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It has become a commonplace to remark that Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life. The manner in which Islam has dominated both the 'theory' and 'practice' of the Islamic world down to recent times has left little room for developments outside of the religion. Such ideas as 'profane' and 'secular' are foreign to the Islamic way of looking at things; in order to translate them into Islamic languages, terms have had to be coined or redefined.

Islam provides for every dimension of life, or for every dimension of religiosity, which, in the Islamic view of things, corresponds to life itself. Far from being a simple religious law molded to the needs of primitive Bedouins, Islam provides the resources for developing and elaborating all humanly legitimate dimensions of life and civilization, including those that pertain to the most sophisticated intellectual and spiritual needs.

If the social institutions and intellectual perspectives that came into existence within Islam were able to shape every aspect of life, the reason for this at least as far as Muslims are concerned must be sought in the Qur'an, the foundation of everything Islamic.

There, with the help of a famous *hadith* (saying of the Prophet),[1] it is easy to discern three basic areas of concern:

(i) activity, or those actions which must be performed by those who wish to submit to God's will;

(ii) faith and knowledge (these two are closely connected and often employed synonymously), or the doctrines that bring the mind into conformity with revealed truth;

(iii) spiritual virtue, love, or inward goodness and moral beauty, without which correct action becomes hypocrisy and orthodox dogma becomes empty words or narrow minded and hateful fanaticism.[2]

These three dimensions of Islam, which for simplicity's sake we can label works, faith, and virtue, provide three broad categories in terms of which the Islamization of all aspects of human life and thought took place; as elaborated theoretically and institutionalized in practice they were able to bring every human activity and need into the context of the religion. Since here we are dealing mainly with intellectual perspectives and theoretical expositions of the Qur'anic teachings, it need only be pointed out that the Qur'anic concern with works, whether individual or social, becomes institutionalized through the law (the *shari'a*); 'faith' is dealt with mainly in *kalam* (dogmatic theology), theoretical Sufism, and philosophy; while virtue along with all the psychological and spiritual concomitants of love for God is discussed primarily in manuals of Sufi theory and practice.

Sufism is often referred to as 'Islamic mysticism', but this term can be misleading if it suggests something extraneous or superadded to the tradition. Once it is understood that Sufism in the widest sense represents the whole dimension of spiritual virtue and love, or the 'spirit' of Islam as opposed to its 'letter', then it becomes clear that Islam without Sufism is a corpse.[3]

If Sufism has sometimes assumed certain institutionalized forms that were at odds with other institutionalized forms in particular those of the law, this only proves that there always exists a creative tension between 'spirit' and 'letter' and that in any case human institutions represent the formalization, solidification, and even stagnation of a spiritual ideal; by the very act of assuming outward form institutions become limited and are set in opposition to other possibilities of expression.

However, this may be the fact remains that throughout Islamic history, Islam has been animated by an inner life whose spokesmen have been practitioners of the spiritual disciplines connected with the name of Sufism. The title of Al-Ghazali's celebrated *Ihya ulum al-din* ('Revivification of the Sciences of Religion) points to what has been going on from the beginnings of Islam through the active presence of a living spirituality.

In the sphere of faith or doctrine Sufis have attempted to revivify religious dogma by explaining its meaning and significance. The Qur'an and the *hadith* literature make pronouncements in a 'mythical' form that is not always easy of access, especially as the temporal and spiritual distance from the origin increases (witness all the thwarted attempts of westerners trying to fathom the appeal of the Qur'anic message).

Those Sufis who have had the vocation to expound the doctrine of Islam have often felt it necessary to revivify it by explaining it in 'contemporary' terminology. Most of these Sufis have also taken great pains to demonstrate that their teachings do not break out of the normative limits imposed by the revelation, but only clarify certain implications which are no longer obvious to the Muslims of their times.

In short, far from being anti-Islamic in any sense, the Sufis invite Muslims to a deepening of their own faith by confirming its truth and efficacy on every level, not only on that of a literalistic understanding.[4]

The basic contents of faith, or the articles of Muslim dogma, are set down in the Qur'an as 'God, the angels, the prophets, the scriptures, and the Last Day'[5]. Islam has traditionally divided these into three main categories:[6]

(i) *tawhid*, or the profession of Divine unity, which includes the whole question of the relationship between the Creator and His creatures and speaks in detail about the intermediate role of the angelic hierarchy;

(ii) *nubuwa*, or prophecy, which deals with such problems as the necessity and universality of revelation and the contents of the divine messages;

(iii) *ma'ad*, or the 'return' to God, i.e., eschatology.

A perspective like *kalam* is concerned primarily with the defence of the Islamic dogmas in the literal form in which they were revealed. In contrast, Islamic philosophy attempts to understand these doctrines by means of the human reason and without depending upon or necessarily defending the Qur'anic data. In general, the Muslim philosophers found the Qur'anic teachings rationally acceptable, though they often felt it necessary to 'interpret' them in ways the defenders of *kalam* could not accept, and on certain occasions individual philosophers came to conclusions about secondary matters, especially in categories (ii) and (iii), that were in apparent opposition to the text of the Holy Book.

Broadly speaking, philosophy in Islam was an intellectual exercise not necessarily connected with religious practice, though it usually was. In contrast, the Sufis always emphasized the primacy of religious practice over philosophical theory. Moreover, their expositions of Islamic doctrines were normally the fruit of an 'unveiling' (*kashf*) or an inward vision of the truth of the Qur'anic message, which was then reformulated in the language of their disciples and followers; by means of these 'revivified' interpretations of Islamic doctrine the Sufis invited Muslims to *practice* Islam with full sincerity and to realize inwardly, through the opening of the 'eye of the heart', the truth of the revelation.

If eschatology is made the third of Islam's three fundamental doctrines, this is certainly connected to the fact that the Qur'an discusses the return to God in great detail; its graphic descriptions of the delights of paradise and the horrors of hell are well known.

To the extent that it deals with eschatology, *kalam* accepts the Qur'anic account at face value, while both philosophy and Sufism attempt to explain the 'myth' in terms more readily understandable to men who tend to 'think' and analyze rather than to relate intuitively to the synthetic and non-analytical picture provided by the Qur'anic imagery. Again, Islamic philosophy is mainly concerned in its accounts of eschatology to show that there is nothing 'irrational' about belief in the next life; on the contrary, the future life follows necessarily from the nature of the universe and more, particularly from the nature of the human soul.

As for the Qur'anic descriptions of the next world, the early philosophers in particular tend to explain these in terms of the need of a religion to speak the language of the common people; the later philosophers, from Suhrawardi onwards, prefer the position that the Qur'anic imagery provides accurate accounts of actual events which take place in the 'world of imagination', an intermediate ontological realm which is neither purely spiritual nor purely corporeal. The Sufis, beginning with the great Al-Ghazali, tend to agree with the philosophers on these points much more than with the defenders of *kalam*.

In short, an overview of Islamic eschatological teachings would show that the 'defenders of the law' and of the legalistic and literalistic perspective in general uphold the literal accuracy of the Qur'anic accounts. But both the philosophers (generally speaking) and the Sufis maintain that these accounts can also be understood on a level which, without negating the literal interpretation, adds another dimension to our understanding.[7]

Among Sufis, Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) is justly celebrated for his vast outpouring of inspired poetry and his profound interpretations of the inward meaning of the Qur'anic teachings.

No *Muslim* writer can match Rumi's universal appeal; his 25,000 verse *Mathnawi*, called the 'Qur'an in the Persian Language', has been studied and venerated wherever the Persian language has been known, from Turkey to the subcontinent, and he is the most translated of any of the classical Muslim authors.

What needs to be stressed is that Rumi's explanations of Islamic eschatology, like his other teachings, are far from being his own invention; he is merely reformulating in his inimitable manner a tradition which is implicit and sometimes explicit in the Qur'an and the *hadith*; this tradition has been discussed by most of the great Muslim thinkers e.g., Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Suhrawardi, Ibn al-'Arabi, and Mulla Sadra, each representing one of five major perspectives and has been surprisingly coherent and unanimous down to the present day.[8]

In short, if we ask the question, 'What do the Qur'anic teachings about eschatology *mean*?', we will find

that in large measure Rumi's answer concurs with that provided by the major figures who have dealt with the question. What is peculiar to Rumi is the poetical imagery which he employs to express and revivify the traditional position, an imagery that provides his formulations with a freshness and relevance which come through even in translation into English.

Several major discussions can be discerned in works on eschatology. For example, the 'return' proper can be divided into two main divisions, which might be called the 'compulsory return' (cf. *al-mawt al-ijbari*) and the 'voluntary return' (cf. *al-mawt al-ikhtiyari*). Everyone dies and is resurrected, but certain people choose to experience a voluntary death to this world corresponding to a rebirth in God.

The Qur'an often connects death with the 'meeting with God' (*liqa'Allah*), and the spiritual meaning of this juxtaposition was explained already by the Prophet.[9] For example, he said, 'If you want to see a dead man walking upon the face of the earth, then look upon Abu Bakr [the Prophet's close companion].' The 'friends of God' (awliya' Allah) are those who have died to this life, though they live in God and God lives in them. This voluntary return to God is the subject of many works, by both Sufis and philosophers.[10]

The whole dimension of Sufi teaching that is connected with the stages and stations of the spiritual journey describes in voluminous detail the spiritual transformation undergone when a human being returns to God before his physical death. As for discussions of the 'compulsory return', these deal with such topics as the experience of physical death, the period spent in the grave before the resurrection (the 'interworld' or *barzakh*), the resurrection and the various events connected with it, and the final division of human beings into the inhabitants of heaven and hell.

Still another major dimension of eschatological teachings has to do with the 'origin' (*al-mabda*), which is viewed as the complement of the return. Without knowing where we have come from, we cannot understand where we are going. In what follows, an attempt will be made to explain how Rumi understands a single facet of the compulsory return, i.e., physical death; though Rumi deals in his works with other dimensions of eschatology as well, in particular the question of the voluntary return.[11] However, Rumi's remarks on death need to be situated within the context of man's 'origin', so it is necessary to begin by saying a few words about how he interprets the Islamic teachings concerning the human role in the cosmos.

According to the Prophet, man was created upon the image or 'form' (*sura*) of God, or rather, of God as designated by the Name 'Allah', the referent of all the Divine Names, which are often said to number ninety-nine. Just as the macrocosm reflects all of God's Names in an inconceivably vast deployment, so also the microcosm reflects all of the Names or the one 'all-comprehensive' name Allah in a summarized and unified whole. The Sufis see a clear statement of man's microcosmic nature in such Qur'anic verses as:

***"God taught Adam the names, all of them"* (*2:31*).**

In Rumi's words:

The father of mankind, who is the lord of 'He taught the names',

has hundreds of thousands of sciences in every vein.

His spirit was taught the name of every single thing,

exactly as that thing is until its end.

(M I 1234–35)[12]

All mankind, as children of Adam, possess a latent knowledge of ‘all the names’. From one point of view, these names correspond to the ‘outward form’ of each thing in the universe; from another point of view, they are the ‘inward mysteries’ of the things, i.e., the things as known by God, for it was God Himself who taught the names to Adam.[13]

Moreover, the creatures are ‘signs’ (*ayat*) of God, reflecting in their qualities the divine attributes. These are ‘pure and limpid water, within which shine the attributes of the Almighty’ (MVI 3172). So, in the last analysis, knowledge of the 'names' means knowledge of God's own names. This is why Adam, as knower of all the names, was designated as God's vicegerent[14]; the fact that he committed an act of 'forgetfulness' (*ghafla*) is insignificant in the face of the fact that he subsequently repented, was forgiven by God, and then was made His first prophet on earth. Hence Adam is worthy of emulation as the prototype and model of human perfection.

If you are born of Adam, sit like him

and behold his progeny within yourself.

What does the vat contain that is not in the river?

What does the room contain that is not in the city?

(MIV 809–10)

The Prophet said, ‘He who knows himself knows his Lord.’ Just as this copper astrolabe mirrors the heavens, so man’s existence is God’s astrolabe:

“We have honoured the children of Adam” (***17:70***)***.***

When God causes a man to have knowledge of Him and be familiar with Him, moment by moment he observes God's theophanies and His ineffable beauty from the astrolabe of his own existence. (F 10/22)

The goal of human existence is to carry the Trust[15] bestowed upon mankind by God, to be His vicegerent upon earth, the mediator between Him and creation. This cannot be accomplished to perfection without attaining a knowledge of all the Names of God and all the names of the creatures, a

knowledge that implies a transformation of the forgetful and imperfect human substance into a highly polished mirror reflecting both the transcendent and the immanent realities. This transformation is not only cognitive, but also spiritual and moral; hence it is often described by reference to the Prophetic saying: 'Assume the moral traits (*akhlaq*) of Allah', traits which can be subsumed under the ninety-nine Divine Names. Al-Ghazali refers to the goal of this transformation as *ta'alluh* (a word derived from the same root as the Name Allah), i.e., 'being like unto Allah', or 'theomorphism'.[16]

In order to understand the connection between 'assuming the moral traits of God' or 'actualizing the form upon which man was 'created' and the 'return', it is necessary to take a brief look at man's state before he enters into this world. Rumi refers frequently to the 'covenant of Alast', when God asked the children of Adam before their bodily creation,

"Am I not (alast) your Lord?' They answered, 'Indeed (Thou art); we give witness" (7:172).

At this ontological level, man was a disengaged spirit in communion with God:

'Before you were this body, you were a pure spirit.

(D 33704).

By acknowledging God's Lordship, man assumed the grave responsibility of the Trust, of being made upon God's form. To be human is to accept the consequences of how one employs the gift of existence; man cannot escape his free will and power of choice:

Man is mounted upon the steed of 'We have honoured the sons of Adam':

The reins of free will are in the hands of his discernment.

(M III 3300)[17]

When the potentialities contained within a human spirit become manifest within the corporeal realm, a luminous spark descends from the realm of spiritual unity and peace into the world of multiplicity and strife.

Like the sun we were one substance;

like water, we were pure and without ripples.

When that pure light entered into form,

multiplicity appeared like the shadow of a battlement.

(M I 687-88)

The sunlight of the spirits became divided within the windows, the bodies.

(M II 186)

Rumi provides several reasons why God's wisdom should require such a change of state;[18] the one which is most instructive in the present context has to do with the fact that separation from the source of all existence, all knowledge, and all joy means that man will experience the opposites of these realities; then, since things become known through their opposites',[19] he can gain true knowledge of his own primordial situation.

No doubt man knew God in the realm of Alast, but this knowledge precluded individual self-consciousness; all individual lights were yet as one light. For men to perceive that pure light with full awareness and at every possible level of consciousness, they must first enter into a world veiled from it and experience the limitations of individual selfhood. Rumi summarizes these points in the following lines:

The birds of consciousness have descended from the heavens

and become tied to the earth for two or three days.

They were sent from the spheres

though they are the stars in religion's sky,

To realize the worth of union with God

and to see the pain of separation from Him.

(D 7192–94)[20]

To experience separation from God, man must in some sense traverse the various levels of existence known in Sufism as the 'Arc of Descent' until he is born into the sensory world.[21] Then he begins the return to God, also known as the 'Arc of Ascent', which Rumi describes in detail. Following Islamic teachings as found in numerous works on cosmology and psychology,[22] he points out that the human reality, having begun its sojourn in the sensory realm as an inanimate lump of flesh in the womb, gradually begins to manifest the perfections latent within its theomorphic nature. It gains the powers of the vegetative soul and then those of the animal soul; its birth and growth prepare it for specifically human characteristics.

At puberty the human being gains, however imperfectly, the power of discernment known as 'intellect' (*'aql*), and it is then required to follow the Law. Man's efforts and God's grace gradually make of him what he is to be. But the ultimate goal of human existence is beyond measure or reckoning; made upon God's form, man cannot be held back by any created limits. Rumi is well known for his eloquent expression of a doctrine of spiritual development that bears a certain superficial resemblance to evolutionism; the teaching in fact is common to many Sufis and philosophers who deal with the soul's

ultimate end.[23]

A few verses will suffice to illustrate Rumi's mode of expression. Note that the following lines have a direct bearing upon the Islamic concept of death: they illustrate that the death of one thing is always the birth of another. In the words of the Prophet: 'You were created for eternity, and you will only be transferred from abode to abode.'

I died from the mineral kingdom and became a plant;

I died to vegetative nature and attained to the animal state.

I died to animality and became a man. So why should I fear?

When did I ever become less through dying?

Next time I will die to human nature,

so that I may spread my wings and lift up my head among the angels.

Once again, I will be sacrificed to angelic nature and become that which enters not the imagination.

(M III 3901–3 and 5)

The ultimate, unimaginable human perfection corresponds to the full actualization of the divine form, total and integral theomorphism. Rumi sometimes refers to this realization as the station where a man may rightly say, with Hallaj: 'I am God.'[24] The goal of human life is to reach this perfection, while the role of the religious Law in general and the spiritual path in particular is to guide us to its achievement. The extent to which we turn our efforts in life toward this goal will determine our state in the next stage of existence.

Rumi often describes the spiritual development of man in terms of the struggle between the 'intellect' and the 'ego' (*nafs*). The first is a light innate within all human beings that links them to their spiritual origin and provides discernment between truth and error; when fully actualized it enables man to see all things in their proper places. The second is a reality connected to man's own individuation and separative existence which by nature turns away from any superior light or power. When the intellect governs the ego, man will follow the Way to God; but when the ego rules over the intellect, man will fall into error and remain separated from his Source.[25]

The opposition between intellect and ego corresponds to other opposing pairs in creation, such as angels and devils, prophets and deniers, believers and infidels, heaven and hell. The prototypes in *divinis* for these oppositions are found in the two attributes 'Mercy' (*rahma*) and 'Wrath' (*ghadab*), or 'Gentleness' (*lutf*) and 'Severity' (*qahr*). But these opposite attributes are not of equal weight, since, according to the well-known *hadith qudsi*. 'My mercy precedes My wrath'. Mercy is the attribute of God's

very essence, while wrath only comes into play in relation to certain creatures; Mercy pertains primarily to unity and union, while wrath pertains to multiplicity and separation. Eschatologically speaking, gentleness and mercy correspond to paradise, or the peace and joy of God's presence; wrath and severity correspond to hell, or the fire and anguish of separation from God and from our own theomorphic nature. Thus, the man of faith clings to his intellect, which is ‘luminous and seeks the good’ (M III 2557); it is a reality that reveals and displays the divine mercy and leads man back to his own source.

In contrast the man who follows the ego, the limited selfhood that is ‘blind and deaf to God’ (M., IV, 235), will remain in dispersion, separation, and ‘wrath’.

His mercy is prior to His wrath.

If you want spiritual priority, go, seek the prior attribute

(M IV 3205)

If you want to repel the evil of hellfire,

turn the water of mercy on the fire's heart.

The fountain of that water of mercy is the man of faith

the water of life is the pure spirit of the virtuous man.

That is why your ego flees from him,

since you are of fire, and he is the water of the stream.

(M II 1252–54)

To follow the intellect is to follow the prophets and the saints, who are the outward manifestation of God's guiding mercy in the human world.

God's mercy dominates His vengeance:

Hence every prophet has conquered his opposite,

Since he is the result of mercy, while his opposite, that ugly-faced one, is a result of God's Severity.[26]

(M V 515–16)

By continuous effort and spiritual travail, by following in the footsteps of the prophets and saints, and by loving God with a love so fervent that it burns away all ‘others’ (*aghyar*), man's consciousness is transformed. This process is all important, for our inward state will determine our destiny.

You are your thought, brother,

the rest of you is bones and fibre:

If you think of roses, you are a rose garden;

if you think of thorns, you are fuel for the furnace.

(M II 277–78)

The content of our thoughts and the object of our desires and aspirations determines who we are in this world and the next.

Whatever makes you tremble, know that you are worth just that

That is why the heart of God's lover is greater than His Throne.

(D 6400)

Whatever mate you desire, go!

Become obliterated in your beloved! Assume the same shape and attributes!

If you want light, then gain preparedness for light!

If you want distance from God, become self-seeing and distant!

And if you want a way out of this ruined prison,

turn not away from the Beloved,

"But prostrate yourself and draw nigh" **(*96: 19*).**

(M I 3605–07)

God will give you what you seek. Where your aspiration lies, that you will become, for 'The bird flies with its wings, but the believer flies with his aspiration.'

(F 77/89)

Rumi never tires of stressing that the world of thought, the inward realm of our aspirations, hopes, and desires, shapes our outward world. He is not only referring to the fact that the way our life develops depends to a large degree upon our concepts of self and reality, the goals we set ourselves, and our mental reactions to outward stimuli; primarily he has in mind the ontological structure of the universe, where the divine world rules the spiritual, the spiritual dominates over the 'mental' or 'imaginal' (*khayali*), and this last controls the corporeal or sensory.

In your eyes a mountain is large

thought is a mouse, the mountain a wolf.

In your eyes the world is awesome and tremendous;

you fear and tremble at clouds, thunder, and the sky

But, oh you who are less than an ass,

you are heedless and secure from the world of thought, like an unaware stone

For you are but a bodily form and have no share of intellect,

You have not the traits of a man, but of a young ass.

In ignorance you see the shadow and consider it the object,

so the object seems to you a game and a trifle.

Wait until the day when thought and imagination

spread their wings and pinions without veil,

When mountains become soft wool,

and this hot and cold earth becomes non-existent.

You will see neither the heavens, nor the stars, nor existence

only the Living, Loving, One God.

(□ II 1038-45)

Thought will rule man's situation after death, just as it governs it now in this life.

The major difference will be that in that world, thought will take up form and be perceived in images. The world after death is a branch of the world of imagination (*'alam-i khayal*), an intermediate ontological state higher than corporeal existence but lower than the purely spiritual.[27] There, the thoughts and intentions that determined our works in this world will be perceived in half-corporeal, half-spiritual form; the visions of angels and other holy apparitions granted to spiritual travellers also take place in various branches of this world.

The 'imaginal' nature of after-death experience is discussed in some detail by theologians such as Al-Ghazali, Sufis such as Ibn al-Arabi, and philosophers such as Suhrawardi.[28] Rumi is continuing this tradition when he explains that eschatological realities reveal themselves in appropriate forms, just as

thoughts and emotions are perceived in imaginal form during dreams; in fact, the Qur'an itself makes an explicit connection between death and sleep[29], while the Prophet called sleep 'death's brother'.

Al-Ghazali had shown that the traditional data referring to death and the resurrection can be understood in terms of the same principles that are used in dream interpretation, one of the most popular of the Islamic sciences. For, he says, just as we see dream images in forms that are appropriate to the meaning that lies beyond them, so in the next world 'Forms will be subordinate to spirits and realities: hence everything seen there will be perceived in a form appropriate to its reality.[30]

Rumi applies the same mode of explanation in discussing such traditional concepts as 'scrolls flying into the right hands or left hands of the dead', heaven and hell, the Scales, and the Reckoning.[31] But of course Rumi makes it clear that, in spite of a certain ontological similarity between death and dreaming, the next world is far from being a dream; that title should rather be given to this world. According to the Prophet: 'Men are asleep, and when they die, they wake up.' Concerning death, the Qur'an says:

"Thou wast heedless of this; therefore, We have now removed from thee thy covering, so thy sight today is piercing" (***50:22***).

This world is a sleeper's dream;

the sleeper thinks his world will last,

till suddenly the morning of death arrives,

and he is delivered from the darkness of opinion and distortion.

once he sees his place of rest,

he laughs at all that used to cause him heartache.

whatever good or evil you see (today) in this dream

will appear to you (again), one by one, on the day of resurrection.

what you did in the dream of this world will be clear to you once you wake up.

think not that your evil act in this dream will have no interpretation.

on the contrary, your laughter will be transformed

into weeping and sorrow

on the day of interpretation, oh evil man.

oh you who have torn the cloak of many Josephs,

you will rise up as a wolf from this heavy sleep.

having become so many wolves,

your character traits will tear you, limb from limb in anger.

(M IV 3654–63)

Elsewhere, Rumi quotes the Prophet as saying that if a man's works are evil, they will be transformed into serpents in his grave (M V 1051–52). Al-Ghazali had explained this animal symbolism in some detail, remarking, for example, that when the Prophet mentions 'ninety-nine serpents in the grave' he is referring to a person's corrupt character traits that will torment him after death.[32]

Al-Ghazali employs the same sort of symbolism to aid in explaining the structure of human character; a human being, in order to attain perfection, must integrate and harmonize four basic kinds of attributes: the beastly (*bahimi*, also known as 'concupiscence', *shahwa*), the -predatory (sab'i, also called irascibility, *ghadab*), the satanic (*shaytani*), and the lordly or seigneurial (*rabbani*). More specifically, this last kind of attribute, which is reflected directly in the intellect, must dominate over the other three and bring them into perfect balance.

Thus, says Al-Ghazali, man contains within his skin a pig, a dog, a devil, and a wise man.[33] If the last fails to rule, man will remain in multiplicity and dispersion; failing to reach unity and mercy, he will be overcome by wrath.[34] The rule of the intellect or of the 'wise man' goes hand in hand with submission to the prophets, i.e., to Revelation.

The Qur'an, the word of God is the divine light focused within the macrocosm, just as the intellect is the same light shining within the microcosm. The function of revelation is to remind the intellect of its own nature; Al-Ghazali compares the relationship between the Qur'an and the intellect to that between the light of the sun and vision.[35] The intellect must be awakened to its own essence by God's word; the more it conforms to the word, the more its own reality sheer cognitive luminosity streaming forth from the divine light-becomes actualized.

Paul Nwyia describes how the efforts of the Sufis were directed at 'Koranizing the memory,[36] though in the present context it is better to speak of 'Qur'anizing the imagination'. To the extent that the domain surveyed by the intellect is one of concepts, images, and formal limitations, it pertains to the 'imaginal world' (in this life only the prophets and saints are able to break out of the limitations of their own individual imagination in a quasi-absolute manner and make contact with the supra-individual world of imagination).

Through the process of Qur'anization, thoughts and concepts take on the normative forms and images provided by the divine word. The Qur'an, the articulated word of God, 'reforms' the soul of man and thus remakes the divine image.[37]

This process can also be described as follows: Islam views the fall of man and hence the whole process of 'individuation' in terms of 'forgetfulness' (*ghafla*), which in turn is connected to the ideas of separation, dispersion, and multiplicity. Forgetfulness is contrasted with 'remembrance' (*dhikr*), which can only come about through the intervention of revelation.

The Qur'an often refers to itself as a 'remembrance' or a 'reminder' (*dhikra*); and it employs such terms as 'to meditate' (*tafakkara*) and 'to intellect' (*'aqila*) in contexts which show that 'remembrance, 'meditation', and 'intellection' are equivalent operations. They must be God-centred or else erroneous.

Thus, forgetfulness and 'ego-centricity' are the attributes of fallen man, while the human theomorphic nature can only be actualized through remembrance and 'intellection'. Forgetfulness is multiplicity (*kathra*), dispersion (tafriqa), separation (*firaq*), and wrath; remembrance is unity (*wahda*), collectedness (*jam'*), union (*wasl*), and mercy.38

What then does man experience at death? In short, he encounters his own character traits and thoughts, but in a form that corresponds to their true nature; they appear to him in corporeal form within the imaginal substance that plays the role of matter in the next world. If man's thoughts are shaped by the Divine Word, he will meet them in an appropriate imaginal form; luminous and merciful. But if his thoughts are shaped by his own limited self, he will remain within the dispersion, darkness, separation, and 'wrath' that is his own ego.

What occurs is summarized by Rumi's friend Qunawi (the foremost disciple of Ibn al-'Arabi): 'What had been outward becomes inward and what had been inward becomes outward. Every attribute that dominated over man in this world will manifest itself to him in an appropriate form.39

In Rumis own words,

The dust motes thoughts and mental processes

will be made manifest by the Sun of Realities.

(M VI 434)

Here (in this world) imagination is hidden, while its effects are apparent;

there (after death) forms will grow up from imagination.

(M V 1790)

There are thousands of wolves and pigs in our existence:

good and evil, fair and foul.

Man's properties are determined by the trait that predominates:

if gold is more than copper, then he is gold.

Of necessity you will be given form at the Resurrection [40]

in accordance with the character trait that

predominates in your existence.

(M II 417–19)

How many children of your thoughts will you see in the grave after death,

all surrounding your soul crying, 'Papa!"?

Your good thoughts give birth to youths and houris;

your ugly thoughts produce great demons.

(D 20435–37)

After your death, your good traits will run on ahead of

like moon–faced ladies, those attributes will stroll gracefully.

One will take your hand, another will ask after you,

and still another will bring you offerings of ruby lips and sugar kisses.

(D 4099 4100)

In death, man meets himself. Once the veil is lifted from before his eyes, he stands face to fee with the self that he has nurtured for a lifetime. Whether that self, manifests the harmony and unity of mercy or the disequilibrium and dispersion of wrath will determine his permanent abode in the next stage of existence.

Everyone's death, oh youth, is the same colour as himself:

for God's enemy, an enemy, for His friend, a friend.

A mirror before a Turcoman shows a shining face;

a mirror before a black man shows blackness.

If you fear and flee from death,

you fear yourself, oh friend.

Take heed!

It is your own ugly face, not the face of death.

Your spirit is like a tree, and death its leaves.

Whether good or bad, it has grown from you.

Every hidden thought, pleasant or unpleasant,

derives from your own self.

(M III 3439–43)

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1. The hadith in which the Prophet defines 'the religion (al-din)', i.e., Islam, as the sum of al-Islam, al-iman, and al-ihsan. Al-Islam or 'submission to God' is the profession of faith, the ritual prayer, the alms tax, and pilgrimage to Mecca; al-iman or 'faith' is faith in God, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, the Last Day, and predestination; and al-ihsan or 'spiritual virtue' is 'that you worship God as if you see Him for even if you do not see Him, He sees you.' This hadith is found in both Bukhari and Muslim (the two most authoritative collections). CF. J. Robson (tr.), Mishkat al-masabih, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963–65, pp. 5–6.

2. In interpreting the Islamic concept of faith, W.C. Smith places the accent on the personal commitment that it entails rather than the divine reality to which commitment is made; at the same time, he acknowledges the importance of the content of faith in many places, as when he entitles one of his studies on the subject 'The Islamic instance: faith as theocentric' (Faith and Belief, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 33 ff.).
While generally agreeing with his analysis, I would maintain that the sources of the tradition provide ample room to place the accent on the faith's content, as I am doing here. When the Qur'an says, as it often does, 'Have faith!', it means 'Have faith in God, His angels. His scriptures, His Prophets, and the Last Day', whether or not it mentions these in any given passage. Instead of searching for the deepest meaning of commitment to the contents of faith in discussions of the concept of iman provided by the authorities on kalam, it would be more fruitful to investigate the analyses of ihsan or 'spiritual virtue' found in texts written mainly by Sufis. Even though Smith pays little attention to the Sufi contribution to this domain, he does recognize its importance, as when he writes: 'Theology [kalam] has been not even a secondary expression of Islamic faith, but takes at best a tertiary place after the moral-legal (shari'a) and the mystic Sufi (Faith and Belief, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 182).

3. When a Sufi like Abu Nu'aym Isfahani (d. 1038) includes in his voluminous history of the Sufis entitled Hilyat al-awliya ('The Adornment of the Saints') practically every Muslim of a spiritual bent from the beginning of Islam, he is pointing to the perception of 'Sufism' as another name for the dimension of Islam that is also called 'spiritual virtue' (ihsan). The fact that Western scholars as well as legalistically minded Muslims raise the objection that most of these figures were not connected to any institutionalized forms described by the name 'Sufism' in no way detracts from the accuracy and authority of Abu Nu'aym's perception. Thus P. Nwyia writes that 'The meaning of true Sufism is inflated, since all pious persons or wise men of olden times are counted by Abu Nu'aym as Sufis' (Ibn Ata Allah et la naissance de la confrèrie sadilite. Beirut: Dar el-Machreq. 1962, p. 8). In fact, Abu Nu'aym knows far better than Father Nwyia what the 'meaning of true Sufism' is.

4. In this Sufism is conforming to the general trend of 'mystical' movements everywhere, in spite of certain popular misconceptions to the contrary. See S.T. Katz, 'The "conservative" character of mystical experience, in Mysticism and Religious Traditions, ed. idem, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 3–60; cf. A. Schimmel, 'Sufism and the Islamic tradition', pp. 131–47.

5. Cf. 4:136, 2:177.

6. The Shi'is add two more, 'adl, or Divine justice, and the Imamate, but these in fact are riders on the first and second categories respectively.

7. The best summary of the literal teachings of the Qur'an and the hadith is found in J.J. Smith and Y.Y. Haddad. The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection, Albany: SUNY Press. 1981, although the jump that this work makes from the literalistic position to certain modernist accounts leaves out all the significant interpretations of the meaning of Islamic eschatological teachings (the word understanding in the title of the work is particularly inappropriate). For an overview of the tradition as a whole.

See W. Chittick, 'Eschatology,' in Islamic Spirituality. ed. S.H. Nasr (vol. 19 of World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest). New York: Crossroad, forthcoming. The only relatively detailed presentation in English of the developed eschatological tradition is found in Mulla Sadra, The Wisdom of the Throne, tr. J.W. Morris, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

8. Smith and Haddad quote from the works of Egyptian modernists who have largely stepped outside of the living tradition of eschatological hermeneutics; but in other parts of the world, Iran in particular, contemporary thinkers have restated the traditional teachings in modern language. Cf. the outstanding work by the contemporary female master of Islamic thought who signs her work Yak Banu-yi Irani ('An Iranian Lady'): Ma'ad, ya akharin sayr-i bashar, Tabriz: Surush, 1334/1955.

9. It is already obvious in the Qur'an itself if a person 'has eyes to see'. L. Massignon, the foremost Western scholar of Sufism, pointed out long ago that all of the central Sufi teachings can be found in the Qur'an if it is read with the proper sensitivity toward the spiritual life; Sufis have been making the same point ever since they first started producing systematic works, in about the ninth century.

10. J.T.P. de Bruijn points out the affinity of this dimension of Islamic eschatology with Neoplatonic conceptions. However, he is totally in error when he says that it represents a 'different tradition of eschatology' or that it was 'irreconcilable with the 'orthodox doctrine of the resurrection of the body'. Without going into details, I will merely point out that a sensitive reading of the Qur'an shows numerous references to this second tradition. In any case, if we are asked to decide whether the 'orthodox' interpretation of Islamic teachings is that provided by Mr. de Bruijn or by Al-Ghazali (or dozens of other authorities), our choice should be clear. CF. J.T.P. de Bruijn, Of Piety and Poetry, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983, p. 211.

11. CF. W. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi, Albany: SUNY Press, 1983, pp. 171 ff.

12. Cf. Chittick, Sufi Path. pp. 61 ff. References to Rumi's works are indicated as follows: M: The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi, ed. and trans. R.A. Nicholson. 8 vols., London: Luzac. 1925-40: D: Kulliyat-i Shams ya diwan-i kabir. ed. B. Furuzanfar. 10 vols. Tehran: University of Tehran Press. 1336-46/1957-67: F: Fihi ma fihi. ed. B. Furuzanfar. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1348/1969, and A.J. Arberry (tr.). Discourses of Rumi. London: John Murray, 1961. All translations are my own.

13. CF. Sufi Path. pp. 62-63.

14. Khalifa, See 2:30.

15. See 33:72.

16. Al-Maqsad al-asna fi sharh ma'ani asma' Allah al-husna, ed. F.A. Shehadi, Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1971, pp. 65, 46. Cf. R.J. McCarthy. Freedom and Fulfilment, Boston: Twayne Publishers. 1980. p. 377: R. Stade, tr., Ninety-nine Names of God, Ibadan: Daystar Press. 1970. p. 12.

17. Cf. Sufi Path, pp. 113-18.

18. Cf. Sufi Path, pp.72 ff.

19. Cf. Sufi Path, pp. 49 ff.

20. Cf. Sufi Path, pp. 68-72.

21. On the stages of this descent, see Sufi Path, pp. 72 ff., and Chittick, The circle of spiritual ascent according to al-Qunawi, in Neoplatonism and Islam, ed. P. Morewedge, Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming.

22. Cf. Chittick, 'Eschatology.'

23. Cf. Chittick, 'Eschatology'; also, Sufi Path, pp. 72-82.

24. Cf. Sufi Path. pp. 191-193.

25. Cf. Sufi Path., pp. 33-35. 88-92.

26. From another point of view, the prophets manifest both mercy and wrath. e.g. mercy toward the faithful and wrath

toward the deniers. The prophets realize a perfect balance between mercy and wrath, since both attributes are constituent elements of the created world, whether macrocosm or microcosm. But in the last analysis wrath is an aspect of mercy, since mercy precedes it ontologically. This is one meaning of the prophetic saying: 'Hellfire is a whip with which God drives people to paradise.' If wrath is a manifestation of mercy, so also is multiplicity a manifestation of unity. Man's fall into this world, which Rumi calls 'God's house of Severity' (M VI 1890), means that, to the extent he identifies himself with it and with his own ego, he has chosen multiplicity and wrath over unity and mercy. The spiritual task is to reach unity, though wrath and multiplicity always have a positive role to play, since without them there would be no creation.

27. Rumi himself does not provide a philosophical description of the world of imagination: its nature as he perceived it has to be deduced from the images and symbols he employs in describing it (cf. Sufi Path. pp. 248–67). However, what he does say is consonant with the descriptions provided by philosophers such as Mulla Sadra and Sufis of a philosophical bent such as Ibn al- 'Arabi. For a relatively straightforward definition of this world and its function in the cosmic hierarchy, see Chittick. 'The five divine presences,' The Muslim World. LXXII (1982), 107–128.

28. See Chittick, 'Eschatology'.

29. See 39:42.

30. Al-Madnun bi-hi 'ala ghayr ahli-hi, in al-Qusur al- 'awali min rasa'il al-Imam al-Al-Ghazali. II. Cairo: Maktabat al-Jundi, 1970. p. 166.

31. Cf. Sufi Path. pp. 102 ff.

32. Ihya ulum al-din, IV.10.7; Kimiya-yi sa'adat, ed. A. Aram. Tehran: Markazi, 1319/1940. p. 85: al-Arba'in, ed. M.M. Abu 'l- 'Ala', Cairo: Maktabat al-Jundi, 1970, p. 282.

33. McCarthy. Freedom and Fulfillment, p. 377.

34. Innumerable examples of animals mentioned in the context of moral development and eschatology, whether by Rumi or other authorities, can be understood as referring to man's failure to achieve spiritual integration and actualize his theomorphic nature. Avicenna goes as far as to claim that all instances of serious authors speaking of 'transmigration' (tanasukh) must be taken as warnings that imbalanced character traits will result in deviation from the human state. See his Risala adhawiyya fi amr al-ma'ad, ed. S. Dunya. Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi. 1949. pp. 42–43,92, and 119.

35. Ihya ulum al-din, 171.

36. Ibn Ata' Allah et la naissance de la confrerie Sadilite, p. 46; cf. A. Schimmel, 'Sufism and the Islamic tradition,' p. 131.

37. Cf. Chittick, 'The Words of the All-Merciful', Parabola, VIII/III, 1983, pp.19–25.

38. Note that the relationship between the two elements in these pairs of opposites (and many others that Rumi employs) is of the same nature as that between mercy and wrath: the first term 'precedes' and takes ontological priority over the second. In other words, Wrath is not so much the opposite of Mercy as one of its internal dimensions necessitated by conditions in the created world. In a similar way, multiplicity derives from unity and becomes integrated into it (Islamic art with its geometric designs and arabesques is a good visual illustration of this principle): dispersion is only comprehendible in terms of the collectedness from which it strays; separation is only meaningful within the context of union; the forgetful ego once infused with the light of the intellect becomes 'the soul at peace with God' (al-nafs al- mutma'inna, 89:27); and so forth.

39. Tabsirat al-mubtadi, tr. W. Chittick, 3.3, forthcoming.

40. Rumi speaks here of the resurrection rather than physical death, but the points he makes are the same as those made in other passages which definitely speak about the period in the grave before the resurrection. Indeed, the authorities agree that what occurs at death is a foretaste of what will happen at the resurrection; thus, death is commonly called the 'lesser resurrection', and a prophetic saying is often quoted as alluding to this point: 'He who has died has experienced his resurrection (man mat fa-qad qamat qiyamatu-hu).' Cf. Chittick, 'Eschatology'.