

A Sufi for A Secular Age

Reflecting on Muslim Modernity through the Life and Times of
Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Yusuf Muslim Eneborg
Ph.D. candidate in Religious Studies
Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion

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Author: Yusuf Muslim Eneborg

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Department: Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion, University of Gothenburg, Box 200, SE 40530, Gothenburg

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Fadhlalla Haeri (b. 1937) is a contemporary Muslim figure best known for his spiritual commentaries on the Qur'an and his influential role as a 'post-madhab' and 'post-tariqa' Sufi teacher. Born and brought up in the pilgrim city of Karbala by its religious elite, Haeri would go on to pursue a secular education in the West and a successful career in the booming Arab oil industry. But Haeri would inevitably withdraw from the business world and return to his roots by directing his efforts towards teaching the Qur'an, resulting in numerous publications and a worldwide network of students, with past and present communities especially established in the United States, Pakistan, England, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and South Africa. The purpose of this thesis is to observe Haeri's life and works through the larger historical story of secularity as told by philosopher Charles Taylor. As *a Sufi sage in a secular age*, what Haeri offers us is a mirror, reflecting a period of time in which we are still so immersed that it eludes our ability to understand it in any comprehensive way. By looking at how his life and works both reflect and respond to our current epoch, the intention is to offer a compelling narrative of what can broadly be called Muslim modernity, together with the themes of 'authority' and 'authenticity' that can be seen to define it.