

IRANIAN SUFISM AND THE QUEST FOR THE HIDDEN DIMENSION

TOWARD A DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY OF
MYSTIC INSPIRATION

I. SOME FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
SELF

“Being is an ocean in perpetual agitation,
Of this ocean people perceive but the waves.
On the apparent surface of the ocean, hidden in them,
Look at the surging waves arising from secret depths!”¹

¹ Abdorrahmân Jâmî, *Les Jaillissements de lumière (Lavâyeḥ)*, translated from the Persian by Yann Richard, Paris, Les Deux Océans, 1982, p. 139.

Adventure in the spiritual order between the east and the west

One of the leitmotifs of the literature of Iranian Sufism is the “quest for the Orient” (*istishraq*). It is an Orient that is neither localized nor localizable in the realm of positive geography. It escapes our normal perception; it is the mystic Orient, point of Origin and of Return, located at the “heavenly pole” of the cosmic North. It figures in that *geographia imaginalis* that is perceived only by the power of the imagination. It is located, then, beyond the devastated lands of this sensible world, lands that incarnate troubled and dispersed hearts for Iranian Sufism.

The return to this Orient, to the heart of this inner Land, signifies returning to one’s origins, the vivifying springtime of one’s being; it is the realization of the unified empire of conscious being where knowledge, will, power and wisdom reign.

As a result of the transfiguration of psychosensorial faculties by mystic pedagogy, an extrasensorial or imaginative perception appears. There the entire body is experienced as a rarified body endowed with exceptional powers, of unlimited space. The Sufi thus perceives himself as a microcosm.

From that point “the heavenly Land” is nothing more than the rarified land of his body, and “Heaven” is the heaven deep in his heart. The Sufi affirms himself then as the universal man with a cosmic mission. Thus this Orient-origin typifies, as Corbin stresses, “the day of esoteric knowledge” that is opposed to the “night of the depths of the obscure psyche”.² Located at the center of being, this Orient is illuminated by the “midnight sun” that typifies inner light. This Orient is located esoterically in a vertical direction, at the heavenly pole, at the boundary of the extrasensory. The Sufi, “this heavenly knight”,³ is “the Lord of all the Orient” (Rûmî; Thirteenth century).

The quest for the Orient—of the solar kind—is also the quest for knowledge, of an “oriental knowledge” (*ilm ishrâqi*) that is a saving knowledge. Recognition of the Orient of enlighten-

² Henry Corbin, *L’Homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*, Paris, Editions Présence, 1984, p. 55.

³ Djalâl-od-Dîn Rûmî, *Roubâ’yât* (Quatrains), quoted in S.H. Nasr, *Essais sur le soufisme*, tr. by Jean Herbert, Paris, Albin Michel, 1980, p. 80.

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ment corresponds to the intensification of its luminous presence and to that of its vision. And it is this rediscovered dawning presence that gives birth to illuminative knowledge. It “is thus illuminative because it is oriental, it is oriental because it is illuminative”, notes Corbin.⁴ This presence rising in the inner orient, according to Sohrawardî, makes oriental knowledge a “presential knowledge” (*ilm hozûrî*). It is “knowledge-in-the-present”, as Corbin explains, “with presence constituting the specifically ‘oriental’ relation to everything known, known in this very presence”, a relationship that is “initially fundamental to being and to knowledge”.⁵

Founder of *Oriental Theosophy*, Sohrawardî himself describes this relationship of identity established between presential knowledge and the Orient.

“The soul, spiritual in its essence, is subject to the action of the Light and wears the robe of the rising dawn, as well as producing the effect and the action of the Light. It creates a sign, and the thing is produced at its signal. It imagines, and something occurs in accordance with the image that it imagines.”⁶

Oriental knowledge is thus both the goal and the means for the quest of the Orient. This knowledge is then the opposite of western knowledge, which lacks the oriental presence and so is imaginary and fictitious, obscure and fruitless. To be deprived of “the Orient” means to be deprived of profound knowledge of self.

Indeed at the beginning of the mystic itinerary, the impassioned Sufi is nothing other than an exiled Oriental (*ishraqî*), in the mystical sense of this term. What this “foreigner” seeks, moving up vertically, is the “north pole”, this Orient lost at the time of ontological disintegration. And Sufism is nothing other than the tale of this return in the course of which one attests to the Unique. For Rûmî, the infinitely nostalgic wailing of a certain reed flute (*ney*), “cut away from its reed bed” and so “far from its source”

⁴ Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, t. II, p. 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶ Shîhâboddîn Yahyâ Sohrawardî, quoted in H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

sincerely expresses the feelings of such an exile and his passion to return.⁷

In fact this Orient-origin is the opposite of what Sohrawardī terms “western exile” (*qhorbat*), which is a sad “personal city”.⁸ It is the city of the solitary “I”, set somewhere on the inner continent as a result of the initial separation.

“It is I who am in question, for I have been through catastrophe.
From the higher place I have fallen into the pit of Hell.
... I am held prisoner in the land of the West;
... I sobbed, I implored, I sighed with regret over this separation.”⁹

In Sufism all separation mediatizes this primordial separation. Rûmî describes, in familiar language, the point of departure and the final point of this human adventure:

“Your Orient was your mother’s belly;
from there you rose to the horizon,
and then you lay down in the West of the tomb”.¹⁰

But beyond this embryonic Orient and this post-mortem West, there exists, according to Rûmî, an East and a West of the spiritual order. “In the mystic theosopher, in the light of his spiritual practices and of his devotional acts, there appear light, spiritual enjoyment and inebriation, and calm. This is his Orient. If he abandons these practices, all these feelings are turned to their twilight. This is his West.”¹¹

The separation from the mother’s belly is thus similar to the separation from the ontological Orient. It mediatizes it, it is the very reminiscence of it. As if, on the psycho-affective level, the mnemonic traces of the drama of the fall of man (which in Sufism symbolizes the fall of a clear conscience linked to ontological dis-

⁷ Rûmî, *Mathnawî*, Teheran, Amir Kabir, 1974, verses 1-11.

⁸ Sohrawardī, *Le Récit de l’exil occidental*, passage translated by H. Corbin in *ibid.*, t. II, p. 258 ff.

⁹ Sohrawardī, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 293.

¹⁰ Rûmî, *Le Livre du Dedans (Fîhî mâ fîhî)*, Teheran, Amir Kabir, 1985 (6th ed.) p. 204.

¹¹ Rûmî, *ibid.*, p. 205.

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integration) persisted in the sub-conscious of historic humanity.

“Western exile” (*qhorbat*) is the opposite of the Orient-origin. It is a disturbing universe tormented by upheavals, marked by unease and strangeness (the Arabic-Persian word *qhorbat* designates both the “disorientation” or aberration of the Orient, and exile); it is the “personal City” where the I (egoity), the You (tuity) and the Self (ipseity) rule.¹² The man exiled to this sad continent is from now on a stranger (*qharib*: disoriented), marked by psychological instability, by fear and trembling. He is prey to his own “double-enemy”, to his own solitary and alienated I, mastery of which escapes him.

“I escape from myself as long as I have strength,
How could it be easy to flee from oneself?
I am both enemy to myself and in flight from myself,
And so I am the eternal wanderer who roams here and there.
For he whose enemy resides in himself will never find shelter, not in
India nor in China.”¹³

The Sohrawardian narrative

In a mystical novel entitled *The Tale of the Western Exile*, Sohrawardî admirably illustrates this human adventure that takes place between two eternities: exile outside the Orient, the world of light, and captivity in the West, in the depth of darkness. This adventure takes place in three stages. Sohrawardî defines each one of these stages using examples taken from the text of the Koran.

1. The beginning of the tale of the mystic gnostic is marked by a “fall into captivity and the escape”:

“...I had undertaken, along with my brother ‘Azim, the journey to the land of the West...
“And we suddenly fell into ‘the city whose inhabitants are oppressors’ (Koran 4/77), I mean the city of Qayrawân...”

¹² Sohrawardî, *L’Archange empourpré*, translated from the Persian by H. Corbin, Paris, Fayard, 1976, pp. 457-458.

¹³ Rûmî, *Mathnawî*, book V, Teheran, Amir Kabir, 1974.

“They spotted us, they bound us with chains and shackles of iron and threw us as prisoners into a pit of unlimited depth... at the bottom of the pit there was ‘darkness piled on darkness’.”¹⁴

2. Then, “on a night of the full moon”, the pilgrim and his brother receive the visit of a hoopoe bringing them a message from their father, consoling them and indicating how they might escape. Then the pilgrim and his brother ‘Azim begin to walk and reach the end of the darkness. There they embark on “the vessel of Noah”. “At that moment the sun was just over our heads”, says the pilgrim. This symbolizes for Sohrawardî the quest for the Orient, the limit of the West, there where “the middle Orient” begins, the “eighth climate” that corresponds to Eran Vêj, according to the sacred cartography of ancient Iran:

“We took our place on the boat, and it carried us ‘in the midst of waves like mountains’ (Koran 11/44). ...Then between me and my son ‘the tempest arose’, separating us, ‘and he was among those swallowed up’ (11/45).

‘And I knew that the city that wallowed in turpitude’ (21/74) would be overturned ‘from top to bottom’ (11/84)...

I found the path of God. And then I understood, ‘This is my path’ (61/154)...

When I had covered the entire distance... I saw the heavenly bodies; I united myself with them and perceived their music and their melodies. I introduced myself to their recital...”¹⁵

3. The pilgrim then finds himself at the foot of the mystic Sinai where there is “the Great Emerald Mountain” that must be climbed in order to encounter the Angel, the heavenly Ego. There is the “Source of Life”:

“...then I climbed the mountain. And behold I saw our father like a Great Sage, so great that the Heavens and the Earth were near to being separated under the epiphany of his light. I was dumbfounded, stupefied... I cried for a moment, then I told him my tale of woe about the prison of Qayrawân. He said to me, “Courage! Now you are safe.

¹⁴ Sohrawardî, *Le Récit de l'exil occidental*, quoted in H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, t. II, p. 289.

¹⁵ Sohrawardî, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 290.

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However, you absolutely must return to the western prison, for you have not yet been completely freed of your bonds.

In the end you will be totally freed; you will come to be with us, abandoning completely and forever the western land.”¹⁶

The Sohrawardian adventure thus moves through two inevitable stages in the itinerary of knowledge of self: the coming to awareness of the inner exile, of the solitary “I” that is the very fact of psychological alienation, and a “self-analysis”, a descent into the depths of the obscure psyche, here typified by “western prison”:

“- What does the region of Darkness mean?

- The obscurity that one becomes aware of. For you *are* in the Darkness. But you are not aware of it.

When he who takes this path sees *himself* as being in Darkness, it is then that he has understood that before he was already in the Night... the first step of true pilgrims is this. At last after the Darkness, he will contemplate the Light.”¹⁷

Indeed what the mystic gnostic is seeking through this spiritual combat is the conquest of the citadel of the Self. For Sohrawardī the final resolution of this personal undertaking is found in the encounter with the “Father” or the “Angel” in the mystic Sinai, this other figure for the Alborz,¹⁸ the cosmic mountain. The Father-Angel represents the *alter-ego*, the veritable ego. It is not an Other than oneself, an other who, according to a certain philosophy of man, is subject to the law of otherness, “feature of what is other” and “is the opposite of identity”.¹⁹ It is the conscious Ego, authentic figure of the Self, that is typified in the Angel or father, in perfect Nature; the realization of this higher Ego is subordinated to the transformation of the “I”, the unconscious or still alienated part of the personal self experienced

¹⁶ H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁸ A chain of mountains in northern Iran, culminating in the Demāvand at 5,671 meters. In the popular imagination, the Alborz (or *Qâf*) is considered to be the secret place of the mythical bird Symorgh, symbol of mystic union.

¹⁹ André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, Paris, P.U.F., 1976 (12th ed.), p. 39 (see the word “altérité”).

as “a stranger”. At the end of the mystic journey, there remains but the One. The Angel as the transfigured Self of the mystic gnostic thus expresses integral being, being in fullness. And a relationship of identity is established between being in fullness and the Being of the Unique.

“In my heart, and outside my heart, everything is Him,
In my body, my soul, my veins, my blood, everything is Him...
My being is without equal, there is no equal other than He.”²⁰

Thus the quest for the fundamental dimension (Orient) necessarily passes through the tormented period of inner exile (West). But the Sufi is one who is conscious of his solitary condition originating in inner dis-orientation. He ardently desires to return home, to his Orient-origins. This existential liberation, in the Sohrawardian plan, is subordinated to overcoming this ontological exile, without which the solitary “I” would forever experience the world, the self or the Other strangely. This overcoming can only be realized in the course of the experience of the Way. And so existential expatriation, linked to an opposition anchored in the inner depths, will come to an end with the overcoming of the inner “exile”, accompanied by saving knowledge.

The quest for the Orient is thus an archaeology of the deepest Ego, in the course of which are realized the overcoming of the solitary I, identification and recognition of the fundamental dimension of being, the Self and its reintegration into the realm of clear conscience.

From the Revolution of the heart to the Transfiguration of the world

Persian Sufism, nourished by Mazdean phenomenology and the spirituality of Islam, proves, in the Iranian context, to be the culminating point of the ontological revolution. It is at once a practical method, a meditative rule and a body of doctrine that

²⁰ Rûmî, *Roubâ'iyât* (Quatrains), translated from the Persian by A.H. Tchelebi, Paris, A. Maisonneuve, 1978, No. 190.

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enlighten the impassioned follower and orient him toward deeper knowledge of self. It is, truly stated, “mystic depth psychology”, inseparable from a certain “phenomenology of the spirit” (*kashf al-mahjub*, unveiling of what is hidden).

The Sufi meditates on the phenomenon (*zahîr*) to unveil what is hidden therein (*batîn*). The realm of mystic activity is the imaginal interworld (*‘alam al-mithâl*, the world of Images-Ideas, which is a second sensible world, perceptible through the active imagination), experienced as a sphere of events, events proper to inner history. The realm of external history, perceived and defined according to criteria of the standard rational plane, can, however, as theater (*mazhar*), lend itself to events of inner history.

The vision of the profoundest interiority of events thus flows from the interrelation of the within and the without like a two-way mirror. It is through the transparency of the *mundus imaginalis* that this interrelation (which is also a relationship of identity) is established between the sensible and the suprasensible, between profound interiority and apparent exteriority. This occurs without the uni-dimensional exterior becoming the sole and unique frame of reference for objectivation and accomplishment of the psycho-spiritual event. This interrelation becomes the very essence of the creative imagination in Sufism:

“The sea is agitated because of your love,
The clouds spread pearls at your feet.
The lightning of your love has fallen on the earth;
And thus this smoke rises toward the heavens.”²¹

Thus in the deepest level of the Sufi creative imagination, a realm of reciprocal inclusion, cosmic Being is relativized into individual being and this is generalized into the other.

Here we are at the heart of a mystically inspired “depth psychology”. Through this view of man as microcosm, two fundamental dimensions of being overlap, the body and space. The body, caught in the whirlwind of the imaginalization of the sensible, is the rarified primordial matter of this “other” world to which mystic knowledge accedes. The body becomes that through

²¹ Rûmî, *Roubâ'yât*, quatrain No. 155.

which is born an imaginal structure of space, a mystic and lyric dimension of the within that is projected on external space by reconstituting it in its own image.

Unfolding the macrocosm within itself, the rarified body is now experienced as the original field of the possible:

“... You believe you are but a small body, but the macrocosm unfolds within you,
And you are the open Book (*al-kitâb al-mubîn*) through whose letters
what is Hidden becomes manifest.²²

Your remedy is within yourself, but you do not know it!
Your illness is within yourself, but you do not see it!”²³

The body-microcosm experienced as diagram of representation is thus the *a priori* of space, of the universe; and the universe, in addition to positive or rational representation, maintains an intrinsic link with the imaginal space of the rarified body that remains coextensive with it.

The body experienced as foundation and origin thus combines, in its metaphorical form, the ideal and reality. As original field it is experienced as the very site of the transfiguration of the sensible.²⁴

“the heavens and the earth are your clothing,” says Shabestari (Twelfth century),
“contemplate this non-being that is the proof of Being, see how this height is the essence of depth...
Each creature who passes before you has a soul, and this soul is linked to you by a line...
the soul of each of them is hidden in you,
know that you are yourself the soul of the universe...”²⁵

²² Verses attributed to the Imâm 'Ali and recorded by A. Djamî, *Naqd al-nusûs fi sharh naqsh al-fusûs*, translated and quoted in E. de Vitray-Meyerovitch, *Rûmî et le soufisme*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, coll. Maîtres spirituels, 1977, p. 119.

²³ This last verse, missing in the French version, is our translation.

²⁴ “I am this soul that has thousands of souls. Is it the soul or the body? Both are only me... I created another being... this other is nothing but myself.” (Rûmî, *Roubâ'yât*, quatrain No. 273.)

²⁵ Mahmûd Shabestari, *Golshan-e-Râz* (The Rose Garden of Mysteries), translated by E. de Vitray-Meyerovitch, verses 262 ff., quoted in *Anthologie du soufisme*, Paris, Éd. Sindbad, 1978.

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This projection of the within toward the outside is the very movement of “presential knowledge”; to this knowledge originating in the imaginative perception are then revealed the “mysteries” of the universe, revelations that positive knowledge will detect only a long time later.

“Know that the entire world is a mirror, in each atom can be found
one hundred flaming suns.
If you break the heart of a single drop of water,
a hundred pure oceans emerge.
If you examine each speck of dust,
a thousand Adams can be found therein...
A universe is hidden in each grain of wheat,
everything is contained in the point of the present...
From each point of this circle,
thousands of forms are drawn.
Each point, rotating in a circle,
is both a circle and a circumference that turns.”²⁶

Why is there this spatialization of the within and this transfiguration of the without? Because only visionary experience makes possible apperception, in imaginal forms, of events that take place in the depths of the human soul. These subtle events take form and shape and then go beyond the state of the pure possible; they are affirmed through their visionary manifestation, in the space of the Imaginal, in a world that escapes from the conditions of positive and quantitative time and space. These images are then the theater (*mazhar*) in which is manifested the very essence of experienced states. But the outer world must be transfigured so that it can simultaneously receive and reflect the reality of these events. Thus what is hidden in the depth of the human spirit cannot be suitably manifested other than by these dispositions taken in the spatial order inherent in the imaginative visionary field.

Through this transfiguration of the sensible, the external world can be endowed with transparency in light of the inner universe and enter into interrelation with it. At the heart of this interrelation of the within and the without, the imaginal interworld is born

²⁶ Shabestari, *Golshan-e-Râz*, verses 145 ff., quoted in *Anthologie du soufisme*, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

at the moment when the spiritual takes flesh and form and when the corporal becomes rarified and spiritualized, in the manner of images in a mirror.

This rarified world and its events are subject only to imaginative perception since positive perception, of limited extent, is not able to cover the distant zones of internal psycho-geography.

For the mystic theosopher, this imaginal world is not at all an imaginary or fictitious world. It is a real world, stable in its own reality. It is hidden in the very heart of the phenomenal world, and we can attest to its existence. The one who belongs to this world can attain it. Sufism, the interior revolution that overcomes the boundaries of the sensible, orients the one who undertakes the quest for this world, a world both distant and quite near.

Through this change of state that is a personal movement, the Sufi is able to visualize the heights and the depths of the interior continent. He dwells among the monuments that constitute his own personal history even while attesting to the contradictory forces that spring up from the oases of his passions. The Sufi is aware that recognition of the Other must take place through knowledge of self. Once this self-knowledge has been realized, he can fully affirm the Unique, to which he is assimilated through the experience of the Way, and discover that the within and the without are now the transfiguration of the Unique. This knowledge of self requires an absolute mastery of passionate forces. To identify these, in order to channel them toward positive sublimation, mystic pedagogy recommends, as we have already noted, an archaeology of the deepest Ego, a mystic ‘self-analysis’.

As we continue, our examination, even though only partial, will deal essentially with this personal aspect of the discoveries of mystical archaeology.

II. TRILOGY OF THE SOUL IN IRANIAN SUFISM

The infrastructure of mystic depth psychology is the “trilogy of the soul” that Persian Sufis have minutely developed by assembling various observations of an esoteric order discernible in the heart of the Koran. These are three states of the soul, of a triple

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Ego (*nafs*): the lower or sensual, the blaming or critical and the approved or pacified. The predominance of one over the others determines the manner of being of the person, the level of his consciousness and the degree of his psychological stability. Thus, in accordance with the Koran, can be distinguished:

- *Nafs-e-Ammâra* (imperative, impassioned or instinctual soul), a source of unbridled motivations or even unrestrained sensuality that vigorously attack reason, the intellect (*'aql*), that is the criterion for the "good"; this impels man toward "evil", that is, toward a set of morally forbidden intentions, attitudes and behavior. In many verses of the Koran we can grasp the impulsive function of the *Nafs-e-Ammâra*. For example:

"I no longer call myself completely innocent: the passionate Soul leads to evil." (Koran 12/53)

"... they follow only their own supposition and the desires of their passionate Souls (*'anfus*)." (53/23)

The "passionate Soul" thus designates the primitive Ego in its raw state, possessive, selfish and unconscious in nature. According to a *hadith* (prophetic tradition):

"Your greatest enemy is your own passionate Soul (*Nafs-e-Ammâra*), the one that is within you."²⁷

In the prophetic tradition, the mastery of passionate forces is designated symbolically by the interior "Great holy war" (*Djihad akbar*):

"Glory to those who have returned from the little battle (*Djihad asqar*) and who still must complete the Great holy war", said the Prophet to the faithful.

- 'What is this other war?', they asked him.

- 'It is the war against oneself' (*nafs*, the selfish Self), answered the Prophet."²⁸

²⁷ *Hadith*.

²⁸ *Hadith*, given in *Wisail ashi'ah*, vol. II, part. I, p. 122, quoted in Morteza Motaharî, *De l'Homme parfait*, Teheran (no date), p. 133.

Sufism insists firmly and above all on the necessity of the internal combat without which realization of the true Ego would be impossible. In accordance with this initiatory pedagogy, Rûmî declares:

“As soon as I had completed the external battle, I undertook the internal battle.”²⁹

Again he warns:

“O Kings! We have just eliminated the enemy without, but there is still another one for us, the most dangerous of all.”³⁰

For Rûmî this fearful enemy is the passionate soul. It is typified by a “dragon” greatly to be feared.

For Sufism, in the course of the external war one struggles solely against the symptomatic manifestations of evil; whereas in the internal combat one attacks the roots of evil hidden in the underground of the human psyche. Sufism thus accepts that interhuman conflicts are the manifestation of hostility linked to the impulsive nature of the passionate Soul.

- *Nafs-e-Lawwâma* (blaming or guardian Soul). This is the critical soul that disapproves the projects of the *Nafs-e-Ammâra* and reproaches man for his subjection to it. Indeed the *Nafs-e-Lawwâma* constitutes the moral order; it is a version of the divine Law that man must constantly take into consideration and to which order and human law must be identified. The guardian soul is always present in the heart of the faithful, in his conscience. And this presence is evident. Transgression of the law of the guardian Soul signifies regression to the impulsive state, the sinking of moral conscience into denial.

“I will not judge the soul that accuses itself (*Nafs-e-Lawwâma*)... but man wishes to deny what is before his eyes.” (Koran 75/2 and 5).

An Iranian master of hermeneutics, Qâshânî (thirteenth-

²⁹ Rûmî, *Mathnawî*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

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fourteenth century), designated the “critical soul” as the “heart” endowed with “intellectual intelligence”; this heart is typified by “people” whose intelligence is “purified of the stain of passions and who arrive at knowledge, at power and at wisdom...”.³¹

This group, according to Qâshânî, is composed of two categories: people of reason who distinguish the true from the false and who “produce rational arguments”, and people of heart who, having gone beyond the primitive stage of pure reasoning, see what the people in the first category know simply.³² The critical or guardian Ego, which incarnates the faculty of reasoning and will, is thus realized by going beyond the stage of the lower Ego. It is even capable of going beyond its own present state.

- *Nafs-e-Mutma'yinna* (calm and balanced Soul or Ego): this is a state of certitude, a state of being without crisis and without worry. This implies realization of the higher stage during the euphemic evolution of inner life. The balanced Ego comes into action when the passionate Ego, under the careful watch of the blaming Ego, has been subjected to the principle of reason (*'aql*). The *Nafs-e-Mutma'yinna* is thus the highest human potentiality in the hierarchy of the trilogy of the soul. This Ego incarnates the subtle organ of the heart (*'qalb*), a psychic heart synonymous with *intellectus*, the faculty for knowing the transcendent. This heart is receptive to divine truth.

“Oh pacified soul, full of certitude (*Mutma'yinna*)
Return to your Lord,
Satisfied and approved”. (Koran 89/27-28)

Qâshânî designates this soul as the subtle organ of “the spirit”. “The people at this level have gone beyond the stage of the epiphany of the Attributes and have arrived at the stage of direct contemplation (*mushâhada*).”³³ At this level of elevation, the human and the divine each become the mirror of the other, the

³¹ 'Abd ar-Razzâq al Qâshânî, “*La Lettre de Qâshânî adressée à Semnânî*”, quoted in Pierre Lory, *Les commentaires ésotériques du Coran, d'après 'Abd ar-Razzâq al-Qâshânî*, Paris, Lex Deux Océans, 1980, p. 157.

³² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 158.

³³ Qâshânî, quoted in P. Lory, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

sublime place of encounter where they interpenetrate one another while reflecting themselves in one another.³⁴

Nûr 'Ali-Shâh (eighteenth century) designates this soul-spirit as “the universal Soul that is the sovereign of the corporal territory”. This soul, which sanctions the Spirit (*rûh*), is “a luminous spiritual essence”. The heart, located at the boundary of “the unknown”, of the supra-sensible, becomes the transcendent center, the seat of the soul-spirit, the Spirit radiating through the openings of this heart.³⁵ According to Nûr 'Ali-Shâh, this heart is both “the mirror that reflects the world”³⁶ and “a sea of light” at the very depths of which “the Face of the Beloved appears”;³⁷ in the microcosm it is “the divine Throne” (*'arsh*) since “the King of Beauty, in his Kingdom, has no other royal throne than Love”.³⁸ This soul-heart receptive to the infinite is thus the supreme stage of human evolution in which arises the “mystic Superconsciousness”.

On the other hand, if the Ego with possessive instincts dominates man's internal space, he suffers from deep sadness of heart, from which arises the impotence of the conscious or critical Ego and the impossibility of achieving a state of balance. We designate this inner blinding as psychological alienation:

“Are their eyes incapable of understanding?
Have they no ears to hear?
It is not their eyes that are blinded,
It is their hearts that are, their hearts
Buried in their chests.” (Koran 22/45)

Or again:

“... the seal has been placed on their heart, and they do not understand a thing.” (Koran 63/3)

This somber alienation can be pushed to the extreme:

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³⁵ Michel De Miras, *La Méthode spirituelle d'un maître du soufisme iranien, Nûr 'Ali-Shâh*, p. 189.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

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“Remember this murder that was committed against a man among you... Your hearts have hardened since; they are like rocks and even harder still, for springs flow from rocks; the rocks break and bring forth water. There are those who are sinking through fear of God, and God is certainly not inattentive to your actions.”

(Koran 2/67-69)

III. ISOMORPHISM AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE EGO THROUGH VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

This trilogy of the soul that forms the foundation of the human person is profoundly thought through in light of Persian visionary tradition and thanks to Sufi hermeneutics. Moving through this infrastructural trilogy, mystic experience attests to the realization of other states of the soul, of the development of other elevated levels of clear conscience.

Through a series of processes of homology, psychic realities as spiritual facts take on the form of subtle bodies and are open to imaginative perception. These homologies that we witness in the course of mystic archaeology are themselves creative since they prepare and justify the visionary culmination.

Previously we have noted the homology between the “microcosm” and the “macrocosm”, between deep interiority and the mystic Orient, between the body itself and the rarified body that is its transfiguration. Similarly we can note an homologous relationship between the figures of the deep Ego. The apogee of this homology is the identification of the self with an Other that is its authentic figure. This operation prepares for the visionary apprehension of the states experienced.

In this context we will look at the “self-analysis” of the Persian Sufi visionary Najm Kobrâ (thirteenth century). This will enlighten us with regard to the ontogenesis of the figures of the Ego and the isomorphism they present; these phenomena are articulated around a decisive relationship: presenting himself as the Imâm or “suprasensible Guide” of his own body-microcosm.

Najm Kobrâ: Spiritual Diary

Three figures of the Ego form the Trilogy of the soul. As a result of a profound awareness, each lower phase of the Ego is a prelude to the birth of a new phase:

“the lower soul, extravagant, is the ego of the ordinary man.... When the effect of continuous prayer, the *thikr*, penetrates it, it is like the glow of a lamp in a darkened house. Then the soul accedes to the level of the “blaming soul”; it perceives that the house is filled with filth and wild beasts. It works to expel them so that the home will be ready to receive the light of the *thikr* as sovereign. This reception will be the prelude to the blossoming of the pacified soul.”³⁹

Through the subtle physiology of the Ego and its metamorphoses, Najm Kobrâ describes for us the characteristics of three phases or instances of our person visible to the mystic. Here two phenomena overlap and ensure the visualization of these phases, their isomorphism and their coloring. Taking the form of a circle, symbol of cosmic movement, these phases are recognized by the colored lights that symbolize them. This is how Najm Kobrâ visualizes and describes them.

“Know that the inferior soul offers a sign that allows visionary apperception to recognize it. It is a great circle that rises before you, completely *black*, as if it were of tar. Then it disappears. Later it rises before you taking on the form of a black cloud. But gradually, as it rises, something is revealed around its edges that resembles the crescent of the *new moon* when a tip of it shows through the clouds. Little by little this becomes a full crescent of the moon. When it has become conscious of itself to the point of censuring itself, then it rises from the side of the right cheek in the form of a *reddish sun*; sometimes one even feels its heat on the cheek. Sometimes it is visualized alongside the ear, other times in front of the forehead, or other times above the head. And this *blaming soul* is the intelligence (*'aql*) that philosophers speak of. As for the *pacified soul*, it also offers a sign that makes it possible for visionary apperception to identify it. Sometimes it rises before you forming an orb that is a great source of many flowing lights; sometimes you

³⁹ Najm od-Dîn Kobrâ, quoted in H. Corbin, *L'Homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*, op. cit., p. 78.

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see it in the suprasensible as if it corresponded to the circle of your face, to the orb of light, clear disk, like a perfectly polished mirror. It happens that this circle seems to rise toward your face and that your face seems to disappear. Your face itself is then the pacified soul. Sometimes, on the other hand, you see the circle at a distance, as if it were far from you in the suprasensible. Thus between you and the circle of the pacified soul there are a billion stages; if you draw near to one of them, you will be caught on fire.”⁴⁰

The time of personal history becomes imaginative space, the space in which forms in time are made homologous with forms that are developed in space. This is not an imaginary or metaphorical space. It is the special theater for the manifestation of inner events. To move from one event to another, perception of a constant structure isomorphic in nature is required. And this is precisely what the inner observation of Najm Kobrâ describes.

Traveling between the heaven and earth within, the mystic tells us how the sun of esoteric consciousness illuminates the full extent of interiority, the place of reciprocal inclusion of self-knowledge and the re-cognition of the Other.

“Each time that a light rises from you, a light descends toward you; and each time flames rise from you, other flames also descend on you that correspond to them... When your substance of light has grown in you, it is this substance that becomes a Whole relative to its counterpart in Heaven. Then it is the substance of light in Heaven that longs for you, for it is your light that attracts it, and it descends toward you. This is the secret of mystic progress (*sirr al-sayr*)...”⁴¹

Najm Kobrâ finally reveals to us the most intimate secret of the mystic experience: the alternation of the first and the third person, the substitution of one for the other that attests, through this profound relationship of identity, to the real presence of the one with the one and for the one, the rejoining of like to like.

“When the circle of the face has become pure, it bursts with lights like a spring pouring out its water, so that the mystic has the sensible perception of the pouring forth of these lights that irradiates his face.

⁴⁰ Quoted in H. Corbin, *L'Homme de lumière...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

⁴¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 84.

At that moment there is before you, in front of your face, another Face also of light; it too irradiates lights while behind its diaphanous veil a sun becomes visible, appearing animated by a to and fro movement. In reality this Face is your own face and this sun is the sun of the Spirit (*shams al-rûg*) that moves to and fro in your body. Then purity submerges all of your person and now you contemplate before you a person of light (*shakhmin nûr*), which is also irradiated with lights. The mystic has the sensible perception of this irradiation of light proceeding from his whole person. Often the veil falls before the entire reality of the person, and then, with all your body, you perceive everything.

The opening of the inner vision (*basifra*, the organ of the light of vision) begins with the eyes, then with the face, then with the chest and finally with the entire body. This person of light (*shakhs nûrânî*) before you is designated in the terminology of Sufism as the suprasensible Guide (*moqaddam al-qhayb*). He is also called the suprasensible personal Master (*shaykh al-qhayb*)...⁴²

Through this progressive series of events in the spiritual order, the mystic himself becomes his own Guide.

Such a mystic archaeology of the Ego obviously eludes the criteria for any positivist conception of man. Mystic investigation, sustained by the powerful faculties of imaginalization of the sensible and of transfiguration of psychosensorial faculties, achieves both the most profound interiority and the height of the evolution of the human person. It follows the Ego from its primitive state to its conscious state, at the summit of visual representation, and then to its ontological integrity, its fullness.

Mystic enthusiasm engenders the archaeology of the self. This enthusiasm carries the questioning of the sensible, of ordinary reality, quite far, and it pierces behind the banal into the presence of the Imaginal, the world of images-ideas that is the theater for events that occur in the deepest depths of the human soul. Mystic archaeology ultimately leads to gnostic knowledge (*irfân*). Access to this knowledge enables the Sufi to be the master and investigator of impulsive oases and passionate states rather than abandoning himself to their primary fascination.

⁴² Quoted in H. Corbin, *L'Homme de lumière...*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

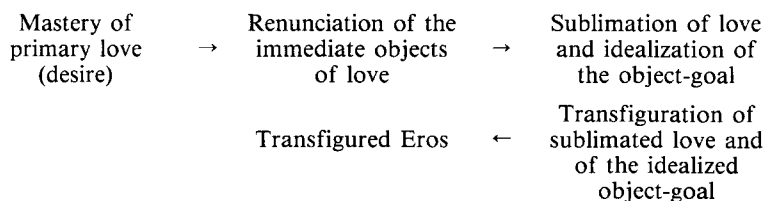
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IV. FROM SUBLIMATION OF THE EGO-BODY TO TRANSFIGURATION OF THE EROS

In the context of mystically inspired depth psychology, the term “sublimation” contains a special connotation since idealization of the purpose and changing of the object of passionate desire take place in a spiritual manner. The process of sublimation is indeed placed within the phenomenon of transfiguration that ultimately transforms the sublimated eros into transfigured Eros.

In this respect the notion of the passionate ego-body dissolves the standard criteria through which it is thought possible to circumscribe it. The primary ego is a mechanism that is internal to man and prior to any form of the ego-consciousness. Uncertain of his means and his purposes, he follows the path of his personal history through a series of changes, both essential and accidental. He first draws near to the canonical form of love and is finally assimilated to transfigured Eros. Through these internal transmutations, love, the object of love and even the manner of loving elude any explanation by instinct. In the course of internal metamorphoses, two important phenomena overlap: the corporalization of the soul and the spiritualization of the body, such as we note in the case of our mystics. In this manner the changes that the primitive ego-body undergoes are no longer the simple result of some corporal and instinctual mechanisms. Likewise the corporal subjected to transfiguration is no longer experienced as a mass of matter. It belongs to an inner life destined for psychosensorial transformations and the elevation of the soul.

In accordance with what is provided by the mystic experience, we arrive at the following table:



Thus in the mystic experience of love, sublimation constitutes an important stage in the fundamental process of transfiguration.

Sublimation of Eros

The trilogy of the soul as it is meditated in Iranian Sufism leads to the idea that at birth man is endowed with a lower ego characterized by possessive and destructive instinct. Out of this primary impulsive state appear and are developed other states of the soul or “ego”, benefitting from balancing and constructive forces, essential to development of the conscious being. This progressive psychogenesis is revealed through the phenomenon of visualization that covers the vast area of inner psycho-geography. This implies a process of positive sublimation in the course of which the primitive energy inherent in the lower Ego is made to undergo modification of its purpose and a change in its object. The personal experience of Najm Kobrâ is testimony to this.

I. Kâshânî and Nûr 'Ali-Shâh

Likewise for other Persian Sufis, mastery and sublimation of impulsive forces lead to their destruction. According to Izzodîn Kâshânî, “all three (souls) are a single soul having a different name according to its level”.⁴³ For Nûr 'Ali-Shâh (eighteenth century) “the blaming soul” is itself “the commanding (primitive) soul” arrived at the stage of reproof; from now on “it is subject to changes; sometimes it brings suffering and sometimes stability (*tamkîn*)”.⁴⁴ Indeed the first objective of the Sufî is to detach the animal soul from itself, to liberate it from all its errors in order to make of it a “servant”, a “slave”. Finally the blaming (or thinking) soul reaches the level of the approved (universal) soul and becomes the “sovereign of the bodily territory”.⁴⁵

⁴³ Izzodîn Mahmud 'Ali Kâshânî, *Misbâh al-Hidâyat wa Miftâh al-Kifâiyat*, Teheran, 1325 h. sh., p. 84; passage quoted in Michel De Miras, *La Méthode spirituelle d'un maître du soufisme iranien Nûr 'Ali-Shâh*, Paris, Editions du Sirac, 1973, p. 183.

⁴⁴ Nûr 'Ali-Shâh, *Jannât al-Wisâl*, Teheran, 1358 h. sh.; quoted in Michel de Miras, *ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 188.

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A. Semnânî

The transformation of the state of the lower ego and the change, or rather the idealization, of the object of desire are again admirably illustrated by Semnânî (thirteenth-fourteenth century), who had visionary experiences similar to those of Najm Kobrâ.

In his mystic notes, Semnânî reveals to us the secrets of a physiology of the rarified body that agree with the idea of the double phenomenon of sublimation and transfiguration. According to Semnânian anthropology, the primitive ego-body represents the perigee in the cycle of creation; it is the ontological descent, the collapse of consciousness. Mystic pedagogy and the experience of the Way consist in encouraging an ontological ascent leading from this perigee to the apogee of conscious being. In this ascent, which departs from the microcosmic depths and attains the macrocosmic dimension of being, the hidden Self passes through seven degrees—or stations—of evolution manifested in seven “bodies” or “subtle organs” (*latifa*, plural *latâief*). Each of these degrees or rarified bodies is the embryo of the following rarified body; and to each degree there is a corresponding different colored light, which implies both the transformation of the preceding rarified body and the realization of a newly activated rarified body. Semnânî calls each transmutation that a rarified body undergoes an “event” (*wâqi’a*).

Finally for each of these rarified organs there is a corresponding prophet; each of these rarified bodies is, in the human microcosm, the manifestation of a prophet, whose status and role it assumes. Thus Semnânian anthropology brings us as close as possible to the principal moments of internal history.

1. First the mystic visualizes dark blackness, “a light that is the color of black smoke”; this is the region of the corporal “mold” or “embryo” of the new rarified body; it is the “Adam of your being”.

2. Then the mystic visualizes a blue light; this corresponds to the kingdom of the passional or animal soul. It is the battlefield of organic forces, desires and passions (*anima sensibilis*). It is the scene of trial where the Self confronts the hostilities and temptations of the passional soul, just as Noah confronted the hostilities of his people. “It is the Noah of your being.” As the mystic

progresses from the passional soul toward the balanced or higher soul, says Semnânî, “the clouds that fill the sky (of the within) are dissolved; he sees a starry sky, and the stars seem to descend toward him, acting on him as they will. Temptations disappear.”⁴⁶

3. In the third stage a red light appears for visionary apperception, an affective and intimate color that symbolizes the realization of an important rarified body, the spiritual Heart. This gives birth to the true Ego, to the true personality. It is “the Abraham of your being”, the friend of God.

4. A white light emanates from the fourth subtle organ, the Secret (*sirr*) or Super-consciousness. Here the realities of a world of mysteries, of the very world of the unspeakable, are presented to the visionary apperception of the mystic. It is a trans-conscious state in which the mystic, like Moses, takes part in secret conversations, in “confidential psalms”. This subtle organ is “the Moses of your being”.

5. A yellow light corresponds to the fifth subtle organ, the Spirit (*rûh, pneûma*). This organ is assigned the function of representing the divinity, playing the role of “divine viceregent”. It is “the David of your being”.

6. A luminous black symbolizes the subtle organ of the arcane (*arcanûn*). It is the announcer of the Name. This subtle organ announces the identity (Name) of the other subtle organs. It is “the Jesus of your being”.

7. Finally, a green light emanates from the seventh subtle organ. It is “the divine center of your being”, which is typified by the “Mohammed of your being”. It is the True Ego (*latîfa anâ’îya*) whose embryo had begun to be formed in the subtle center of the Heart, seat of the “Abraham of your being”.⁴⁷

Semnânian anthropology thus teaches us that the trilogy of the soul, as infrastructural foundation, is not, however, a finality in itself. For our mystics it is integrated into the double process of sublimation and transfiguration which, because of multiple human potentialities, activates new bodies or subtle organs.

⁴⁶ Alâoddôwleh Semnânî, *Tafsîr* (Esoteric commentary on the Koran), passage quoted in H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, t. III, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Semnânî, quoted in H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien, op. cit.*, t. III, pp. 279-280.

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In microcosmic life, everything begins with the body, a body animated by an immense vital thrust from its inorganic depths to the blossoming of its conscious state, and then beyond that state to its ultimate quietude. This body-origin is thus itself both spiritualized and re-actualized, combining the ideal and reality in its metaphorized form.

Not only are the primary impulsive forces that besiege the lower ego-body subjected to a fundamental transmutation and an idealization of the object, but so too are all the psychosensorial and imaginative faculties. From now on the passional forces are psychospiritual forces, the imagination of the sensible becomes theophanic imaginalization, positive perception declines before imaginative or visionary perception. The entire body is transformed into a psychospiritual body with rarified organs, and the primitive ego into the higher Ego, endowed with macrocosmic dimensions.

However, this is not some crisis of the body to be scorned but its transfiguration; nor is it the destruction of passional instincts, but their sublimation. The primitive body becomes the embryonic space in which the psychic body is formed; the psychic body is perfected through psychospiritual transmutations and is far from being a simple imaginary body pathologically detached from the real body. It is the body with subtle organs that engulfs the psychic Heart (*intellectus*); in Sufism this is the organ of creative Imagination and the seat of gnostic knowledge (*irfân*).

Transfiguration of Eros

It is through the love of Eros that the transformation of man in his essence is realized. And the concrete form of this Eros is the trinity of Love-Lover-Beloved. It is the transformation of human eros into a transfigured Eros, which, in Sufi language, is “divine Eros”. In Sufism, which is “the religion of Love”, every form of passionate love is identical with the divine Eros. It is through this capacity for identification in human love that mediocre and immediate objects give way to make room for ideal objects.

“God is Love”. This means that in Sufism there is a polarity

between love and beauty; divine Love and Beauty constitute the archetype for human love and beauty and provide them with their true meaning. At the beginning the human lover is not aware of this Love-archetype; but he gradually learns that in order to recognize his own love, he must go beyond the limits of his objective consciousness and of his raw desire (*nafs*). He thus moves through internal metamorphoses through which he is placed in direct relation with primordial Love-Beauty.

The human being is thus dual in nature; he has two emotional aspects, the natural aspect and the spiritual aspect. For Ibn 'Arabi, "the most perfect of mystical lovers are those who love God simultaneously for himself and for themselves. Because this capability reveals in them the unification of their two-fold nature."⁴⁸

In the experience of mystic love, which is a unifying love, there comes into play the powerful creative Imagination, which is a theophanic imagination. This is the very organ of transmutation of the sensible.⁴⁹ It "theophanizes" the suprasensible, it makes it descend to the deepest depths of the "oceanic heart", the realm of visionary experience. At the same time it transfigures the sensible, taking it beyond the conditions of the phenomenal world. Thus in the active imagination there is a "dialectic of love", which is the encounter of spiritual love and profane love, giving birth to mystic love, to Eros.

The apogee of the idealization of Eros is its visualization "in the most beautiful of forms". And it is at the heart of the theophanic Imagination that this Love-Beauty is presented to visionary apperception.

Rûzbehân

A great Sufi visionary, Rûzbehân of Shiraz (twelfth century), in his *Spiritual Diary*, tells us of this theophanization of divine beauty and love and the transfiguration of human beauty and love. This

⁴⁸ Henry Corbin, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi*, Paris, Flammarion, 1958, p. 118.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 118.

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occurs at the very height of his adolescence, the tumultuous and stormy period of human sensuality.

“I began searching for my secret (*sirr*), and then came a blossoming in my heart of the love of desire (*ishq*, carnal desire), and I felt my heart melt in this love. I passed all this time in a deep nostalgia... Later, there blossomed in me the abrupt intuitions of fleeting ecstasies... I saw all beings as so many beautiful faces, and while they were presenting themselves to me, I felt inspired by the special desire for certain retreats, confidential psalms...”⁵⁰

This adolescent experience was to be decisive throughout the mystic’s entire life.

Juvenile love initiates the adult contemplator to its secret. It later brings him to the world of vision. From there he sees his Lord, in all his Beauty; he contemplates Him in the depths of himself, the universe with its vast horizons being one with the *mundus imaginalis*. The description by Rûzbehân instructs us clearly on this point.

“... Then I saw God in the most beautiful of forms, rising before me from the world of mystery...

He showed me a gracefulness and said to me, ‘Seek me in the mystic station of love’... and I remained with the sweetness of my vision.”⁵¹

“Then this is what I saw on the paths of the Mystery.

In his hand, something... He said to me, ‘It is your heart... it is more vast than the universe’...

I said, ‘I want to see you as you are in pre-eternity’...

And then the Lights of sublimity appeared. I was annihilated, overwhelmed.”⁵²

Eros is also love of Beauty, of a Beauty that pre-exists every other form of beauty. Through theocentric Imagination, transfigured and transfiguring Eros-Beauty is visualized in its essence.

⁵⁰ Rûzbehân, *Le Jasmin des fidèles d’amour*, quoted in H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, t. III, p. 23.

⁵¹ Rûzbehân, *Le Jasmin des fidèles d’amour*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 60.

“And then I saw God; through his Beauty and his Majesty was revealed to me the dazzling lightning of his Face. I remained in contemplation of this beauty; I was filled with spiritual inebriation... my intelligence was abolished, my heart flew away, my secret consciousness overwhelmed...”⁵³

At this stage of Super-consciousness and of Super-existence, the trinity of “love-lover-beloved” is realized. The internal master and the external master are united and mutually contemplate one another in an unlimited act of adoration and of love. This paradox of the experience of absorption is a liberation from oneself produced by a thrust beyond physical and psycho-sensorial boundaries. Everywhere the experience of love causes the mystic to discover the secrets of being; through love the heart becomes the eye by which the Unique contemplates itself. It is also through love that intelligence becomes a light that lights up the field of inner vision. Love is thus both the point of departure, the means and the goal of the experience of the Way.

V. CONCLUSION

The experience of the Sufi Way culminates in the indissociable double phenomenon of ontological emancipation and “gnostic knowledge” (*irfân*), which is “saving knowledge”. Ontological emancipation or reintegration is the counterpart of the phenomenon of the “double”, restorer of the disorder that makes man unknowing, a solitary “I” lost in the heart of the inner continent. It is this double or solitary “I” that is designated by Sohrawardî as “western exile” (*qhorbat*), the personal city of the infra-conscious. Thus the existential expatriation linked to inner disorientation comes to an end with overcoming of the “Exile”, which implies the return to the oriental city of the conscious-being. With this return to oneself appears “oriental knowledge”, which is presential knowledge; it is acquired in the presence of an oriental relation with everything known, a relation that is initially fundamental to being and to knowledge.

⁵³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 63.

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This immediate knowledge is saving knowledge. The fundamental act of this knowledge is an awakening. It brings about in the Sufi remembrance of what this gnostic was before having sunk into oblivion, an oblivion that derives from the collapse of clear conscience. This supposes a memory eclipsed by the most distant times of personal history. As for its finality, this knowledge is the prelude to recognition of the authentic figure of Self and to its reintegration into the unified empire of the conscious-being. Mystic knowledge is thus both the point of departure, the means and the goal of the conquest of Self.

Indeed, the solitary "I" is the knowing subject as it is perceived in the course of daily experience; the Self is the subject recognized as it is affirmed beyond ordinary appearances. It is the substantial and permanent Ego typified by the suprasensible "personal Guide". Knowledge of self culminates in the reunion of the apparent ego (I) and of the profound Ego (Self). It is this reintegration that conditions the realization of the conscious-being.

At the heart of inner perception, consciousness becomes the two-way mirror in which the two figures of the ego, formerly strangers to one another, interpenetrate. The visionary experience in Sufism attests to this dialectic of recognition.

"I brought you a mirror, oh Light!
So that you can see your own face
and that you can remember me."⁵⁴

From that point on the person of the mystic is revealed as being both his "myself" and his "other-self"; this in ontological recognition. The ideal of Sufism is access to this gnostic knowledge.

It is in this mystic experience of unicity that the outcome of personal integrity and the development of higher consciousness are justified. In Sufism all rivalry is eliminated between believing and understanding (with believing being the prelude to knowing), between the profane and the sacred (human eros is transformed into "divine Eros"), between the apparent and the Hidden ("I am closer to him—man—than his own jugular vein"⁵⁵). Now all opposition between the distant and the near

⁵⁴ Rûmî, *Le Livre du dedans*, p. 237.

⁵⁵ Koran 50/15.

disappears, for the sensible world is itself Presence of the Unique (“No matter in which direction you turn, the face of Allah is there”⁵⁶). Sufi poetry alone reveals the absence of such opposite-ness. The active imagination transcends both the literal and the figured; it unites them and integrates them in imaginative forms that translate the events of inner meta-history. Sufi poetics emanating from mystic unicity thus becomes the very language of transfigured Eros. “Each of my fibers bears the trace of the Beloved; through each particle of my body the Beloved speaks”, declares Rûmî.⁵⁷

Thus the world and all that exists are experienced as the transfiguration of the Unique; apart from the Unique, nothing can exist. At the heart of this unicity, immanence and transcendence are not excluded. We then can note the absence of the contradictory.

This unicity thus is free from that monism that considers “all things as reducible to unity” and that “reduces all things either to matter or to spirit”.⁵⁸ In this manner the Sufi Way distances itself from the *Via negativa* of certain forms of mysticism.

It is at the heart of the imaginalization of the sensible that the inner metamorphoses are produced that lead to the integrity of the conscious-being. It is also at the summit of this fecund active imagination that mystic consciousness is developed and arrives at a supreme state that can only be qualified as Super-consciousness. These internal realizations are neither of the fictive order nor of the pure rational order; they belong to the specific realm of the extra-rational or even the extra-sensorial that are not pervious to imaginative perception.

This perception is free of any pre-established bond, of any rational criterion that would define it *a priori*. Without detouring by way of the sensible, it arises in full inner revolution, fully covers the realm of psycho-geography and follows the events of intimate life from their ontogenesis to their fullness, then to the summit of visionary representation. Perceptive imagination is thus the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2/109.

⁵⁷ Rûmî, *Roubâ'yât*, quatrain No. 117.

⁵⁸ André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, Paris, P.U.F., 1976 (12th ed.), p. 648.

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hic et nunc vision of things; it is the perception of the totality of things, in their original form. It is the place where knowledge of the ineffable and discourse on the unspeakable begin to take shape. Imaginative perception thus benefits from a much greater receptivity than positive perception. The latter is prisoner to the limits of chronological time and quantitative space and allows us only a partial perception of things.

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