ibn Sina has concerned himself in his intellectual career including demonstrating rationally the metaphysic of the Ultimate Being in terms of Necessity and contingency. This idea has reasonably a rich reservoir to be studied as a ground for analysis on the question of the nature of religion. Also –and more importantly- the theory of emanation, which Ibn Sina often discussed in the context of an intellectual self-realisation process. If we ponder –and I think we should- on the "mystical" significance of emanation, one would find it convenient to suggest that this conception provides the framework of religious studies, and leads to the same conclusions that the mystical notion of *tashbíh* leads. If we understand emanation as self-realisation process, then we should understand it as leading ultimately to the actualisation of the Real *a se*. Like mystical experience, emanation offers a clue about the notion of the transition from the world of *máya* into the world of *Átmán*, where direct and unmediated awareness of the Real is achieved. Emanation facilitates a relationship with the Real in which the epistemic and "ontological" distance between the Real and the subject is transcended. In short, in emanation one discovers that there is a sense of unity and oneness with the Real, thus a sense of sameness and closeness with the universe.

Emanation depicts the continuum of human's journey towards union with the Ultimate Being. In emanation, there are many degrees of being. Among these beings are the angels and the being of the visible world. According to Ibn Sina, every being has double aspects, namely the interior (*bátin*) which is its essential reality, its angel, and the exterior (*záhir*), the visible world. In the words of Henry Corbin, being has the aspects of cosmic Occident and cosmic Orient (1977, 75; 1980, 16). This cosmic Orient is not to be sought in the East on our maps, but in the "polar dimension" as Corbin calls it. The Occident represents the sensory material world and the Orient represents the world of the soul. Now, for Ibn Sina in order to gain access to the world of the soul, and to the deeper reality of things it is necessary to go beyond the "literal", beyond the world of visible things. This aspect of Ibn Sina's thought thus requires us to move beyond externality to the deeper and real understanding of reality. Like

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mystical experience, this aspect represents the way of experiencing reality as it is in its pure "suchness", or in its pure "as-it-is-ness". It is therefore, the sphere of "seeing things as they are", or the sphere of *ens a se*.

In this respect, we see that some aspects of Ibn Sina's philosophy are homologous to some mystical recurrences. Indeed, if one reads carefully Ibn Sina's *al-Ishárát* and compares it with Rumi's *Fíhi má Fíhi* for example, one would find himself in the presence of two figures, two worlds or two modes of thought strangely coherent and permanent, particularly in terms of transcending the boundaries of religious doctrine. Mehdi Amin Razavi in his *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* discovered that Ibn Sina's philosophy particularly when interpreted from the viewpoint of Suhrawardí's philosophy of illumination advocates the universal truth of all divinely revealed religion. R. Casper on the other hand, maintains that Suhrawardí in believing that the truth of all revealed religions is universal follows the intellectual example of Ibn Sina (1981, 167).

In terms of methodological starting points, Ibn Sina's philosophy is indeed different from that of the mystical aspect of Islam, on two grounds. One, in Ibn Sina's philosophy –methodologically speaking- judgement of truth and reality is based on reason, while in mysticism it is based on intuition or the knowledge of the heart. Two, concomitant to that, in Ibn Sina's philosophy, religion is essentially philosophical, while in the Sufi tradition it is essentially spiritual, "pre-rational", only referable to a pre-conceptual ground. Nonetheless, apart from this difference, Ibn Sina's philosophy may be said to be homologous to some mystical recurrences in so far as both lead to the same epistemological assumptions about reality.

In this chapter we treat Ibn Sina as representing the philosophical version of *tashbíh*. We confine our discussion to those aspects of his philosophy, which denote some specific philosophical connotations about this assumption including the notion of emanation, the role and operation of intellect, and the idea of the Perfect Sage. But first, let us speak about the most central idea in the philosophy of Ibn Sina, namely the metaphysic of the Ultimate Being,

The Metaphysic of the Ultimate Being

In its material and content, Ibn Sina's philosophy is Hellenistic, but in its construction, the system itself, it is Islamic. Thus, in explaining the reality of God, Ibn Sina always keeps in mind the centrality of the Islamic propensity of God. This point is important to mention so as not to mislead the readers concerning the nature of Ibn Sina's philosophy.

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Ibn Sina describes the reality of God in different names depending on the context in which he speaks. Sometimes he describes Him as the Truth, the Pure Good (*al-Khair al-Mahd*), the Intelligent, the Perfect and so on. Among those names he used, the Necessary Existent is the most important one. This name appears in his many treatises including in *Danish Náma* in which he says:

> A primary entity in the world which is not in the world, though the being of the world comes from it. Its existence, which is necessary, is due to itself. In reality It is absolute existence. All things exist due to It in the same manner as the light of the sun is due to itself, whereas the illumination of all other things receive from the sun is accidental. This analogy would have been correct if the sun were basis of its own illumination. This is not the case because the illumination of the sun has a subject, whereas the being of the Necessary Existent has no subject but stands by Itself.[1]

The Necessary Existent must be numerically one. Even within itself there can be no multiplicity of attributes. In *al-Ishárát* Ibn Sina explains that God is the First who has no equal, no opposite, no genus, no division and no limit (1958, 481). And in *al-Naját*, he explains that God has no other essence, no other attributes than the fact that He exists, and exists necessarily. God's essence is identical with His necessary existence (n.d., 205). And since God has no essence, He is absolutely simple. He is non-substance and at the same time, an absolute existence.

The above citation from *Danish Náma* gives us some features about God. Thus for example, He is the source of all things and is self-caused. He is the Sustainer of individuals and the supreme power over all else. All existents are subordinate to Him like things that derive their lives from sun. He is the One and the Primary Entity.

Ibn Sina feels that God's existence is necessary because all multiplicity cannot exist unless they depend upon Him. Multiple things are contingent and God, upon whom all things depend, is necessary. In this universe where we live, there is Necessary Existent whose existence is uncaused except by itself. He is the one that started the chain of cause and effect.

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1 Cited from Parviz Morewidge's The Neoplatonic Structure of Some Islamic Mystical Doctrines, p 55.

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He is the Almighty, the highest thing of all, who is worth of honour and worship for His absolute perfection.

In *al-Ishárát*, Ibn Sina speaks of the Necessary Existent as the absolute Oneness that He can never be used to designate plurality or multiplicity, nor can He be subjected to susceptible division in either concept or quantity (1958, 472-3). Ibn Sina also places God beyond any substance and any genus which might be labelled "being" (1958, 478). He has neither substance nor genus that His essence can not be in any way defined.

So, the Necessary Existence must necessarily be related to the absolute Oneness. God is Necessary precisely because He is absolutely One. And being absolutely One, He has no infinite series of contingent beings or causes.

Ibn Sina elsewhere speaks of an ontological scheme of reality –on top of which is the Necessary Existent- which provides us with a sense of our place in the cosmos together with a way of attaining a vision of the whole. According to Ibn Sina, the nature of the Necessary Existent which occupies the apex of the hierarchy of existence, is axiomatic; meaning that all beings can be known through Him, in the same way that He can also be known through them. Ibn Sina describes the axiomatic nature of God by simply saying: *inna wájibal wujúd 'aqlun wa á'qilun wa ma'qúlun* (n.d, 200); that is, the Necessary Existent is an intellect, knowing and knowable. We, being part of the hierarchy, can know God by virtue of our possible existence, and God can be known to us by virtue of His necessary existence. Since the infinite succession of beings ultimately relates us to the top of the hierarchy, the Necessary Existent is necessarily known within that hierarchy because He is part of that hierarchy.

The possible and the Necessary Existent, Ibn Sina would argue, are interrelated due to them belonging to one hierarchy of existence.[2] The worldly beings are but the manifestation of the Necessary Existent because being on top of the hierarchy, the Necessary Existent is necessarily emanating to all beings below. God, "descends" to human, and manifests Himself in the existence of creations. In other words, by this manifestation, the inter-relatedness between God and human is taking place. Human is the external reality of God. Therefore, the existence of God includes the existence of human, and the existence of human is part and parcel of the existence of God.

The vast majority of Ibn Sina's attentions were given to prove the

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[2] On the notion of this interrelationship between the Necessary Existent and the possible existent, David Burrell has offered lengthy discussion in his *Knowing the Unknowable God*, pp 5-18.

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soundness of the theory of the hierarchy of existence; that is the axiomatic nature of the relation between the possible and the Necessary Existent. The most fundamental mechanism, which Ibn Sina employed to arrive at this purpose, is to rely on the severely rigorous method of division and distinction of concepts. The distinction between the possible and the Necessary Existent is among the most important concepts. This method of distinction lends an extraordinary subtlety to Ibn Sina's arguments. It can often give his philosophical reasoning a strongly scholastic complexity, which can annoy the modern temperament. But it is undoubtedly true that it is also this method that has resulted in almost all the original doctrines of Ibn Sina. It has enabled him to formulate his most general and basic principle including the theory of the hierarchy of existence.

In *al-Ishárát*, Ibn Sina elaborated the distinction between the possible and the Necessary Existent in which he, among others, maintained that every being that exists (*mawjúd*), if it is examined in terms of its essence, either exists necessarily by virtue of itself, or does not exist. If the former is the case, then that being is the Real (*haqq*) in Itself, or the One who necessarily exists by virtue of His essence (1958, 447; 1983, 235). Similarly, if the latter is the case, then that being is the contingent being who is dependent upon the necessary being for its essence and existence.

Looking at the issue of existence from slightly different angle, Ibn Sina in *al-Ishárát* also discusses the question of the possible existence vis-à-vis the Necessary Existent in terms of cause-effect dichotomy. The possible existent is the effect, while the Necessary Existent is the Cause. Ibn Sina then argues that whenever there is a series of causes and effects that followed each other, and there appeared in it a cause that was not an effect, then that series had to be regarded as terminating in that cause. And it is logical that any cause in the middle of such a series could only be regarded as an effect and therefore, not uncaused. Furthermore, every such series or chain arranged according to causes and effects had to be either finite or infinite. Now, if such a chain only contained effects then it would require an external cause at one end of the chain. If there were anything in the chain that was not an effect (i.e. uncaused), then that would constitute the limit of the series. Ibn Sina concluded that every series (*silsila*) ends in the Existent who necessarily exists by virtue of Himself (1958, 455).

It is precisely in this doctrine of existence, disclosed in terms of the method of distinction and the dualism of cause and effect that Ibn Sina exposed the notion of the relationship between the Necessary Existent and possible existent.

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The stress placed on the merge of God as the Cause and other beings as effects envisages that because God is the origin of other things, in Him live these things including their bodies and souls. Possible existent as an effect is the eternal emanation of God vis-à-vis whom he had a unilateral relationship of absolute dependence. Possible existent is therefore not an existent independent from God. It is derived from and merged with God in a constant unilateral relationship, through the process of emanation as well as cause and effect.

Now, Ibn Sina's logical sleight of hand in the whole notion of existence should foretell us that in fact it is less a matter of "how the existence is" than it is how we should relate beings in the existence to what is. The importance of Ibn Sina's theory of hierarchy of existence lies not in itself but in establishing the connection between the cosmological components within that hierarchy, so that our place in the universe will be intelligible enough to lead us onto the proper return to the One. The scheme that Ibn Sina speaks serves as an aid to self-consciousness by properly locating us through knowledge in the overall scheme of things.

We are then in the presence of an intellectual scheme, which purportedly speaks of the structure of the cosmos designed to offer an image of the connection and the inter-relation between God and the world.

While the nature of the Necessary Existent in the hierarchy of existence is axiomatic, the question that might be raised is; does this contradict Ibn Sina's another proposition that God has neither substance nor genus? If God has neither substance nor genus, neither cause nor temporal dimension, how can He be axiomatic and be related to the world?

Ibn Sina no doubt recognises God as "out of this world", and that He is essentially unique (*mukhtalif*), that He cannot be compared to any of the things that exist in the normal, contingent sense. In another phrasing Ibn Sina explicitly indicates that God is not connected to any other existent or cause. His existence is necessarily uncaused, so He cannot be linked in any way to any being, because if His existence is not uncaused, He obviously is not the Necessary Existent in Himself (1958, 477). Ibn Sina also agrees that it is impossible to envisage a genuinely reciprocal relationship between God and something else. If such relationship existed and each were considered as the cause of the other, each would logically have to be considered as having existed before the other (1958, 481).

These expressions are true and valid. But on the other side of the coin, Ibn Sina also holds the view that God must be known in order for Him to be worshipped. Therefore, He must be displayed in such a way that He can be known. So, our philosopher embraces the solution he learnt from the Neo-

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platonic example, which combines the notion of God's absolute uniqueness with the idea that God must be known. Ibn Sina strives to derive God's attribute of knowledge from His unchanging essence, or rather, to show that this attribute of knowledge is nothing but the fact of His existence. This is done by an attempt to work out that God's attribute of self-knowledge is both relational and negative. In one respect, God's self-knowledge is relational thus His existence is axiomatic, that is "similar" to borrow the theological term, and in another respect His self-knowledge is negative thus He is beyond this world, or "incomparable".

God's self-knowledge is *ipso facto* knowledge of other things as well, since, knowing Himself, He also inevitably knows the rest of the existents. Similarly, His self-knowledge is the world's knowledge of Him. Things in the world are emanated and created by Him, therefore they must know Him. God is the emanative cause of all things, therefore He knows these things and is known by them.

If we are to borrow the Sufi tradition, we may say that God *is* known by His created things because He Himself wants to be known. "I was a hidden treasure, and I wanted to be known, therefore I created the world".

This saying should serve as a reminder that our endemic tendency to distinguish God from the world should not result in us denigrating God and the world we know. Rather, it should alert us that we should find a congenial system that seeks to comprehend the whole existent –including God- and to understand the original intent of God's creation. For if God is not to be known, then either God will be abandoned in favour of God's world, or He will not be seen as part of the necessary whole. God and the world must be seen as partners, in the formula of "God-plus-world." God and the world should not be seen as alienated from each other, for "not a particle remains hidden from God in the heavens or on earth" (Qur'an 34/3).

God created the world because He wanted to be known. Ibn Sina is at one with developing philosophical system concerning the existence around this principle. The world, Ibn Sina argues, is created through the process of eternal emanation. The world then, exists eternally with God, for both matter and form flow eternally from Him. But although this concept seems abhorrent to Islamic orthodoxy, Ibn Sina's purpose in speaking of it was to try to do justice both to the demands of religion and reason and to avoid atheistic materialism (Rahman 1963, 503). For the materialists, the world has existed eternally without God. For Ibn Sina, the world is an eternal existent, but since it is in itself contingent in its entirety it needs God and is dependent upon Him eternally. We see

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here the double purpose of the doctrine of essence and existence. Unlike the atheists, Ibn Sina believes that existence requires God who should bestow being upon existents, and unlike the pantheists, he believes that existence requires that the being of God should be radically differentiated from the being of the world.

The chief crux of the eternity of the world is that the world is not only the eternal emanation of God, but also the eternal partner of Him. Being the eternal emanation of God necessarily means that the world is the eternal partner of God. And this premise should lead us to a conclusion that God and the world are in an eternal interrelationship, whereby God knows and is known by the world. In this, Ibn Sina shares the view of other Muslims particularly the Sufis, but differs with them in that he sees this notion of mutual knowledge not merely as a religious or spiritual issue, but as an intellectual one. This kind of knowledge is the necessary demand of God being the pure intellect and of man being the rational creature. Here Ibn Sina lays emphasis on the creation especially man, having the character of unalterable rational necessity. And this means that knowledge of God is ultimately grounded in the rationality of man. There are countless passages in Ibn Sina's treatises whereby he assets that intellect is the ground of knowledge of God.

In Ibn Sina's system of philosophy, the world is seen as having a constituent element of matter and form. In this, Ibn Sina learnt from Aristotle. However, according to Aristotle, the form of a thing is the sum total of its essential and universalisable qualities constituting its definition. The matter in each thing is that which has the potentiality of receiving these qualities –the form- and by which the form becomes an individual existent (Rahman 1963, 483). But, there is one major difficulty in this conception from the point of view of the actual existence of a thing. And that is, although Aristotle generally holds that the definition or essence of a thing is its form, he nevertheless says that matter is also to be included in the essence of a thing, otherwise we shall have only a partial definition of it. If then we regard both form and matter as constitutive of definition, we can never arrive at the actual existence of a thing.

Ibn Sina disagrees with Aristotle on the issue of form and matter being constitutive of definition. He rather holds the view that form and matter have only accidental qualities. Both form and matter depend on God. Everything except the One who is by His essence One and Existent acquires existence from something else (Rahman 1963, 483).

However, while Ibn Sina discarded Aristotle's thesis that form and matter are constitutive of definition, he nonetheless maintains –like

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Aristotle- that existence, besides being comprised of matter and form, is a constituent element of relation to God. And the nature of this relation is determined first of all by the rational necessity of God, and second of all by the rational necessity of the contingent being who derived that necessity from God. Here rationality becomes some kind of both premise and conclusion for Ibn Sina. For Ibn Sina, God creates things through a rational necessity, on the basis of which the relation between God and the world is taking place.

This in short, is Ibn Sina's exposition of the metaphysic of God, of existence and of their interrelationship.

So, the problem of existence is not only about metaphysic but also about rationality. Rationality in Ibn Sina's philosophy is the central core of existence. In fact, the whole program of his philosophy is to establish the relation between God and the world on the ground of rationality.

However, this basic contention that God and the world is related on the ground of rationality is only abstraction of Ibn Sina's larger view about rationality and intellect. In this, lies the more important contention that rationality –or rather intellect- has the supremacy over all else in the universe of existence. Ibn Sina considers intellect not only as a dominant force within religion, but is also a force which is of equal value as religion itself. Rational truth becomes in the end nothing less and nothing more than religious truth. So, Ibn Sina is firm in his belief that intellect –like religion- could stand as the basis for truth. Rationality therefore, is Ibn Sina's *Weltanschauung* representing the actual structure of his overall thought.

Vis-à-vis the mystical aspect of Islam, this premise in Ibn Sina's philosophy created no doubt a perilous situation for itself. It might even –some Sufis would probably argue- pose a patent threat to the revealed content of Islam because of its ethos that assigned too many roles for the intellect in religion.

Rumi was among the first Sufi to object the philosophy of Ibn Sina or some aspects of his philosophical teachings. He denounced his approach and revealed –or perhaps tried to reveal- the *naïveté* of his rational universe. In the following verses Rumi says:

> I was on that day when the Names were not,
> Nor any sign of existence endowed with name.
> By me names and named were brought to view
> On the day when there were not "I and We."

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For a sign, the tip of the Beloved's curl became a center of revelation
As yet the tip of that fair curl was not....
I questioned Ibn Sina of his state
He was not in Ibn Sina's range
I fared towards the sense of "two bow-lengths distance"
He was not in that exalted court
I gazed into my own heart
There I saw Him. He was nowhere else.[3]

In this citation, we may learn two things. First, Rumi reveals that the philosophical formula of Ibn Sina concerning knowledge of God is inadequate. Second, Rumi maintains that this knowledge should be based –instead of on intellect as Ibn Sina would say- on the faculty of the heart.

Rumi builds his overall "system" of thought on the normative role and function of the faculty of the heart. He has no hesitation in saying that heart is the central epistemological principle. He sees it as the direct, metaphysical perception of reality by the spiritually pure, that is those who have purified their intellect and are bent on seeking the deeper meaning of reality by means of that purified intellect. For him, knowledge of the heart allows human to know the divine and what is divine in man. This knowledge is what defines man and the relationship between him and the whole members of the hierarchy of the existence as well as the apex of that hierarchy.

Such assumption naturally implies a particular picture of reality against which Rumi's "conversation" with Ibn Sina must be understood. Firstly, Rumi's universe hinges on what might be termed the *phenomenology* of mystical experience; the focus of his concern is with knowledge of the heart attained through the mystical experience. Secondly, and as a consequence of this, Rumi is loathed to tie knowledge of reality with such thing as intellect as Ibn Sina would do. Rumi says:

Within the breast Thou paintest a Form
Fatherless like Jesus, were Ibn Sina to try to understand it
he would be an ass on ice
Marvellous, sweet Form that contains all the
world's saviour-giving salt – oh Muslims, who has ever
seen salt

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3 Cited from R.A. Nicholson's *Selected Poems*, pp. 71-3

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> fitting for halva!
> Such a form that were its radiance to reach a
> painting on the wall, the painting would gain a spirit and
> begin to talk and see.[4]

As can be seen from this citation, Rumi is using strong vocabulary, employing such word as an "ass", which in its nature is an apparent loathing and obliteration of Ibn Sina's philosophy. Now, if we look at the *Mathnawi*, we would find more passages in which Rumi objects the plethora and intellectual resonance of philosophers in general in manners, which leaves us under impression that he in fact represents a total antithesis to philosophy. His conception of the Universal Intellect (*al-'aql al-kulli*) and the partial intellect (*al-'aql al-juz'i*) for example is a case in point whereby Rumi classifies philosophy as partial and Sufism as universal.

For Rumi philosophy is nothing more than a temporary rapprochement that must be rejected and finally abandoned because it is the product of the partial intellect. In his treatises, Rumi regularly posed questions on the actual compatibility of the partial intellect, thus of the philosophy. Having convinced that Islam must be understood in terms of the Universal Intellect, Rumi advocates that Islam has no need of philosophy. Islam needs not be exhibited in a way tallied to the interpretation of the philosophers.

Paradoxically however, Rumi shares a lot in common with Ibn Sina. For instance, his description of God –like Ibn Sina's- is replete of allusion, which coalesces into the discourse of *tashbih*. Thus, for Rumi God is:

> ...exceedingly near to you. Whatever thought and idea you conceive, God is next to you. For He gives existence to the thought and idea and places it before you. But He is so near that you cannot see Him. What is so strange about that? Whatever you do, your intellect is with you, initiating the action. But you cannot see the intellect. Although you see its effects, you cannot see its essence (1994, 179-80).

God is Beauty whose beauty is "an ineffable and inscrutable, just as He has established an ineffable and inscrutable connection with you" (Rumi 1994, 217).

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4 Cited from William Chittick's *The Sufi Path of Love* p. 264

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Also Rumi shares the same view with Ibn Sina that man is the unique epiphany of the Hidden World. Man can know God, and God can be known through man. God and man are connected through the mutual knowledge; a knowledge which might be gained through man's innermost organ, which is intellect in Ibn Sina, and heart in Rumi. This connection between man and God is the pathos of the spiritual realisation -in Rumi's thinking- and the essence of emanation in Ibn Sina's philosophy.

Ibn Sina on Emanation

Emanation –like the spiritual ascent- is held as depicting the continuum of human journey –intellectual journey that is- towards union with God. It is a process of seeking the perfection of human intellect through "self-realisation" whereby man may achieve union with God.

As far as our research is concerned, the theory of emanation is central, for it provides a justifiable answer to such a question as the relational aspect of God's self-knowledge. It also provides a clue for the problem of philosophical intensification of yearning and experience to God through the intellectual union with Him. Understanding the problem of union is central, for it leads to our understanding of Ibn Sina's version of *tashbîh*. Emanation in short, offers a handy way of picturing union.

According to the basic premise of emanation, from God, the Necessary Existent, flows the first intelligence alone, since from a single, absolutely simple entity, only one thing can emanate; *inna al-wáhid min haithu huwa wáhid innamá yújad 'anhu wáhid* (Hurr 1991, 88). But the nature of the first intelligence is no longer absolutely simple since, not being necessary by itself, it is possible, and its possibility is due to God. From the first intelligence the emanatory process continues until it reaches the lower and tenth intelligence which governs the sublunary world (Ibn Sina n.d., 225). This tenth intelligence is called the Active Intellect, which the majority of the Muslim philosophers believe to be the Angel Gabriel. This name –Active Intellect- is applied to the tenth intelligence because it bestows forms upon or "informs" the matter of this world, i.e., both physical matter and the human intellect. Hence it is also called the "Giver of forms" (Ibn Sina n.d., 231).

The process of emanation from the Necessary Existent through the first intelligence and down to the tenth intelligence was intended to verify the view that there is no passage, or *movement*, from God to the world. Formulated initially by Aristotle (Rahman 1963, 482), emanation means that although God remained in Himself high above the created world,

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incomparable and distant to His earthly creatures, there is nevertheless relation between Him and the world of contingency through the mediation of the Active Intellect.

In addition, emanation, it may be said, is the first occasion to remark that early Muslim philosophers not only sought to build a rational system, but a rational system which sought to integrate the "traditional" view concerning creation. That is, emanation is the application of the rational scheme to the notion of creation. The question is, would it not be dangerous to speak of creation in terms of emanation?

Indeed, Ibn Sina has been accused of trying dangerously to replace the Qur'anic doctrine of creation by the theory of emanation (Netton 1994, 163). Al-Ghazzálí charged Ibn Sina with ill-treatment. He maintains that in a thoroughly emanationist account, the will of God has no meaning. God's will means nothing but the necessary procession of the world from Him. Furthermore, emanation means that God has a minimum role in creation. As Oliver Leaman observes, in the scheme of emanation, God is indeed portrayed as having a role in creating the sublunar world, but God did not directly perfect all parts of the sublunar world. He instead, activates the Active Intellect to enlighten the world above and below eternally and illuminate it regarding its place in the cosmos (1985, 90).

No doubt that emanation for the traditional scholars of Islam is antithetical to creation. But I think emanation is simply designed to fulfil both religious and rational needs of Islam, and not to contradict it. I also think that Ibn Sina advocates emanation instead of creation because creation does not explain the existing relationship between God and His creatures. Creation simply speaks of God having or willing to create the world, while emanation speaks of God having or willing to establish connection with His created beings.

The whole theory of emanation is designed –as Netton indicates- to explain that in the creation there is wholeness, and that within that wholeness we are organically connected (1994, 168). Accordingly, as a tool, emanation is pedagogically designed to show our intrinsic relationship as members of the hierarchy of being, and also to bring God, the One, into the organic unity with the world, the many.

Ibn Sina's emanation has many essential features. These essential features are exhibited among others in his *al-Najât* where he says, "The Necessary Existent, the absolutely one in all respects, proceeds or emanates the first effect or emanation. The first effects are the angles (the first intelligence) of the celestial spheres, who in turn

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emanate or illuminate the next emanation of the second intelligence. The emanation continues until the tenth intelligence who illuminates the sublunar world" (n.d., 225).

Ibn Sina here focuses on at least three features of emanation. One: the source of emanation is the Necessary Existent. Two: the emanation produces diverse levels of angels ranging from the first to the tenth intelligence. Three: the sublunar world is illuminated by the tenth intelligence.

The first feature recognises God as the source of all things, in agreement with the basic teaching of Islam. It conveys the fact that *tawhíd* is encapsulated in the overall system of Ibn Sina's philosophy. Meanwhile, the categorisation of God as the Necessary Existent shows that God is recognised as unique, as the source and cause of all things. He is recognised as incomparable and different from anything else in the universe for He exists necessarily, while other things exist only by an external cause.

The second and third features put together necessitate that emanation has double aspects, namely the world of angels, and the world of the sublunar being. The world of the angel is the internal aspect (*bátin*) of existence, and the sublunar world is its external aspect (*záhir*).

The third feature symbolises the mode of connection between the internal and external aspects of existence supposedly through the mediation of the tenth intelligence. The two aspects of existence are members of the same hierarchy of being. Like human body, they are related to one another like ears, eyes, nose and so forth are related to each other as members of the same body. Vertically in the meantime, they are related to God, the primal entity which creates and nourishes them.

A question then might arise, if God and the world are interrelated, would it not imply that the necessary and all-important gulf between God and the world is destroyed? Would it not lead to a downright pantheistic world-view *-tat tvam Asi-* against which Islam, like all higher religions, had warned so sternly? No doubt that this is a type of pantheism. But this *dynamic* type of pantheism is different from the absolutist and static forms of pantheism. Yet, it may lead to gross anthropomorphism or to the "re-absorption" of the creature's being into the being of God by the reverse process of ascent. Nonetheless, Ibn Sina interposes a guarantee against the danger of falling into gross anthropomorphism. This guarantee shall be Ibn Sina's doctrine of Active Intellect.

The nature and operation of the Active Intellect represents one of

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the major interests in Ibn Sina's theory of emanation. Ibn Sina held that the Active Intellect forms an intermediate realm between God and the world, and links the world of sublunar to the world of the Divine. The logic of this doctrine signals that God and the world are interrelated, and the Active Intellect is there to operate as the intermediation to this interrelationship. At the same time, the doctrine also demands that God remains infinitely beyond every limitation or else the intermediation is not needed. Ibn Sina locates God beyond both the universe and the intellegences that move the universe. But at the same time, Ibn Sina also locates God as "within" the universe because through His eternal thought He eternally and continually emanates the intelligence.

Ibn Sina ascribes to the Active Intellect a set of functions apart from being the intermediator between the two worlds. Thus, the Active Intellect is (1) the emanating cause of the matter of the sublunar world. (2) The emanating cause of the natural forms appearing in matter, including the souls of plants, animals, and man, and (3) the cause of the actualisation of the human intellect (Davidson 1992, 76).

Matter with its potentiality for exhibiting the forms of all natural objects in the sublunar world, is eternally emanated by the Active Intellect with the aid of the movement of the heaven. All natural forms in the meantime, are contained in the Active Intellect in a unified, undifferentiated mode, and the Active Intellect eternally emanates them not through choice but as an eternal, constant, and necessary expressions of its being (Ibn Sina n.d., 226). Active Intellect is therefore called, as we have mentioned earlier, the "Giver of forms". Yet Active Intellect is an incorporeal "unitary" being and a "unitary" (cause) produces only a unitary (effect) in a unitary (subject). This vision allows Ibn Sina to believe that in principle matter and form as well as existence in general, are governed by the ideal of unity and oneness, and that this oneness within the lower world is connected with the oneness of the heavens. Simultaneously, the Active Intellect, which is unitary, also acts upon undifferentiated matter, therefore differentiation of effect is possible, and matter may as a result exhibit a plurality of forms.

So, there is at once unity and multiplicity within the lower world. Nonetheless, the unity is the principle because the multiplicity is caused not by the emanation of the Active Intellect, but by the "particularising factor" (*mukhassis*). One set of factors "particularising" matter and preparing it to receive a natural form is the "influences" emitted by the celestial spheres; for although themselves free of qualities, the spheres

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instil the four basic qualities –heat, cold, dryness, wetness- in matter. Alternatively, Active Intellect does produce a multiplicity of effects. But it does not –although it can- produce multiplicity within a single species. Multiplicity within a single species results only when an agent acts on divisible matter (Ibn Sina n.d., 228). Also, multiplicity is indeed part of thing, but it comes later (*mutaakkhiron*) after the unity of thing is caused. Multiplicity therefore does not interfere with unity, which is the essence of thing (Ibn Sina 1958, 715).

At the lowest level, the emanation of the Active Intellect supplies the forms of the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth (Ibn Sina n.d., 232). Forms above the level of these four elements are also emanated by the Active Intellect, but Ibn Sina does not make it perfectly clear which forms are, and which are not, emanated.

The form that a given portion of matter does receive depends upon the mixture of the matter; the finer the blend the more perfect the form. Matter has the potentiality of receiving all physical forms. And when a form is manifested in matter, matter has simply received and exhibited actually what always belonged to it potentially. But matter is always moving from one stage to another to receive a new and higher form. At the upper limit, matter may go "as far as possible in approaching the mean" and reach the point where "no further form is possible". It therefore receives a substance closely similar in certain way to the incorporeal substance. In other word, when matter is blended to the highest possible degree, it receives an incorporeal substance similar to the substance of the Active Intellect and the First Cause. This matter, which has received the incorporeal substance, is human rational soul or intellect (Ibn Sina n.d., 131). Thus human rational intellect has the potentiality of being with God in a perfect unity and oneness. God becomes "similar" to human. They are all in one, and one in all.

Human intellect is the highest form of the natural matter. Unlike the other natural matter, human intellect is emanated by the Active Intellect directly and is an incorporeal substance. But like the other natural matter, human intellect progresses from one stage to another for a higher form.

Ibn Sina distinguishes a series of stages of human intellect, starting from the empty potentiality with which man is born to the kind of intellect which possesses a repertoire of thought without actually thinking them and then to the "perfect" potentiality of the intellect.

Parallel to these three stages, are the three stages of what Ibn Sina calls the theoretical intellect (*al-'aql al-nadhorí*). In terms of this intellect, Ibn

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Sina distinguishes between: (1) the "material" intellect or what he often calls *quwwah lil isti'dád*, (2) the intellect *in habitu* (*bil-malaka*) and (3) the actual intellect. The first kind of intellect is the wholly "unqualified" intellect, the second is the intellect with possible potentiality, and the third is the "complete" or "perfect" intellect (n.d., 137). The third kind of intellect is widely known among the philosophers including Ibn Sina and his predecessor al-Fárabí as the acquired intellect, *al-'aql al-mustafád*.

From passages in various works of Ibn Sina, we obtain information that he depicts the acquired intellect as the culmination of human intellectual development (Ibn Sina 1958, 672). The state of the acquired intellect is a man's perfection. In *al-Naját*, Ibn Sina tells us that the acquired intellect, which is also known as the holy intellect, is the head (faculty of the soul), which all the other (faculties) serve, and it is the ultimate end. It is "a kind of high intellect; so high that not every one is capable of attaining it" (n.d., 115-6).

In all its development from the material to the intellect *in habitu* and finally to the acquired intellect, human intellect is continuously guided by the Active Intellect, which provides it with the first principles of thought, with abstract human concepts and with other propositions. This reminds us once again about the third feature of Ibn Sina's emanation in which the Active Intellect is depicted as playing an important role in connecting the sublunar world to the celestial one.

From the notion of the acquired intellect, Ibn Sina advances his argument that this kind of intellect has a full capability of entering into the conjunction (*ittisál*) with the Active Intellect (1958, 674) and therefore with the whole celestial sphere. This account of intellectual conjunction with the celestial sphere however, should be combined with Ibn Sina's third feature of emanation. Combining them will give the following result: Active Intellect is the intermediary link between the sublunar world and the celestial one. Human acquired intellect on the other hand, has the potentiality of entering into the conjunction with the celestial sphere. Therefore, by means of the Active Intellect, human acquired intellect has the potentiality of entering into the conjunction with the celestial sphere.

The intellect that has entered into the conjunction with the Active Intellect becomes itself an active intellect (Ibn Sina 1958, 701) and resembles the member of the celestial sphere. In the same vein, when human intellectual faculty has been perfected, human soul can and in fact should discard its physical faculties. Ibn Sina offers a long explanation of the process of discarding this physical faculty, which I think, is not necessary to relate here.

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From our explanation above it becomes clear that acquired intellect has the potentiality of being with the Active Intellect. There is however, a higher stage of conjunction, namely a stage in which the intellect enjoys a "permanent conjunction", becomes "united" with the incorporeal region, enters into the company of the incorporeal beings, and has the intelligible order of all existence inscribed in it. Whether this permanent conjunction may be achieved during lifetime or after death is not clear. Nonetheless, Ibn Sina does speak of a situation in which man has incorporeal beings particularly the Active Intellect as an object of thought during lifetime. In such situation where the Active Intellect in its full individuality becomes an object of human thought, human intellect becomes identical with it. And Ibn Sina speaks specifically of the human intellect becoming identical with the Active Intellect in its true essence (1958, 701).

Everything said so far relates exclusively to the theoretical intellect as opposed to the practical intellect (*al-'aql al-'amalî*). In the intellectual hierarchy of Ibn Sina's philosophy, theoretical intellect occupies a higher status both in function and nature than practical intellect. Practical intellect includes commonly accepted views, traditions, opinions, and flimsy experiences. Practical intellect, unlike theoretical intellect, does not have as its source, the Active Intellect. Practical intellect only deals with sensible "particulars" abstracted from matter in various ways, as opposed to the theoretical intellect, which functions to apprehend "universal", immaterial ideas or essences (Ibn Sina n.d., 136; Fakhry 1983, 141). Thus, practical intellect would perceive human being as particularly human, but theoretical intellect would perceive him in terms of universal concept of humanity.

Nonetheless, despite its inability to apprehend universals, the practical intellect does help the theoretical intellect in its task by providing (1) individual particulars that aid in the apprehension of universal concepts, (2) information that clarifies the positive or negative relationship among individual concepts, (3) data from which general premises or conclusions may be induced, and (4) general secondary reports or traditions of a stable, undisputed nature (Ibn Sina n.d., 151). Here, practical intellect is portrayed as an essential part of the theoretical intellect. Practical intellect also functions to govern the practical deliberations and actions, controls the lower faculties such as the animal faculties and appetites, and helps to integrate relations between the animal intellect and the theoretical intellect (Heath 1992, 84). How exactly this transpires is a problematic area in Ibn Sina's philosophy.

Mention has been made that Ibn Sina ascribes to the Active Intellect

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a set of functions including being the cause of the existence of matter in the world. Mention has also been made that the Active Intellect brings about prime matter with its potentiality to exhibit the forms of all natural objects in the sublunar world with the aid of the movement of the heavens. Ibn Sina employs this notion of "the aid of the movement of the heavens" as a proof for the existence of God. To this "movement of the heavens", Ibn Sina adds for the existence of God, the movement of the universe stemming from the distinction between necessary and possible existence. In other words, to the inference of the existence of God from the *movement* of the celestial sphere, Ibn Sina adds a proof of His existence from the *movement* of the sublunar sphere. And now, to the inference of the existence of the Active Intellect from the *movement* of the human intellect from potentiality to actuality, Ibn Sina adds an inference of the existence of the Active Intellect from the *existence* of sublunar world (Davidson 1992, 97). The sublunar world, which includes matter and form, are emanated from the Active Intellect, Ibn Sina contends. And this emanation is not a matter of choice of God or His grace, but rather a necessary implication of the Active Intellect's essence. In this context, Ibn Sina demonstrates that human intellect being the highest and the most perfect form of matter emanated from the Active Intellect becomes incorporeal, hence immortal (n.d., 230; Rahman 1952, 12).

Immortality is the result of intellect being incorporeal. Ibn Sina builds his formulation of the immortality of intellect on the proposition developed by al-Fárabí, but extends it in an important way. For al-Fárabí immortality is a concomitant of the stage of acquired intellect. That is, immortality is attained when human soul reaches the level of the acquired intellect. For Ibn Sina the human intellect is immortal due to its very essence regardless of a man's intellectual development.

There are understandably different varieties of immortal soul. Some souls are perfect, hence achieve the ultimate happiness available to human souls. This kind of soul is able to conjoin completely and permanently with the Active Intellect. Others are less successful at achieving this total conjunction. There are also souls which do not reach even the level of physics and metaphysics, but which nonetheless understand that perfect happiness is only possible by developing the intellectual thought. There are finally souls which are so completely ignorant that they constitute a formless material substratum which does exist, but without any intellectual activity (Ibn Sina n.d., 239-40). This kind of soul is sometimes characterised as being as good as non-existent. It has no notion of genuine

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intellectual happiness. Having no inkling of what intellectual desire is, it is immune to the pain that unfulfilled intellectual desire occasions. It is void of both intellectual pleasure and the pain of realising that intellectual pleasure. It may finally "destroy" some other souls forever.

Here Ibn Sina's thinking does pose confusion. He does not explain on the one hand, how the "destruction" of some souls might be harmonised with the proposition that human soul is immortal by its very nature regardless of a man's intellectual development, nor does he explain which souls subject to destruction are. Ignorance implies a lack of knowledge. But Ibn Sina is not clear precisely how little knowledge a soul has in order that it can be categorised as ignorant. What we can say is that, ignorant souls are the ones that lack all intellectual accomplishments, hence completely outside the category of human intellect. But this would imply an exclusion of the ignorant soul as a soul. However it may be taken, the statement that ignorant soul may destroy souls runs counter to Ibn Sina's painstaking philosophical thinking about the immortality of human intellect.

Be that as it may, conjunction with the Active Intellect and the resultant state of acquired intellect are integral part of all actual human thought. Acquired intellect, besides having the potentiality of being in conjunction with the Active Intellect, has also the same potentiality of apprehending the First Cause in a most perfect clarity. Ibn Sina remarks, "the intellect that has attained intellectual perfection as well as a proper beauty of truth, may have the clarity of the First Truth when represented in it" (1958, 764).

Now, given the intrinsic immortality of the soul, and considering the nature of the acquired intellect, we may say that the acquired intellect may achieve not only a conjunction with the Active Intellect, but also a union with the First Cause. From here, one may say that the real issue of emanation is an intellectual union with God. Emanation deals with the issues of epistemology, cosmology and metaphysic, but I think its real goal is to offer a plausible elaboration of the union between the actual human thought and the First Cause.

Accepting this proposition would mean that Ibn Sina represents the philosophical version of *tashbih*. It seems legitimate within this framework of analysis to maintain that like the mystical experience, what is discovered in the doctrine of immortality and particularly the perfection of the acquired intellect is the apprehension of reality as it is in its pure "suchness". In *al-Ishárát* Ibn Sina clearly maintains that in its perfect state, the acquired intellect apprehends none but the thing in its essence as it is in itself; *'alá má*

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huwa 'alaihi (1958, 764). In its ideal form therefore, the conception of the acquired intellect and its immortality represents the idea of "seeing things as they are", and are arbitrarily the realm of Kant's *ens a se*. If we understand the perfection of the acquired intellect as simply the top end of the scale of intellectual intensity, then the intellect is the actualisation of the *ens a se*. As we have said, the acquired intellect has the potentiality of achieving a permanent conjunction with the Active Intellect and a perfect clarity of the First Cause. All these should mean that the acquired intellect may achieve a direct and unmediated awareness of the First Cause whereby the epistemic and "ontological" distance between Him and the intellect is transcended. We have also said that theoretical intellect, of which acquired intellect is part, functions to apprehend the "universal", immaterial ideas or essence. This should mean that when we speak of religion for instance, theoretical intellect transcends the doctrinal boundaries by recognising the universal truth that lies at the heart of all religions.

The point I want to make is that this aspect of Ibn Sina's philosophy tends to coincide with the vision of *tashbíh* as opposed to *tanzíh*. In speaking of the immortality of intellect, the permanent conjunction between the acquired intellect and the Active Intellect and the perfect apprehension of the First Cause by the acquired intellect, Ibn Sina I contend envisages genuinely a vision of *tashbíh*.

Nonetheless, this aspect of Ibn Sina's philosophy vis-à-vis the "*Fidei defensor*" such as al-Ghazzálí and Rumi created a perilous situation for itself. The claim that intellect is immortal and that the world is eternal appears rather dubious for them. Rumi for instance strongly objects this view. In some of his verses, Rumi –while not mentioning anyone by name- addresses his objection against Ibn Sina saying:

> After all that, the little philosopher asks the Sunni how he knows that the world was temporally created? You ass, how do you know that the world has existed eternally? After all, when you say that the world is eternal, what you mean is that it is not temporally created. This is a statement based on a negative. Statements based on affirmatives are easier to make than statement based on negatives...For this reason testimony based on a negative statement is not admissible because it is not within the realm of possibility. On the other hand, testimony based on an affirmative is within the realm of possibility and quite simple (1994, 147).

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Against the notion of the intellectual conjunction with the incorporeal sphere, Rumi maintains –like any other Sufis- that conjunction with the incorporeal sphere including with God is possible. But he dismissed that this conjunction may be achieved or proved by means of philosophy. In the following citation he criticises Ibn Sina without mentioning him by name saying, "the philosopher knows this, but he knows it through logical proof, and logical proof does not last" (1994, 46).

It is evident from this that Rumi is sceptical about philosophy. Speaking about philosophy and philosophers in a broad generalisation, Rumi maintains that:

> The acquired intellect is like a stream led into a house from outside. If its way should be blocked, it is helpless. Seek the fountain from within yourself (1381/IV, 1157).

He also says that:

> The philosopher is in bondage to intellectual concepts; the pure saint is mounted upon the Intellect of intellect. The Intellect of intellect is the kernel, your intellect the husk. The stomachs of animals are always seeking husks (1381/III, 814-5).

In these verses, especially the second, we can see how wild is Rumi in accusing the philosophers as the "animals seeking the husks". In addition to being embarrassing, these accusations speak volumes about the fact that Rumi's rejection of philosophy is almost total. For Rumi, philosophy is an intellectual construct without universal value. He grounds his allegation on what he calls a partial intellect upon which philosophy is based. Because philosophy is based on a partial intellect, it lacks the power of religious truth.

So, being against the philosophers and the philosophical quests is the simplest fact about Rumi. This attitude is undoubtedly regrettable. It misses out the fact that the Qur'an contains references whereby the people of intelligence and thought who think of the sign (*áyát*) of God in the world are praised. This attitude also ignores the fact that the Qur'an urges us to use the great gift of God, which is intellect in its fullest capacity. The philosophers are those who make an effort to use their intellect, and base their knowledge on it, because the Qur'an does not rule out the possibility that knowledge is

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based on something like intellect. Religious knowledge cannot be a matter of suddenly knowing by some sort of intuition. People must use their intellect and be led gradually to recognise the teaching of Islam. Also, there must be a rational order of the progress of faith which starts with the acknowledgement of the role of intellect in providing the explanation of the contingent world, God, the Prophet and so on. In the "rational" model of Islam, the validity of this religion is established among others by signs, which must be interpreted by the rational arguments and demonstration. Furthermore, such concept as miracle is a package of sign, and is regarded as the decisive factor in stimulating belief. Miracle is a rational device provided within the context of prior theoretical rational understanding.

Intellect is capable of knowing the names of things or the essential nature of reality, so that, when God appoints us to govern the earth, He can be confident that we will use our intellect to make good use of it. In Islam, there is certainly nothing, which would give support for the decrying the use of intellect. Indeed, the use of intellect may ultimately lead one to the happiness both in this world and the next.

Scholars of Islam are almost unanimous in encouraging the use of intellect. Al-Ash'ari for instance stressed that the use of intellect must be involved if one is to understand the truth of Islam. He claimed that the Prophet debated the People of the Book by means of logical thinking (*hujjah*), observed their beliefs and faiths and made plain the error of their situation with the conclusive proofs of God and his clear explanation. The prophet also demonstrated the validity of that to which he called them with the proofs of God and His signs so that to none of them did there remain a counter-argument concerning the matter nor was there any need in it for any addition to what was received from Him (1988, 92-3).

Al-Ghazzálí, the mentor of al-Ash'ari maintains that there are four uses and functions of intellect. Firstly, it is the quality that distinguishes between man and animal. Secondly, it enables us as children to build up a repertoire of necessary truth such as mathematical equivalence. Thirdly, it produces knowledge. And lastly, it is essential to carry out one's practical ends (1989/I, 101-2).

Rumi on his part, while entertaining the view that intellect is good and useful, rejects the philosophical use of intellect. Thus, speaking of the good nature of intellect, Rumi says for example that intellect is the dimension within man that can discern error from truth, good from evil, the absolute from the relative, beauty from ugliness and so on (1994, 12, 26). It is also part and parcel of the process of spiritual realisation, identical with knowledge, wisdom and even the vision of God that may

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lead man to the higher step of spiritual station (1381/IV, 1022). It is good because it is like angel (1994, 111), like a prince in man's body (1994, 56), and like the vizier for the functioning of the kingdom, and so on.

However, intellect in passages like this is for Rumi, by no means the philosophical approach or the rational faculty of the philosophers. Rumi has often connected the sheer philosophical or intellectual endeavour with Satan. Partial intellect can err whereas Universal Intellect is safe from defect and fault.

All in all, Rumi's thinking concerning intellect is not consistent. But, in trying to moderately interpret his thought, let me say the followings. First, Rumi depicts intellect as useful, though somewhat pedestrian, but it must be connected with the source, which is the Universal Intellect. Second, Rumi acknowledges that intellect is good, but it must be distinguished from the sheer rational faculty or the intellectual endeavour. Third, Rumi accepts the view that intellect is good, but rejects the philosophical use of it.

Rumis' rejection of philosophy seems to have been based on at least three major grounds. First, Rumi seems to believe that philosophy does not limit the use of intellect within its own parameter. Second, he seems to believe that the use of the intellect by the philosophers has been grossly exaggerated. And third, this use has led to the compulsive orbit of narcissism. The underlying reason for all of these is the fact that for Rumi, philosophy is based on partial intellect.

Be that as it may, the implication that this rejection has for the attitude of Rumi against the philosophers and the philosophy should be evident. He is simply against any kind of philosophical and speculative method, which seeks to establish the theoretical and demonstrative understanding of the nature of God and universe. By speculative method, we may include not only philosophy proper, but also scholastic theology, jurisprudence and grammar. Rumi is not interested in these theoretical sciences, and only believes in science, which he thinks aims at strengthening the faith of the faithful.

Paradoxically, apart from his objections against philosophy, Rumi's worldview contains a great deal of striking affinities with some aspects of the philosophy of Ibn Sina. The notion of emanation for example, is readily found in Rumi's thinking but with slightly different flavour. In Rumi's model of emanation, spirit is a sequence of hierarchy. All spirits "emanate" from the Cosmic Spirit by a kind of overflow of the divine spirits. Spirits are graded; the spirit of the prophets is higher than the spirit of an ordinary human being and so on.

It is also likely on the other hand, that Rumi borrows some key

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terminology such as the Universal Intellect from Ibn Sina. In fact, there are passages in the *Mathnawí* and *Fíhi má Fíhi* which point to the Universal Intellect as the power acting behind the multiplicity of phenomena, an idea which finds its consonance in Ibn Sina's Active Intellect as the "Giver of forms".

Moreover, it will be recalled that emanation is designed to explain the idea of conjunction between the corporeal and incorporeal spheres. This idea of conjunction is evidently present in Rumi's thought as it is in any Sufi's doctrines.

Ibn Sina also speaks of the successive progress of matter from the lowest degree to the highest (the highest being the human soul). Rumi similarly speaks of the "evolution" of man from matter to the higher form. He explains:

> For several epochs I was flying about in space like atoms of dust without a will, after which I entered the inorganic realm of matter. Crossing over to the vegetable kingdom I lost all memory of my struggle on the material plane. From there I stepped into the animal kingdom, forgetting all my life as a plant, feeling only an instinctive and unconscious urge towards the growth of plants and flowers, particularly during the springtime as sucking babies feel towards the mother that gave them birth. Rising in the scale of animality I became a man pulled up by the creative urge of the Creator whom one knows. I continued advancing from realm to realm developing my reason and strengthening the organism. There was ground forever getting above the previous types of reason. Even my present rationality is not a culmination of mental evolution. This too has to be transcended, because it is still contaminated with self-seeking, egoistic biological urges. A thousand other types of reason and consciousness shall emerge during the further course of my ascent; a wonder of wonders.[5]

Having all these in mind, I think Rumi is just one step away in accepting the philosophy of Ibn Sina as his own. He could have properly

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5 Cited from Khalifah Abdul Hakim's *Jalal al-Din Rumi*, 829.

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articulated Ibn Sina's philosophy and integrated it into his mystical thought. I think Ibn Sina's philosophy elicits ready approval from Rumi, because the circularity of their thinking generally speaking, does not preclude each other. Their thinking can indeed function as auxiliary.

Like Rumi's mystical thought, Ibn Sina's philosophy is an eloquent plea for the journey toward the One, the origin of all existence. In both systems, knowledge is the great keystone. Both Rumi and Ibn Sina share the same view that knowledge is the condition in human journey toward the One and in achieving the happiness of being in conjunction with Him. Given its centrality, let us now turn to the conception of knowledge in Ibn Sina's philosophy.

The Way of Knowledge

Although Ibn Sina's philosophical account of God and his conception of emanation may have some striking affinities with Rumi's thought, it fails to satisfy Rumi, mainly because Ibn Sina's philosophy is based on partial intellect. It is necessary to face the question yet again why philosophy does not appeal to Rumi satisfactorily.

We have said elsewhere that the necessary implication of the theory of emanation is the fact that there are two different levels of world, one is physical and the other is spiritual. The former is outward and the latter is inward, or in the words of Henry Corbin, the one is the cosmic Occident and the other is the cosmic Orient. When we think of the world in terms of the cosmic Occident, then we are thinking of the world in terms of externality. And when we think of the cosmic Orient then we are thinking of the "internal" union with God. We have also spoken about the progression of stages of matter on the way to perfection from the lowest level in the form of the four elements, to the highest level in the form of the rational soul. When the stage of the rational soul is achieved, perfection is attained. The ultimate aim of this progression of mater is none other than the knowledge of the Supreme Being.

In line with his distinction between the cosmic Occident and the cosmic Orient, Ibn Sina made distinction between the external and internal kind of knowledge. The external knowledge belongs to the external perception, which is the operation of the external five senses. The internal knowledge in the meantime belongs to the five "internal senses", which operate through different part of human internal faculties. The first internal sense is *sensus communis* (*khayáliyya*) which is the seat of all the senses. It functions to integrate sense data into precept.

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The second internal sense is the retentive imagination (*musawwiro*) which functions to conserve the perceptual images. The third faculty is also imagination (*dhákira*) in so far as it acts upon these images by combination and separation. In man this faculty is pervaded by reason so that human imagination can deliberate and is, therefore the seat of the practical intellect. The fourth faculty is estimative faculty (*wahmiyya*) which functions to perceive immaterial motions like usefulness and harmfulness, love and hate in material objects, and is the basis of our character, whether influenced or uninfluenced by reason. This faculty is in other words intuitive whereby sheep for example, recognise the wolf as dangerous and to be avoided. The last internal sense is *háfizah*, which functions to conserve in memory those notions of meaning, *ma'ná* (n.d., 135-6).

On the other hand, the notion of the progression of matter from one stage to another is responsible for the introduction of the notion of man's rational progression from one stage to another. Man is believed to be in a constant progression on the way to rational perfection from external to internal sense. However, in addition to these two stages, there is another higher stage known as intellectual stage. External and internal senses are physical, but intellectual sense is incorporeal.

Now, Ibn Sina reasons that when perception is forgotten, it does not disappear from human organism but remains "stored" in either retentive imagination faculty or *dhákirah* faculty. Forgetting is an instance of human soul's ceasing to attend to a precept that is stored in the brain, while recollection is the soul's attending to it once again. But, whereas the memory and the recollection of sense perceptions are thus amenable to psychological explanation, a different kind of explanation is needed for memory of "intelligible thought". Intelligible thoughts are indivisible. Being indivisible they cannot be present in a physical organ or known through a physical faculty. They are not stored therefore anywhere in external or internal senses, and must rather exist in an incorporeal sense. Actually the state of conjunction with the Active Intellect and with other incorporeal beings is acquired when intelligible thought exists in the intellectual sense. And when this state of conjunction is acquired, the actual knowledge is attained. This kind of knowledge is connected with the happiness of the knower because it is in itself knowledge of the Supreme Being.

Accordingly there are three kinds of happiness which follow three kinds of knowledge; namely happiness of internal sense, external sense

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and intellectual sense. Intellectual happiness is greater than internal happiness, and internal happiness is greater than external happiness (Ibn Sina 1958, 751).

Everything desires happiness, no matter how strong or weak that desire is. The intellectual sense desires knowledge because knowledge is its proper happiness. Yet, there is also degree of happiness that might be acquired by this intellectual sense, the highest of which being the acquisition of the proper quality of its subject –this subject being God, the Supreme Being.

We have said elsewhere that intellect may acquire a perfect clarity of the Supreme Being when represented to it. The intellect after taking on the quality of clarity from the Supreme Being may have the representation of the quality of various objects in their very essences. In other words, contrary to external and internal senses, intellectual sense when it reaches the highest degree of perfection grasps nothing but the essence of things in their universal forms.

The notion of intellect having acquired the proper quality of its subject –that is God- and its apprehension of things in their universal forms, reminds us yet again about intellect having the potentiality to apprehend reality in its pure "suchness" or "as-it-is-ness." Here we are returning again to the issue of "seeing things as they are", or to the realm of Kant's *ens a se*.

Yet the state of knowing God is being interpreted in different ways by different people. For the philosophers this "knowing God" is a matter of something like philosophical knowledge, while for the Sufis it is a matter of spiritual knowledge. This knowledge for the philosophers requires intellectual perfection, while for the Sufis it requires spiritual perfection. For the philosophers one must be skilled in philosophy and demonstrative thought –and for the Sufis one must be skilled in intuitive knowledge- in order to really know God, and so on.

At this point, we are speaking of what might be called the problem of *contra philosophus mystica* (tension between philosophy and mysticism). It goes without saying that philosophy and Sufism have been bedevilled by the dispute around the notion of knowledge. The dispute –it may be contended- is originated in the debate around the question of whether our happiness lies in the exercise of intellect. Intellect for a man like Plato is the sole source of value. But if intellect is required for happiness, then most people will not be able to achieve it. Only those capable of rational contemplation can succeed in finding it. This Platonic doctrine is

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advocated by the Muslim philosophers but then creates problem not only for the Sufis but also for the ordinary thinking class among the Muslims. For the Muslims happiness may be achieved by means of obeying the law of religion. The Qur'an contains the whole knowledge and guidance in the most perfect form possible that lead man to goodness and happiness. The Qur'anic knowledge and its accompanying happiness is available to anyone who takes the appropriate religious steps.

The tension between philosophy and Sufism on the question of knowledge is further reverberated in Ibn Sina's notion of the Station of Knowers. This notion is discussed in the Ninth Class of *al-Ishárát*, in which a distinction is made between the knowers and the nonknowers; the knowers being the philosophers, and the nonknowers the non-philosophers.

Along the line of this distinction, Ibn Sina introduces three classes of people; namely the ascetic (*záhid*), the worshiper (*'ábid*), and the knower (*'álim*). The ascetic is the one who does not indulge in worldly delights. The worshiper is the one who practices prayer, fasting, and the like, and the knower (the philosopher) is the one who turns his thought upward toward the sanctity of divine power, seeking the perpetual illumination of the light of the Truth for his innermost thought (1958, 799-801).

Ibn Sina maintains that the knower can make use of asceticism, but his use of asceticism is different from the use of the ascetic. The ascetic would use asceticism for the purpose of buying the delights of the life to come with the worldly delights. The knower on the other hand, uses asceticism as a method to elevate him above anything that distracts him from the Truth. The knower also may use the worship, but again his use of worship is different from the use the worshiper. The worshiper would use the worship only in order to get something beneficial such as reward in the second life. On the contrary, the knower uses worship to train the faculties of his animal soul (Inati 1996, 33). In addition, the knower would seek the Truth for Its own sake and does not use It as the means for anything else. He would worship the Truth because It is the noblest object of worship. Therefore, his worship stems from the fact that It is worthy of worship, not from any desire or fear. Ibn Sina states, "if desire or fear were present, the desired object or the feared object would be the motive and the object of the search" (1958, 811-13).

Indeed, all this does not mean that Ibn Sina dismisses the asceticism of the ascetics, and the worship of the worshipers as wholly meaningless. He admits that even though the object of these, that is reward, is not as meaningful as the object of knowledge, the former is also real as well

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as useful and even necessary for the development of man's theoretical intellect. Happiness therefore must be some form of a composite, a mixture of asceticism, worship and contemplation. On this view, happiness essentially includes not only the activity of theoretical intellect, but also the full range of human spiritual and religious activities. On account that human being is a mixture of soul, body and intellect, our happiness must also be defined by intellectual, spiritual and religious activities. It may even be said that happiness may be acquired without intellectual activities. Religious and spiritual life is also a happy life. There are people who become happy due to the proper use of their spiritual and religious properties as distinct from the intellectual ones. Nevertheless, Ibn Sina argues that the life of contemplation is the best sort of life for the happiness of human being. And therefore he places the station of the knower above the stations of the ascetic and the worshiper. Anyone who, in addition to asceticism and worship, focuses his attention on the intellectual perfection, will receive an additional happiness. In addition, intellect is the only organ within man capable of concentrating on what is higher than his own being.

The comparison between the theoretical knowledge and the practical knowledge attained through asceticism and worship, Ibn Sina illustrates, is like boys compared to serious, mature, and well-experienced people. Boys, being highly preoccupied with the value of playing, pay no attention to the more valuable things that the more mature people value. Because their vision is limited to the value of playing, they resent the fact that those who are more mature are not interested in playing. They also fail to understand the reason for this lack of interest on the part of mature people. Likewise, those whose vision is limited to incomplete pleasure stick to this type of pleasure and never abandon it in this life, unless they expect to receive twice as much of it in the second life. Their worship of God is only for the purpose of being rewarded by Him with a generous amount of the incomplete pleasure (1958, 816).

The idea is that in Ibn Sina's philosophy, human beings realise their function most perfectly as human beings when they are on the highest possible point. This highest point is the station of the knower, the station of the philosophers, in which they apprehend the Truth as He is in Himself in pure suchness. This is the only station that gives the knower the actual arrival at the Truth and is the only thing capable of giving him salvation. All other stations are inadequate for this purpose, for they do not finally lead the knower to the ultimate end of being with the Truth.

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He who experiences the Truth as He is in Himself manifests certain qualities resulting from this experience. Because he is pleased with the Truth in which everything to some extent shares, he is pleased with everything around him. That is why he respects at the sight of any human being regardless of religion, *maddhab* or origin, considering all human beings as equal inasmuch as they all share in the Truth. He also considers them equal inasmuch as they all have the potentiality of being distracted from the Truth by the falsehood of worldly affairs; distraction that renders them worthy of mercy and friendship.

The attainment of a complete conjunction with the Truth, and therefore of complete happiness, requires a perfect knowledge of the Truth; *al-sa'ädah lá tunálu illá bi istikmáli al-'ilm* (Ibn Sina 1958, 740). And a perfect knowledge requires a perfect intellect. In other words, to attain a perfect knowledge one must be a knower. This view indeed, received an awkward objection because it means that only through philosophy one is able to attain the conjunction with the Truth and realise the accompanying happiness. By implication it also means that philosophy is superior over all else including mysticism and worship.

Happiness, represented as an action of the intellect, is therefore the end of human beings in the philosophy of Ibn Sina. And again this happiness can only be achieved through philosophy. This is rather nice for Ibn Sina, and this actually is where the weakness of Ibn Sina's philosophy, as far as the notion of knowledge is concerned, lies. Here Ibn Sina limits the access of happiness only to philosophers, and fails to realise that different people have different ways of achieving happiness. In fact, one of the excellences of the Shariah lies in it being able to make possible for everyone to attain happiness in a specifically appropriate form for that person. So, no one is excluded from happiness by reason of innate ability. It would indeed be a problem in a religion to have a creator who formed his creatures differently with the result that some but no others were capable of being happy.

Ibn Sina is indeed, not only concerned with an intellectual perfection. He is also concerned with external and internal perfection. But he stresses that the true and ever-lasting happiness lies in the intellectual perfection. None of the external and internal perfection lasts, and only intellectual perfection lasts because intellect is immortal.

Now, if this intellectual perfection really provides everything needed for the attainment of ultimate happiness, what then is the value of other aspects of religion such as Shariah and Sufism, other than in urging us to acquire

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this intellectual perfection? The fact is that intellectual knowledge only provides us with theoretical cognition of ultimate happiness, and there still remains a need for something else, which brings into actual existence what is known theoretically.

Sufism is frequently given the task of filling this gap between theory and practice. Ibn Sina's account of the three human perfection (external, internal and intellectual) tells us that someone must possess all three perfection to bring the happiness into actual existence.

Shariah which corresponds to the external knowledge, and Sufism to the internal knowledge are partners to philosophy for the attainment of happiness. It cannot be denied that Shariah and Sufism, like philosophy, are forms of knowledge. Shariah is knowledge of Divine Law, and Sufism knowledge of inner meaning. The survival of religion requires not only the maintenance of faith through intellect, but also through law and spirituality. In view of its function, religion stands in a great need of Divine Law, spirituality as well as philosophy. Just as religion cannot afford to divorce itself from philosophy and rational interpretation, it cannot afford too to ignore its need for law and asceticism.

Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that law and asceticism are essentially inferior to philosophy, for they spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality through law, the other through the "eye of the heart", and the other through intellect. They all aim at reaching the Ultimate Reality by transforming human externality, internality and intellectuality respectively. They all are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. The law "rules", the philosophy "analyses", and the Sufism "sees". In view of this, the three aspects of Islam should rather work hand in hand for the attainment of the more complete form of happiness.

These remarks unfortunately, do not well serve as an introduction to the attitude of Ibn Sina toward the internal and external knowledge. He would still argue that the external and internal knowledge are secondary and are to be used to fulfil the purpose of intellectual perfection, thus purporting the supremacy of philosophy over Shariah and Sufism.

Nor do these remarks serve to portray the attitude of Rumi towards philosophy. He remained forever hesitant to accept wholeheartedly the philosophy and its account of intellect and rational knowledge as a necessary part of religious knowledge.

The origin of Rumi's objection against philosophy hinges in his distinction of partial intellect and Universal Intellect. Says Rumi:

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> Intellect is of two kinds: The first is acquired, you learn it like a boy at school from books, teachers, reflection, and rote, from concept and from excellent and new sciences. The other intellect is a gift of God (1381/IV, 1157).

The intellect of rational man is partial, and is only satisfied with a cupful of water:

> It is pity to reach the sea and be satisfied with only a cupful of water. When pearls and hundreds of thousands of beneficial things can be extracted from the sea, what is the use of taking water? What pride does a rational man have in doing such a thing? This world is but foam, while the oceanful of water is the knowledge of the saints (1994, 10).

The intellect of common people is also partial, and is satisfied with a second-hand knowledge:

> Most people know only second-hand knowledge which easily falls prey to imagination and fantasy. Their knowledge is fated to remain incomplete. They only know descriptively rather than essentially (1381/VI, 1987).

Partial intellect is a husk and Universal Intellect is a kernel. Universal Intellect belongs to the saints and the prophets:

> The Intellect of intellect is the kernel, your intellect the husk. The stomach of animals is always seeking husks. The seeker of the kernel has a hundred loathing for the husk. In the eyes of the goodly saints, the kernel alone is truly lawful. Since the skin of the intellect gives a hundred proofs how should the Universal Intellect ever take a step without certainty (1381/III, 815).

Partial intellect discerns form and Universal Intellect passes beyond form and discerns meaning. Compared to the Universal Intellect, partial intellect is null and void. Says Rumi, "partial intellect is like a magistrate when the Sultan comes, the miserable magistrate slinks off to a corner

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(Rumi 1381/IV, 1169). "The "eyes" of the magistrate is like the moon, but the "eyes" of the Sultan is like the sun; when the sun disappears, there remains darkness. The light of the Sultan burns darkness and brings the water of life into the night of this world. The key of the magistrate opens the doors of the kingdom, but the key of the Sultan opens the doors of the rose-garden. The intellect of the Sultan is the fountain-head of the water of life, safe and secure from every defect and fault".

The intellect of the saints and the prophets is Universal, because "they can escape from a blind imitation, and are liberated from the snares of imagination. They are endowed with special kind of intelligence, guided by spiritual and primary causes rather than by external secondary causes" (Rumi 1381/IV, 1205). They are "the touchstone by which one can distinguish true coin from counterfeit...away from the machinery of mental fabrication" (Rumi 1381/I, 123).

Rumi occasionally associates partial intellect with the *nafs* (animal soul), the lowest intellect in the hierarchy of spirit. Partial intellect is therefore, the intellect that has been removed from the luminosity and pure consciousness. To share in the knowledge of the Universal Intellect, "man must subdue his *nafs* through the discipline of polishing the mirror of the heart" (Rumi 1381/I, 29).

Partial intellect can only work at the behest of Universal Intellect. If the latter does not desire to serve the former, the former may simply desist from being existent. Rumi explains:

> See how earth can be turned into a fine palace by coming into contact with an intelligent person. If association with the intelligent person has such an effect on inanimate objects, think what effect there will be when one believer associates with another. Inanimate objects are elevated to such a stage through association with the partial soul and intellect. If all this is a shadow of the partial intellect, and if one can deduce a person from his shadow, then deduce what intellect and reason is necessary to produce the heavens, the sun and moon, the seven layers of earth and all that lies between. All these existing things are shadows of the Universal Intellect (1994, 233).

Finally, because partial intellect falls short of genuine knowledge of Reality, it needs instruction and nourishment:

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> Whoever possesses partial intellect is in need of instruction. The Universal Intellect is the giver of all things. Those who are united with the Universal Intellect and become one are prophets and saints...partial intellects are tools that are instructed by and benefit from the Universal Intellect, but they are gross in comparison to the Universal Intellect (Rumi 1994, 149).

From the above descriptions, it is clear that partial intellect is the intellect of the people other than the saints and the prophets. The knowledge resulted from this intellect is second-hand, piecemeal, receptive and not total. Even the intellect of the most original and creative philosophers is partial because it is not in total contact with reality, or as Rumi would put it, "is not one with the Universal Intellect". Only the ones with the Universal Intellect have the total knowledge –the ones with the Universal Intellect being the saints and the prophets.

In the cognition of the saints and prophets, the partiality is overcome because they escape from a blind imitation, and are liberated from the snares of imagination. Their intellect has become luminous that it is elevated with the pulse of the total reality in its grasp. He who possesses this kind of intellect, Rumi would argue, is aware of the total context of truth and therefore in him alone there is the full awareness of the meaning of each truth.

The totality of Rumi's conception of partial and Universal Intellect gives us a clear indication of the character and direction of his thinking. From our description, it is clear that Rumi belongs to an aura of intellectual world in which Ibn Sina is a foreign citizen. In his mind, philosophy is an apparent degradation of the Universal Intellect. We see therefore, that when Rumi speaks of philosophy in terms of the partial intellect, he projects into us the mental universe where the underlying lines of philosophy are nullity and voidness.

It is dubious no doubt, to dismiss the intellect of the philosophers as partial. Religion demands philosophy, just as it demands Sufism and Shariah. Whatever demerits philosophy might have, the philosophers' intellect cannot be dismissed as partial. Philosophy represents an important rational means of understanding the nature of religion as well as the structure of the world. If religion commands believers to understand the world, then it must command philosophy as the means to that end for those capable of thinking philosophically. Philosophy is not precarious for religion. On the contrary, it is meaningful for it, for it is the extension of religious teaching and the fortification of its foundation.

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It is equally dubious to regard –as Ibn Sina would do- the intellect of the non-philosophers as partial. Both Rumi and Ibn Sina have therefore committed the same fallacy by regarding the intellect of the other as partial.

A claim that an intellect is partial is not acceptable. Intellect, according to the prophetic tradition, is the first thing that God created. [6] Intellect is therefore special and sacrament, and is able to function as a means to gain happiness, regardless of the quality and the thinking power of that intellect.

Also, we cannot accept the claim that happiness is an exclusive property of say, the philosophers or the Sufis. There exists a divinely revealed law, which is available to all believers. People –regardless of their intellectual quality- may be led to the truth by means of the divine law. The happiness of all believers is assured by the truth of Islam itself. There is in the end, no difference between the intellect of the philosophers, the Sufis and the ordinary masses. The only difference is the way they show the truth.

All believers can be happy although the way they are happy is different. The ordinary believers will be happy through the observance of the divine law, the Sufis through the spiritual fulfilment, and the philosophers through the intellectual virtues. This explains why the Qur'an is revealed in figurative and metaphorical language. It is designed to enable anyone to understand and believe as much as he needs to understand and believe in order to be happy and lead a good life.

Finally, instead of looking at philosophy and Sufism in terms of contrast, thus distancing the one from the other, we should rather see them in terms of complementarity and resemblance. Ibn Sina's philosophy should be seen as adaptable to the basic tendencies of Rumi's thought, and vice versa. In the same breath, the notion of the theoretical intellect or the Active Intellect in Ibn Sina's philosophy should be seen as identical to the notion of the Universal Intellect in Rumi's thinking. As a whole, in terms of intellect, Ibn Sina and Rumi embody the philosophical and mystical dimensions of almost the same religious vision. Consequently, the two dimensions are isomorphic in the general structure of the conception of intellect. On the notion of emanation, the breath of Ibn Sina's philosophy and Rumi's thinking are readily parallel: it takes persons from the lowest state to the highest one, which is an encounter with the Ultimate Being in terms of either union or ecstasy. In this context, the two systems can be seen as participating substantially in the same structure of the concept of

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[6] *Hadith* narrated by Abú Dáwúd (Abádí 1979/XII, 468)

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union (with the Ultimate Being) and the *theory* of knowledge via the path of self-realisation. Perhaps in the same way that one may look at Ibn Sina's philosophy as the natural development of the esoteric features of Islam, one may also look at Rumi's thinking as somewhat natural interiorisation of the exoteric aspects of the religion. Consequently, the two systems are consistent to each other, as objective ways of attaining knowledge of the Ultimate Being. Both –as an objective path to the Real- are equally permitted and indeed demanded by Islam.

Furthermore, within the context of Neo-platonic thought, a philosopher is regarded as a seeker of conjunction with the incorporeal beings, since achieving this conjunction is a prerequisite to union (*ittihád*) with God, or immersion in the deity, which is the ultimate end of the rational being. The analogous nature of this view to the mystical view of the Sufis in general and of Rumi in particular, concerning union with God should be apparent. Also, within the same context, a philosopher is the one who seeks to rise above and beyond the world of appearance to the world of oneness and essence. Again, this view does not differ fundamentally from the mystical view of the Sufis and Rumi. The materials with which the two systems build their thought might differ. But the actual construction, the system itself, has an indubitably similar stamp.

So, the philosophy of Ibn Sina and the thought of Rumi can be brought closer together by insisting that they have the same ends and goals within the framework of an adequately unified intellectual universe.

Speaking of ends and goals, we may again notice that both Ibn Sina's philosophy and Rumi's way of thinking strive to achieve the knowledge situated in the universe of "Universal Intellect" as opposed to the partial intellect. They agree that Universal Intellect is the central factor for the acquisition of the real knowledge. "Universal Intellect" is the end, because it directs man to the truth, determines the truth, and signifies etymologically that which binds man to the truth. To the extent that this kind of knowledge involves both mystical intuition and philosophical intellection at every stage, it represents a unified web of key elements in Ibn Sina's philosophy and Rumi's thought.

There is every reason therefore, to suggest that Ibn Sina's philosophy and Rumi's thinking are interwoven. And there is equally enough reason to suggest that an objection of the one against the other as being partial is not justified.

In sum, Rumi's thinking in its mystical dimension participated substantially in Ibn Sina's thought in its philosophical structure. And this is

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what we have attempted to show here: exploring the general structures of Ibn Sina's philosophy and bringing forward the analogy between this structure to the mystical view of Rumi. What we found is that both Ibn Sina and Rumi provide more or less the same matrix, which may lead to the same conclusion and end. This is despite Rumi's objections against some aspects of Ibn Sina's philosophy, and Ibn Sina's hesitation to acknowledge asceticism as a valid form of knowledge equal to that of philosophy. Philosophy if understood properly represents –like Sufism- the internal aspect of religion in which its true and real meaning manifests.

This has been my argument; that philosophy traces the essence of religion and appraises its import in terms of religious "as-it-is-ness". And I am convinced that the aspects of Ibn Sina's philosophy that we have dealt with in this chapter keep this perspective in mind. Apart from their real intention, these aspects are but, as it were, the vestibules to the real question of religious *ens a se*, and the stirring of intellectual evaluation toward the real notion of religious similarity (*tashbih*) as opposed to incomparability (*tanzih*).

The Way of the Perfect Sage

The present thesis has given us an occasion to show that there is an analogy or parallel between Ibn Sina's philosophy and Rumi's thinking. It is true that Ibn Sina and his intellectual project were nourished in a philosophical environment. But it is equally true that it is possible to connect Ibn Sina with the great family of Sufism. Our thesis does not set for itself the task of deciding whether Ibn Sina had really been a Sufi. This is a mater of an endless controversy. Nonetheless, we concur with the Iranian tradition that Ibn Sina is among the *Ahl-e 'Erfán* (the people of inner wisdom).

We also concur that Ibn Sina is a Shí'í. 'Alí b. Fadhlulláh al-Jílání in his *Tawfíq al-Tatbíq* has proven than that Ibn Sina is a Shí'í of Imámiyyah sect. This claim is based on a proposition that Ibn Sina professes a conception of Islam in harmony with some central concepts of the Shí'ah, such as the ideas of caliphate, *imámah* and imam's infallibility; the ideas of human soul, prophecy, resurrection, and the characters of the knowers; and the ideas relating to politics, state arrangement, social management, and so on (n.d, 16). However, among the most important concept of the Shí'ah that Ibn Sina learnt, and proved to have a great stimulus on his intellectual awareness was unquestionably the concept of an imam as the Perfect Sage.

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The fact that Ibn Sina is a Shí'í, is unquestionable. We learn that in Bukhara, he used to study Greek, philosophy, geometry and arithmetic from the Shí'ís. We also learn that he grew up in the Samanid Dynasty whose princes are mostly Shí'ís. Also, during this period the most powerful philosophical, mystical, social and political movement to have emerged was *Ikhwán al-Safá* (the Brethren of Purity), which is characteristically Shí'í (Jílání n.d., 18). All this make possible the fact that Ibn Sina is a Shí'í proper considering that he was brought up in a strong Shí'í environment. Al-Jílání has spoken about this in length, and I think no repetition is needed here.

Having said that, we may ask ourselves what does it mean to say that Ibn Sina is (or is not) a Shí'í. We consider this question to be essential. But it may likewise be said that so far as what made his philosophy important, the question of his sectarian allegiance is of secondary interest. He may have been born a Shí'í, but what is of major importance in his philosophy is not to know what religious sect he belonged. The significance of his philosophy does not lie here. It lies rather, in the system and content of his philosophy itself. It may even be said that Ibn Sina -having revealed to us something better than what the Shí'ah could- belongs only to himself. There is even a gesture within the Iranian tradition that Ibn Sina is independent and in fact above any sectarian or intellectual school to have ever emerged in Iran. That is why, Henry Corbin reports that in Iran there is such a thing as what he calls the Iranian Avicennism with its peculiar physiognomy and characteristic (1980, 24357).

However, like any other Shí'ís, Ibn Sina also speaks highly of an imam, particularly of 'Alí b. Abí Tálib whom he calls in his *Mi'rájNáma*, "the centre of the circle of wisdom, the sphere of truth, the storehouse of intellect, and of course the Commander of the Faithful" (1992, 122). In the meantime, in the last lines of *al-Shifá* Ibn Sina speaks of an imámah. Generally speaking, meditation on these lines reveals that for Ibn Sina an imam is the one who realises in himself the ideal of a Perfect Sage –that is, the archetype of the sage corresponding to the Perfect Man (*al-Insán al-Kámil*) of Ibn 'Arabí. An imam is the essence and the object of mystical gnosis. That the Perfect Sage realises this image is a practical application that shows how Ibn Sina's philosophy is an immediate benefactor of an idea, latent in all esoteric movements, that appraises religion in its internal aspect.

In *al-Shifá*, Ibn Sina explains that an imam is, "he in whom speculative wisdom and practical wisdom are united. He is blessed for the unity of

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this wisdom. If in addition he is invested with the qualities proper to Prophets, lo, he becomes almost a God in human form, and it is almost permissible to render him a cult of adoration after God, for he is the King of the terrestrial world, the caliph of God in this world".[7]

In *Mi'ráj Náma* in the meantime, Ibn Sina quotes two prophetic *hadíth*, which describe the intellectual characterology of 'Alí b. Abí Tálib. For him, Alí is simply the personification of the Perfect Sage. The Prophet is reported to have said to 'Alí, "while the common run of mankind approach the Creator through every kind of piety, do thou approach Him by every form of intelligence: thou art before them all". And again, "O 'Alí! While men take such pains to multiply their acts of adoration, do thou attend to knowledge of the intelligible world so that thou shalt be before them all" (1992, 122).

Such prophetic words could be addressed only to a being who deserves to be properly called perfect. Here then, through perfection and with the appeal to the divine service that constitutes knowledge, we have the portrait of the Perfect Sage who is exalted to a metaphysical plane above the plane of empirical history.

The Perfect Sage is –borrowing Ibn 'Arabí's terms- the polished mirror, because he –in the words of Ibn Sina- is like the intelligible is among sensible (1992, 122). He is the polished mirror precisely because he, in the words of Ibn Sina, is "the eye of the intellectual insight, who perceives secrets, comprehends all truths, and understands intelligibles" (1992, 122).

In the eye of the intellectual insight, all truths are indeed comprehended. Horizontally, in this eye, unity between the Real and the perceiver of all truths is achieved. Through it, the division between the Real and phenomenal reality yields to a single image, because in this eye, the phases of reality may collapse, and the whole existent becomes theoretically one.

Ibn Sina clearly indicates in the statement cited above that the Perfect Sage may become "identical" to God. This statement should be understood as having the meaning of the Perfect Sage being able to achieve union with God, perceive the secrets of God and more importantly comprehending all truths and belief in terms of similarity and harmony.

Being "identical" with God also means that at this particular stage, there occurs an "identity shift" within the existence of the Perfect Sage. In the first place, the individual in achieving the state of being "identical" to God no longer exists as a separate entity from God. In the second sense, his "identity" has shifted from an ego-self in a dualistic relationship to a being-in-union with the divine. In this sense then, a self-other relationship has shifted to one of one identity, i.e. oneness with God. In semantic terms, the dualism that

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reflects the dual nature of the self and the other is fused through the collapse of the semantic structure that reflects it.

We may understand this realisation of the oneness with God as an event. Seen from Ibn 'Arabí's binding, the continual shift from the self-other-based notion of existence to the oneness-based one, prevents the mind from binding a single "object" from reifying God into a single form. In this context, we may contend that the whole program of Ibn Sina's philosophy is designed to create a discourse, which portrays the whole existence as an integrated entity in terms of similarity and oneness. In this context too, we may say that Ibn Sina, Rumi and Ibn 'Arabí have the same system of discourse, which revolves around the notion of the oneness of existence.

The Perfect Sage is regarded as a centre (*qutb*) of existence (Ibn Sina 1992, 122; Corbin 1980, 249). This centre, borrowing Ibn 'Arabí's word, is an isthmus (*barzakh*) between the Creator and creation. This centre encompasses all realities within the realm of the creation, and embraces them in a single and harmonious grip. That is why, Ibn Sina, as we have cited above, likes to say that the Perfect Sage perceives secrets and comprehends all truths.

This "comprehending all truths" means that the Perfect Sage is eluded from of the act of binding. The Perfect Sage, it may be said, does not differentiate the Real into various forms, due to him being able to grasp reality in its wholeness. He embraces all realities because he is at the centre of it. He is therefore, free from binding and from rejecting other manifestations of the Real in other forms of belief.

From what we have explained above, we may say that the centrality of the Perfect Sage exists on two axes. On the horizontal axis, the Perfect Sage refracts the divine unity into the phenomenal unity, and at the same time refracts that phenomenal unity into its various properties and unifies them back into the pure oneness of its nature. On the vertical axis, the Perfect Sage encompasses all strata of reality, from the eternal to the mortal, from the divine, through the spiritual, to the rational, to the animal, to the vegetative, to the elemental. Thus, the idea of the Perfect Sage implies a kind of twice-doubled prism, which functions ultimately to refract the divine reality, and more importantly to unite and integrate the differentiated reality of the phenomenal world.

All space, says Huston Smith, condenses into the mathematical point (1992, 27). The Perfect Sage, centred in the mathematical point of the hierarchy of existence, sways all members of that hierarchy. He opposes nothing and is opposed by nothing. Neutralising all oppositions and contraries, the Perfect Sage has entered the world of primordial ether

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where difference and otherness are resolved. Hence, the viewpoint of the Perfect Sage, the pole, and the centre, in the words of Chuang Tzu:

> is one at which this and that, yes and no, appear still in a state of non-distinction. This point is the Pivot of the Law; it is the motionless centre of a circumference on the rim of which all contingencies, distinctions and individualities revolve. From it only Infinity is to be seen, which is neither this nor that, nor yes nor no. To see all in the yet undifferentiated primordial unity or from such a distance that all melts into one, this is true intelligence (Smith 1992, 33).

Hierarchy means level, level implies space, space entails distance, and distance spells separation. Separation is what Ibn Sina, I believe, seeks to overcome. Ibn Sina speaks of the hierarchy of existence. His aim is not to cherish the discrete levels of reality, or to build cleavage into the very structure of existence, but to cure the endemic disease that this hierarchy implies. The insight that Ibn Sina gives on this issue yields the keys to the core problem of the matter. This insight forms a thesis within the categories of his philosophy. But rather than trying to give a direct proposition concerning this problem, he, through the symbolism of the centre, implies that the universe is governed by the principles of oneness and unity.

Ibn Sina's language works continually toward achieving this vision of oneness. And I think he was perfectly aware of what the idea of centre means and implies. To understand what triggers Ibn Sina to speak of this idea does not demand special knowledge; what triggers him is an aspiration to deliver the message of tolerance and harmony. Ibn Sina would certainly agree with René Guénon, who, centuries after him, writes in his *Fundamental Symbols* that:

> The centre is the place where contrary tendencies are neutralised so to speak and are in perfect equilibrium... centre is the place where all contraries are unified, and all oppositions resolved. The idea expressed here more particularly is, therefore, that of equilibrium; and this idea is really one with that of harmony (1995, 49).

Due to its importance, we will return again to this idea of the centre when we discuss Rumi and his tradition in the last chapter to which we are now turning.

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Chapter

4

Rumi and the Sufistic Phenomenology of the Cosmic Islam

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Chapter 4

Rumi and the Sufistic Phenomenology of the Cosmic Islam

As can be understood from the previous chapter, Ibn Sina and Rumi tend to keep the same perspective in mind when speaking about religion; they both trace religion in its essence and appraise its import in terms of religious "suchness". Nonetheless, Rumi rejects the philosophy of Ibn Sina, or any philosophy in that matter, on account that it is based on what Rumi would call a partial intellect.

However, the effect of Ibn Sina's philosophy was enormous, not only on a great number of Sufis, but also on Rumi himself, initiating as it did a new philosophical and mystical epoch. Setting aside the complexities of Ibn Sina's philosophy and the controversies it has created, for the major part of Islamic intellectual history, his thought overshadowed all else. It became predominant and might be said to have curtailed the influence of other scholars especially in the development of systematic thinking.

Several reasons might be suggested to have a role for the supremacy of Ibn Sina's philosophy. One is the sheer intellectual power and literary vigour with which he asserted the exclusive claims of the Islamic intellectual history. This is in somewhat marked contrast to Rumi's less assertive yet perhaps ultimately more convincing weighing of Islam in the balance of religion in general. Although Ibn Sina was a Muslim and wrote his philosophy as a Muslim, his ideas were to become prevalent not only in the Islamic world but also in the West for many centuries.

Furthermore, the supremacy of Ibn Sina's philosophy must in part be

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attributed to Ibn Rushd's progressive defense against the denunciation by such scholar as al-Ghazzálí.

Be that as it may, let me not give the impression that I underestimate the importance of Rumi and his works. From the beginning his works particularly the *Mathnawí* was recognised as a work of the first importance. So important that it was called "the Qur'an in the Persian language". When Rumi led the religion out of ensnaring situations, the shower of illumination and "liberation" prevailed and Rumi emerged as the Mawláná, the one whom people called "our spiritual leader".

The popularity and influence of *Mathnawí* can be attested to by the fact that until today it has inspired many people across the globe and has been translated into so many foreign languages. This book is important that it seems to have overshadowed the works of other minor Sufi intellectuals, and rivaled the popularity of some great works such as Ibn Arabí's *al-Futúhát al-Makiyyah*.

In the eyes of modern scholarship, Rumi enjoys an enormous popularity. People and academics of different backgrounds applause him as a celebrated figure. Franklin D. Lewis describes his popularity as "Rumi Mania" (2000, 1). Khalifah Abdul Hakim in the meantime describes Rumi as the greatest poetical genius of all time:

> Jalaluddin Rumi is the greatest mystical poet of Islam. It can be said without fear of contradiction that in the entire range of mystical literature of the whole world there is none to equal him either in depth or in comprehension and extent. There have been mystics both in the East and the West whose experiences in the realm of the spirit may have equalled the spiritual perceptions of Rumi, but their emotional or intuitional side was not matched by an equally clear and powerful intellect. Rumi's uniqueness lies in the fact that in him reason is wedded to a wide and deep religious experience. The Muslim world has honoured him with the title of *Maulawí Ma'nawí* (the Doctor of Meaning), a religious scholar who is capable of philosophising, of penetrating into the meaning of physical and spiritual phenomena, and lifting the veil of appearance to peep into the reality behind them. When he argues he is a match for a superb dialectician of the stature of a Socrates or a Plato (1966, 820).

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Rumi's greatness was not merely because of his thought and genius, but also because of his personality. He was simple, sincere, selfless and respectful. He was considerate even towards his enemies. Kings were attracted to him because of his living and moving faith. Nothing could tempt or seduce him from it. To his followers, he was an heir to the spiritual wealth bequeathed to humanity by the glorious line of great prophets from Abraham to Muhammad. One would find in him the sturdy ethics of the Israelite prophets, the dynamic view of life of Islam and the all-pervading love of Jesus (Abdul Hakim 1966, 820).

Rumi and Ecumenical Phenomenology

Consistency is not always the case in Rumi's system of thought. But what lends his ideas an overall appearance of unity is the persistent weighing of certain solution for certain problems. First, there is the notion of what William Chittick calls the kaleidoscopic image of God, man, the world and the interrelationship of these three realities (1983, 7). Scholars and specialists in the study of Rumi have emphasised this aspect of thinking. I have mentioned this in the introduction of this thesis. To this, I would like to add that this interrelationship must not be explained in isolation from the notion of the spiritual journey toward the One, the origin of all that exists in this world.

Second, there is the notion of the natural affinity between all religious traditions in terms of their inner meaning. In his spiritual teaching, Rumi shows the interest in this praxis of inner natural affinity, and gave a highly sensitive appreciation and empathy for the affinity between various religious traditions. On the other hand, Rumi continually shows his regret of the externally legalistic and theological explanations of religion, and maintains that the essence of religion is not to be found in the external aspect of religion, but in its internal essence.

Third, there is the notion of the superiority of Islam over other religions. For Rumi, Islam is superior though his position on the superiority of Islam ought not to be construed as, in principle, merely a judgement that proceeds from criteria inherent in his own religious thought. Nor should Rumi's position be seen simply as that of a Muslim apologist for whom recognition of the legitimacy of other religions is merely a preliminary to the recognition of the superiority of Islam. Alternatively, although for Rumi Islam remains superior, this position does not seem to imply that other religions are invalid. Rather it implies that other religions are valid if understood purely from the inner aspect of

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religious reality. The fact is that Rumi was firmly committed to the faith of Islam, but at the same time he is also fully aware of the claims made by other people about the exclusive truth that their religion asserts. That is why he likes to say that: "I am neither Muslim, nor Christian, nor a Jew" to accommodate the truth-claims of other religions. Other religions too embody some kind of truth, at least when they are seen from the inner fruit of religion:

> What is skin but multi-coloured words
> reflections upon a colourless pool.
> Words are like rinds and meanings the kernels.
> Words are like forms and meanings their spirits.
> The skin a faulty meaning can conceal
> or jealously guard good meaning from view (1381/I, 91-2).
> The conflicts among men stem from names
> Trace back the meaning and achieve accord (1381/II, 600).

Although the solutions Rumi offered on the issue of the natural affinity between religions might seem bewildering, his concern for the validity of religion in general and his quest for the criterion of religious truth remain constant. This criterion is love, to which we will turn latter at the end of this chapter. The love of God transcends form and creed, ritual and dogma as God Himself –claims Rumi- has put it thus:

> I have given everyone a character
> I have given each a terminology (1381/II, 452)
> Hindus praise me in the terms of India
> and the Sindis praise in the terms of Sind
> I am not made pure by their Magnificats
> It is they who become pure and precious
> We do not look to language or to words
> We look inside to find intent and rapture (1381/II, 452).

Rumi adds:

> Every prophet, every saint has his path
> but as they return to God, all are one (1381/I, 249).
> Love's folk live beyond religious borders
> The community and creed of lovers: God (1381/II, 453).

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These are of course in sharp contrast to the legalistic and theological perspectives about religion. The advocates of religious externality in their failure to recognise the real value of religion gave it one-sided interpretation. Indeed, there are some representatives of religious externality with whom Rumi had a close bond and dear attachment, such as al-Qushairí, al-Shírází and al-Ghazzálí to mention just view. For example, in his *Fíhi má Fíhi* Rumi praises the works of al-Ghazzálí especially his *Kitáb al-Wasít al-Muhít bi áthár al-Básit*, and the works of al-Shírází especially his *Tanbíh fí al-Furú'*. Rumi recognised that these two works have a special power to guide man towards the right path (1994, 117). Rumi's attachment especially to al-Ghazzálí, may furthermore be illustrated by the fact that a great number of stories in the Mathnawí are taken from *Ihyá 'Ulúm al-Dín* (Lewisohn 2000, 23). Also, Rumi's explanation of the Divine Names is, in some way, similar to that of al-Ghazzálí's discussion in the Maqsad *al-Aqsá*. And in his attack against philosophy, Rumi apparently follows the logic of al-Ghazzálí in his *al-Munqidh min al-dholál*. Al-Ghazzálí's pronouncement that "nothing in logic is relevant to religion by way of denial or affirmation", paraphrased itself repeatedly in Rumi's verses. But again, this attachment should not be taken as fully suggesting that Rumi was under any sort of influence from, and was in agreement with al-Ghazzálí. It is true that Rumi studied the whole bulk of Arabic literature including al-Ghazzálí's *Ihyá* and many other works, which have enriched his vocabulary and his imagery. But as he himself says, "I read the story of the lovers day and night. Now I have become a story in my love for you" (1374, 597).

Rumi has studied all the sciences of his time including theology and philosophy. Schimmel reckons that having studied these sciences, Rumi was not completely anti-intellectualistic (1993, 296). Logically, Rumi would praise these kinds of science as useful as long as they serve religion. But he is afraid that intensive theological and intellectual activity without religious background is dangerous for man's spiritual progress. The wisdom of this world is good only for augmenting thought and false imaginations, whereas religious wisdom flies beyond the spheres. So long as religious science remains at the surface and is concerned exclusively with legal problems and theological as well as philosophical disputations, it is not only superfluous but dangerous. A person who indulges in false scholarly interpretation of the Divine Word, relying upon his intellect but without religion, "is comparable to a fly; his imagination is like donkey's urine, his conception like straw" (1381/I, 91).

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Rumi is never tired of telling people that -on the basis of a prophetic tradition- most of the inhabitants of Paradise are the unintelligent. The unintelligent here being those who do not concern themselves with the outward sciences, but are not ignorant of religious duties. Some Sufi authorities interpret the word unintelligent here to mean the perfection of human reason when God reveals Himself to man, so that the recipient of this grace looses his rational faculties, being overwhelmed by this wonderful light (Schimmel 1993, 297). Just as a five-year-old child will not faint at the sight of a beautiful beloved, but the grown up man will forget everything in the contemplation of his friend's beauty.

Thus, Rumi is disappointed with the outward scholars who hold the traditional science; science which only relates from hearsay is, if brought into the presence of the divinely inspired master, like performing the ablution with sand instead of running water, i.e. it is not only unnecessary but prohibited by law. "Why use dry sand when the water of life, manifested in the spiritual guide, is available" (1381/IV, 1113).

Rumi's main targets in his disappointment are the philosophers as we have tried to show in the previous chapter. Apart from Ibn Sina whom Rumi often calls the "little philosopher" (1374, 21), Rumi also shows his disappointment against a philosopher whom he nicknames Bu 'Alá, who might –although it cannot be established for sure- refer to Abú al-'Alá al-Ma'arrí. Rumi refers to him as in the "sleep of heedlessness".

Besides Ibn Sina and Bu 'Alá, Rumi also curbs Fakhruddín al-Rází, about whom he heard much from his father Bahá Walad. As a child, Rumi used to listen to his father denouncing al-Rází, and when he grew up he followed his father in slamming and denouncing him. "If dialectics alone could reveal the secrets of the spirit", says Rumi, "al-Rází would have certainly reached them, but the feet of the dialectician are wooden and the wooden feet are most shaky". He adds that the philosopher "walks into the realm of religion on the wooden legs". He also says that:

> Our words are true coin, the words of others are artificial...the artificial is secondary to the true. True coin is like a man's leg, whereas the artificial is like a wooden form in the shape of a human leg. The wooden leg has been "stolen" from the original leg: its measure has been taken from the real one (1994, 152).

Rumi is certainly aware of al-Rází's thought and is perhaps in

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agreement with us that al-Rází is a proponent of what we refer to in the second chapter as the naked determinism.

Rumi also directs his verdict against those whom he suspects as having pretended to be Sufis while they are not. These people, describes Rumi, "claim to have a high spiritual rank. They shave their heads and necks, as if they were gourds. They confuse the poor visitor with highfalutin talk about gnosis and poverty so that he thinks his companion must be a veritable Junaid or another of the great masters of the Path. In fact, such people show three qualities, which are not found in a true Sufi: they talk too much, like a bell; they eat more than twenty people, and they sleep like the Seven Sleepers".[1]

Rumi continued to have this kind of repugnant attitude against the philosophers throughout his life. Already at the age of thirty-four, he saw it necessary to reform the religion from the "artificial" explanation of religion and show the true meaning that he himself had seen. His youth was devoted to an explanation of this true meaning against what he would consider as the scholastic ingenuity of those who had made a virtue of it by colourfully concealing their attempt in the garb of theological and philosophical activity.

Rumi is a Sufi. His tradition, Sufism, grasps the object of religion by the different means than the conceptual and theological thinking, viz. by the "ideograms" of vision, inspiration and divine frenzy. For Rumi, religion must be grounded in this inward aspect, for it is the pivotal point of religion. It is where religion can be kept intact, unimpaired and unobstructed from the superfluous interpretation and unreliable explanation. Rumi would therefore believe that in Sufism the survival of the true meaning of Islam is insured, for it preserves what in the outward tradition came to be overlooked. In it, the spirit of "the true coin" is seen as generally astir and alive.

Like other Sufis before and after him, Rumi held that the true meaning or significance of religious praxis must be discovered and revealed beyond the outward surface (*súrah*). The veil of appearance must be lifted and the reality behind them be looked at. (This notion of súrah and its pair ma'ná have been a familiar item of discussion among the scholars of Sufism in general and of Rumi in particular, that any accounts or intricacies of Sufi thought naturally contain references to this conception). The spirit of Rumi's thought concerning such idea as ecumenism may –among others- be excavated from this simple yet profound idea.

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1 Cited from Schimmel's *The Triumphal Sun*, pp. 298-9

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Generally, there have been many interpretations on Rumi and his thinking. I would like however, to maintain that the vast and variegated interpretations on him have acknowledged that the man is temperamentally a non-conformist who would see form as secondary in comparison to which meaning is the primary. Meaning suggests the real experiential comprehension achieved through self-discipline and purity, not through easy or superficial or worldly understanding. Rumi continuously urges his readers to discard the husk and taste the inner fruit of religion.

For Rumi, in this inner aspect of religion lies the fundamental unity of all spiritual religions despite their apparent contradictory dogmas. By all account, Rumi's thought is dynamic wherein diversities of life are harmonised and apparent contradictions transcended by creative unity. For him religion is not merely to be moulded into a dogma, but into a transcendental and universal body of communality. Hence, the goal of Rumi's thought is to transcend the dogmatised religion and to –as John Moyne puts it- extend the dogma into an ecumenical parity of all religions (1998, 25).

What I think to be the ecumenism of Rumi is closely related to these following premises around which much of Rumi's thought on a variety of issues evolve:

First: the belief that there is between God and man a connection. Rumi explains: "and the God-man relationship is a case where the negation is affirmation of its existence necessarily" (1994, 167). Man, due to him being originated from God is related to God and is in constant journey to discover and return to this origin. This connection makes some form of understanding of God by man possible through His manifestation. Says Rumi, "when God makes a person to know himself, through the astrolabe of that person's own being he can witness the manifestation of God and His unqualified beauty moment by moment and glimmer by glimmer. That beauty is never absent from his mirror" (1994, 11).

The fact that knowledge of God is possible through the knowledge of the self is indicative that there is between man and God a connection. Referring to the knowledge of God attained through the knowledge of the self, another Sufi named Shihábuddín Yahyá Suhrawardí explains, "He who comes to know of himself, inasmuch as his ability allows, attains knowledge of God".[2]

I have indicated in the introduction of this thesis that it is because of this doctrine of God and His relationship to man that Rumi went

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[2] See Mehdi Amin Razavi's *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, p.74

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beyond the tolerance of his time, and lifted Islam above any parochial conception by revealing its inner relation to the great and universal spiritual movements. Certainly, this idea of God-man relationship echoes the vision of *tashbih*, the implication of which on the understanding of the nature of religion has been explained in the previous chapter.

Second: closely related to the first point, the ecumenism of Rumi is connected to his belief that there is in human a universal and "inherent" capacity to experience the divine. I say "inherent" to distinguish this from the kind of knowledge we described in the first point. What we refer to in the first point is a kind of knowledge, which may be called knowledge of the self, crucial to the attainment of the knowledge of God. It is attainable by anyone only through spiritual training. In the second point we refer to a kind of knowledge, which may be called knowledge of innate ideas (*fitrah*). This kind of knowledge exists within every human a *priori*, and serves as the foundation for various modes of cognition. In this regard, all humans irrespective of their religious background have the inherent capacity to know God. Says Rumi:

> Now let us consider humans, inwardly, in the depths of their hearts, they all love God, search for Him and pray to Him. All their hopes are in Him, and they acknowledge no one as omnipotent or in absolute dominion except Him (1994, 102). Love for the Creator is inherent in all people –Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians- all creatures. How could anyone not love his Maker (1994, 216).

By narrating a story, Rumi also says:

> We were speaking one day to a group that included some infidels. And during our talk they were weeping and going into ecstatic states. "What do they understand? What do they know?" Someone asked. "Not one out of a thousand Muslims can understand this kind of talk. What have these people understood that they weep so?" It is not necessary for them to understand the words. What they understand is the basis of the words. After all, everyone acknowledge the oneness of God and that He is the Creator and Sustainer, that He controls everything, that everything will return to Him, and that either eternal

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> punishment or forgiveness emanate from Him. When they hear words that are descriptive of God they are struck with a commotion, yearning, and desire because their objects of desire and search are made manifest in these words. Although the way may differ, the goal is one. Don't you see that there are many roads to Ka'bah (1994, 101).

The vision of the knowledge of *fitrah* allows us to categorise Rumi as belonging to the vision of *tashbih*, which echoes once again the ecumenical nature of Islam.

Third: Rumi's ecumenism is related to his belief that all faiths when seen from an inner perspective generally reveal the same character and display the same universe. "Prayer," says Rumi, "differs according to religion, but faith does not change by religion. Its states, its focus, and so forth are immutable" (1994, 33).

In contrast to most of non-mystical scholars' implicit assertion that Islam is the sole and absolute bearer of religious truth, Rumi's primary concern in his ecumenism is to establish the fact that other religions also bear some sort of truth. Rumi explains:

> God's treasure houses are many, and God's knowledge is vast (1994, 85). Some come from Anatolia, some from Syria, some from Persia, some from China, some across the sea from India via the Yemen. If you consider the ways people take, you will see a great variety. If however, you consider the goal, you will see that all are in accord and inner agreement on the Ka'bah. Inwardly there is a connection, a love and affection, with the Ka'bah, where there is no room for dispute. That attachment is neither infidelity nor faith (1994, 101).

Rumi is therefore at one with following the vision of *tashbih* as opposed to *tanzih*. As we have explained, Rumi is against the theological doctrine with its unmitigated assertion that God is solely incomparable. Rumi might be described as an "Islamic pietistic"; Islamic because he is committed to his religion, and pietistic because he is a genuine believer in the universal truth of all religions.

Part of Rumi's ecumenism is to leave his window open in all

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directions, so that both the "insiders" and the "outsiders" may easily and comfortably see each other. Rumi's window is the one that God's letter, i.e. the inspiration can come through. A house without such a window is like hell. The real meaning of religion, the sole content of the prophetic and mystical teaching, is that man should open this window of the soul. Rumi explains:

> The window of my soul is opened, and from the purity (of the Unseen World) the Book of God comes (to me) without intermediary. The Book and the rain (of Divine Grace) and the Light are falling through my window into my house from my (real and original) source. The house that is without window is Hell: to make a window, O servant (of God) is the foundation of the (true) religion (1381/III, 804).

Only by opening the window one can gain the real vision of the true religion and therefore, participate in the great universal religion. The individual human soul cannot understand this universal religion as long as his soul-principle is closed. "Only after opening the window and partaking of the Divine Soul will it feel that the faithful, though separated by the barriers of bodily existence, are one in soul, vibrating in a single harmony" (Rumi 1374, 390).

Form and Meaning

In Rumi's phenomenological way of thinking everything is viewed as consisting of both form and meaning. This distinction is the mainstay of Rumi's teaching. Form is the outward appearance of thing, while meaning is its inward essence.

First of all, Rumi recognises that form and meaning constitute the warp and woof of things, each is important in its own way. They are inextricably connected: form derives from meaning, and meaning manifests itself as form. The two are aspects of a single reality. Universal thing such as religion must also be seen as a composite of both form and meaning. The loss of the multidimensional character of religion and its reduction to a single level will cause the narrowing of religion in such a manner that its more profound dimension, namely meaning, will at the end itself be castigated. Says Rumi:

> Just as a thing without substance cannot be effected it

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> cannot be effected without form either. It is like a seed: if you sow it without its shell it will not sprout, but when you plant it in the ground along with its shell it will sprout into a great tree (1994, 20). The Prophet was asked whether or not one in human form could derive benefit from unqualifiable concepts. He replied, here are the sky and the earth; as you see their form you derive benefit through it from the universal concept (1994, 40).

The form of religion is significant although it is impermanent.Religion speaks to man through form such as words and physical signs in the cosmos. The message of religion is not only written in the "Protected Table" (*LauhMahfúdh*) but also on the pages of the Book and within the grand phenomena of natural forms. Form is inseparable from religion, and like cosmos, it is in a constant need of form as its external manifestation.

So, it is through form that religion forges and forms an ambience in which its truths are reflected outwardly. Through form men breathe and live in the universe of meaning in conformity with the reality of religion. That is why, in nearly every case of which we have a historical record, almost all religion created and formalised its outward form by elaborating its laws, theologies and philosophies. In order to breathe and function in a world, religion must remould the world not only mentally, spiritually and intellectually, but also formally. And since most human beings are much more receptive to outward forms than to inward ideas, and outward forms often leave the deepest effect upon the human soul even beyond the material plane, it is necessary for religion to have a form. This is especially true for Islam, which is known to have been a complete religion both in its form and meaning.

The role of form in the forging of a particular mentality and the creation of an atmosphere in which attainment of the most profound metaphysical truths is made possible, is fundamental to the understanding of religion both in its outer and inner dimensions. From an Islamic perspective, form is seen as a veil that both hides and reveals the most profound metaphysical truths (Nasr 1989, 189-214). Within Islam, there are always people who have gone beyond form. But this does not mean that form does not exist, or must be cast aside and destroyed. Those who have eschewed forms have been certain types of people who have transcended themselves beyond form to discern meaning and realised the supraformal realities. Those, who "having broken the nutshell and eaten the nut inside, cast the shell aside", as SH Nasr explains

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it borrowing a Sufi saying (1989, 256). But obviously one cannot throw away a shell that one does not even possess. "To go beyond forms is one thing and to fall below them is another", explains Nasr again (1989, 256). To pierce beyond the phenomenal surface to the noumenal reality hence to see God through forms and not forms as veil is one thing and to reject forms entirely is another. Inner dimension of Islam is concerned with the supraformal Essence but is perfectly aware of the vital significance of forms in the attainment of the knowledge of that Essence. This knowledge even when speaking of the Supreme Reality above all forms does so in a chant, which is in conformity with the laws of cosmic harmony and in a language which in itself is a form. That is why the possessor of such knowledge in its realised aspect is the first person to confirm the significance of forms and the relation of this form to the truth and meaning, for form reflects the truth and meaning and emanates their presence. Indeed, the form perceived by this type of knowledge depicts metaphysical truth, provides a platform which can increase the grasp of the Divine and makes possible the understanding of meaning. This type of form is an expression of a realized knowledge leading to the awareness of meaning, for it is a theatre wherein are reflected the Divine Names and Qualities.

From another point of view, form is significant because in various religions revelation descends not only into the mind and soul of the prophet but also into his physical body. In Islam for example, the Archangel Jibríl reveals himself to the prophet Muhammad sometime as a Holy Spirit (*al-Rúh al-Amín*)[3] descending upon his heart, and sometime as a body appearing to him as a man.[4] In Christianity, Christ is understood both as form and meaning. He –in the Christian perspective- is God in the human form, or –in the Islamic perspective- the "Word", hence the meaning. But he is also human, hence form.

All this points to the fact, fundamental for the understanding of religion, that form is significant and that it is the direct reflection of the highest level, which is the spiritual world. That is why the face of the earthly beloved is the perfect mirror wherein is reflected the face of the Beloved who is above all form. It is also why an Arabic calligraphy, which reads Allah or Muhammad, can become the locus of Divine Presence and support for the attainment of awareness of the formless. No doubt that an Arabic art is characterised with a sacred aura, which may manifest itself

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3 God says, "The Holy Spirit descended upon your heart with it (revelation) so that you may be (one) of the warners" (Qur'an 26/192-3).

4 In a *hadith* narrated by Bukhárí, the Prophet was asked as to how revelation is revealed to him. He answered that sometime when revelation is revealed, the Archangel would appear to him as a man and talk to him, then he (the prophet) would understand that he is the Archangel (Asqólání n.d/I, 268).

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outwardly cloaked in the dress of beauty which attracts the sensibility of even those who are not able to understand the tenet of Islam intellectually and provides an indispensable spiritual climate.

The point is that form is indeed a branch, and meaning is its principal. But the principal is only attainable through the branch. Rumi illustrates this by narrating the following story:

> An Arabic-speaking poet appeared before a king who not only was a Turk but did not even know Persian. The poet had composed an externally ornate poem for him in Arabic. When the king mounted his throne with all his courtiers, princes, and ministers in the places, the poet rose and began to recite his poem. In the part of the poem that was to evoke admiration, the king nodded his head. In the part that was to evoke astonishment, he stared wildly. And in the part that was to evoke humility, he paid rapt attention. The courtiers, bewildered, said, "Our king never knew a word of Arabic. How can it be that he nods his head at the proper place, unless he can actually understand Arabic and has concealed it from us all these years? If we have said impolite things in Arabic, woe unto us". Now the king had a slave boy who was highly privileged. The courtiers went to him and gave him a horse, a camel, and some money and promised him as much again if he would find out whether or not the king knew Arabic or, if he didn't, how he came to nod his head at the proper place. Was it a miracle or inspiration? One day the slave found an opportune moment: while the king was on a hunt and, having bagged much game, and was in good spirit, he asked. The king laughed and said: "By God, I don't know Arabic. As for my nodding my head and expressing approval, it was obvious what his intent was in that poem. Therefore I nodded and expressed approval. It was obvious that the "principal" thing was intended (1994, 23-4).

Religion is like human, which has body and spirit. Human reflects the Divine Form and the whole archetypal world directly and inversely according to the principal of inverse analogy. When human is particularly purified and

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dressed in the garment of spiritual virtues he represents the highest kind of beauty in this world, reflecting directly the Divine Beauty.

Form is also important because it is the principal order of God's creation. But because creation must be dressed in the garment of spiritual virtues to reveal its innermost beauty, human must therefore internalise the external aspect of God's creation. This internalisation is the task of human as SH Nasr tries to explain:

> In the principal order God creates by externalising. His "artistic" activity is the fashioning of His own "image" or "form". On the human plane this relation is reversed in that man's "artistic" activity in the traditional sense involves not the fashioning of an image in the cosmogonic sense but a return to his own essence in conformity with the nature of the state of being in which he lives. Therefore the "art" of God implies an externalisation and the art of man an internalisation. God fashions what God makes and man is fashioned by what man makes. And since this process implies a return to man's own essence, it is inalienably related to spiritual realization and the attainment of knowledge (1989, 259).

Corollary to the importance of form is the existing innate rapport between it and its inward meaning. This rapport is there because form is a vehicle for the attainment of meaning, and the channel to it. Therefore, in Hindu tradition *máya* is perceived as both relativity – that is illusion- and creativity. It is both the supreme veil and also the supreme theophany (*tajalli*), which at once veils and reveals (Nasr 1989, 141).

In its aspect as an illusion, *máya* is the cause for the impossibility of encompassing Reality. In thought, *máya* would cause the thought to be profane belonging to the realm of relativity, which cannot be used to perceive the Absolute. Human thought clothed in the universe of *máya* cannot become absolutely conformable to the Real. Moreover, *máya* is the source of all duality causing the distinction between the Essence and the Qualities, subject and object on a principal level.

In its aspect as creativity, *máya* is the supreme theophany, which reveals the qualities of the One, *Átmán*, particularly for the one who has purified his soul and dressed it in the garment of spiritual virtues. To reach the One, one has to be pure like clear water in order for the moon and the stars to remain reflected in it. Rumi advises:

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> Consider creation as pure and crystalline water in which is reflected the Beauty of the Possessor of Majesty. Although the water of this stream continues to flow the image of the moon and the stars remain reflected in it.[3]

Sufism teaches that man must not see form one-sidedly as a veil. He must also see it as a theophany. Form is a veil that reveals. To reach the Formless man needs form and veil. The miracle of natural form for example, lies in its power to aid man to transcend form itself. Natural forms are present not only to remind man of the greatness of God, but also serve as a support for man to realise that which is beyond all forms. To denigrate forms is to misunderstand the significance of the formless Essence. Explains Rumi:

> God has created these "veils" for good purpose. If He showed His beauty without a veil, we would not be able to bear it or benefit from it because we are benefited and strengthened indirectly. You see the sun? In its light we come and go; we see and we are able to distinguish good from bad. In it we warm ourselves. Because of it, trees and gardens bear fruit...If this same sun, which is so beneficial indirectly, were to come closer, not only would it give no benefit but it would cause the whole world and everything in it to burn up and perish (1994, 36-7).

Man can experience the Ultimate Reality through form not as transcendent and beyond but as here and now, for form can unveil its own inner meaning and becomes eventually the immediate symbol, the reflection of the noumenal world of God. A man who has realised the spiritual virtues, sees a particular form as reflecting God and His beauty. Rumi explains:

> To the saints God appears in a particular, sensible form that can be seen with the eye, like that of lion, a tiger, or fire. It is apparent to the saint that the lion or tiger's form he is seeing is not of this world but rather an "ideal" form, one that has been give shape. It is God revealing Himself

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3 Cited from SH Nasr's *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p. 271

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> in a form of exquisite beauty. Gardens, camels, houris, mansions, food and drink, robes of honor, cities, houses and various wonders are the same. The saint knows that none of these is of this world, but God has made them visible by garbing them in form (1994, 46).

For the saint, explains SH Nasr, a particular tree is not only a symbol of the grade of being, which he has come to know through his intelligence and the science of symbolism. It is also a tree of paradise conveying a presence and grace of a heavenly nature (1989, 201).

This immediate experience is not only inseparable from religion, but also provides that immediate religious experience which can increase the grasp of the Divine and makes possible the understanding of meaning through form. Thus form may also be an expression of realised knowledge leading to the awareness of meaning.

Divine Qualities are too hidden to be known, therefore they must be externalised through the medium of factual form. Says Rumi:

> God's attributes are hidden. They do not become apparent except through some internal or external medium such as speech, discord, war, or peace...They are like water in the sea: water does not come out of the sea except through the medium of clouds, and it does not become apparent except through waves. A wave is a "fermentation" from within you that becomes visible without an internal medium. So long as the sea is still, you do not see anything (1994, 65).

In the philosophy of Aristotle, form is recognised as essential and not simply as accidental. We have explained in the third chapter that according to the philosophy of Aristotle, the form of a thing is the sum total of its essential and universalisable qualities, which constitutes its definition. The matter in each thing is that which has the potentiality of receiving these qualities –the form- and by which the form becomes an individual existent. An object therefore, is composed of form and matter in such a way that the form corresponds to that which is actual and matter to what is potential in the object in question. Form is that by which an object is what it is. Form is not accidental to the object but determines its very reality. It is in fact the essence of the object which the

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more metaphysical Neo-platonic commentators of Aristotle interpreted as the image or reflection of the essence rather than the essence itself; the essence having belonged to the archetypal world. In any case, form has an ontological reality and participates in the total economy of the cosmos according to strict laws because it is not accidental but essential.

Although Rumi would probably differ with the Aristotelians concerning the essential nature of form, he nonetheless shares their view that form does have an ontological significance.

Like an object, religion must also have a form. Like all forms, the form of religion leads –it goes without saying- to the world of the formless. Even the material form, which constitutes the lowest level of existence, symbolises and ultimately leads to the archetypal essence, and may become itself a higher form. Rumi explains:

> True lovers sacrifice themselves to this Face and seek nothing in return. The rests are like cattle; yet although they are mere cattle, they are deserving of favour. Though they are only in the stable, they are acceptable to the stable-maker. If He wishes, He can move them from this stable to His private pen, just as in the beginning He brought them from non-existence into being, then from the "pen" of being into the state of minerality, and from the pen of minerality into the state of vegetation, and from the state of vegetation into the state of animality, and from animality into the state humanity, and from humanity into the state of angelicity, and so forth ad infinitum (1994, 21).

There is thus a level of existence. Rumi does not only speak of the distinction between the Existence and the non-existence, but also between the grades of cosmic existence. In Rumi's thinking, all forms are indeed of the same origin except that they are of different level of existence. Material form, like any other higher forms, is inseparable from Reality and is related to the inner dimension of the Real as such. It also reflects the absoluteness of the Absolute in its regularity and order, infinity in its sense of inwardness and mystery. It reflects the perfection and goodness of the Source, the harmony and order, which are also reflected in the cosmos.

Among all forms however, religious form is the most important form because it is invested with the transforming power of the

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Divine through the revelation. It therefore is capable of enabling and ennobling man to penetrate the world beyond forms, and to gain a vision of both the outer world and his own soul. Religious rituals, which some Sufis regard as form such as prayer and fasting, are undoubtedly capable of distancing one from evil and delinquency, opening up for him the gate of the Pure, and transcending him from within into the inner dimension of all forms.

There is another reason why form is important. And that is that form is of divine origin. This type of thinking is found not only in a certain circle of Islamic thought, but also in the "Western" and non-Islamic religious thought. For Plato and Plotinus for example, form as the reflection of the world of paradeigma, the invisible model or exemplar (Nasr 1989, 263). Likewise, for the Eastern religions of ancient China and India, form is originated from the supraindividual source belonging to the level of reality, which Platonism identified with the world of ideas. Form is thus held to have a "celestial" origin.

Within the religion of Islam, this type of thinking is also found in the philosophy of Ibn Sina. In the previous chapter we have dealt with Ibn Sina's theory of emanation. This theory, if understood within the framework of our investigation, contains an understanding that form is originated from the celestial world.

Now, apart from recognising its significance, Rumi would encourage people to go beyond form and discern meaning, and caution that falling below the level of form is foolish. Form can be a crypt above which man must transform himself and undertake a journey to reach the level beyond it. Form is a shadow, and although it is the grace of God and His beauty, man must not be content with this small amount. Rumi says:

> One therefore must pass beyond these pleasures and delights which only shadows and reflections of the Real. One should not become content with this small amount, which, although is of God's grace and a shadow of His beauty, it is still not permanent. It is permanent in relation to God but not in relation to man. It is like a ray of sun shining into a house. Even though it is a ray of sunlight, it is still attached to the sun. And when the sun sets its light will cease (1994, 62). If men were simply form without meaning, Muhammad and Abú Jahl would be no difference (1381/I, 85).

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Sufism therefore, while affirming the significance of form on its own level, seeks to provide meaning. It is concerned with providing man with a map, which would orient and guide him to transcend himself beyond form to the world of meaning. Man lives in the world of forms, but instead of being a captive of form, he must make use of form in order to direct him to the vision of meaning. Meaning is the principal, and form is merely the branch.

In the philosophy of Ibn Sina, meaning would be that element in the object, which cannot be perceived by the physical senses, but only by some sort of perceiving faculty of the mind called *quwwahqudsiyyah* or *bâtinah*. In his philosophy furthermore, meaning has an *intentiones universales* put there by God, and forms the material for the thinking mind.

In the theological discourse, the rhetorical meaning of meaning refers to the non-physical traits of any expression (that is to say: its tenor) and the inner content of reality. In this respect, form is synonym to *lafz* (word), while meaning to the world of immateriality, as T. Izutsu tries to explain succinctly:

> The word belongs in the world of material and sensible things (*mulk*) while the meaning properly is of the world of immateriality (*malakût*). Compared with the vast field of meaning that lies behind each word, the latter is nothing more than an insignificant, tiny point. The word is but a narrow gate through which the human mind steps into a boundless domain of meaning. Moreover, the meaning is something that has, so to speak, its own life. It has no fixity. Quite independently of the word, which indicates it, the meaning develops as it were, of its own accord with amazing flexibility in accordance with the degree of depth of man's experience and consciousness....one is here required to use the given word as a springboard by which to dive into the depth of the meaning. As long as one remains trying to understand the meaning from the word, one can never hope to obtain it (1970, 158-9).

According to the Sufis, meaning is transcendental, understood only when seen in vision (*shuhûd*) or through theophany. In most of spiritual religions, meaning is placed at the heart of their perspective, and considered to be the key to deliverance with which man can discern

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between *Átmán* and *máya*. Spiritual religions address themselves to that element in religion to be pursued and realized; an element that pierces the veils of *máya*.

Now, at the root of the dichotomy between form and meaning, is the dichotomy between two kinds of knowledge; namely outward knowledge and inward knowledge.Rumi calls these two kinds of knowledge in different names, but the most popular ones are those of "giving" knowledge and "knowing" knowledge (1994, 62).

"Knowing" knowledge is the inward knowledge, and "giving" knowledge is the outward knowledge. "Knowing" is to know something beyond its physical form and penetrate its true inner essence. Rumi explains:

> Now people say that they have seen their friends and know them well. Yet however they may describe them, in truth their description is no more than if they were to tell the story of the two black cows, which was no description of the man at all. One must go beyond a man's good and bad qualities and penetrate into his essence to see what he is like substantially, for that is really "seeing" or "knowing" (1994, 39).

Elsewhere, Rumi explains that a "knower", that is someone who possesses "knowing" knowledge, is the one who knows the way and needs no sign or guidepost:

> For the sake of example, let us say there is a man going down a road. But he doesn't know whether it is the right road or the wrong road. He goes on blindly hoping that he will hear a rooster crow or see some sign of a settlement. Now, what is this man in comparison with someone who knows the way and needs no sign or guidepost? He knows what he is doing. Therefore, "knowing" is beyond everything (1994, 62).

"Knowing" is attained through the twin source of knowledge, namely revelation and intellectual intuition or spiritual realization, which –borrowing SH Nasr's words- involves the illumination of the heart and the intellect and the presence in man of knowledge of an

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immediate nature, which is tasted and experienced (1989, 130). This knowledge envisages intelligence in its rapport not only with revelation in external sense but also with the source of inner revelation, which is the centre of man, the heart.

The illuminated heart and intellect, being the instruments for gaining this knowledge, cannot but be intertwined with that knowledge which removes from things their opacity and enables them to shine forth as transparent mirror which reveals rather than veil the archetype realities. That is why this knowledge satisfies the human soul and provides it with certitude and protection from doubt. No scepticism involved in this knowledge. The rays of its splendour evaporate all shadows of doubt and the wavering of the uncertain mind. This knowledge bestows upon the human intellect the highest gift, which is certitude. It also melts the hardness of the human soul and brings about the taste of that union with the Real, which is the fruit of this knowledge.

This knowledge is identified with the Universal Intellect and is beyond the limitations of discursive knowledge and the rational thought, for these are the working of the partial intellect. This knowledge is true (*haqiqi*) and realised (*tahqiqi*) for it derives directly from the Source of all knowledge. It is not the fruit of human reasoning speculating upon the content of an inspiration or a spiritual experience. It is contained in the spiritual experience, which issues from the Bestower of all principal knowledge. It differs from the outward knowledge in its nature. It is knowledge essentially spiritual, accessible only in the cadre of Sufism.

Rumi advises that man transcends himself from merely a rational animal into a being endowed with "knowing" knowledge centred upon the Absolute. To be human, in the words of SH Nasr, is to know and also to transcend oneself (1989, 4). And to know means ultimately to know the Absolute, who is at once the source of the objective world and the inner self. To have knowledge is to have the food for not only man's animality but also for his essential part. Says Rumi:

> Man is called a rational animal; therefore he is two things. What feeds his animality in this world is passion and desire, but the food for his essential part is knowledge, wisdom and the vision of God. Man's animal nature avoids the Real, and his human nature flies from this world (1994, 59).

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The Real, which resides at the centre of every man, is the centre and root of human knowledge since ultimately knowledge of the Real is the real knowledge. The truth descends upon human heart, says SH Nasr borrowing a Sufi saying, like an eagle landing upon a mountaintop (1989, 131). This process of landing is however, not the result of man's mere mental faculty or intellectual exercise, but of his spiritual experience and inner purification. Of course not everyone is capable of spiritual realisation. But for those who have achieved such realisation there is the means to attain a knowledge that lies at the heart of that objective revelation which constitutes religion and the centre of man's being. The same people would be able to discover the principal truth, which is the very root and substance of all religions.

What Rumi designated as "knowing" knowledge is none other than Sufism if this knowledge is understood as the ultimate science of the Real. From a purely Sufi point of view, Sufism is the science of the Real or, more specifically, the knowledge by means of which man is able to distinguish between the Real and the illusory and to know things in their essence as they are *ens a se*. Sufism treats the Real as the Principle in contrast to which all manifestation is accident juxtaposed as form and máya.

From here, the Real is understood as opposing to *máya* conceptually. But in the second sense, the Real is both the Absolute Transcendent and the Infinite Immanent. He is both *tanzíh* and *tashbíh*, incomparable and similar, far and near. Insofar as God is tanzíh, "knowing" knowledge presupposes that the Absolute is the only reality compared to which all things are relative, accident and illusion. But insofar as God is *tashbíh*, "knowing" knowledge presupposes that *máya* is real on its own level.

The idea of *máya* as real however, allows us to understand that Sufism, while emphasizing the "knowing" knowledge as the principal, recognizes the "giving" knowledge as important. This is one of the positions that Rumi upholds. He explains:

> An ascetic must perform asceticism with knowledge. Asceticism without knowledge is absurd. What is asceticism? It means to turn away from this world and to attend to acts of piety and the next world. It is also necessary to know this world with all its ugliness and impermanence and likewise to know the grace, permanence, and eternality of the next world... Asceticism is thus impossible without knowledge, and an ascetic is of necessity a "knower" also (1994, 49).

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The word knowledge mentioned in that verse is clearly meant to be the knowledge of this world, namely, "giving" knowledge, otherwise its mention after the word asceticism, which is meant to be "knowing" knowledge, would be an absurd repetition.

However, Rumi did sometime appear to be confusing; he often issues conflicting statements by sometimes recognizing the outward knowledge as important, and sometimes rejecting it altogether. Thus, he thinks of the rational knowledge to be futile and hopeless, and likens those who seek to discover God by means of such knowledge as an ass or as the stomachs of animals that are always seeking for husks. This we have explained in the third chapter.

Ideally, one should pursue knowledge that envisages reality both in its external sense and inner meaning. "Giving" knowledge identified as the external aspect of revelation is not in itself negative; revelation in its fullness implies the correct functioning of human intelligence in pursuing analytical and discursive knowledge, and human heart in attaining inner spiritual intuition. The two knowledge must function together in order to make possible the reception, crystallisation, formulation, and finally communication of the truth, borrowing SH Nasr's expression (1989, 151). "Knowing" must be assimilated in "giving", so that the light received by the heart can be communicated and transmitted. The nature of the content of the intuition received by the heart has to give of itself in order for it to shine forth. It has to be exteriorised, in order to be interiorised. The person who has realized both knowledge is the best witness to the bond between outer and inner reality of revelation. And such a person would be the embodiment of revelation in its two-dimensioned aspect. Realising "giving" knowledge enables man to become a prince, attaining "knowing" knowledge enables him to become a king, and realising the two enables him to become the fountain of knowledge and grace, the prototype of all forms of beauty and love.

Rumi himself was student of "giving" knowledge, before he attained "knowing" knowledge. The history of his life shows that before he concerns himself with the world of *numen ineffabile* he devoted assiduous and serious study of the *ratio aeterna*.

Revelation must be expressed outwardly through the "giving" knowledge, and cannot remain only on the level of the inner illumination of the heart. That is why, the Sufis see revelation as having three components of the Law, the Way and the Truth. The Prophet said: "The

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Law is my words, the Way is my works, and the Truth is my inward states."[6] These three components are interrelated; the Law and the Way being the outward aspects of revelation, and the Truth its inner aspect. The outward aspect is the seed, and the inner aspect the fruit. Says Rumi:

> Although our hearts are ever at God's service, nonetheless we desire formal honor because form too, being inseparable from substance, has great significance. Just as a thing without substance cannot be effected, it cannot be effected without form either. It is like a seed: if you sow it without its shell it will not sprout, but when you plant it in the ground along with its shell it will sprout into a great tree. On this basis, the body too is of importance in principle, for without it neither can works be effected nor can the goal be reached (1994, 20-1).

An ideal knowledge is the one, which contains not only an agenda to guide man, illuminate him, and allow him to attain the knowledge of the Real, but also a theoretically outward exposition of reality. An ideal knowledge must not only lead one to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, that is the Truth, but also to the knowledge of the shell and the seed, that is the Law and the Way. As a theory, knowledge must be planted both as seed and shell in the heart and mind of man so as to bring fruition. Further, in order to become a plant, which finally blossoms forth and bears the fruit, a seed must be nurtured not only through spiritual practices and virtues, but also through outward religious rituals such as prayer and fasting. The Law and the Way are the seed, without which the Truth cannot blossom.

The difficulty in understanding Rumi with regard to this issue –or with any issue in that matter- is that he moves quickly from one point to another by apparently contradicting himself. However, to mediate this contradiction especially concerning the issue in hand, we may say that Rumi theoretically makes use of both the Law and the Way in the exposition of his doctrine. But in practice, his doctrine is rooted in its formal aspect of the Truth. He may speak of the Law and the Way, but his formal world is that of a spiritual realisation. In the final analysis, it is

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6 Like any other Sufi-oriented *hadith*, this prophetic saying is not to be found in the standard references of *hadith*. It is rather to be found in Sufi literatures such as Rumi's *Mathnawi* from which we cite this saying (1381/V, 1309).

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this spiritual realisation, which moulds the language of his teaching, and chooses among the vocabulary available to him those, which best serve his purpose of communicating a doctrine of a mystical nature.

It is evident that Rumi remains adamant that the Truth is the principal, while the Law and the Way are only secondary. He makes it clear that religion must be something more that just about obeying religious law, performing prayers, and believing in religious doctrine. Above and beyond all these conceptions, religion must be about achieving the goal of religion, which is the realisation of the Truth. For him, prayer is a shell whose kernel is that which is beyond prayer.

> Prayer differs according to religion, but faith does not change by religion (1994, 33). Prayer does not exist in outward form. That is just "shell" of prayer because it has a beginning and an end. Anything that has a beginning and en end is a "shell" (1994, 12).

Now, after making this modest observation on the notion of form and meaning, "knowing" and "giving" knowledge, it seems appropriate to summarize the destiny of this idea within the context of our investigation.

First, seen strictly from revelation in its fullness, the "knowing" knowledge, which seeks to realize the Truth without much consideration to the Law and the Way is a natural denial of the authentic interpretation of the Real. It is therefore a particularization of the more universal nature of revelation. Revelation is narrowed down and reduced to a mere partiality in the conceptual lens of the "knowing" knowledge. Rumi himself seems to implicitly acknowledge this when he says that the fortunate is the one that has both knowledge of "knowing" and "giving"; hence the one who has "knowing" knowledge only is not fortunate. Accordingly, "knowing" knowledge is removed from the full totality of revelation. Nonetheless, looking at the two kinds of knowledge in terms of different levels of meaning, "knowing" must be higher than "giving" on the following ground. "Knowing" knowledge, which belongs to Sufism, moves beyond religious formality to a deeper understanding of reality. We have said in the second chapter that Sufism –despite its failure to apprehend revelation in its wholeness- offers an "authentic" religious intuition closer to the true spirit of revelation. "Knowing" knowledge discovers things "as they are" in their pure "suchness" and for their own sake in their presentational immediacy.

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Second, "Knowing" knowledge, having concerned with the discovery of reality beyond its formality, is *ipso facto* knowledge of the Real. As such, it is knowledge through which religion in its profundity and eternal content is realised, and through whose immediate appraisal religion can be seen as transcending the mere forms of things. It is a kind of inner knowledge, which allows one to understand things in their true and veridical meaning; that is, things as they are. And since this knowledge envisages reality as it is in itself, it defines the nature of reality in its oneness and similarity *ens a se*. On the contrary, "giving" knowledge is discursive and can only determine things as they appear to us. It can only explain things in the way it knows them, and cannot go beyond its constitutive and determinative power. "If everything were as it seemed," Rumi says, "the Prophet would not have cried out with such illuminated and illuminating perspicacity "show me things as they are" (1994, 6).

What can be implied from this is that, when religions are seen from the perspective of "knowing" knowledge, their mere forms are transcended, and they therefore show a natural affinity with one another. Religions are thus capable of displaying the universe of oneness, and revealing some kind of analogous truth when they are seen from this perspective.

This is the main concern of Rumi; to show the universe in terms of oneness and to reveal "things as they are" which are hidden in the depth of every religion. His religious thought explores the deeper reaches of religious faith, and perceives religion as a dynamic self-engagement rather than as an outward belief. His thought interiorizes this faith and beholds all religions as manifestations of one archetypal reality. "The root principle is one, duality lies in the branches...variety occurs in form, in substance all is unified" (Rumi 1994, 48).

Third, because "knowing" knowledge sees revelation in terms of oneness, this knowledge leads man back to the source of that oneness, namely the One. This One is the source of the cosmic harmony, of correspondence, of the multidimensional reality of forms, of sympathy between things, of the rapport between colours, orientations, configurations, shapes, and also sounds.

"Knowing" knowledge therefore, conforms to a large extent, to the very internal logic of revelation insofar as revelation fosters a movement from outside to inside. The internal logic of revelation is none other than the essence of *tawhid*, which in the discourse of "knowing" knowledge is seen not only as the property of Islam but also as the heart of every religion.

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Fourth, the assertion that religions are so many repetitions of the same source in different forms means naturally that there is a plurality of religion on the level of form. One is thus confronted of necessity with the basic question of religion and religions, a question about which much has been written and which has been the focus of so much debates. From the point of view of meaning, there is but one religion, the primordial religion. It is the single truth, which is at once the heart and origin of all truths. All other truths are but manifestations of this truth. Yet, there is also plurality and multiplicity of religions on the level of form. That is, the oneness of religion on the level of meaning does not in any way deny the plurality of religions on the level of form.

Fifth, the differences between religions on the level of form must imply that –horizontally- one form of a religion occupies a superior status over the others due to its complete and unique value. It is interesting to note that although a Sufi like Rumi would affirm the analogous truth between religions, he nonetheless would tend to view Islam as superior over all other religions. Islam, says the Qur'an, is a perfect religion: "Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as religion" (5/3). The perfection of Islam is due –among others- to the fact that it contains an authentic and complete combination of form and meaning and conforms to a particular archetype of reality, which represents a genuine manifestation of the One. We count this the very mark and criterion of a religion's high rank and superior value. We do not mean by saying this that we want to restore the paraphernalia of a religion or the apparatus of an effete dogmatism. We are concerned not to mend old clothes, but to ascertain in its truth and subtlety the spirit of a religion, and thus to set a value upon the particular, the essence of the ideals, sentiments, life and conduct which it produces.

For Rumi, the superiority of Islam is not only due to its perfection in its form and meaning, but also due to the surety and certainty that it holds. "Muhammad's superiority over all the other prophets stems from surety" (Rumi 1994, 50).

The prophet Muhammad is not only the closing chapter of the religious process, but also the origin of all religions:

> It is obvious that Muhammad was the origin, for God said to him: "Were it not for you, I would not have created the heavens." Whatever exists such as nobility, humility, authority, and high station, all are gifts from him, shadows of him (Rumi 1994, 110).

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To sum up, "knowing" knowledge sees in all religions the same truth not of an outward and sentimental kind, but of a transcendent order as primordial truth. This knowledge is a kind of approach which emphasises the more universal aspect of religion, but at the same time does not deny the differences between religion on the level of particularity. It furthermore recognises the unity between religions, but at the same time distinguishes between a unity that transcends forms and a supposed unity that disregards forms. It asserts that similarity between religions is to be found first and foremost at the level of the Principal, the Substance, the meaning, and the inward. Only at this level the teachings of religions are the same. Below that level, namely at the level of form, there are correspondences at which Islam is deemed superior over other religions due to its more prefect form, complete outward configurations and certitude.

The Formula of Opposite

We have seen that form and meaning are crucial in Rumi's account of things. Due to their importance, we wish to try to further resolute them by tackling the broader formula to which form and meaning are attached; namely the formula of opposite. The basis of Rumi's formula of opposite is this: "Things become clear through their opposites" (1994, 84)

In our discussion on form and meaning, our main concern was to show that Rumi is concerned with showing the universe of oneness and wholeness in things. We have tried to imply from the general observation of form and meaning that when religions are seen from the perspective of meaning, they transcend their mere forms and show their natural affinity between them. But when they are seen from the perspective of form, they remain multiple and different.

Our task in this section will remain the same; to explore Rumi's religious thought and to show his concern of the notion of the oneness of religion, this time by appealing to the formula of opposite. We are particularly interested in testing how the formula of opposite may be applied to the understanding of the oneness of religion.

Before going any further, it is important to note that Rumi never develops a systematic and articulated body of the theory of opposite. Nor did he ever intend to speak of opposite in terms of the understanding of the oneness of religion. It is my reading and interpretation that postulates that this formula is of relevance to the issue we are dealing with.

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Equally important is to note that the little Rumi has said about the opposite is highly abrupt, enigmatic and somewhat empty. How to go about eliciting this formula and giving it content becomes our serious challenge.

At the same time, this formula is in itself intriguing and complex. It is puzzling to explain how "things become clear through their opposites". In the face of this complexity, we have decided to seek assistance from such disciplines as philosophy and to a lesser extent psychology. Let us proceed to see what the formula of opposite can offer to the explanation of our purpose in this thesis.

In psychology we come across discussion of opposite as a subject matter, where we find a common phrase about something or someone being pulled or tugged in opposite directions by conflicting values or emotions.[7] Nonetheless, it cannot be contested as to how people actually "feel" themselves as being pulled rather than pushed or impelled or driven, and it is hard to imagine how they could sense the precise directions between which they were torn. What people can do is to convey the intensity of their irresolution, and this kind of words is an expression of metaphor rather than concept. In other word, from psychological point of view, opposition is metaphorical and not conceptual; the metaphor represents an image, and the image is the product of a pure personal experience.

In psychology therefore, metaphor must take over. So, in a purely psychological term, the constituents of opposite's idiom must be ascribed to the psychological consciousness of individuals. But one is under impression that in psychology, opposite is given too broad and enigmatic characteristics, and the more intense the scrutiny directed at its constitution, the more it proves to have that unsteady integrity.

Unlike psychology, philosophy offers a more promising explanation for the question of opposite. In certain philosophical circle, opposite has been tested as an instrument of symbolism and ratiocination.[8] Some philosophers are particularly interested in opposite for its extreme simplicity of its binary structure.[9] For this reason, they are encouraged to presume that opposite is a primary factor for philosophical analysis.

Concomitantly, opposite has been taken for an elementary intellectual construct, and hence as the basis to epistemology and conception of knowledge. Opposite would thus seem to be a fundamental notion and

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7 See for example, Wilhelm Wundt's *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 36 or John L Smith's *The Psychology of Action*, pp. 71-5

8 Aristotle is certainly the first to lay down the theoretical basis for the notion of opposite, and to use it as a paradigm for a profound philosophical investigation. His *Metaphysic* is the pioneer in this field. It formalises the logical use of opposite.

9 Among these philosophers are Rodney Needham in his Counterpoints, and GER Lloyd in his *Polarity and Analogy*.

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thereby qualified to serve as a basic predicate in the interpretation of human and religious knowledge.

Among the Muslim scholars of medieval period who have attempted to use opposite as a model of an intellectual construct was Shihábuddín Yahyá Suhrawardi (d. 605/1208). He wrote a book called *al-Muqáwamát* in the tradition of the Peripatetic and is aimed at elaborating the philosophy of illumination using among other the imagery of opposites.

Another early Muslim scholar to do this was Mahmúd Sabistárí (d. 740/1339). According to Leonard Lewisohn, Sabistárí wrote the theory of opposite in order to explain the notion of the Unity of Religions. This theory, Lewisohn notes, was designed to support the broader theory of the Relativity of Evil, according which evil must exist if only in order to maintain harmony in creation (1992, 391-2).

Among the leading brain of the theory of opposite in the medieval Islam was certainly Ibn 'Arabí. He exposes his thought concerning this formula quite extensively in his al-*Futúhát al-Makkiyyah* and *Fusús al-Hikam*.

In the modern study of Islam, there has been relatively few work dedicated to elaborate this theory or to apply it into a specific area of discussion. Among those modern Islamicists to have attempted to do this was Sachito Murata in her excellent work on gender relationship entitled *The Tao of Islam*.

Historically, opposite has a long history back to Aristotle, and has been used since then in some of the most profound speculations. As we have just mentioned, Aristotle's *Metaphysic* is the pioneer and the origin of the theory of opposite. Opposite is known as having the appearance of an ultimate simplicity such as might be thought of as an appropriate to a primary operation of thought. In the profound philosophy of Aristotle, opposite is thought to implicate only two terms (1912, 129-31), and in this respect, can be seen as exemplifying the simplest possible form of relation. Suhráwardí and Sabistárí use the principle of opposite as representing a form of relation, namely relation between the dual reality, and use it as the standard resource in the expositions of their respective mystical ideas.

Every existence seems to have a dual reality; *jalál* and *jamál*, *yin* and *yang*, active and receptive, male and female and so on. Everyone knows that only by the togetherness of these two principles can life continue. Borrowing the words of Annemarie Schimmel in her foreword to *The Tao of Islam*, "there is no life without the systole and diastole of the heartbeat, without inhaling and exhaling, or without the two poles between which the electric current can move" (1992, viii).

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Islam itself is based on the principle of opposite. We are talking about the first principle of Islam, *tawhíd*, which consists of *Lá* (negation) and *Illá* (affirmation). In fact, the whole religion of Islam is governed by the principle of opposite, the principle of *Lá* and *Illá*. Self-realisation cannot proceed without self-abnegation; certain stage in human life must be negated in order for the human to move toward the higher and higher stage. As Rumi would tell us, there is a ladder in human life; a man must negate the lower stage and move upward toward the higher one. Negation is, in this context, necessary in order for man to affirm.

From another perspective, both negation and affirmation are manifestations of God. Each is but the face of the same Reality, because "one who denies God is also His manifestor insofar as affirmation is impossible without denial" (Rumi 1994, 143).

The Qur'an also speaks of opposites. "And of everything We created a pair" (51/49). "God Himself created the pair, male and female" (53/45), and so on.

Now, like in his Sufi counterparts Suhráwardí and Sabistárí, in Rumi the notion of opposite seems to expresses the natural propensity of his thought and presents –as it were- the mode of relation. In coming to terms with some major religious questions, Rumi seems to have realized that he is in an absolute need of the idea of opposite. Even God, as Rumi likes to say, describes His desire "to be known" through the principle of opposite. "I was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known", says God –that is I created the whole world and the end of it all was our manifestation, sometimes through kindness and sometimes through wrath" (1994, 84, 184). Elsewhere Rumi explains:

> He said and therefore created this world which is of darkness, in order for His light to be apparent. Likewise He made the prophets and saints saying, "emerge with My qualities to My people". They are the focus of God's light in order that friend be distinguished from foe and stranger (1994, 84).

Thus in Rumi, it is understood that within the formula of opposite all opposite things are related. The simplest and closest example of this relation is perhaps the relation between form and meaning. Rumi is fond of explaining that the world of form receives its legitimacy from the world of meaning, as the former is the reflection of the latter, thus implying the

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inherent relationship between the two. He also likes to note that the eye of the body for instance -that is the eye of the form- represents the eye of the heart, namely the eye of the meaning. Moreover, he maintains that both form and meaning are related by being equally originated from the light of God, the Eternal, the archetypal truth which transcends particulars in their universal applicability. He explains:

> The outward light and the inward light are derived from the beams of Divine Glory. The light, which gives light to the eye, is in truth the light of the hearts. The light of the eye is produced by the light of the hearts. Again, the light of the hearts is the Light of God, which is pure and separate from the light of intellect and sense (1381/I, 94). God created pain and sorrow for the purpose that happiness might be made manifest by means of this opposite (1381/I, 94).

Conversely, while Rumi argues that form receives its legitimacy from of meaning, he maintains that meaning receives its derivativeness from form; he takes the normative dimensions (meaning) as the "destination" of a material entity (form) such as water and bread. He explains:

> As for instance water and bread, which were not our congeners, became homogeneous with us and increased within us. Water and bread have not the appearance of being our congeners, but from consideration of the end, (final result) deem them to be homogeneous with us (1381/I, 74).

Also, in matter of worship the significance of rituals and other religious artefacts is not due to themselves, but due to their designata.

Other example of opposite is the relation between good and evil. Inquiring about these two fundamentally opposing values, Rumi asks:

> Are good and evil one thing or two? Insofar as they are contradictory, then the answer is that they must absolutely be two since nothing can contradict itself. However, from the point of view of their being inextricable, evil must come from good because good is the abandonment of

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> evil, and it is absurd to think of abandoning evil unless it exists...There can be no good unless there is evil because being good means a cessation of evil. It is impossible for evil to cease without there having been evil to begin with. Joy is the cessation of grief, and it is impossible for grief to cease unless it exists. The two are therefore one and indivisible (1994, 133).

In Rumi's view therefore, there can be no absolute goodness -except in God- and absolute evil. Various degrees of goodness derive from evil in the same way that various degrees of evil derive from goodness. The same can be said of other opposites such as light and darkness, faith and infidelity, and so on. Rumi asks:

> Is it not said that the Water of Life is in the land of darkness? The darkness is the body of the saints, where the Water of Life is. The Water of Life can be found only in the darkness. If you hate the darkness and find it distasteful, how will you find the Water of Life? (1994, 100).

In this context, good must contain evil, while still being contrary to it; real perfection is not the absence of evil but its perfect subordination; a world without evil could not possibly be good.

From another point of view, evil can in fact be non-existent because all things in relation to God are good as in His eyes all things are serving and worshipping Him. Thus there can be no such a thing as evil:

> It is said truly that everything is good and perfect in relation to God, if not in relation to us. Impurity and purity, neglect and attention to prayer, infidelity and faith, polytheism and monotheism, all these things are good in relation to God (1994, 32).

Rumi also speaks of the relation between hope and fear, and explains that "these two are inseparable. When someone plants wheat, he of course hopes that it will grow. At the same time, he is fearful that some blight or disaster may befall it. It is obvious that there is no such thing as hope without fear. Neither fear without hope nor hope without fear can be imagined" (1994, 79).

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Furthermore, by using the more day-to-day natural phenomena such as day and night, Rumi illustrates:

> Although night is the opposite of day, it is an ally of day in that they both do the same thing. If night lasted forever, nothing would get done. If day lasted forever, people's brains would get so addled they would go crazy and malfunction (1994, 223). Night and day are in mutual embrace. They are different in appearance, but (are really) in agreement. Day and night, outwardly, are two contraries and enemies, but they both attend on one truth. Each desires the other, like kinsfolk, for the sake of perfecting their action and work (1381/III, 965).

Other familiar terms of opposite are male and female. Rumi says:

> The female desires the male so that they may perfect each other's work. God placed desire within man and women so that the world might find subsistence through their union. He places desire in each part for another part and their union gives birth to offspring (1381/III, 965).

From a genetical point of view, male and female are of course opposed. In their body build too they are opposed. The external organs are varied greatly. When we take social characteristics into account, we find more criteria of differentiation such as dress and comportment. Yet, when one sees beyond these physical descriptions one can forget about chromosomes, and the gross differences between them. Beyond their form, male/female paradigm is defined not by their physical criteria or lexical category, but by their common identity as human.

Having said that opposite things are related, one is provoked to contend that the major problem with taking opposite as related would be to allow the relation between the two logically different things without admitting duality. At some stage, one is faced with considerable difficulties to accept the hypothesis that the opposites constitute a natural relation. If one looks at his own body, he would find that the laterally enantiomorphic surfaces of it (what we ordinarily call the right and left side) are sensorily different, in the sense that event in the one are not ascribed to the other. Having this in mind, we have to admit that even if the premise -that

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opposites are related- is entertained, some would still find it difficult to understand how the binary classification for instance, is seen as an accommodation of dual reality. In fact, Rumi himself –having said that two opposite things are related- acknowledges that they nonetheless constitute two different realities. He says for example, "Pharaoh and Moses are two opposite things and constitute two different realities" (1994, 39). Similarly, Prophet Muhammad and Abú Jahl, Universal Intellect and partial intellect, messengers and devils, faith and infidelity, and so on are two different realities.

Here, it is clear that two different things are constitutive of two different realities, like the cosmic Orient and cosmic Occident in Henry Corbin's terms. So, it is important to pose yet again the question of how two opposite things may be said as related.

One way of explaining this, I think, is to say that the formula of opposite must be distinguished into two kinds, namely the opposite by metaphor and the opposite by reificatory exposition. What we mean by the opposite by metaphor is a tendency to present opposing ideas by means of images. This kind of paradigm is a "psychological" and has to do –as we have indicated earlier- with metaphor rather than concept. We have given an example of this kind of opposite by saying that we find the notion of people being pulled or tugged in opposite directions by conflicting values or emotions. But people cannot contest as to how they actually "feel" themselves as being pulled rather than pushed or impelled or driven. Since it is not a concept, it cannot be explained theoretically. What we understand by metaphor here is therefore an idea or that representation that lies and stands outside the territory of thought without any intellectual foundation. In this sense metaphor is a kind apperception that is by definition subliminal and by nature obscure. Spiritual realization too can be subliminal, but it has the foundation in religious teachings. At the same token, spiritual realization is something with which we –at some stage of our spiritual life- are familiarized by our own inner state. On the basis of metaphor therefore, we cannot reach at a sustainable conclusion about the complexities of dual representation of opposites. By this account we mean that in metaphor we are not dealing with fundamentally logical imperative or a cognitive necessity. We are rather dealing with a highly general relational abstraction, or with a non-conceptual apprehension. Our investigation avoids dealing with an argument, which stands against intellectualism. In the study of human experience and more particularly religious sciences, interpretation and

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presumption must be based on facts. Intellectual considerations must be preponderant and decisive.

The most the opposite by metaphor can do is to relativise the distinction between two opposing things. Let us think as an example, of a house. The house has of course the inside and outside as its boundaries. Logically indeed, inside and outside are mutually distinctive and exclusive: something that from a given point of observation is inside with respect to a certain limit cannot simultaneously be outside with respect to that same limit. But this does not entail that inside/outside dichotomy is an absolute opposition since one can be "inside" the house physically, yet his inner being is outside it, and vice versa. The distinction at issue becomes relative from this point of view. In addition, from the viewpoint of opposite by metaphor, the conceptual clarity of inside/outside can be imprecise in the assessment of our action. For example, when someone is charged with breaking and entering the house, it has to be determined whether or not he was inside the house or outside it. This can be imprecise that it has to be settled by a judgment of the court. Within the premises of law, the precise boundary of the house can indeed be certain. Yet there can be doubt as to the precise boundary because both outside and inside have an operative value in relation to the other that one is said to be inside although in an actual fact he/she is outside.

Now, consider the threshold of the house. Once the threshold of the house is crossed, the notion of space is turned round and the points of orientation are interchanged; it is as though the threshold were a center of symmetry between external space and internal space of the house, which is inverted in relation to the former. In other words, when we cross the threshold we simply pass from one level of reality into another.

Let me give another example. This time is a forest. The forest has, needless to say, trees. In reality however, the trees of the forest could become sparse in the direction of the plain, so that there would be some extent, which was neither true forest nor true plain. But let us assume, a simpler case, there is a definite boundary, on the plain side of which there is no single tree. If someone enters the forest from the plain, he can go deeper and deeper inside the forest. But before he goes deeper into the forest, he must first be at the far outside of the forest, then the right outside, and afterwards just outside. On entering, he is first inside, then right inside, and afterwards deep inside. Now, it must be admitted that the line between the forest and the plain can be blurred by our usual descriptions, because "just outside" is practically speaking equivalent as a

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description of "almost inside", and "just inside" is comparably equivalent to "almost outside". Finally by this account, such recognition of the line no longer makes the appearance of dichotomous "inside" and "outside" an absolute distinction.

Another kind of opposite is opposite by reificatory exposition. What we mean by this is an opposite within the structure of the natural world; the natural world here being understood as the reflection or reverberation of the archetypal world. This basic understanding of the structure of the natural world as representing the basic structure of the archetypal world is of course derived from Rumi when he says for example that:

> Everything you see in this world is as it is in that world. The things of this world are just samples of that world. Whatever is in this world has been brought from that world (1994, 64)

Annemarie Schimmel, expressing Rumi's view, explains that:

> God's twofold aspects are revealed in everything on earth: He is the Merciful and the Wrathful; His is jamál, beauty beyond all beauties, and jamál, Majesty transcending all majesties (1993, 231).

In the natural world, we see that there are always two principles of active and receptive, which together produce something new; for example wife and husband, which produce a child. The two opposite principles symbolise a productive relationship, around which a constant movement and change in any given phenomena revolves. When the sun rises, the moon disappears; when spring comes, winter goes and so forth.

Similarly in God we find two sides of His attributes, namely *jalál* and *jamál*. Like the natural world, these two sides of God embrace each other in harmony and their union produces what we see daily as four elements of nature, namely earth, air, fire and water. These elements represent, metaphorically speaking, the basic ontological tendencies within the spiritual world. They –and everything that exists in the physical world- are the direct reflections of the spiritual world, the domain of the pure elements of the four spheres, which lie between the heavens and the earth. That is why Rumi likes to speak about the spiritual world being analogous to the natural world. In countless verses, he speaks about this phenomenon saying for example:

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> Morning is the small Resurrection, oh seeker of merit! Take it as an analogy of the great Resurrection (Rumi 1381/V, 1457). The effects and the fruits of God's mercy are manifest, but who except Himself knows mercy's essence? No one knows any of the essence of His attributes of perfection except through their effects and through analogy. The child knows not the essence of copulation, except that you tell him, "it is something like candy" (Rumi 1381/III, 904).

By way of analogy God likened His light to a lamp (Rumi 1994, 173).

He also speaks of the analogous nature of God, His attributes and nature with the phenomenon of natural experience. Thus he speaks of God as analogous to the sun (1381/I, 17), and to the sea (1381/V, 1553); God's wisdom to the rain (1994, 30), His decree ill for ill and good for good to someone planting wheat or barley (1994, 70) and so on. There are many other examples of this nature in Rumi, which I think are not necessary to relate here.

Analogy –it might have been clear- functions to explain the opposite by reificatory exposition. In Islamic discourse, to speak in a broad generality, analogy constitutes a mode of comparison between two opposite, yet, analogous realities. In the discourse of Abú Ya'qúb al-Sijistání, cosmology is analogy; analysis proceeds by finding the inherent analogy between one structural element or set of elements and another (Walker 1993, 69).

Our examples from Rumi show that analogy can reveal the "easy similarity" between God and the natural world. If we say that God is sun, we imply that God is light, or that He has light. And if we say that God's wisdom is like the rain, we imply that God is the source of life and survival.

If I propose to discuss this problem of analogy in a great detail, it might reasonably be demanded that first of all the problem should be clearly and precisely formulated. This will take us far away from the focus of our discussion. However, we need to say that the reality of God can be explained by means of our earthly human experience. It is not our intention of course to suggest that the existence of God cannot be recognised unless He is discoverable in the same way that the sun for example is discoverable. No believing Muslim would demand that God should be visible like the sun. If He were, He would not be God; that is to say, He would not correspond to our account of what we mean by God. Nonetheless, the reality of God cannot I think, for eternity be

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treated in entire abstraction. To resort to analogy –or to the opposite by reificatory exposition to be more precise- is desirable because God is transcendent and infinite.

All this is to suggest that we need –by means of analogy- to suggest that God needs to be explained existentialistically, for the reality of God is not merely a question of how we can believe in Him, or how can He be explained in theological terms. There is also the question of how the infinite God can be seen to exist from the consideration of finite things, and how can He be spoken about in language derived from our human experience, for God is not merely a matter of theology, but also of metaphysic and psychology.

The question of analogy does not indeed arise at all in the mere proof of the existence of God, for we can arrive at the existence of God without an explicit recourse to analogy. But we have also to say that the proofs of God are analogical realities. Two things must therefore be distinguished without separating them and still more without opposing them, namely the problem of analogical knowledge and the metaphysical problem of analogy. Concerning the former, we have no need of it insofar as we can argue about the existence of God without analogy. But as soon as we realise that the existence of God is so radically different from everything else in our experience, it becomes clear to us that we do need analogy as a tool to the metaphysic of God. There can be little satisfaction in demonstrating the existence of a being whom the very demonstration shows to be altogether inapprehensible. God would seem to have slipped from between our hands at the very moment when we had at last laid hold on him. It is at this point that the formula of analogy becomes necessary and its elaboration a matter of urgency. Any religious system, which has, as its genuine teaching a belief in transcendent God will need analogy for it will be bound to explain how is it possible for man to talk about God by means of a tangible example. An expression about God must to some extent, be expressed in language drawn from the finite world, or else it would not be able to be thought about.

It is vital however, to insist that in analogy we are not instituting comparisons between the finite and the Infinite as a completely analogous. The Infinite is Necessary and Immutable, and the finite is contingent and mutable. The possibility of us applying to the infinite Being terms that are derived from the finite order conditioned by the fact that the finite order is dependent for its very existence on the fiat of the infinite and self-existent Being.

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Also, the purpose of us using analogy is not to allow us to form concepts of the divine essence, but to affirm the divine existence. It is not to compare God's features with those of finite beings, but to allow us to assert that He exists when we can identify Him only by describing Him in terms derived from the finite order.

God's creatures are His effect, and every effect is analogous to its cause. The concept, which we form of this effect, can in no case be transformed for us into the concept of God, which we lack, but we can attribute to God by our affirmative judgement, the name that denotes the perfection corresponding to this effect. To proceed in this way is not to posit God as absolutely similar to the creature, it is to ground oneself on the certitude that since every effect resembles its cause, the creature from which we start certainly resembles God. This is the essence of the notion of opposite by reificatory exposition.

It is then, in virtue of this inherently existential element in all our affirmations about God that the analogical knowledge of God can be maintained. Purely essential statement about God is a sheer agnosticism, since in principle God's essence necessarily involves His existence. We cannot in short, know God's essence by forming a concept of it, but we can know it analogically in our concepts of finite beings.

Now, if it is possible –by means of analogy- to speak of God in our concept of finite beings, it is even more possible within the discourse of the finites to speak of one finite being in the concept of another finite being. In other words, what is true about God in His relation to the finite beings, must also be true *a fortiori* about the finite beings in their relation to one another. The principle of analogy which -as we have seen- applies to God when He is brought into consideration from the finite beings, will apply with even greater force to the finite beings. Let us look at this more carefully.

We all know that words can be used for different purpose or have different meaning. Within the discourse about finites, and in line with our purpose, there are at least two uses of words, one is analogical and the other is univocal. As for the former, it is like saying that Ali and John are civil servants. The word civil servant is applicable to both Ali and John. As for the latter, it is like saying that Ali and John are human. When we call them in this way, the characteristics that distinguish Ali and John are additional to them being human. Even if Ali is Muslim for example, and John is Christian, we mean the same thing about them when we call them human. However, the difference between the analogical use and the univocal use is so dim that we need to consider them as different only in degree and not in kind.

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But how is it that things within the discourse of the finite may be said to be univocal? Simply because there is nothing outside the finite being by which it could be differentiated. When we say that Ali is Muslim and John is Christian, we refer to them as different for we specify their characteristics in terms of their religious differences. That is, we acknowledge their differences as intrinsic in them. But when we say that they are human, the differences that distinguish them as human cannot be intrinsic, for being human in its universal reference, embraces them both including their differences. In this instance, there is nothing outside them being human that could act as a differentia to their humanity and to subdivide this humanity into species.

Moreover, everything within the discourse of the finite is an instance of being, and being is differentiated by its own inherent analogical variety. To be is to be in a certain way, and the way is the very heart of the being. So the whole order of beings consists of nothing more and nothing less than analogical instances of being: rational being and non-rational being, spiritual being and non-spiritual being, actual being and possible being, substantial being and accidental being, real being and notional being and so on. Nonetheless, in a profound sense every being must be in the last resort depends upon its relation to the self-existent Being who is the prime analogate of all. And in this self-existent Being all beings –including their differences- are embraced in the mood of oneness and homogeneity. To connote this Rumi says:

> If then one looks at the purpose, no duality remains...It is like a breeze blowing through the house: it lifts a corner of the carpet and ruffles the mats, causes the dust to fly into the air, ripples the water in the pool, and causes the branches and leaves of the trees to dance. All these things appear to be quite different; yet from the point of view of intent, principle, and reality they are all one thing, since their movement is all from one breeze (1994, 24).

Also:

> Don't you see how a person often has a hundred wants? "I want vermicelli. I want pastry. I want sweets. I want fritters. I want fruit. I want dates." These appear to be many different wants that have been expressed verbally.

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> The origin of them all however, is one, and that one is hunger (1994, 8).

However, as far as the relation between the natural and archetypal world is concerned, the Intent, the Principle and the Origin is God, the vertical axis of all beings who is relieved of all confines and conditionings. In the meantime, as far as the relation among the finite beings is concerned, this principle is what many Sufis would call the pole, the centre of existence.

If existence may be described geometrically as a triangle, then the centre is the one, which occupies the point of intersection between the vertical and horizontal lines. It is the point where differences may converge, and irreconcilable elements may meet; the point where an opposition between the two lines and four directions may cease to be pertinent. "Existentially centre," in the words of Huston Smith, "represents the point where complements unite and opposites are resolved" (1992, 27).

Centre is what in Sufism called the Divine Station, in Kabbala the Inward or Holy Palace, and in the Chinese tradition the Chung Yung, the Invariable Middle, and the Taoist. It is the smallest unit within the structure of existence, and is –as it were- the space of the spaceless, and the station of no-station.

Paradoxically, this smallest unit, the space of the spaceless, is the one that unites the spokes and makes them a wheel, and functions to represent the pectoral mode of relationship between the antinomies. To connote this, Rumi says:

> What is to be done, O Muslims? for I do not recognise myself.
> I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Muslim.
> I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the Land, nor of the Sea.
> I am not of Nature's mint, nor of the circling heavens.
> I am not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulgaria, nor of Saqsin.
> I am not of the kingdom of Iraq, nor of the country of Khurasan.
> My place is the Placeless, my trace is the Traceless.

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10 Cited from RA Nicholson's *Selected Poems*, p. 125

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Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved.
I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds are one.
I seek one, I know one, I see one, I call one. [10]

Hence, centre may form oneness and homogeneity, and by stipulation, may form harmony and accord. Centre is the domain of the pole. To know the pole is to know the centre, and ultimately to know the whole existence. Conversely to be ignorant of the pole is to be ignorant of the whole existence. Rumi holds a strong view of the pole and believes, like Ja'far al-Sádiq whose saying we have mentioned in the first chapter, that to know the pole is a religious duty. Rumi says, "He who does not know the true Shaikh, the perfect pole of his time, is an infidel". [11]

In Ibn 'Arabí's discourse, the pole is the Perfect Man, the owner of divine courtesy and the friend of God. For Ibn 'Arabí, the Perfect Man functions to reconcile differences and to establish oneness out of contrast. In the Futúhát, he explains:

> The root of all things is difference, which first becomes manifest in the divine names. The properties of the names are different because their meanings are different (n.d.a/II, 521-2). The friend of God, the owner of divine courtesy never conflicts with anyone (n.d.a/III, 96-7).

With the same spirit about the function of the Perfect Man, Ibn 'Arabí explains in his *Fusús al-Hikam* saying that:

> God described Himself as manifest and non-manifest. He brought the cosmos into existence as a world of the unseen and a world of the visible, so that we might perceive the non-manifest through our unseen dimension and the manifest through our visible dimension. He described Himself through good pleasure and wrath, so He brought the cosmos into existence possessing fear and hope: we fear His wrath and we hope for His good pleasure. He described Himself as beautiful and possessing majesty, so He brought us into

[11] Cited from Annemarie Schimmel's *The Mystical Dimension of Islam*, p. 200

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> existence having awe and intimacy. And so it goes with everything which is attributed to Him and by which He is named. God called these two attributes the "two hands" through which He turned toward creating the Perfect Man, who brings together the realities and individuals of the cosmos (n.d.b/I, 54).

We have discussed in the second chapter Ibn 'Arabi's view of the "two hands" of God, and what implication this view has on the understanding of God's incomparability and similarity. Two points are worth of mentioning here. First, in Ibn 'Arabi's view God's two hands indicate two general attributes of God. Second, oppositions in the cosmos, which are the natural consequence of God's dual attributes, may be resolved by means of the Perfect Man, the pole, and the centre of existence.

All this is to say that oppositions in the cosmos may be brought together to form oneness, homogeneity, tolerance and harmony provided that there is a centre.

So far we have talked about the role and operation of the idea of the centre through the exposition of the formula of opposite and its counterpart formula of analogy. We feel that we need to speak further about this idea, because it serves to explain our purpose and highlights our aims. In what follows I hope to shed more lights on this idea, this time by appealing to the problem of the mystical experience.

Rumi's Phenomenology and the Notion of Mystical Experience

We have mentioned earlier that centre is the smallest unit within the structure of existence, and is the space of the spaceless. Because centre has no dimension, and occupies no space, for man to be aware of it he must undergo spiritual realization, undercut the vicissitudes of the stream of forms, and undergo a process of inner purification. These processes are however, the essence of the mystical experience.

Mystical experience involves the elimination or transformation of the ego through asceticism and spiritual training. Through this experience one may pass beyond his/her illusory selfhood at the stage of which he/she may be achieve a true understanding of things beyond their immediate forms. Rumi explains:

> The gnostic has escaped from the five senses and the six directions and makes you aware of what is beyond

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> them. His allusions are the allusions of Eternity. He has passed entirely beyond fantasies and drawn himself apart. Hundred of thousands of men are hidden within a single man, a hundred bows and arrows are contained in a single dart (1381/VI, 2020-1). His direction is without directions. In the direction without directions all is spring (1381/V, 1339). His origin is the Placeless (1381/II, 368).

When one achieved a true understanding of things, he/she becomes aware that all things travel the same path for the same end. Rumi illustrates:

> When you go to a friend's form, you go for the sake of your companionship with him. Hence in meaning you have gone to the formless, even if you are unaware of your goal. So in reality God is worshipped by all things, for they all travel their paths in search of joy. But some have turned their faces toward the tail. The Head is the root, but they have lost it (1381/VI, 1957).

Because the Placeless is above all places, the Placeless and the state of being with the Placeless transcends all places. Places are secondary causes, as Rumi says:

> People look at secondary causes and think that they are the origin of everything that happens. But it has been revealed to the saints that secondary causes are no more than a veil...Secondary causes are pretexts, and the motivator is something else. Secondary causes are nothing but wool over the eyes to occupy the common folk (1994, 71-2).

The saints are the ones that have achieved the state of the placeless and being with the Placeless. They therefore, are able to perceive the true character of things beyond their physical forms. They have been transformed into a higher stage of reality and they accordingly coincide practically with the whole cosmos. For them, forms are veils, but their unveiling of these veils enables them to see the origin of these veils. At

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the end, veils are so many manifestations of the same origin, all of which are tied in the fabric of the cosmic Reality.

The state of the placeless is both ontological and valuational. On the one hand, when one is experiencing the placeless his own being is as nothing in the face of the overwhelming might of the other. On the other, alongside this consciousness, his own value -indeed the value of the existence in general- is as nothing in the light of the unsurpassable value of the Divine. But it is exactly at this stage that one realises the oneness of various forms of divine manifestations. By standing in the station of the placeless, and not being defined by a particular cosmic possibility, one knows concretely the ontological and doctrinal delimitation represented by forms of particular manifestation. In the state of the placeless, one transcends the barriers of creed, dogma and religion. Rumi says:

> My place is the Placeless, my trace is the Traceless.
> Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved.
> I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds are one.
> I seek one, I know one, I see one, I call one.[12]

In this state, all creeds are one:

> This world and that world are the egg, and the bird within it is in the darkness and bruised of wing, contemptible and despised
> Regard unbelief and faith as the white and the yolk in this egg
> Between them, joining and dividing, "a barrier which they shall not pass".
> When He hath graciously fostered the egg under His wing infidelity and religion disappear: the bird of Unity spreads its pinions.[13]

The state of the placeless is the point of connection between things, between those of the four directions and the five senses. Each direction

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12 Cited from R.A. Nicholson's *Selected Poems*, pp. 125-6

13 *ibid*, p. 221

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and sense has a specific identity and manifests a particular place or form. Nonetheless, all places and forms manifested by the different direction and sense are attached to one place and form, that is the source of all places and forms. Each embraces the whole spectrum of existence, because each emerges from the divine origin. But once forms are attached to the source of forms and are unified with the overwhelming might of the Divine, forms become naughted and unreal. Placeless therefore entails that form is unreal. From one point of view therefore, form -to the extent that it is a matter- is real and has value. But to the extent that it is perceived from the perspective of *Átmán*, form is *máya* and worthless. Placeless negates the reality of form by affirming the reality of meaning. This is the meaning of *Shahâda*. It means that nothing is real but the Real. Beyond all the things that we see and imagine is the true Reality. Everything else other than the true Reality is not real.

Insofar as form participates in a worldly reality, it has indeed existence and reality. But insofar as it is part of the divine might, it neither exists nor has a value. Form must be valueless in order for the meaning to have value. It is like saying that in order for God's "I-ness" to exist, man's "I-ness" must die. Says Rumi:

> With God there is no room for two egos. You say "I", and God says "I". In order for this duality to disappear, either you must die for Him or He dies for you. It is not possible however, for Him to die, either phenomenally or conceptually, because *He is the Ever-living who dieth not* (Qur'an, 27/58). He is so gracious that if it were possible, He would die for you in order that the duality might disappear. Since it is not possible for Him to die, you must die that He may be manifested to you, thus eliminating the duality (1994, 26).

This state is the essence of the mystical experience. It constitutes a frame within which one is concomitantly confronted with the mental reaction to the presence (*hudhúr*) of the Divine. The mental reaction is as such stupor, where the Divine becomes "wholly near". God says, "We are nearer to him than his jugular vein" (50/16). In this state, God manifests Himself as God of *tashbih* entrancing and captivating the individuals thereby generating nearness to His creatures. He becomes God of "jealousy", the God of inconceivable beauty, grace and love.

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> His jealousy is directed toward lovers and sincere believers, and His awfulness toward devils and beasts (Rumi 1381/IV, 1290).

When God appears to those who encounter Him as beauty, He captivates and transports them with exaltation and ecstasy:

> Like a fly, when it is immersed in honey, all its parts cease to move. Its "absorption" is such that it is not aware of itself and no longer makes any exertion, motion or movement...People think that to say, "I am God", is a claim of greatness, but it is actually extreme humility. Anyone who says "I am God's servant" predicates two existences, his own and God's, while the one who says "I am God" nullifies, that is, he gives up his own existence as naught. It is said that, "I am God" means: "I do not exist; everything is He (Rumi 1994, 45-6).

This "I am God" is the dionysiac element of the mystical experience, that is, the spontaneous quality of unification, self-surrender, and of "identification" with Him. To be in the state of the placeless is to be "identical" with the Placeless. Nonetheless, this "I am God" is not an expression of self-divination. It is rather an expression of self-devaluation resulted from the experience of total absorption in God. As Rumi just explained, the "I am God", is not a claim of greatness, but it is an extreme humility, because the one who says, "I am God" nullifies his own existence as naught.

In the expression of "I am God", God is recognised as the source of the supreme values, and accompanying this is the corresponding devaluation of the self. Simultaneously, with the recognition of God as the source of the supreme value and the realisation of the valuelessness of the self, comes the awareness of the relativity of the bodily form. "I am God" is therefore to "identify" oneself with God, but in order to be "identical" with Him, one must die as "dust and ashes" so that He might appear and be manifested to him. In any case, the mystery of "I am God" is both –borrowing Rudolf Otto's terms- *tremendum* and *fascinan* (1923, 19-20). As *tremendum*, God is experienced as "wholly other" vis-à-vis whom human self is totally nullified and naughted. In this lies the source of what the Christians would call the *via negativa*,

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that is, the incomparable aspect of God, or *tanzih*. In the meantime, as *fascinan* God is experienced as "wholly near" vis-à-vis whom human self may be said to have achieved union and "identification".

Two kinds of Mystical Experience

Recognising God as *tremendum* is one thing and overstressing it is quite another. Theology has done the latter, and for that it has erred. Theology gives expression to its perplexed endeavour to find a name for the elements of the *tremendum* in such a doctrine as *mukhálafa* and *bilákaifiyyah*. It has therefore depreciated religion by giving it this fortuitous character. Overstressing *tremendum* is a poor ideogram primarily because it negates religion as containing the integrative power it possesses inherently. And it becomes more inappropriate when it is taken as a conceptual affirmation of the divine nature, one which, conflicts not only with the spirit of religion, but also with the sound human reason. Although theology has no doubt a positive contribution, it has nonetheless erred where it has positively construed religious concept or doctrine. For that reason, theology I think, should rather remain a tentative activity.

Unlike theology, Sufism emphasizes the "wholly nearness" of God. Sufism recognizes that the whole cosmos is governed by the principle of nearness, similarity and "withness" (*ma'iyya*). It follows that the Sufis tend to dwell on the world of unity and sameness, and erase what seems for them to be relative distinctions and dissimilarities. Rumi illustrates:

> One day we were speaking to a group that included some infidels, and during our talk they were weeping and going into ecstatic state. "What do they understand? What do they know?" Someone asked. "Not one out of a thousand Muslims can understand this kind of talk. What have these people understood that they weep so?" It is not necessary for them to understand the words. What they understand is the basis of the words. After all, everyone acknowledges the oneness of God and that He is the Creator and Sustainer, that He controls everything, that everything will return to Him, and that either eternal punishment or forgiveness emanate from Him (1994, 101).

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The Sufis seek to transcend the world of words into the basis of those words. For them words are just pretext, the "sympathy" of which is hidden but attracts one man to another:

> Words are just pretext. It is the element of sympathy that attracts one man to another, not words. If a man should see a thousand prophetic or saintly miracles, it will profit him nothing if he does not have sympathy with the prophet or saint. It is that sympathetic element that unsettles and disquiets. Were there no element of sympathy to amber in straw, the straw could never be attracted by amber. The sympathy between them is hidden, however; it cannot be seen (Rumi 1994, 7).

The Sufis leave the multiplicity of words and journey toward the origin of this multiplicity. They leave the many for the One in the process of which they are granted the vision of the One in many:

> When they hear words that are descriptive of God they are struck with a commotion, yearning and desire because their objects of desire and search are made manifest in these words. Although the way may differ, the goal is one. Don't you see that there are many roads to the Ka'bah? (Rumi 1994, 101).

In this vision, all forms become transparent, including religious forms, thus revealing their unique origin.

Sufism therefore sees that all religious forms are connected in the One. Sufism is about that which steps out of the limits of the external elements and constitutes the deeper side of religion. In essence, Sufism is the core of religion. It is its kernel in comparison to which its external element is only a shell. In this context, Sufism is both the reason and means whereby Islam can be seen as coinciding with other religions. It can function to measure the value of Islam and how this value is actualised in the tradition of other religions. Sufism has fair criteria from within Islam, which can be employed to evaluate other religions according to the degree to which the notion of Divine is revealed in each religion. Sufism thus affords an objective standard within which various manifestations of religion can be recognised.

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To some extent, Sufism must be understood –at least provisionally- as that which has the same nature as the universal spiritual religion, for while it allows the possibility of connecting religions, it views religions as the manifestation of the universal human capacity to experience the Divine. And while Sufism views religions as equally the working of the underlying power of that universal capacity, Sufism finds it convenient to see religions on a supra-mundane level in which it grasps the parallels and the mysterious unity between them.

Speaking from the general perspective, seeking the parallels between religions is not only favourable, but also impulsive because these parallels have been the laws of religions. First, at the historical level, there have already been parallels between religions when they made way for their emergence. Thus, the period between 800 and 500 B.C, saw the simultaneous emergence of some great religions such as Confucianism and Lao Tzu in the Far East, the teachings of Xenophanes, Parmenides and Zeno in the West, the religion Judaism in Jerusalem, and the reformation of Zoroastrianism in Persia and the Upanishadic doctrine and Buddhism in India.

Second, along with this contemporaneity in time, we find parallels in the nature of the religious ideas themselves. The concept of *jalál* and *jamál* in Islam for example, corresponds to the conceptions of *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinan* in the modern study of the Christian West. The concept of *Brahman* is similar to the *Tao* of Lao Tzu and the *logos* of Heraclitus. The *bhakti* is parallel to the Christian doctrine of salvation, and to a lesser extent with the Sufi doctrine of love.

Third, in more general terms, we may find parallels between the Christian mysticism of the West to the saviour mysticism of the cults of Khrishna and Rama. Also, we may find parallels between the Islamic mysticism and the mysticism of other religions in general as each mysticism contains what the modern mystics would call the *fundus animae*, the "Synderesis", the "spark", the "Inner Abyss", or the ground of the soul. This *fundus animae* is the organ of discovering the depths of the self and of God indwelling in the heart of man. It is therefore the ground through which the vision of the One may be discerned.

The similarities between religions extend to the more fundamentally principle doctrine such as the doctrine of God. There is no doubt that in all religions God is present as a real and saving God, believed and received. "Love for the Creator," says Rumi, "is inherent in the whole world and in all people –Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians- all creatures" (1994, 216).

All religions put the question of God as a concatenating goal and end for

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the whole existence; the world is destined to become the manifestation of God's majesty and grace in His kingdom. Finally therefore, the similarities between religions are so great that one can speak of convergence of types: beyond and above the striking differences are similarities of extraordinary proportion. All of these point to one thing; the underlying, uniform, and common ground for all religions in East and West, South and North, a common ground, which takes effect as a force of development and sets the formation of religious life in various spheres.

This common ground is due to the operation of *mysteriumfascinan*, in which God is apprehended as "wholly near", as opposed to *mysterium tremendum*, in which God is apprehended as "wholly other". The former is what Rudolf Otto calls "mysticism of unifying vision", and the latter "mysticism of introspection" (1957, 38). Mysticism of unifying vision is the one, which looks out upon the world of finitude and multiplicity and perceives the infinite in the finite, the eternal in the temporal, the unity beneath the apparent multiplicity (1957, 38).

Two "logically" ascending steps can be discerned in the mysticism of unifying vision. In the first and lowest of these, the perceived world is transfigured in a unity in which space and time are transcended; all is one and one is all. Concurrent with this vision of the identity-in-difference of the world everything becomes part of this unity and distinctions between thing collapse.

Second, while in the lowest stage the unity and multiplicity form a "coincidence of opposites" in this stage emphasis is placed upon the One, the source of all unity. The One is the substantial, the permanent, and the constant beyond the changing and fleeting many. It is the real value behind the many. In the state so attained, the soul completely one and is the One. Because mysticism of unifying vision is one of undifferentiated unity, it may be seen as one in which union with or identity with the One is achieved.

In contrast to mysticism of unifying vision, mysticism of introspection is the one in which union with God is not the goal (1957, 39). This kind of mysticism is what Louis Gardet would call a "natural mysticism", the resulting experience of the absolute, which the very act of existing constitutes for the mystic. Natural mysticism is the fruit of radical detachment particularly from an intellectual activity by means of which the mystic achieves a radical act of existing and finds there supreme enjoyment in the natural order (Casper 1981, 176).

Unlike natural mysticism, "supernatural mysticism" is essentially the fruit of divine grace. It makes it possible for us to detach ourselves from

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creatures and opens us up to the union with God alone. It is both the means and end of union with God (Casper 1981, 176). Gardet identifies the supernatural mysticism with love, gratuity and passivity by and toward God (Casper 1981, 176).

For Gardet however, natural mysticism can also function to realise unity with the One, but its way is that of the outward way. Supernatural mysticism on the contrary, follows the inward way.

According to Gardet, certain Sufi's mysticism is derived from and dependent on a natural mysticism. This includes the mysticism of al-Bistámí and Ibn 'Arabí. Al-Halláj and the so-called intoxicated Sufis are the supernatural mystics (Casper 1981, 177). Accepting this proposition would mean that Rumi's mysticism is supernatural because of its link to the Sufism of al-Halláj,[14] and because of its characterisation with love and the union with God. Whether it is appropriate or not to consider the Sufism of al-Bistámí and Ibn 'Arabí as a natural mysticism is not our intention to discuss here. Suffice it to say that this proposition does pose some serious questions and raise some serious doubt, because like al-Halláj, Ibn 'Arabí and al-Bistámí do speak of love and follow the inward way like any other Sufis.

What is of an interest here is to note that the idea of supernatural mysticism coalesces -in my judgement- to the notion of inner affinities between religions. As we have explained little earlier, supernatural mysticism is the inward way of perceiving reality. It is also, (1) both the means and end of unity with God, (2) the way toward God alone, and (3) love, gratuity and passivity by and toward God. Now, on the basis of these premises, we may deduce the following logical conjectures. First, since supernatural mysticism is a means and end of unity, it is then a way of transfiguring reality in unity.

Second, concurrent with this vision, and because God alone is the end, He generates the basis whereby He, the One, "conditions" the many. The oneness therefore, becomes the basis and the principle of the manyness. The manyness in turn should be perceived within the oneness, the finite within the infinite, the temporal within the eternal, and the apparent multiplicity within the compelling unity.

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[14] Rumi preached doctrines in words that one would expect to have been borrowed from al-Halláj. One of these doctrines is the doctrine of "die in order to live". Al-Halláj's verse, "kill me, o my trustworthy friends," becomes a key word for Rumi. More importantly, it was the fire of Hallájian love that Rumi allowed to penetrate the kernel of his inward consciousness. No doubt that Rumi made numerous allusions to al-Halláj in his *Diwán* and *Mathnawi*.

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Third, because supernatural mysticism is love, gratuity, passivity and intoxication, and has been identified with the mysticism of al-Halláj, it should consequently be understood as the way of progressive annihilation. Accepting this proposition would mean that supernatural mysticism is the way where one must disappear and sink down into the One and die as "dust and ashes" so that the One may live and manifest in him:

> With God there cannot be two egos. You say "I", and He says "I". In order for this duality to disappear, either you must die for Him or He for you. Since it is not possible for Him to die, must die that He may be manifested to you (Rumi 1994, 26).

To the extent that annihilation is the state of the stateless, it dissolves the negative charges and connotation of difference and otherness. To be in the state of annihilation is like "the murky water that recognises the great water and says, "I am from and of this," mingles with it". That is to say, "The great water is of the same type as the small water. They share the same soul and the same substance" (Rumi 1994, 35-6).

While annihilation is nothingness against that by which the self is confronted as the object, it leads to the mingling in of the small water with the great water. "Those who recognise their common bond are bound together. Those who deny their common bond are split asunder" (Rumi 1994, 35).

Junaid of Baghdad (d. 298/910) reckons that there are three stages of annihilation; namely annihilation of characteristics, annihilation of pleasures, and annihilation of consciousness in attaining the vision of God in the final stage of ecstasy (Abdel-Kader 1962, 68). In this final stage of ecstasy, the gulf between God and man disappears, hence a total unity. If there is a gulf between the two realities, this is only in appearance since God has become all and is in all. R.A Nicholson puts it thus:

> The infinite distance between God and man, God alone can annihilate; man has no power to bridge the chasm, therefore it is overleaped by a tour de force of the omnipotent Will. That idea lies behind the whole theory and practice of religious ecstasy on which the Sufis throw so much stress. How should the mystic's conscious self

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> not be obliterated and swept away by the transcendent glory of Him who in a sudden gleam reveals Himself as ineffable near? (1923, 13).

Indeed, in the state of annihilation, God would reveal Himself as ineffable near, so near that the annihilated would, as Muhammad Láhíjí puts it, "involuntarily cry out and announce whatever truth flash upon his heart" (1992, 471).

In Rumi's imagery, the annihilated is exemplified as a shepherd, who was reproached by Moses for his blasphemous comparison (*tashbih*) of God to a human beloved. God Himself latter rebukes and chastises Moses for his meddling in lover's affairs and for his objections, allowing Rumi to comment that the "religion of lovers" transcends the "religion of reasoners". God –claims Rumi- says:

> I am independent of all purity and impurity, of all slothfulness and alacrity. In the Hindus the idiom of Hind is praiseworthy; in the Sindians the idiom of Sind is praiseworthy. Within the Ka'bah the rule of the qiblah does not exist: what matter if the diver has no snow-shoes? The religion of Love is apart from all religions: for lovers, the only religion and creed is God (1381/II, 448-52).

Thus, in love (of God) all are united and embraced including the diversities of religions and sects. Indeed, for lovers, it does not really matter what "lamp" one has, for the origin of all lamps is the same. This origin is the Light, which comes from beyond:

> The lamps are different
> but the Light is the same: it comes from Beyond.
> Mind of the finite bodies! It makes all the difference we see
> between the believer, the Zoroastrians and the Jews (1381/III, 712).

We will return to the notion of love latter. For now, let us turn to what might be called the organ of love; namely the heart or the faculty of discernment.

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The Faculty of Discernment

Rumi often describes the faculty of discernment as a subtle concept within human being. It is the opposite of the faculty of physicality:

> You cultivate this physical existence in which there is no discernment. Don't you see that a madman has physicality but no discernment? Discernment is that subtle concept that is inside you (1994, 9).

It is subtle because it is situated -as it were- behind the sense, it sees through the eyes without being seen, hears with the ears without itself being heard. It lies deeper than mind. If we equate mind with the stream of consciousness, the faculty of discernment is the source of this stream; it is also its witness while never itself appearing within the stream as a datum to be observed. It lies on our cosmological map beyond the reach of the strongest telescope, but it may function as a means to cognize and recognize God. It is the trait, which constitutes the essential "me" in reference to which God bears witness by saying, "My heavens and My earth encompass Me not, but the heart of My gentle, believing, and meek servant does encompass Me."

> How could the rays of God's light fit into the heart"? Asked Rumi. "Yet when you search you will find it there, not from the point of view of containment such that it could be said that the light is that place. You will find it through that place, just as when you look in a mirror you see yourself, although your likeness is not really in the mirror (1994, 173).

Rumi also often equates the faculty of discernment with faith:

> Do you not see that at the time of Pharaoh, when Moses' staff became a serpent and the staff and cords of the sorcerers became serpents, he who had no discernment saw them all in the same light and made do distinction? But he who had discernment understood the difference between truth and sorcery. So he became a believer through discernment, hence we understand that faith is discernment (1994, 153).

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The faculty of discernment determines at what level a man may be categorized. There are at least three levels of man's dimensions, according to Rumi, to which a man may belong; namely animal level, human level and angelic level. Man can be like animal, but he can also be like angel depending upon the quality of his spirituality and the state of his faculty of discernment. Says Rumi:

> There are three kinds of creatures. The first are the angels, which are pure intelligence...The second kind are the beasts, which are pure lust and have no decisive intelligence...The angel is free because of his knowledge, the beast is also free because of his ignorance. The son of man may become either but he remains between the two to struggle (1994, 81).

The son of man remains in struggle indeed. But he possesses the basic skill of discernment so that he stands a good change of progressing from his state into the state of the angel. Nonetheless, a great number of men fail in this struggle, and only a few succeed. These few are the prophets and the saints (Rumi 1994, 82).

On this ground, we may speak of two kinds of the faculty of discernment. The one is actualized and the other is representational. The actualized faculty is the one that belongs to the prophets and the saints; the specially endowed and equipped individuals. And the representational belongs to the common people other than the saints and the prophets. The former is productive, and the latter is receptive. The former is the principle of judgment and cognition, and the latter is the principle of acknowledgment.

Speaking of prophets and saints, Rumi categorises them as belonging to the same substance. In some respects, they are identical because almost anything said about the prophets applies to the saints. The necessity of following the prophets means also the necessity of following the saints. They are all the men of heart, and "the man of heart is the all. When you have seen him you have seen everything" (Rumi 1994, 80). They all are "angelic" to the extent that they can penetrate into the inward meaning of existence in general.

While in substance, the prophets and the saints are the same, in rank they are not. First, Rumi speaks of two categories of the saints, namely, the saints with sight who have achieved union, and the saints beyond them who are called the veiled ones of God (1994, 93).All saints have actualised their faculty of discernment, but some saints are naturally more gifted

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than the others. The so-called "the veiled ones of God" are the ones who, by virtue of their high quality faculty, have in fact an individual religious genius that they can create their own religion out of the depths of their spirituality. Included in this category, I would suggest, are such men as Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Martin Luther, Bahá'ullah, Inayat Khan, AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and others.

Above the level of these "veiled ones of God" are the prophets. Although the saints and the prophets have the same substance, the prophets are naturally higher than the saints in terms of rank and spiritual stratum. The prophets received a message directly from God, while the saints are dependent inwardly and outwardly upon the prophets for various formal elements of the religion. The prophets received a Scripture and law while the saints do not receive any of these.

Above the rank of all prophets and saints however, Rumi asserts that there is the stage of what commonly known as the stage of the Perfect Man (al-insán al-kámil) which refers specifically to the stage of the Holy Prophet Muhammad –peace be upon him. This is the stage in which the supreme divining subject is also the object of divination par excellence. The Sufis as well as Muslims in general, see the Prophet Muhammad as the most perfect man, and as the sole representative of this type of spiritual stage. He is from the outset something more than a mere man. He is the being of wonder and mystery, who somehow or other is felt to belong to the higher order of things. It is not that he himself teaches that he is such, but that he is expressed as such. The Prophet is recognized as the perfect manifestation of God's mercy and love.

On the basis of a judgment, which proceeds from the operation of both mind and heart, Rumi maintains that Muhammad is the origin and the reason for God to create the whole universe:

> It is obvious that Muhammad was the origin, for God said to him: "Were it not for you, I would not have created the heavens".[15] Whatever exists –such as nobility, humility, authority and high station- all are gifts from him, shadows of him, inasmuch as they were manifested through him (1994, 110-11).

Apart from this rank, all prophets and saints have actualized their faculty of discernment and gained as a result, a full vision of the Real. That is to

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15 God says to the prophet, "*lauláka má khalaqtu al-aflâka.*"

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say, they have discerned God both in His aspects of incomparability and similarity. The common people on the other hand, cannot discern God in His two aspects. For Rumi discerning the aspects of God in His similarity and incomparability is the quality of the prophets and the saints, and discerning Him in His incomparability only is the quality of the common people. The common people, says Rumi are unable to perceive God in His true reality:

> To be unable to perceive the essence, oh uncle, is the state of the common people. For the perfect saints, the essences and the mystery of their mystery are manifestly visible before their eyes. In the whole of existence, where is anything further from understanding and penetration than the mystery and essence of God? Since that does not remain hidden from His intimates, what essence and attribute can remain concealed (1381/III, 620).

The faculty of the saints and the prophets is well-trained and perfected that they can discern both sides of God. In this way, they have perfected their understanding of religion, because religion is only convinced when God is attested through both sides of His reality. It is in this context that a man like Bahá'ullah, the founder of Baha'i faith says:

> The prophets of God have been divine shepherds of humanity. They have established a bond of love and unity among mankind, made scattered peoples one nation and wandering tribes a mighty kingdom. They have laid the foundation of the oneness of God and summoned all to Universal Peace...The sun is one but the dawning-points of the sun are numerous and changing. The ocean is one but different parts of it have particular designation Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, Antarctic, etc. If we consider the names, there is differentiation, but the water, the ocean itself is one reality (Townshend 1978, 21-2).

It is also in this context that Rumi says, "in the eye of realized discernment we are all a single soul: Your creation and your upraising are as but a single soul".[16]

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16 Cited from William Chittick's *The Sufi Path of Love*, p. 72

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The actualized faculty of discernment is, I think, an active and productive instrument for the process of understanding and appraising religion. It can qualify to assess the true meaning of religion, through anamnesis, that is through the "recollection" of its accord with that which is known inwardly in the depth of human person. This faculty is the faculty of those who have transcended themselves above their lower soul and occupied the point of the center.

Love: The Law of Union

The formulas of opposite, analogy, mystical experience and the faculty of discernment are not presented as theories in the thinking of Rumi. The same is true with love. It is presented as a product of mystical and personal experience with the Beloved.

To the extent that love is a personal experience, there would be certain leap, which cannot be easily explained. How is love to be defined and put in the proper perspective, how can it be brought and applied to the pure category of understanding, and so forth remain difficult to be answered. Nonetheless, in the context of our inquiry, love may serve to illuminate the idea of union and similarity, as will become clear shortly.

The basic premise that underlies Rumi's thinking about love is the idea that there is in existence the law of attraction and gravitational pull, not only between the complementaries but also between the opposites. Thus, such opposites as male and female, right and left, above and below, darkness and light, and even faith and infidelity are attracted to one another through the fundamental urge of love. We have cited earlier in this chapter some verses from Rumi, which explain his thought concerning this matter. As an addition, perhaps we need to cite more verses. Rumi says for example:

> The Wisdom of God in destiny and in decree made us lovers of one another. Because of that fore-ordainment all the particles of the world are paired as mates and are in love with their own mate. Every particles of the universe desires its mate, just like amber and the blade of straw. Heaven says to the earth: "Welcome! To thee I am in the same relation as the iron and the magnet". In the view of intellect, heaven is the man and earth the women. Whatever the one throws down, the other

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> nurtures...God placed desire within man and women so that the world might find subsistence through their union (1381/III, 964-5).

Within the rule of love, apparent opposites were akin by its affinity. Even the smallest masses of matter such as particles are attracted to one another like lovers.

Love for Rumi is originated from God and moves toward God. Because of love the inorganic part of life merges and emerges into vegetation and vegetation into animal, from which life would ascend towards the spirit and then toward God. Without love, all things would not come into existence and the already existing things would get frozen and shrink into nothingness. Rumi often says that heaven is not blindly mechanical but is a dynamic wave of ocean of love. Heaven is always opening its door to draw the earthly existence toward its ocean of infinite love. Everything is urged to return to the heaven and to the source of the existence. God is both the source and the goal of existence. The process of moving towards this goal creates new perfection at every stage. Religion is not simply about accepting what we are, but also about goal-seeking activity. Religion is about moving from the lower stage into the higher until we reach the stage of being with God. This process is demanded not only by the primordial nature of man, but also by the cosmic love of the All-merciful and All-loving.

In every religion, love is a great word. It is the central tenet of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and to a lesser extent Judaism. Among the Sufis love is of central importance. Even among the philosophers, love is of a popular concept. Philosophers such as Shihábuddín Yahyá Suhrawardí, the founder of the Philosophy of Illumination, and Ibn Sina, the paragon of Peripatetic philosophy in Islam, are strong advocates of love.

Among the earliest exponents of love in Sufism was Rabí'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 186/801), a women saint from Basra. She was invoked by many as a figure who stands for the first intensive meditations on the nature of mystical love in Islam (Ernst 1993, 439). Other early Sufis to have advocated love were Shaqíq al-Balkhí (d. 195/810), Sumnún al-Muhibb (d. 288/900), the famous al-Halláj, Aynul Qudát al-Hamadání, Fakhruddín 'Iráqí (d. 687/1289), Ahmad al-Ghazzálí, brother of the celebrated Abú Hámid al-Ghazzálí, and Ruzbihán Baqli (d. 606/1209), author of the *Abhar al-'Áshiqín* (The Lover's Jasmine), with whom we meet the most striking articulation of the notion of love, and in whose

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hand the concept of love gained an intellectual currency.

Among these Sufis, there is a basic and common assumption about love; that love is the immediate source of life and the magnetic energy behind all movement and activity in the universe. Universe is created out of love, and therefore it is the realm of love. Universe is the arena where all things are participating, motivated and infused with love.

Underlining this assumption is the idea that love is law of union and association. That is, union among the diversities of manifested life, and union between these diversities and the origin of these diversities. Rumi holds this doctrine of union based on love, as very important to the proper understanding of the natural affinity among things and between things and God. Khalifah Abdul Hakim, while commenting on the teachings of Rumi, maintains that in Rumi love is understood as creating the law of uniformities, and seeking the thread of unity (1966, 834). This law of uniformity and unity is not only the rule of things at the level of materiality, but also at the level of spirituality. Just as things at the level of materiality are connected by the fundamental urge of love, so also things at the level of spirituality. Moreover, in love uniformity is not just a mere conjunction such as that which is produced by the law of pure external analogy and opposite, but it is the uniformity of permanent nature.

As we have already indicated, Rumi is a monadologist who would see atoms and things on the material world in terms of their mutual attraction. When Rumi speaks about this, he actually is also speaking about his religion in terms of an inner spiritual attraction with other religions. Rumi's religion is the one, which attracts and is attracted by other religions. It is the religion of love:

> My religion is to live through love (1381/VI, 1688).
> Love is the origin of all religion,
> because love is the direct manifestation of the Real,
> the Eternal and the Immortal (1381/II, 453).

"The religion of a mystic philosopher like Rumi," explains Khalifah Abdul Hakim "is a universal religion, which could not be enclosed within any orthodox or dogmatic boundaries. His religion is not the creed of any one particular religious community but being the religion of the universe is a universal religion" (1966, 834).

Being universal, and unidentifiable with any particular creed, the religion of love is independent of all religions. Rumi says, "the creed of

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love is separate from all religions. The creed and denomination of lovers is God" (1381/II, 452).

All this is consonant with the idea that religion is secondary while love is primary. Yet, Rumi also speaks of religion as primary and love as secondary. Rumi says for example:

> Man must strip secondary motives from his power of discerning and look to religion for assistance, for it is religion that is capable of discovering whence comes aid. If, however, a man spends his life with the undiscerning, his own discernment will grow weak and he will be unable to recognise the power of religion. Religion is the end (1994, 8-9).

While religion is the end, love is only the beginning, for "he who looks for God by the light of love is like him who seeks the sun by the light of the stars".

Here Rumi clearly contradicts himself in an area of particular importance. We will not go deeper into this controversy. Suffice it to say that love, I think, cannot by all means qualify as a religion (religion in its proper sense of the word) because unlike the revealed religions, love has no metaphysical and theological bases. Nor is love revealed to human being through a divine revelation. The most one can say about love is that it is a divine value and is the source of some other values. It is also a reflection of the Absolute value, because the nature of this Absolute value is love. Nonetheless, love is neither autonomous from religion, nor is it independent from it. It is just an aspect of religion. God Himself had never decreed love as religion. To the extent that religion is revealed by God through the decree of His divine command, love must be subsumed under it. Love cannot be understood as arising merely from itself or from an impulse of an independent province outside revelation. It must rather be related to religion, because religion, being the revelation of God, is the ground of all values. A mundane value such as love demands the Absolute value as its "metaphysical anchorage", and any value divorced from this anchorage would be both inappropriate and vulnerable. Love must be submerged into the authority of religion because love does not and cannot rest on itself.

Alternatively, we may say that what is meant by the word "religions" in the saying "love is separate from all religions" is the religions of the

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theologians and the philosophers, or the religions which are enclosed with orthodox or dogmatic doctrines.

Be that as it may, let us not loose sight that apart from this controversy, what is important about love in Rumi's thinking is not to debate whether it is an independent religion or not, but to see what is the cosmic significance of this idea. In this chapter I have tried to do this, and explained that love is creative, ameliorative and integrative. It is integrative because it covers the entire existence "like the day", we may say, "when it dawns it embraces the whole universe and conceals the prejudices of the dark night".

For Rumi, the ultimate goal of the whole existence is love. God says, "God has ordained that you shall worship none but Him" (Qur'an 17/24). To worship is to love in the extreme. No object is worshipped unless it is invested with some sort of love.

In Rumi, love is understood as pervading all things. It is –borrowing Henry Bergson's term- the *élanvital* (Kolakowsi 1985, 34) the fundamental urge, the gravitational pull, which creates attractions and affinities between thesis and antithesis, or even among the antitheses.

So, this is the language of Rumi, the great poet-mystic who has brought out the essence of religion as creative love. Rumi's vision of religion is that which paves the way for the different "forms" of religion to meet in a receptacle called love. His, is a harmonising force in which diversities of dogmas and modes of worship converge. As far as the salvation of our modern world is concerned, the vision of Rumi, I think, remains the convenient answer. The strife between religions, the conflict between nations and races arise from intolerance and fanaticism. Rumi wants us to go deeper into the underlying principles of religions, for there we would find the point of unity and reconciliation; there we would ascertain that the purpose of all religions is the acquisition of praise-worthy virtues, betterment of moral, spiritual development of mankind and divine bestowal. All prophets have been the promoters of these principles; none of them has been the promoter of corruption, vice or evil. They have summoned mankind to all good, united people in the love of God, invited them to the religions of the unity of mankind and exhorted them amity and agreement. Rumi was an heir to the spiritual wealth of these great souls. His is the vision, which shone from their perfection and illuminative knowledge. Rumi finally, is among those visionary souls whose single-encompassing vision displays the universe of oneness and unity, and embraces different manifestations of the Real in a single and healthy home.

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Conclusion

The goal of this study has been to expose the phenomenological aspect of what we call the Cosmic Islam by referring to its thesis and antithesis. We have used in our erudition the two basic concepts of tanzih and tashbih. We have explained in the four preceding chapters, that as a way of thinking, tanzih and tashbih are represented in particular traditions or individuals. We hold that Ibn Sina's theosophical phenomenology and Rumi's sufistic phenomenology are exponents of the cosmic Islam. Our argument has been that apart from their differences, Rumi and Ibn Sina have the same system of discourse based on the vision of tashbih. We maintain that tashbih embodies the notion of oneness and similarity. Those who emphasize God's nearness and "withness" tend to dwell on the world of unity and interrelationship. The etymology of this word suggests precisely a meaning that characterizes things in term of oneness and similarity.

The Ash'arís in the meantime, which in our discussion are divided into political and theological camps, are understood as an antithesis to the cosmic Islam. In the first chapter we dealt with Nizamul Mulk both as the political wing of the Ash'ariyyah, and as the political representative of tanzih. In the second chapter, we dealt with the Ash'arís as the primafacie exponents of tanzih.

To evaluate tashbih is indeed an apophatic judgment. However, what has been presented here is tashbih not as an apophatic dogma but as an intellectual discourse. As an apophatic dogma, tashbih –together with tanzih- represent a genuine dilemma about the aporia, that is, about the unresolvable reality of the transcendent. But as an intellectual discourse, they represent an interpretable mode of thinking. Yet, the discourse of tashbih is not easily treated in terms of the development of a single tradition or the tracing of textual influences. Such a discourse might appear in traditions, and might be the result of developments within particular school of thought, but it dões not typically form into school. A visionary mystics like Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi do speak of this discourse, but they do not form a school of thought to represent it.

In writing this thesis, we have in mind the aim to present tashbih as a formal religious paradigm for the study of religion. My discourse has been based on the idea that in the dialectic of transcendence (tanzih) and immanence (tashbih), the utterly transcendent is revealed as the utterly immanent. That is, that which is utterly "beyond", extraordinary, and unimaginable is understood as revealing itself as the most intimately "within" and common. God's aspect of similarity overwhelms His aspect of incomparability.

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I try to explain that the moment in which the transcendent reveals itself as the immanent is the moment of mystical union. It is the moment where the boundaries between divine and human melt away. I have discussed annihilation as the key component of this moment of mystical union.

Vertically in the meantime, God's dual aspect is reverberated in the cosmos, and has in turn the implication of the problem of the many in the ontological context.

From the logical perspective, the many are mutually exclusive and thus cannot be related to each other. But our purpose has been to show that apart from their exclusiveness, the many are nonetheless related. How? Our answer is manifold the most important of which is the idea of the centre.

From the perspective of the centre, various perspectives are related apart from their ontological, directional, epistemological and religious dimensions.

The centre is the alchemy of existence, for it is only around the centre that existence can revolve. It means that to exist is to have a centre. It also means that the multiplicity we see around us is dependent upon the centre. Conventional logic teaches us that the very structure of existence is a composite of centre and periphery. In the words of Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi, existence has a "from" and a "to", a starting point and a goal. The periphery is the "from", and the centre the "to". All movements must depart from the "from" and journey toward the "to" and ultimately meet at the point of the centre, which is the "to" of all movements.

My discourse takes this idea of the centre as explaining the relationship between religions in general, and the religious reality as the peripheries of the same centre.

This paradigm is analogous to the natural paradigm of Copernicus, which sees the sun as the centre of the universe. Earth and other planets are members of the same universe, which revolve around the same sun. Our "heliocentric" world-view necessitates that religions are but single tapestry especially when they are seen from the inner aspect of religion. Co-religionists are members of the same spiritual universe and are oriented toward the same centre, the Eternal and the Real.

Paradigm such as this is based on the spirit of tashbíh. I believe therefore, that tashbíh provides a secure ground for the study of religions. It entails the undoing of dualism of things, and consequently substantiates the basic unity of things and of religions.

While far from being complete, our paradigm is reminiscent of that tendency which is concerned with bringing about the objective approach

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toward religion. It is intended to be an active expression of nearness, configuring a pattern of oneness within the world of manyness.

Finally, tashbíh-oriented paradigm must, I think, be promoted in the light of the modern challenges that Islam faces. Time has come for us to actually speak of tashbíh not only as an extension of metaphysical wonders but also as a formal paradigm and hypothesis of knowledge. It is surprising –apart from its importance- that tashbíh has only been given –if any- a small place in the whole structure of the Islamic thought. Muslim intellectuals have thus far neglected this conception, and it may well be that this negligence is responsible for much of the unsatisfactory explanations about Islam and its noble teachings today.

To be more precise, tashbíh must be used to illuminate the ecumenical teachings of Islam. It is a means to speak of Islam as analogous to other religions. To consider this is certainly a preliminary step towards achieving a better understanding of not only Islam but also of other religions. It is these that we call here, the phenomenology of tasawuf.

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