A SUFI FOR A SECULAR AGE

A Sufi for A Secular Age

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

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Abstract

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-*madhhab*' 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.

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My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one.

Wittgenstein[1]

1. From a letter to Ludwig von Ficker (circa 7 October 1919) describing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein, with a Memoir*, Horizon, New York, 1967, p. 97. During the period of my doctoral thesis I have come to abide by the final proposition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' ('*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*').

Preface

The Last Alchemist

'You are a Sufi shaykh and an alchemist!' proclaimed the Scottish Sufi to Fadhlalla Haeri on their very first encounter. Although Haeri had been taken aback by the comment, this short statement had summated not only his future but also his past. Sure enough, in the coming years, Haeri would live out a long and eventful career as a Sufi shaykh. But what was more curious about the comment was how it evoked Haeri's childhood memories of sitting quietly watching his father absorbed in alchemical experiments at his dedicated laboratory. Precarious wooden steps descended into a laboratory littered with an assortment of containers on wall niches and tables; pots atop burners boiling unusual organic substances, vessels joined together as part of crude distillation apparatus filtering fluids, and numerous jars full of all sorts of coloured liquids filled the room. A hot coal furnace raged on at the other end of the small room, which harboured ancient alchemical manuscripts easily at hand, as well as ingredients such as horns and hair, or scattered strips of lead, copper and silver, and chemical compounds, all of it lending to an atmosphere thick with the 'sickly smells of sulphur'.[1] As Haeri grew older, his father would explain to him that 'the aim of the alchemical process is to enable a base metal to transform into a higher noble metal, from lead to gold', while cautioning him that 'whoever wants to turn other metals into gold for material gain will never succeed'.[2] Of far more value than the wealth and power that the final product of the alchemical elixir could ever provide was the transformation of the alchemist himself through the process.

Haeri's father had been an accomplished alchemist, as had been his grandfather, and his great-grandfather before that. But Haeri would not continue the legacy, for his future lay elsewhere. After finishing secondary school with one of the top results in the country, Haeri was offered a scholarship from the Iraqi government and the British-led Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) to study in the UK. The candidates were expected to take an engineering degree, but Haeri, perhaps as an echo of his alchemist heritage, insisted on being allowed to study organic chemistry.[3] By the eighteenth century, the previously interchangeable terms 'alchemy'

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1. F. Haeri, *Son of Karbala: The Spiritual Journey of an Iraqi Muslim*, O-Books, Winchester, UK, 2006, pp. 11-12; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
2. F. Haeri & M. Haeri, *Sufi Encounters: Sharing the Wisdom of Enlightened Sufis*, Watkins, London, 2018, p. 13; Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 11-12.
3. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 85.

and 'chemistry' had come to be separated from each other, the latter being favoured by modern scientists and the former falling out of favour and eventually coming to indicate the fraudulent activities of charlatans.[4] While this distinction between chemistry and alchemy, and the secularisation process it exemplifies, had been for Europeans a gradual transition occurring progressively from within over a number of centuries, for those beyond the West it was a sudden change often imposed from outside.

In their introduction to a recent volume applying Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* beyond the West, Mirjam Künkler and Shylashri Shankar show the contrast between how secularisation in the Western world as presented by Taylor stretches over several centuries, while in the case of most of the rest of the world it involves only part of the twentieth century; Taylor's grand narrative of secularisation spanning 'several histories, philosophies, and methodologies ... shrinks to a matter of decades in many of the cases' illustrated in the book.[5] This rapid shift seems even further exaggerated in Haeri's case, which saw him leaving one world and entering an entirely new one in a matter of days. His first visit back to his father's laboratory presents an analogy of modernity as an impasse from which there is no going back: he returned home to find the laboratory 'under a cover of dust, concealing [its] ancient secrets', signifying the inevitable end of the effectively premodern world that had characterised Haeri's early life in the pilgrim city of Karbala.[6] The primary purpose of this thesis is to observe Fadhlalla Haeri's inescapable entry into a secular world, using it to explore the larger historical narrative of secularisation within which he can be situated. By holding up Haeri's life and works as a mirror of his times, a reflection is presented on the transformations we all inevitably face in our meeting with modernity.

4. L. M. Principe & W. R. Newman, 'Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy', in W. R. Newman & A. Grafton (eds.), *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 386.
5. M. Künkler & S. Shankar, 'Introduction', in M. Künkler, J. Madeley & S. Shankar (eds.), *A Secular Age Beyond the West: Religion, Law and the State in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2017, p. 10.
6. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 11-12.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This initial chapter serves to some extent as a behind-the-scenes look at the thesis. In it I offer an exposition of the rationale behind my choice of, and approach to, this particular research topic, the methodology I have used in investigating this research topic, and the thematical underpinnings that shape the way I present the thesis. After a brief look at the scarcity of previous literature on Fadhlalla Haeri, we will move on to an account of the methods that have been used in collecting and analysing the research material that informs this thesis, before finally moving on to an in-depth discussion of the narrative approach, especially the specific narrative of secularisation presented by Charles Taylor in his book *A Secular Age* (2007), which holds a central role in this thesis. The chapter concludes with an outline of the rest of the thesis, providing reasoning for this particular choice of structure.

1.1 Previous Literature and Research Question

Wanting to look at the boundary between the vague categories of Western Sufism and the New Age, this project started out as a study of a small Sufi community just outside Gothenburg, which had previously been a Zen-inspired meditation group and apparently 'converted' *en masse* to Islam in the early 90s after having come into contact with Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri (b. 1937). I had myself come to know of Haeri during my last year as an undergraduate in London, when I had read one of his books during a paper I was writing for a freestanding course on mysticism. I had not given it much thought since, but when I did finally attempt to find previous research on Haeri for my thesis, it quickly became clear that he had been largely ignored or unwittingly neglected.

Fadhlalla Haeri is a largely understudied, if not entirely unstudied, Muslim thinker and religious figure. When searching for attempts by researchers to situate Haeri within a definable context, we find only cursory and sometimes contradictory information. More than any other scholar, the American researcher on Islam and Muslims, Marcia Hermansen, has collected and presented information about Haeri, the earliest academic account of Haeri being from her 1997 survey of various American Sufi movements.[1] Hermansen describes Haeri as an Iraqi engineer and situates him and his followers as part of a small number of Shi'i-Sufi movements in the US.[2] These she considers to be part of a wider category of 'hybrid' Sufi movements in America that may contain many 'Western' members – meaning Euro-Americans and African-Americans rather than more recent immigrants to America – but are usually founded and led by someone born and raised in a Muslim society. Therefore, these movements are seen to identify more closely with Islam when compared to the 'perennial' type of Sufi movements that preceded them, yet not in the manner found within ethnic Sufi groups 'transplanted' from their homelands by the growing immigrant Muslim communities in the West.[3]

In a later paper (2000) elaborating on hybrid Sufi movements in America, Hermansen once again places Haeri and the community around him with the other Shi'i-Sufi movements, this

1. M. Hermansen, 'In the Garden of American Sufi Movements: Hybrids and Perennials', in P. B. Clarke (ed.), *New Trends and Developments in the World of Islam*, Luzac, London, 1997, pp. 155-178.

2. Ibid., p. 155.

3. Hermansen first used the garden metaphor to classify American Sufi Movements as either 'perennials' or 'hybrids' in the aforementioned article (Hermansen, 'In the Garden of American Sufi Movements', pp. 155-158), to which she added the third category of 'transplants' in a later paper: M. Hermansen, 'Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America: The Case of American Sufi Movements', *The Muslim World*, vol. 90, no. 1-2, 2000, pp. 158–197. See also M. Hermansen, 'What's American about American Sufi movements?', in D. Westerlund (ed.), *Sufism in Europe and North America*, Routledge-Curzon, London, 2004, pp. 36-63; and M. Hermansen, 'American Sufis and American Islam: From Private Spirituality to the Public Sphere', in D. Brilyov (ed.), *Islamic Movements and Islam in the Multicultural World: Islamic Movements and Formation of Islamic Ideologies in the Information Age*, Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia, 2014, pp. 189-208. For a recent critique and challenge to Hermansen's understanding of Sufism in America, see S. Sorgenfrei, *American Dervish: Making Mevlevism in the United States*, PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, 2013.

time under the label of 'Ja'fari-Shadhili'.[4] However, it is obvious when looking at the other Shi'i-Sufi groups she mentions, such as the Nimatullahi order headed by the Iranian psychiatrist Javad Nurbakhsh (d. 2008), and the Oveyssi order lead by a son and daughter of Shah Maghsoud Angha (d. 1980), that there is a disparity between them and Haeri. For instance, whereas they are Persian/Iranian in origin and connected with traditionally Shi'i orders, Haeri's group is connected to the traditionally Sunni, Arab and North African Shadhili order.[5]

It is Hermansen's survey (2005) of Shadhili Sufi movements in the West that is her most comprehensive treatment of Fadhlalla Haeri, and indeed the most any academic has written on Haeri to date.[6] In the survey, Hermansen devotes two pages to Haeri and his community of followers as a branch of the Shadhili order in the US, labelled 'al-Haydariyya al-Shadhilyya'.[7] She gives a brief background of Haeri, mentioning that he was born in Karbala and comes from a family of Iraqi Shi'a scholars, but that he left Iraq for the West at the age of sixteen to study science, engineering and business, going on to become an oil businessman before coming to Sufism.[8] Sharing some details about the establishment of his American Sufi community and 'Islamic teaching centre' near San Antonio, Texas in 1979, Hermansen also notes that Haeri set up 'satellite Sufi centres around the world' during the 1980s, including in Latin America and Pakistan. She traces his move to England and then Sweden, before his final move to South Africa in 1994 after the end of the apartheid system.[9]

Hermansen's survey attempts to map out the Shadhili influence on Western Sufism by looking at six prominent Shadhili shaykhs influential in the West – Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998), Ian Dallas (Abdalqadir as-Sufi), Fadhlalla Haeri, Muhammad Said al-Jamal (d. 2015), Nooruddeen Durkee and Nuh Ha Mim Keller – whom she tries to classify according to a number of characteristics.[10] These she lists in a table at the end of an article summarising her findings:

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4. Hermansen, 'Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America', pp. 158–197. The first half of the title Ja'fari-Shadhili refers to Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765), the sixth Imam in Shi'i theology and namesake of the main Shi'i school of law; the latter half refers to Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1258), the Moroccan mystic and founder of one of the most prominent Sufi orders. As we learn in a later paper by Hermansen, she takes this title from a talk by Haeri where he himself uses it to describe his group; see M. Hermansen, 'The "Other" Shadhilis of the West', in E. Geoffroy (ed.), *Une voie Soufie dans le monde: la Shadhiliyya*, Maisonneuve el Larose: Paris, 2005, pp. 481-499; for the original quote, see F. Haeri, *Songs of Iman on the Roads of Pakistan*, Zahra, Blanco, TX, 1982, p. 103.

5. Hermansen, 'Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America, pp. 158–197.

6. Hermansen, 'The "Other" Shadhilis of the West', pp. 489-491.

7. Ibid., pp. 489-499. In the title 'al-Haydariyya Shadhilyya', the word 'Haydar' (Lion) is an epithet of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the first Imam and fourth Caliph, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad.

8. Ibid., p. 489.

9. Ibid., pp. 489-490. Hermansen also mentions a few details about Haeri's activities in South Africa, which she obtained through personal communication (February 2003) with Abdelkader Tayob, according to whom Haeri has a group of followers in Johannesburg that are apparently led by the diplomat Iqbal Jazhbhay. She also speaks of one of his most senior students from the United States, Hajj Mustafa, whom she identifies as 'Haeri's American khalifa [deputy]' (ibid., p. 490).

10. Ibid., pp. 489-491

	Schuon	Dallas	Haeri	Jamal	Durkee	Keller
charismatic shaykh	x	x	x			
communal living	x	x	x		x	
sharia/fiqh emphasis		x				x
anti-Wahhabi debate		x				x
kufr/dualist rhetoric		x	x			
comparativist/New Age	x			x	x	
Shadhili rituals	x	x	x	x	x	x
anti-modernity	x	x	x	x		
Maliki	x	x				
Shafi'i				x	x	x
Ja'fari			x			
Hanafi					x	

Even without paying attention to the other names mentioned in the table, the ambiguity of trying to classify Haeri is apparent in this portrait of him by Hermansen, who presents Haeri as a charismatic shaykh not connected with the New Age yet not really emphasising the legal aspects of Islam (*shari'a*) either.[11]

Where Hermansen attempts to make a decisive statement about Haeri is in her assertion that he espouses an Islamist language in his teachings that express anti-modern and anti-Western sentiments.[12] Her position seems to have been shaped by two main factors. The first is that her understanding of Haeri's teachings is mostly informed by her reading of a particular publication of a series of talks given by Haeri during his tour of Pakistan in 1982, from which she points out his criticism of 'the adoption of the practices, especially social and medical, of the decaying modern West'.[13] As we shall see later, when considered in relation to his other works, as well as within the context around these talks in Pakistan, a far less one-dimensional character emerges. The second and perhaps stronger factor informing her view is captured in her statement that the general rhetoric she finds in the collection of talks reminds her of 'Abdal Qadir al-Sufi's style'.[14] This association with the Scottish Sufi and anti-Western political activist Abdalqadir as-Sufi (b. 1930), also known as Ian Dallas, has plagued almost every academic account of Fadhlalla Haeri. Hermansen herself has mentioned it in each of her accounts of Haeri, where, even in passages only a paragraph long, she manages to affiliate Haeri with

11. Ibid., pp. 489-491, 496
12. Ibid., pp. 489-491, 496
13. Ibid., p. 489.
14. Ibid., p. 489.

Abdalqadir.[15] However, as she mentions in her lengthiest account, Haeri and Abdalqadir were only briefly affiliated with each other, in the late 70s and early 80s.[16]

As the above example shows, the ambiguity and anonymity that surrounds Haeri has meant that he has been largely defined by his affiliation to others. The same author may even show seemingly conflicting views depending on which context Haeri is mentioned within. The Swedish scholar of religion, David Westerlund, contrasts a New Age type of universal and psychologically orientated Sufism with 'the more thoroughly Islam-based Sufism of Fadhlalla Haeri', due to associating Haeri with Abdalqadir, in *Sufism in Europe and North America* (2004).[17] But in *Islam Outside the Arab World* (1999), Westerlund, together with his fellow Swedish colleagues Christer Hedin and Ingvar Svanberg, states that Haeri advocates a 'more general form of Sufism, to some connected to the New Age movement', this time because of mentioning him together with the New Age-inclined British Sufi Reshad Feild, another more well-studied Western Sufi figure Haeri had a relationship with for some years.[18] A further example of portraying Haeri as this type of New Age Sufi is found in Svanberg's chapter in the same volume surveying Islam in the Nordic countries, where Haeri is briefly mentioned in a short account of the Sophia Foundation, the Swedish New Age-come-Sufi group near Gothenburg I had myself originally intended on studying.[19] Yet another example is found in a work by historian of religion Scott Kugle on the fifteenth-century Moroccan Sufi scholar Ahmad Zarruq (d. 1493), in which Kugle casts Haeri together with Hamza Yusuf and others attracted to the teachings of Zarruq as 'leading a movement that is slowly but steadily growing into

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15. Hermansen, 'In the Garden of American Sufi Movements', p. 155; Hermansen, 'Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America', pp. 158–197; Hermansen, 'The "Other" Shadhilis of the West', pp. 489-491, 496.
16. Hermansen, 'The "Other" Shadhilis of the West', p. 489 and Hermansen, 'American Sufis and American Islam'. A contrast with the well-known American Muslim scholar Hamza Yusuf Hanson (b. 1958) shows us how fruitful it can be to take our understanding of Haeri out of the shadow of Abdalqadir. Works on Hamza Yusuf, who also had a close affiliation with Abdalqadir during almost the exact same period as Haeri did, have not at all been mired by this association in the same way. Academic studies of Hamza Yusuf include: G. Schmidt, 'Sufi Charisma on the Internet', in D. Westerlund (ed.), *Sufism in Europe and North America*, pp. 109-126; N. Khan, 'Guide Us to the Straight Way: A Look at the Makers of Religiously Literate Young Muslim Americans', in Y. Y. Haddad, F. Senzai & J. I. Smith (eds.), *Educating the Muslims of America*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, pp. 123-154; Z. Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Crisis of Global Authority*, New York University Press, New York, 2013.
17. D. Westerlund, 'Introduction: Inculturating and Transcending Islam', in D. Westerlund (ed.), *Sufism in Europe and North America*, p. 7; see also D. Westerlund, 'The Contextualisation of Sufism in Europe', in the same edited volume., p. 22; there is also, in Swedish, Westerlund's chapter, 'Euro-sufism – universalister och konvertiter', in I. Svanberg & D. Westerlund (eds.), *Blågul islam?: muslimer i Sverige*, Nya Doxa, Nora, Sweden, 1999, pp. 85-106. As an academic survey of Western Sufism in Sweden, Westerlund gives a general introduction to the three 'most western' Sufi movements that can be found in Sweden, namely, the Swedish representatives of the Traditionalists or Perennialists (pp. 89-92), the Swedish members of the Sufi Movement (pp. 92-96), and the Swedish followers of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri (pp. 96-98). In Westerlund's survey this group is called 'Föreningen Sophia' and have also been called 'Sofia-stiftelsen', but both these labels seem to have become much less significant for the group today. For information on the group, Westerlund is also indebted to Birgitta Stålhammar and her contributions to a particular issue of the journal *Sökaren*, vol. 28, no. 6, 1991, pp. 2-9.
18. C. Hedin, I. Svanberg & D. Westerlund, 'Introduction', in D. Westerlund & I. Svanberg (eds.), *Islam Outside the Arab World*, St. Martin's, New York, 1999, p. 16.
19. I. Svanberg, 'The Nordic Countries', in D. Westerlund & I. Svanberg (eds.), *Islam Outside the Arab World*, p. 391. About the Gothenburg group, he states that it consisted of about twenty members in 1997 and 'is now part of a worldwide Sufi network' (p. 391).

discursive opposition to fundamentalist extremism.[20] In the anthology *Sufism in Britain* (2014), Julianne Hazen describes Haeri – in the context of her study on conversion narratives (some of which are taken from Haeri's followers in England) – as a shaykh of the Rifa'i Sufi order and his followers as a transnational Rifa'i Sufi community. This Hazen does because of her affiliating Haeri with a particular Bosnian Alami and Rifa'i shaykh she has been studying, whom Haeri had a close connection with throughout the 80s and 90s. Not surprisingly, Hazen considers Haeri to be similar to the shaykh of her study, as someone who bridges the East and the West.[21]

Coming back to Hermansen's treatment of Haeri as a Shadhili shaykh, she acknowledges the issue with identifying Haeri under any particular order, citing the claim of him being a shaykh of the Chishti order as further complicating the matter.[22] Hermansen nevertheless considers Haeri a Shadhili shaykh, who, together with all of the others on her list, upholds the practice of the traditional Shadhili rituals and abides by a traditional school of law (*madhhab*), albeit uniquely in his case a Shi'i tradition. Again, we can complicate this view of Haeri as a shaykh with a conservative leaning towards one of the established Islamic traditions, with Westerlund's portrayal, where Haeri is presented as someone who represents a 'law-oriented form of Sufism, with certain roots in the Shadhili-Darqawi tradition as well as in Shiite Islam', but also as someone who emphasises 'the need for ijtihad, i.e. a new interpretation of the law' and 'refers to himself as a 'post-tariqa shaikh''.[23]

These descriptions of Haeri capture the anomalous ability to fit him into almost any of the categories we have grown accustomed to using when trying to differentiate varying tendencies in Western Sufism and among modern Muslims in general. I gather this to be one of the main reasons for our academic ignorance of Haeri. He does not fit the mould. We cannot seem to fit him into any of the convenient categories so neatly assorted by previous studies. There are a handful of more cursory accounts of Haeri to be found in previous literature, most of which simply borrow from the works mentioned.[24] This lack of attention seems all the more glaring

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20. S. Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2006, pp. 17-19.

21. J. Hazen, 'Conversion Narratives among the Alami and Rifa'i Tariqa in Britain', in R. Geaves & T. Gabriel (eds.), *Sufism in Britain*, Bloomsbury, London, 2014, pp. 139-141, 148-152.

22. Hermansen, 'The "Other" Shadhilis of the West', p. 490.

23. Westerlund, 'Contextualisation of Sufism in Europe', p. 22.

24. One such work briefly mentioning Haeri is M. Haron, 'Da'wah Movements and Sufi Tariqahs: Competing for Spiritual Spaces in Contemporary South(ern) Africa', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2005. In it, Haron refers to Haeri as the leader of the 'Ja'fariyya-Shadhiliyya Order' and mentions two prominent South African Muslim figures that are followers of Haeri (Abu Bakr Karolia and Iqbal Jhazbhay), as well the fact that Haeri has made White River in Mpumalanga his permanent home. Another notable work which borrows heavily from the works already mentioned is A. K. Idrissi, *Islamic Sufism in the West: Moroccan Sufi Influence in Britain: The Habibiyya Darqawiyya Order as an Example*, trans. A Bewley, Diwan, Norwich, 2013. An example that can perhaps be seen as an exception that proves the rule is M. K. Akman, 'Fadhlalla Haeri and Universal Message of Sufism', in *Terrorism, Migration, Refugees: Contemporary Challenges on Cultural Identities Heritage, Economy, Tourism and Media: Conference Proceedings of the 4th International Conference "Ohrid-Vodici" 2016.* Institute for Socio-Cultural Anthropology of Macedonia, Skopje, 2017.

when considering the reception of Haeri's publications, some of which have been published by well-known publishers, have been reviewed by some of the most recognised peer-review journals since the 80s, and cited as references by numerous works in the disciplines of social work, psychology, religion and Islamic studies.[25] As was the case with my own situation before embarking on this project, the general position of most researchers in the field of Islam and religion is that they are more likely to have heard of Fadhlalla Haeri as an author by having read or come across his work, than to know anything about him or his role as a contemporary Sufi leader.

With Haeri being such an integral part of my original research project, I have had little choice but to address this academic blind spot, and have therefore had to shift the entire intention and attention of this project to gaining a better understanding of this enigmatic figure. In doing so, I aim to use Haeri in this thesis as a prism through which to view the time and place in which his life and works have emerged. The emphasis here is on understanding the wider context around Haeri's biography and, to some extent, his bibliography. And so, as my basic research enquiry, I am more interested in asking *when* (time) and *where* (space) Fadhlalla Haeri has had to formulate and articulate his teachings than I am in asking *what* those teachings are. Though all three questions are addressed, it is the first two that are given more room in this work, as they best demonstrate Fadhlalla Haeri as a reflection and response to what we can broadly label the meeting of Muslims and modernity.

1.2 Methodology

The purpose of this section is to present the basic methodological framework of the thesis and give an account of my experiences in its application. The presentation of the specific methods applied in this research, and the theoretical and technical issues arising in regards to them, are all given equal importance in order to reflect their co-dependency in practice. A crucial conviction underpinning the methodology for my research is that we cannot avoid theorising, and that we in fact always gravitate towards general theory, whether we are aware of it or not. That is why even under our contemporary critique of classical theories of religion as 'totalising' oversimplifications that ignore human complexity, we often end up reproducing them in partial

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25. Haeri's book, *Elements of Sufism* (1990) for example, has been reviewed in the journal, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 146, and has been cited over 40 times and translated into around a dozen different languages. And his book, *Journey of the Self* (1989), for instance, has been cited by a number of psychologists and social workers; including: S. Dharamsi & A. Maynard, 'Islamic-Based Interventions', in S. Ahmed & M. M. Amer (eds.), *Counselling Muslims: Handbook of Mental Health Issues and Interventions*, 2012; and B. Cutting, & A. Kouzmin, 'The Emerging Patterns of Power in Corporate Governance: Back to the Future in Improving Corporate Decision Making', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2000, p. 480.

form under the guise of new theory.[26] No single grand theory can fully grasp all religious phenomena, as even the task of simply trying to define 'religion' attests to. Thus, in the study of religion we quite understandably have become reluctant to build general theories of religion from our own empirical findings. Yet in our research we nonetheless draw upon the classical general theories of religion or look towards other disciplines with a knack for generalising. As Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler note, 'grand theory is in demand because it provides a view on the forest, whereas scholars of religion tend to concern themselves with trees'.[27]

From this perspective, denying the need for generalisation can only lead me to take such theorising for granted, and thereby allow it to operate implicitly within my research.[28] The very act of identifying what empirical material I should work with requires me to take a stance on what I assume to be of value and interest in the academic study of religion, as well as what I deem to be relevant for the topic of my thesis. Hence, theory is already present in my motivations for gathering data, in my choice and application of 'scientifically' acceptable methods for collecting and analysing that data, and in my evaluation and presentation of inevitably only a selected fraction of that data. Especially in my choice of methods, theory plays an integral role. Not only does each research method serve to theoretically frame the relationship between concepts and data, but also privileges a particular perspective by offering only a certain way of generating and/or analysing data.[29]

By investigating my focus of study — the life and works of Fadhlalla Haeri — from a number of different angles, I have hoped to address some methodological limitations, as well as to pre-empt a few of the many practical constraints and unpredictable occasions that call for improvisation, and which tend to have a far greater bearing on the shaping of the final product then does any planned procedure.[30] An important discrepancy to highlight here is that between methodological pluralism, which is what has been attempted in this research project, and 'methodological *laissez faire*', a common malady in religious studies.[31] To quote Stausberg and Engler:

> The study of religion stands in marked contrast to other disciplines, which put great emphasis on training in research methods — often in the first year — and which have a strong record of published work on methods, including journal articles, handbooks and specialist volumes ... There are several reasons for the general neglect of research methods in the study of religion. A major one is the fragmentary situation of our research landscape, in which some scholars learn textual methods while

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26. J. Thrower, *Religion: The Classical Theories*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999.
27. M. Stausberg & S. Engler, 'Theories of Religion', in M. Stausberg & S. Engler (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, p. 66.
28. Ibid., p. 67.
29. M. Stausberg, & S. Engler, 'Introduction: Research Methods in the Study of Religion', in M. Stausberg. & S. Engler (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2011, pp. 9-11
30. Ibid., pp. 4-5
31. Ibid., p. 4.

> others become familiar with qualitative social enquiry as part of their training … But it is a misconception to think that the study of religion is significantly different from other disciplines in its use of a variety of methods; what is different is the scarcity of explicit reflection on methods in the study of religion.[32]

In remedying this tendency of the discipline within my own work, I have embraced a reflexive attitude to both the collecting and analysing of my material, as well as its final presentation within this manuscript. In doing so, I have chosen to depend upon the qualitative side of the spectrum of methods familiar to me from the social sciences. The immediate methodological reasoning for this is that the subject of my study is much more amenable to qualitative methods of enquiry.

The aim of my investigation has been to see how the experiences and teachings of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri work as a response to some of the salient features of modern Muslims. Besides a familiarity with his teachings through literary works and multimedia formats, an essential requirement in trying to achieve my aim has been the need for a close relationship with the thinker and a means to produce a rich pool of data from that close interaction. To deepen and widen this pool of data I have also spent considerable time with his network of family, friends and followers, as well as taking the opportunity to participate in and observe various conferences, workshops and other activities connected to Fadhlalla Haeri. All of this encourages a number of qualitative methods as the most relevant and practical choices in my research. However, the epistemological reasoning behind my favouring a qualitative approach is important to make explicit, as I do in the subsequent discussion on my methods of choice. Unsurprisingly, I have followed the 'status quo in the academic practice of the discipline' of religious studies by relying mainly on ethnography and historiography as my methods of enquiry.[33]

1.2.1 Practicing Ethnography

Ethnography, literally 'writing culture', refers both to a process and a product.[34] It is the term for both the practice of immersive involvement by the researcher into the social life of those being studied as well as the written presentation that results from this practice. Here, 'ethnography' is used beyond its traditional usage within anthropology, in its more common use as the preferred term for what is otherwise called participant observation since the

32. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
33. Stausberg & Engler, 'Theories of Religion', p. 66
34. R. Sanjek, 'Ethnography', in A. J. Barnard & J. Spencer (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 193.

resurgence of qualitative enquiry in the 70s.[35] One major contribution to this qualitative turn was initiated with the publication of *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) by two celebrated sociologists of religion, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman; their social constructionism acknowledges that our realities are cognitive constructs of our own partial and situated perspectives, and that this is as much the case for a researcher as it is for anybody else.[36] In the application of partiality and situatedness to ethnography, some works of note by James Clifford deserve mentioning, namely his introduction, 'Partial Truths', to the defining book on postmodern ethnography, *Writing Culture* (1986).[37] Due to the influence of these works, dialogue, reflexivity and candour in my role as an ethnographer are as important to me in evaluating the credibility of my research data as is any assessment of their validity and reliability, or even generalisability.[38] Especially my reading of Donna Haraway and her notion of 'situated knowledges' has been decisive in refining my objections to positivist and totalising theoretical positions and in seeing the methodological benefits of partiality.[39]

The application of Haraway's ideas by Adele Clarke in the form of 'situational analysis' has also been of some influence in the overall framework of my ethnography.[40] I have benefited from the mapping techniques situational analysis offers, and made use of the 'rhizomic' form of analysis.[41] By giving primacy to partiality, fresh approaches like situational analysis have helped to dissolve the teleological tripartition by which research has been traditionally confined in the social sciences and humanities. Within that hierarchical framework for levels of analysis, qualitative methods have been seen as most appropriate for the micro level and

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35. A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 2008, p. 431. The import given to ethnography and related forms of qualitative research by some of the notable intellectual influences on my own thinking has perhaps been most significant in influencing my inclination for such an approach in my research. Being trained in social theory and anthropology, the influence of the respective Anglo-anthropological traditions initiated by Bronisław Malinowski (d. 1942) and Franz Boas (d. 1942) have been dominant, as well as the urban sociology of the Chicago School, the critical studies of the Frankfurt School and the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. My initial academic education near the beginning of the millennium has meant that from early on, not only have I been exposed to the value of ethnography as the traditional qualitative method of enquiry, but also that I have been taught by a generation of anthropologists who themselves were taught during the resurgence of qualitative methodology in the late 60s and 70s and the emergence of the many critical discourses (e.g. deconstructionism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, gender studies, cultural studies, etc.) that are often conflated under the rubric of postmodernism. See A. Clarke, C. Friese, & R. Washburn, 'Introducing Situational Analysis', in A. E. Clarke, C. Friese & R. Washburn (eds.), *Situational Analysis in Practice: Mapping Research with Grounded Theory*, Left Coast, Walnut Creek, CA, 2015, p. 29.
36. Clarke, Friese & Washburn, 'Introducing Situational Analysis', p. 26.
37. J. Clifford, 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1986, pp. 1-26; see also J. Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Authority', *Representations*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1983, pp. 118-146.
38. H. Graham, 'Field Research: Participant Observation', in M. Stausberg. & S. Engler (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, pp. 217-244.
39. D. J. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 575-599.
40. A. E. Clarke, 'Situational Analyses: Grounded Theory Mapping after the Postmodern Turn', *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2003, pp. 553-576; A. E. Clarke, *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2005.
41. On rhizomic analysis, see G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1987, pp. 3-28.

quantitative methods as most suited for the meso levels, whilst the macro has been largely reserved for less empirically engendered theorising.[42] Recent critique has already discounted these imposed distinctions as arbitrary and inconsiderate of the complexities of social relations and how they are constituted by involvement on all these levels.[43] For my own work, this has helped me tremendously in seeing beyond partiality as a limitation on enquiry to positioning it as an initial theoretical and methodological anchoring that allows for a great deal of conceptual freedom.

As well as bringing a level of awareness to the situatedness of the researcher, situational analysis is basically a postmodern modification to 'grounded theory', which itself is the application of some of the core tenets of a vital philosophical influence that underpins the epistemological foundation of this entire work, namely pragmatism.[44] Put simply, grounded theory entails the use of flexible methods of inquiry that allow for an appreciation of the interplay between data collection and data analysis, which ethnography traditionally separates as two distinct phases.[45] Whilst still allowing for the open-ended approach that is one of the real strengths of ethnography, grounded theory techniques encourage the ethnographer to compare data with data as they are gathered, so as to engage theoretically with the empirical material while in the field rather than afterwards.[46] The great benefit for me with bringing grounded theory into ethnography is that the inherent bias and agenda with which any researcher observes his or her subject of study is brought to the fore rather than allowed to hide behind the commonly overlooked misconception of the ethnographer as a 'passive receptacle in to which data are poured'.[47]

Practical Parameters of Fieldwork

In my understanding, ethnography or participant observation is an umbrella method incorporating various other methods under its canopy. This is a common notion held by ethnographers, for whom ethnography is best viewed as a strategy involving a combination of methods rather than a single method of collecting data.[48] Following usual ethnographic procedure, the initial stage of my research involved an almost all-encompassing exploration of the field in its widest scope, before an inevitable process of narrowing down could take place.[49]

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42. Clarke, Friese & Washburn, 'Introducing Situational Analysis', p. 44.
43. Ibid.
44. A. Bryant, 'Grounded Theory and Pragmatism: The Curious Case of Anselm Strauss', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 10, no. 3, art. 2, 2009.
45. K. Charmaz & R. G. Mitchell, 'Grounded Theory in Ethnography', in P. Atkinson et al. (eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography*, Sage, London, 2001, p. 162.
46. Ibid., pp. 161-162.
47. Ibid., p. 162.
48. H. R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, AltaMira, Lanham, MD, 2006.
49. Sanjek, 'Ethnography', p. 196.

Recognising that any method can only offer a partial perspective, I chose to approach my object of study through using a variety of means of data collection and analysis before narrowing my scope and becoming more focused through the methodological process itself. Hence, my fieldwork involved multiple methods of inquiry that became clearer and more restraint as my research matured.

After settling on the preliminary research aim of exploring the social and historical context of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri and the international network of followers that has grown around him, I first embarked on a two-week trip to South Africa, where he has been residing for the last two decades. The point of my initial visit was to get my feet wet and gather a sample of data to assess and reflect upon so as to have more direction during my next, much longer, stay a few months later. Wanting to have a clearly defined site, I had decided on focusing my attention on the Rasooli Sufi Centre close to Pretoria, which had been established by a group of Haeri's followers from the area. During this initial visit, I became accustomed with the general social life that surrounded the centre and the people that frequented it. For this, a lot of my methodology involved me simply being a fly on the wall, keeping fairly silent and simply observing the activities occurring around me or listening in on conversations without interjecting. I made no recordings during these gatherings and only made notes after-hand. An exception to this was my recording of almost every moment of interaction with Fadhlalla Haeri, which incidentally also occurred for the first time on this occasion during one of his usual visits to the centre. Haeri had of course been indirectly informed about my PhD project about him, and this had been made clear to everyone else also. Hence, to my great relief, an openness about my position as a researcher was there from the very beginning.

My second field trip some five months later would last for over ten weeks and was far more focused. Having had the time to reflect upon my first visit and the data I had collected, and having discussed this with my supervisors, I had decided to focus my attention more exclusively on Fadhlalla Haeri and his work than I had originally intended. Not only was this decision made on the grounds of the issues of interest I saw arising from my first batch of field notes, but also from an unexpected opportunity that had now become open to me by Haeri inviting me to spend time with him at his own home near Nelspruit in Mpumalanga. Realising the lack of any substantial prior academic work on Fadhlalla Haeri, the theoretical interest in him that our first few interactions peaked in me and the practical possibility to listen and observe the thinker in his 'natural' environment, all contributed to this decision. Yet, with Haraway's words — that situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated peoples — ringing in my ears, I knew how crucial it would still be to look at the social dynamics of the community around Haeri insofar as it could contribute to this main aim. Adopting such a strategy also meant that the major theoretical reconsideration of my thesis would not actually disturb my research design and intended ethnographic practice too much, mostly involving a

flip in emphasis, from learning about Fadhlalla Haeri in order to better understand the community to learning about the community in order to better understand Haeri.

I would make another four visits to South Africa over the next three years, for varying periods of time amounting to over seven months in total over the three-year period of my fieldwork, spanning December 2014–December 2017. It was because of my application of grounded theory to ethnography, and the simultaneous working with data and theory it allowed, that I could continue visiting the field until so late in the research process. This was one of the major reasons for breaking up my fieldwork into intermittent visits that would allow me to constantly reflect upon and refine my ongoing methodological work. For a considerable amount of my time in South Africa, I was fortunate enough to be in the company of Fadhlalla Haeri in his natural day-to-day setting, at his home and at various other venues. The rest of the time was spent with people connected to Haeri at the Rasooli Centre and other locations in Nelspruit, Pretoria and Johannesburg.[50] This has allowed me to take part in and observe a number of gatherings and workshops connected to his teachings, including an international conference that takes place at the Rasooli Centre every year. The international conference exposed me to the larger international network of people affiliated with Haeri, an exposure which was further expanded by the few weeks I spent attending various gatherings organised during Fadhlalla Haeri's two visits to the UK and one visit to Scandinavia during the three years of my fieldwork.

Framing the Field

As my fieldwork matured, so did my relationship with those I had met and came to know through it, many of whom I now consider friends. To clarify, I had no previous relationship with Fadhlalla Haeri or the other informants connected to him. But during the fieldwork, as is often the case, I developed a close relationship with many of them. Not only me, but some of my friends and family have also come into contact with them, forming their own friendships, often independently of me. Adding to this the fact that there was a considerable amount of cultural overlap between me and my informants – whether from England, Sweden or South Africa – maintaining boundaries became an increasingly pressing challenge. I had begun my fieldwork with the express intention of setting physical parameters to reinforce a separation between my work and personal life, and therefore was happy to confine my field to an unknown country to which I had no prior connection and which was far away from all I was familiar with.

50. There are also communities of Haeri's followers in Durban and Cape Town, which I did not have the opportunity to visit. I was however able to meet several people from these communities during conferences and other events at the Rasooli Centre.

Since Bronisław Malinowski's (d. 1942) establishment of ethnography as the mainstay of anthropology, the goal of fieldwork has been 'to grasp the native's point of view ... which really can only be achieved by camping right in their villages'.[51] For this reason, an ethnographer's object of study has traditionally been conceived of as anchored in physical territories. Although aware that the experience of space is constructed, we find ourselves unquestioningly mapping cultures onto physical spaces that the ethnographer may 'enter' and 'leave' at will. For Malinowski, the 'white man's compound' was such a space to escape to 'outside' of the observed culture.[52] Even though the vision of a 'culture' as a self-contained bounded entity is well worn out, conceptualising the field as bound to a physical space allows for an easier hopping in and out of 'culture' considered so integral for successful fieldwork.

> Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly.[53]

The need to 'detach' from the field is an inheritance from 'natural' science, one which leads to envisaging the field as a laboratory with concrete boundaries that a scientist can remove himself from. Ironically, there is also the simultaneous want within anthropology to conduct research in 'natural' settings with ethnography idealised as an empirical interaction with the 'raw material' of social life by which the ethnographer can get close to the people and blend in with the society.[54]

As the latter half of this dilemma became easier for me, the first half grew difficult. This was because I did not have a 'white man's compound' to escape to daily from the 'culture' that I was immersing myself into, and which was, to a degree, my own. Although a generation younger than most of the followers connected to Haeri with whom I engaged, I share a similar background to many of them. A majority of those I spent time with in England, for instance, were British children of migrant Muslims from the Indian subcontinent, as is my own mother. In Sweden, many of my informants were Swedish Sufi converts, like my father.[55] In South Africa also, despite my lack of any previous connection to the country, I shared a lot of cultural familiarity with some of the informants due to them, like myself, belonging in some shape or form to the international Gujarati diaspora. There were, of course, many exceptions to this demographic, including a number of people from other countries or with a background in

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51. B. Malinowski, 'Method and Scope of Anthropological Fieldwork', in A. C. G. M. Robben & J. A. Sluka (eds.), *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2007 [1922], pp. 56, 47; see also B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1922, pp. 4-25.

52. Malinowski, 'Method and Scope of Anthropological Fieldwork', p. 47.

53. Bernard, Research Methods in Anthropology, p. 344

54. Ibid., pp. 342-344.

55. In Sweden I perhaps had the least in common with my informants in terms of cultural heritage, yet thanks to having lived there for several years, and my father's active role as an imam and Sufi teacher, I found myself sharing values and norms with my informants.

Arabic, Persian or Bantu-speaking cultures. But even here, I felt a great deal of familiarity with them.

I bring attention to these similarities not to undermine the many cultural features that differentiate me from my informants, but to make apparent the double-edged sword with which I was able to conduct my fieldwork. The level of familiarity with my informants made it easy for me to 'blend in' and allowed the observation of 'natural' behaviour and perhaps even the generating of 'honest' responses from my informants, uncompromised by my presence as a researcher. However, it also fuelled an ongoing contention with maintaining clear boundaries between me and the 'object' of my study. This became an even more pressing matter as my ethnography became multi-sighted, spilling out of the geographical quarantine I had placed it in and began to encroach on my 'home turf' of Europe.

What has helped me deal with this best has been conceptualising my field of study as more determined by my encounters than by my entering a particular geographical location. This is partly inspired by Clifford, for whom thinking is 'a process of locating oneself in space and time', and for whom location 'is an itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations'.[56] I restricted my field to two concentric circles relating to two levels of intensity in my engagement with it. The outer circle would be 'activated' whenever I was engaging with the people around Haeri, including family, friends, followers, former associates, etc. The inner circle of my field would be 'activated' only whenever I could observe these people or myself being in the presence of Fadhlalla Haeri himself. The 'outer circle' thus gave me room to breathe and allowed for the grey area that was forming between my work and personal life, whilst the 'inner circle' allowed me to maintain and perhaps even enhance the intensity of attention and professionalism I felt I required in performing good fieldwork.

Conducting Interviews

As mentioned, I recorded almost every conversation of mine with Shaykh Fadhlalla since our very first meeting, but our relationship had an entirely different dynamic to those I had developed with the other informants. The reverence with which they held him, together with the charisma and acumen that Fadhlalla Haeri himself expressed, made me more than intimidated by his presence. Although Haeri made much allowance to put me at ease, he is accustomed to the teacher's role and I felt comfortable to take the role of a student, something only exacerbated by me being a dutiful researcher eagerly attentive to his every action and word; that and the fact that the surroundings in which I was often with him earlier on were in gatherings with his devoted students. At first, I had resigned myself to this circumstance as something that could not be helped, and, in light of Haraway's and Clifford's shared objective

56. J. Clifford, 'Prologue', in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997, p. 11.

of 'providing the object of knowledge with the agency and the authority', sought comfort in the notion that an informant *is* a teacher for the ethnographer.[57] Yet, as our relationship deepened, I found it easier to communicate with him beyond the dynamics of a student–teacher relationship, freeing me to ask questions I might have otherwise considered impolite or inappropriate. Interestingly, I realised in hindsight that whatever restraint I had felt in our initial interactions was all my own concoction; Haeri was as comfortable and assured in our later conversations as he had been before.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in interviewing Fadhlalla Haeri was his being both an informant and the topic of my thesis. This made formulating productive questions a complicated endeavour, and analysing the answers to them afterwards even more so. It was not only the concentrated style of Haeri's responses, requiring a wide array of further research to unpack, but also at times their seemingly contradictory nature. Often it would happen that as soon as I felt I had understood his position on a matter, he would take up an opposing stance and throw me off, something I only began to appreciate the more I immersed myself into the cosmology he was expounding. Hence, in making sense of his answers, I needed to investigate other fields of general knowledge, ranging from science and history to Muslim religious scholarship and Qur'anic studies, all of which, together with an increasingly better understanding of his worldview, improved my skills in asking him the 'right' questions at subsequent interviews. Perhaps the most comforting part of my interaction with Fadhlalla Haeri has been the fact that he has never sought to involve himself in the project, at most asking me about the title or how far along I had come. Any more interest than that would have made me anxious and perhaps problematised the process of writing the thesis itself.

Another primary source of collecting data was further face-to-face interviews, ranging from informal and unstructured to semi-structured. I also conducted a number of interviews by e-mail or phone, which were more formal and structured, designed with the explicit purpose of eliciting first-hand accounts of the communities Fadhlalla Haeri had set up in the past in America and Europe, from some of those who had been part of these communities. As an example, the type of questions used in the formal structured interviews were:

1. From what period was the community active?
2. How was the community established?
3. What were the activities of the community?
4. Where did these activities take place?
5. What would you say was the size of the community at its height?

57. A. Nas, 'A Discussion on Bourdieu's "Scholastic View", Clifford's "Dialogic Authority" and Haraway's "Situated Knowledges" through an Experiment on How to Write a Dialogic Essay', *Musings on Communication and Cultural Studies*, 28 December 2009, https://alparslannas.wordpress.com/2009/12/28/a-discussion-on-bourdieus-scholastic-view-cliffords-dialogic-authority-and-haraways-situated-knowledges-through-an-exp/.

6. What, if any, are the traces of the community today?

With the interviews I had the privilege of conducting in person during the period of my fieldwork, a narrowing process occurred in both the purpose of my interviewing and the choice of informants to interview. Although finding the unstructured interview technique to be a thoroughly time consuming and demanding method, I had little choice but to begin with it during the early stages of my ethnography, not only because of a lack of theoretical direction in my research at the time, but also because of the lack of rapport I initially had with the informants. As time went on, I was able to narrow my scope to a handful of key informants whom I could interview in a more structured format as my own agenda with the interviews became more obvious. Whilst one group of interviewees included a close friend to Haeri and two of his family members, another batch of interviewees included three male and three female informants who all had at some point been actively engaged in each of the different communities established by Haeri. Yet another cluster of interviews were conducted with approximately another half-dozen people who are part of the South African community that exists around Haeri and his teachings today.

To give the reader some idea of the type of the informants interviewed, I mention their general backgrounds here collectively. By no conscious choice on my part, of the dozen main informants there was almost equal division of men and women, with most informants aged in their fifties or slightly older. Ethnic and national backgrounds varied, but included American, English, Scottish, Swiss, German, Swedish, Danish, Iraqi and Pakistani, as well as quite a few South Africans of Indian descent. Again, around half of those interviewed were born Muslims and half became Muslim later in life, some directly as a result of meeting Haeri and some before having met him. Among those interviewed, many played a key role in setting up or running the communities and centres in the US, UK, Sweden, Germany and South Africa, and others were at various points involved with these and other communities, including in Denmark and Pakistan. Like in the case of Haeri, as we grew more comfortable with each other, I felt less intrusive in asking more direct and pertinent questions to my informants, and more confident in asking to record the sessions, with only one of the informants declining my request.

1.2.2 Data Analysis with Narrative Inquiry and Grounded Theory

Through my initial interaction with the field, it soon become clear that the main methodological aim of my research was to build a narrative around the central character of my thesis from as wide a spectrum of data as possible. An early strategy for analysing the data acquired from the interviews was the application of a form of 'triangulation' which could allow for varying opinions on the same events to bring a richer and more informed understanding of these events. Especially in piecing together Haeri's long career as a shaykh, what this allowed

for was a method of crosschecking various information garnered from the interviews against one another, to try and come to as unanimous an account as possible from the data at hand. Hence, the fact that not all of those interviewed considered themselves as followers of Haeri or part of the community was a real asset to the research.

The manner in which I conducted the interviews, and my ethnographic approach in general, involved a level of 'narrative inquiry', meaning a collaborative effort between the informants and researcher to bring to light those events and experiences that are most significant in the stories being told. A crucial aspect of my own attempt at practicing narrative inquiry was to take these accounts of personal experiences further by focusing 'also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted'.[58] For this reason, my collection and analysis of data extended beyond participant observation and personal interviews to the mining of a multiplicity of other material, to which the application of a grounded theory approach was highly beneficial. To put this understanding into context, it is perhaps best to look in some detail at the types of other material collected for this study and the process of analysing my pool of data from the combined methodological approaches of narrative inquiry and grounded theory.

Collecting Other Material

Although the material collected is too vast to list here in any comprehensive manner, I nonetheless list a substantial amount to both demonstrate more concretely the type of material collected as well as the process of analysing it. This largely involved me accumulating and categorising various data from printed material and other media directly or indirectly connected to Fadhlalla Haeri, including an array of primary-source literature in the form of pamphlets, flyers, brochures, administrative documents, books, booklets and websites, as well as video documentaries, recorded lectures, interviews and conversations found online or acquired as CDs and DVDs during my trips to South Africa and sometimes elsewhere. This gathering of data happened continuously throughout the three-year period, with a filtering of what was deemed relevant for my thesis occurring gradually, as what precisely this relevance entailed became clearer. Basically, my selection process was informed by the themes and patterns I found emerging from earlier material, which then influenced what I would search for during subsequent sessions of data collection.

Among the most important material collected and used for this thesis is a three-part documentary film series called *Sufism: The Heart of Islam*, created by Robert Mullan and

58. D. J. Clandinin & J. Rosiek, 'Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions', in D. J. Clandinin (ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2007, pp. 42–43

broadcasted on Channel Four (UK) in December 1990. An interview with Fadhlalla Haeri appears predominantly in the documentary, as does the centre he had started in Texas. There is also the documentary titled *Blessed are the Strangers*, created by A. Peerbux & S. H. Whyte in 2017, which shows both video and photography from Abdalqadir's early community in England, as well as interviews with some of its earliest members. Other important video footage includes the televised broadcast of the Intercultural Eid Celebration in Johannesburg on 30 January 1998, which Haeri held together with Nelson Mandela (d. 2013), both dignitaries giving their respective speeches to the large crowd of attendees as well as viewers watching at home. Also important are two promotional videos for the centre in Texas, *Bayt al-Deen* (1982) and *Bayt al-Deen Revisited* (1984). Both of these videos contain plenty of archive film footage and photography from Haeri's time as a shaykh in America and the community he established there.[59]

As well as the interview from the above-mentioned documentary series, a few other important interviews were collected and analysed. This includes a series of five interviews by the South African journalist Jerry Schuitema, which were filmed and made available as a DVD titled *Enlightenment & Islam* (2004). Another important source of earlier interviews was former politician and academic, Ali Allawi. Planning on writing a biography of Fadhlalla Haeri, Allawi had conducted several interviews with him in early 2014, which I was able to acquire. There exists one long publicly available interview, called 'A Spiritual Path', which is accessible in both DVD form and on YouTube, as well as in print as an edited transcript.[60] I was also privileged enough to make use of several audio recordings of private conversations between Allawi and Haeri in relation to his plans on writing a biography. Others previously recorded interviews include: two interviews by Shafiq Morton on the Cape Town radio station The Voice of the Cape, available online; an interview conducted by Kabir Helminski in 2009 that is also available online in audio format; the full transcript of an interview of Fadhlalla Haeri broadcast on Canadian television in 1991; and lastly, an interview of Haeri by the now-terminated *Non-duality Magazine*.[61]

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59. Although obviously a positive take on the centre, the informative style of these videos offered visual support for a lot of the data collected from other material. The videos are available online at https://www.shaykhfadhlallahaeri.com/vid_youTube19.php#BaytalDeen1984.
60. *The Spiritual Path – An Interview of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri with Dr. Ali Allawi* [online video], YouTube, uploaded by user 'Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri', 30 April 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TgxCoPmcJ2A. The transcribed interview is available as *The Spiritual Path: A Conversation between Professor Ali A. Allawi and Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri on his Life, Thought and Work*, ed. A. Jaleel, Zahra, London, 2019.
61. S. Morton, 'Interview with Sheikh Fadleila Haeri', *Drivetime*, The Voice of the Cape, 23 January 2017, https://iono.fm/e/71662; S. Morton, 'Face to Face – Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri', *Drivetime*, The Voice of the Cape, 16 October [2013?], https://iono.fm/e/220721; K. Helminski, 'An Interview with Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri' [online audio], Baraka Institute, http://www.barakainstitute.org/podcasts/an-interview-with-shaykh-fadhlalla/; J. Giancarlo, 'The Light, Love and Peace of Islam (Transcription of a TV Interview of Shaykh Fadhlalla, Broadcast in Canada in 1991)', *Nuradeen*, 22 January, 1992, https://www.nuradeen.com/archives/Reflections/LightLovePeaceOfIslamIntro.htm; *Non-Duality Magazine*, 'Interview of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri', 2011, https://www.shaykhfadhlallahaeri.com/art_interviewWithNonDualityMagazine.php.

Through the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, I was also able to access two earlier websites dedicated to Haeri's teachings that are now defunct: one called *Nuradeen* (www.nuradeen.com), which published articles and news updates about the network around Haeri from 2001 until 2009, and another called *ASK Online* (www.askonline.co.za), which was the main vehicle for the online 'Academy of Self Knowledge' course.[62] Started in 2003, the ASK website was redesigned and updated in 2010, but later sublimated into the *SFH Foundation* website which launched in 2015.[63] A lot of data was mined from these sources, including short articles and texts, photos and other material from previous events, transcripts and excerpts from various other relevant sources, e-books and course materials, etc. I gained access to many audio and video recordings of various conferences and lectures by Fadhlalla Haeri through these websites, YouTube, and various social media sites, but I was also able to access recordings not found online. These included over 30 recordings as hard copies in the form of cassette tapes, CDs and DVDs, obtained from storerooms and some of the small libraries connected to Haeri's teachings, such as at the Rasooli Centre. I was also fortunate enough to have access to a massive electronic catalogue and archive of over 300 audio recordings of both private and public talks given by Fadhlalla Haeri dating back to his early days in America. Although I have not been able to listen to all of the recordings of Fadhlalla Haeri's talks, I nonetheless made a point of dating and summarizing a number of them so as to get a fair overview of the general trajectory of his ideas.

Another category of material that this thesis has benefited from is the vast amount of printed material I was able to collect during my fieldwork. This not only included Haeri's bibliography of published works, but also an assortment of other printed material. I managed to read through and take notes on quite a few issues of the journal *Nuradeen*, which some of the members of Haeri's community in America ran in the 80s, as well as almost the entire series of pamphlets and booklets produced by the Swedish community connected to Haeri in the 90s. Besides these two valuable resources, I also made use of a number of other print material, including: photos and other archive material of historical relevance, such as of the Karbala of Haeri's childhood as well as of his family; old papers and articles, such as those submitted by Haeri as an engineer and MBA student; administrative papers and registration forms, such as for the 'Futuwah' children's summer camp held by Haeri's community in 1981; legal documents, such as those connected to the case between Haeri and the IRS in the late 80s; architectural designs for some of the community projects, such as the recent Calmera project in South Africa; personal letters addressed to Haeri, such as those sent by Chinmayananda; advertising posters, such as those for various Sufi gatherings or the ASK course; mission statements and charters,

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62. *Nuradeen*, https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.nuradeen.com. *ASK Online*, https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.askonline.co.za.
63. *SFH Foundation*, https://sfhfoundation.com. SFH is an acronym for 'Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri'.

such as the one posted on the entrance wall of the Rasooli Mosque; newspaper clippings and columns highlighting some event or other connected to Haeri, from as early as the 80s to more recently in South Africa; public and private printed accounts from various ex-members of Haeri's community; pamphlets and promotional material, such as advertisements, brochures and programs for many of the conferences held in America, Europe and South Africa throughout Haeri's career as a shaykh.

The Process of Data Analysis

Grounded theory involves an arduous process of continuously 'coding' the data in order to abstract various conceptual categories that in turn can be integrated into a comprehensive theoretical framework.[64] For reasons that will become clearer in section 1.3 below, my own process departs from this general methodology in that I from early on in my research have been working to build a *narrative* from the acquired material rather than a substantive theory. Therefore, I combine grounded theory with narrative inquiry to more neatly serve the aim of my research. Although this may seem like an odd pairing at first, Shalini Lal, Melinda Suto and Michael Ungar have demonstrated 'that grounded theory and narrative inquiry can be potential allies in a qualitative study given that they are theoretically commensurable and methodologically complementary'.[65]

To start with, 'the theoretical roots of grounded theory and narrative inquiry can both be traced to American pragmatism'.[66] Furthermore, constructivist grounded theorists that have inspired the methodology of this thesis, such as Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (1999), 'adhere to similar principles' as those espoused in this approach, 'and actively engage with these principles by using methods from narrative inquiry.'[67] So, for instance, we see the influence of John Dewey's (1938) ideas on how social context influences individual experience, both in Clarke's situated analysis and in the framework for narrative inquiry proposed by Connelly and Clandinin, in which they emphasise how experience is bounded by 'temporality, sociality and place'.[68] On a more practical level, for both grounded theory and narrative inquiry, language is the primary form of data collected and analysed.[69] Also, both approaches advocate the use of 'several data collection methods as sources of evidence', and share a heuristic approach to tackling the data, which emphasises collecting and analysing simultaneously.[70]

64. J. A. Holton, 'The Coding Process and Its Challenges', in A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2007, pp. 265-289; J. A. Holton, 'The Coding Process and Its Challenges', *Grounded Theory Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2010.
65. S. Lal, M. Suto & M. Ungar, 'Examining the Potential of Combining the Methods of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry: A Comparative Analysis', *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 17, no. 21, 2012, p. 14.
66. Ibid., p. 6.
67. Ibid., p. 8.
68. Ibid. 6; see also J. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Collier, New York, 1938, p. 479.
69. Lal, Suto & Ungar, 'Examining the Potential of Combining the Methods of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry', pp. 7-8.
70. Ibid., pp. 8, 11.

Most importantly for the present work, advocates of grounded theory and narrative inquiry both make use of coding procedures for the purpose of analysis. However, whereas in grounded theory coding is used to fracture a given narrative and then rebuild it according to emergent categories of conceptual interest, in the case of narrative inquiry, coding involves the search 'for narrative features such as plotlines, details of setting, characters, and actions within' a given account.[71] A further discrepancy between the two is that whereas grounded theory seeks legitimacy through a rigorous methodical procedure that can be accurately documented, in narrative inquiry the quality of a study is equally appraised through other values, such as 'its aesthetic features and capacity to evoke emotion in the reader/audience'.[72] As well as general criteria of quality, including plausibility and trustworthiness, transparency of the research process is another essential ideal for both methodologies.[73] However, whereas in grounded theory this aim is usually achieved through a conventional format of reporting the steps taken to reach the findings presented, a narrative inquiry approach emphasises self-reflectivity, and findings are presented in a variety of artistic ways that promote engagement of the audience with the research.[74]

My aim with this current research has been to take advantage of both methodologies in order to enrich the findings and present them as a compelling story. For this reason, narrative theory as discussed in section 1.3 has been crucial, as it can be conceived of as 'providing a conceptual bridge that strengthens links between narrative inquiry and constructivist applications of grounded theory'.[75] In fact, merging grounded theory with narrative inquiry is nothing new, and is often implicitly present in constructivist variations of grounded theory.[76] But for the purposes of this thesis, the attention is very much on narrative, both as a means to structure my inquiry, and as a direction in which to explore the implications that result from this inquiry. For grounded theory, it is the concepts that emerge from the data that are of importance rather than the data itself. From a narrative inquiry standpoint, the interpretive nature of this analytical process of coding the data is not taken for granted, and therefore comparing and contrasting codes usually occurs at a later stage of analysis in order to keep each individual story intact.

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71. Ibid., p. 12.
72. Ibid, p. 12; see also C. K. Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2008.
73. Lal, Suto & Ungar, 'Examining the Potential of Combining the Methods of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry', pp. 12.
74. Ibid., p. 13.
75. Ibid., p. 7.
76. Ibid., pp. 14-15. For example: K. Charmaz, 'Stories of Suffering: Subjective Tales and Research Narratives, *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 9, 1999, pp. 362-382; S. Drew, 'The Delta Factor: Storying Survival and the Disjunctive between Public Narratives and Personal Stories of Life after Cancer', *Storytelling, Self, Society*, vol. 1, 2005, pp. 76-102; C. K. Riessman, 'Considering Grounded Theory: Categories, Cases, and Control', *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 32, 2009, pp. 390-393.

In combining the 'category-centred' perspective of grounded theory while still seeking to protect the integrity of the narrative, the coding procedure for this thesis mainly unfolded as an integrative exercise in eliciting those events and themes that not only seemed interesting, but also appeared frequently enough in the material to be of note. It might seem that this coding and analysis was a smooth and systematic procedure, but it was in fact a far messier affair. Rather than a linear progression towards further and further abstraction, the actual process involved a lot of trial and error, and reconsiderations of what might be deemed relevant for the narrative that was slowly and often sporadically emerging out of constantly comparing various incidents and information brought forth from the material. It is mainly therefore that I consider a 'rhizomic' form of conceptual mapping more appropriate than traditional hierarchical techniques.

By combing through the vast amount of material collected for this research, I was able to gradually elicit key points in the plot. The wide gamut of material at my disposal was useful in establishing the commonality as well as consistency or inconsistency of certain accounts made by the interviewees, ranging from simple issues like an accurate chronology of Haeri's biography, to more sensitive and specific questions, such as the context around Haeri's sudden departure from America in the mid-80s. During the process, I was particularly cautious that even simply choosing which incidents to highlight and which not, or deciding what information to leave out and what to include, would drastically shape the consequent narrative. What guided this selection process was the ambition to build a textured, compelling, cohesive and — perhaps most importantly — credible story of Fadhlalla Haeri's life. A lot of information that felt ambiguous or did not materialise from a number of different sources was disregarded. This was really the strength of the sheer volume of material, which could itself serve as one of my most effective methods for vetting the data.

What began to emerge from the data was a narrative structure that brought to the fore certain aspects of Fadhlalla Haeri's biography at the cost of others. One positive I took from this emergent structure was how it contrasted with Haeri's own account of his life that I had taken from his autobiography, *Son of Karbala*, and interviews with him conducted by myself and others. Though Haeri himself was an indelible source in developing the initial narrative, his story was only one version of events. Data collected from other interviewees as well as additional research material played a crucial part in shaping and reshaping the narrative I finally ended up with. Much like in grounded theory, at a certain point in the analytical process I found I had reached a level of saturation where the data I had at hand could offer very little in further developing the narrative that would then come to serve as a skeleton for the entire thesis. A brief outline of this narrative is offered here as a means to familiarise the reader with Fadhlalla Haeri, as well as introduce the themes I have considered central in developing my thesis around his story.

An Outline of Fadhlalla Haeri's Biography

Fadhlalla Haeri was born and brought up in the Iraqi city of Karbala, established centuries earlier at the site of the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn along with a band of his allies in 680 — a tragic massacre which became one of the most defining events in the history of Islam. A city soon grew on the site to meet the needs of pilgrims and came to be one of the most significant places of pilgrimage and religious learning in Islam, especially for Shi'a Muslims. Haeri's father was the main religious authority connected to the shrine of Imam Husayn and held the main congregations at the adjacent mosque, just as his father had done before him and his father before him. But this religious role held by his paternal lineage for generations, Haeri would not inherit. With one foot in its centuries-old traditions, and the other in the increasingly noticeable influence of Western interests, Fadhlalla Haeri would come to reflect a Karbala transitioning from one epoch to another. As a reasonably self-sustained and autonomous pilgrim city, Karbala had managed to maintain a lot of its pre-modern composition during a period of turbulent political, social and economic change that had been upsetting most other urban areas throughout the Middle East. The extraordinary situation belated Karbala's modernisation, providing Haeri with a sheltered childhood that experienced the last remnants of a way of life seemingly unchanged for centuries.

All this suddenly changed for Haeri, when at only sixteen years of age he boarded a propeller plane that would take him away from his family, home, and all that was familiar to him. Haeri had been given a scholarship to study science in the UK, and would do so for the next six years, coming of age in an alien culture that not only felt it was from another place but also another time. But with time Haeri got used to life in the UK and would even end up meeting a young Danish girl there, whom he soon married. By the time of his return to Iraq and employment in the oil industry, Haeri once again found himself at the centre of the gradual transition from what was left of the earlier colonial epoch towards the emerging era of nation states. Haeri was stationed at the chief oilfield, near Kirkuk, where he lived with his newlywed in a quaint house within the confines of the nearby anglicised camp, a surreal enclosure modelled on a typical England suburb, complete with all the amenities and infrastructure a British expat could require. This was due to the mainly British senior staff of the company Haeri worked for, which had a British-led consortium of foreign share-holders. Whereas when Haeri had first arrived, the company still held a monopoly over oil production in Iraq, they would begin to concede their foothold throughout the 1960s, under mounting pressure from an Iraqi government with growing anti-colonial and nationalist tendencies. This was also reflected in the rapid replacement of the foreign staff with Iraqis, which is why Haeri, as one of the foreign-educated elite, rose through the ranks swiftly and got further training abroad.

Eight years passed before Haeri once again left Iraq, just as the country was about to fall into decades of despotic rule from which it would never recover. Haeri's excuse for leaving had been a progressive new degree that applied scientific methods to management. Originating in the US and being offered in the UK for the first time, the Masters in Business Management (MBA) program would expose Haeri to the country's top-tier thinkers in business and economics. This did not translate into immediate success after graduation however. There were several months of financial struggle before Haeri procured a job. Initially, he worked for a recruiting firm in London, but after a year or so Haeri was offered a director's post with an IT consulting subsidiary of BP (British Petroleum), which mainly involved him securing IT contracts from the emerging oil-producing countries and setting up offices all around the Middle East. This he did from his new home in Beirut, and after a further two years with the company, developed a base for his own highly successful Arab oil consultancy, Project Development Company (PDC), in the newly emerging city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Haeri's own independence from his British employers coincided with Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf, marking the end of one era and the beginning of a new post-imperial one.

It was at the height of his success that Haeri would turn away from it all in order to pursue another ambition, an ambition which had been lit by his encounter with a travelling swami from India who was part of a wider phenomenon of international Indian spiritual teachers that had exploded across the globe. Haeri was only one among many non-Indians who found the modernised versions of Vedanta that these gurus expressed appealing. This was especially the case for affluent individuals from Western countries who felt unfulfilled by material wealth and were disillusioned with their own establishments and so had become receptive to religious alternatives. For some years, Haeri would spend a lot of time with his swami, until one day the swami told him to continue his quest by reconnecting with his Muslim roots. Haeri would do so by spending a few years with a Sufi teacher, after which Haeri would himself become a recognised Sufi shaykh, establishing centres and communities across five different continents and publishing numerous books.

Not only was it Haeri's industrious and itinerant career as a teacher that took him around the world, but also his search for a permanent home. Ever since leaving Karbala, Haeri had not resided in any one place for more than a few years. Originally, he had looked towards South Asia, where he made many attempts to establish a home as well as philanthropic projects. But with the end of the cold war and the political threat of 'Islam' taking centre stage, Haeri ended up moving as far away from the Middle East as possible, finding his home in South Africa. Whereas the promise of a decolonised and developing Asia dwindled as the twentieth century drew to a close, South Africa was a land full of optimism. With Mandela soon to be released and the oppressive apartheid regime over, Haeri thought to find a location in the promising country

that could be ideal for him to settle down privately with his family. However, a community would once more grow around him and a new centre was established, which has now become a hub for the global network of students affiliated with Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri. From South Africa, Haeri has continued his teaching and writing, developing a more and more universal reach with his message.

Electing Key Themes

Once I had a general narrative structure of Haeri's biography, I felt ready to analyse his recorded talks and publications so as to elicit themes within his work in light of the story of his life I saw before me. Some of the most salient themes to emerge from the material can be summed up with phrases such as:

1. loss of vast amounts of sacred knowledge throughout history
2. material wellbeing at the cost of spiritual wellbeing
3. contemporary science on the verge of being able to explain ancient metaphysical ideas
4. a mission to make spiritual tenets operational for ordinary people in their everyday lives
5. self-knowledge and self-critique; returning to an 'original' Islam
6. universality of the message
7. inner/outer dichotomy

Through notions such as these that emerged from the coding and analysis of data, what became clearer with time were certain ideas and incidents that seemed to have been central points in Fadhlalla Haeri's outlook as well as that of the community around him at certain periods in his life. I found there to be both ideas and issues that occur consistently throughout Haeri's life and work, but also others that existed or were at least prioritised only during a bracketed time period and location. This brought forward my first major thematic realisation: what I was witnessing from the material was an 'arc' in Haeri's life and works, which seemed to reflect larger shifts and changes.

Coming back to the narrative I had developed, it was clear how this insight supported a portrait of Haeri which exhibited a wide array of changes that offer a recurring theme of transition from one era to another. Following this new knowledge, I looked once again at a lot of the material with a fresh perspective and saw how Haeri adapted his teachings in relation to the audience, which was my second major thematic realisation. What I noticed was that there seemed to be certain central principles that Haeri held to, but that these were either downplayed, up-played or retranslated depending on who he was talking to. The link between Haeri's teachings and activities and his socio-historical context was far more significant than I had realised. This might seem obvious now in hindsight, but it was only after evaluating and

revaluating the data that it became so clear to me. All that remained now was to find a suitable 'macro' narrative that could reflect and contextualise the 'micro' narrative of Haeri's life I had formed.

Analysing data largely consists of a process of comparison and contextualisation against which empirical data has to be filtered and interpreted.[77] In doing this with my own material and fieldnotes, I have tried to keep in mind the following words:

> Full accountability, of course, like the dream of self-knowledge, is elusive. The kind of situated analysis I have in mind is more contingent, inherently partial. It assumes that all broadly meaningful concepts ... are translations built from imperfect equivalences. To use comparative concepts in a situated way means to become aware, always belatedly, of limits, sedimented meanings, tendencies to gloss over differences.[78]

It is this type of situated analysis articulated by Clifford that has been influential not only in my ethnographic work and data analysis, but also in my approach to historiography, which has been the other major methodological framework utilised in this thesis. After many false starts, my analysis of data and the themes and concepts that I saw emerging from it eventually brought me to an increasing appreciation for a growing trend in contemporary historiography that emphasised the entangled and interconnected aspects of our past and present. However, I had an intention to approach this with a serious consideration of the inherent partiality of any perspective I might be able to express. It was at this point that I began to consider the larger picture emerging from the analysis of my data about Fadhlalla Haeri. Hence, in as much as I have been mindful of my own situatedness, it has been all the more important to consider the situatedness of Fadhlalla Haeri in formulating a fascinating and informative story of his life and times. Therefore, what my thesis is primarily concerned with is a contextualisation of this narrative.

1.2.3 Applying Historiography

In referring to history as 'historiography' — literally, 'writing history' — Michel de Certeau exposes it as 'a human activity' that involves the producing of a text as much as the product of the text itself.[79] Beyond the 'linguistic turn' and the exclusive focus on the textuality of history by its post-structuralist critics, de Certeau brings attention to the actual practice of writing and not just what is written.[80] In particular allusion to historiography, take for instance how the

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77. Sanjek, 'Ethnography', p. 196.

78. Clifford, *Routes*, p. 11

79. M. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p. 57.

80. This is in reference to critics like Roland Barthes (d. 1980), Michel Foucault (d. 1984), Hayden White (d. 2018) and Dominick LaCapra. Gail Reekie writes: 'This group is often taken to represent 'the' poststructuralist critique of traditional history: a challenge coining mostly from literary and cultural studies that, among other things, analyses historical discourse to reveal its coincidence with other forms of writing.

expression of chronological order, completeness and coherence that the writing of history necessitates in the construction of a bounded account inverts the research process, which starts from the present, is never-ending, and is constantly confronted with gaps that the scriptural representation must attempt to fill or obliterate.[81] In this sense, history is to be understood as an *operation* comprising 'the relation between a *place* (a recruitment, a milieu, a profession or business, etc.), analytical *procedures* (a discipline), and the construction of a *text* (a literature)'.[82] In other words, historical knowledge is the outcome of a text's relationship with a specific form of labour shaped by the particular established routine practices of a given time and place.

De Certeau does not resign himself to epistemological scepticism or call for an institutional revolution, but rather asks for some epistemological self-awareness and ethical commitment by stressing how the collectively incorporated implicit regulations that at once permit and prohibit the writing of history — institutional determinants — should be identified and accounted for in the final narrative of the author as a gesture of transparency.[83] For him, being 'responsive and responsible to epistemological doubt' offers a distinct solution to any perceived epistemological crisis. In this way, he helps us confront the fact that the past is ultimately irretrievable and that 'any reading of the past ... is driven by a reading of current events', but simultaneously invites us towards a more self-consciously literary approach that allows for the discursive construction of historiography to be more evident.[84]

Ben Highmore explains de Certeau's desire for a more literary historiography as not antithetical to 'the science of history' but rather an opportunity to improve histories of the past by being able to judge one account 'as relatively better than another on account of a set of values (the ability to present complexity, say) that historians defend'.[85] This allowance for the return of both 'science and fiction' through a prism of ethical consideration can counter not

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From this point of view, both the historical document and the history book on which it is based are texts, and both are therefore amenable to textual analysis. The historian is an author; the 'past' a discursive construction'. See G. Reekie, 'Michel de Certeau and the Poststructuralist Critique of History', *Social Semiotics*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1996, pp. 45-46.

81. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, pp. 86-87.

82. Ibid., p. 57.

83. L. Giard, 'Introduction: Michel de Certeau on Historiography', in G. Ward (ed.), *The Certeau Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000, pp. 19-20.

84. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, p. 23.

85. B. Highmore, *Michel de Certeau: Analysing Culture*, Continuum, London, 2006, pp. 25-26: 'Michel de Certeau provides historiographic thought, not just with an epistemological crisis or an epistemological undoing (which might be one reading of Hayden White's approach), but with an epistemological awakening that results in a re-grounding of the science of history. The "literary-ness" of historiography becomes the opportunity for historians to become (more) "scientific" in their commerce with the past. Rather than treating "literature" and "the science of history" as antithetical, de Certeau's practice suggests a new cosmology of historiography, such that the becoming-literary of historiography coincides with the desire to produce "better" histories of the past. If critical historiography has been accused of ushering in a form of relativism that would give any account of the past equal status (thereby allowing it to be epistemologically vulnerable to Holocaust deniers, for instance), here relativism insists on critical evaluation – which is, significantly, an anti-relativist operation. If there are no absolute guarantees to knowledge, no final jury that would arbitrate on the "facts", it is even more crucial to make relative judgements, such that one account is judged as relatively better than another on account of a set of values (the ability to present complexity, say) that historians defend'.

only the dogmatising tendency of modern science, but also the indifference and stymying effect of absolute relativism.[86] Haraway aptly contends that 'relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity', as both extremes deny the implication of partial perspective and situated knowledge.[87] Therefore, 'a geography of knowledge', that is, locating the production and products of knowledge within the parameters of their 'socio-economic, political, and cultural' possibility, does not necessarily contradict the desire for validity.[88] Rather than abandoning notions of reality, truth and actuality altogether, a textualist position can accord for a less complacent engagement with them, which, in short, is the generative aptitude of de Certeau's perspective on historiography.

A Turn to Global History and Connected Histories

It is in this capacity that Roger Chartier can show how 'de Certeau linked rather than opposed knowledge and narrative, proof and rhetoric, critical scholarship and historical writing'.[89] Evoking Carlo Ginzburg's critique of the postmodernist linguistic turn by noting that rhetoric — if properly understood, as in the Aristotelian tradition — is associated with proof rather than being antinomic to it, Chartier argues that the rhetorical dimension of historiography does not deny its validity as knowledge founded upon evidence and verification.[90] He further stresses the urgent need for 'reflection on the conditions that make it possible to consider a historical discourse as an adequate representation and explanation of reality', at a point in time where 'our relationship to the past is inhabited by the powerful temptation of imagined and imaginary histories'.[91]

Chartier brings this reflective gaze upon the recent discussion around the 'return to a global history' amongst historians by highlighting variations of scale in historiography and questioning 'the supposed epistemological superiority of one scale of observation over another'.[92] He heeds Paul Ricoeur's warning that 'at each scale one sees things that one does not see at another scale' and that 'each vision has its own legitimate end', which makes the search for the vantage point (*lieu de surplomb*) from which all the ways of seeing the past can be considered commensurable, a futile pursuit.[93] Taking his cue from Ginzburg once again, the point of Chartier's critique is to dissolve the apparent conflict between a 'global history' and a microhistory (*microstoria*) approach, when considering that the purpose of both is to reveal

86. Reekie, 'Michel de Certeau and the Poststructuralist Critique of History', p. 56.

87. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', p. 191.

88. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, p. 58.

89. R. Chartier, 'History, Time, and Space', *Republics of Letters*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2011, pp. 2-4.

90. Ibid.; see also C. Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof: The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures*, University Press of New England, Hanover, NH, 1999.

91. Chartier, 'History, Time, and Space', p. 8.

92. Ibid., p. 9.

93. Ibid., p. 9; see also P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2004, p. 218.

what would otherwise remain unobserved.[94] If historians can agree that interdependencies are not to be neglected, then 'what matters is the choice of a framework of study capable of rendering visible the "connected histories" that have brought together populations, cultures, economies, and powers'.[95]

In their state-of-the-art exposition of global history, Caroline Douki and Philippe Minard conclude by reiterating this point and stress how it is a situated approach to history:

> Hence, *microstoria* and connected history are hardly incompatible. On the contrary, they both seek to tear down barriers by bringing together social, economic, cultural, and political aspects; they both aim to render the substance of social interplay and the global nature of the exchanges at its core. In other words, this global history that seeks to identify connections, interactions, or junctions and operates on different scales, is indeed a 'total' but also a 'situated' history. It differs from total history or from the 'syntheses' of our predecessors in that it constructs its questions from a situated vantage point, which is obviously not a universalizing point of view. Thus, connected history does not claim to offer a reformulation of a grand and all-encompassing explanatory narrative. We should not let ourselves be misled by words: global does not mean totalizing.[96]

While both global history and *microstoria* discard the grandiose synthesising and economic determinism of much of the earlier historical approaches (such as Marxism) to which they are a reaction, global history intends to go a step further by attending 'not only to ways of living, working, and consuming, but also to gender, cultural and religious practices, and the circulation of ideas and ideals'.[97] The 'global turn' in historiography, as it has been called, has brought about a reconsideration of what we mean by 'context', and has encouraged a global intellectual history with hopes of 'rectifying localism and bringing into focus neglected international practices, ideas and imaginaries'.[98] The attention from this culturally sensitive perspective is on 'immaterial contacts and circulation' that can be understood through concepts such as acculturation or hybridisation.[99] Hence, the focus is 'on connections, movements, transfers, influences, relations, and even continuities that have long been ignored or minimized.'[100] It is in this capacity that I have intended to apply a 'global history' approach to my own study.[101]

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94. Chartier, 'History, Time, and Space', pp. 8-9.
95. Ibid., p. 9.
96. C. Douki & P. Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories: A Shift of Historiographical Scale?', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. 54-4, no. 5, 2007, trans. Cadenza Academic Translations, https://www.cairn-int.info/revue-revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2007-5-page-7.htm.
97. Ibid., p. 11.
98. R. López, 'The Quest for the Global: Remapping Intellectual History', *History of European Ideas*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2016, p. 155; see also S. Moyn & A. Sartori, *Global Intellectual History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.
99. Douki & Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories', p. 19.
100. Ibid., p. 19.
101. Keeping in mind de Certeau, it seems necessary to situate my own inclination towards using 'global history', which may be understood as largely a consequence of having a multicultural background, an education in anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies

The approach can be said to have been initiated with William McNeill's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (1963), and only by the 80s and 90s did it come to be called 'world' or 'global' history.[102] Other terms have followed, with one of the most popular being Sanjay Subrahmanyam's (1999) 'connected history', highlighting his mission of repairing the transnational connections obfuscated by national historiographical traditions.[103] Some French historians have noted that 'connected histories' is a field very much dominated by English.[104] The implications of this apparent Anglo-American taint involves the politically charged impetus of a movement attempting to 'carve a space' within academic institutions entrenched in a tradition of imperial and colonial history established under historical ambitions of empire.[105] This I see as having given the approach a reactionary character, where the aim is to tear down established political partitions and reject the 'Western' viewpoint of 'traditional' history. Of course, techniques for decentring from any kind of ethnocentrism and attempts at shifting away from a reductionist vision of history as simply the story of the rise of Western civilisation could be considered as strategies for expanding historiography in positive ways, but, nonetheless, can lack a sense of self-criticism when done with such fervour as is apparent within this growing movement.

Comparative Analysis and Historical Life-Writing

The popularity of 'global' or 'connected' history occurs against the backdrop of the theme of 'globalisation' as it has proliferated from its beginnings in economics to now a multitude of academic disciplines and across mass media.[106] This contemporary appeal coupled with its relative novelty has masked the unstable nature of the field, as is indicated by the variety of terms and methodologies grouped under it, and makes it difficult to evaluate the actual efficacy and coherence of its methodologies. Thankfully, amidst all this chaos, for the formation of my own methodological approach, I have been guided by Simon J. Potter and Jonathan Saha's evaluation of comparative methods in global history and the wider historical interest in global

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(an institute with a long and important relationship with colonialism), and because of English being my primary language of research and writing.

102. Douki & Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories', p. 9. See also W. H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963. The success of McNeill's book can be likened to that of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997) and more recently Yuval Harari's *Sapiens* (2014), their popularity reflecting a deep desire in modern man for a grand story of mankind.

103. Douki & Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories', p. 19. See also S. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', in V. Lieberman (ed.), *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-imagining Eurasia to c. 1830*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1999, pp. 289–316.

104. Douki & Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories'; see also R. Chartier, 'La Conscience de la globalité', *Annales, HSS*, vol. 56, 2001, p. 120.

105. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

106. Ibid.

interconnectedness.[107] For them, connected histories essentially involve comparisons, whether implicit or explicit that look mainly at large scale socio-economic change, with a very clear agenda made apparent by how very many of these comparative histories have predominantly aimed at calling into question traditional explanations of 'the European miracle of industrialisation'.[108]

As a key example of the particular methods of comparison characteristic for the discipline, Potter and Saha point to the influential work *The Great Divergence* (2000) by comparative global analyst Kenneth Pomeranz.[109] Pomeranz articulates two forms of comparative analysis that have since 'set the tone for much of the comparative Global history that has followed'.[110] Through (1) *reciprocal comparison* of various areas of the world (such as the Yangzi Delta, Gujarat, the Netherlands and Japan) during the early modern period that were all as centralised and economically dominant in their respective regions as was England, Pomeranz finds a number of similarities and resemblances between them that undermine our narratives of Europe's uniqueness. And with (2) *encompassing comparison*, Pomeranz hopes to compare these areas as elements interacting in a larger global economic system that reveals the essential role of coercive colonial strategies in the industrialisation of England and its divergence from these other areas, which did not develop in the same way precisely because of being closer in practice to ideals of free market economics and mutual growth than England.[111] In this work, Pomeranz's encompassing comparisons are seen as a potential bridge for the gap between comparative analysis and an attempt at connected history, with the two potentially becoming almost indistinguishable from one another.[112]

A vital methodology pointed out by Potter and Saha that I have been inspired to make use of for my own work has been the 'broader recent trend in historical life-writing using individual biographies as a means to illustrate large-scale structures of imperial and global

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107. S. J. Potter & J. Saha, 'Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2015.

108. Ibid., pp. 7-11

109. Ibid., p. 10; see also K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europa, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2000. A general criticism towards Pomeranz's comparative approach has come from Christopher Bayly, who emphasises a 'great convergence' rather than a 'great divergence' as characterising world history during the long nineteenth century between the French Revolution and Great War, and emphasises the global diffusion of the nation state. Although valuable for offering the nuanced notion of 'contested uniformity' to help explain some of the complexities behind the seemingly similar modernising processes underway across the world at that time, his argument for opposing Pomeranz seems to reflect yet another attempt at an all-encompassing narrative of modernity. See C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004.

110. Potter & Saha, 'Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire', p. 10.

111. Ibid., pp. 7-10.

112. Ibid., p. 9, 14. This is especially the case when informed by Ann Laura Stoler's call for a more reflective mode of comparative analysis which can bring a level of awareness of many contemporary comparisons as political tools of hegemony steeped in colonial history; see A. L. Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1989, pp. 134-161.

interconnection'.[113] Examples of this type of life-writing can be found in the field of global history, such as the study by Natalie Zemon Davis (2008) of sixteenth-century writer and traveller Leo Africanus (d. *c.* 1550) and his famous geographical and anthropological work on Africa published in Venice in 1550, *La descrittione dell'Africa*.[114] Both with her careful consideration of his work and extensive contextualisation of his life, the author brings the interconnectivity between Europe and Africa during the period to the fore, recasting Leo Africanus with a significance missed by previous historical accounts or even novelisations.[115] The creative blend of story-telling and empirical history that Davis is known for works masterfully in her book, where she manages to turn an otherwise sparse subject matter into the portrait of a hero straddling contrasting identities that reflect the increasingly entrenched Muslim and Christian worlds between which Leo Africanus moved.

I have a similar ambition of moulding the biography of a single individual into a story that reflects the historical context in which he can be situated. Whereas Davis can be criticised for being far too speculative in her reimagining of Leo Africanus, due to a lack of source material on her historical subject, my case is different. Fadhlalla Haeri is a contemporary figure who is actually still alive and the period which I aim to elucidate is more modern, and so, for me, scarcity of material is not an issue; rather, it is a question of selecting which material to include from the seemingly unending stream of data I have had the great fortune of collecting. More than fearing any possible lacuna of detail on Haeri's life, my difficulty has been in not overburdening the narrative I hope to present with information not useful or enjoyable to the reader. Therefore, I have given particular attention in this thesis to the notion of narrative and its implications in writing this historically contextualised account of the life and times of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri.

1.3 Narrative

What I want is to tell a story that can help us understand Fadhlalla Haeri's life as more than a sequence of isolated events, by presenting it as a unified narrative that is itself 'part of an interlocking set of narratives'.[116] An event or action only makes sense when put in context, a context which can describe the intentions of the agent of that action and the social setting or

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113. Potter & Saha, 'Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire', p. 19.

114. Ibid., p. 19; see also N. Z. Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds*, Faber, London, 2008. Leo Africanus was born Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan and was later called Yuhanna al-Assad, but is better known posthumously as Leo Africanus or Giovanni Leone.

115. An example of the former is of course Louis Massignon's *Tableau geographique du Maroc d'apres Leon l'Africain* (1906), and of the latter is Amin Maalouf's *Leon l'Africain* (1986).

116. A. Macintyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Duckworth, London, 1981, p. 218.

cultural background which made that intended action intelligible, as well as the previous circumstances it was a response to and the outcome it was meant to bring about.[117] Any act only occurs because I do it, and I can only act for some reason or another, which I am only able to have if I situate myself within a narrative.[118] This is the assertion of philosopher Alasdair Macintyre (b. 1929), who goes against the atomistic tendency to partition 'each human life into a variety of segments' by demonstrating how any activity or event derives its 'character as part of larger wholes'.[119] Macintyre demonstrates how fundamental it is for us to embed any segment of human behaviour within its numerous contexts by illustrating how 'one and the same segment of human behavior may be correctly characterized in a number of different ways'.[120]

Neither can we 'characterize behavior independently of intentions', nor 'characterize intentions independently of the settings which make those intentions intelligible'.[121] Macintyre argues that we can only identify and understand an individual agent's actions by embedding them within the context of both their personal narratives and the narrative histories of the settings in which they belong.[122] Furthermore, the same action can belong to more than one setting, and each of these settings has 'a history within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible'.[123] An event becomes intelligible once seen as an episode within a narrative. And just as events become intelligible when placed within, say, a short narrative, that short narrative only becomes intelligible when considered in the wider context of a longer narrative.[124]

Macintyre is only one of a number of contemporary thinkers to emphasise the primacy of narrative in our making sense of the world. Speaking broadly, attention to narrative began with the work of Russian formalists, especially Vladimir Propp's (d. 1970) attempt to uncover an underlying composition shared by apparently different folktales.[125] As exemplified by intellectuals inspired by Propp, such as Roland Barthes (d. 1980) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (d. 2009), it was through the success of structuralism and the field of semiotics since the middle of the twentieth century that narrative theory could develop and travel across a range of

117. Ibid., p. 206: 'A social setting may be an institution, it may be ... a practice, or it may be a milieu of some other human kind'.

118. A. Rudd, *Self, Value, and Narrative: A Kierkegaardian Approach*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, p. 178.

119. Macintyre, *After Virtue*, p. 204.

120. Ibid., p. 192.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid., pp. 208-211.

123. Ibid., p. 206.

124. Ibid. To paraphrase an example from Macintyre, consider the act of me writing right now as an event that we can place within the short-term narrative of finishing this sentence, which makes more sense when considering the longer-term narrative of me wanting to complete this thesis, which can in turn be placed within the narrative of me hoping to contribute to the debate about secularisation (or attempting to climb the academic career ladder).

125. J. S. Jensen, 'Narrative', in M. Stausberg & S. Engler (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, 2016, pp. 291-292; see also V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1958 [1928].

disciplines within the humanities and sciences of the mind (including literary studies, law, history, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political theory and cognitive studies).[126] What we are referring to here, however, is the particular use of narrativity since the 80s in understanding selfhood and the formation of identity, in the works of notable thinkers like Macintyre, and Charles Taylor in his influential book *Sources of the Self* (1989).[127] Most relevant for this study is in fact Taylor's more recent use of narrativity in *A Secular Age* (2007). In the simplest terms, the argument put forward with the narrativity approach is that the wider the narrative within which an action can be placed the more sense it can make to us, and the more it can contribute to our understanding of the agent of that action.[128] It is this line of logic I find in Taylor's use of master narrative in *A Secular Age* as 'an account which embeds the events it makes sense of within some understanding of the general drift of history [which] in turn is intimately linked with a certain view of the gamut of human motivations'.[129]

Before proceeding with a primer of *A Secular Age*, two important points in relation to narrative as Taylor uses it in this book require clarification. The first recalls what has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter: 'that we can't avoid such narratives. The attempt to escape them only means that we operate by an unacknowledged, hence unexamined and uncriticized, narrative'.[130] Narratives do not need to be narrated to exist and often remain unarticulated, just as many of our intentions and motives behind our actions remain unconscious. Hence, it is important to make explicit our implicit narratives, because otherwise there is no way to gauge their unavoidable partiality and potential falsity.[131] This connects to the second point, which requires us to distinguish general theory from grand narrative. While Taylor is hesitant of the former, he professes his use of the latter; although both offer a wide reach, theory traditionally implies a categorical and universal representation of reality while narrative attempts to offer a convincing but consciously limited argument.[132] With narrative, contingency and partiality are appreciated at the same time as an ideal of consistency, coherence and cogency is upheld. As Anthony Rudd puts it, 'we can only justify the claim that

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126. Jensen, 'Narrative', pp. 291-292; J. S. Jensen, *Myths and Mythologies: A Reader*, Equinox, London, 2009, pp. 290-307; see also R. Barthes, 'An Introduction to the Analysis of Narrative', in *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. R. Howard, University of California Press, Berkley, 1994 [1966], pp. 95-136; C. Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 68, no. 270, 1955, pp. 428-444; Nash, C. (ed.), *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature*, Routledge, London, 1990; D. Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011.

127. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; see C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1989. See also P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.

128. Rudd, *Self, Value, and Narrative*, p. 184.

129. C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Belknap, Cambridge, MA, 2007, p. 818 n. 27.

130. C. Taylor, 'Afterword: Apologia pro Libro Suo', in M. Warner, J. VanAntwerpen & C. J. Calhoun (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, pp. 300.

131. Rudd, *Self, Value, and Narrative*, pp. 181-182.

132. R. Schulze, 'The Quest for the West in an Era of Globalization: Some Remarks on the Hidden Meaning of Charles Taylor's Master Narrative', in F. Zemmin, J. Colin & G. M. M. Vanheeswijck, (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Charles Taylor's Master Narrative*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2016, p. 182.

a particular narrative falsifies by giving a better narrative'.[133] He continues that we 'can't simply point to a pure array of events, for the only sense we can make of an event is as an episode in a narrative; and what even counts as an event will alter as the narrative alters'.[134] As I aim to show below, Taylor hopes to give us a more convincing narrative of secularisation than those given by the predominant theories of secularisation, by primarily arguing for the limitations of any narrative of secularisation.

1.3.1 Charles Taylor's Master Narrative

Charles Taylor's master narrative in *A Secular Age* reminds us of another great storyteller of secularisation, Max Weber (d. 1920), whose own master narrative of modernity predates Taylor's by over a century.[135] As Reinhard Schulze remarks, the accounts of Weber and Taylor are best seen as narratives rather than historical accounts or even as general theories.[136] They seek to give us a coherent and convincing interpretation, which, in the words of Taylor himself, 'embeds the events it makes sense of within some understanding of the general drift of history'.[137] Both Weber and Taylor propose a narrative of modernity that centres on Western Christianity and 'assumes that the modern Western world, in its religious form, ultimately emerges from inner impulses and self-initiated transformations of religion'.[138] In Taylor's account of how our modern condition is culturally constructed, religious thought is not only a recipient of its transformative impact but also the motivational factor driving its emergence. Just as charting a reformist momentum to renounce 'all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin' was integral to Weber's narrative of secularisation, Taylor aims to elucidate, through his 'Reform Master Narrative', a general Christian drive for reform, wider than but exemplified by the Protestant reformation, which worked 'to bring the details of ordinary human life, in all its contingency and ambivalence, into line with the demands of religious and cultural elites'.[139]

As well as his choice of Christianity as the primary driving force behind secularisation, Taylor's overall approach to modernity as a cultural program with a fundamentally

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133. Rudd, *Self, Value, and Narrative*, p. 182.

134. Ibid., p. 182.

135. M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons, Routledge, London, 1992 [1930].

136. Schulze, 'The Quest for the West in an Era of Globalization'.

137. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 818 n. 27

138. T. Günter, 'The Temptation of Religious Nostalgia: Protestant Readings of A Secular Age', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, p. 50. Günter writes: 'A Secular Age radically limits the sources to Latin Christendom. This means in practice that both Eastern Orthodoxy and minorities such as Jews in the West and the historical power of Islam in Spain and the Near East are excluded'.

139. M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 61; F. Zemmin, J. Colin, & G. M. M. Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijk (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, p. 2. They continue: 'In a more literary idiom, "Reform" means the imposition of form upon content, with all the gains and losses that attend such an imposition' (p. 2).

transformative influence on theology also aligns well with the Weberian legacy of interpretative sociology.[140] Taylor is quite clearly influenced by Weber's cultural account of modernity, as asserted by Robert Bellah (2010), who singles out Taylor as especially cautious against 'letting modernity obliterate our spiritual past'.[141] Taylor, as well as others like José Casanova (1994), have particularly noted the acknowledgement of a sense of loss in Weber's work, but also how he then sees this as an inevitable sacrifice we need to courageously make.[142] Taylor's own description of a confining and homogenous secular time echoes Weber's caution against the ceaseless march of progress.[143] Once the duty to work and rational self-discipline are seen to have outlived the spirit of religious asceticism, 'disenchantment of the world' by abolition of all 'mysterious incalculable forces' and freedom from 'recourse to magical means' leaves the 'desire to master all things by calculation' to determine the lifestyle of all those born into it.[144] Whereas the 'concern for worldly goods should have lain like a cloak' on the shoulders, it has turned 'into an iron shell' from which the spirit has evaporated, rendering life and death meaningless.[145]

Considering that the 'iron shell' was an existential problem for Weber, it seems strange how modernisation theorists could distil 'a deterministic optimism out of Weber's tragedy', obscuring his historicising temperament.[146] This 'deterministic optimism' has been so ubiquitous that the secularisation thesis remained practically uncontested for most of the twentieth century. The basic claim they have held, that modernisation necessarily leads to the decline of religion, betrays a 'lingering influence' of Weber's notion of 'disenchantment' in all the wrong ways.[147] Reminiscent of the deterministic interpretation of Darwinian evolution, the biased appropriation of Weber's narrative of secularisation by modernisation theorists is cast into a story of 'progress' that explains 'disenchantment' as the purification of the old world

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140. M. Koenig, 'Beyond the Paradigm of Secularization?', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck (eds.), *Working with A Secular* Age, pp. 30-31; see also Eisenstadt, S. N., *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities: A Collection of Essays*, Brill, Leiden, 2003.

141. R. N. Bellah, 'Confronting Modernity: Maruyama Masao, Jürgen Habermas, and Charles Taylor', in Warner, VanAntwerpen & Calhoun (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in A Secular Age*, p. 51.

142. J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 18. Citing Weber's 'Science as a Vocation', Casanova writes: 'The old churches, for Weber, remain only as a refuge for those "who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man" and are willing to make the inevitable "intellectual sacrifice" and religious rejections of the world and their directions'. See also Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 307.

143. T. A. Carlson, 'Secular Moods: Exploring Temporality and Affection with *A Secular Age*', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, p. 245.

144. Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p. 139; P. Pels, 'Introduction: Magic and Modernity', in B. Meyer & P. Pels (eds.), *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA, 2003, p. 26.

145. Talcott Parsons, cited in Pels, 'Introduction: Magic and Modernity', p. 26.

146. Pels, 'Magic and Modernity', pp. 26-27.

147. M. D. Bailey, 'The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early European Witchcraft Literature', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 111, no. 2, 2006, p. 383; Pels, 'Magic and Modernity', pp. 26-29; see also C. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009 [1997], pp. 177-180; T. Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA, 2003, p. 13; R. Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004, p. 13.

rather than its substitution with a new one. What makes *A Secular Age* seem like such a meaningful and convincing alternative to what in contrast look like one-dimensional depictions of secularisation, is the Janus-faced narrative that Taylor puts forward, showing an appreciation for both sides of the story.

Appreciating the Antinomies of Modernity

It is in his acknowledgment of the different dimensions of modernity that Taylor stands apart from earlier simplistic interpretations of Weber's narrative as a unilinear process of modernisation or a singular modernity. That is not to say that Weber did not promote a progressive disenchantment; rather, whilst Weber still acknowledged the antinomies and contradictions that beset the program of modernity, many subsequent theorists of secularisation ignored the inherently contradictory character of modernity. 'Haunted by their own diagnoses of the process of modern development', writes Peter Pels (2003), 'classical theorists of 'modernity' acknowledged how much it was riven by contradiction, regression, and paradox. A singular modernity was never an empirical, historical fact except as a Eurocentric ideology of a universal teleology of the evolution of social systems, such as provided by modernization theory'.[148]

A well-known proponent of the Weberian tradition, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (d. 2010), points out Weber's emphasis on the contradiction between 'an overreaching vision through which the modern world becomes meaningful and the fragmentation of such meaning' that is generated with the rising autonomy of the social, economic and political institutional arenas, all of them multi-centred and heterogeneous.[149] Weber does this through explaining modern society as consisting of a 'polytheism' of values, again with some parallels to Taylor's own conceptualisation of a fragmentation of options in modernity, which he dubs the 'nova' and subsequently 'supernova effect'.[150] Eisenstadt stresses how Weber understood the importance of contradictions and tensions within the cultural program of modernity, and argues that most sociological analyses of Weber 'have implicitly or explicitly conflated these different

148. Pels, 'Magic and Modernity', p. 29.

149. S. N. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 65. For Eisenstadt, like Weber and Taylor, modernity is understood as 'a cultural program' originating in Europe (ibid., p. 5). His approach to modernity can be seen as a conscious generalization of Weber's contention that Protestant sectarianism is an integral facet to the rise of Western modernity, and thereby insists on the religiosity integral to its initial development, as well as later development into multiple forms.

150. Weber, cited in Pels, 'Magic and Modernity', p. 28. For Weber, this includes the values of 'value free' science and rationality, where 'many old gods arise from their graves' and 'resume their eternal struggle' in disenchanted and impersonal form.

dimensions of modernity', assuming that, regardless of whether they were distinct, these dimensions come together to become basically inseparable.[151]

Like Weber, Taylor offers an appreciation of modernity as a double-edged sword, as evidenced by his self-confessed zig-zag account of secularisation in contrast to the linear version he sees as prevalent among most other theorists of modernity.[152] Yet, Taylor's is a more confined and careful approach than Weber's, something Taylor himself acknowledges by differentiating his use of 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*) from Weber's usage, and noting Weber's penchant for spilling out of an originally 'narrow corral' as something he hopes to avoid.[153] We notice this also in Taylor's more considerate and complex approach to Weber's radical distinction between an 'unchanging magical past' and a 'dynamic, disenchanted modernity' that emerges through increasing intellectualisation and rationalisation, by which belief and practice undergo higher levels of abstraction.[154] In the words of Weber, what distinguished an earlier 'primitive-magical worldview' from the later 'rational-religious one' is that the former 'is not worship of the god but rather coercion of the god, and invocation is not prayer but rather the exercise of magical formulae'.[155] Taylor criticises this type of distinction between supplicatory and magical religious behaviour – where the former is seen as concerned with other-worldly aims and meaning-giving whilst the latter is seen as concerned with practical material ends – offering instead a more nuanced understanding with his own version

151. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, pp. 19-199. More generally speaking, the contradiction is in the annihilation of the creative dimensions within such visions by the mounting bureaucratization of modern society: 'the limitations on human creativity through the mechanisms of social control' (ibid., p. 65).

152. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 95.

153. C. Taylor, 'Afterword', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck, (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, pp. 374-376. Here I can cite Taylor's criticism of Weber's overplaying of disenchantment: 'I am somewhat consoled by the reflection that Weber's horse also seems to have escaped the corral. He seems to have started with a narrow concept: Entzauberung involved purging the world of "magic", and he was aware that this was first of all the concern with certain religious traditions, those descended from Judaism, although different variants of Christianity and Islam pursued the agenda with differential zeal and scope. But later Weber begins to use the term in a much broader sense, englobing the denial and sidelining of religion itself. This in spite of his intimate knowledge of Protestantism' (pp. 375-376 n. 2). Of course, some have made a case against the usefulness of the concept of 'disenchantment' altogether; to quote Courtney Bender: 'Disenchantment is one of the stories modernity tells about itself. It does the work of shaping our understandings of our place and role in world history and politics, in relation to a story of our own enchanted past and to others' enchanted present ... the secular is marked not by disenchantment but by an oft-repeated claim that we have been disenchanted. 'We' believe that the enchantments we feel now are not like those of our forebears: we believe that we are (for good or ill) living with nothing but a faint shadow of something that is now gone, something that was real. But if we take a cue from the historians who question this very move, then we can no longer assume that modern enchantments are so shadowy, or that we are haunted by nothing but the faint traces of a past cut off from us' (C. Bender, 'Every Meaning Will have its Homecoming Festival: A Secular Age and the Senses of Modern Spirituality', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck, (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, pp. 299-300).

154. Pels, *Magic and Modernity*, p. 32: 'In Weber's narrative for example, magical rites that engage the world of spirits are replaced by rituals of worship of an independent pantheon of deities (organized from the world of spirits) less conducive to coercion, which, in turn, are replaced by the more abstract system of ethical prescriptions in which God is more aloof and depicted as less anthropomorphic. Correspondingly, ritual experts evolve from the magician who mediates relations with the spirits, to the more formal mediator priest, and then to the individual seeker of salvation for whom ritual is of little use in fulfilling the ethical norms prescribed by a remote yet all-powerful God'.

155. M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1978 [1921], p. 422.

of the latter which he calls 'folk ritual'.[156] Also, Taylor consciously restricts his sphere of study strictly to 'Latin Christendom', hoping to avoid any gross, Orientalist-type generalisations akin to Weber's assertion that 'only ascetic Protestantism completely eliminated magic', while other religions 'practically everywhere contain numerous magical components'.[157]

Praise and Criticism of *A Secular Age*

By carefully managing to avoid making the same mistakes as his forebearer, Taylor updates the Weberian story for a post-postmodern audience.[158] Schulze sees this as a major reason behind the popularity of Taylor's narrative. He argues that 'Taylor has tried to give a new meaning to the West'.[159] Whereas the West had earlier been considered the producer of 'a societal and political order which represented the civilizational ideal for mankind ... with the end of the post-modern condition, the West obviously requires new and adjusted narratives' that acknowledge postcolonial and poststructuralist criticism.[160] This is precisely what Taylor has succeeded in doing with *A Secular Age*. Hence, the book is not only a faithful continuation in the long line of Christian genealogies of modernity that begins with Weber.[161] As José Casanova states, it is in fact the best 'genealogical account that we have of our modern, secular condition', precisely because it manages to integrate insights from an entire spectrum of competing genealogies.[162] The significance of such an approach to understanding secularisation is highlighted when considering how difficult it actually is to construct histories and genealogies for this kind of concept.[163] Gregory Starrett (2010) writes that 'like people, the story of their development takes no single path through the past'.[164] Just as 'tracing our individual genealogies backwards in time doubles the number of our ancestors each time we ascend a generation', there is a similar type of exponential multiplication of sources and origins when attempting to trace intellectual histories.[165]

Taylor appreciates the inescapable complexity of understanding our secular age in his own narrative genealogy, spread over 900 pages of intricate detail. This is attested to by the way in

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156. For Taylor: see Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 438-440. For Weber: see Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p. 275; also cited in G. Cunningham, *Religion and Magic: Approaches and Theories*, 1999, p. 13.

157. Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 630, 424.

158. Schulze, 'The Quest for the West in an Era of Globalization', pp. 184-189.

159. Ibid., p. 187.

160. Ibid.

161. In fact, Weber can be seen as originating the genealogical approach to explaining modernity, in his *The Protestant Ethic*.

162. J. Casanova, 'A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?', in Warner, VanAntwerpen & Calhoun (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in A Secular Age*, pp. 265, 267. Casanova identifies four genealogical accounts of modernity: '(1) the triumphant secularist and anthropocentric progressive stories of enlightenment [...;] (2) the inverse negative philosophies of history, counter-Enlightenment narratives [...;] (3) the positive, mainly Protestant postmillennial identifications of Western modernity and Christian civilization [;] and (4) their opposite, Nietzschean-derived critical genealogies of modernity' (ibid., p. 267).

163. G. Starret, 'The Varieties of Secular Experience', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2010, p. 631.

164. Ibid.

165. Ibid.

which discussion and debate around Taylor's book has taken place in a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, theology, anthropology, history, and the social and political sciences; the sheer number and diversity of responses ranging from reviews and articles to entire anthologies devoted to unpacking Taylor's narrative of modernity show just how rich and multifaceted it is.[166] Any single critique or appraisal has only managed to reflect some aspects of the book, and similarly, any attempt at applying Taylor's insights to other contexts has only succeeded in doing so by being selective. Taylor achieves such a rich and nuanced account by 'radically refrain[ing] from dealing with anything beyond the Latin Christian West'.[167] I see Taylor's investigation as masterfully bounded in some ways, which in other ways allows for a great deal of breadth and depth to his observations, and I agree with Junaid Quadri's (2016) assessment that Taylor's decision to 'restrict his analysis to the Western (or North Atlantic, or Latin Christian) world ... [is] taken in the spirit of a certain intellectual humility and a keen awareness of the specificity of his study, [which] has the virtue of allowing Taylor to avoid undue and historically fraught generalizations of what constitutes religion elsewhere'.[168]

Unsurprisingly, there has been a torrent of criticism towards the 'boundary Taylor draws around Latin Christendom [which] is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain for both historical and conceptual reasons'.[169] A number of critics have responded to Taylor's self-restraint by convincingly asserting the crucial importance of interactions with the non-West in the construction of the 'Latin Christian' or 'Western secular' civilisation.[170] Especially unsatisfactory has been the absence of colonialism in Taylor's narrative. Even Casanova in his positive evaluation of Taylor makes mention of the fact that 'the very pattern of Western secularization cannot be fully understood if one ignores the crucial significance of the colonial encounter in European developments'.[171] Furthermore, Saba Mahmood points out that 'not only did the discovery of and subsequent knowledge produced on other religious traditions serve as the *mirror* against which European Christianity fashioned itself, but the very concept of 'religion' — its conceptual contours, its classificatory system and attendant calculus of inferior and superior civilizations — was crafted within the crucible of this encounter'.[172]

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166. For a list of English-language responses, see F. Zemmin, 'An Annotated Bibliography of Responses to A Secular Age', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck, (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, pp. 385-420.

167. Schulze, 'The Quest for the West in an Era of Globalization', p. 187.

168. J. Quadri, 'Religion as Transcendence in Modern Islam: Tracking 'Religious Matters' into a Secular(izing) Age', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck, (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, p. 331.

169. S. Mahmood, 'Can Secularism be Other-wise?', in Warner, VanAntwerpen & Calhoun (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in A Secular Age*, p. 296.

170. D. Chakrabarty, 'The Modern and the Secular in the West: An Outsider's View', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 77, no. 2, 2009, pp. 393-403. Besides Dipesh Charkrabarty, other critics include: Elizabeth Hurd, Peter van der Veer, Saba Mahmood, Reinhard Schulz, Nilüfer Göle, Michael Warner, Jonathan Antwerpen and Craig Calhoun.

171. Casanova, 'A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?', p. 277.

172. Mahmood, 'Can Secularism be Other-wise?', p. 286 (emphasis mine).

1.3.2 A Civilisational Approach

What comes to the fore from the criticisms of Taylor is an absence of any consideration for the foils, counterparts or 'others' that have been essential in the formation of the very concepts he spotlights. Not only does *A Secular Age* lack an appreciation of the necessary role global interactions played in forming the very idea of a 'Western civilisation', but Taylor's narrative also fails to give any attention to the modern conceptualisation of 'religion' that went hand-in-hand with the growth and spread of the secularisation he speaks of.[173] With the amount of time he spends talking about 'belief', it is rather surprising that Taylor altogether omits any mention of the influential work on the subject by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (d. 2000), which is even more odd considering that Taylor was once a student of Smith's on a course in comparative religion.[174] Though he defends his hermeneutic intentions for isolating his study to the North Atlantic, Taylor accepts that he 'neglected the way in which Western understandings of religion were informed through precolonial and then the colonial encounter with other parts of the world', something he was already aware of when writing *A Secular Age*.[175] But Taylor is careful to point out 'the misleading element in the word 'construction' when speaking of cultures as constructed'.[176] For him, cultures and civilisations are formed over long expanses of time due to gradual processes beyond the control or consciousness of individuals.[177]

We see this in *A Secular Age* perhaps most pronouncedly where he attributes the origin of the 'drive for reform' – and the initial break in the sociological and cosmological 'embeddedness' of the individual that lies at the core of his master narrative – to 'the emergence, conceptualization and institutionalization of a basic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders' during the 'Axial' revolution of the first millennium BC.[178] By this token, Taylor allies himself with a group of sociologists which includes Shmuel Eisenstadt, Robert Bellah, Norbert Elias and Johan Arnason, who all similarly take an interest

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173. Zemmin, Colin, & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 36. Important works on the modern Western concept of 'religion' include: W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Fortress, Minneapolis, 1962; T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, John Hopkins University Press, London, 1993; T. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2005.

174. In an interview Taylor states: 'When I was an undergraduate at McGill, there was a guy called William Cantwell Smith who was my teacher. He blew my mind. I was studying honours history, back in 1949. I had to take an optional course, and I took his course in comparative religions. No rhetoric – he wore a gown and walked up and down, and he was just extraordinary, just inspiring' (L. Michaud, 'Interview with Charles Taylor', *The United Church Observer*, 1 March 2013).

175. C. Taylor, 'Apologia', p. 301. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor notes: 'I am also aware of the opposite danger, that one could neglect the interconnections between the process of secularization in different civilizations. Peter van der Veer has already criticized me on this score, for neglecting the way in which colonialist perceptions of non-European societies nourished their conceptions of religion (p. 781 n. 21). See also P. van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2001.

176. Taylor, 'Apologia', p. 302.

177. Ibid.

178. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 793 n. 13.

in 'civilisation' and follow the Weberian trend to pay greater attention to a society's history.[179] Indeed, as Eisenstadt points out, recognition of the Axial period was already implicit in the comparative studies of religion by Weber, who was also an instrumental influence on the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, originator of the idea of the 'Axial Age'.[180] But it is Eisenstadt who brought the concept to the attention of comparativists and social scientists, and it is from him that Taylor largely takes his own particular approach to the Axial revolution.[181]

Eisenstadt's introductory paragraph to 'The Axial Age Breakthroughs' (1986) — which Taylor himself partly cites — concisely captures the basic premise behind the concept of the Axial Age:

> In the first millennium before the Christian era a revolution took place in the realm of ideas and their institutional bases which had irreversible effects on several major civilizations and on human history in general. The revolution or series of revolutions, which are related to Karl Jasper's 'Axial Age', have to do with the emergence, conceptualization, and institutionalization of a basic tension between the transcendent and mundane orders. This revolutionary process took place in several major civilizations including Ancient Israel, Ancient Greece, Early Christianity, Zoroastrian Iran, early Imperial China, and the Hindu and Buddhist civilizations. Although beyond the Axial Age proper, it also took place in Islam.[182]

Taylor relies on, or at least agrees with, a macro-social framework as formulated by Eisenstadt, not only in contextualising his study within a wider range of time (through the concept of the Axial Age), but also in contextualising his study within a wider expanse of space (by situating his segregated study of secularity in the North Atlantic within a broader spectrum of 'a world of multiple modernities').[183] It is in fact the concept of multiple modernities, initiated by Eisenstadt, that Taylor uses to justify geographically limiting his study, claiming

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179. S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empire*, Free Press of Glencoe, London, 1963; R. N. Bellah, 'Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan', Free Press, New York, 1985; N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1978 [1939]; J. P. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions*, Brill, Leiden, 2003; J. P. Arnason, 'The Axial Age and its Interpreters: Reopening a Debate', in J. P. Arnason, S. N. Eisenstadt and B. Wittrock (eds.), *Axial Civilizations and World History*, Brill, Leiden, 2005, pp. 19–49. On the growing interest in civilizational diversity, see A. Salvatore, 'From Civilizations to Multiple Modernities: The Issue of the Public Sphere', in M. Sadria (ed.), *Multiple Modernities in Muslim Societies*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2009, pp. 19-20.

180. S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthroughs: Their Characteristics and Origins', in S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1986, pp. 1-2; see also K. Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1953.

181. Zemmin, Colin, & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 39. See also S. N. Eisenstadt, 'The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of the Clerics', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 23, 1982, pp. 299-314; and S. N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, 2003. Although Taylor is most closely following Eisenstadt's interpretation, he of course has a well-informed perspective on the 'Axial Age', which also includes a reading of the works of Robert Bellah, such as R. N. Bellah, 'What is Axial about the Axial Age?', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 46, pp. 69-87.

182. Eisenstadt, 'The Axial Age Breakthroughs', p. 1.

183. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 21. On his use of Eisenstadt's conceptualisation of the Axial Age, see p. 793 n. 13; and for his reference to Eisenstadt's sense of multiple modernities, see p. 781 n. 20.

that the changes wrought by modernity, such as secularisation, 'need to be studied in their different civilizational sites before we rush to global generalization'.[184]

What most critics take exception to, however, is Taylor's assuming 'civilisations' or 'cultures' to be enclosed and independent rather than open and interdependent. Herein lies the actual tension, I believe, between Taylor and those criticising his isolationist approach to studying secularity, which we can characterise — with an unorthodox use of Taylor's own terminology — as a tension between those who wish to see culture as 'buffered' and those who wish to see it as 'porous'. It seems appropriate to fit this tension within the debate between those holding themselves to a multiple modernities model and those who want to emphasise the 'entangled' or 'interconnected' histories in a 'globalist' vision of the world.

Multiple Modernities

In much the same way that 'multilinear evolutionism' moved away from 'unilinear evolutionism' in the mid-twentieth century by focusing on the specifics of historical development, the shift from a singular trajectory of modernity to multiple ones hinges on acknowledging the history of civilisations beyond the West.[185] Criticism against the multiple modernities model has been based not on the premise that it neglects to recognise these other civilisations, but that it neglects to recognise the interconnectedness of these civilisations to the West, as well as to each other. For example, sociologist Gurminder Bhambra (2007) argues that although proponents of multiple modernities identify 'the importance of interconnections, global conjunctions and connected and entangled histories in understanding the development of modernity', these conceptualisations are 'weakened by a comparative approach based on the internal dynamics of civilizations, one with a trajectory leading to modernity and others with trajectories that do not but which then later adapt to it'.[186]

The main issue for Bhambra is that because of his 'focus on the internal dynamics of separate civilizations', Eisenstadt still manages to position modernity 'within the broad framework of Western civilization' by affirming the birth of modernity within Europe and then explaining its initial diffusion into multiples as taking place in North America and other parts of Europe, which leads to the assumption that Europe alone is able to 'develop' modernity unaided, whilst all other societies have to 'gain' it by interacting with Western societies.[187] In contrast, Bhambra wishes to show modernity as 'a shift of global dimensions' by demonstrating

184. Ibid., p. 21. See also C. Taylor, 'Western Secularity', in C. J. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, & J. VanAntwerpen (eds.), *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p. 36-37. Florian Zemmin also makes mention of this point; see F. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition: The Concept of 'Society" in the Journal Al-Manar (Cairo, 1898-1940)*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2018, pp. 311.

185. A. Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2000, p. 40-42.

186. G. K. Bhambra, 'Multiple Modernities or Global Interconnections: Understanding the Global Post the Colonial', in N. Karagiannis (ed.), *Varieties of World-making: Beyond Globalization*, University of Liverpool Press, Liverpool, 2007, pp. 65, 69.

187. Ibid., pp. 67-71 (Eisenstadt cited on p. 67).

its very inception as involving the connected and entangled histories of interconnected cultures, societies or civilisations, and especially stressing the inseparability of the development of modernity from colonialism.[188] In her opinion, the modern world is not in a process of becoming global from the diffusion of Western civilisation, but is already global and has been for some time.[189] But by diminishing the cultural specificity of the program of modernity, this type of critique of the multiple modernities model ironically fails to recognise some of the significant aspects of the impact of colonial and contemporary forms of imperialist expansion upon postcolonial cultures.

The range of challenges to a Eurocentric narrative for modernity is wide, spanning anti-Eurocentric arguments like Bhambra's, which situate the origins of central modern features outside the West, to polycentric accounts, such as Peter van der Veer's (2001), which see modernity as a result of the 'imperial encounter' between the West and the rest.[190] Many of these assertions are substantial, especially at the latter end of this spectrum, that is, global or entangled historical approaches to modernity which stress global connections over civilisational differences. However, this is only the case when civilisational boundaries are appreciated as a given in the reciprocal influence of East and West upon each other, which can then allow for a polycentric view in the development of modern concepts and an understanding of how European ideas spread to other parts of the world where they were actively rather than passively appropriated.[191] Though I am sympathetic to attempts at uncovering 'entangled histories' underlying the growth and development of modernity, I am wary of the tendency in these attempts to conflate globalisation with modernity, thereby abstracting modernity from its European heritage and attributing a universality to it that ignores its culturally specific character.[192] This is why a comparative approach to history cannot be neglected; not only does it help to 'familiarise the unfamiliar', it also works to 'de-familiarise the familiar'.[193]

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188. Ibid., p. 71. Bhambra also writes: 'colonization was not simply an outcome of modernity, or shaped by modernity, but rather modernity itself, the modern world developed out of colonial encounters ... these colonial encounters have also constituted the circumstances for the emergence of the fragile emancipatory codes of modernity at the same time as modernity has been separated from its origins in the colonial relationship, and has been regarded as a resource for the emancipation of others" (ibid., pp. 68-69). See also her book *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007), where she turns her postcolonial gaze upon three historical events associated with the birth of modernity – the Renaissance, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution – through which she convincingly draws out and repudiates the idea of an insular and singular Europe that singlehandedly originated modernity.
189. Bhambra, 'Multiple Modernities or Global Interconnections', p 62.
190. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, pp. 3-4; see also Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*.
191. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, pp. 12-13; H. Schulz-Forberg, 'Introduction: Global Conceptual History: Promises and Pitfalls of a New Research Agenda', in H. Schulz-Forberg (ed.), *A Global Conceptual History of Asia, 1860–1940*, Pickering & Chatto, London, 2014, pp. 1-24.
192. See S. Randeria, 'Entangled Histories of Uneven Modernities: Civil Society, Caste Solidarities and Legal Pluralism in Post-Colonial India', in Y. Elkana, S. Raderia, E. Macamo & I. Krastev (eds.), *Unraveling Ties: From Social Cohesion to New Practices of Connectedness*, Campus, Frankfurt, 2002, pp. 284-211.
193. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, p. 22, p. 22: n. 90; See also J. Kocka & H. Haupt, 'Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope, and Perspectives of Comparative History', in J. Kocka & H. Haupt (eds.), *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, Berghahn, London, 2009, p. 4.

Although we can say 'that the European self-understanding only evolved in contact with others', it is entirely another thing to posit an equally impactful transfer of ideas *into* Europe from other regions, as was the case with the transfer of ideas *from* Europe to the rest of the world. I agree with Florian Zemmin's (2018) critique that even in a polycentric understanding of modernity as a result of 'a web of connections both in space and over time', Europe still remains central in the end.[194] Why, Zemmin argues, if these connections have always existed, 'does modernity designate the connections of a certain period'; modernity only emerges when Europe takes centre-stage and is regarded as such by Europeans and non-Europeans alike.[195] 'There is no escaping a Eurocentric bias in modernity', argues Zemmin, pointing out that 'in even the most sophisticated attempts at conceiving of modernity as evolving from a plurality of traditions', modern features are still inherently identified with the European tradition as a point-of-departure, whether or not they are then located elsewhere or seen to have been falsely universalised through processes of Western hegemony and homogenisation.[196]

The Civilisation of Modernity

Taking the argument further, we can actually say that European hegemony is crucial in understanding the spread of modernity. But rather than seeing this expansion as a one-sided affair, it is much more useful to understand it as involving a number of interactive processes that lead to the dynamic reshaping of modernity itself. Far from envisaging the expansion of modernity from Europe as the transference of some holistic entity to other societies, Eisenstadt conceptualises it as entailing diverse reformulations shaped by the continual interaction between antinomies and tensions existent in modernity from the very beginning of its institutionalisation in Europe and 'the pattern of historical experience' of non-European societies.[197] Rather than just the emergence of multiple modern civilisations, what we have is a dynamic process that leads to increasingly diverse understandings of the basic premises of modernity. As argued by Eisenstadt, it is from the basis of its European origin that modernity can be better understood as the crystallisation of a new kind of civilisation drastically shaping, and being shaped by, contributions from other societies and the global interconnections within which it is enmeshed. This 'civilisation of modernity', like previous civilisations, undermines 'the symbolic and institutional premises of the societies incorporated into it' as it expands.[198] And a variety of modern societies emerge out of this encounter, 'sharing many common

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194. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, pp. 22-24.
195. Ibid.
196. Ibid. Zemmin continues: 'A more fruitful reading, however, stresses that this particular European tradition had already incorporated other particularities and hegemonically elaborated features universal to modernity' (p. 24).
197. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, pp. 200-206.
198. Ibid., p. 197.

characteristics but also evincing great differences among themselves' as a response to the sudden presence of new possibilities.[199]

Building on Eisenstadt's ideas, Johan Aranson has paid particular attention to the 'civilisational' aspect of the multiple modernities model and has attempted to negotiate between the two perceptions of civilisation that underly our difficulties in understanding the universal and particular aspects of modernity.[200] The first is the perception of 'civilisations' in the plural, where various civilisations across the world are seen as facilitating the emergence of multiple modernities, and the second is the perception of 'civilisation' in the singular, which sees modernity as a global civilising process in the sense articulated by Norbert Elias (d. 1990).[201] Following Eisenstadt, Arnason draws on the idea of the 'Axial Age' to delineate specific 'civilizational complexes' emerging during that period, all of which share common cultural premises centred around 'the conception that there is a chasm between the transcendental and the mundane'.[202] The cosmos is divided into transcendental and mundane worlds, where the latter only achieves a derivative position that then creates a tension for reform which is kept in check because of the prevalent idea of 'sacred rulership' and order.[203] But with modernity, the mundane world loses its derivative status, whilst the tension for reform now goes unchecked by the absence of a sanctified authority and transforms into a vision of human autonomy over both the social and natural world.[204]

> In the most general sense, modernity should — according to Eisenstadt — be understood as a transformation of Axial cultural premises. The tension between transcendental and mundane levels of order is redirected towards a radical vision of human autonomy, in the double sense of ability to construct and construct social order as well as to acquire ever more knowledge of and control over the natural world. These perspectives are grounded in the transcendental turn of Axial predecessors, but they give a thoroughly this-wordly, anthropocentric and activist turn to traditional frames of meaning. The multiple projects of autonomy — from the idea of scientific inquiry to the incorporation of protest as a permanent aspect of political order, and from the principle of subjective rights to the paradigm of self-expression through artistic creation — take the place of ontological models.[205]

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199. Ibid.
200. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*.
201. A. Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, pp. 7-8. See also J. P. Arnason, 'Civilizational Patterns and Civilizing Processes', *International Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2001, pp. 387–405; J. P. Arnason, 'Marshall Hodgson's Civilizational Analysis of Islam: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives', in J. P. Arnason, A. Salvatore and G. Stauth (eds.), *Islam in Process: Historical and Civilizational Perspectives*, Transcript Verlag, Berlin, 2006, pp. 23–47. See also 'Marshal Hodgson's Civlizational Analysis of Islam' and 'The Emergence of Islam as a Case of Cultural Crystalisation', in Arnason, Salvatore and Stauth (eds.), *Islam in Process*, pp. 95-122.
202. Eisenstadt, cited in Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*, p. 163.
203. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*, p. 167 ff.
204. Ibid., p. 173.
205. Ibid.

Taylor treads similar ground in his master narrative, preferring to refer to the dichotomy as that between an immanent and transcendent order, or natural and supernatural world.[206] Taylor also uses the distinction between natural and supernatural as an early and integral step towards secularisation, and claims it as an exclusive characteristic of Western Christendom, which he singles out from other civilisations, with the possible exception of Islam.[207] What this reflects is the tendency to view Christianity and Islam as two latecomers of the 'Axial Age' that radicalise its distinction between the transcendent and mundane.[208] Arnason, for example, posits a continuation of the Axial Age, dated by earlier scholarship to the first half of the millennium BC, incorporating especially the post-prophetic era after Muhammad.[209]

1.3.3 Applying Taylor's Narrative to a Muslim Context

An avid advocate of the civilisational approach developed by Eisenstadt and Arnason, Armando Salvatore (2009) also casts Christianity and Islam in a shared role as 'new systematisations of older axial repertoires', especially stressing that 'Islam is both external and internal to [the] historical trajectory' of European civilisation, even if 'it constitutes an ensemble of social and cultural potentialities that never became 'Europe', and so truly modern'.[210] For him, the essentialisation of Islam as 'other' to the West is precisely due to the tension arising from wanting to separate 'a view of civilization and modernity conceived as singular, and the counterview of civilization and modernity as not only plural but also as inherently open to contact, interaction and exchange'.[211] The pervasive presentation of Islam as a neatly insulated civilisation that clearly contrasts with a presumed European or Western civilisation is ironically the result of 'the closeness and density of interaction and competition' between these apparently separate cultures.[212] What results from this is a 'peculiar difficulty', as Albert Hourani (1980) puts it, 'in finding a category in terms of which Islam can be understood, being neither 'East' nor 'West', neither Christian nor unequivocally non-Christian', which has made it particularly challenging in othering Islam.[213]

Taylor expresses this in his book, being concerned about the 'othering' of Islam to sustain the dominant secularisation narrative, but also optimistic that 'this way of lending plausibility

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206. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 13-14, 143.
207. Ibid., p. 781 n. 19.
208. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*, p. 172. See also Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West'; Arnason, 'The Axial Age and its Interpreters'; S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies', in M. Hoexter, S. N. Eisenstadt & N. Levtzion (eds.), *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 2002, pp. 139-161.
209. Arnason, 'The Axial Age and Its Interpreters'.
210. Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West', pp. 13-14, 18.
211. Ibid., p. 14.
212. Ibid., p. 13.
213. A. H. Hourani, *Europe and the Middle East*, Macmillan, London, 1980, p. 71.

to the secularization narrative will give out sooner or later'.[214] For those critical of the story of secularisation told by Taylor, such as Nilüfer Göle (2010) who refers to it as 'an inwardly West-looking narrative of the secular', their argument is most often supported by showing how Islam in particular both informs current debates about secularity and is itself 'shaped by the secular age'.[215] The equal representation of Islam as similar to and different from the West in the scarce references to it by Taylor in *A Secular Age*, highlights for us this role of Islam being 'at once constituent of and set apart from the West'.[216] It is of little surprise then that the majority of attempts at expanding Taylor's narrative beyond the West have been in a Muslim context, a project with which some have fared better than others.

Of all previous attempts at applying *A Secular Age* to non-Western and especially Muslim contexts, Zemmin's study of the concept of 'society' among Muslim modernists has perhaps been the most successful.[217] This Zemmin has mainly achieved by seeing 'Taylor's story as a useful heuristic tool for uncovering other stories of modernity'.[218] For him, *A Secular Age* does not offer a theory, but rather a narrative. In contrast, Elizabeth Barre (2012) misreads 'Taylor's narrative as providing a theoretical framework for a universal historical process', and therefore is a clear example of how not to apply insights from Taylor's book to Islam.[219] Again, like Weber, Taylor presents his narrative within the parentheses of three ideal-types: (1) 'ancién regime', (2) 'age of mobilization' and (3) 'age of authenticity', which are utilised by Taylor to highlight different historical phases or periods in the process of secularisation but in actual fact cannot so easily be distinguished from each other as they are part of a 'gradual process in which the new co-exists with the old'.[220] Barre rightfully defines these three 'social imaginaries' discussed in *A Secular Age* as 'Weberian ideal-types', but then seeks to apply these as *prêt-à-porter* analytical categories to what she problematically calls 'the Muslim imaginary'.[221] Even just the notion of a 'Muslim imaginary' has been a cause for contention for researchers on Islam, such as Schulze, for whom it is one of the main problems with Barre's article. Schulze writes, 'Taylor himself surely would have been very cautious about such a framing of the Muslim world. He himself never speaks of a 'Christian imaginary' — which indeed would not have made any sense within his story'.[222]

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214. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 770.

215. N. Göle, 'The Civilizational, Spatial, and Sexual Powers of the Secular', in Warner, VanAntwerpen & Calhoun (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in A Secular Age*, pp. 244, 264.

216. In them being similar, see Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 154, 608, 781 n. 19; on them being different, see pp. 102, 283, 419.

217. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*.

218. Zemmin, Colin, & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 3.

219. E. Barre, 'Muslim Imaginaries and Imaginary Muslims: Placing Islam in Conversation with A Secular Age', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 40, 2012, pp. 138-148; Schulze, 'The Quest for the West in an Era of Globalization', p. 189.

220. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 483.

221. Barre, 'Muslim Imaginaries and Imaginary Muslims', p. 140; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 437-438.

222. Schulze, 'The Quest for the West in an Era of Globalization', p. 190.

Even more important for us to note is the other major problem Schulze points out, namely Barre's use of 'Taylor's narrative as if it was a theoretical model'.[223] Barre's superficial treatment of Taylor's three 'social imaginaries' as ready-made models posits them as three 'universal' stages along a path to progress; she then challenges this model with the case of 'Islam', which is not only further behind than the West — still being stuck at the second stage and only showing glimpses of the third stage — but is in fact heading in the wrong direction back towards the first stage.[224] A way to avoid falling into such gross oversimplifications is to take Zemmin's advice on 'testing Taylor's concepts for individual cases' and approaching Taylor's 'rich and complex work' selectively.[225] This is particularly important to keep in mind for the purposes of this thesis, because, like Barre, we will be looking at Taylor's three ideal-types, but in our case, they are to be used as landmarks along the narrative infolded around the life and times of Fadhlalla Haeri. In short, the aim of this thesis is to use *A Secular Age* as a narrative rather than a theory.

Using Fadhlalla Haeri as a Mirror

In this thesis, Taylor's story is taken out of its careful confinement to the North Atlantic, not as an analytical tool but rather as a backdrop for an analogous narrative through which to partially perceive the impact of secularisation within the context of Muslim modernity. This is to be understood neither as part of a deterministic unilinear evolutionary process nor as simply the result of a reciprocal diffusion of cultural traits across the globe. Having Haeri as my focal point makes it easier to apply Taylor's narrative within the slightly different context explored in my thesis. Emphasis here is on the word 'slightly', as I hope to present a narrative that largely overlaps with Taylor's rather than attempting to apply it to an entirely 'other' context. This is not only a practical choice but also one considerate of both the specificity of Taylor's own approach and the context surrounding Fadhlalla Haeri's lifework. Focusing on Fadhlalla Haeri's biography allows us to investigate a context that is close to Taylor's original 'North Atlantic' context, whilst also being far enough removed from it to offer a fresh perspective. As already alluded to by some of the previous literature on Haeri, his life and teachings represent the intersections between 'East' and 'West', which reflects a more general sense of admixture inherent in the modernisation process. A related and equally crucial reason that makes Haeri's story such a fascinating case is that it seems to span a large breadth of time and space.

What follows is a contextualisation of Haeri's story. In the second chapter, we will first look at the premodern Islamicate civilisation, the legacy of which still lingered in the Karbala of Haeri's childhood. Also, we will explore some of the apparent precursors to modernity as

223. Ibid. p. 190.
224. Barre, 'Muslim Imaginaries and Imaginary Muslims', pp. 143-144.
225. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, p. 309.

they emerged within Muslim societies during the early modern era, before looking at the drastic changes wrought by the encroaching influence of Western hegemony, encapsulated in Haeri being sent abroad. This second chapter attempts to weave a historical context around Haeri's life before he became a Sufi shaykh, and aims to introduce the three major ideal-types Taylor uses in *A Secular Age*. The Karbala of Haeri's early childhood is described as a lingering legacy of the medieval Islamicate civilisation, which allows us to explore some of the elements Taylor identifies as characteristic of his first ideal-type, 'the ancién regime'. Next, Haeri's education and employment in both the Middle East and the West are presented with particular attention to a spectrum of modern reform that all help to define Taylor's second ideal-type, 'the age of mobilization'. Lastly, we look at the disillusionment Haeri experienced during this period and his subsequent search for meaning within the context of the historical process of individuality that feature throughout Taylor's narrative, but most strongly in relation to his third ideal-type, 'the age of authenticity'.

For this application of ideal-types to succeed, it cannot be stressed enough how each of Taylor's ideal-types are pedagogical exaggerations, there to help us grasp what it is that is changing in the move towards secularisation. What we find in actual observation is always a blend of these ideal types, with tensions often occurring along the lines they map out. In an appreciation of this fact, the narrative presented here aims to emphasise the intertwined actuality of the ideal-types by not making constant references to the conceptual arguments they indicate. Trusting the reader to notice the simultaneous presence of all three ideal-types, and the tensions between them, without the need to repeatedly and explicitly point this out, I instead offer further nuances to the original discussion in the hopes of enriching the argument being made, and minimising disruptions to the storyline through which it is being made.

The historical, biographical and theoretical background of the second chapter serves to set the stage for the main focus of this paper, which is to investigate the transformation that colonial and postcolonial processes brought to what we unquestioningly refer to today as 'Islam'. As part of this investigation, we will also take a closer look at how what was left out in order to create this simplification of 'Islam' came to be gathered under the different rubric of 'Sufism' as the other side of the coin. As we shall see in some detail, Haeri's own experiences are a witness to many of these transformative processes. By exploring the historical underpinnings of these transformative processes, we gain a substantial understanding of the context around Fadhlalla Haeri's emergence as a religious figure and spiritual leader in the wake of both the 'spiritual revolution' and 'Islamic revivalism' of the late twentieth century, as many of them coalesced during Haeri's efforts to recreate a Muslim community of his own. Therefore, chapter three and four both aim to delve into Haeri's life as a Sufi shaykh and link this to general socio-historical issues so as to illustrate a Muslim accent to the secularisation narrative offered by Charles Taylor.

In the third chapter we will look at Haeri's emergence as a religious figure and work to formulate a socio-historical contextualisation around some of the major points of interest during Haeri's early career as a shaykh. What we will be exploring through this account is the wider narrative of Islamic revivalism and reformism with which Haeri's story can be contextualised. With authority being the overriding theme of this chapter, we will give particular attention to how the rise of a Muslim public sphere relates to the demise of the institute of the caliphate and the declining influence of the ulama, the class of Muslim religious scholars, in two corresponding parts of the chapter that roughly relate Haeri's life during the first and second half of the 80s respectively.

The fourth chapter continues with Haeri's time as a Sufi shaykh, beginning in the 90s, and his development into a more universal spiritual teacher, attempting to construct a context that helps us understand some of the reasons for this development. Focusing on the theme of authenticity, we will investigate the rise of mysticism as a modern category and the related process of a psychologisation of religion. Looking at Haeri's literary output and other activities, we shall see how his efforts reflect on a smaller scale more general trends that characterise the culture of authenticity of late modernity and the sense of individual autonomy and interiority that characterise it.

Finally, the fifth chapter draws a summary of the salient themes explored in relation to Haeri's life as well as in light of some of the actual content of his teachings in as far as they can be seen as a reflection and response to the narrative of secularisation outlined by Taylor.

Chapter 2

Meeting Modernity

In this chapter, we will introduce the three ideal-types that constitute Taylor's narrative of secularisation through a contextualised appreciation of the earlier half of Haeri's life. First we will look at the environment that Haeri was born and raised in, the pilgrim city of Karbala. It is argued that Karbala still held the lingering remnants of a premodern way of life that shares some features Taylor considers essential when speaking about the *long durée* of 'the ancién regime'. Then we will move on to an exploration of the Age of Mobilization, which, again, we can draw parallels with in the impact of certain reformist movements on Karbala during the modern era, and in Haeri's own life after leaving the city as a young man. Lastly, we turn to the Age of Authenticity, with a look at the deep impression of disenchantment that Haeri would experience and then try to resolve after embracing a typically modern lifestyle.

2.1 Sacredness and the Ancién Regime

2.1.1 The Islamicate Civilisation

The historian Marshall Hodgson (d. 1968) is one of the earliest and most successful writers to simultaneously resituate both the history of European and Muslim civilisations within a world-historical context.[1] His magnum opus, *The Venture of Islam* (1974), not only decentred the place of Europe in the history of civilisation but also unfettered the conceptualisation of Islamic civilisation from the contextual constraints of the Middle East as well as from the religion of Islam. Hodgson differentiates between 'Islamic' and 'Islamicate' in order to mark the distinction between 'the religion of the Muslims' and a civilisation 'naturally shared by Muslims and non-Muslims'.[2] In his 'project to recuperate and apply Hodgsonian terminology in the service of Hodgson's historical revisionism', Bruce Lawrence points to the 'inherently cosmopolitan nature of the Afro-Eurasian oikumene', which has both before and after European colonial rule been 'dotted with majority Muslim populations'.[3] By speaking of an Afro-Eurasian 'oikumene' or ecumene, Lawrence uses another Hodgsonian phrase, adapted from historian Arnold Toynbee (d. 1975), which refers to 'the interconnectedness of the known world prior to the 16th century'.[4]

In placing Islam at the centre of world history, Hodgson showed how Europe was an outlier on the periphery of Asia and its major civilisations, and explained the Renaissance as Europe's attempt to catch up with these civilisations by assimilating key advances from them.[5] The wider contextualisation of the civilisational approach that Hodgson was committed to was largely achieved by his focus on what he called the 'Middle Period' of Islamic history, spanning the first five hundred years of the second millennium (1000–1500 CE). This not only allowed Hodgson to reassess the traditional periodisation of Islamic civilisation, but also to revaluate early modern history. Hodgson also argued away the conventional conception of an Islamic civilisation in decline by the beginning of the second millennium as one blinded by an 'Arabistic bias', which,

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1. E. Burke, 'Introduction: Marshall G. S. Hodgson and World History', in M. G. S. Hodgson & E. Burke (ed.), *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, 1993, p. x.
2. Hodgson, M. G. S., *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974, vol. 1, p. 58.
3. B. B. Lawrence, 'Islamicate Cosmopolitanism from North Africa to Southeast Asia', in J. Gedacht & M. Feener (eds.), *Challenging Cosmopolitanism: Coercion, Mobility and Displacement in Islamic Asia*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2018, p. 31.
4. B. B. Lawrence, 'Islamicate Cosmopolitan: A Past Without a Future, Or a Future Still Unfolding?', *Humanities Futures*, Franklin Humanities Institute, 2 May 2017. Explaining the premise of his project, Lawrence writes: 'I want to ask: How do we wrestle with this aporia between Hodgson's ethical revisionism — he even subtitled his magnum opus: *Conscience and History and in a World Civilization* — and his contemporary legacy, marked by nominal recognition of his stature but also continuous neglect of his plea for parity across time and space?'.
5. These advances include, among others things: gunpowder firearms, the compass, the sternpost rudder, decimal notation, and the university; see Burke, 'Introduction', p. xix.

he argued, failed to see the central role of non-Arab, especially Persian, influence in what was a period that saw the greatest cultural and scientific advancements under Muslim rule, as well as the height of its economic and political power.[6] With the rise of Muslim Persian dynasties such as the Buyids (932-1062 CE) from around the tenth century, there developed a Persian-Arab cultural synthesis that ultimately brought about the 'extraordinary efflorescence of the Islamized Persianate cosmopolitan culture that expanded over large areas of Anatolia, Transoxania, and western India'.[7]

This period, beginning at the start of the second millennium, has been defined by Björn Wittrock (2001) as the 'ecumenical renaissance', and by others as the 'transcultural age'.[8] All of them mark it as one of increasing global interaction between the different Axial civilisations through trade, travel, war, communication, migration, etc., which, along with a crystallisation of these civilisations, brought about 'a set of deep-seated transformations across the Afro-Eurasian landmass' that are akin to the original Axial breakthroughs.[9] Just as some scholars equate the period's importance for European civilisation to that of the Renaissance, Salvatore (2001) sees it as a moment of maturity within the Islamicate civilisation also, mentioning the simultaneous and equally significant rise of 'mystically orientated movements drawing on the imagination and needs of the commoners' in both 'Christendom' and 'Islamdom'.[10] Salvatore is making use here of yet another term coined by Hodgson, who referred to 'Islamdom' — analogous to Christendom — as a 'territorially more or less well-defined' ecumene that extended across parts of Europe, Africa and Asia where 'Muslims and their faith are recognized as prevalent and socially dominant'.[11] In the words of Salvatore, 'Islamdom was the civilisation that had inherited and creatively recombined the cultural characters and the political specificities of a vast and more ancient geo-cultural unit, the Irano-Semitic area', and went on to become 'a simultaneously Euro-Mediterranean and Asian ecumene, building a strong

6. M. G. S. Hodgson, 'The Unity of Later Islamic History' [1957], in M. G. S. Hodgson & E. Burke (ed.), *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, 1993, p. 172-175; see also Burke, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

7. B. Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran: Studies on Safavid Muharram Rituals, 1590-1641 CE*, Brill, Leiden, 2012, p. 156.

8. B. Wittrock, 'Social Theory and Global History: Three Periods of Cultural Crystallization', *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 65, 2001, pp. 27-50; A. Salvatore, 'Introduction: Problem of the Ingraining of Civilizing Traditions into Social Governance', in A. Salvatore (ed.), *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power*, LIT Verlag, Münster, 2001; see also Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*; Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West'; Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran*, pp. 142-144.

9. B. Wittrock, 'Social Theory and Global History', pp. 27-50; A. Salvatore, 'Introduction: Problem of the Ingraining of Civilizing Traditions into Social Governance', in Salvatore (ed.), *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power*; see also Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*; Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West'; Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran*, pp. 142-144.

10. Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West', pp. 22-23; Salvatore writes: 'During the ecumenical renaissance Sufism became ubiquitous in the Muslim world thanks to a fresh wave of diffusion and institutionalisation of mystical paths as practised in the brotherhoods (*turuq*)', and compares this to the rise of mendicant orders in Europe which 'manifested the pressures, on ecclesiastical institutions, of the practical necessities and aspirations of renewal that spread among the popular classes and the rising urban middle classes' (p. 23).

11. Ibid., p. 23.

presence in Central Asia, in parts of China and especially in India, while also reaching out as far as South East Asia'.[12]

The later advent of Turkic rule by dynasties such as the Seljuks across these lands 'opened the way for the establishment of the Persianized-Turkic powers, such as the Ottomans and the Safavids in Asia Minor and Irano-Mesopotamian steppes, and the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi in the thirteenth century in the Panjab and most of the Gangetic plain (Hindustan)'.[13] Islamicate civilisation's peak of cultural creativity and political power at the dawn of the modern era in the sixteenth century is most prominently visible in the geopolitical dominance of these three 'gunpowder' empires (the Ottomans in Anatolia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa; the Safavids in Iran, and the Mughals in South Asia).[14] All three empires shared a common cultural heritage forged by former Islamic dynasties — the last of which being the Timurids (1396-1510) — that had ruled over the geographic region of premodern Greater Persia. This is best exemplified by the three metropolitan capitals connected to these empires, Istanbul, Isfahan and Delhi, which all shared a common 'political aesthetic' influenced by Persian but also Chinese and Central Asian motifs.[15] According to Lawrence, all three cities are Islamicate, a term that for him captures an influence that 'exceeds any creedal or cultural limits', reflecting Muslim presence for sure, but 'rather than [the] pure presence or absence of Islam', alludes to its 'hybrid trace'.[16]

Divine Kingship and Sainthood

Use of the term 'Islamicate' helps to emphasise the role that Islamic civilisation has played as 'a creative synthesiser and diligent incorporator of the heritage of several civilisations'.[17] One aspect of such synthesis important for our discussion here is indicated by Lawrence himself, who points out that 'what makes all three cities Islamicate' is not only that they are 'linked to

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12. Ibid., pp. 3, 23. For an understanding of 'ecumene', see E. Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 17: Order and History, Volume IV, The Ecumenic Age*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO, 2000 [1974].

13. Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran*, p. 156-157. We can see this process reflected in language: 'The term Persianate was coined by Marshall Hodgson in *The Venture of Islam* (1974) to describe a major component of the Islamic civilization. Persian, according to Hodgson, "was to form the chief model for the rise of still other languages to the literary level. Gradually, a third "classical" tongue emerged, Turkish, whose literature was based on the Persian tradition ... Most of the more local languages of high culture that later emerged among Muslims likewise depended upon Persian [Urdu would be a prime example] ... We may call these traditions, carried in Persian or reflecting Persian inspiration, "Persianate" by extension"' (S. A. Arjomand, 'Defining Persianate Studies', *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2008, p. 3; citing Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, p. 293).

14. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*, p. 97-100; Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West in Islam and Modernity', p. 3.

15. Lawrence, 'Islamicate Cosmopolitan'.

16. Lawrence, 'Islamicate Cosmopolitan'; see also S. Aravamudan, 'East-West Fiction as World Literature: The *Hayy* Problem Reconfigured', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2014, p. 198; Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran*, p. 159. Rahimi writes: 'The fusion of Arabic-scriptural, Byzantine-Greek, Turkish-nomadic, and Persianate-lettered traditions of the Middle Period paved the way for the creation of new cultural complexes'.

17. Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West in Islam and Modernity', pp. 18-19.

Timur but also a sensibility. All three are capital cities in post-Timurid empires: in addition to kingship and sainthood, they embrace a public celebratory tone, at once aesthetic and ethical, in everyday life'.[18] Azfar Moin's recent study of the period has shown how the popular charisma of saint and sovereign drew upon a 'sacredness' found in everyday life and popular imagination, [and] not [only] elite genres of writing'.[19] Sacred kingship 'drew extensively upon the universal knowledges of astrology and alchemy', but also on 'the widespread institutions and embodied practices of a shrine-centered sainthood'.[20] Muslim kings were no exception to the significant role that shrines and saints played in the collective practices of the people, nor did they stand outside the influence of sciences such as alchemy and astrology, which could legitimise a king's place in the hierarchy of the cosmos.[21]

Muslim monarchs of the era expressed a supreme sacred sovereignty well into the sixteenth century: the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail I (r. 1501–24), inherited his father's warrior-disciples, the Qizilbash, who saw him as 'a quasi-divine person', immortal and infallible, and as the Mahdi, the prophesised eschatological saviour figure; the Ottoman sultan Selim I (r. 1512–20) was also 'subject to mahdist expectations resembling the messianic imagery surrounding Shah Ismail'; and the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), 'fashioned himself as the spiritual guide of all his subjects regardless of caste or creed'.[22] Rather than being found in canonical religious texts, sacred authority as embodied by these Muslim kings is best seen as part of 'inhabitable cosmologies and performative narratives'.[23] More than mere superstition or the political ploy of rulers, the 'sacrality of kings' during this period was taken for granted as 'part of the natural order of things'.[24] Public performances by Muslim rulers demonstrating their sacrality through participation 'in the same carnivals and parades that enchanted and entertained the populace', as well as their visiting of shrines and the consulting of astrologers, reveals that Muslim rulers were as embroiled in a sense of the 'sacred' as were the populace, similarly feeling 'the force of its threat or the pull of its desire'.[25]

An important element Moin considers 'critical for understanding the institution of sacred kingship' is the 'astrological-cyclical view of time' that pervaded the premodern world, which

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18. Lawrence, 'Islamicate Cosmopolitan'.

19. A. A. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012, p. 14.

20. Ibid., p. 234.

21. Ibid., p. 3.

22. M. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy: Competing Claims for Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict', in H. T. Karateke & M. Reinkowski (eds.), *Legitimizing the Order, the Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power,* 2005, p. 160; See also C. H. Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah: the Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân', in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Süleymân the Magnificent and his Time: Acts of the Parisian Conference, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 March 1990,* Documentation Française, Paris, 1992, p. 162. See also Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 153-154.

23. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, p. 8.

24. Ibid., p. 16; see also R. M. Savory & A. T. Karamustafa, 'Esmāʿīl I Safawī', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* vol. 8, fasc. 6, Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, London, pp. 628-636.

25. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 14-16.

helps to show how sacred kingship 'was not bound by a single religious tradition but universally extended to all the communal constituencies of early modern Islamic empires, whether Muslims, Christians, Jews, Mongols, Hindus, Buddhists, or others', and 'points to an important continuity with cosmological knowledge from the pre-Islamic traditions of India, Iran, and Greece and the even more ancient ones of Sumeria and Akkadia'.[26] This continuity is clearly evident in the institution of sacred kingship itself. A breadth of historical research attests to fact that sacred kingship was a culturally embedded institution across much of the Afro-Eurasian ecumene sharing related cosmological views.[27] In the Middle East region, for instance, the general notion of a sacred king can be seen in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the ancient Mediterranean world (Phoenician, Etruscan, Greek, Roman).[28] Similarly, forms of sacred kingship with emphasis on kingship and not the king himself as sacred are evident among late Babylonian and Persian rulers, who, rather than the self-deification common to the Egyptian pharaohs or earlier Mesopotamian kings, arrogated to themselves divine favour.[29] The ceremonial synthesis this found in the Achaemenid royal court was inherited by the Greeks under Alexander, and consequently appropriated by the Romans in its Hellenised form, crystallised with the inauguration of Augustus and the 'cult of Emperor' in Rome.[30]

Official titles designating the caliph as a divinely appointed deputy of God (*khalifat Allah*) since the Umayyad dynasty, and later 'God's shadow on earth' (*zill Allah*) and 'supreme authority' (*sultan Allah*) by the Abbasids, attests to a later inheritance of sacred kingship by Muslim rulers.[31] As well as offering an incredible strategic advantage, the caliphate moving to Damascus and then later Baghdad opened the way for a marriage of the caliphate with the court-culture of sacred kingship found among the ancient monarchies of Rome and Persia; stressing

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26. Ibid., p. 6.

27. The most well-known work on divine kingship is James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), which had a great impact initially but has since been widely criticised by anthropologists and other academics in the study of religion. Another classical anthropological work is Clifford Geertz' essay, 'Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', in C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, Basic Books, New York, 1983. A classical text on Muslim kingship is Aziz al-Azmeh's *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1997. For a classical work on sacred kingship in medieval Europe that Charles Taylor speaks about, see M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, Routledge, London, 1973.

28. G. Woolf, 'Divinity and Power in Ancient Rome', in N. M. Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago, 2008, p. 247; see also B. Lincoln, 'The Role of Religion in Achaemenian Imperialism', in the same volume, pp. 221-242.

29. Ibid., p. 247; see also B. Lincoln, 'The Role of Religion in Achaemenian Imperialism', in in N. M. Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, 2008, pp. 221-242.

30. Woolf, 'Divinity and Power in Ancient Rome', p. 243. Sociologist Frank Füredi begins his book *Authority* (2013) by maintaining that since the time of Augustus, 'there have been continual attempts to claim the possession of something more than power. Yet, time and again, societies have found it difficult to find an adequate way of conceptualising this'. In general terms, we can say that authority precluded an understanding 'that something more than force was needed to maintain order and cohesion'. Attempting 'to communicate the possession of something far more important than mere military or political power', Augustus appropriated the word 'auctoritas' to describe himself, seeking 'to draw attention to a far more compelling attribute'. From its earliest use by the first Roman Emperor as a title, the word 'authority' alluded to a type of 'sacredness' that meant the possession of something more than just physical power. See F. Füredi, *Authority: A Sociological History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 1.

31. P. Crone & M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 12.

those 'aspects of poetry, philosophy, science, art and architecture that could help define the authority of the regime and the legitimacy of the ruling classes'.[32] But also within this cosmological view, the notion of sacred kingship intertwined with ideas gleaned from religious scriptural sources about the prophesised redeemer (Mahdi), and of a 'reviver' (*mujaddid*) of the faith who would appear for every century, as well as with mystical concepts of an 'axis' or 'pole' (*qutb*) who headed a secret hierarchy of saints through whom God steered the cosmos.[33]

2.1.2 The Holy City of Karbala

Acknowledged both 'explicitly in elite philosophical metaphysics that sought to explain the role of human actors in maintaining the rhythm and balance of the cosmos, and implicitly in popular tales and stories about prophets, saints, kings, and other heroic saviors', the view of time and space as infused with personal agency pervaded the premodern landscape.[34] A prime example of its implicit or untheorised acknowledgment among the general population is the interesting melding, in the popular imagination, between the collective memory of regret and

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32. I. M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p. 68. Lapidus writes: 'The court of the Umayyad Caliphs became a theatre enacting the drama of royalty ... The Caliph held audience dressed in crown and royal robes, seated on a throne, and veiled from the rest of his audience by a curtain. His courtiers stood or sat on each side of the long hall. His day included consultations and receptions, prayer, and private entertainers – hunting, music, dancing girls, wine drinking, and poetry reading. A chamberlain, controlled access to the royal person, everyone addressed him in submissive tones and with panegyric greetings. The decorations of the court mirrored the royal way of life; representations of the Caliph depicted his majesty and power. In the desert palace at *Qasr al-Khayr* the Caliph appears in a formal, frontal pose; at *Khirbat al-Mafjar* he assumes a martial figure. Representations at *Qusayr 'Amra* portray the Caliph in a hieratic manner derived from Byzantine depictions of the Christ as Pantocrator. At *Qusayr Amra* his majesty also appears in its full triumph in a painting of the Shah of Iran, the Emperor of the Turks greeting the Caliph as their master. The family of kings is portrayed as deriving its authority from its new suzerain, the Islamic Caliph, whose power embraces not only Islam, but the whole world. Other scenes depict hunting and gardens, birds and animals, banquets, attendants, and dancing girls. The court with its domed room was the center of the universe; its decorations signified the gathering of the living cosmos to glorify the Caliph. The Caliph is majestic, his reign universal, his court paradise. Art was a narcissistic affirmation of royalty. The array of court symbols conveyed the august majesty and unique rank of the Caliph among men. He was entitled to dress and furnishings, to ceremonies and amusements, and to gestures of respect than no other human enjoyed. Court poetry glorified the ruler and surrounded him with a divine aura. The court poets addressed the Caliph as *khalifat allah* (deputy of God). The panegyrics sometimes imputed supernatural powers to him; his intercession brought rain. The *bay'a* or oath of allegiance, became a gesture of the humble servitude of the courtier and subject before his overlord. Obedience and fidelity to an adored majestic personage was a leading theme in Umayyad court life' (pp. 68-69).
33. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, p. 9.
34. Ibid. One example of its explicit or theorised acknowledgement among Muslim intellectuals is Hermeticism, which was a significant synthesis and explicit elucidation of premodern cosmology in the metaphysical writings during the early modern period. Based on writings attributed to the mysterious figure of Hermes Trismegistus, Hermeticism was the crystallisation of a metaphysical tradition that not only shows the continuity of a certain cosmological view since at least late antiquity to the early modern period, but also shows how this imagining of the cosmos was shared by European, Arabian and Persian contemporaries. See K. T. V. Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 239; S. Schmidtke, 'The Doctrine of the Transmigration of the Soul According to Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (Killed 587/1191) and His Followers', *Studia Iranica*, vol. 28, 1999, p. 238; B. P. Copenhaver, 'Natural Magic, Hermetism, and Occultism in Early Modern Science', in D. C. Lindberg and R. S. Westman (eds.), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990. The title Trismegistus, 'thrice great', refers to Hermes' alleged mastery of the three parts of the wisdom of the universe: alchemy, astrology and theurgy. This explanation of Hermes as master of alchemy, astrology and theurgy is stated in the Emerald Tablet, an originally Arabic text attributed to Hermes that was essential reading for European alchemists. Alternately, 'thrice great' has been interpreted as referring to Hermes as the greatest philosopher, the greatest priest and the greatest king.

revenge that had evolved around the martyrdom of Imam Husayn at Karbala and the expectation of a saviour, the Mahdi, who would come to avenge it.[35] Amid the uprisings that followed in the wake of the appointment of the second Umayyad caliph by his father in 680 CE, a group of dissenters at a garrison town near the Euphrates had invited the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn to lead a rebellion against the caliphate. But upon his arrival from Mecca, Husayn together with his family and a small group of supporters, received little actual support from the dissenters and were intercepted then slaughtered upon the plains of Karbala by an army vastly outnumbering them.[36] From early on, regret and revenge for Karbala became such a strong sentiment among the growing Muslim public that Abdulaziz Sachedina considers it 'a distinguishable feature of all early revolutions that took place in different regions of Islamic lands under different leaders'.[37] Seen as the height of injustice and oppression, the event of Karbala came to represent the central wrong that the Mahdi would right, giving rise to a popular piety that found expression in 'epics, hagiographies, and religious stories'.[38]

Heroic stories popular among medieval Turkish Muslims, for instance, were about the Prophet's son-in-law Ali, his grandson Husayn and the rest of the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), with avenging Karbala being the most recurrent theme. In his study of these texts, Yildrim describes the epics as various facets of a common lore:

> An examination of this religious-heroic epic literature would show that a clearly defined Islamic perception and political mood is embedded in these narratives. Above all, this particular piety is suffused with Sufism, heroism, and sentimental aspects of the religion at the cost of strict legalism. When examining the creedal content, one would immediately realize the foregrounding of 'Ali's image as the archetype of the ideal saint and warrior. The second conspicuous feature of this piety is a remarkable stress on the role of the House of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) as representatives and guides of true faith. According to this vision, 'Ali and his offspring were the loci of the rightful Islamic path after the Prophet. A close scrutiny even discloses that the true faith is identified with the Prophet and the *ahl al-bayt*. On the other hand, enmity to the *ahl al-bayt* is deemed the gravest sin against the faith. It is the members of the Umayyad clan who appear as paragons of this aberrant strand. The names of Yazid and Marwan are particularly put forth as synonyms for the devil. ... this literature presents the whole of Islamic history as an eternal struggle between two parties centered around two families: the Friends of the House of the Prophet and the Friends of the Umayyad House. According to this vision,

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35. R. Yildrim, 'In the Name of Hosayn's Blood: The Memory of Karbala as Ideological Stimulus to the Safavid Revolution', *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 8, 2015, p. 134.

36. On the historiography of the Battle of Karbala, see, for instance, A. J. Hussain, 'The Mourning of History and the History of Mourning: The Evolution of Ritual Commemoration of the Battle of Karbala', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, pp. 78-88; A. Borrut, 'Remembering Karbala: The Construction of an Early Islamic Site of Memory', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 42, 2015, pp. 249-282; I. K. A. Howard, 'Husayn the Martyr: A Commentary on the Accounts of the Martyrdom in Arabic Sources', *Al-Serat*, vol. 12, 1986, pp. 124-142; T. Hylén, 'Dating Versions of the Karbala Story', paper presented to 'Shii Studies: The State of the Art' International Conference, The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, 7-9 December 2017.

37. A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1981, p. 7; see also Yildrim, 'In the Name of Hosayn's Blood', p. 130; Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', pp. 165-166.

38. Yildrim, 'In the Name of Hosayn's Blood', p. 130; see also Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, pp. 158-65.

> the Umayyad family overturned all the achievements of Islam, which were intrinsically tied to the Family of the Prophet. Therefore, their assumption of power under Mo'awiya is considered as a reversal of the revolutionary process that the Prophet started. As the archenemy of the Family of the Prophet, hence of Islam, deeds of the Umayyads and their followers are condemned as debauch and heretical.[39]

According to Yildrim, the ways in which the various narratives and themes gleaned from these texts interrelate, 'indicate an encompassing web of background knowledge'.[40] Rather than the production of a single author at a specific time, 'these narratives rest on a long oral accumulation of knowledge' in which committing them 'to writing constitutes simply the last stage of this production process'.[41] It was performative enactments by storytellers that helped produce, preserve and transmit these narratives, 'which were eventually collected, edited and written down by a compiler, reaching us as hagiographies, epics, or folk romances'.[42]

What Yildrim portrays in his work, and what is highlighted here, is that the mourning for Husayn and seeking vengeance for Karbala deeply affected popular religious experience throughout much of Muslim history. Pilgrimage to the grave of Imam Husayn, who was buried on site, was observed from very early on after the tragedy of Karbala, and a tomb was built over it by the time of the Abbasids.[43] But the varying policies of successive caliphs — ranging from complete destruction of the site and prohibition from visiting it, to the lifting of the ban and restoration of the tomb — would stifle any further development until the time of the Buyid dynasty in the tenth century.[44] Under them, a shrine was constructed upon the surrounding precinct (*ha'ir*) of the tomb, where there soon developed an entire complex including hostels and a marketplace accommodating the pilgrims, schools of religious learning, and cemeteries for a growing number wishing to be buried at the site.[45]

Muharram and Collective Rituals

Dating almost as far back as the tragic event itself, the mourning of the massacre at Karbala and the martyrdom of Husayn and his friends and family was formalised during Buyid rule and has been observed by Muslims, especially Shi'a, ever since, most explicitly on its anniversary on Ashura, the tenth day of the Muslim month of Muharram.[46] But Muharram processions lamenting the martyrdom of Husayn were never restricted to Shi'i Muslims exclusively and were popular across a diverse range of Muslim traditions. Although 'by the end of the twentieth

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39. Ibid., pp. 134-135.
40. Ibid., p. 141-142
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. M. Litvak, 'Karbala', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 15, fasc. 5, Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, London, 2010, pp. 550-556.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.; Yildrim, 'In the Name of Hosayn's Blood', p. 10.

century commemorating Karbala declined among Sunnis', this was not the case even at the beginning of the same century, especially among Sufi-oriented Muslims.[47]

Even during Fadhlalla Haeri's childhood, Karbala would have been filled with a stream of international visitors coming to the pilgrim sight during the month of Muharram from as far afield as North Africa, Anatolia, Iran, Central Asia, India and the Arab world, overcrowding the city and spilling out into an enormous campsite on its outskirts. The diversity of Muslim traditions was also apparent in the large tents that were pitched around the shrine to serve the many activities surrounding the commemoration of Imam Husayn and his fallen friends and family. As Haeri describes in his own words:

> Every year, as Muharram approached, hundreds of thousands would flock to Karbala as the city stirred in anticipation. Twenty days before Muharram began, large tents would go up in the open courtyard surrounding the Shrine. The poles of these tents would be some twenty meters high and broad enough for two or three of us boys clasping our hands together to only just encircle one. Inside the tents were calligraphies, rugs and tapestries. Woven on the tapestries were pictures of battle scenes and warriors. There was *Dhu'l Fiqar*, the legendary two-bladed sword of Imam `Ali and *Dhu'l Jinah*, the 'winged horse' of Imam Hussein. In all, six or seven tents would be pitched inside the marble courtyard of the Shrine, each one joined to the next so that sunlight was screened and it was cool inside. My favorite was the Sufi or Dervish tent at the back of the shrine. Although small compared to the others, it was exquisitely colorful and certainly the most enticing and mysterious of the tents. Inside, incense drifted through the air, rose water splashed onto faces, Turkish delight vanished into mouths and men with the most impressive of beards sang and chanted praises of God and the Prophet. They had come from Turkey, Iran, India, Afghanistan and further afield, each one with a staff and each one with his own brand of headgear; turbans of all colors, sizes and styles, skull caps and tall red fezzes.[48]

It is difficult to see from the climate of today, where Sunni and Shi'i practices have become so divided, that 'throughout much of Islamic history the differences between them based in ideological constructs were less prevalent. This was particularly true of popular practice, which could even often be at variance with the views of the elite ulama'.[49] Yet, due to their social importance, such collective rituals exemplify a 'happy syncretism' between 'official' orthodoxy and 'unofficial' folk ritual and meaning.[50]

Charles Taylor asserts that it is collective ritual practices of the community that most strongly cemented people to the notion of an order present in the cosmos as well as the polity. 'The social bond', Taylor says, 'was at all levels intertwined in the sacred, and indeed, it was unimaginable otherwise. How could a society not so sustained exist in the enchanted world?'.[51]

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47. K. S. Aghaie, 'Gendered Aspects of the Emergence and Historical Development of Shi'i Symbols and Rituals', in K. S. Aghaie (ed.), *Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2005, p. 14.
48. F. Haeri, *Son of Karbala: The Spiritual Journey of an Iraqi Muslim*, O-Books, Winchester, UK, 2006, pp. 25-26
49. Aghaie, 'Gendered Aspects of the Emergence and Historical Development of Shi'i Symbols and Rituals', p. 14
50. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 439.
51. Ibid., p. 43

The premodern enchanted world that Taylor speaks of is a cosmic order 'since time out of mind' that binds us to the larger social hierarchy of bishop and king through our membership in the local hierarchy of priest and noble.[52] In this milieu, popular religious practice had quite practical concerns of prosperity (luck) and protection (warding off evil), and often a collective form of ritual played a central role in the solidarity enjoyed by local communities.[53]

We see clear parallels to this in Islamicate cultures. Although many Sufi orders remained elitist, it is during this period that a number of orders attracted the poor and uneducated masses and became associated with the type of folk or popular religion characterised by 'magical' practices for healing, protection and other desired effects. While at the heart of religious ritual in rural communities, it is important to keep in mind that shrine culture was part of the religious life of many urban elites and ulama as well, who took part in and endorsed at least some of these practices.[54] Even most reformist ulama, who might be against many of the unorthodox practices taking place at shrines, would nonetheless visit them to pay their respects to the respective saint.[55] This attitude existed even during the early life of Haeri, who was brought up with a great love and reverence for Imam Husayn but was discouraged to take part in the popular proceedings on Ashura commemorating the anniversary of the battle, during which there would be a re-enactment of the events and mourning rituals including extreme forms of self-flagellation not approved of — though nonetheless tolerated by — Karbala's religious elite, including Haeri's father.[56]

A Sacred Time and Place

Academic researchers have recognised the soteriological interpretation of the Muharram proceedings as 'a grand drama of sacred history [where] everyday time and space are transformed and reconstructed in sacred terms and meaningful ways so that the day of Husain's martyrdom (Ashura) becomes the eternalized now and the place of Karbala becomes the present here'.[57] We can relate this to what Charles Taylor explains as a premodern experience of space and time, where 'the time of ordinary 'temporal' existence in which things happen one after another in an even rhythm' is interspersed with 'higher times' which we can periodically re-approach at certain high moments'.[58] In explaining our earlier experiences of ordinary time as interspersed with what he calls 'higher times', Taylor evokes the sense of a

52. Ibid., p. 446
53. Ibid., p. 440
54. M. V. Bruinessen, 'Sufism, 'Popular' Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', in Masud, Salvatore & Bruinessen (eds.), *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 145-146.
55. Ibid., p. 146.
56. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 34-35.
57. Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran*, p. 43. Rahimi points out that this type of interpretation is only one aspect of Muharram processions and must be checked by a look at its popular and carnivalesque aspects.
58. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 96.

hierarchy of cosmic time inherited by Europe from Plato and after him Plotinus, at the apex of which rests eternity as a 'fixed and unvarying' reality beyond time.[59] This unchanging eternal realm of platonic Forms is reflected in movement within time to different degrees of closeness to eternity, from its flawless reflection in 'higher' movements, such as the circular course of stars, which undergo change but have no beginning or end, to its imperfect imitation in the ordinary world of sublunar time, which deviates further and further from its natural Form as we move from the great repeating cycles of epochs towards day to day life.[60]

One of the central aspects of the medieval image of the cosmos was that everything in it had its place in a hierarchy, with minerals, vegetation and animals at the bottom, angels and God at the top and humans in the middle.[61] Commonly referred to as the 'great chain of being' or the 'hierarchy of being', this worldview pervaded popular imagination as well as philosophy in medieval Christendom and Islamdom, most pervasively in the form of what we today call Neoplatonism.[62] This hierarchical view of the cosmos was as central to the experience of space as it was to time. Taylor writes that 'the non-homogeneity of time entails a non-homogeneity of space. Certain sacred places — a church, a shrine, a site of pilgrimage — are closer to higher time than everyday places'.[63] By this token, Taylor offers a simple definition of the term 'sacred' as the belief that Divine power is 'concentrated in certain people, times, places or actions … in a way it is not in other people, times, etc., which are 'profane''.[64]

From early on, the very earth of Karbala was considered sacred. Partly for this reason, the shrine city not only facilitated for a growing populace of living visitors from all over the Muslim world, but also an ever-increasing traffic of dead pilgrims, sent in the belief that the soil itself was holy and that proximity to Imam Husayn would ensure his intercession on the day of resurrection. Hence, the city became above all else a necropolis, with death, having been the origin of its existence, aptly becoming its main industry.[65] Corpse traffic was a multinational

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59. Ibid., p. 55

60. Ibid., pp. 55-56

61. C. Truglia, 'Al-Ghazali and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Question of Human Freedom and the Chain of Being', *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2010, pp. 143-166. See also the classical work on the topic, A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1964.

62. S. Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 2005, pp. 1-2. Akkach writes: 'Underlying a variety of cosmological models was the Platonic duality of 'physical' and 'metaphysical', which gave allowance for cosmic entities such as angels or celestial gardens. The greatest synthesis of this ancient cosmological view with that alluded to in the Qur'an is in the work of Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), whose multi-layered and complex cosmology has since dominated the Islamic world' (p. 2). See also A. D. Knysh, *Ibn Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1999. Knysh remarks that 'from the 7th A.H./13th C.E. centuries onward practically every Muslim thinker of note took it upon himself to define his position vis-à-vis the controversial Sufi master' (p. 1).

63. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 96

64. Ibid., p. 76

65. I. S. Üstün, 'The Ottoman Dilemma in Handling the Shi'i Challenge in Nineteenth-Century Iraq', in O. Bengio, & M. Litvak (eds.), *The Sunna and Shi'a in History: Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2011, pp. 92-93; see also M. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq: the Ulama of Najaf and Karbala*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 60.

enterprise and a major source of economic activity for the city, providing an income for the muleteers who would transport the corpses, the smugglers who helped avoid payment of burial taxes, as well as for those who administered the upkeep and management of the cemetery, made the tombs, provided the shrouds, performed the ritual bathing of the corpses, dug the graves, carried the funeral biers, etc.[66] Even junior ulama and madrasa students were paid for conducting the funeral prayer and reciting verses from the Qur'an over the deceased.[67] During an interview, Fadhlalla Haeri recollected his own experience of growing up within an ambiance dominated by this central feature of Karbala: 'every 2-3 minutes there would be a corpse being carried in the main street of Karbala ... of dead people from all over the Muslim world who wanted to be buried there ... and people would rush out to carry it for a while, remembering that they may be on top'.[68]

Son of Karbala

Alongside the significant role played by the shrines of saints in the local politics and economy of many Muslim cities, there was the equally important role historically served by the institutionalised religious rank of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.[69] As indicated by the titles used to refer to those from the lineage of the Prophet through his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali — *sharif* (pl. *ashraf*) meaning 'noble', and *sayyid* (pl. *sadah*) meaning 'master' — descendants of the Prophet were held with reverence throughout Muslim history. Haeri's personal connection to this was through his mother, Bibi Fadhila (d. 1997), who was from a family of descendants of the Prophet.[70]

Haeri's father, Shaykh Ahmad al-Ha'iri (d. 1957), reflected the other constituent of the religious elite. He was from a Persian family of Shi'ite ulama and served as the main religious authority of the mausoleum of Husayn, just as his father had done before him and his father before him. As well as the conventional religious subjects, Shaykh Ahmad had inherited an interest in the esoteric sciences from his father and grandfather and founded a library in Karbala for such works.[71] Haeri's father was a renowned astrologist and alchemist from a line of well-known alchemists, who would receive visitors at his dedicated laboratory from as far afield as North Africa hoping to learn formulas or secrets of the elixir.[72] Haeri recalls a

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66. Üstün, 'The Ottoman Dilemma in Handling the Shi'i Challenge in Nineteenth-Century Iraq', pp. 92-93.
67. Ibid.
68. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.
69. S. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', in Masud, Salvatore & Bruinessen (eds.), *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 59-60.
70. As another reflection of a premodern legacy, she also had some Turkic heritage, and was part of an Arab tribe distinguished as those who had found and buried the martyred Husayn.
71. M. S. A. Bahr al-Ulloom, 'Introduction', in F. Haeri, *Prophetic Traditions in Islam: On the Authority of the Family of the Prophet*, Muhammadi Trust, London, 1999 [1986], p. xxiv.
72. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

childhood memory of himself sitting quietly watching his father absorbed in his experiments, at times explaining the mysteries of alchemy to his tentative son:

> Every morning after fajr, the dawn prayer, and then again for an hour before maghrib, the evening prayer, my father would retreat to his laboratory. From the upper floor, I would hold on to the banister and tentatively make my way down the precarious wooden stairs, choking and coughing as the sickly smells of sulphur and ammonia would invariably engulf me. There, on tables or niches in the walls, would be all kinds and sizes of pots, some with burners beneath, crude distillation units, a strip of felt slowly dripping filtered liquids from one container to another and liquids of all colors in unmarked jars. Metal strips would be lying around, copper, lead and silver. There would be animal horns, human hair and chemical compounds. At the end of the ground floor, in an enclosed room, raged a coal furnace ... With a mixture of curiosity and concern, I would quietly sit and watch my father as he worked, totally absorbed in his experiments ... As I grew older, one day he explained to me that the aim of the alchemical process is to enable a base metal to transform into a higher noble metal, from lead to gold, from an unstable to a stable state. 'It is an exercise of being admitted to God's secret of how time and the timeless relate; how thousands of years can be shrunk by speeding up the natural process. Whoever wants to turn other metals into gold for material gain will never succeed', my father assured me. The alchemist will himself be transformed and will transcend the usual human limitations. This in itself is worth far more than the worldly power and wealth the elixir is meant to provide.[73]

This memory echoes Haeri's sheltered childhood experience of the last remnants of a way of life seemingly unchanged for centuries.

Haeri grew up in a Karbala that, as a reasonably self-sustained and autonomous pilgrim city, had managed to maintain much of its premodern composition into the first half of the twentieth century, a period of great turbulent political, social and economic change that had been upsetting most other urban areas throughout the Middle East. A reflection of Karbala itself, his mixed background gave a young Haeri equal familiarity with the Persian and Arabic languages and cultures of which he was a product. But Haeri wasn't only the admixture of two cultural worlds; he would also come to reflect a Karbala transitioning from one epoch to another.

2.2 Reform and the Age of Mobilisation

2.2.1 Early Modern Reform

In his attempt to pin the emergence and development of modernity and the secular within and out of Latin Christendom, Charles Taylor argues that the Reformation is not the cause of

73. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 11-12.

disenchantment, as Weber would have it, but is only one expression of a more general sense of 'Reform' in the period that surrounds it (approx. 1450–1650).[74] Taylor puts this astonishing longevity of the drive for Reform throughout this period down to two factors: (1) a move 'towards greater personal devotion, and/or discipline, as well as a more Christocentric focus for these', and (2) the objective 'to make over *all* Christians, so that they meet these higher standards of dedication and commitment'.[75] Furthermore, it is these two aspirations 'that made Reform not simply a return to past purity (although this was frequently invoked), but an engine of genuine novelty and unprecedented change'.[76] One of the key changes evident during this period is 'a growing split between élite and popular culture' and 'the deliberate attempt by élites ... to change the lives of the mass of people, and make them conform better to certain models which carried strong conviction among these elites'.[77]

Taylor explains this effort 'to raise the standards of religious practice and piety' as a 'rage for order' arising out of the tension between hierarchy and laity characteristic of 'civilizations dominated by 'higher' religions'.[78] As well as a 'rage for order', another integral contribution to the reformist drive to sort things out was the continuing effort to bring a more intense and personal devotional faith into ordinary everyday life evident since at least the High Middle Ages.[79] Taylor argues in his case that even though there was a level of friction between clergy and community, 'the disruption of these community forms only really began with the Reformation and the detachment of social élites from popular religion, who become hostile to it and attempt to make it over', most often by the imposition of disenchantment through the suppression of what is considered magical or pagan.[80] This type of 'Reform from on top' is highly effective against the kind of religion defined primarily by collective participation: 'If the king himself will no longer play his role, what can one do? Or if the relics and statues of saints are burned, how go on drawing on their power?'.[81] We can find definite indications of this type

74. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 85; see also H. Enayat, *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought: A Cartography of Asadian Genealogies*, Springer International, Cham, Switzerland, 2017, p. 7.

75. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 786 n. 92.

76. Ibid. Taylor mentions a number of other features that the reform movements of this period share: 'There are certain common features running through all these attempts at reform and organization: (1) they are activist; they seek effective measures to re-order society; they are highly interventionist; (2) they are uniformizing: they aim to apply a single model or schema to everything and everybody; they attempt to eliminate anomalies, exceptions, marginal populations, and all kinds of non-conformists; (3) they are homogenizing; although they still operate in societies based on differences of rank, their general tendency is to reduce differences, to educate the masses, and to make them conform more and more to the standards governing their betters. This is very clear in the church reformations; but it also is true of the attempts to order people's lives by the 'police states'; (4) they are 'rationalizing' in Weber's double sense: that is, they not only involve an increased use of instrumental reason, in the very process of activist reform, as well as in designing some of the ends of reform (e.g., in the economic sphere); but they also try to order society by a coherent set of rules (Weber's second dimension of rationality, *Wertrationalität*)' (ibid., p. 86).

77. Ibid., pp. 87, 85.

78. Ibid., p. 85.

79. Ibid, pp. 143-144.

80. Ibid., p. 440

81. Ibid., pp. 440-441

of reformist attitude having establishing itself among Muslim elites by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Top-Down Reform of Muslim Elites

A millenarian climate permeated the Islamicate world during the late sixteenth century, aroused by expectations of the approaching end of the first Islamic millennium (1592 CE). Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid monarchs were all independently referred to as 'master of the conjunction' (*sahib-i qiran*) in relation to the astrological conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 960 AH (1552–53 CE) that would precede the culminating shift to the second millennium and perhaps the end of the world.[82] But as well as the usual rhetoric of sacred kingship, including notions of being the saviour of the age (*mahdi-i zaman*), the Safavid shah, for example, would also be presented as a descendent of Ali or sometimes even as his current reincarnation, whilst his followers were described as the supporters of Ali and his enemies as the enemies of Ali.[83] Yet, as much as this type of reference to the archetypal Imam Ali in relation to the ruler had been a common feature in all three empires up until now, such popular Alid tendencies, along with various forms of millenarian Mahdism, were ultimately subdued by a new legalist orientation in the following centuries.[84]

We find a top-down style of reform evident already in the second half of the sixteenth century, when Suleyman I (r. 1520–66) shifted presentation of the Ottoman sultan from that of a saviour figure and sacred king to that of a pious devotee and upholder of the sharia, as seen for instance in state efforts to build more mosques in marginal villages to encourage communal prayers.[85] Almost parallel to the Ottoman sultan, at the end of the sixteenth century, Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) of Safavid Iran would end the dominance of the Qizilbash devotees to the 'divine-king'.[86] In Mughal India also, Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58) — who was similarly portrayed as a millennial saviour since he was born at the turn of the Muslim millennium — would stop earlier styles of imperial devotion, like the practice of prostration to the king, as well as many other courtly practices criticised by an increasingly influential orthodox intelligentsia.[87] Most notable among these was Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), who came to be considered the 'reviver of

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82. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 29-31; see also N. S. Chann, 'Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān', *Iran & the Caucasus*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2009, pp. 93-110.
83. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', p. 157. This can be seen in poems penned by Shah Isma'il I himself under the name Khatai. Isma'il's successors were lauded by Safavid poets with titles such as 'the beautiful Imam', 'offspring of Ali', and 'master of the age' (*sahib-i zaman*).
84. M. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', p. 161, 155.
85. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', pp. 160, 162; Fleishcer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah', p. 168. Earlier during his reign, Suleyman, like his father and predecessor Selim, was also referred to as 'Saviour and Master of the Age' (*mehdi ve sahib-i zaman*) and 'Saviour of the Last Days' (*mehdi-yi ahir-i zaman*).
86. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 153-154
87. Ibid., pp. 211-233.

the second millennium' (*mujaddid-i alf-i thani*) for his pivotal role in the development of Hanafi jurisprudence and the spread of the Naqshbandi Sufi order across Asia.[88]

Claims of authority would come to be expressed in terms of 'orthodoxy' rather than 'charisma' at a time when ulama had come to dominate the intellectual life of all three empires. The Ottomans and Safavids had begun to go through a process of scripturalisation since the end of the sixteenth century by a 'scripture-loyal orthodoxy', both empires achieving their respective orthodoxies in opposition to the Qizilbash, who were emblematic of a form of loyalty to the Mahdi which Dressler describes as 'based on the belief in his sacred authority – an authority that surpasses scripture-based claims'.[89] In both the Ottoman and Safavid empires, conflicts with the Qizilbash can be seen as expressions of 'a tension between urban and literate versus tribal and illiterate lifestyles and values'.[90] Building on anthropologist Jack Goody's assertion that illiterate societies tend to be centred around personal or charismatic authority whereas literate societies usually codify their religion, Dressler has looked at the rise of the Ottoman Sunni and Safavid Shi'i orthodoxies as similar processes of systematisation that represent 'a shift from loyalty based on the charisma of the sultan ... to loyalty based on written law (*sharia* and *qanun*)'.[91] It was with the gradual establishment and institutionalisation of Imami Shi'ism as state dogma that millenarian and messianic ideas, together with many of the popular religious practises epitomised by the Qizilbash, were marginalized and eventually condemned as heresy.[92] Similarly, whereas religious difference was of little concern for the Ottomans at the beginning of the century, 'its importance grew in the second half of the 16th century when a legalistic interpretation of Sunnism was established as orthodoxy in the last period of the reign of Suleyman I'.[93]

Most modern historians, however, mark the end of Muslim sacred kingship in India with Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), remembered today as a patron of religious orthodoxy because of his efforts to codify Islamic law and implement it on Muslim and non-Muslim alike.[94] Yet, Aurangzeb 'must have appeared as the most deviant of sovereigns' in his own time due to him

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88. Ibid. This trend was continued by Shah Jahan's son and successor, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), who abandoned even more of the popular performative practices linked to sovereignty and instigated a stronger alignment with scripturulist and reformist-minded ulama who would follow in the footsteps of Ahmad Sirhindi. In fact, the significant role played by Sirhindi is attested to by his continuing legacy among Hanafis, from India to Turkey, and the fact that most Naqshbandi sub-orders trace their lineage to him.

89. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', p. 167.

90. Ibid., p. 168.

91. Ibid., pp. 167-168. See also J. R. Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

92. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', p. 159; see also K. Babayan, 'The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1994, p. 154.

93. Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy', pp. 160-161; Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah', p. 166; see also C. Imber, 'Ideals of Legitimisation in Early Ottoman History', in I. M. Kunt & C. Woodhead (eds.), *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, Longman, London, 1995, pp. 151-153. According to Fleischer, Suleyman's homogenising efforts to put the world legally in order was part of a millenarian 'culture that was spread broadly and deeply through ottoman society in the first half of the 16th century, reaching even to the sultan himself' (p. 166).

94. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, p. 234.

abandoning 'the script of sovereignty' inscribed 'in the wider reaches of the ecumene and the diverse imaginations of its denizens' that he was expected to perform.[95] Although he made an effort to present himself as a champion of orthodox Islam and has come to be seen as such, caricatured by admirer and detractor alike as a puritanical ruler, Moin emphasises 'how little Aurangzeb was able to change the order of things'.[96] He points out the fact that 'the institutional shell of Mughal kingship survived for more than a century' after Aurangzeb, and its various 'modes and styles of sacrality', although diminished, 'did not immediately vanish with the decline of Mughal power'.[97]

Even when impoverished and powerless under British colonialism in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Mughal dynasty was still upheld as a symbol of sovereignty, not least by the East India Company itself, which 'continued to enact this myth by formally drawing its authority from the Mughal dynasty until the rebellion of 1857'.[98] Also in Iran, the Qajar rulers that would come to replace the Safavid dynasty drew legitimacy upon the claim of 'heredity that went back to their membership in the Qizilbash of the Safavid era', as well as by linking themselves to legendary Persian kings of the ancient past.[99] The entire objective of Moin's book is to provide 'a glimpse of the 'unreformed' episteme in which Muslim kings enacted schemes of holiness and even of divinity, aided by the knowledge of the ulama and inspired by the performance of the saints'.[100] By aiming to recover sacred kingship and charismatic sainthood as two central aspects of premodern Islamicate society 'that seem starkly alien to modern and reformist views of Islam', he argues that 'it is only by taking these forgotten elements as central to notions of authority in early modern Islam that we can appreciate the extent and nature of modern reform'.[101] But what do we actually mean by 'modern' reform as opposed to earlier forms?

2.2.2 Religious Reform and Mobilisation

For Taylor, what characterises modern reform, in contrast to forms which predate it, is an understanding that we have to 'mobilise' into existence that which we aspire for.[102] Even though mobilisation is evident already in the drive for Reform during, say, the seventeenth century

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95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid., p. 239.
98. Ibid.
99. A. Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2017, p. 175.
100. Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, p. 240. Moin adds that this was achieved 'by giving ritual practice and performance an interpretive priority over religious doctrine and law. For what may appear as "heresy" from a doctrinal point of view was, in many cases, a ritual engagement with popular forms of saintliness and embodied forms of sacrality that were broadly and intuitively accepted by much of the populace as morally valid and spiritually potent' (p. 6).
101. Ibid., p. 240.
102. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 445.

with the English Reformation or French Counter-Reformation, this was still taking place within a wider social context informed by pre-modern ideas of hierarchical order grounded in the cosmos and higher time, 'that of Kingdom and Church, which were not themselves seen as the products of mobilisation, but on the contrary as already there, the unchanging and unchangeable backdrop of all legitimacy'.[103] And as we have seen, the same can be said about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Muslim reformism, as exemplified by the wave of 'religious orthodoxy' that spread across the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires due to the direct efforts of their respective rulers, Suleyman I (r. 1520–66), Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58) and Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707).

By taking the early modern drive for 'Reform' as the pivotal factor out of which modernity emerged in the West, Taylor is using the term in its widest sense as 'the attempt by élites to make over society, and the life and practices of non-élites, so as to conform to what the élites identify as higher standards'.[104] However, what we also begin to see glimpses of in this era is that modern 'mobilisation' not only includes the bullying of people into adopting new forms by government or church; it more markedly involves the displacement of an earlier worldview which envisaged us as 'living in a hierarchical order ... [where] the presence of God was unavoidable; authority itself was bound up with the divine, and various invocations of God were inseparable from public life'.[105]

Taylor establishes the drive for reform as 'a remarkable fact' without really being able to offer any further explanation for its emergence beyond the Axial connection mentioned earlier.[106] He does, however, elaborate in great detail on how this drive for reform 'begins to take up a more ambitious goal, to change the habits and life-practices, not only religious but civil, of whole populations; to instil orderly, sober, disciplined, productive ways of living in everyone'.[107] This attempt to introduce civility, which arose since the Renaissance, was interwoven with the religious drive to reform, contributing to 'an understanding of religion' almost exclusively 'in terms of a morality of correct conduct' by the eighteenth century.[108] What Taylor stresses throughout his narrative is that the attempt to 'civilize' was not 'a deviation imposed on the drive to religious reform, but was itself an ideal sought by religious reformers themselves, who 'concurred that the undeniable fruit of Godliness would be ordered, disciplined lives'.[109] Importantly, the ideal of civil society reinforces the process of disenchantment and furthers the reformist ambition to sideline the sacred without necessarily

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103. Ibid., p. 446.
104. Ibid., p. 242.
105. Ibid., p. 446.
106. Ibid., pp. 242-243. See section 1.3.2 above.
107. Taylor, *A Secular Age.*, p. 244.
108. Ibid., pp. 244, 228.
109. Ibid., p. 244.

disregarding religion per say.[110] Independence from sacral, confessional or ecclesiastical authority, therefore, does not necessarily mean independence from religion.[111]

By focusing on this particular perspective on modern reform, we can understand why a historian like Moin places the growing dominance of the ulama class and an ensuing wave of religious reformism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries within the wider context of 'the waning of Muslim sacred kingship'.[112] He writes about how 'the ulama had to reorient themselves in a world that had lost a master symbol, a sacred center — the body of a Muslim sovereign — and the networks of patronage and influence tethered to it. Without a Muslim ruler to look up to, they turned inward toward reform of the Muslim self'.[113] There developed an unprecedented dependency upon the average Muslim among the ulama, 'who no longer had to serve, please, or oppose a Muslim sovereign'.[114] And with it, an emphasis on the mobilisation of the masses that replaced earlier genres of knowledge and modes of practice with new forms that no longer sought to sustain 'the institution of sacred kingship'.[115]

Eighteenth-Century Muslim Reform

Already in the seventeenth century, but especially during the eighteenth century, the central governments of the three gunpowder empires seceded territory to foreign forces and lost control over many of the provinces that still remained nominally within their dominion.[116] Many historians have attributed the success of eighteenth-century reformist thinkers and movements to this decentralisation of political power in the period, which not only saw 'a systematic and comprehensive restructuring of Islamic thought' but also 'active social and political engagements'.[117] Thinkers and activists, such as Shah Waliullah in India (d. 1762), consequently assumed a dual role 'as both reformers of tradition and teachers responsible for guiding an Islamic community'.[118] Ahmad Dallal (2018) has given us an overview of this undertaking underlying a variety of eighteenth-century reformist thinkers who were embraced

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110. Ibid., pp. 238-239.
111. Ibid., pp. 236-237.
112. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 239-240.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid. The entire quote reads: 'In effect, with the rise of colonial rule the learned scholars of Islam, the ulama, had to reorient themselves in a world that had lost a master symbol, a sacred center — the body of a Muslim sovereign — and the networks of patronage and influence tethered to it. Without a Muslim ruler to look up to, they turned inward toward reform of the Muslim self. They became an 'estate' that interacted with and depended upon the average Muslim in a way that had not been the case in the Mughal era. This shift in social structure, it is important to add, led to a substantial change in the ritual use of knowledge (*'ilm*) and in the social role of its purveyor, the alim, who no longer had to serve, please, or oppose a Muslim sovereign. This transformation also dissolved major genres of knowledge and modes of practice that had sustained the institution of sacred kingship' (pp. 239-240).
116. See A. S. Dallal, *Islam Without Europe: Traditions of Reform in Eighteenth-Century Islamic Thought*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2018.
117. Ibid., p. 1.
118. Ibid., p. 12.

by 'masses and elites alike', and who 'came from India and Arabia, North Africa and West Africa, as well as Syria and Yemen'.[119] Not only was Muslim reformism of the period geographically spread wide — 'from the banks of the Ganges to the shores of the Atlantic' — but also covered a wide range of activity ranging 'from political mobilization under the banner of classical Islamic ideology to the creation of a centralized network of Sufi settlements to purely intellectual reform embodied in new approaches to the study of traditional Islamic disciplines'.[120]

By presenting a diversity of 'Islamic sociopolitical as well as intellectual movements' of the time side-by-side, Dallal wants to show us how although 'it is too simplistic to suggest that all early modern reformers belong to the same movement ... it is also simplistic to suggest that eighteenth century reformers had nothing in common'.[121] Although there is strong disagreement among historians about the extent of the similarities between eighteenth-century reformers, they all concede that there are at least some significant convergences. The sheer diversity among them belies the similarities between these various revivalist movements of the eighteenth century, which most clearly differ from each other when seen from a synchronic perspective and most closely resemble each other when seen from a diachronic perspective. John Voll (1975) clarifies how eighteenth-century Muslim revivers were tackling similar issues but addressing very different traditions within different local contexts.[122] Although their ideas might have varied, these reformers shared similarly novel intellectual constructs, which, despite some continuity with 'earlier Islamic traditions and epistemologies', decisively broke away from them with 'implications that far exceeded the scope and impact of earlier Islamic intellectual activities'.[123] What eighteenth-century reformers generally seem to share then, is an unprecedented move away from medieval metaphysical thought. Furthermore, it cannot be stressed enough that all of the reformers were consciously reviving traditions that had already been established prior to their time.

Though our interest lies in mainly understanding the development of eighteenth-century reformism from the purview of the rising authority of an ulama class, it is interesting to note how this correlated with the type of changes in the content of these reforms. One important change in this period, for instance, is the increasing attention given to the teachings of the

119. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

120. Ibid.

121. Z. M. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism: The Emergence of an Islamic Reform Movement in Early Modern Iraq and Iran*, PhD diss., University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 2011, p. 161; see also A. S. Dallal, 'The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought: 1750-1850', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 113, no. 3, 1993, p. 341-359.

122. J. O. Voll, 'Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: An Analysis on an Intellectual Group in Eighteenth-Century Madina', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1975, pp. 32-39. For example, although Shah Waliullah and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab studied in Mecca under the same scholar of hadith, Muhammad Hayyat al-Sindi (d. 1750), their opinions differ from each other as much as they confer.

123. Dallal, Islam Without Europe, p. 3.

twelfth-century Sufi scholar Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and the simultaneous decline in interest in the works of the Sufi intellectual and mystic Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), who had dominated medieval Sufi thought.[124] It goes without saying that this was a gradual process and not an abrupt replacement. As Levtzion and Voll argue, eighteenth-century 'movements of renewal often took place within the context of a reformulated Sufi tradition which often still utilized the terminology of Ibn al-'Arabi but also reflected a renewed interest in the works and style of thought of al-Ghazali'.[125] One important distinction between the two is that whereas Ibn 'Arabi advanced a highly elaborate form of Neoplatonism, al-Ghazali had been opposed to it. As Truglia has succinctly argued, although the Renaissance humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (d. 1494) is 'most often credited as the first to free humanity from its bonds in the chain of being ... Pico was not the first philosopher to break the metaphorical chain in order to laud the transcendent abilities of all human beings, exercised through their free will'.[126] According to Truglia, al-Ghazali's views 'on humanity's ability to go outside the chain of being' precede those of Pico, and quite possibly influenced the latter's own opinions through his writings.[127]

One of the key reformers to adopt al-Ghazali's playing down of mediaeval metaphysics is a Maghrebi Maliki scholar Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi (d. 1837), trained together with his contemporary Muhammad al-'Arabi al-Darqawi (d. 1823) within the Shadhili Sufi tradition by Sidi 'Ali al-Jamal (d. 1779).[128] Among Muslims, Ahmad ibn Idris is mostly remembered for his litanies and collections of prayers, but by academics he is often invoked as a primary example of early modern 'neo-Sufism', a term coined by Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) to describe a 'Sufism reformed on orthodox lines and interpreted in an activist sense'.[129] Following Rahman's definition, John Voll describes neo-Sufism as a rejection of Ibn 'Arabi's teachings as heretical and an emphasis on the adherence to rigorous interpretations of the Qur'an and Sunna.[130] But even more than neo-Sufism, where we most clearly see a break with medieval Muslim tradition is with the two main non-Sufi (or even anti-Sufi) reformists of the eighteenth century, Muhammad Baqir Behbahani (d. 1791), better known as Vahid Behbahani, and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1971).

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124. J. O. Voll, 'Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2-3, 2008, pp. 327-329.

125. N. Levtzion & J. O. Voll, 'Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform Movements in Islam: An Introductory Essay', in N. Levtzion & J. O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1987, p. 9.

126. Truglia, 'Al-Ghazali and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Question of Human Freedom and the Chain of Being', p. 143.

127. Ibid., p. 156.

128. R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 1990, p. 45.

129. F. Rahman, *Islam*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979 [1966], p. 206. For more on neo-Sufism, see J. O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, Westview, Boulder, CO, 1982, pp. 36-39; N. Levtzion & J. O. Voll, 'Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform Movements in Islam: An Introductory Essay', in Levtzion & Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, pp. 7-13.

130. Voll, *Islam*, pp. 27-29; see also Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, pp. 168-169.

Wahhabism as the Exception?

Vahid Behbahani was an influential Shiʿi scholar who has remained largely ignored by academic works on reformism during the eighteenth century, perhaps due to a general lack of reference to Shiʿism in most historiographical material discussing Muslim reform movements of the period.[131] Widely cited works discussing modern Muslim reform, such as those by Fazlur Rahman (1982) and John Esposito (1984), completely neglect to mention eighteenth-century developments in Shiʿism.[132] Only John Voll has made mention of Shiʿism in the context of a general discussion about Islam in the eighteenth century, in which he briefly refers to Behbahani's crucial role in establishing the current shape of Shiism.[133] Yet, even here, Behbahani is still not situated with other early modern Muslim reformers. Zackery Heern is among a handful of academics to acknowledge Behbahani as a crucial Muslim reformer, who was, according to Heern, 'the leading teacher in the foremost center of Shiʿi learning (Karbala) during his lifetime'.[134]

Heern explains the lack of scholarly attention on Behbahani as partly due to 'an underlying assumption that the eighteenth-century Islamic reformation was a 'Wahhabi' phenomenon in which reformers in various regions of the Islamic world either fully adopted Wahhabism or adapted a Wahhabi-type ideology to their tradition or regional movement'.[135] Yet, as he also points out, this common misnomer is due to Wahhabism later coming to occupy 'a pride of place in Mecca and Medina'.[136] 'A deeper study of early modern Islamic movements', he asserts, will show how 'there is no basis to suggest that all reformers of this period were simply off-shoots of Wahhabism and that the most influential eighteenth-century reformers mimicked the ideology or approach of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab'.[137] In his research, Dallal also asserts that whereas Wahhabism is in fact the exception when it comes to eighteenth-century Muslim reform, there is a tendency today among confessional and academic scholars alike – especially those adopting the common narrative of that period as one of irreversible political and cultural decline in the Muslim world – to consider Wahhabism as emblematic of the revivalist current of the century.[138]

131. Heern, *Usuli Shiʿism*, pp. 9-12.
132. Rahman, *Islam*; J. L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1984.
133. Voll, *Islam*, p. 82.
134. Heern, *Usuli Shiʿism*, p. 63; see also his reworking of the PhD dissertation, Z. M. Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shiʿism: Islamic Reform in Iraq and Iran*, Oneworld, London, 2015.
135. Heern, *Usuli Shiʿism*, p. 10.
136. Ibid., p. 10.
137. Ibid., p. 10.
138. Dallal, *Islam without Europe*, pp. 5-7.

One important disparity to note is that while most of the eighteenth-century movements withered under the climate of colonialism, Wahhabism actually grew.[139] This is especially noteworthy when considered together with the fact that although most eighteenth-century reformers 'were primarily concerned with larger social and political problems', Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab exclusively focused on creedal issues.[140] He had developed his ideas from formal training in the Hanbali school of jurisprudence and had been attracted by its most contentious proponent, the medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1358).[141] But Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was strongly opposed by other reformers and the ulama establishment in general as 'heretical'. Ahmad ibn Idris, for example, held Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and his followers to be 'miserable wretches who are bound inflexibly to the externality of the Law. They know the details of knowledge and use them to accuse of heresy those who oppose them'.[142] An animosity between the successors of Behbahani and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab would also arise, and endure in the form of a continuing enmity between Saudi Arabia and Iran. These tensions were originally ignited during the first wave of Wahhabi conquests at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Wahhabi raiders looted and destroyed all of the tombs in and around the cities of Mecca and Medina as well as the rich shrines of southern Iraq, such as Karbala and Najaf.[143]

Despite such strong ideological and sociopolitical disparities, when comparing the ideas of Behbahani with those of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab, as well as those of Ahmad ibn Idris, what comes to the fore is the 'major unifying factor in their theoretical approach to knowledge and authority', all of them seeing 'the need to challenge medieval interpretations of Islam. In other words, they rejected the necessity of clinging to long-established precedents'.[144] One of the outcomes of this shared mindset among them, as well as other reformers of the time, is that they all seem to emphasise opposition to popular 'unorthodox' practices and a strict conformity to legal

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139. Ibid. Wahhabism had initially spread out of the Najd region of the Arabian peninsula and was able to overrun the important cities of Mecca and Medina in the Hejaz because of the diminishing control over the region by the Ottomans. Although this initial campaign was thwarted by the Egyptian governor Muhammad Ali (d. 1849), by the twentieth century British influence in the region disrupted both the ideological and political counter that had kept Wahhabism at bay. On this point, Dallal writes: 'The twentieth-century reemergence of Wahhabism as a regional power in Arabia resulted largely from a new balance of power in the region marked by both a decline of the Ottomans and a rise of British influence in Arabia, which was favorable to the Wahhabis. Furthermore, the Wahhabi regional influence in the twentieth century was dramatically bolstered by the discovery of oil in Arabia. The sway of contemporary Wahhabism is a function of the legacies of postcolonialism. In fact, European influence not only shaped twentieth-century Wahhabism and allowed it to reemerge despite its limited popular appeal, but it also aborted the rich, non-Wahhabi traditions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that had previously managed to contain Wahhabi ideology and provide alternatives to it' (p. 6).

140. Ibid., pp. 5-7.

141. George Makdisi has argued that Ibn Taymiyya and the Hanbali school stand 'outside the mainstream of Muslim thought'; see G. Makdisi, 'Ibn Taymiya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order', *American Journal of Arabic Studies*, vol. 1, 1973, p. 119; see also A. Mihrig, 'The Myth of Intellectual Decline: A Response to Shaykh Hamza Yusuf', *The Maydan*, 27 November 2017, https://themaydan.com/2017/11/myth-intellectual-decline-response-shaykh-hamza-yusuf/. Mihrig writes, 'Ibn Taymiyya represents a particular strand of a reduced Hanbalism, which went through another reduction with Ibn Abdul-Wahhab'.

142. Idris quoted in O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, p. 74; see also Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 167.

143. Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 125.

144. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 172.

precedent (*taqlid*). What is interesting to note, however, is how gradual this change was, despite the efforts of reformists. For example, although Ahmad ibn Idris completely discounted the notion of the centennial reviver (*mujaddid*), his successors still saw him as the reviver of the thirteenth Islamic century (1785–1883 CE) and described him as the 'axis of the age' (*qutb al-zaman*).[145] Like Ahmad ibn Idris, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab was cited as the reviver of the age and depicted as a saviour by his successors, although he was opposed to such thinking.[146] This was also the case with Behbahani, who makes almost no mention of mystical experiences in his own writings, but is moulded as such a figure in later hagiographies that contain numerous examples portraying him as the reviver of the age 'sent to save the Shi'i community from Akhbaris and establish Usuli clerics as the rightful intermediaries of the Hidden Imam'.[147] Even today, there is a unanimous consensus among Usuli ulama that Behbahani was the reviver of the religion for the twelfth Islamic century.[148]

The Rise of Usulism

The juxtaposition of reason (*'aql*) and tradition (*naql*) has been a common cause for tension in Muslim religious scholarship, which in the Shi'i tradition was most explicitly articulated by the Akhbari–Usuli debate as it concretely manifested in its most politicised form in the eighteenth century during the interim between the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722 and the superimposition of the Qajar dynasty upon its ruins 70 years later.[149] After the fall of the Safavid capital and religious centre of Isfahan, many Persian scholars migrated to the learning centres of southern Iraq, Najaf and Karbala. This included Behbahani, who took refuge in a Karbala which was dominated by Akhbarism at the time.[150] It was in the mid-Safavid period that the traditionist school known as Akhbarism initially developed. Growing out of earlier traditionist

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145. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, pp. 21, 105; Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, pp. 163-166.
146. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, pp. 163-164
147. Ibid., pp. 112-113;
148. Ibid., p. 37-38. Heern writes that 'Bihbihani himself explains this concept, saying that Shi'i mujtahids will come every hundred years during the occultation of the Hidden Imam in order to promote the true religion. This principle was also repeated by Bihbihani's students, including Bahr al-'Ulum in *al-Fawa'id al-rijaliyya*. Lists of the renewers of each century differ slightly but appear in important works, such as *Firdus al-tawarikh* and *Jam' al-usul*, which were both written after Bihbihani's time. In both of these lists, Vahid Bihbihani appears as the twelfth renewer' (p. 38).
149. Initial development of Islamic jurisprudence at the beginning of the eighth century had been dominated by a rationalist approach that, beside the unrivalled status of the Qur'an as an authoritative source, gave primacy to human reasoning (*ra'y*) in formulating rulings. But by the middle of the century this was challenged by the growing popularity of an opposing approach that disqualified the need for human reasoning in religious matters and placed greater emphasis on the overriding authority of the recorded accounts of the Prophet's sayings and actions (*hadith*). With advancements in the collecting and verifying of hadith, the latter traditionist approach was bolstered by 'the rapid increase in the volume of Prophetic reports that had infiltrated the domain of law', which simultaneously saw the decline of the rationalists. It is in this contested climate that the well-known Muslim scholar al-Shafi'i (d. 820) attempted to reconcile the two approaches, the tension between the two only subsiding enough for there to be any genuine synthesis between rationalism and traditionalism over a century later with the rise of *usul al-fiqh* in the tenth century. See W. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: **An Introduction to Sunni Usul al-Fiqh***, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 16-35; see also Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, *p.* 4.
150. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 30.

trends in Shi'i scholarship, the school materialised under Muhammad Amin al-Astarabadi's (d. 1627) polemic against the rationalist methodology of eliciting religious regulations.[151] Although mainly confined to the Arab Shi'i scholars outside the domain of the Safavid empire, the extent of Akhbari influence was such during this period that it even affected the highest levels of Shi'i scholarship in Iran.[152] When Behbahani migrated to Karbala in the 1760s, the Akhbari school had already been dominant for well over a century.[153] But Behbahani ended Akhbari dominance in Karbala and the rest of southern Iraq by the late eighteenth century with the establishment of the Usuli school of thought, which has remained the principal school of Shi'ism for the last two centuries.[154]

Behbahani built his approach to Shi'i jurisprudence on the work of earlier rationalist scholars and their formalisation of principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*).[155] Behbahani and the Usulism he established follow in the footsteps of earlier proponents of *usul al-fiqh*, such as al-Mufid (d. 1022) and al-Tusi (d. 1067), acknowledging a similar hierarchy of sources: the Qur'an, then the Hadith, then consensus (*ijma'*) and finally reason (*'aql*).[156] But Behbahani went beyond his predecessors in placing greater emphasis on 'the early community' as an authoritative source, and allowed for the possibility of both incorrect interpretations of textual sources and logical errors among earlier scholars in their formulation of Shi'i jurisprudence, which thus opened up for 'reinterpreting Islamic law through a process of purifying it from

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151. For more on the Akhbari school, see R. Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbari Shi'i School*, Brill, Leiden, 2007.
152. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 29. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Akhbarism was an extreme representative of a wider trend in the seventeenth century among Shi'i scholars to revive the collection of Hadith. Under Safavid rule, religious officials were appointed by the state, the most important institution being that of the 'head cleric' (*mullabashi*). The last *mullabashi* of the Safavid period was Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (d. 1700), who is considered the most prominent Shi'i cleric in the entire Safavid period and central to the mass conversion to Shi'ism of Safavid subjects through a government-supported campaign. Although not completely identifying himself with the Akhbaris, we see a Hadith-orientated approach in Majlisi, who wrote the most extensive collection of Shi'i hadith work of its time, *Bihar al-Anwar*.
153. Ibid., p. 29.
154. Ibid., p. 111.
155. By the tenth century, the major legal schools (*madhhab*, pl. *madhahib*) had established themselves as had the science of jurisprudence, due in large part to the spread of a standardised methodology of extracting religious rulings (*usul al-fiqh*). The *Risala* of al-Shafi'i was an important antecedent to the development of this discipline, as has been asserted by scholars on Islam; see N. J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1964; J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1964. Although his treatise placed al-Shafi'i in the influential position of being 'the first Muslim jurist ever to articulate his legal theory in writing', al-Shafi'i's elementary effort to synthesise the rationalist approach of Iraqi jurisprudence with the conservative traditionist approach of the Hejaz did not translate into immediate success; see W. Hallaq, 'Was al-Shafi'i the Master Architect of Islamic Jurisprudence?', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1993, pp. 587-605; see also M. Fadel, 'Istihsan is Nine-Tenths of the Law: The Puzzling Relationship of *Usul* to *Furu'* in the Maliki Madhab', in B. G. Weiss (ed.), *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, Brill, Leiden, 2002, pp. 160-176.
156. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 130. al-Mufid was opposed to what he considered a far too casual attitude in the collection and application of traditions that he found among his contemporaries, asserting instead reliance on only those traditions that were completely verifiable due to being widespread (*mutawatir*), together with the Qur'an, consensus and reason as sources for extrapolating law. These sources would become the basis of the legal theory in Twelver Shi'ism, and the work of al-Mufid's student, al-Tusi would become widely accepted among Shi'a. A synthesis between traditionalism and rationalism akin to that achieved by later proponents of al-Shafi'i is clearly evident in al-Tusi, who gives more allowance in accepting contradictory or isolated hadith that his teacher had flatly rejected (see Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, pp. 98-100).

what has *wrongly* become part of the tradition'.[157] This kind of a fundamentalist approach parallels the ambition of other eighteenth-century Sunni reformists, especially in its caricatured form under Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab.[158]

Although Behbahani and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab greatly differed from each other in what they espoused through their content, similarities in their context is clearly evident, especially in how they both established themselves under similar circumstances which contributed to their future impact.[159] They seemed to be responding to concerns particular to the eighteenth century and thus attracted 'a significant amount of political, financial, and social support'.[160] Behbahani overthrew the Akhbari establishment in Karbala during a period when he and other Shi'i scholars were expected to make a living without state sponsorship. This allowed him to carve out a more independent, prominent, authoritative social role for Shi'i clerics by asserting 'that legal experts (*mujtahids*) who were capable of deducing new rulings from the foundational texts (i.e. Qur'an and Sunna) with the aid of reason possessed supreme authority after Muhammad and his rightful successors (the twelve Imams)'.[161]

The influence of the ulama continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century on the foundation laid by Vahid Behbahani and his students, such as Muhammad Mahdi Bahr al-'Ulum (d. 1797), during a period when Karbala together with Najaf remained the main centres of Shi'i scholarship.[162] Even as Qajar support brought many Persian scholars back to Iran, 'most prominent Persian (and Arab) scholars remained in southern Iraq as heads of the seminary (*hawza*). This allowed them to remain independent of the Persian state, but still influence Persian society from afar'.[163] The most enduring effect of Behbahani's Usuli reforms was that 'henceforth clerics played a more central role in Shi'i society and the clerical hierarchy became more stratified'.[164] The network of Usuli ulama dominated all Shi'i centers in Iran and Iraq in the first half of the nineteenth century and would amass unprecedented religious, social, and economic power'.[165]

Although Behbahani and his immediate successors maintained a 'pious aloofness from worldly affairs', the Usuli movement became associated with political activism from the late

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157. Ibid., pp. 138-140 (emphasis mine). Behbahani states that 'agreement between the early believers (*qudama'*) is stronger than what is closer to [the present] time (*'ahd*)' (Behbahani, cited in Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 138).

158. Heern makes an interesting statement to take note of: 'It may seem convenient to label Akhbaris as fundamentalist conservatives and Usulis as liberal rationalists ... [but] this division falls short when considering that it was Usulis, not Akhbaris, who issued death warrants on their enemies because of their false interpretations of the texts. Considering this fact outside the context of the Usuli approach to fiqh, one might suggest that Usulis are the fundamentalists, not Akhbaris' (Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, pp. 157-158).

159. Ibid., p. 172.

160. Ibid., pp. 172-173.

161. Ibid., pp. 62, 167, 185, 173.

162. Ibid., p. 65.

163. Ibid., p. 64.

164. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

165. Ibid., p. 36.

nineteenth century, when its proponents challenged the Qajar rulers of Iran in what grew into the constitutional revolution (1905-1911). It would also be scholars from the Usuli school, such as Ruhollah Khomeini (d. 1981), who would overthrow the Shah of Iran in 1979 and install an Islamic Republic.[166] Even before they took control of the state through revolution, Usulis would came to play a critical leadership role already in the late eighteenth century with the establishment of the Qajar dynasty in Iran.

The Autonomy of Karbala

American historian Juan Cole writes that 'Usulism, with its emphasis on the leading rule of the religious scholars in generally representing the absent Imam and serving as exemplars for lay believers, resonated with the increasing local power possessed by the Imami ulama in the shrine cities [Karbala and Najaf]'.[167] He continues that 'in the shrine cities themselves the Usuli victory coincided with the rise of local Shi'ite power and the decline of central Ottoman control, such that Usuli principles like the holding of Shi'ite congregational prayers could be implemented, something the Ottomans had not tolerated when their hand in Iraq was firmer'.[168] Although under the sovereignty of the Shi'i Safavid rulers Karbala had benefited from construction projects and an influx of affluent Persian settlers, the Safavid enforcement of Shi'ism in its Persian territories turned attention away from Karbala and other nearby pilgrim sites towards newly cultivated religious centres in Iran.[169] It is actually only after the fall of the Safavids that Karbala became the epicentre of the international Shi'i community, especially with the large migration of Persian clergy from a consequently unstable Iran.[170]

Extending his role as 'Protector of Islam' and 'Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries', Suleyman I visited Karbala and contributed to its infrastructure after having conquered the region from the Safavid dynasty of Iran.[171] The Ottomans did continue to intermittently improve its religious buildings and irrigation, and, realising the financial potential of the city, allowed safe passage for pilgrims from outside the empire's borders.[172] But Karbala's frontier status and distance from the capital as well as the tribal autonomy of the surrounding region

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166. Ibid., p. 184.
167. J. R. Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2002, p. 77.
168. Ibid., p. 74.
169. Litvak, 'Karbala'.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid. 'Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries' (*khadim al-haramayn al-shairfayn*) was a title appropriated by the Ottomans from the Mamluks in reference to Mecca and Medina, and would in turn be appropriated by the King of Saudi Arabia;. See H. İnalcık, 'The Rise of the Ottoman Empire, Appendix: The Ottomans and the Caliphate', in P. M. Holt, A. K. S. Lambton & B. Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 1A: The Central Islamic Lands from Pre-Islamic Times to the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 320. The development of the Husayniyya canal in the sixteenth century is the main example of Suleyman's contribution to the city.
172. Y. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1994, pp. 14-25; Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shi'ism*, pp. 59-60.

meant that the city was mostly neglected by the Ottomans.[173] It was during this neglect that Karbala became one of the foremost places of religious learning and pilgrimage in Islam.

Having had the curious position of being a community of Shi‘a under Sunni rule, Karbala was not effectually sustained by the Ottoman administration, and instead, financial support came from the local and international Shi‘i community; charitable endowments from Iran and later on especially India supported the upkeep of the pilgrim sites as well as the city's infrastructure, ranging from irrigation and civil construction to actual manpower to defend the city against Saudi-Wahhabi raiders.[174] The donations also provided for the city's religious institutes and body of religious clerics, who could thus enjoy a political independence from the Ottoman elite not shared by many of their Sunni counterparts.[175] Unlike how Sunni ulama within the Ottoman empire had become part of its political organisation through receiving direct subsidies from the government and being engaged in a variety of state positions, the ulama of Karbala enjoyed a diffused system of income based on a wide pool of donations that could not all be controlled by any single formal organisation or regulatory body.[176]

The Haeri-Mazandarani Legacy

Sami Zubaida (2009) writes that 'communities in pre-modern societies, and in some cases until recent times, tended to be geographically insulated, largely self-sufficient and self-managing'.[177] This was especially the case with Karbala, which remained largely autonomous throughout Ottoman rule, despite the empire's numerous efforts at centralisation.[178] The combination of Ottoman weakness in the region, together with the failure of successive Iranian shahs to retake the city in the eighteenth century, allowed Karbala to develop independently of government interference into a prosperous market centre and self-subsistent shrine city supported by the foundational tripod of pilgrimage, burial and religious scholarship.[179] By the early twentieth

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173. Nakash, *The Shi‘is of Iraq*, pp. 14-25; Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shi‘ism*, pp. 59-60.

174. Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shi‘ism*, p. 65.

175. For a detailed account of the financial state of the ulama of Karbala, see the following works of Meir Litvak: 'Continuity and Change in the Ulama Population of Najaf and Karbala, 1791-1904: A Socio-Demographic Study', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 23, 1990, pp. 31-60; *Shi‘i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*; 'The Finances of the Ulama Communities of Najaf and Karbala in the Nineteenth Century', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2000, pp. 41-66; and 'Money, Religion and Politics: The Oudh Bequest in Najaf and Karbala, 1850-1903', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1-21.

176. Litvak, *Shi‘i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*.

177. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 61.

178. Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, p. 78; see also J. R. Cole & M. Momen, 'Mafia, Mob and Shi‘ism in Iraq: The Rebellion of Ottoman Karbala, 1824-1843', *Past & Present*, vol. 112, 1986, pp. 112-143.

179. Litvak, 'Karbala'. It is important to note, however, that the tug-and-pull between local and imperial authority reached an all-time high in the eighteenth century, with an emboldened Karbala that under indirect Ottoman rule via the Mamluk dynasty had stopped paying taxes to Baghdad against an Ottoman regime determined to implement its most ambitious centralising efforts to date (Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shi‘ism*, p. 63). Hala Fattah and Frank Caso give us an account of what resulted: 'The unique status of Karbala, with its self-governing hierarchy of clergy, landholders, and urban gang leaders, irked the Ottomans. After repeated military feints against the city, which had become dangerously independent in Ottoman eyes, the governor of Baghdad, Najib Pasha, sent an army to conquer Karbala and bring it back within the Ottoman fold. In January 1842, the die was cast. Breaching a strategic wall of the city, the Ottoman army attacked. After a

century, Karbala remained firmly under the authority of a religious elite of high-ranking scholars, functionaries of the shrines, and heads of Sayyid families.[180] Fadhlalla Haeri was raised in the lap of this religious elite, being born and brought up at the very heart of the holy city of Karbala in a household adjacent to the precinct (*ha'ir*) of the shrine of Husayn from which the family had gotten their name, *al-Ha'iri*.[181]

The second surname of the family, *Mazandarani,* is in reference to the region in Northern Iran that was the birthplace of Haeri's paternal great-grandfather, Shaykh Zayn al-'Abidin al-Mazandarani (d. 1892), who, following the general trend of the time, migrated from Persia and settled in Karbala during the mid-nineteenth century.[182] Together with its sister shrine city of Najaf, Karbala was still the foremost centre of Islamic learning when Zayn al-'Abidin came to prominence there as a religious legislator, guide and teacher, as well as leader of the congregational prayers at the mausoleum of Husayn. This was during the ascendancy in Karbala of the Usuli school of thought associated with Isfahan, and the simultaneous decline of the Akhbari school that had come to prominence over a century earlier. As mentioned above, one of the main issues of contention between the two lay in the amount of authority ascribed to the class of religious scholars or clergy. The Usulis insisted on a more influential role for the ulama, both as a group in the weight of their consensus (*ijma*) and as individuals in their capacity for independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). The centrepiece of this tenet was the legitimacy of the *mujtahid* (one qualified to make such reasoning) to act as a representative of the twelfth Imam, who for the main branch of Shi'ism had gone into occultation and would only return once again when most needed.[183]

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fierce fight in which more than 5,000 of Karbala's forces were killed while only 400 government soldiers lost their lives, the Ottoman troops succeeded in reining in the local elements and conquering the town and its environs. On January 18, Najib Pasha entered Karbala and made straight for the sanctuary of Imam Husayn, where he and his military commanders prayed and gave thanks. After that, the governor spelled out the dimensions of Karbala's defeat: A Sunni governor was appointed over Karbala, Sunni judges were sent to the city to administer the court system, and a Sunni preacher was brought in to lead the Friday prayers, at which the Ottoman sultan's name would be ritually mentioned as a symbol of dominion. While Karbala's fire was extinguished and its spirit broken, the structure of Ottoman power remained a facade. By the early 20th century, all the city's powerbrokers — the local mob leaders, smaller clergy, and merchants — had returned to assume their places in the great game of autonomous rule versus renewed imperialism in the context of late Ottoman Iraq' (H. Fattah & F. Caso, *A Brief History of Iraq*, Facts On File, New York, 2009, pp. 150-151); see also Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, p. 118.

180. Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, p. 78.

181. *Ha'ir* is another name for Karbala, especially referring to the immediate enclosed vicinity around the tomb of Husayn; see C. Glasse, 'Kerbala', in C. Glasse (ed.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Harper and Row, New York, 1989, pp. 220. The title al-Ha'iri was often bestowed upon custodians of the shrine.

182. Nakash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, p. 105. The region of Mazanderan is historically known as Tabaristan. Haeri's paternal line before the 1800s traces back to 'Shirvan' near Dagestan.

183. Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, p. 77. After the disappearance of the twelfth Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi in 873, Shi'i scholars argued that he was still alive but in hiding, and was continuing to guide the community indirectly through a succession of intermediaries known for their spiritual connection with the Imam. When the fourth such intermediary died without appointing a successor, what is referred to as the Imam's Minor Occultation ended with the beginning of the Major Occultation, where authority now lay solely in the hands of the ulama as the hidden Imam's representatives. The systematisation of mainstream Shi'i jurisprudence and theology was a result of this changing role of the ulama, who had originally been tasked with collecting transmitted traditions of the Prophet and Imams – more

Zayn al-'Abidin was not only considered a *mujtahid* but also a *marja' taqlid* (source of emulation), an ultimate authority in religious jurisprudence who, as deputy of the hidden Imam, would serve as an exemplar for the laity. Zayn al-'Abidin was a perfect candidate for this newly instated role, as he was acknowledged as one of the foremost religious scholars of his time and ascribed the highest rank of 'the proof of Islam' (*hujjat al-Islam*) or what is commonly referred to today as Ayatollah (lit, 'sign of God').[184] He also produced a number of important intellectual works and a popular manual available in Arabic and Persian for his followers in Iraq and Iran, as well as in Urdu and Gujarati for his followers in India and East Africa. The latter were a group among the Indian Khoja community of Isma'ili Shi'a that had dissented from their 46th Imam, the first Aga Khan (d. 1881), and had met and affiliated themselves with Zayn al-'Abidin, who sent students of his to India and East Africa in order to teach the new Imami Shi'a community of Khoja.[185] Many prominent Shi'i scholars came from Zayn al-'Abidin's progeny, but it his eldest son and Haeri's grandfather who succeeded him in taking over the responsibilities in Karbala as well as towards the larger group of followers outside of the city.[186] Then, in turn, his eldest son and Haeri's father, Shaykh Ahmad, would take over from him.[187]

The success of Fadhlalla Haeri's grandfather, Zayn al-'Abidin, reflects that of the Usuli school as a whole, which had not only expanded beyond the city of Karbala into the surrounding tribes, but had become a truly international movement.[188] Heern argues that the Usuli revival and reform of Shi'ism associated with Behbahani was part of a wider sentiment of reform in the eighteenth century that resulted from the decentralisation and collapse of the early modern Islamic empires (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal), which he situates within a global context, relating the reform movements to simultaneous changes 'elsewhere, including the industrial revolution, the Enlightenment, the American, French and Haitian revolutions, Christianity's Great Awakening, as well as the ideologies of nationalism, secularism, communism and capitalism'.[189] Borrowing Western historiographic terminology by defining the period as the 'Age of Reason' and 'Age of Revolution', Heern takes the Islamic reform movements of this era

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commonly referred to by Shi'a as Akhbar rather than Hadith – but now would need to expound on them and give their opinion on original religious matters (see Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, pp. 96-98).

184. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, p. 90; Litvak writes that 'when Jennings enquired among local mujtahids, notables, and ordinary people about the relative status of mujtahids in Karbala, the general consensus was that 'the two great mujtahids of first rank, and far above all others were ... Sherazi of Samarra, and Shaikh Zain-ul-Abidin of Karbala'. Whereas Iranians placed Shirazi above Mazandarani, Arabs 'regard the latter as equal, or just a tiny bit the bigger of the two".

185. Mainly based in the Gujarat and Kutch regions of India, The Khojas were a previously Hindu caste known as the Lohana who had converted to Islam en masse at the hands of a Persian Ismaili missionary in the 14th century. Today the community numbers around a 100,000, and now also include established communities in the US and UK (see L. Takim, *Shi'ism in America*, 2009, pp. 36-37).

186. As an exception, Haeri's great uncle Abdullah Ha'iri Mazandarani (d. 1937) was in fact the Grand Shaykh of the Nimatullahi order, one of the few existing Sufi orders in Iran.

187. Shaykh Ahmad also quite possibly travelled to the community in India.

188. Heern, *The Emergence of Modern Shi'ism*, pp. 65-69.

189. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

as examples of how key changes we associate with modernity 'had global roots and implications, which were not simply confined to Europe or the 'West''.[190]

2.2.3 Colonialism and Westernised Reforms

A 'global' perspective on the historical development of modernity has been most forcefully argued within the framework of postcolonial critique.[191] As has been pointed out in recent decades, there was little to differentiate between the industrialisation of European and non-European economies before the nineteenth century, with clear historical evidence indicating how a number of regions outside of Europe (India, China, Japan, etc.) were all as 'civilised' as Europe.[192] Furthermore, prior to 1800, Europe benefited greatly from appropriating non-European technologies and ideas, and continued to benefit from their land, labour and resources long afterwards, transforming them from traditional economies into modern underdeveloped ones that could serve the emerging European empires.[193] In contrast to the traditional imperial model, these empires were 'nation-states with colonial appendages'.[194] The ethnic tensions that had weakened the Russian, Hapsburg and Ottoman empires was countered in these modern empires by a strong sense of nationalism which was strengthened by colonialist projects that could divert attention away from internal conflicts.[195] Not only did the idea of a cohesive nation camouflage disparities within the state (for instance, the livelihood of more than a third of the population of England was still based on agriculture at the beginning of the nineteenth century), it also masked the fact that it was the overseas empires that created the advanced European states rather than the states that created their respective empires.[196]

By exploiting resources overseas and dispossessing the trades of people with whom they came into contact, Europeans stimulated growth back home through simultaneously constraining it in their colonial territories. One of the key success stories of the Industrial Revolution serves as an apt example, namely, the British production of cotton textiles. Cotton

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190. Ibid. Heern mentions the birth of nation-states, a global economy and industrialisation as 'three changes [that] stand out above others', and adds, 'indeed, the age of 'revolution' and 'reason' were not limited to the Western experience as illustrated by the Islamic reform movements' (p. 7).

191. G. K. Bhambra, 'Historical Sociology, Modernity, and Postcolonial Critique', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 116, no. 3, 2011, pp. 653-662.

192. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*; J. M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004. 'Civilized' here is used in regards to 'appurtenances of civilised societies' such as 'cities, trade, regular taxation, standing armies, legal codes, bureaucracies' etc.; see P. Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 148; see also B. Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2014 [2006].

193. Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, pp. 77-82.

194. Ibid., pp. 77; see also I. M. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, Volume 1: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Academic Press, New York, 1974, p. 163.

195. Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, pp. 77-82.

196. Ibid., pp. 77-82; Henry Kamen also says this about Spain; see H. Kamen, *Spain's Road to Empire: the Making of a World Power, 1492-1763*, Allen Lane, London, 2002.

first came to Britain from India, together with the knowledge and skills of how to design, weave and dye it. But with the development of the industry in Britain, a concurrent destruction of the cotton textile industry in India ensued, with the intention of opening India as a market for British exports.[197] This example, alongside numerous others, is employed by Bhambra to support her argument that modernity should be understood as 'a shift of global dimensions'.[198]

As well as stressing the inseparability of the development of modernity from colonialism, Bhambra attempts to show how the very inception of modernity should be seen as involving the connected and entangled histories of numerous cultures, societies or civilisations.[199] One such example is the advent of the printing press in China and its arrival into Europe, resulting in the subsequent shift from scribal to typographical culture, which, with its preservative qualities, 'facilitated a sustained revival and ultimately produced fundamental changes in the prevailing intellectual models of continuity and change' that we associate with the Renaissance.[200] Turning key European developments such as the Renaissance on its head, Bhambra draws out and repudiates the idea of an insular and singular Europe that singlehandedly originated modernity. The fallacy of such a perception is made apparent in Bhambra's critique that, by abstracting the qualitative effects leading to the Renaissance from wider interconnections, Europeans convinced themselves into believing these to be occurring due to the internal developments in their own mindsets.[201] Hence, Bhambra's examples not only elucidate the fallacy of this narrative but also how it came to prominence.

Ottoman-European relations are particularly revealing in this regard. During the long reign of Suleyman I (r. 1520–66), the Ottoman Empire reached the apex of its power and commanded an invincible presence on land and sea across the Middle East, North Africa and Europe; in Europe alone, Suleyman's land army was the largest ever seen and possessed the best field artillery, while his navy dominated the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.[202] Ironically, it was in large part Ottoman expansion into eastern and southern Europe that led to the shift in power from the centre of the continent (the Northern Italian and German Hanseatic cities) to its north-western fringes (Holland, France and Britain), something which would come to play an integral role in the Ottoman Empire's downfall. The Ottomans aided France against the city-states of Italy and ended the latter's 'monopoly on Oriental goods' through impinging access to

197. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*, pp. 136-137.
198. Ibid., p. 71.
199. Ibid. Bhambra writes that 'colonization was not simply an outcome of modernity, or shaped by modernity, but rather modernity itself, the modern world developed out of colonial encounters … these colonial encounters have also constituted the circumstances for the emergence of the fragile emancipatory codes of modernity at the same time as modernity has been separated from its origins in the colonial relationship, and has been regarded as a resource for the emancipation of others' (pp. 68-69).
200. Ibid., p. 97.
201. Ibid.
202. P. Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453–1924*, John Murray, London, 1995, pp. 60-63.

their trade routes and privileging French traders with a number of 'capitulations' that exempted them from tax and other liabilities, allowing them to displace their Venetian competitors from the lucrative Levant.[203] The French were soon followed by the British and Dutch powers signing similar treaties with the Ottoman Empire.[204]

As part of the Franco-Ottoman alliance initiated during the reign of Suleyman, the capitulations had at first seemed harmless and well within the power of the Sultan to revoke at any time. But, with the gradual decline of Ottoman military supremacy, these increasingly enforced capitulations effectively brought the Ottoman export market more and more under the control of European powers through their respective autonomous expatriate communities and the increasing number of 'honorary citizens' appointed by them from among the population of non-Muslim Ottomans.[205] With Napoleons occupation of Ottoman Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century, the longstanding alliance was annulled and the consequent reliance on the other major power of the time for diplomatic assistance allowed Great Britain to dominate commerce within the Ottoman Empire from the nineteenth century onwards.[206] This was sealed with the Anglo-Ottoman treaty in 1838, which not only confirmed all existing capitularies, but also abolished all government monopolies, deprived them of setting their own tariffs, flooded the empire with British goods and brought an end to Ottoman industrial development.[207] The treatment of the Ottomans is just one example of a number of unequal treaties imposed by Britain in the nineteenth century on countries across the globe not already under direct colonial rule; an 'imperialism of free trade' (often enforced through military conquest) which served as midwife to the industrialist capitalist and consequent global financial system.[208]

Karbala after the Tanzimat

The Ottomans hoped to keep up with the military and economic ascendency of European powers by mimicking them through the Tanzimat, a series of ambitious reforms meant to reorganise (*tanzim*) the empire's outdated martial, legal, political, fiscal and educational institutions: the medieval army that had been established in the fourteenth century was disbanded with many of its officers executed, now replaced by a reconstituted standing army trained in Western strategies by European advisers and armed with European weapons; a new

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203. Of course, the shift in European power wasn't as simple as this. For a nuanced account showcasing the complexity of the transition, see L. Pezzolo, 'The Venetian Economy' in E. R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, Brill, Leiden, 2013, pp. 255-289.

204. On the history of Ottoman capitulations, see H. Inalcik & D. Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume 1: 1300-1600*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 190 ff.

205. S. Kelly, 'Capitulations: Middle East', in T. Benjamin (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*, Thomsan Gale, Farmington Hills, MI, 2007, pp. 177-180.

206. Ibid.

207. Z. Y. Hershlag, *Introduction to the Modern Economic History of the Middle East*, Brill, Leiden, 1980, pp. 43-54.

208. See H. J. Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*, Bloomsbury Press, New York, 2009.

civil code of law based on the French Napoleonic code was implemented, supplanting much of the earlier system of largely autonomous *millet* courts based on the respective religious rulings of Muslims, Christians and Jews; an entirely new finance system based on the French model was introduced, including the use of paper banknotes, a central bank and stock exchange.[209] Since the commercial treaty with Britain in 1838, an influx of British goods had already put the traditional craft guilds across the Ottoman Empire in decline, which accelerated when many of the rights and subsidies they had enjoyed were revoked, and then culminated in an outright abolishment of the guilds in the early twentieth century. A nationalist ideology of 'Ottomanism' was encouraged through the creation of a national flag and a national anthem, as well as a common citizenship for all of the empire's subjects irrespective of ethnicity or religion.[210] There was also a bureaucratic overhaul of the government's administration with centralising efforts that saw the establishment of new councils and ministries fashioned on their European counterparts, as well as the first Ottoman parliament.[211]

It took several decades before any of the effects of these reforms reached those lands considered backwaters of the Ottoman Empire. In one such region, close to the Euphrates river, was the city of Karbala.[212] Only with the appointment of a former governor of a European province in Bulgaria, Midhat Pasha (d. 1883), as governor of Baghdad in the second half of the nineteenth century, would the Tanzimat laws finally be implemented in and around Karbala.[213] As part of the provincial reforms, he established provincial representatives and municipal councils in the regional cities and began building several towns as government and commercial centres in tribal areas.[214] This would come to impact Karbala indirectly, as a major advantage supporting the city's longstanding autonomy had been the support of surrounding tribes, who themselves had 'a long history of maintaining their independence from imperial power.'[215]

Rather than by some sort of a missionary or proselytising project, Islam had initially spread beyond the Arabian peninsula with the expansion of Arab tribes into the formerly Persian and Roman territories, and so, the region that came to be Iraq had consisted of a tribal majority ever since. Even in the second half of the nineteenth century, more than half the population was still nomadic.[216] Tribal presence was especially overwhelming in the south, where

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209. For a comprehensive account of the Tanzimat and other reform movements in the late Ottoman era, see M. S. Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2008.
210. S. Deringil, 'The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1993, pp. 3-29.
211. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', pp. 61-66.
212. See E. Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, I. B. Tauris, Bloomsbury, 2011.
213. Ibid., pp. 123-131.
214. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, p. 159.
215. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 65.
216. Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, pp. 31-32.

migration of tribes from the peninsula had increased in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, largely due to the military campaigns that ensued in the wake of the alliance between the puritanical Wahhabi movement and the newly formed Saudi dynasty.[217] With Karbala situated within this climate, relations with the surrounding tribes was significant; as a constant target of Saudi-Wahhabi raiders, Karbala was a natural ally of the tribes, who offered a first line of defence against the common enemy.[218] Through an enigmatic educational movement initiated by the Shi'i ulama, many of these southern tribes adopted Shi'i teachings, finding in Husayn a symbol of the traditional tribal values of valour and honour. Serving as almost a counter to the Wahhabi-Saudi pact, this alliance between the Shi'i officials of the city and surrounding tribal chiefs was further strengthened by marriages.[219]

The provincial reforms were designed to extend Ottoman administration to these tribes, but it would be the land reforms that had the greatest effect in bringing government control into rural areas, by tipping the balance of power between tribes and cities in favour of the latter. Although applied to the region only much later, the land code of 1858 outlawed tribal ownership and introduced property rights in order to tempt tribal chiefs to settle and become landowners, while relegating the tribesmen to being tenants. Although the land registration scheme was seen as a ploy to impose military conscription and taxes, and to confiscate land, causing at least seven major tribal revolts in the area, it did eventually have the desired effect of sedentarisation.[220] By the twentieth century, the majority of tribes had settled and the nomadic population declined drastically, bringing an end to centuries of tribal autonomy.[221] Whereas the lands of the fertile crescent had been traditionally used for grazing by nomadic tribes, tribesmen now laboured in a landscape of increasing agricultural production and exportation of cash crops, shifting what had been a subsistence economy to an exporting capitalist economy.[222] Though initially bolstering the influence of the Usuli ulama in the region, the settling of the tribes brought the beginnings of a shift in Karbala from a traditional form of authority and social status largely based on noble lineage and religious knowledge, towards one more determined by accumulation of wealth and ownership of property.

Karbala under Western Influence

Karbala was also a direct target of the reforms via Midhat Pasha, who during his visit to the city dismissed the inept Ottoman bureaucrats and initiated the construction of a new planned

217. Y. Nakash, 'The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shi'ism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1994, pp. 443-463; see also Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*.

218. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p, 66.

219. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 68; see also Nakash, 'The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shi'ism'; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*.

220. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 66.

221. Ibid., p. 64.

222. M. Farouk-Sluglett & P. Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987.

neighbourhood with markets and broad streets, praised by European travellers in years to come as 'presenting an almost European appearance'.[223] Telegraph lines were also introduced in Karbala during this period, as part of the larger network in the region that had only recently been established by employing tribesmen in its construction, maintenance and protection.[224] Together with communication, transport was also improved, including the presence of a number of river-steamers on the Tigris and Euphrates, as well as a number of railroads, including one between the two rivers that was extended to Karbala to increase the number of pilgrims to the city.[225]

It is astounding to think that it was these few inventions, namely river-steamers, railroads and telegraphs (together with improved firearms), which allowed Britain and other colonial powers to globally penetrate inland in the eighteenth century, whereas before their dominance had been mostly offshore, limited to harbours and islands.[226] Especially with the later development of the internal-combustion engine and the substitution of coal with oil, Western powers were enabled to travel at even greater speed.[227] The British, who had already opened a consulate in Baghdad at the beginning of the century, had become particularly industrious in the region since the treaty in 1838, and, by the twentieth century, accounted for half of the region's imports and a quarter of its exports. Britain had entrenched its supremacy in the region, both as a commercial and military power. With the Ottoman reforms, European commercial interests grew, and so did Western political and economic presence in the region, culminating with the British occupation of Iraq and subsequent Mandate after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. By the time of Haeri's birth in October 1937, Iraq was an independent nation, yet still very much under the shadow of British imperialism.

It was in this climate that the effects of the Ottoman and subsequent British modernisation efforts became more noticeable in Karbala, over what became a period of great change in the city. With one foot in its centuries-old culture and another in the increasingly noticeable influence of Western interests, Haeri witnessed the transition of a seemingly unchanging Karbala into a rapidly changing city. Crafts and craftsmen who clustered together into guilds, as did their stalls and open-shops at specialised bazaars, were being displaced by machine-made products sold by sales representatives behind glass doors in modern stores. Branded imports, such as Singer sewing machines, Colgate toothpaste, Kraft tinned food, or Haeri's own Hercules

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223. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, p. 159; Litvak, 'Karbala'.
224. Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, p. 189.
225. Ibid., p. 204; see also Fattah & Caso, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 152.
226. The dockyard and harbour of Basra, which connected to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, was improved during this period for that very reason, as a safe guard against increasing British influence; see D. R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, pp. 3-17.
227. M. Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, Cornell University Press, London, 1989.

bicycle, were becoming more and more common. Even alcohol found a home with the opening of an officers' club in the sacred city. Where once there had been mainly mud bricks, one now found concrete and steel. Cars were gradually becoming a common presence, and roads were built to facilitate them. Many hotels cropped up, and a hospital. The presence of biomedicine had already replaced ancient herbal remedies with modern medicine and surgery; the advent of the first hospital abolished birth and death as a domestic affair altogether.[228] The idyllic Karbala of Haeri's childhood was at the cusp of modernisation, as was he.

2.3 Disenchantment and the Age of Authenticity

2.3.1 The Modern Moral Order

Bearing in mind Taylor's simple description of the 'sacred' as the belief that divine power is 'concentrated in certain people, times, places or actions', we can define the transition from what he calls the premodern 'ancién regime' to the modern 'age of mobilization' as characterised by an increasing disenchantment that moves us away from a sacred and therefore hierarchical cosmos, but which does not necessarily entail an opposition to belief in God.[229] In a disenchanted world, the very understanding of the sacred fades away.[230] But even if the presence of God is no longer felt to be there in the cosmos, 'He can be thought to be no less powerfully present through His Design'.[231] Taylor writes that even when the universe is 'conceived in conformity with post-Newtonian science, in which there is absolutely no question of higher meanings being expressed in the universe around us … there is still, with someone like Newton himself, for instance, a strong sense that the universe declares the glory of God' in its Design.[232]

Similarly, God's presence might no longer lie in the polity, with, for example, 'a King who straddles the planes', but 'it can be present to the extent that we build a society which plainly follows God's design'.[233] This 'design' is expressed by the idea of a 'modern moral order', which is seen as constituted by individuals coming together to mutually benefit each other rather than as agents of a set order reflecting the cosmos. Taylor argues that the modern moral order can be conceived of in providential terms as God's design, which only works to strengthen the

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228. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.
229. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 76.
230. Ibid., pp. 446-447.
231. Ibid.
232. Ibid.
233. Ibid.

moral order by giving it a religious authority that cannot be overturned by King or Church.[234] This is exemplified by the American Declaration of Independence, where also we see how the rightness of that order can be equally legitimised as 'God's Providence' or 'Natural Law', or even some concept of civilisation as conceived of by American revolutionaries, in their 'view of history as the theatre in which this Design was to be progressively realized and of their own society as the place where this realization was to be consummated'.[235]

What Taylor is alluding to here is the 'epochal change' in our 'stance towards nature' that takes us from 'finding our place in the cosmos to constructing an order within the universe'.[236] What develops is an attitude to order as not something that we conform to or collaborate with, but rather something that needs to be constructed.[237] He states that 'this transition can be conceived as one which takes us from an ethic grounded on an order which is at work in reality, to an ethic which sees order as imposed by will'.[238] The centrality given to will and its ability to alter 'raw nature', whether out there in the world through a science-of-control (*leistungswissen*) or within ourselves through modes-of-discipline, is what most distinguishes modern formulations of order from their predecessors.[239] Essentially, what distinguishes modern forms of discipline from premodern traditions of ethics (Greek, Christian, etc.) is that, whereas all of them call for subordinating or eliminating our baser desires, this is now understood as something that needs to be imposed upon inert matter by will, rather than something that is 'already at work in human nature' which we can 'help emerge'.[240]

The link 'between the ideal of order and the disciplines and modes of organization by which society was to be civilized' is a principal proposition Taylor puts forward in his book.[241] As an integral development of the modern 'stance of reconstruction towards ourselves' and by extension to society as a whole, this ideal of civility 'takes form in programmes and methods of "self-fashioning"', according to Taylor.[242] He cites Michel Foucault (1975), who has pointed out how these programmes proliferated from the sixteenth century, initially as new modes of military training, which were then carried through and applied to other institutions such as schools.[243] The success of élites 'in imposing the order they sought on themselves and on society, was, at least among the dominant classes, apparent by how 'the training in a disciplined, sober, industrious life came to be widespread enough that for lots of people this

234. Ibid., pp. 236-237.
235. Ibid., pp. 448.
236. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
237. Ibid.
238. Ibid., p. 130.
239. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
240. Ibid., p. 112.
241. Ibid., pp. 236-237.
242. Ibid., p. 112.
243. Ibid.; see also M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979 [1975].

became a second nature, from which individuals would deviate, but which was not under perpetual threat of being cast off and abandoned'.[244]

Modernising Education

Together with military training, new forms of more general education served as mechanisms of discipline through which the diffusion of a new way of relating to the world from social elites to society at large could happen. We can argue that this was as much the case in other parts of the world as it was in certain parts of Europe. Together with the widescale appropriation of new military styles and governance, Muslim majority countries also adopted novel European styles of education. Qajar Iran, for example, reacting to a disastrous defeat to the Russians in the Russo-Persian War of 1803–15, initiated a program of military reforms that sought the aid of mainly French instructors as well as sending students to study military subjects in France or Britain. But they would also establish other important educational institutions, such as the Academy of Applied Sciences, founded in 1851, which grew out of these earlier reforms and still followed a curriculum very much focused on military affairs.[245]

Like Qajar Iran, or even Mamluk Egypt, the Ottomans also conceived of an entirely new European-inspired educational structure as part of the reforms they adopted in reaction to the rising military and technological dominance of Western powers. With confidence in 'the transformative power of new-style schooling', Ottoman officials initiated educational reforms completely outside of the existing native madrasa system; initially during the Nizam-i Cedid ('New Order') military reforms that saw the establishment of an Army Academy in 1793, and a massive restructuring of the Naval Academy in 1796, both modelled on French military training and instructed by mostly French as well as some other European instructors; and later during the Tanzimat reforms that saw the establishment of new Western-orientated academies for medicine in 1827, engineering in 1859 and law in 1878.[246]

Educational reform was an integral focus during the Ottoman modernisation project of the nineteenth century. Seen as an important tool with which the empire could counter continuing colonial encroachment, the reformers believed education was the best way to transform Ottoman society into a modern power on par with its European competitors. With immense financial commitment and genuine optimism in education as a force for change, the late Ottoman state undertook an ambitious plan to construct a network of schools throughout the

244. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 228.

245. R. W. Hefner, 'Introduction: The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education', in R. W. Hefner & M. Q. Zaman (eds.), *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2010, pp. 15-16; see also M. M. Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Re-form in Qajar Iran*, Mazda, Costa Mesa, CA, 2001, pp. 20, 33.

246. B. C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 5; see also Mazanec, J. 'The Ottoman Empire at the Beginning of Tanzimat Reform', *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations*, vol. 2, 2016, pp. 21-45.

empire.[247] As well as a modern university and even more academies (for civil service, economics, politics, science, etc.), secondary education based on the French lycée model was also introduced, all of which undermined the traditional cleric-ran seminary system of schooling that had become a typical feature of Muslim societies during the Middle Period. This was not by accident. Part of the program saw a deliberate movement to replace the centuries-old religious school system controlled by the ulama with a state-run secular one that introduced students to Western languages and disciplines. The novelty of this new system of schooling and its profound effects in Muslim lands is captured by Jonathan Berkey (2010), who writes: 'the idea that education and educational institutions can be, or should be, an instrument of conscious change in the world at large – especially change of a social or political character – is an idea that strikes the historian of medieval Islamic education as a fundamentally modern one'.[248] He argues that education as a tool of social engineering is a thoroughly modernist ideal, more easily found in the ideas of American philosopher John Dewey (d. 1952) than in medieval Muslim institutes.[249]

Classes for basic instruction in reciting and memorising the Qur'an had emerged early on, as well as a loose network of informal study circles centred around recognised religious authorities. Only during the tenth century did this casual character of the early transmission of religious knowledge begin to give way to the colleges or seminaries in the institution of the *madrasa* or, particularly in Shi'i contexts, the *hawza*. These institutes could provide classrooms and boarding for a growing population of students that required prolonged periods of study of an increasingly complex science of religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*).[250] It was primarily to accommodate the study of jurisprudence according to the legal schools that the madrasa developed.[251] Yet, even though education now took place within a madrasa, the institution itself 'had little or no impact on the character or the processes of the transmission of knowledge', which remained personal and informal as it had been before the advent of the madrasa.[252] According to Berkey, 'no medieval madrasa had anything approaching a set curriculum'; there was no institutional structure or regular examinations.[253] Rather than the madrasa itself, it was the teacher under its roof whom students sought to associate themselves with, and it was by

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247. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom.*

248. J. P. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern: Politics, Education, and the Problem of Muslim Identity', in Hefner & Zaman (eds.), *Schooling Islam*, p. 41.

249. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 41.

250. Hefner, 'The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education', pp. 5-6. As well teaching typically religious subjects like *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), Hadith and *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), these madrasas often also taught more general topics, such as arithmetic, medicine, logic and philosophy.

251. Berkey, J. P., *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992, p. 7. See also G. Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1981.

252. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 43.

253. Ibid., p. 43.

personal permission (*ijaza*) from the teacher that a student would gain validation, rather than through a degree or other qualification issued by the madrasa.[254] As Berkey points out, 'medieval Muslims themselves seem to have been remarkably uninterested in *where* an individual studied', rather 'what mattered was with *whom* one had studied'.[255] The criterion for choosing where to study wasn't based on the reputation of a madrasa, but rather the status of a teacher who 'had God's blessings', and perhaps the sanctity of the site where the madrasa was situated.[256]

Education in Karbala

Although the madrasa undoubtedly marks the advent of more formalised forms of higher education, it nonetheless continued to rest 'on the character of the relationship a student maintained with his teacher, and not the reputation of any institution'.[257] Hence, the transmission of knowledge from master to student still often occurred outside of the madrasa, in the form of small study circles at the teacher's home, in shops, bookstores and archways, or in front of larger crowds in public squares, gardens and markets, as well as often by a student living with his teacher over a certain length of time.[258] Many madrasas developed next to mosques or near shrines, which had already been important spaces of learning.[259] Speaking about Karbala and Najaf in particular, Heern states that madrasas connected to a shrine were 'often perceived to have more religious legitimacy than other *madrasa*s because of the authority that the shrine adds to the educational endeavors that occur nearby'.[260]

Like Najaf, Karbala has been one of the most enduring and important centres of Shiʿi scholarship for this reason, especially since the late ninth and early tenth century, when pilgrimage to the site became an integral aspect of Twelver or Imami Shiʿi identity.[261]

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254. The *ijaza* bound the pupil to a teacher, and through him to a chain of transmission reaching back to the Prophet and revelation itself.
255. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 43.
256. Hefner, 'The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education', p. 9; D. F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1985, p. 105.
257. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, p. 22; see also D. Ephrat, 'Madhhab and Madrasa in Fifth/Eleventh-Century Baghdad', in F. E. Vogel, R. Peters & P. Bearman (eds.), *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution, and Progress*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005, p. 79.
258. Z. M. Heern, 'One Thousand Years of Islamic Education in Najaf: Myth and History of the Shiʿi *Hawza*', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2017, p. 419; see also Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, pp. 44-94.
259. Heern, 'One Thousand Years of Islamic Education in Najaf', p. 419.
260. Ibid., p. 420.
261. N. I. Haider, *The Origins of the Shiʿa: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kufa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 246; Fattah & Caso, *A Brief History of Iraq*, p. 95; Heern, 'One Thousand Years of Islamic Education in Najaf', p. 420. The initial growth of Karbala that had occurred under the Buyid dynasty during the tenth century occurred in conjunction with their patronage of Imami Shiʿism, which led to a more clearly defined theology and development of a distinct tradition of jurisprudence under notable Shiʿi scholars, such as al-Kulayni (d. 925), al-Mufid (d. 1022) and al-Tusi (d. 1067), who were all based in 'the hawza of Baghdad' at a time when it was 'the center of the great theological and legalistic renaissance of Shiʿism' (Haider, *The Origins of the Shiʿa*, p. 246). As well as the Buyids, there were several ruling dynasties (i.e. Fatimids, Hamdanids, Baridis and Carmathians) supportive of a growing Shiʿism during this period, which led Hodgson to label it 'the Shiʿi century', beginning with the Major Occultation in 945 and terminating with the fall of the Buyids in 1055.

Furthermore, while many Sunni ulama were severely affected by their dependency on the patronage of the governing elite or on the termination of pious endowments by colonial and postcolonial rulers, Shi'i ulama had long enjoyed a level of financial independence due to the Shi'i tradition whereby all those of means are expected to pay a fifth (*khums*) of their income to any of the recognised leading scholars (*mujtahid*s), who, as representatives of the hidden Imam and recipients of his share, delegate the funds as they see fit.[262] So, whereas many Sunni madrasas had been formalised due to reforms undertaken either at the direction of the state, such as al-Azhar in Egypt, or as a reaction to colonial rule, such as Deoband in India, 'informal styles of learning have, in fact, persisted more resolutely, and longer, in Shi'i scholarly circles than they did among the Sunnis'.[263]

Although it is true that 'colonial rule did not impinge on the ulama of Iraq and Iran as they did on the Deobandi ulama of South Asia', educational reforms implemented by Ottomans and then strengthened by the British did eventually affect even the fairly autonomous educational organisation of Karbala and Najaf.[264] As with the Tanzimat reforms generally, the ambitious system of lycée secondary-level schooling did not see as much success in the backwaters of the Ottoman Empire that would become Iraq, which by around the fall of the empire could only claim the enrolment of about 200 students throughout the entire region; subsequent British rule quickly moved to increase the number of students at secondary school.[265] It was at such a secondary school modelled on a Western curriculum – the only one in Karbala at the time – that Fadhlalla Haeri was educated. Most of the teachers were Iraqi, giving lessons on subjects such as Arabic, mathematics, history, geography, the natural sciences and English. As a sign of just how much the dominance of the madrasa system had subsided, traditional religious subjects like Qur'anic recitation, which had once been central even in the education of children, were taught at school but were not taken seriously and did not count towards the final grade.[266] Representing a very different education from that of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Haeri's school years in Karbala were an early sign of things to come. Haeri would not continue the religious role his paternal ancestors had traditionally held, for his future lay in the West.

Haeri's Education

An important trend initiated by the Ottoman educational reforms was the government's selection and sponsorship of students to train in Europe, particularly in practical subjects such

262. M. Q. Zaman, 'Epilogue: Competing Conceptions of Religious Education', in Hefner & Zaman (eds.), *Schooling Islam*, p. 243.
263. Ibid.
264. Ibid..
265. T. A. J. Abdullah, *A Short History of Iraq: From 636 to the Present*, Longman, Harlow, 2003, p. 123.
266. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

as medicine, engineering and educational methods.[267] In an ironic twist from a bygone era, it would now be Arabs translating works from European languages and travelling to its centres of learning. Among them can be counted many of the most influential Muslim icons of the modern period and initiators of the massively influential intellectual revolution, the Nahda, which swept across the Arabic-speaking lands of the Ottoman Empire and culminated in a plethora of nationalist and liberalist movements.[268] In many ways, the Nahda marked the period of 'transition from traditional Islamic education to modern education, and worked to legitimize the innovations which came in the train of military, scientific, technical and educational imports from the West'.[269]

With the deepening dependency of the emerging Arab countries upon the West in the twentieth century, state sponsorship of selected students to Europe continued.[270] A sixteen-year-old Haeri became an inheritor of this convention; after finishing secondary school with one of the top results in the country, Haeri was offered a scholarship from the Iraqi government and British-led Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) to study in the UK. The candidates were expected to take an engineering degree, but Haeri insisted on being allowed to study chemistry.[271] In the summer of 1954, Haeri took a KLM propeller plane from Baghdad to London with a one-night stopover in Beirut, where the sight of 'high-rise buildings and glitzy hotels' dazed the impressionable teenager who had rarely seen a world outside of Karbala.[272] After arriving in England, Haeri was sent to a technical college in Weybridge, Surrey, and was then relocated to Wrexham in North Wales a year later to finish off his preliminary studies (A-levels), before starting a degree in physics, chemistry and mathematics at the University of Wales in the seaside town of Bangor.[273]

During his early years in Britain, Haeri had felt extremely homesick. This was, of course, partly due to the cold and wet weather which contrasted with the arid and sunny desert climate of his home which now lay miles away. But what was more jarring was the culture-shock Haeri had to experience in leaving all that was familiar to him for a strange land. Being able to charge purchases to his father's tab anywhere in Karbala, Haeri had hardly even seen money during

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267. O. Kulaç & H. Özgür, 'Sending Scholarship Students Abroad in Ottoman Empire', *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2017, pp. 830-836.

268. J. Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence: Modernity's Modes of Narration in Nineteenth-Century Arabic Literary Tradition', in Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijck (eds.), *Working with A Secular Age*, p. 353.

269. S. Sadaalah, 'Islamic Orientations and Education', in H. Daun & G. Walford (eds.), *Educational Strategies among Muslims in the Context of Globalization: Some National Case Studies*, Brill, Leiden, 2004, pp. 42-43; 37-62; see also J. W. Livingston, 'Western Science and Educational Reform in the Thought of Shaykh Rifa'a Al Tahtawi', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 28, 1996, p. 543.

270. M. A. Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East: Fundamentalism in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia*, 1997, pp. 42-43.

271. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 85.

272. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 87–89. Besides a trip to Iran as a small child, and some visits to Baghdad, Haeri had rarely spent time outside of Karbala before this trip.

273. Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017.

his childhood, but now he had to pay for whatever he wanted from the allowance he would have to collect every month.[274] The single orange or quarter-piece of cucumber that he would save-up to buy every so often in a country still on rations after the Second World War only reminded him of the abundant fresh fruit and vegetables of Karbala he was missing.[275] Coming from a typically segregated environment, Haeri found the free-mixing of genders particularly shocking.[276]

Replacing Religion

During his first year in England, Haeri had stuck to the religious practices as he had done in Karbala. He maintained the religious practices for a while, but soon they began to lapse in the absence of an environment conducive to them.[277] Daily religious rituals or annual ceremonies and the festivities around them that had been so central to Haeri's upbringing remained now only as memories.[278] As Haeri's focus rescinded mainly to his studies and later to his career, he observed the religious rituals of his childhood only occasionally. Almost as an existential substitute for his waning interest in religion, Haeri immersed himself in philosophy during this period instead.[279]

After becoming more proficient in English and getting used to his new surroundings during his early university years, Haeri had grown to enjoy Britain, from its countryside to its architecture and cultural heritage.[280] An important aid for Haeri in this transition was his personal friendship with the Irish writer Anthony C. West (d. 1988), who kindled in him an interest for European history, literature and philosophy.[281] Haeri himself reflects on the significance of this relationship in his 2018 autobiography, *Sufi Encounters*:

> This period was largely dedicated to the development of life skills but there was a meeting of hearts and minds with the Irish writer, Anthony C. West, which enabled me to reflect on the contrasts between the God-centric world I had come from and the western materialism, which now confronted me. He was the author of a much-acclaimed novel called 'River's End' and had devoted his life to literary pursuits. He was also something of a philosopher and during the long walks we enjoyed together on the Welsh beaches he would talk about the unifying field that permeates this world and its play as it manifests. Anthony was able to reassure me of the correctness of my basic childhood upbringing, which was the fruit of a living faith, not mere rituals or superstition. During these walks

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274. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
275. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 90.
276. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
277. Ibid.
278. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 96. One exception to this was his few visits on Eid al-Fitr (the annual festival after Ramadan) to the mosque in Woking, Surrey, with a group of equally alienated Muslim friends, who eagerly enjoyed the rare chance to eat familiar Middle Eastern food.
279. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
280. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 96.
281. Ibid. pp. 96-97; Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, p. 12; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

> we would talk about ethics, morality, the purpose of life and different religions. Anthony regarded them all as having the same essence and purpose; although he believed that contemporary Christianity had lost its original spiritual impetus. I, too, had felt the spiritual barrenness of western society but had to admit that the traditional way of life in the east was also no longer sustainable.[282]

Haeri not only observed a 'spiritual barrenness of Western society' from the outside, but was himself experiencing it. He also knew that 'the traditional way of life' he had grown up with in the East was a thing of the past. His new-found infatuation with existential questions, as evident in his eagerness to attend lectures on the topic and his extensive reading of Western philosophy, poetry and literature, reflects Haeri's attempt, at least in a subconscious way, to replace a sudden loss of religion. Haeri was also fascinated by the life and works of enigmatic Eastern figures, like Mahatma Gandhi (d. 1948) and Rabindranath Tagore (d. 1941), but was most drawn to the writings of Western philosophers such as A. J. Ayer (d. 1989) and Bertrand Russell (d. 1970). Russell especially had a great impact on Haeri, who read almost everything written by the philosopher. What affected him most was his short book, *In Praise of Idleness* (1935), about which Haeri said in an interview, 'I was always interested in this nothingness, the power of aimlessness'.[283] In his own words, the establishment had become an 'anathema' for Haeri, who wanted to see the alternative. He had been struck by a kind of nihilism.[284]

Existentialism

Being at the height of its popularity, existentialism had been of particular interest to Haeri. He had read some works of Jean-Paul Sartre (d. 1980) in Arabic earlier, but what affected him most were the writings of Albert Camus (d. 1960) and the notion of the 'absurd' that characterises them. Not surprisingly then, Haeri was very much interested in 'the theatre of the absurd', and was a fan of Samuel Beckett (d. 1989) and his play *Waiting for Godot* (1949).[285] Fadhlalla Haeri's interests are reflective of his times. Charles Taylor considers the works of figures like Camus and Beckett as having 'seized the imagination of the age', and points out that while it is 'clear that they mean to reject religion, at least as it has been understood … strangely, many things reminiscent of the religious tradition emerge in these and other writers'.[286]

Taylor considers Camus as particularly worthy of closer examination, due to the 'articulacy and rhetorical force' in his notion of the 'absurd', which captures 'the sense of the human condition, after the end of religious-metaphysical illusions'.[287] What Camus' idea of absurdity highlights for Taylor is the contradiction that ensues from an inherent human need to find

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282. Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, 2018, p. 12.
283. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
284. Ibid.
285. In Haeri's own words, 'Beckett was my hero' (Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014).
286. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 321.
287. Ibid., p. 583.

meaning in an indifferent universe void of any meaning.[288] Taylor is quick to point out, however, that Camus' claim can itself seem a contradiction; if the universe is absent of meaning then how is it that we come to expect meaning in the first place? The answer for Taylor lies in what he sees as the phenomenological approach Camus takes in explaining the 'absurd', as a reality not of the universe in itself apparently devoid of meaning, but in the universe as lived. We cannot speak of the absurd in relation to a universe that is simply indifferent, but in our lived experiences 'to expect, strive, hope for happiness and meaning'.[289] In Camus' words: 'what is absurd is the confrontation between this irrational reality and the wild longing for clarity whose call resonates in the depths of the human heart'.[290]

Taylor outlines how Camus rejects early humanities-constructed religio-metaphysical projections of meaning on the cosmos, which have occluded the capacity of modern man to face the painful truth of a meaningless universe.[291] Our transition to this form of meaningless universe from an earlier meaningful cosmos is what Taylor defines as disenchantment, and describes as a narrative line that sees us climbing 'from childhood to adulthood, from barbarity to civilization ... to the point of being capable of self-authorization'.[292] We see this narrative line even in Camus' rejection of not only older forms of affirming cosmic meaning, such as Christianity and the promise of Salvation, but also newer attempts to do the same thing, such as Marxism and the promise of Revolution.[293] Taylor writes that although Camus clearly opposes 'the 'progressive', Communist-leaning, revolutionary humanism espoused by Sartre', he nonetheless expresses a salvific view by championing a 'revolt' against absurdity itself as a means to acceding into a wider space of unity for mankind; more truthfully universal then the acceptance of any particular creed which necessarily excludes some at the expense of others.[294] Hence, by reflecting a humanism where our actions are aimed at the benefit of all, Camus

288. Ibid, pp. 582-584. Taylor explains: 'We feel called to happiness, jouissance. This is not just a desire, but a sense that this is our normal condition; that this is what we are designed for. And beyond that, we feel an imperious demand in us to make sense of the world, to find some unified meaning in it. We have, in other words, an intuition about the meaning of things, written into our inescapable life experience. But then the claims to fulfillment and meaning are brutally denied by an indifferent universe. It owes us nothing, and its operations randomly favour and then crush our aspirations. The nascent sense of meaning meets an enigma which defies all over-all meaning. The attempts at sense-making are continually and utterly frustrated. This is the contradiction which Camus names "absurd"' (p. 583).

289. Ibid., p. 583.

290. A. Camus, cited in Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 583-584; see also A. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. J. O'Brien, Penguin, London, 1975 [1942], p. 26.

291. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 583.

292. Ibid. Taylor writes: 'In Camus, the sense is strong that this self-authorization takes place over against a universe which is silent and indifferent, and which defeats all attempts to find some meaning in it. It is in this sense the site of 'absurdity'. But realizing this fully, and rising to the challenge, and espousing one's own ethic in the teeth of this absurdity, can yield the courage and inspiration to struggle against the force of meaningless adversity' (pp. 582-582).

293. The salvatory idea here is that 'in the end of history, after the Revolution, everything will make sense' (ibid., p. 584).

294. Ibid., pp. 582-583, 585.

reflects a variant of the modern moral order and illustrates for us the social imaginary it inspires.[295]

2.3.2 The Modern Social Imaginary

Charles Taylor points to the decisive step towards a modern idea of order as reflective of the 'shift from hierarchical, mediated-access societies to horizontal, direct-access societies'.[296] In contrast to an 'earlier 'vertical' vision' of society as a hierarchy to which people are meant to relate indirectly through intermediaries, our 'modern idea of order animates a social imaginary which presents society as a 'horizontal' reality, to which each has direct access, created and sustained by common action in secular time, as we see in forms like the public sphere, the market economy, the sovereign people'.[297] Whereas the premodern tribe was seen as based on laws passed on 'since time out of mind', or the kingdom was imagined as part of the 'Great Chain of Being', 'the modern social imaginary no longer sees the greater trans-local entities — nations, states, churches — as grounded in something other, something higher, than common action in secular time'.[298]

Interwoven with our 'embedding in secular time' is 'a move to a horizontal, direct-access world', which 'bring[s] with it a different sense of our situation in time and space; in particular, it brings different understandings of history and modes of narration'.[299] There are many ways 'in which immediacy of access takes hold of our imaginations', but ultimately, they are all facets of the same modern imaginary.[300]

> These modes of imagined direct access are linked to, indeed are just different facets of, modern equality and individualism. Directness of access abolishes the heterogeneity of hierarchical belonging. It makes us uniform, and that is one way of becoming equal. (Whether it is the only way is the fateful issue at stake in much of today's struggles over multi-culturalism.) At the same time, the relegation of various mediations reduces their importance in our lives; the individual stands more and more free of them, and hence has a growing self-consciousness as an individual. Modern individualism, as a moral idea, doesn't mean ceasing to belong at all — that's the individualism of anomie and break-down — but imagining oneself as belonging to ever wider and more impersonal entities: the state, the movement, the community of humankind.[301]

295. Ibid., p. 586. We could say that in his rejection of the penchant to cover up the absurd by projections of meaning-making, and in turn, an assertion of what Camus calls his 'Hellenism', Taylor still sees an ambition 'to once more restore ordinary human flourishing to its rightful place as our highest end' (p. 585).
296. Ibid, pp. 119-120, 713.
297. Ibid., pp. 392.
298. Ibid., p. 713.
299. Ibid., p. 714.
300. Ibid., p. 210.
301. Ibid., p. 211.

With our embrace of a modern social imaginary, we now see ourselves as belonging to impersonal entities such as the 'nation' without the mediation of networks like kinship relations. The word imaginary is key here, because even though 'we understand ourselves as living in societies which are made up of equal individuals', this does not mean that hierarchies no longer exist, only that we are disconnected from the 'networks which involve hierarchical relations'.[302] Important to note is that it is not so much that we no longer believe the world as ordered, rather that the order of things no longer relates — immediately or evidently — to human meaning and that which shapes our lives.[303] What this allows for is a questioning of hierarchy itself, whereas in premodern societies, such as in Europe or the Ottoman Empire, the fact of hierarchy was taken as a given and could not be challenged; it is only the exploitative and oppressive application of hierarchy that would be questioned and hierarchy itself.[304]

Pan-Arabism

One strong example of the modern challenge to hierarchy outside the Western context is the significant role played by Arab nationalist and socialist ideologies among revolutionaries in Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt and Iraq, both of which overthrew their respective monarchies in the 1950s and replaced them with republics based on pan-Arabism.[305] Like a number of his friends during his study years in Britain, most of whom had also been sent from Middle Eastern countries, Fadhlalla Haeri was a member of the Arab Students' Union during a period when Pan-Arab sentiments were at their highest: after Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser's (d. 1970) striking victory over France, Britain and Israel during the Suez Crisis in 1956.

Nasser's victory and the subsequent nationalisation of the Suez Canal bolstered his standing and popularity among Arabs everywhere, who hung his portrait in their homes, offices and coffeehouses with an enthusiasm that a leader had finally emerged who could liberate the Arab world from its colonial constraints and steer them towards modernisation.[306] Nasser encouraged this image through socialist rhetoric of national unity and an ideologically driven pan-Arabism. But after his heart attack and subsequent death in 1970, much of the fervour

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302. Ibid., p. 576.

303. Ibid., p. 60. Taylor writes: 'Biblical religion, in entering the Graeco-Roman, later Arab, worlds, develops within the cosmos idea. So we come to see ourselves as situated in a defined history, which unfolds within a bounded setting. So the whole sweep of cosmic-divine history can be rendered in the stained glass of a large cathedral. But the universe approaches the limitless, or at any rate its limits are not easily encompassable in time or space. Our planet, our solar system is set in a galaxy, which is one of an as yet uncounted number of galaxies. Our origins go back into the mists of evolutionary time, so that we become unclear as to what could count as the beginning of our human story, many of the features of which are irretrievably lost'.

304. Ibid., pp. 577-578.

305. M. N. Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, p. 131; see also R. Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate?: A History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present*, Hurst & Co., London, 2013.

306. Zubaida, 'Islam and Modernity', pp. 78-79. Nasser was a source of inspiration and support not only for the Arabs but for leftist movements across the globe, as voiced by notable figures such as Nelson Mandela (d. 2013) and Fidel Castro (d. 2016).

would die with him.[307] Headquartered in London, the Arab Students' Union played an important role for Haeri and his fellow Middle Eastern students, part of which involved actively supporting pan-Arabism by taking part in political protests on issues concerning the Middle East, such as the Algerian fight for independence against France and the plight of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. As Cemil Aydin (2013) states, 'the Algerian War of Liberation and the Palestinian struggle kept the desires and activism around pan-Arab solidarity very much alive'.[308] In his brief foray with political activism, Haeri himself spoke up against the situation in Palestine, but was soon disheartened by the generally uninterested reception to his appeals by the British public.[309]

Seeds of Arab unity had already been sewn with the British-backed Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, but it was only after the Second World War and the founding of the League of Arab States in Cairo that it grew under the Arab nationalist ideologies of the 1950s, finally blossoming with Nasser's victory and the United Arab Republic.[310] Although short-lived, this union between Egypt and Syria, and Nasser's continued calls for a united Arab world, boosted the pan-Arab movement, especially in Jordan and Iraq, both still Hashemite kingdoms at the time. King Faisal II of Iraq (r. 1939–58), together with his cousin King Hussein of Jordan (r. 1952–99), responded to the UAR and the momentum of Nasserism in their countries with the formation of their own union between Iraq and Jordan called the Arab Federation. But this was dissolved some months later with the 1958 military coup that would see the execution not only of Faisal but of almost the entire royal family.[311] Like the still-standing dynasty of Jordan, and more distantly Morocco, the royal family of Iraq, as well as Syria and the Hejaz, were Hashemite descendants of the Prophet, an honour that had lost its unquestionable sacred status in the eyes of many modern Muslims, who now only saw these figures as puppets and tools of colonial control.

Like many other states in the Middle East, Iraq continued to be dominated by British interests, causing numerous conflicts, even when employed through indirect means. A costly revolt against the British Mandate of Iraq in 1920 convinced the British to implement indirect rule over the country through instating an ally of the empire but a foreigner to Iraq, King Faisal I (r. 1921-1933), as monarch.[312] A ludicrous proposition that was extremely unpopular with various ethnic, religious and nationalist groups, eventually leading to a violent overthrow of

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307. For more on the life and legacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser, see S. K. Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, Duckworth, London, 2004.
308. C. Aydin, 'Pan-Nationalism of Pan-Islamic, Pan-Asian, and Pan-African Thought', in J. Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 687.
309. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 101-105.
310. See J. P. Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and The United Arab Republic*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 2002.
311. See B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'Jordan and Iraq: Efforts at Intra-Hashimite Unity', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 26, 1990, pp. 65-75.
312. R. Stewart, 'The Queen of the Quagmire: Gertrude Bell', *The New York Review of Books*, 25 October 2007.

the monarchy in 1958.[313] Although King Faisal was himself an early supporter of pan-Arabism, later popularity of the ideology in Iraq would inspire a chain of events that ultimately led to the 1958 coup d'état against his grandson, Faisal II, and the execution of the entire royal family. This brutal regicide inaugurated the end of one age and the beginning of another in Iraq. As if symbolising this ending of an era, Haeri's father had passed away before these events, at the eve of that very year. Thousands, including government officials, dignitaries and royal representatives, came to Karbala to attend the funeral. But it would be a further six months before Haeri would visit.[314]

Haeri's Employment

Haeri had met his father for the last time two years earlier, when he had travelled home by journeying through Europe on his Lambretta scooter which he had bought with money earned from a summer job working for two months at a petrol station the previous year.[315] This first job foreshadowed Haeri's future career in the petroleum business, at a time when oil had just taken over coal as the world's primary fuel, marking the beginning of the massive boom in the industry.[316] After completing his degree in 1960, Haeri returned to Iraq with his newlywed, a Danish girl called Inge (later known as Zainab) whom Haeri had met at university.[317] Having been exempted from mandatory national military service after being mistakenly diagnosed with flat feet, Haeri was, as expected, soon employed by the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC).[318]

Haeri was stationed at Iraq's chief oilfield, near Kirkuk, and, together with his wife and soon two daughters, lived in a quaint four-bedroom house with a nice garden, within the confines of the nearby anglicised camp. It was a surreal enclosure modelled on a typical England suburb, complete with all the amenities and infrastructure. As well as a club and cinema, they even had a full eighteen-hole golf course, a horse-riding club, as well as a shooting range, all of it intended mainly for British expats, with the exception of a few Iraqis like Haeri and his close friend Hosam Raouf.[319] There were still some clear demarcations between Haeri as an Iraqi and the British or European staff living at the compound, however. For instance, his daughters, not being English, were not allowed to go to the school at the compound but had to go to a local school in Kirkuk instead.[320] But mostly, Haeri enjoyed the same perks that the expats did, having a gardener, servants, chauffeur, etc.; a pampered artificial environment

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313. Ibid.
314. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 100.
315. Ibid., p. 97. Haeri continued his journey from Genoa to Beirut by boat and then by bus to Baghdad.
316. D. S. Painter, 'Oil', in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, online.
317. I. Haeri, *In the Courtyard of the Beloved there is Healing: a Danish Woman's Journey into Spiritual Islam*, 2015.
318. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 108; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
319. Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017.
320. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017.

catering for the mainly Western senior staff of the IPC, itself a British-led consortium of foreign share-holders. Yet, this was the beginning of the end for the foreign enclave in Iraq.

Whereas when Haeri had first arrived, Western share-holders still held a monopoly over oil production in Iraq, they would begin to concede their foothold throughout the 60s, under mounting pressure from an Iraqi government with growing anti-colonial and nationalist tendencies.[321] This was also reflected in the rapid replacement of the foreign staff with Iraqis within twenty years, from a point where all the staff were British, to the time of nationalisation in 1972, where all the staff were Iraqis, except a few senior positions such as general manager and financial manager.[322] As one of the foreign-educated elite, Haeri rose through the ranks swiftly, and was groomed through further training. Put in at the production department, he was promoted from trainee engineer to production engineer in three to four years, becoming the head of all gassing stations in northern Iraq and earning twice the salary of the ministers, a well-known fact that had begun to make Haeri feel insecure about his safety.[323]

Throughout this period, Haeri worked tirelessly day and night, excelling as an engineer and writing a number of papers on reservoir engineering, pressure maintenance and other topical subjects connected to his expertise.[324] He got a variety of further training during his employment with the IPC, such as in chemical engineering and special reservoir engineering. For this training, Haeri was sent to Esso in Houston, Texas, for six months, and also did other shorter courses in the United States. He would also spend almost an entire year in Paris with one of the founding companies, Compagnie Française des Pétroles (CFP), as well as six months training with the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) in England.[325] During his eight years at the IPC, more than half of Haeri's time was spent abroad.[326] Yet, whether abroad during training or at home in Iraq, this period was the most miserable time in his life, with Haeri at one point becoming ill for several months with digestive problems and gastric issues.[327]

Career and financial success did nothing to alleviate the depressing and lonely state Haeri found himself in, only further exacerbated by anxiety over growing tensions in the country, which indicated to him that Iraq was not a sustainable option for him any longer. Haeri soon became disillusioned with the future of Iraq and before the Ba'ath Party came to power in 1968,

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321. See M. E. Brown, 'The Nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1979, pp. 107-124.
322. Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017; see also Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 121-125.
323. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
324. Ibid.
325. Ibid.
326. As well as for training, Haeri also travelled for leisure, to for example Turkey. Another example is from his time in Paris, during which Haeri made a road-trip with his wife and kids from France to Iraq by car, driving through Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon, before coming to Iraq.
327. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

once more left his home country for England, this time never to return.[328] The move shocked many of the oil company friends he had left behind, many of whom were Baʻathists.[329] The leader of Iraq's Free Officers, Abd al-Karim Qasim (d. 1963), took charge of the country after the revolution, but by going back on his promise to join the United Arab Republic, incurred the anger of a number of Pan-Arabists, including many in the Free Officers movement who were members of the Baʻath party and had allied with Qasim on the basis that he would join Nasser.[330] Hence, it was only a matter of time before these tensions would escalate into a renewed battle for power in 1968, inaugurating several decades of suppressive Baʻathist rule over Iraq made infamous by Saddam Hussein's (d. 2006) regime of brutal violence against all forms of political activity outside its control.[331]

Haeri's excuse for leaving his post in Iraq had been a progressive new degree that applied scientific methods to management.[332] Originating in the US and being offered in the UK for the first time by Birmingham University, the Masters in Business Management (MBA) program would expose Haeri to the top tier of business and economics in the country.[333] Haeri concluded the two-year course with a dissertation on performance appraisals.[334] Haeri's newly acquired MBA did not translate into immediate success after graduation, however. Having paid for the Master's course himself, several months of financial struggle followed before Haeri procured a job. Initially, he worked for a recruiting firm in London, but after a year or so Haeri was offered a director's post with an IT consulting subsidiary of the British Petroleum Company (BP), which mainly involved him securing IT contracts from the emerging oil producing countries and setting up offices all around the Middle East, in Tripoli, Tehran, Kuwait and Beirut.[335] This he did from his new home in Beirut, in the upscale neighbourhood of Raouché, just by the sea across from Pigeons' Rock. After a further two years with the company, Haeri started his own highly successful Arab oil consultancy, Project Development Company (PDC), which he established with a few partners from a base in Sharjah, UAE.[336] One of the early contracts was

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328. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 130.

329. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017, and May 2017.

330. A. H. Rubin, 'Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-63', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 43, No. 3, 2007, pp. 353-382.

331. See C. Coughlin, *Saddam: King of Terror*, HarperCollins, New York, 2002.

332. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014; Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 130.

333. On the emergence of collegiate business education at the start of the 20th century and its exponential rise since the 1950s, see C. A. Daniel, *MBA: The First Century*, 1998.

334. Haeri's dissertation was: F. A. M. Hussain-Haeri, *An Investigation into Executive Appraisal Systems in Four UK Firms*, Master's diss., University of Birmingham, 1969; another one of his important publications from the time is F. H. Haeri, 'Performance Appraisals: What Managers Think', *Information Summary*, vol. 136, 1969; see also C. Sofer & M. Tuchman, 'Appraisal Interviews and the Structure of Colleague Relations', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1970, pp. 365-391.

335. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

336. PDC was a diversified 'umbrella' corporation that owned approximately 30 subsidiaries and maintained a large network of connections and personnel throughout the Middle East (*Haeri v Commissioner*, 56 TCM 1061, Unites States Tax Court, filed 11 January 1989).

the building of the first container terminal in the Gulf for the ruler of Sharjah.[337] Haeri's own independence from his British employers coincided with Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf, marking the end of one era and the beginning of a new 'post-imperial' one.

2.3.4 The Modern Buffered Self

Against the common equation of 'disenchantment' with *subtraction*, Taylor understands 'disenchantment' as the *substitution* of an enchanted world — where 'charged things [relics, spirits, spells, etc.] can impose meanings' upon us — with a world where meaning now occurs exclusively within a strictly bounded mind and things in the world remain outside of it.[338] He refers to the earlier experience of our place in the cosmos as 'porous', indicating 'a perplexing absence of certain boundaries which seem to us essential'; a world where meaning is 'not only in minds, but can reside in things ... already outside of us, prior to contact; it can take us over, we can fall into its field of force. It comes on us from the outside'.[339] But for us today, objects have meaning only to the extent that they evoke a response in us as subjective beings endowed with minds. In Taylor's terms, we have become 'buffered' selves with bounded minds within which our thoughts and feelings are contained.[340]

Meanings or threats of external forces (spirits, magic, etc.) no longer impinge upon a buffered self as they did in the case of the porous self, for whom mind and matter were interpenetrative, with any boundary between them naturally fuzzy. Such external forces not only impinge on those living in a porous world, but do so on the community as a whole, making it inherently social and centred on collective rituals upon which the commonweal is dependent (success of crops, health of animals, etc.). The clearly distinguished boundary between inner and outer offered by the buffered self allows it to 'form the ambition of disengaging from whatever is beyond the boundary, and of giving its own autonomous order to its life'.[341] Essential to understanding modern individuality is this disengaged stance to self and society made possible by our 'buffered' identities; as agents that have the novel possibility to distance and disengage ourselves from our surroundings, both natural and social.

Rather than as a process of purification, Taylor repeatedly relates our move towards modernity with an understanding of disenchantment as a process that 'replaces earlier visions of order' as 'hierarchical and holist' with an idea of order as 'individualist and egalitarian'.[342] He argues that it is only through a profound change in our moral order that individuality could

337. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.
338. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 35.
339. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
340. Ibid., p. 3 ff.
341. Ibid., pp. 39-43.
342. Ibid., p. 392.

arise from an earlier self-understanding 'deeply embedded in society', in which our identity was essentially a placeholder in social relations (father, son, member of a tribe, etc.).[343] Our acquiring an identity independent of any particular social order occurs by what Taylor calls a process of 'disembedding' which involves our displacement from earlier forms of moral order. The 'matrix of embeddedness … [that] provided the inescapable framework for social life' is transformed by our displacement from a sense of society ordered in relation to a hierarchical cosmos with lower and higher levels of being that 'reaches its apex in eternity'.[344] Displacement from the notion of a hierarchy in the cosmos is what allows us to undermine any social or political hierarchy, understood as manifesting and corresponding to such an order in the cosmos and as expressing the way things are.[345] It is what allows for the neo-Stoicism of Justus Lipsius (d. 1606) and Hugo Grotius (d. 1645), affording them the ability to imagine 'a place to stand, mentally, outside of the polity, as it were, from which to judge its performance'.[346]

As 'the self-understanding which arises out of disenchantment', the modern buffered self is central to the advancement of this displacement.[347] The buffered identity challenges both our previous 'contextual limits to the imagination of the self' and 'the ways we are able to think or imagine the whole of society'.[348] Together with the drive to Reform discussed earlier, the buffered self's 'insistence on personal devotion and discipline', firstly among élites, 'increased the distance, disidentification, even the hostility to the older forms of collective ritual and belonging'.[349] Hence, it was equally 'in their sense of self and in their project for society' that élites moved from the embeddedness of an earlier moral order towards one where the social world could be conceived as constituted by individuals.[350] Notably, this modern moral order moves 'from a mere theory to a form of social imaginary' because of 'the culture of politeness' that comes to underpin 'the practices of an educated and 'polished' élite'.[351]

The modern moral order and the importance it accords to individuality and mutual benefit gives rise to 'an ideal of sociability' erected as 'a criterion for social relations' independent from established forms of authority (political, ecclesiastical, particular-doctrinal, etc.).[352] Most significantly, by intervening in society in an unprecedented manner that disregards hierarchical order, 'polite sociability puts a strain on allegiance to strong forms of sacral authority … [and] puts a strain on the various beliefs and practices which could be the basis of

343. Ibid., p. 157.
344. Ibid., p. 60.
345. Ibid., pp. 146 ff; see also, Taylor, 'Can Secularism travel?', p. 17-19.
346. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 156, 188.
347. Ibid., p. 239.
348. Ibid., p. 156.
349. Ibid.
350. Ibid.
351. Ibid., p. 237.
352. Ibid.

such strong sacral authority'.[353] Further entrenching the moral order from which it derives, polite sociability makes it easy for us to live within a self-sufficient civilisational framework wherein we can hope to 'find the standards of our social, moral and political life'.[354] Polite society or civilisation 'builds for the buffered identity a buffered world' by blocking out some 'of the ways in which transcendence has historically impinged on humans, and been present in their lives'.[355] On the one hand, this may seem positive: the development of a kind of 'invulnerability' attained through discipline, education and order; on the other hand, it can be experienced as negative: an insensitivity or even imprisonment from what lies beyond this buffering. Taylor tells us that the distance and disengagement of our buffered identity can make us feel like 'we are missing something, cut off from something, that we are living behind a screen'.[356] Hence, in reaction to the instrumental individualism that characterises the age of mobilisation, there soon also emerges an expressive individualism, with the rise of what Taylor calls the 'age of authenticity'.

Late Twentieth-Century Counterculture

Expressivism was not so much a new invention, as the diffusion to the general public of an attitude already found among many intellectuals and artists; particularly in the Romantics of the late eighteenth century do we find the type of search for 'authenticity' that will gradually become a mass phenomenon.[357] The basic ideal of Romantic expressivism was that each one of us have to discover and follow our own unique and inspired way of life, as opposed to conforming to 'a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority'.[358] This anti-establishment standpoint grew stronger and became an even more radicalised 'ethos among some cultural élites' from the late eighteenth century onwards, 'but it is only in the era after the Second World War, that this ethic of authenticity begins to shape the outlook of society in general'.[359]

As affluence, privilege and luxuries became more common after the war, the type of privacy and individualism found among the bourgeois throughout the nineteenth century proliferated and intensified, altering 'the relations of previously close-knit working-class or peasant communities, even of extended families'.[360] What followed is the saturation of a 'simplified expressivism' virtually everywhere, notably visible in the popularity and pluralisation of

353. Ibid., pp. 238-239.
354. Ibid., pp. 236-237.
355. Ibid., pp. 238-239.
356. Ibid., pp. 301-302.
357. Ibid., p. 473.
358. Ibid., p. 475.
359. Ibid.
360. Ibid., p. 474.

therapies that 'promise to help you find yourself, realize yourself, release your true self, and so on'.[361] Along the lines already laid out during the Romantic period, the expressivist critique in the second half of the century, also became evident as 'revolts of young people in the 60s ... against a 'system' which smothered creativity, individuality and imagination'.[362] A strong example of the diffusion of this kind of expressivism from a penchant among the elite to a sensibility recognisable in wider society can be glimpsed in the Berkeley protests of the 1960s and the 1968 protests in Paris. During the protests, students adopted themes articulated by many intellectuals preceding them who critiqued 1950s society 'as conformist, crushing individuality and creativity, as too concerned with production and concrete results, as repressing feeling and spontaneity, as exalting the mechanical over the organic'.[363] These protests, the May 1968 riots in Paris in particular, resonated throughout the world.[364] Yet another example showcasing the spread of expressivism during this period is the expansion of youth culture itself, which went from a privilege enjoyed by upper-class and some middle-class university students at the end of the previous century to a taken-for-granted stage in life between childhood and adulthood, altering the working-class culture of the nineteenth and twentieth century to which it was initially an entirely alien concept.[365]

It was within the climate of this counterculture amalgamation of expressive individualism during the late 60s and early 70s, in many cities around the world but especially in Western countries, that a growing population of youth, disillusioned with their own establishments, had become receptive to religious alternatives. Due to recent technological developments in mass-communication and flight-travel, together with an influx of South Asian migration all over the world, the late 60s and early 70s saw a wave of international tours by Indian spiritual teachers and the launch of a number of global Hindu brands made famous in the West through the growth of yoga as 'part of the youth revolution that shook Western Culture' and the promotion of Vedantic philosophy and meditation by popular celebrities like the Beatles and the Beach Boys.[366]

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361. Ibid., p. 475.
362. Ibid., p. 476.
363. Ibid.
364. Ibid.
365. Ibid., pp. 474-475. This today of course is most visible as consumer culture, which brings us to another crucial aspect of this age described by Taylor in what he refers to as 'the space of fashion', and which he describes as a new public sphere unique to the age of authenticity, a space not for common action but for mutual display (p. 481).Taylor continues: 'Here each individual or small group acts on their own, but aware that their display says something to the others, will be responded to by them, will help build a common mood or tone which will colour everyone's actions' (p. 482). An extension of expressivism, consumer culture allows for greater individual expression at these 'spaces of display' and is integral to their construction, such as in the form of 'palaces of consumption' and 'giant malls', but also 'metatopical spaces', which relate us to 'prestigious centres of style-creation' that connect us through commodities to an 'imagined higher existence elsewhere' (p. 483).
366. P. van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2014, p. 179; for a brilliant account of the relationship between Hinduism and the mid-century counterculture in the West, see P. Oliver,

Although generally targeted at the growing Indian diasporas, many non-Hindus found the modernised versions of Vedanta and yoga that these gurus expressed appealing. Fadhlalla Haeri's life would change dramatically from a chance encounter with one of the more prominent of these guru figures to have become popular both inside and outside of India in the second half of the twentieth century. Reflecting the times, this encounter took place miles high in the sky on a commercial plane. It was at the Kuwait airport that he first noticed the 'distinguished looking man', as Haeri describes him, dressed in the saffron robes of a *sanyasi* and with the *vibhuti* mark on his forehead. Haeri felt drawn to the man, and having boarded the same plane, could not help but approach him during the flight. Haeri recalls the meeting in his own words: 'This man's charisma, frankness, humility and freedom of soul captivated me and left me hankering for more. My heart yearned for him. His name was Swami Chinmayananda, an Indian Brahmin, Sanskrit Master and Guru'.[367]

Chinmayananda and neo-Vedanta

Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati (d. 1993) was one of the first popularisers of a modernist approach to the classical Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy, which had already begun to take shape through nineteenth century Indian reform movements like Brahmo Samaj, but was most extensively realised by Swami Vivekananda (d. 1902).[368] Acting as a Hindu apologist, Vivekananda would decisively express this neo-Vedanta at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 by presenting the Upanishads in a context agreeable to a modern American audience, stressing religious inclusivity, an embrace of the scientific ethos and the centrality of individual experience.[369] As Dermot Killingley (2003) has written, Hindu apologetics was framed within 'terms of Western ideas of reason and morality which were assumed to be common to all civilized people'.[370] For instance, the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer (d. 1903) was appropriated as axiomatic and elaborated upon by Vivekananda as an idea originating in ancient India.[371] Ann Gleig and Lola Williamson write that by 'incorporating numerous Western

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Hinduism and the 1960s: The Rise of a Counter-Culture, Bloomsbury, London, 2014; see also P. Goldberg, *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation*, Three Rivers, New York, 2010.

367. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 136.

368. For more on the rise of neo-Vedanta and Hindu modernist movements, see M. R. Paranjape, *Making India: Colonialism, National Culture, and the Afterlife of Indian English Authority*, Springer & Amaryllis, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 13-40, 129-162; see also D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969; D. Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1979; R. King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and the Mystic East*, Routledge, New York, 1999; E. de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*, Continuum, London, 2004.

369. C. Wessinger, 'Hinduism Arrives in America: The Vedanta Movement and the Self-Realization Fellowship', in T. Miller (ed.), *Alternative Religions*, 1995, pp. 173-190. The Upanishads are also known as Vedanta because they constitute the third and last part of the Vedas

370. D. Killingley, 'Modernity Reform and Revival', in G. Flood (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, 2003, pp. 512-513; see also D. Killingley, 'Vivekananda's Western Message from the East', in W. Radice (ed.), *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernization of Hinduism*, 1997, pp. 138-157; D. Killingley, 'Hinduism, Darwinism and Evolution in Late Nineteenth-Century India', in D. Amigoni & J. Wallace (eds.), *Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, pp. 174-202.

371. Killingley, 'Hinduism, Darwinism and Evolution in Late Nineteenth-Century India', pp. 153-156.

values such as rationality, ethics, and tolerance, Vivekananda framed Hinduism as universal and scientific, and thus a viable choice for modern Western people'.[372] They continue, 'following Vivekananda, the majority of second-wave gurus also promoted an essentially modernized and Westernized vision of Hinduism, which placed a universal mystical experience at the core of all religions and offered meditation techniques as scientific tools for accessing higher states of consciousness'.[373]

Although modern influences are clearly discernible in the neo-Vedanta of Vivekananda, it is important to also acknowledge a continuity with classical forms of Vedanta, such as the Advaita Vedanta of the ninth century monastic Adi Shankara (d. 820), which often become obscured under the label neo-Vedanta.[374] It is perhaps better to see Vivekananda as a reviver and reformer of Vedanta rather than simply a modernist. Connection to the classical Vedanta school is also evident in some of the important exponents of neo-Vedanta to follow after Vivekananda, such as Ramana Maharishi (d. 1950) and Swami Sivananda (d. 1963), the latter of whom Peter van der Veer refers to as possibly the most important guru to follow Vivekananda.[375] Chinmayananda had met Ramana Maharishi in Tamil Nadu Tiruvannamalai as a young man, and in later years, the Sanskrit writings of the renowned teacher of Advaita Vedanta would influence Chinmayananda more profoundly.[376] However, it was Swami Sivananda that had a more direct influence on Chinmayananda.

Among a new generation of Indian monastics inspired by Vivekananda was a modern Western-educated physician deeply impressed by his contemporary approach, called Sivananda Saraswati (d. 1963), who even modelled his own teachings and organisation on Vivekananda's. In order to present yoga as a universal science and propagate neo-Vedanta, he set up the Divine Life Society in 1936, which, as Van der Veer relates, 'has been one of the most important transnational spiritual movements, spreading yoga over the world ... by sending prominent disciples to various parts of the world and by publishing books in English that became best sellers'.[377] It was at the Divine Life Society that an initially sceptical journalist, Balakrishnan Menon, would be trained and initiated as Chinmayananda by Sivananda. Chinmayananda would

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372. A. Gleig & L. Williamson, 'Introduction: From Wave to Soil', A. Gleig & L. Williamson (eds.), *Homegrown Gurus: From Hinduism in America to American Hinduism*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 2013, p. 5.

373. Ibid.

374. J. Madaio, 'Rethinking Neo-Vedanta: Swami Vivekananda and the Selective Historiography of Advaita Vedanta', *Religions*, vol. 8, no. 6 (101), 2017, pp. 1-12; to be included in R. D. Sherma & J. McHugh (eds.), *Swami Vivekananda: New Reflections on His Life, Legacy, and Influence*, forthcoming.

375. Van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia*, p. 178.

376. V. Khanna, 'Chinmayananda, Hinduism, and Diaspora Configurations: Identifying the Effects of a Modern Advaita-Vedantin on the Hindu Diaspora in North America', *Nidan*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2018, pp. 31-49. Khanna's paper is part of a larger forthcoming biography on Chinmayananda. For an account of the meeting with Ramana Maharishi by Chinmayananda himself, see his contribution (ch. 83) to L. Narain (ed.), *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi: Enchanting and Uplifting Reminiscences of 160 Persons*, Sri Ramana Kendrum, Hyderabad, 2005, pp. 225-226.

377. Van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia*, p. 178.

later study intensely under the Vedanta scholar, Tapovan Maharj (d. 1957), after which he began teaching the Upanishads in the Advaita Vedanta, non-dualist tradition of Adi Shankara.

As much as Chinmayananda followed the trend of making Advaita Vedanta and the Upanishads compatible with science, he also felt the importance of maintaining continuity with the Advaita tradition as it had originated with Shankara. He negotiated the currents of these two forces, building respect and a significant name for himself with both, even being hailed by some as the 'second Vivekananda'.[378] Chinmayananda entered the milieu of gurus in India as a swami in the 1950s, and sought to reform the teaching of Hinduism — as Vivekananda had done half a century earlier — to suit his times.[379] For example, in light of the Western and now global ideal of egalitarianism, Chinmayananda criticised conventional views on the Hindu caste system as 'Caste-ism', an 'evil in our society today' resulting from an abhorrent misuse of what was originally simply 'a scientific classification of human personality'.[380]

A current researcher of Chinmayananda, Varun Khanna (2008), argues that the guru's 'understanding of modernity, science, and contemporary societal needs' informed much of his modernising efforts and vision of a contemporary Hinduism, a 'vision [that] has played a crucial role in the development of Hinduism and the Hindu identity in the Hindu diaspora, particularly in North America.[381] Given the significant role played by Chinmayananda and the Chinmaya Mission he founded in 1953, Khanna points out the surprising lack of attention given to Chinmayananda and his work.

> There has been surprisingly little academic work done on the influential 20th Century philosopher of advaita-vedānta and globally recognized Hindu guru, Swami Chinmayananda (1916-1993), considering that he is acknowledged as a credible author among the Hindu community, being honored with the 'Hindu Renaissance Award' for the year of 1992 by *Hinduism Today* magazine, being chosen to represent Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993 (the 100th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic talks at the same conference), and even being hailed by some as the 'second Vivekananda'.[382]

Realising Vivekananda's vision of curing the ills of society by imparting knowledge of the scriptures, Chinmayananda would be the first to democratise and popularise Vedanta with the public by teaching it to the Indian urban middle class, something unheard of and controversial at the time. In opposition to the elitism of the priestly brahmin class and the otherworldliness

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378. Khanna, 'Chinmayananda, Hinduism, and Diaspora Configurations', p. 37.

379. Ibid. Khanna continues, 'By the time Chinmayananda entered the scene, the term 'Hinduism' and its unified roots in ancient history had gained traction and was used by Chinmayananda to promote *advaita vedānta* as the essence or culmination of Hinduism, just as Vivekananda had done before him. He developed this vision even further than Vivekananda, and due to his popularity and that of *advaita vedānta*, this development led him to be invited to give his now well-known talk called 'Planet in Crisis' in 1992 at the United Nations' (p. 38).

380. Ibid., p. 39; see also Chinmayananda's interview with Cromwell Crawford in Palo Alto, CA, 1984, available in various formats.

381. Khanna, 'Chinmayananda, Hinduism, and Diaspora Configurations', p. 48

382. Ibid., p. 31.

of the ascetic yogis, he became something of a promethean figure who had divulged the 'secret knowledge' to the masses in the language of the foreigners. Discarding sectarian affiliations for a more universal approach, and teaching in English with a modern style that did not present spirituality in opposition to science or even material progress, Chinmayananda came 'to occupy the role of the emblematic 'religious guru' who would redefine Vedantic Hinduism not just in the Indian but also in the global context'.[383]

Sri Haeri and Chinmayananda

After over a decade of touring India, Chinmayananda ventured onto the international arena and began making frequent lengthy world tours that spanned several countries. It was during one such tour in 1971 that his meeting with Haeri took place. Their plane was heading for Beirut, where Haeri was still living at the time and where he would first spend time with his new guru. Attracting the most affluent visitors for both business and pleasure, Beirut before the civil war also had a thriving milieu of intellectuals and activists, as well as a music scene inspired by the counterculture of the West.[384] In this way, it is a perfect example of how expressive individualism found its place among the well-to-do outside the West. After the initial meeting in Beirut, Haeri would meet many more times with Chinmayananda in the ensuing years, spending two to three weeks at a time, sometimes longer, at least three or four times every year. Having the financial resources to travel with Chinmayananda, Haeri took every opportunity to be in his company, at many different locations around the world, but most often for prolonged periods of time at the Sandeepany Sadhanalaya (Academy of Knowledge) ashram in Mumbai.[385]

Because of his background, and due to him being exclusively focused on the intimate relationship he had developed with his spiritual teacher, Haeri was seen somewhat as an outsider by the rest of the community. Yet, due to both his generous philanthropy and the regard with which Chinmayananda held him, 'Sri Haeri', as he came to be known, would be appointed to various boards within the Chinmaya Mission which was growing around its namesake.[386] Haeri also undertook distance education through a two-year correspondence

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383. D. Sreenivas, *Sculpting a Middle Class: History, Masculinity and the Amar Chitra Katha in India*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2010, p. 34.

384. S. d'Arc Taylor, 'What Became of Beirut's 1960s Jet-Set Playgrounds?', *CNN*, 22 June 2015, https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/beirut-five-star-hotels-faded-glamor-cnngo/index.html.

385. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview Ali Allawi, January 2014.

386. As an example, I cite from a recent volume of the Chinmaya Mission journal: 'Many years ago, a young Muslim oil company executive named Fadhlalla Haeri was on the same Kuwait–London flight as Gurudev. They struck up a conversation, and Gurudev, addressing him lovingly as "Sonny", stole the young man's heart. The short meeting led to a long association as Fadhlalla Haeri traveled around the globe to be near Gurudev and attend his Yagnas. In his first letter to the eager devotee Gurudev had written: "Honestly, you stormed your way into me with such divinely appointed suddenness that I enjoyed watching all that was happening. I am sure this can only be a beginning". As it turned out, this young man sponsored the entrance gate to the Jagadīśvara Temple at Gurudeva Vedanta Institute, Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai' (Chinmaya San Jose Mission, 'Yagnas: The Fire of Knowledge', *Chinmaya Tej*, vol. 26, no. 4, July/August 2015, pp. 5-6).

course with facilitators, a postal course on the Vedanta offered by Chinmayananda's organisation called the Chinmaya Lesson Course (now known as the Foundation and E-Vedanta Course offered by the Chinmaya International Foundation). He even started preparing to study more seriously through learning Sanskrit and committing to the life of a *sanyasi* monk, staying in a simple room at the ashram in Mumbai and following a strict program that included only two meals a day.[387]

After moving to London from a Lebanon at the cusp of civil war in 1975, Haeri also began to regularly attend talks by Jiddu Krishnamurti (d. 1986) at Brockwood Park.[388] It was in 1909 that Krishnamurti had been chosen as a child in India and groomed to be a future spiritual saviour by the Theosophical Society. But by 1929 he had broken away from the organisation and renounced his role as a saviour.[389] Still continuing to write and give talks as he had once done under the banner of Theosophy, he established his own distinct form of Buddhist-inspired secular spirituality that became hugely influential already in his lifetime and would persist after his death.[390] Such first-hand exposure and extensive reading on the subject furthered Haeri's engagement with the wider vibrant influence of Eastern philosophy in the West, both as it had arrived earlier through turn-of-the-century occultism and later through the eclectic New Age teachings prevalent at the time. Heari seemed committed to the Advaita Vedanta tradition, however, taking great inspiration from Ramana Maharishi especially. Although he would go on to meet many more inspiring individuals, Chinmayananda's influence arguably left the most lasting impression on Haeri, who would come to model a lot of his own ambitious programs in later years upon what he had seen of the movement Chinmayananda had invigorated.

Being from a well-known religious family, word naturally got around among the Iraqi diaspora in England that Fadhlalla Haeri, the son of a venerated Muslim scholar, had become a Hindu.[391] Ironically, Chinmayananda would actually be a catalyst for deepening Haeri's commitment to Islam.[392] This transition found abrupt expression on a fateful day in 1977:

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387. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

388. *Non-Duality Magazine*, 'Interview of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri'.

389. On the relationship between Krishnamurti and the Theosophical Society, see T. Fitzgerald, 'Krishnamurti and the Myth of God Incarnate', *Asian Philosophy*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1991, pp. 109-126; see also the detailed biography by R. Vernon, *Star in the East: Krishnamurti: The Invention of a Messiah*, Sentient, Boulder, CO, 2001; and S. Field, *Krishnamurti: The Reluctant Messiah*, Paragon House, Saint Paul, MN, 1989.

390. Krishnamurti would give thousands of talks, and meet many other influential contemporaries, publish 50 books and open several specialised schools. On his life and works, see H. Rodrigues, 'Movement in Emptiness: Assessing Krishnamurti's Life and His Teachings on Religion', *Studies and Theology*, vol. 15, no. 2/3, 1996, pp. 45-60.

391. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

392. Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*. Haeri has often mentioned how Chinmaya constantly hinted at and encouraged his young Muslim follower about his own heritage. To quote the book, 'Swami Chinmaya himself exemplified haqiqa and in his wisdom knew the importance for me of combining it with shari'a. Swamiji regularly reminded me of my link with my Islamic heritage, greeted me often with *assalamualaiykum* (peace be upon you) and even suggested that I make Umrah. He also warned me against the deviations and distortions from the original Prophetic message. The Swami knew that I lived by the Islamic Prophetic path and so a full return to it would be a natural completion for my spiritual journey' (pp. 18-19).

> A day came when Swamiji told me the time had arrived for me to find the Sufis and return to the Islam of my youth. The Guru advised that I take the first clear path that presented itself, and not to be distracted by anything I might see which did not directly concern me. At first there was a sense of desolation at losing the close proximity to the Master, who had been my spiritual father for several years. As events unfolded, I came to realise the deep wisdom of Swamiji's guidance.[393]

Although this marked the end of his mentorship under Swami Chinmayananda, Haeri would in the future keep contact with his former teacher through letters and intermediaries.

Western Sufism and the Shadhili Order

Very soon after his painful separation from Chinmayananda in India, Haeri picked up a book from a store near his apartment in Bayswater, West London.[394] He was touched by the book, specifically being drawn to its one-page profile of Prophet Muhammad in the introduction.[395] The author was a successful Scottish editor, playwright and actor called Ian Dallas, who, after discovering Islam and Sufism in the late 60s during a visit to Morocco, also went under the name Abdalqadir as-Sufi.[396] Already apparent in the fact that the earliest two European Sufis of any fame — the Swiss-Russian adventurer Isabelle Eberhardt (d. 1904) and the Swedish artist Ivan Aguéli (d. 1917) — were both anarchists and anti-authoritarian activists, Sufism in the West had unsurprisingly come to be part of the alternative religious milieu that coincided with the counterculture of the 60s and 70s, by which time a number of Sufi movements had come to prominence in Europe and America.[397] Western Sufism before the emergence of a counterculture movement had mainly been an eclectic interest of European and American intellectual and artistic elites influenced by the legacy of Romanticism and *fin-de-siècle*

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393. Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, p. 19.

394. Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

395. The book in question was I. Dallas (as Abdalqadir as-Sufi), *The Way of Muhammad*, Diwan, Berkley, CA, 1975.

396. For research on Abdalqadir as-Sufi and his movement, refer to A. Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts*, Kegan Paul International, London, 1996; Y. Dutton, 'Sufism in Britain: The Da'wa of Shaykh 'Abdalqadir as-Sufi', in Geaves & Gabriel (eds.), *Sufism in Britain*, pp. 93-110; R. Geaves, 'Transformations and Trends among British Sufis', in Geaves & Gabriel (eds.), *Sufism in Britain*, pp. 41-43; R. Geaves, 'Sufism in the West', in L. V. J. Ridgeon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 249-251; R. Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain: An Exploration of Muslim identity*, Cardiff Academic Press, Cardiff, 2000, pp. 142-144, 152; Hermansen, 'The Other Shadhilis of the West', pp. 483-489; F. A. Leccese, 'Islam, Sufism and the Postmodern in the Religious Melting Pot', in R. Tottoli (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*, Routledge, London, 2014, pp. 447-450; M. J. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2017, pp. 237-240, 243-246; A. K. Idrissi, *Islamic Sufism in the West*; also A. Godlas, 'Shaykh Abdalqadir as-Sufi, Eric Clapton, and the History of Rock & Roll', 2010, available at https://themomentoftheseeker.wordpress.com/2013/10/17/the-moment-of-the-seeker-shaykh-abdalqadir-as-sufi-eric-clapton-and-the-history-of-rock-roll/; A. H. Bewley, 'The Influence of Shaykh Abdalqadir as-Sufi on Islam in Africa', *The Official Website of Shaykh Mortada Elboumashouli*, 2 July 2017, http://shaykhmortada.com/index.php/2017/07/02/the-influence-of-shaykh-abdalqadir-as-sufi-on-islam-in-africa/. See also the documentary film about Dallas and the group: *Blessed are the Strangers*, creators A. Peerbux & S. H. Whyte, 2016.

397. For more on Eberhardt and Aguéli's place in modern Islamic anarchism, see A. T. Fiscella, *Varieties of Islamic Anarchism: A Brief Introduction*, Alpine Anarchist Productions, 2014; see also J. Hammond, 'Anarchism', in G. Böwering, P. Crone & M. Mirza (eds.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2013, pp. 36-37; M. J. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004, pp. 63-68, 79.

Occultism.[398] But as a greater population of young seekers emerged in the counterculture era, interest in Sufism widened, as with other exotic religious traditions such as Advaita Vedanta.

As an illustration of the continuity of this trend between earlier elites and later youth in the case of Sufism, we can look at European interaction with the Shadhili Sufi order in particular. The Maghrebi Sufism connected to Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1258) was arguably the most accessible and relatable of the Sufi orders for European Christians since the early modern period.[399] So by the early twentieth century, the Shadhili order would come to the attention of a few occultists who would be instrumental in the early formation of Sufism in Europe and America; this included the aforementioned Ivan Aguéli, as well as his associate, the French intellectual René Guénon (d. 1951). In a historical parallel to Fadhlalla Haeri, Guénon developed and articulated a keen interest in the teachings of Advaita Vedanta before coming into contact with Sufism and being initiated into the Shadhili order.[400] Also inspired by Advaita Vedanta and Sufism, the Swiss-German esotericist Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998) was strongly influenced by Guénon and kept regular correspondence with him whilst also affiliating himself with the Shadhili order during his time in North Africa throughout the 1930s and through his contact with the renowned Algerian Sufi shaykh, Ahmad al-'Alawi (d. 1934).[401]

The Darqawi branch of the Shadhili order, formed after Muhammad al-'Arabi al-Darqawi (d. 1823), would play a particularly significant role in the growth of Sufism in the West during this period. One of its primary figures was Shaykh Ahmad al-'Alawi, whose extensive travels helped spread his 'Alawi branch of the Shadhili-Darqawi order throughout North Africa, all across the Levant and even in Europe among migrant communities like the Algerians in France and Yemenis in the seaports of Britain.[402] Partly due to his engagement with contemporary issues and his personal charisma, recognised by Arab and French alike, Ahmad al-'Alawi attracted notable Europeans, such as Schuon, as well as his contemporaries Titus Burckhardt (d. 1984) and Martin Lings (d. 2005), all of whose writings inspired individuals from the counterculture generation to travel themselves to North Africa. For example, the English writer, Robert Irwin, recounts in his *Memoirs of a Dervish* (2015) that during his visit to Algeria in the mid-60s he had found favour among the successors of Ahmad al-'Alawi at his lodge

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398. Geaves, 'Sufism in the West', pp. 241-247.

399. An example of this early Shadhili influence in Europe is the influence of Ibn Abbad al-Rundi (d. 1390) on St. John of the Cross (d. 1591) and his poem on 'The Dark Night of the Soul'; see M. A. Palacios, *Saint John of the Cross and Islam*, trans. E. H. Douglas & H. W. Yoder, Vantage, New York, 1981 [1941]; for a counter-argument claiming a correlation between the two writers instead, see J. Nieto, *Mystic Rebel Saint: A Study of Saint John of the Cross*, Droz, Geneva, 1979.

400. One of his earliest publications was an article on Advaita Vidanta; see R. Guénon, 'Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines', in *Collected Works of Rene Guénon*, Sophia Perennis, Hillsdale, NY, 2004. Although Guénon left Paris for Egypt in 1930 and remained there for the rest of his life, he left behind him a tremendous legacy through his many writings on metaphysics.

401. See M. Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaikh Ahmad al-Alawi, His Spiritual Heritage and Legacy*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1971 [1961].

402. Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, p. 65; Geaves, 'Sufism in the West', p. 251; see also F. Halliday, *Arabs in Exile*, I. B. Tauris, London, 1992.

(*zawiya*) in the port city of Mostaganem by producing a copy of the biography of al-'Alawi written by Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, first published in 1961.[403] It was around this time that in Morocco, Ian Dallas would be initiated into the Shadhili-Darqawi order by the beloved shaykh, Muhammad ibn al-Habib (d. 1972).

By the early 70s, a small group began forming in London as followers of Ibn al-Habib, with Dallas as the local representative. The group initially consisted of around twenty to thirty British and North American exemplars of the counterculture, who lived together in a street of squatter buildings that housed a variety of other 'hippies'.[404] In line with general counterculture trends towards 'fashion orientalism', Abdalqadir's fledgling group was an evidently Western Sufi movement that adopted strong Oriental and especially Maghrebi cultural trappings, imitating it in their attire, customs and food, as well as in how they understood and practised their new-found religiosity. One example of this expression of counterculture is the short-lived band some of the members of the group formed, dubbed The Habibiyya, who created a psychedelic rock fusion with the traditional Arabic poems of the Shadhili-Darqawi order; on the back cover of their only ever released album, *If Man but Knew*, we see the group wearing turbans and a scarf in the case of the female member.[405] Interesting to discriminate, however, is the fact that Western proponents of Shadhili Sufism seem to have maintained more of a commitment to the 'exoteric' aspects of Islam throughout the twentieth century in contrast to many eclectic forms of Sufism that had also become popular in the West during the same period.

Sidi Haeri and Abdalqadir as-Sufi

Amongst the most prominent of these eclectic Western Sufi movements were a number of Sufi groups that all trace their origins to Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927), an Indian musician and Sufi shaykh of the Chishti order who spent many years in both North America and Europe in the early twentieth century with an explicit mission to spread Sufism in the West.[406] Another popular variant of Western Sufism 'peaking in the 1960s and 1970s search for perennial wisdom in the alternative counter-culture milieu', was the synthesis of explicitly Sufi teachings with the more ambiguous Sufi elements in the work of the Greek-Armenian esotericist George I. Gurdjieff (d. 1949) and his Russian student Pyotr D. Ouspensky (d. 1947) through popular figures such as John G. Bennet (d. 1974), Idries Shah (d. 1992) and Reshad Feild (d. 2015), as

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403. Geaves, 'Transformations and Trends among British Sufis', pp. 40-41; Geaves, 'Sufism in the West', pp. 249-250.
404. They included Mike Evans, Roger Powell, Ian Whiteman, Richard Thompson, Daniel Moore, and Peter Sanders; Eric Clapton had visited on occasion (Leccese, 'Islam, Sufism and the Postmodern in the Religious Melting Pot', p. 448).
405. Leccese, 'Islam, Sufism and the Postmodern in the Religious Melting Pot', p. 448; Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, pp. 239-240;
406. Once again reflecting the nearness of neo-Vedanta and Western Sufism, his first talk in America was hosted by the Vedanta Society of Swami Vivekananda (Z. Inayat-Khan, *A Hybrid Sufi Order at the Crossroads of Modernity: The Sufi Order and Sufi Movement of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan*, PhD diss., Duke University, Durham, NC, 2006).

well as centres like the 'Study Society' at Colet House in London.[407] Though still taking as anti-clerical and anti-dogmatic a stance as these earlier esoteric approaches to Sufism in the West, Abdalqadir and his associates differed in their effort to present themselves as 'authentic' Sufis by emphasising their Shadhili roots in the Maghreb.[408]

In line with this stance, Abdalqadir's movement played a key role in the translation and dissemination of many major Shadhili texts and other classical Sufi and Islamic literature. In coming years, they would achieve a considerable literary output in the West with these translations, as well as original works, including Abdalqadir's own array of writings on political theory, history, philosophy and Islam, as well as fiction.[409] Although Abdalqadir has remained a proficient and prolific writer throughout the years, his two earliest books as a Muslim have remained his most popular. Somewhat autobiographical, *The Book of Strangers* (1972) – written under the name Ian Dallas – is a fictional account of a university librarian in an unidentified futuristic society, who after becoming disillusioned with the electronic, bureaucratic and neurotic confines of his surroundings, embarks on a journey to the desert where he finds Islam and progresses towards enlightenment. *The Way of Muhammad* (1975) – published under the name Abdalqadir as-Sufi – on the other hand, is a meditation on the central principles of Islam through the lens of the modern intellectual and scientific tradition.

It is this latter book that had left such a strong impression on Fadhlalla Haeri, who sought to get in touch with its author soon after reading it. A month or so after contacting the publisher, Haeri was invited to meet Abdalqadir at the apartment of one of his followers in London. At the time of their meeting in 1977, Abdalqadir had just been inaugurated as an authorised spiritual master in the Shadhili-Darqawi order by the Libyan shaykh, Muhammad al-Fayturi (d. 1978), a successor to Ahmad al-'Alawi, whom Abdalqadir had attached himself to after the passing of his previous shaykh.[410] The group around the Scottish shaykh had grown considerably by this time. A centre had already been established at Berkeley and Monterey in California since his visit to the US in 1973, and another community had begun to take shape in Granada.[411] In England, an attempt to create a self-sufficient village had resulted in over a hundred members of his community moving to Norwich in Norfolk, where they had established the Darqawi Institute and Mosque. With his wife Zainab, Fadhlalla Haeri began to attend the *dhikr* gatherings at the centre in Norwich, and, inspired by the expressly Islamic flavour of the group, Haeri resumed the religious practices of his youth.[412]

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407. For a concise genealogy of the influence of Gurdjieff, see J. J. M. Petsche, 'A Gurdjieff Genealogy: Tracing the Manifold Ways the Gurdjieff Teaching Has Travelled', *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 49-79, 2013.
408. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, p. 245.
409. For a select bibliography of Shaykh Abdalqadir's work, as well as translations overseen by him, see Dutton, 'Sufism in Britain', pp. 108-110.
410. See Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century.*
411. The original place in California was a giant house with around 40 male and female occupants; see A. Köse, *Conversion to Islam*.
412. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

Haeri followed his new master's instructions diligently, and was fortunate to spend a lot of time alone with Abdalqadir, travelling with him and having the Sufi shaykh stay with him for some time at his home in Sharjah, UAE. It was during this visit that Abdalqadir advised Haeri to marry his second wife, a Scottish aristocrat and businesswoman working in Dubai, who had just taken the name Muneera after recently becoming Muslim.[413] This demonstrated how Haeri was entirely committed to his new teacher. Yet, as before, he involved himself only minimally with the community that orbited the master, preferring to remain somewhat on the periphery.[414] And in turn, Haeri was regarded by the community as simply a wealthy donor. In the words of a former follower of Abdalqadir, Haeri was seen by the group as 'this wealthy businessman ... a wealthy spoilt Arab who was going to learn to be a real Muslim'.[415] But this all changed during one eventful visit to Abdalqadir's new centre in Arizona, a large six-bedroom house with a tower just outside of Tucson, which Haeri had himself mostly financed.[416]

With the workload of his various businesses mounting, Haeri had been making preparations to leave. But Abdalqadir asked him to stay on a little longer so that the shaykh could put him in *khalwa* ('seclusion', lit. 'emptying out'), a Sufi practice of spiritual retreat where the aspirant undergoes complete isolation for a number of days.[417] Rather than some exotic location on a mountaintop as he might have imagined, the *khalwa* took place in Haeri's own dreary third-floor apartment which he had been renting in the city.[418] To the backdrop of a noisy highway and hammering rainfall, Haeri spent three days entirely on his own, eating the simple food that was brought to his door a couple of times a day, restricting sensory stimulation, and spending his days and nights mostly meditating in silence. His own various accounts of the experiences that he went through during this *khalwa* show what a tremendous effect it had on Haeri.[419] More important for us, however, is that alongside his own personal experiences, the event also marked a new stage in Fadhlalla Haeri's public life. After coming out of his seclusion, Haeri was instructed by Shaykh Abdalqadir to start giving lessons on the Qur'an at the Tucson centre, and soon after, was officially given permission (*idhn*) to give instruction as a Shadhili shaykh.[420]

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413. M. Haeri, interview, March 2017.

414. Haeri writes about the experience in his autobiography: 'I was regarded by most of his companions as a 'special' insider/outsider – a visitor who had access to the Shaykh ... I also did not concern myself with the murids' [followers] personal or community dramas. Some of the followers lacked courtesy and sensitivity towards others and regarded me mostly as a wealthy donor' (*Son of Karbala*, p. 156).

415. Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017.

416. Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

417. This practice is commonly referred to as *chilla* (meaning 'forty' in Persian) in Iran and India, due to its traditional duration of forty days.

418. Haeri had been staying in the apartment together with Muneera, so as to have easy access to Abdalqadir without having to be too involved with the community around the shaykh (Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017).

419. See for instance his account of the experience in Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 157-163.

420. Haeri would also teach Qur'an at other venues during this early period, such as to some 50 ladies in Dubai at the house of a certain Shaykh 'Ali of Hadramawt, Yemen (Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017).

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, we took an initial look at Haeri's own meeting with modernity, looking at it in stages as outlined by Taylor's ideal types. In Haeri's early childhood we found remnants of an Islamicate civilisation and a sense of the sacred reminiscent of an 'ancién regime'. But the Karbala of his childhood also showed evidence of an 'age of mobilisation', having served as the bastion of religious reformism for an ulama class with whom Haeri was personally associated, as well as being a city in transition, showing some tell-tale signs of modern society. Haeri's abrupt departure to the West, and subsequent education and employment, gave us a glimpse into Haeri's personal journey in dealing with secular life. We saw first-hand the disillusionment and nihilism brought on by his modern lifestyle, and how Haeri, like many of his contemporaries, sought a personal remedy for this in the burgeoning milieu of alternative spirituality and esotericism; a move indicating the advent of an 'age of authenticity'.

What this background chapter has done is to introduce these three ideal-types which we are working with in this study to build a larger narrative around our story about Fadhlalla Haeri. But just like with other categories, we have to keep in mind that Taylor's ideal-types are just that, ideal-types there to help us grasp aspects of what is otherwise only observable as a continuous stream of historical process. What these ideal-types mark are tensions that often occur along the lines they map out. In an appreciation of this fact, the narrative presented from this point on will not make constant references to the conceptual arguments the ideal-types indicate, but rather look at them through the prism of two key words I feel highlight those aspects of Taylor's argument under focus in this work: 'authority' and 'authenticity', marked by the respective titles of the remaining two chapters.

Whereas in this chapter we have looked at Taylor's ideal-types through Haeri's own personal journey, what we will be doing in the next two chapters is looking at the ideal-types through a wider context that relates directly to the particular manner in which Haeri would attempt to situate himself to his surroundings in his new role as Sufi shaykh. What will serve as the major theme for the further contextualisation of this story is the meeting of Muslims and modernity and the affects this would have on the consequent development of Islam as a religion. Why this is relevant in relation to Haeri is that it is from this point in his life that he begins to seriously interact with modern Muslims, responding to them through his teachings and other activities.

Chapter 3

Islam and Authority

In this chapter we will continue with Haeri's story, focusing on his reintroduction to Islam through Sufism, with particular attention to the theme of authority. Looking at his emergence as a religious figure, we will work to formulate a socio-historical contextualisation around some of the major points of interest during Haeri's early career as a Sufi shaykh. These include his efforts to build a utopian community in Texas among other places, as well as his many philanthropical projects to achieve the same end. We can add to this his revivalist ambition to propagate an idealistic Islam free from cultural, historical and sectarian trappings, through numerous talks and writings, and also his attempt to create an institute for religious education and a spiritual sanctuary in the form of a modern madrasa. These projects reflect on a micro-scale the ambitions and efforts of many Muslim elites on a much larger scale across a wider span of time. What we will be exploring is this wider narrative of Islamic revivalism and reformism within which Haeri's story can be contextualised. The chapter has been divided into two parts that roughly correspond to the earlier and later half of the 1980s respectively. Whilst the first part is generally concerned with the sociopolitical aspects of Haeri's drive for Islamic revivalism, the second is more concerned with the theological and intellectual aspects of his ambition. With authority being the overriding theme, we will look at how the rise of a Muslim public sphere relates to the demise of the caliphate and the declining influence of the ulama.

3.1 Civility

3.1.1 Creating a Community

> After my *khalwa*, Shaykh Abdalqadir asked me to teach Qur'an to a group of ladies at his Ribat in Tucson. It was my first teaching experience and the Qur'an came to life for me. I felt inspired to transmit its deeper meaning. I came also to understand that what I had seen on the horizons of the Vedanta was also embedded in the Qur'an. My new state inspired me with the desire to create a community that was going to live an effulgent Islam, inspired by the message of Qur'an. America seemed fresher and contained a greater sense of hope and possibility than Europe. It was also the land where my eyes opened in the spiritual sense. The question was where to set up the community centre.[1]

Fadhlalla Haeri's initial teaching sessions in Tucson marked a new direction in his life and the beginning of his withdrawal from the business world. Soon afterwards, in the summer of 1979, Haeri found himself giving a series of lessons on the meaning of the Qur'an to a small group in San Antonio, Texas, indicating his public role as a religious teacher and spiritual leader in his own right.[2] By August, Haeri purchased a 25-acre hilltop-estate, Cielo Vista, not too far north from San Antonio, as a home for him and his family.[3] The place was named Dar al-Hikma (meaning 'Abode of Wisdom') and served as the preliminary place for Haeri's teaching activities and gatherings, until a massive piece of farmland was purchased west of San Antonio, beside Blanco in the Texas Hill Country.[4]

Through his earlier training with the IPC and later real estate business in the country, Haeri had a familiarity with the United States, and, following in the footsteps of his Sufi mentor, chose to establish a community in the country.[5] Communal living had seen an unprecedented revival among idealistic Americans in the 70s, often resulting in an exodus to the countryside (later labelled the back-to-the-land movement). Although some only lived the life briefly, others stayed on, even after the counterculture fervour that had propelled the initiative faded. Besides the typical hippie communes, there were many other types of communal living, of both secular

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1. Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, pp. 33-34.
2. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017. In the coming years, due to Fadhlalla Haeri's hesitation with this new-found role, Abdalqadir would refer to Haeri as 'the reluctant shaykh'.
3. See R. Barnes, 'Hilltop Home with a Colorful Past', *San Antonio Woman*, March/April 2016., p. 30; Barnes details, as part of the colourful history of the property: 'In the 1980s, Iranian Shah [*sic*] and international business man Fadhlalla Haeri was traveling on Interstate 10 and saw the hilltop. He thought it would be an excellent location for his family compound, so he purchased the property and removed the cross [erected in the 1960s by the Leon Springs Presbyterian Church]. He occupied the main house at the top of the hill and added separate buildings for his three wives, a pavilion for gatherings, and a school for young children.'
4. T. Mikell-Choudhury, 'Dar al-Hikma: White, Texas', *The Blue Guitar Magazine*, Fall 2010, p. 14. Although meant mainly for his family, others would live at Dar al-Hikma also -- students as well as friends of the family, such as Princess Shahnaz Pahlavi, daughter of the last Shah of Iran (d. 1980). A large octagonal shaped pavilion on the property worked as a communal hall where anywhere up to 50 students would attend Haeri's classes and gatherings.
5. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

and religious persuasions. Many had environmentalist concerns, with some specifically becoming environmental demonstration projects and others just striving for agricultural self-sufficiency; some were centred on political ideals, from leftist politics to simply encouraging socially responsible livelihoods and helping homeless people; others were devoted to the arts, therapy, healing and personal growth, or even sexual orientation; and quite a few had no agenda beyond the immediate economic incentive.[6]

There was also a great range of diversity among those communes that were specifically religious. A whole range of them were connected to independent and eclectic spiritual movements of the emerging New Age; several were Christian communes of various forms, both old and new; Hindu-orientated and various Buddhist communal centres were also widespread; even a few Jewish ones existed, as well as those built on the basis of Islamic, and especially Sufi, principles.[7] One example of the latter would be the Sufi Order International's property in upstate New York, the Abode of the Message, which, in 1980, had close to 150 people living on the previous Shaker village.[8]

Haeri's venture was another example of this quest for an idealistic community in the attractive American countryside. Search for the actual site spanned a period of eight months, with the emphasis of its possible uses changing as new land prospects were found.[9] What Haeri eventually found was very similar to many of the other communal experiments in the US: a picturesque locale, with hills, water and forested areas all inside its boundaries, located in a rural area with enough arable land to be somewhat self-sufficient, yet within an hour's drive of a major city.[10] Soon, a centre was established on the 134-acre ranch while construction of its various facilities was undertaken in various phases over a period of just under two years.[11]

The first project was the renovation of the existing structures. The original 120-year-old farmhouse was converted into a mosque, and other building projects were also soon underway. The outbuildings were changed to offices and the barns were put into shape for the livestock of mainly poultry, sheep and milk goats. Land was cleared for future orchards and gardens, roads were added and improved, new office buildings and workshops were built, as well as housing for staff and students.[12] In due course, the centre consisted of three different courtyards, surrounded by buildings containing 20–40 rooms, each able to accommodate 3–4

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6. T. Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1999.

7. Ibid.

8. W. R. Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 2015, pp. 98-99; see also G. Webb, 'Third-Wave Sufism in America and the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship', in J. Malik & J. R. Hinnells (eds.), *Sufism in the West*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 89.

9. 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment', *Nuradeen*, vol. 2, no. 4, Autumn 1982, pp. 26-27.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.; see also the two promotional videos *Bayt al-Deen* (1982), available online at https://youtu.be/yrWP9D-apTA; and *Bayt al-Deen Revisited* (1984), available online at https://youtu.be/Mj3yXVmG2fg.

people. In addition, there was a communal kitchen and three other areas with food preparation facilities, separate dining rooms for men and women, laundry facilities, numerous offices, a bath house, two swimming pools, a library and bookstore, a well-stocked homeopathic and first aid clinic for residents, faculty and guests, a morgue next to the mosque, and a cemetery on the grounds. There was also a lake on the land, as well as three wells, underground fuel storage tanks and an emergency electrical generator. Along with food storage facilities and a fully-working farm offering organically grown vegetables, eggs, goat milk and lamb meat, the place offered everything necessary for a self-sufficient community.[13]

Bayt al-Deen

About a year after Haeri had moved into his own home in the region, the newly bought land and community centre began to be populated.[14] In time, people would start arriving at Bayt al-Deen ('House of Wisdom'), as the place came to be called, from all over the country, some from south of the border, as well as a few from Canada, Europe and Africa.[15] The community came to attract all sorts of seekers from 'cultures as diverse as Indians from the Sub-Continent, Persians and Arabs to Native Indians, White Americans, South Americans, Slavs, Britons and many others'.[16] This was an expressed intention of Bayt al-Deen, which was advertised as a diverse community through various posters, pamphlets and other marketing material.[17] Two promotional videos were also made, one in 1982 titled *Bayt al-Deen* and another in 1984 titled *Bayt al-Deen Revisited*, both of which offer plenty of archive film footage and photography from Bayt al-Deen that present an incredibly diverse group of people, of various cultural, ethnic and also national backgrounds.[18]

Although perhaps encouraged to seem that way in the promotional material, there is little reason to assume that this diversity at Bayt al-Deen was not the case, which is also supported by the interviews taken for this research with some of the former members of the community who were themselves of various backgrounds including South African, Jewish American, African American and Native American.[19] Bayt al-Deen was always open to all guests, provided they followed the ground rules, such as no smoking or drinking, and appropriate dress.[20] The

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13. 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment'.
14. This was around August 1980, during the Ramadan of 1400 AH.
15. Yaseera, interview, March 2017; *Bayt al-Deen* (1982); *Bayt al-Deen Revisited* (1984).
16. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 168.
17. Such as the pamphlet 'Bayt al-Deen: An Arena of Service' (observed and copied by the author from an original exemplar found in the archives at the Rasooli Centre).
18. *Bayt al-Deen* (1982); *Bayt al-Deen Revisited* (1984).
19. A South African interviewee, for instance, recalled how she came to stay at Bayt al-Deen for a few years together with her husband who was a Zulu chieftain. They had been touring the country before coming across a poster about Bayt al-Deen. The wife and children are still connected to Haeri and the community in South Africa, where I got an opportunity to interview the wife (Yaseera, interview, March 2017).
20. 'Bayt al-Deen; An Arena of Service'; 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment'; *Bayt al-Deen* (1982); *Bayt al-Deen Revisited* (1984).

centre also provided for a few hundred local Muslims who would come on Fridays for the congregational prayer and complementary lunch, while for the biannual Eid prayers and festivities, Bayt al-Deen would cater for approximately a thousand attendees.[21]

At one point, Bayt al-Deen housed a children's school, the Sadiq School for Boys, which provided classes in Qur'an and basic fundamentals of Islam, as well as vocational and sporting activities. One of the more interesting projects for children was a four-week summer camp for both boys and girls from the ages of seven to fifteen. Like any typical summer camp, outdoor activities included swimming, canoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, archery and martial arts, and indoor activities included woodworking, silk-screening, sewing and weaving. There were studies in nature and health, the basics of farming and gardening, as well as campfires and overnight camping expeditions. But there were also other more explicitly Islamic activities, such as prayer and other events centred around the mosque.[22] An account from someone who spent part of their childhood in Bayt al-Deen at the time offers us a window into this multicultural centre:

> My parents divorced when I was five years old. At that time, my Orthodox Jewish father converted to Islam and joined a Sufi-Muslim commune in the middle of Texas. He tried to bring my second-generation Holocaust-survivor mother with him, but she refused. As a result, I spent school years with my mother and summers and holidays with my father and his new American-Muslim convert wife and her four children. Four months of every year I lived at Bayt 'ul Deen, a 200-acre farm, isolated from the rest of society. Unlike me, my stepbrothers and stepsisters never left the commune. At most, they drove two hours to Austin, Texas to visit the Whole Foods to buy brown rice and lentils a few times a year. Otherwise, they remained separate from everyone else. The children of our commune were schooled on site. Our teachers were our mothers and the mothers of our friends. The women and men who taught us were not trained. Some of them may not have completed high school themselves. After joining the commune, my father taught himself and became fluent in Arabic. He became the Arabic teacher on our 'utopian' community. Other men on the commune taught Persian, Urdu, and the history of Islam. My stepmother and the other ladies taught the kids math, reading, and writing. The subjects we studied were non-orthodox, to say the least. Our Sufi commune was unlike most households in America. We studied subjects most Americans never heard of or even acknowledged. My closest friends were from Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan. We ate together, slept together, cooked together, studied together, and prayed together. Together we questioned life and death. We debated world politics, the idea of Americanism, and the problems of our consumer-based world. The more I learned about the world and problems outside of my not-so-typical home, the more disinterested I became in traditional education.[23]

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21. Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017.
22. *Nuradeen*, vol. 1, no. 3, May/June 1981; data also gathered from promotional material and the registration form for the summer camp.
23. T. Mikell-Choudhury, 'Red Ink: A Literacy Autobiography', *The Whirlwind Review*, vol. 1, Autumn 2011, p. 41; see also her paper, T. Mikell-Choudhury, *Bayt 'ul Deen, an Islamic Sufi Shi'ite Commune at Arizona*, PhD diss., University of Arizona, Tucson, 2005; and her forthcoming memoirs about her childhood, *Bayt ul-Deen: House of Faith.*

As shown to us in this account, conscious effort to cultivate diversity was an expressed intention of the social experiment that was Bayt al-Deen. This ambition is directly stated in the title, 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment', for an article promoting the centre at the time that refers to it as 'a laboratory in which to see the personal and social dynamics on a mini scale'.[24] The article highlights the 'multi-racial and multi-national characteristics of the population' at Bayt al-Deen, which is described as a 'micro-social environment' that can offer anyone living there the opportunity to deal with experiences that usually only arise during travelling.[25] This intentional inclusivity was part of a greater 'utopian' ideal that was being inculcated at the Sufi commune. In his own words, Haeri described Bayt al-Deen at the time as 'a project designed to harbour anyone who is interested in practicing and living Islam and diving into the totality of the spiritual quest of man – a haven whereby anyone who is serious and mature can come and meet others who are like-minded and benefit from the teaching and companionship'.[26]

The Ideal of Civility and Civilisation

The purpose of Bayt al-Deen was to offer a utopian sanctuary for the inculcation of an idealised Islam.[27] As the name of the centre denotes, Bayt al-Deen was to be a home for the practice of an 'original Islam'.[28] Reinhard Schulze points out that the vision of an idealised Islam served as a Muslim equivalent to European 'classicism' and the utopian ideal it represented.[29] The correspondence here is between the nineteenth-century European concept of 'classicism' that became popular as a consequence of the republican revolutions, and the ideal of returning to the 'pure' Islam of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-salih*) that became a trend at the turn of the century among different clusters of Muslim intellectuals, which in some variants came to be called Salafism. This parallel drawn by Schulze is far from coincidental, with use of the Arabic word '*Salafiyya*' especially pertinent as it semantically matches that of 'classicism'; both terms capture the search for 'a timeless aesthetic and intellectual ideal, derived from an origin that was pure of all temporal circumstances'.[30] This shared vision is further accentuated by another pertinent idea that links Salafism and classicism.

Marcia Hermansen has highlighted how Haeri's project was explicitly expressed as 'the nucleus of a community ... to be modelled on the first Islamic community at Madina'.[31] There is plenty of evidence to support this assertion. The Medinan community was clearly held as the

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24. 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment'.
25. Ibid.
26. Haeri, cited in 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment', p. 27.
27. Ibid., p. 26.
28. Ibid., p. 26-27.
29. R. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, trans. A. Azodi, I. B. Tauris, London, 2000, p. 18.
30. Ibid.
31. 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment'; also cited in Hermansen, 'The Other Shadhilis of the West', p. 489.

template and primary role-model for Bayt al-Deen by Haeri and his followers.[32] In fact, what had attracted Haeri to the area in the first place was seeing a little town near San Antonio called Medina.[33] As the city that harboured Muhammad and the first living community of Muslims, the oasis town of Yathrib came to be called *al-Madinah*, 'the City'. The Arabic word for city, *madinah*, derives from a verbal root meaning to refine or civilise, and the word for civilisation, *tamaddun*, derives from the same root, alluding to the strong association between civilisation and the city.[34] This we see also with the Latin word for civility (*civitas*) and the Greek word it translates (*polis*), which both likewise denote the city. Taylor writes that the ancients saw the city 'as the site of human life at its best and highest. Aristotle had made clear that humans reach the fullness of their nature only in the polis'.[35]

The ideal of civility draws upon a fundamental and perhaps universal distinction 'between life in the forest and life in the city'.[36] That is why our self-identity as civilised people occurred during the Renaissance in contrast to the idea of the other as the savage. Taylor mentions the idea of an '*état policé*' among seventeenth-century French elites as something they had that the '*sauvages*' did not. What the savages apparently lacked was the capacity to 'be governed in orderly fashion, under a code of law', basically amounting to the modern state, which began to develop during this period as a powerful instrument of control over society and came to be seen as a defining feature of an *état policé*.[37] It is of note that when this modern state-system was initially introduced to lands outside of Europe, most Muslim thinkers and 'reformists didn't see themselves as victims of European hegemony' or 'as outsiders seeking entry into European society', but as 'beneficiaries and active agents of new governance practices'.[38] This is because, initially in the minds of Muslim thinkers and other elites, 'Arab' or 'Islamic'

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32. 'Bayt al-Deen: an experiment', p. 26.
33. Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017; Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 167; Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, p. 34.
34. 'The root of the Arabic word '*din*' is d-y-n. This root has four primary meanings: mutual obligation, submission or acknowledgment, judicial authority, and natural inclination or tendency. For example, the word '*dana*', which comes from '*din*', means 'being indebted'; this term conveys an entire group of meanings related to the idea of debt. The word '*dain*', depending on the way in which it is used, can mean either 'debtor' or 'creditor', words that have opposite meanings but are based on the same concept. To be *dain* means that one is obliged to follow all of the laws, customs, and ordinances covering indebtedness. Being in debt also implies obligation, which is expressed in Arabic by the term '*dayn*', another word that comes from the same root. Indebtedness may also involve formal judgment (*daynuna*) or conviction (*idanah*), terms that relate to one's obligation to pay or otherwise fulfill a debt or a contract. Commercial life, which is based to a large extent on the responsibility to fulfill one's contracts and debts, is centered in a town or a city, both of which are designated in Arabic by the term '*madinah*'. A city has a judge, ruler, or governor, each of whom may be designated by the term '*dayyan*'. In Islamic society, belonging to a community, whether a family, a tribe, or an urban community, is fundamental to the human condition. Similarly, the concept of civilization has always been associated in Islam with towns and cities. Thus, it is not surprising to find that some of the Arabic terms for civilization are also derived from the root 'd-y-n': '*tamaddana*' means 'to build or found cities' or 'to refine' or 'to humanize', while '*tamaddun*' means 'civilization' or 'refinement of society'' (Encylopedia.com, 'Din and Theology in Qur'an and Sunnah', [2002], https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/din-and-theology-quran-and-sunnah). See F. Haeri, *The Elements of Islam*, Element Books, Dorset, 1993, p. 14.
35. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 99-100.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. C. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2017, pp. 47-48.

civilisation was considered as 'sharingly participating in the same universal process as the West, that is, in the common (hi-)story of progress'.[39]

A Universal Process of Progress

Notable scholars from the foremost modern Muslim institute of higher education, the Azhar in Cairo, were already engaging with European scholarship at the dawn of the nineteenth century, and would be among those that were later sponsored to go and study science and technology in countries like France and Italy as part of the modernisation reforms under the Khedivate rule of Egypt.[40] The most famous Azharite among these was Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (d. 1871), who after spending a number of years in Paris would return to Cairo and publish his travelogues, *Takhlis al-ibriz ila talkhis Bariz* in 1834.[41] In it we find a grand narrative of human history that tells a universal story of progress of all mankind in which people can be categorised as either 'wild savages' or 'uncivilised barbarians' or 'people who are refined, sedentarized, civilized, and have attained the highest degree of urbanization'.[42] Obviously for Tahtawi, France and Egypt both fall into the third category, but Egypt needs to acquire certain types of knowledge (i.e., science) from Europe as indeed Europe once had to learn from 'Islamic countries'; thus he charges 'all nations of Islam' to awaken from their slumber.[43]

The earlier vision held by many Muslim elites, of a single world civilisation of progress and prosperity, was soon dissolved by 'European politicians, journalists and scientists [who] were drawing a radical line between Europe as the bulwark of modern civilization and the rest of the world, including the Islamic countries'.[44] We can link this development to Taylor's assertion that the central role played by 'the modern moral order' is 'refracted' into the concept of civilisation as it develops from the Renaissance notion of civility, 'becoming a crucial part of our own historicized self-awareness, whereby we place ourselves to our own 'barbarian' past, and to other, less fortunate peoples'.[45] Just like that, what Europeans had earlier considered 'acceptable civilisations mysteriously degenerated and became uncivilised'.[46] Modernism was envisaged by them as the exclusive product of Western progress, and, like the railway and

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39. Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 16. Schulze gives the example of the Egyptian Khedive Ismail (d. 1895), who, after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, 'euphorically exclaim[ed] "my country is no longer in Africa; we have now become part of Europe"' (Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 15).
40. Quadri, 'Religion as Transcendence in Modern Islam', p. 339; Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', pp. 353-354. One prominent example is Hasan al-Attar (d. 1835).
41. Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', pp. 353.
42. Tahtawi, cited in Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', p. 335.
43. Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', pp. 355, 362.
44. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 15.
45. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 301-302.
46. P. Fitzpatrick, *Modernism and the Grounds of Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 157; see also E. Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 167.

telegraph that symbolised it, would have to be exported to a 'backward' Orient incapable of such progress by themselves.[47] Muslim elites of the Ottoman Empire and other parts of the world 'attempted to cope with this civilizational hegemony of the West and with what was perceived as the belated development of Muslim societies by instituting a programme of reform intended to revitalise key resources drawn from their scholarly, legal and philosophical traditions'.[48] These civilising reform projects were actively pursued by individual Muslim rulers throughout the lands of a fading Islamicate civilisation, in Oman, Tunisia, Qajar Iran, Morocco, Afghanistan, the central Asian khanates, Indian princely states, etc., but most notably by the Ottoman Empire with the Tanzimat reforms.[49]

Peaking in the late nineteenth century, concepts of civilisation and progress gave expression to a broadly conceived project of modernisation initiated by these various stately reforms.[50] For instance, the 'series of wide-ranging institutional reforms by the Ottoman regime throughout the nineteenth century commonly referred to as the *tanzimat* (reorganization) had its intellectual foundations in the idea of civility and civilization (*medeniyet*)' which Ottoman elites had appropriated from Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century and 'solidified by references to 'civilized nations', 'civilized world', and the 'progress of civilization'' by the second half.[51] The reforms were no simple appropriation of European ideas and values, however, and had originally been conceived along secular lines but with a genuine effort to find native resources well-rooted within Islamicate culture.

Looking beyond the religious forms of knowledge associated with the ulama, the native conception of civility involved longstanding traditions of knowledge, such as the 'vibrant tradition of belletristic literature' called *adab* (lit. 'etiquette', in Turkish *edep*).[52] A 'legacy of Persianate court culture' that was 'cultivated by a class of literati' in the Ottoman as well as Safavid and Mughal Empires, *adab* was a tradition of ethical norms central to Islamic civilisation.[53] It therefore served as a vital resource for cultivating a sense of civility among

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47. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 18.

48. A. Salvatore, 'The Reform Project in the Emerging Public Spheres', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, pp. 185-186.

49. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 46-47

50. Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', pp. 358, 362; see also M. Kohn, 'Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilization', *Political Theory*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2009, pp. 398–422; F. Konrad, 'Fickle Fate Has Exhausted My Burning Heart: An Egyptian Engineer of the 19th Century Between Belief in Progress and Existential Anxiety', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 51, 2011, p. 175; F. Zachs, *The Making of the Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, Brill, Leiden, 2005, p. 67; F. Zachs, 'Cultural and Conceptual Contributions of Beiruti Merchants to the Nahda', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2012, pp. 153-182; B. Schäbler, 'Civilizing Others: Global Modernity and the Local Boundaries (French/German/Ottoman and Arab) of Savagery', in B. Schäbler and L. Steinberg (eds.), *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2004, p. 23; S. Sheehi, 'Arabic Literary-Scientific Journals: Precedence for Globalization and the Creation of Modernity', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, vol. 25, no. 2, p. 12.

51. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 44

52. Hefner, 'The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education', p. 30; see also Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, pp. 238–239.

53. Salvatore, 'The Reform Project in the Emerging Public Spheres', p. 198.

modern Muslim elites who could find in it continuity with their own cultural heritage. Salvatore has identified the significant role that the *adab* tradition played for this elite, stating that 'cultivation of this tradition became particularly strong in the Ottoman Empire at the passage to the modern era and provided the background culture to the scribal class, which, especially from the eighteenth century, assumed the profile and reflected the ambitions of an increasingly modern bureaucracy'.[54] However, he marks a close to this 'culture of Ottoman bureaucratic reformers' with the shift to a more explicit focus 'on Islamic slogans and motifs' instigated by Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876-1909) in the late nineteenth century.[55]

Pan-Islamism

An important reason why the Ottomans had initiated their desperate campaign of reforms in the early nineteenth century was to appease the Europeans, especially the British, in order to secure their support against regional threats. By the time of the ascension of Abdulhamid II to the throne in the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was almost bankrupt due to foreign loans, on the verge of war with an invading Russian army, infested with European interference in its internal affairs and suffering from growing separatist sentiments among its subjects.[56] It became all the more apparent that, rather than supporting the Sultan to maintain his grip over the empire, the Tanzimat reforms were allowing his control to slip further away into foreign hands. Preoccupied by the influence of the European powers, Abdulhamid distanced himself from British influence and initiated an allegiance with Germany to further stifle the empire's former protector. As a result, his reign would witness an intensification in the development of communication and transportation throughout the Ottoman Empire, with massive infrastructural projects, often developed by German firms, including telegraph networks, railways, harbours and irrigation systems.

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54. Ibid., p. 198.
55. Ibid., p. 198. Salvatore writes: 'The Ottoman Reform programme known under the banner of tanzimat was inaugurated in the 1830s and was framed in the sober, pragmatic and even positivistic language of the bureau of translation, which reflected a concern for the dissemination of meaning in vernacular forms while keeping principled neutrality on matters of religion administered by the ulama. Successive reform packages embraced the realm of education and the legal field. On the other hand, it is also possible to see the culture of Ottoman bureaucratic reformers as not completely neutral towards specific traditions, if we were to count adab (edep in Ottoman Turkish) as a parallel tradition inherited from the legacy of Persianate court culture and distinct from the Islamic tradition of the ulama. The most general definition of adab would be the ensemble of the ethical and practical norms of good life, ideally cultivated by a class of literati in the context of a court culture. As such it was a tradition central to Islamdom, intended as Islamic civilisation, more than to Islam, in the strictest meaning of a religious tradition. The cultivation of this tradition became particularly strong in the Ottoman Empire at the passage to the modern era and provided the background culture to the scribal class, which, especially from the eighteenth century, assumed the profile and reflected the ambitions of an increasingly modern bureaucracy. If we count adab as integral to Islamic traditions intended in the widest sense of the word, we can detect a longer line of cultural continuity providing a background to the tanzimat reforms, before the shift to the synthesis performed by the sultan and caliph Abdulhamid II from the 1870s, which was more explicitly focused on Islamic slogans and motifs' (p. 198).
56. A. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, The Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, Brill, Leiden, 1997 [1992], pp. 40, 30.

These developments were part of Abdulhamid's efforts to terminate the apparent 'Westernising' aspects of the Tanzimat reforms whilst continuing with their supposed beneficial 'modernising' aspects.[57] Where the line was drawn between the two was never clear. His extensive educational reforms, emphasising the construction of secondary schools in the Asian provinces, are a good example of this ambiguity: 'the curriculum, designed and administered by state officials, employed European pedagogical techniques to teach modern sciences while at the same time inculcating students with the principles of Islamic morality, Ottoman identity, and loyalty to the sultan'.[58] Soon after coming to power, Abdulhamid abolished the nascent parliament and exerted a personal authority over central and provincial officials alike. Under his iron grip the Ottoman Empire would go through its most determined attempts at centralisation. Religious sentiment especially would be used to cement the fracturing empire into a cohesive entity in order to stem the rise of emerging nationalist tendencies and serve as a bulwark against Western influence.

Abdulhamid embraced his position as Sultan and Caliph of all Muslims and reinforced the prestige of the caliphate among besieged Muslims through a policy of pan-Islamic propaganda meant to 'challenge the authority of European colonial powers over their Muslim subjects'.[59] Though pan-Islamic sentiment had been spreading before his reign, it was under Abdulhamid's rule that it took on a more definitive role.[60] This was achieved not only by continuing to receive delegations from sovereignties suffering Western subjugation, but also by funding writings and sending emissaries beyond its borders in the guise of diplomatic envoys and consular officials to spread his image as representative of the supreme caliphate.[61] He also encouraged assimilation and resettling of refugees arriving from North Africa under French rule, Caucasus and Central Asia under Russian rule, and even from India under British rule.[62] But most important was consolidating his credibility within his own borders, especially among the large population of Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire. For this specific task, Abdulhamid also worked closely with loyalist religious authorities from across the Arab world, such as the heads of various Sufi orders, helping to expand their influence into his weakest territories.[63]

For the Shiʿi ulama and officials, Abdulhamid employed the renowned reformer Jamal al-Din al-Afghani to launch a letter-writing campaign 'about the kindness and benevolence of the

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57. A. M. Craig (ed.), *The Heritage of World Civilizations. Volume 2: Since 1500*, MacMillan, New York, 1986.
58. W. L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1994, p. 121.
59. E. Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*, Curzon, Richmond, 1999, p. 75.
60. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 40.
61. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 53; M. S. Kramer & M. Dayan, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985, p. 6.
62. Kramer & Dayan, *Islam Assembled*, pp. 5-6.
63. Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, p. 76.

great Islamic Sultan toward all Muslims of whatever opinion and group they might be'.[64] Abdulhamid made further effort to bring the Shi'a under the Ottoman cause by bequeathing 'largesse' donations to the shrines of the city. Without actually retracting any of the major discriminatory policies of the Ottomans towards the Shi'a, Abdulhamid reached out to the Shi'i mujtahids, helping to entrench their role 'as mediators between the population and the government'.[65] Although a migrant mujtahid, Zayn al-'Abidin al-Mazandarani was among those that 'acquired considerable influence with the local Ottoman authorities'.[66] Through Abdulhamid's cultivation of pan-Islamism in Iran, the mujtahids of Karbala gained stronger correspondence with notable Iranian religious leaders, whose appeals for 'Islamic unity against Europe through support for Abdul Hamid ... did not fall on deaf ears'.[67] The resulting 'efforts to reach a rapprochement with Iran', meant that the mujtahids' attitude towards Abdulhamid and his pan-Islamic policy was generally favourable.[68]

In the Shadow of European Dominance

Unable to protect his own territories, let alone liberate Muslims under Western rule elsewhere, Abdulhamid's caliphal claims, however, gave only a façade of latent strength that thinly concealed an inability to take any real action.[69] Where once the Ottoman Empire had stood indomitable, by the nineteenth century it was increasingly apparent, through successive military defeats, the loss of territory and an increasing economic dependency on European powers, that the survival of the empire was at stake. Yet the Ottoman Empire was still the strongest Muslim power in the nineteenth century as it had been in the sixteenth, and the idea of an all-powerful Ottoman caliph was willingly held onto by Muslims across the world as a tool of resistance against Western colonial rule.[70] Especially in reaction to Western dominance, the Ottoman sultan had often been evoked since the days of Suleyman as 'Caliph of the World', and requested to fulfil his responsibilities by other Muslim rulers across the world.[71] Whereas this recognition of the universal caliph had resulted in military, diplomatic and economic aid in the past, it could now only offer moral support at best. For instance, when the sultanate of Aceh had sought help from the caliph against Portuguese attacks upon their islands in the late sixteenth century, the Ottomans responded by sending an armada of battleships, ammunition and military officers. But when similar appeals were made to the caliph by Aceh against the

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64. Abdulhamid II, cited in Dayan, *Islam Assembled*, pp. 7-8.
65. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, p. 166.
66. Ibid., p. 166.
67. Ibid., p. 169.
68. Ibid., p. 169.
69. Kramer & Dayan, *Islam Assembled*, p. 6.
70. Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate*, p. 24.
71. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 24-28.88

Dutch in the mid-nineteenth century, the response was a symbolic declaration of protection and a nominal offer of mediation for the Dutch to end the conflict.[72] Abdulhamid's use of pan-Islamism, therefore, became evidence of weakness rather than a sign of strength.

Part of the wider effort to form a bloc against the West, pan-Islamism, like pan-Asian or pan-African ideologies, was being formulated by intellectuals of the era in the shadow of European dominance.[73] As Talal Asad (1993) has shown us, this sentiment was a result of those aspects of European dominance that went beyond political, military and industrial superiority, and into its 'power to construct a 'universal progressive history', which the other tradition does not possess'.[74] Referencing Asad, Hadi Enyat (2017) elaborates on this as 'a tradition in Western philosophy from Vico to Hegel based on the assumption that Western reason and progress is the ability of the West to transcend its past and is a result of it having written histories which other civilizations did not have'.[75] This 'critical self-consciousness' lacking in non-Europeans meant they had to position themselves in relation to European history in order to understand their own histories.[76] 'In response to European historical narratives', Aydin writes, 'Muslims rethought of their history in relation to a Christian European center', whereas they had never before 'given such primacy to Europe [despite the Crusades], their experiences being as closely connected with Buddhists and Hindus as with Christians'.[77]

As a result, there developed 'a new historical consciousness positing eternal civilizational conflict between the Muslim world and Christian West' in the form of pan-Islamic discourse among Muslim intellectuals.[78] Historical personalities like Saladin (r. 1174-1193) 'were resurrected as mythical heroes and redeemers within a historical romanticism fashioned by reformers like the Ottoman intellectual, Namik Kamal (d. 1888), who 'wrote a play about [Saladin] as a hero who repelled a Western Christian attack on the Muslim world'.[79] This 'new political Islamic language' also allowed reformists like Kamal 'to describe a civic order without raising the suspicion of simply importing and copying European political concepts'.[80] He also wrote 'an article about the uncivilized nations unable to preserve their freedom against civilized nations' in 1871.[81]

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72. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 26.
73. Asian intellectuals, such as Tagore (d. 1941), Sun Yat-sen (d. 1925) and Nehru (d. 1964), had used the idea of their civilizational heritage to refute civilizing principles underlying Western colonialism. For more on the discourse of civilization, see C. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought: 1882-1945*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.
74. Enayat, *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought*, p. 10; see also, Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p. 231.
75. Enayat, *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought*, p. 10.
76. Ibid., p. 10; Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p. 231; Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*, p. 22.
77. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 76.
78. Ibid., p. 76.
79. Ibid., p. 77.
80. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 16.
81. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 45.

Aydin ties the idea of a 'golden age' into this larger narrative of 'Islamic civilisation', which although intended to contest the European racial discourse on Muslim inferiority, mostly worked to reinforce it.[82] One key example of this is the notion of decline, which served as an important aspect of the Islamic civilisation narrative. Muslim reformists like Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), for instance, thought a pure 'Islam would be an instrument in the revival of the victimized, declining Muslim world'.[83] And others, like Sayed Ameer Ali (d. 1928) and Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), looked to Muslim-ruled Andalusia as a 'golden age' of Islamic civilisation and a clear example of Islam's contribution to the emergence of European civilisation.[84] As Aydin notes, the 'narrative of decline often merged with nostalgia ... the notion of a golden age giving way to humiliation'.[85]

Ideas of nostalgia and humiliation served as an integral ingredient in the formation of modern Islamic revivalism throughout the twentieth century, initially as ideas among Muslim elites at the beginning of the century and eventually as part of the zeitgeist of the Muslim masses by the end of the century. Ever since the spectacular victory of the Israeli army over those of Egypt and Syria in 1967, Arab Muslims in particular had gradually turned away from pan-Arabism and socialism as a source for a brighter future, turning instead to 'the heritage of Islam' and 'Islamic civilisation', which could also offer a refuge to the humiliation of the present and recent past many Muslims perceived themselves to have been subjected to.[86] Yet, although this Islamic revivalism started becoming more publicly visible throughout the subsequent decade under the waning impetus of Arab nationalism, it was the success of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 that brought this trend to the forefront of global political discourse and into the consciousness of the general public.

3.1.2 Islamism

Fadhlalla Haeri's emergence as a public Muslim religious figure in 1979 coincided with the Iranian Revolution, which came to epitomise the idea of 'Islamic civilisation' as an alternative to supposedly Western ideologies, offering a moral philosophy and ideological worldview based upon a supposed return to the original principles of Islam. Like in many other postcolonial nations, the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979), had enforced a one-party

82. Ibid., p. 8.

83. Ibid., p. 10.

84. This vision is poetically captured in the ode to the *Mosque of Cordoba* (1933) and the end of Muslim Andalusia that its current condition symbolises by the influential Muslim modernist, poet and philosopher, Iqbal; see A. Ahsan, 'A Late Nineteenth Century Muslim Response to the Western Criticism of Islam', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1985, pp. 204-205.

85. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 75.

86. A. Tayob, 'The Shifting Politics of Identity', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 261.

policy in his country, which especially agitated an educated middle-class 'frustrated by the continuing repression and exclusion from political and policy participation'.[87] Resentment against the Shah was also festering among religious clerics, students and supporters since the influential scholar Ruhollah Khomeini's (d. 1989) open opposition to his policies. Because the political anti-imperialism of the left also carried with it a Third-Worldist and populist cultural nationalism, Khomeini's anti-imperialist and liberationist slogans also appealed to a wider audience of protesters, offering Islam as a nativist and populist idiom for the revolution.[88]

Although Haeri did not offer any political support, he did gesture towards a solidarity with Khomeini, sending his recently established publishing house, Zahra Publications, to the first international bookfair in Tehran after the revolution, during the Iraqi-Irani war.[89] Haeri was himself taken by Khomeini, considering him to be a gnostic (*'arif*) after having met with Khomeini on one occasion soon after the revolution, at a meeting with several important Iraqi Shi'i dignitaries opposed to Saddam's regime.[90] This was at least partly due to Khomeini's own Sufi orientation, as evident in his commentaries on Ibn 'Arabi and in his emphasis on mysticism and theosophy.[91] Elizabeth Sirriyeh has noted that Khomeini is 'perhaps the most outstanding example' of a proponent of the 'political resurgence of Islam ... for whom Sufi spirituality was central to his vision of an Islamic system to regenerate Iran and the wider umma'.[92] He did not restrict his call to benefit from such spirituality to Muslims either, advising President Mikhail Gorbachev to study Ibn 'Arabi in a letter.[93]

As well as in the tone of many of his talks and writings, Khomeini's more-than-coincidental connection to Sufi thought is also revealed by the reception of his ideas among a number of Sufi leaders.[94] In fact, the revivalist fervour exacerbated by the Iranian Revolution was also encouraged by a Sufi resurgence.[95] One effect of this in the West was that the 80s and 90s saw more of Sufism draw closer to an overt identification with Islam, whereas in the 60s and 70s

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87. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 73.
88. Ibid., p. 73.
89. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017.
90. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, pp. 173-175.
91. Heern, *Usuli Shi'ism*, p. 119. He writes: 'Significantly, as Ayatollah Khomeini was on the verge of initiating changes within Shi'i establishment, he revived claims to *kashf* and even criticized Usulis for diminishing its importance. Soon after Khomeini made his way to Qom, he began studying philosophy and mysticism. In 1937 he even wrote a commentary on Sharh al-Fusus, which was itself a commentary on Ibn al 'Arabi's *Fusus* by Sharaf al-Din Dawud Qaysari (d. 1350). As a result of his studies, Khomeini came to the conclusion that there is no contradiction between mysticism and Shari'a. Similar to many theosophists, Khomeini publicly conformed to mainstream legalistic Shi'ism, while privately leaning towards mysticism. He considered himself a follower of Mulla Sadra's Illuminationist philosophy and became interested in the idea of the perfect man, first spoken of by Ibn al-'Arabi as the pupil of God's eye. In his commentary, he even says that the perfect man 'is the beginning and the end...[and] whoever knows the Perfect Man has known God' (p. 119).
92. E. Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, p. 145.
93. Ibid., p. 145.
94. Ibid., pp. 146-147.
95. M. Van Bruinessen & J. D. Howell, 'Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam'; in M. V. Bruinessen & J. D. Howell (eds.), *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2007, p. 8.

the flowering of Western Sufi groups had occurred in conjunction with the anti-establishment movements of the time and as part of the alternative religious milieu inspired by Hindu, Buddhist and Sufi traditions. Many Western countries up until then had only been exposed to Sufism as an expression of a universal mysticism that could easily mingle with other spiritual traditions. Clearly, this was changing in the aftermath of a global resurgence of Islam, as well as with rising transnational networks of migration. With Islamic revivalism and the increased involvement of an ethnic Muslim diaspora growing rapidly in many European countries during this period, there emerged many new Western Muslim Sufi groups. But there was also a transition towards a distinct Islamic identity in some of the older existing Western Sufi groups, like the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in the US and Abdalqadir as-Sufi's movement.[96]

Abdalqadir had initially gained popularity because of his emphasis on esoteric teachings and the presentation of 'original' Islam as a revolutionary anti-authoritarian way of life that stood in stark contrast to the 'ritualised garbage the *fuqaha* [religious jurists] have surrounded us with'.[97] But as he and his movement matured within the religious climate of the late 70s and early 80s, the emphasis shifted to political, legal, social and scholastic concerns. In this way, the Murabitun, as the group would later come to call themselves, became one of the main movements to bridge the gap between Sufism as it had formed in the West and the Sufi orders that had come over with Muslim migrants. Already in the 70s, the group began travelling to meet with South Asian Sufi ulama in Britain who taught in the areas where migrants had settled. In the early 80s, they also hosted international conferences promoting the Maliki legal tradition and inviting prominent scholars from Muslim countries.[98]

Al-Haydariyya al-Shadhiliyya

The Murabitun would go on to influence the future formation of an alternative to 'ethnic Sufism' for children of Muslim migrants, offering them a sense of 'ideological belonging to Traditional Islam', which has tellingly resulted in the popularity of a Sufi-orientated Islamic trend across Europe and America that is Maghrebi in character.[99] One way in which the Murabitun contributed to this, for instance, was the role they played in fostering the emergence of influential Western Sufi scholars who were equally fluent in Arabic and English, extremely adept at the traditional Islamic sciences whilst also being well-educated in Western thought. The prime examples of this from either side of the Atlantic are Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad (Timothy Winters) in Cambridge and Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson in Berkeley, both of whom

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96. For more on Bawa's group and the effects of this new phase of western Sufism in America, see Webb, 'Third-Wave Sufism in America and the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship', pp. 86-102.

97. Abdalqadir, cited in Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, p. 245.

98. See Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain*, pp. 142-144, 152; Geaves, 'Transformations and Trends among British Sufis', pp. 41-43; Dutton, 'Sufism in Britain', pp. 93-110.

99. Geaves, 'Transformations and Trends among British Sufis', p. 46; Sedgiwck, *Western Sufism*, pp. 237-246.

have started the first accredited Islamic institutions in their respective countries, and who, interestingly, met each other for the first time at Fadhlalla Haeri's commune in Texas.

Haeri's community in America also had a noticeably Maghrebi Sufi character, with his followers at some point expected to wear the green Shadhili turban and brown North African robes.[100] But the community also reflected Haeri's increasing reaffiliation with his own Shi'i heritage. This resulted in a fusion between the two Islamic traditions within the community at Bayt al-Deen, which Haeri officially expressed by calling his Sufi sub-order al-Haydariyya al-Shadhiliyya, thereby fusing his Shi'i and Sufi Islamic connections.[101] The attempt at a Sufi-Shi'i synthesis is also apparent in various community projects executed from Bayt al-Deen. This hybridity is visible, for example, in the bi-monthly journal the community had been publishing regularly since the beginning of 1981, the *Nuradeen* magazine, which contained both classical and original contemporary texts and reviews from Sufi and Shi'i sources. The two earliest special issues of the journal were *On Healing* and *On Education*, both in 1981, indicating just how important these two fields were for Haeri.[102] Others included *On Government* and *On Economics*, both in 1984, with content reminiscent of the type of criticism seen in Abdalqadir's work, as well as more general topics such as *On the Ahl ul-Bayt* (1983), *On Gatherings* (1984) and *On Fasting* (1985).[103] The content in any given journal included both more social-minded articles, with titles such as 'Insight into Homeopathy', 'World Without Cancer', 'Who Rules the World?', 'The Banking System', as well as more religiously oriented articles, with titles such as 'Path of Islam Original', 'The Slavehood of Choice', 'The Virtues of Fasting', 'The Mystery of Faith' and 'One Essence, Two Manifestations'.[104]

A cursory view of some of the titles from the journal is enough to a general idea of the varied type of content the journal espoused. But the varied writings nonetheless betray a consistent undercurrent of Islamic revivalism, with particular focus on the need to get back to Islam as it was originally practiced. The purpose of Bayt al-Deen, in a sense, was to expound a teaching that was 'strictly Islam original, taken from the source and expounded by the Prophet's appointed heirs'.[105] As articulated in an article from the *Nuradeen* journal: 'By the definition of its name, Bayt al-Deen is the home of the practice of the original Islam with the

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100. Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017.

101. 'Haydar' means lion, and is a common title given to Ali, the Prophet's cousin and first Imam.

102. *On Healing*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1981; *On Education*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1981.

103. *On Government*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1984; *On Economics*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 4:4, 1984; *On the Ahl ul-Bayt*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1983: *On Gatherings*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1984; *On Fasting*, special issue of *Nuradeen*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1985.

104. A selection of these articles were later published, together with a forward by Fadhlalla Haeri, in *Leaves from a Sufi Journal* (1988). The magazine itself was later reprised by Shaykh Fattah in 1989 with *Nuradeen*, vol. 6, no. 1, (Spring) 1989 and continuing on for a short while. There was also a website called *Nuradeen* (www.nuradeen.com) started by some of Haeri's committed students, which carried on publishing articles and news updates about the network around Haeri up until 2009.

105. 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment', pp. 26-27.

Medina community as the model and the Ahl al-Bayt as the ideal'.[106] For Haeri, the vision of an original Islam brought a seemingly seamless fusion of the Maliki emphasis on Medina and the Shi'i emphasis on the family of the Prophet. This fusion was also encouraged and supported by ongoing interaction between Fadhlalla Haeri and Abdalqadir at first, but not for long.

Separate Ways

The following lengthy account from one of Haeri's earliest and still remaining students is reproduced here both as a typical sample of the demographic of Americans that were attracted to Bayt al-Deen, and as a specific example of why some of Abdalqadir's people were also drawn to Haeri's new centre instead:

> I was living in a commune in Berkeley, California, called the Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge. It was pseudo-Sufi and Gurdjieffian with a bit of a Tibetan Buddhist link. I had taken vows with Kalarimpashay, the premier lama and head of the school of Tibetan Buddhism. I had also been involved with Murshid Sam Lewis in San Francisco and Vilayat Khan. So there was a mix of people in this house, but all of us had bonded together because of this New Age living. We owned two homes and made them one, with forty people living in these two communal homes. It was lovely. I lived in this shack in the back. We were all in this commune, leaning in different ways but we all found this commonality with each other. But then this man came to our home, called Murshid Hassan Mu'mini.
>
> He was a Rifa'i shaykh who lived in the West Bank. They found him living in his grave for five years. He would sleep there, eat there and only came out to use the toilet. He was an amazing being. The Sufi Ruhani Society found him there, and when Murshid Hassan saw this American interest in Islam he came out of his grave. They took him to America and he agreed to come to spread it, finding that they weren't so interested in Islam but in him.
>
> One day, he shows up at our commune looking for me. We were celebrating the birthday of Gurdjieff. He says you are the only one I can trust. So, I invited him to live with us. I owned the house by the way. I said we are going to take this man in. He lived with us a year, and he completely turned our commune upside down. In a good way. To give you an example, one morning we got up just before dawn because we could smell fire burning. He had taken all the furniture out of the house and started a bonfire in the backyard. We all rushed out. We were hippies so we weren't going to be mad, we just asked, 'Wow, what's going on?'. What we got from him was that the other night we had all been talking about how much better it is to sit on the floor and he kind of took it as that's it, do it. So, he did. And so, everybody in the house started helping him and we burned everything. He would have *dhikr* every night in the house and it changed the whole centre of the house.
>
> When he left I felt empty and needed something. I had met the *fuqara* [followers, lit. 'paupers'] of Abdalqadir many times. I use to go to their *dhikr*s but I still hadn't embraced Islam. They were open but they didn't allow you to look at the *Diwan* [Shadhili collection of poems]. You could sit and listen but you weren't allowed to look at it or read it. That was only for initiates. I uses to go in 1974. That is when they published *The Way of Muhammad* at a Tibetan printing house I happened to be working at when that book was printed there. When that book came off the press, I took it off the press myself

106. Ibid., p. 26

> and started reading it. That was my first introduction to Shaykh Abdalqadir. That is what pulled me. When I read that book it was like just what I needed to hear. Anyway, I had this black night of the soul kind of thing. The soul doesn't have any black nights, I'm just being dramatic. And then I wound up going down in '76 to say my *shahada* [testimony of faith]. I wanted to be Muslim. When I got there, Hamza Yusuf was there too. He was 17 and I was 20. I took *shahada* with the guy who wrote *Signs on the Horizons* [Michael Sugich]. That's how that happened. When Shaykh Abdalqadir comes, I think: This is a great teacher. And I know about teachers. I had met lamas, rishis and murshids, but I wasn't prepared for Shaykh Abdalqadir. 'Don't say a word, I can write your biography in 3 minutes', he says to me there and then, and says that everything I have learned up until then is a lie.
>
> I became his driver. We were staying in Monterey, California, in like a *zawiya* [Sufi lodge]. There were like 40 people living in this giant house, men and women. A lot of new Muslims. I lived there and so did Hamza Yusuf. We slept in the same room together. Abdalqadir kept Hamza Yusuf close for two years. Hamza Yusuf was his protégé. But Hamza left and went to Mauritania. I also left Abdalqadir, after staying with his community in Norwich together with Hamza Yusuf for one year in 1977. I couldn't do it. I couldn't stay there in the community. I couldn't understand him allowing his community to go off and do things. What really broke the back for me was this new revolutionary structure where everybody would distribute things evenly and then men would live with men and women would live with women. With conjugal visits scheduled. Children would be split. The majority of the community voted for it, but they never implemented it. But at that point I said, I am out of here! It was cultish. Very interfering. Doing community engineering. And there were other things that were happening with money and marriage. Abdalqadir kept aloof of it, but still. I called him [Abdalqadir] and he told me to go to Sidi Fadhlalla. When I go there, they had just bought the land for Bayt al-Deen'.[107]

This account offers us a concise case of why a number of individuals who were originally attached to Shaykh Abdalqadir seemed to be attracted to Shaykh Fadhlalla's less hands-on attitude towards his followers, and found their way to Haeri's centre once it was established. Although Abdalqadir and Haeri were both involved with community building, what they emphasised in both their methods and ambitions diverged from each other, which, as we see from the above account, did not initially cause any friction between the two. Also, during this period (late 70s and early 80s), Abdalqadir was still expressing the importance of transcending Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divisions. Hence, many of the people at Bayt al-Deen had been enjoying a level of ignorance and ambiguity in relation to sectarian differences. Indeed, a reconciliation between the major sectarian divisions in Islam was part of the main 'utopian' ethos at Bayt al-Deen, where 'sectarian differences and madhabs are not allowed, discussed or taught'.[108] But this all changed when Abdalqadir would publicly denounce Fadhlalla Haeri as a Shi'i heretic in quite dramatic fashion, whilst sitting right there beside him in Bayt al-Deen.

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107. Haji Mustapha Interview, February 2017.
108. 'Bayt al-Deen: An Experiment', p. 26.

Reinstating the Caliphate

Abdalqadir had initially been sympathetic towards the Shiʿa, having himself benefitted from the close company and council of the Raja of Mahmudabad (d. 1973) during his early years as a Muslim. However, with time, as Abdalqadir and his movement began to lean more heavily on the political past of the caliphate, the tension between Shiʿa and Sunnis came to the fore, just as Haeri himself began to delve deeper into his Shiʿi heritage. Furthermore, as much as he respected and accepted his Sufi teacher, Haeri did not hold a similar political sentiment to that of Abdalqadir.[109] Therefore, in a matter of years, Abdalqadir's growing political ambitions, together with the Murabitun movement's increasingly hostile attitude towards Shiʿism, ruptured their relationship.[110]

Ali Köse has been one of the main researchers to describe how Abdalqadir and his movement transitioned from an early esoteric phase to a later Islamist phase.[111] The transitional period in between seems to have coincided with Haeri's close affiliation with Abdalqadir from around 1978 to 1983, as suggested by Hermansen, who echoes Köse by tracing a shift in Abdalqadir's teachings from 'an earlier esoteric Sufi period favouring isolation from society' towards a later 'activist political phase'.[112] It was with the establishment of the centre near Tucson in 1977 that Abdalqadir initiated the Murabitun phase of his movement, by designating it a *ribat*, a spiritually charged Moroccan term used to refer to the frontier forts which housed the *murabitun*, defenders of Islam's borders. As if marking his own transition from an esoteric to political phase, Abdalqadir also used the term self-referentially, titling himself Abdalqadir al-Murabit instead of Abdalqadir as-Sufi in his later books, such as *Jihad: A Ground Plan* (1978) and *Resurgent Islam: 1400* (1979). Pan-Islamic idioms abound in these works, one important motif being the need to reinstate the caliphate in order to bring back the glory days of Islam, which is most explicitly stated in his later book, *The Return of the Khalifate* (1996).

Originally, Abdalqadir expressed an apparent need to reinstate the caliphate with a strong ideal of overcoming Sunni-Shiʿi differences, for example, through claiming that the caliphate and imamate are meant to be united in one and the same person. But, the more Abdalqadir began to move further away from this idealistic view — upheld by previous pan-Islamist

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109. Abdalqadir has described to Haeri their relationship as though 'it is like we are on two ranges of mountains, every now and then we pop up and greet each other' (Abdalqadir, cited in Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, p. 34).

110. Something to note at this point that during the early eighties Haeri would marry his third wife, Aliya, who had been married to Abdulqadir for a short period in the late 70s after embracing Islam. She eventually left him and joined Haeri's community, subsequently marrying Haeri. But there seems to have been little animosity on this point between Abdulaqadir and Haeri, the tension between them never having been a personal gripe but rather one informed by a difference of ideological of opinion.

111. Köse, *Conversion to Islam*, pp. 180-183.

112. Hermansen, 'The Other Shadhilis of the West', p. 484. According to Hermansen's assessment, this is similar to the period during which the popular American Muslim scholar, Hamza Yusuf was affiliated to Abdalqadir, as he left Abdalqadir and the Murabitun around 1983 (p. 489). She further mentions how, by 1983, 'Abdalqadir's movement became increasingly rigid and cultlike', reflected in them adopting the name Murabitun. (p. 485).

thinkers also — the more adamantly he sought to implement his reformist project through political activism instead, such as the minting of the Islamic Gold Dinar and its implementation as an alternate currency system in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, and liaising with political figureheads like Saddam Hussein (d. 2006), Muammar Gaddafi (d. 2011) and other Muslim rulers. These efforts exemplify the two-pronged mission of the Murabitun identified by Reza Pankhurst (2013) as 'the destruction of the global capitalist banking system and the re-establishment of the caliphate'.[113] This is because they see the adoption of a modern monetary system and paper money by the Ottoman state in 1842 as causing the demise of the caliphate.[114] Pankhurst further states that the presence of the Murabitun movement in the form of over twenty communities as far afield as the US, UK, Europe, South Africa, Indonesia, Mexico and Russia, 'often established with indigenous converts', 'demonstrates an evolution of the movement into an ambitious project for a global Islamic revival'.[115] For this 'the Murabitun declare re-establishment of the caliphate as an issue of primordial importance', and as the 'ultimate goal that unifies all Muslims', which can be achieved through their vision of a 'pan-Islamism' for a 'United State of Islam'.[116]

The Demise of the Caliphate and the Rise of Public Opinion

Abdalqadir writes in his book on the caliphate that the deposing of Abdulhamid II was 'in truth the end of the Khalifate'.[117] This is because Abdulhamid had been the last caliph to hold any actual political power. After his overthrow by a nationalist party of army officers in 1909, subsequent Ottoman caliphs became nominal figures with no political power. An earlier alteration prefiguring this shift is the amendment of the role of the caliph that occurred in the treaty following the cessation of Crimea to Russia in the late eighteenth century, where the Ottoman rulers- claims of being 'the Supreme Muhammadan Caliph' was recognised by Western powers, but only in religious matters that did not compromise the 'political and civil independence' of their Muslim subjects.[118] By recognising the caliph 'as a spiritual figurehead for Muslims who were not living in the domains under his authority', this treaty and later similar treaties between the Ottomans and European states did not affirm the authority of the caliph, but rather trivialised it.[119] Bulwer-Lytton expressed this so aptly when asserting that the British ambition to be the power behind the throne of the '*rois faineants* [lazy king] of Istanbul'

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113. Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate*, p. 182.
114. Ibid., p. 184.
115. Ibid., p. 183.
116. Umar Vadillo, cited in ibid., p. 187.
117. Abdalqadir, cited in ibid., p. 184-185
118. Ibid., p. 35.
119. Ibid,, p. 35; See also M. O. Haddad, *Rashid Rida and the Theory of the Caliphate: Medieval Themes and Modern Concerns* (diss.), Columbia University, CO, 1989, p. 83.

meant 'keeping the destinies of the Sultan in our own hands, but imperfectly reducing him to much the same position as Pope'.[120]

By the First World War, the caliph had become 'the target of considerable machinations and plots by the British and their allies ... [and] was widely seen as a pawn under the control of the British ... [due to which] there was a consensus across the Middle East against the caliph'.[121] Other possible candidates, such as the Sharif of Mecca, were equally unacceptable owing to being backed by the British.[122] Championing of the caliphate by Muslim personalities seen as tools of the British further discredited the office of the caliph as a political instrument of British power.[123] Anyone raising the discussion of caliphate was immediately condemned by the press as furthering British interests.[124] In the climate of the times, it seemed all the more suitable to abolish the caliphate once and for all.

Pankhurst succinctly traces the final steps in this momentous end to an almost thirteen-hundred-year-old institution. Military hero and head of the Ottoman state after the First World War, Mustafa Kemal (d. 1938), originally issued to separate the caliphate from the sultanate in order to finally abolish the latter.[125] Kemal justified this by claiming that it 'was completely natural for the position of the caliphate to exist side by side with the authority of the people'.[126] But less than two years later, in March 1924, he declared 'the dignity of the caliphate abolished', this time justifying his decision by stating it necessary in foiling foreign attempts at using the caliph as a political instrument, and therefore a crucial step 'in order to secure the revival of the Islamic faith'.[127]

Muslim clergy and laymen alike all lamented the loss of the caliphate across the world, in the Arabian peninsula, Syria, Libya, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Albania and Kurdistan, even offering the latter a pretext for a rebellion against the newly-formed Turkish Republic. Interesting to note is that it wasn't the initial secularisation of the position of the caliph to that of a symbolic figurehead of an imagined unity of Muslims which 'caused a backlash from Muslims at large', but its complete abolishment that soon followed.[128] A number of attempts were made in the form of often rival conferences and congresses, not to reinstate the existing caliphate, but for the election of a new caliph. Many rulers 'sought the caliphate to cement their power, such as the kings of Morocco and Egypt and the Sharif of Mecca'.[129] Britain itself

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120. Letter by Lytton to Salisbury on 10 June 1877, cited in Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 73.
121. Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate*, pp. 36, 40-41.
122. Ibid., p. 46.
123. Ibid., pp. 32, 50.
124. Ibid., p. 40.
125. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
126. Kemal, cited in ibid., pp. 31-32.
127. Kemal, cited in ibid., pp. 31-32.
128. Ibid., p. 50-51.
129. Ibid., p. 59.

interfered in such proceedings, asserting that 'the election would have to be of a caliph friendly to his majesty's government', seeing as the Crown's many Muslim subjects meant that 'British Islam' held the decisive vote.[130]

The crucial point to stress here is that the entire discourse on re-establishing the caliphate was now framed within ideas of election and sovereignty of the people. For both proponents and opponents of the caliphate, political authority now lay with the people, indicating just how ubiquitous the European notion of 'public opinion' had become all across the modern world of the twentieth century.[131] Religious justification that authority rested in the hands of the people came to be axiomatic. For example, Egyptian scholar, jurist and minister, Ali Abdel Raziq (d. 1966), pointed out that the Qur'an referred to the Prophet Muhammad as a 'warner' not a 'warden', arguing that 'kingship was not required by sacred precedent'.[132] Another example is the Algerian reformer and scholar, Abdelhamid Ben Badis (d. 1940), who cited a speech of the first caliph in support of his argument that 'it is the people that have the right to delegate authority to the leaders and depose them. No one can rule without the consent of the people'.[133]

Ummah as an Expression of the Modern Moral Order

What makes 'public opinion the arbiter of the King's action in the dying years of the ancien régime', Taylor argues, is the modern moral order and the culture of civility that entrenches it.[134] We have already looked at how, the 'modern moral order' is seen as constituted by individuals coming together to mutually benefit each other, rather than as agents of a set hierarchy; this, when conceived of in providential terms, only works to strengthen the moral order by giving it a religious sanctioning that cannot be overturned by the authority of throne or altar.[135] In his application of Taylor's narrative to a Muslim context, Florian Zemmin (2018) concludes that modern interpretations of *ummah* by Muslim reformists are just as secular as any European interpretations of 'society', because they all share a modern moral order with an understanding of human beings as rational individuals who have to construct their society.[136] Zemmin argues that the term *ummah* was used both as an equivalent and alternative to the modern idea of 'society' by reformist writers, who preferred the religiously laden term over any secular Arabic alternatives, such as *mujtama'*.[137] He considers this a part of the effort of Islamic reformists, like Rashid Rida (d. 1935), 'to express the most constitutive concept of

130. Ibid., p. 58.
131. Ibid., p. 60.
132. Abdel Raziq, cited in C. Kurzman, 'Introduction', in C. Kurzman (ed.), *Modernist Islam (1849-1940): A Sourcebook*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, pp. 19-20.
133. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, pp. 19-20.
134. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 237.
135. Ibid., pp. 236-237.
136. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, p. 427.
137. Ibid., p. 16.

modernity — "society" — from within the Islamic discursive tradition, of which *umma* is firmly a part'.[138]

As the above example only goes to show, Western categories were far more widely adopted by the non-Western world during the nineteenth century than vice versa, and for that reason modernisation has been synonymous with Westernisation for most of its history.[139] Yet, we still must appreciate how the reconceptualization of a classical Arabic term still very flexible at the time, *ummah*, into a modern fixed category, 'society', is more a 'convergence of discursive traditions in modernity, over against the idea of a one-way diffusion of European concepts'.[140] What the modern reconceptualization of *ummah* by reformists reflects is the central aim of the reform project 'to retrieve and valorise those components of the Islamic tradition that affirmed the centrality of human reason and the acceptability of the law in ways that could be accessible to the common people (*al-'amma*)'.[141] Identifying the 'public sphere' as 'a construct strictly related to the rise of the modern state', Salvatore (2009) argues how the kind of 'public Islam that took shape in the colonial era reflects modern forms of institutionalisation of social governance ambivalently matched by reformed ideas drawn from Islamic traditions'.[142] He makes sense of this development with support from Taylor's assertion 'that the rise of a modern public sphere expresses the quintessential capacity of modernity to valorise ordinary, common life. The outcome of this process is the formation of a common space accessible to all members of a given political community'.[143]

Mass communication, especially print capitalism, had been significant in this regard for having the novel ability to instil a sense of belonging and an imagined shared community or society among people who had never actually met.[144] As we have seen, the sense of shared progress with which most Muslim intellectuals looked at the economic colonialism that had characterised the earlier nineteenth century would be undermined by an emergent cluster of discourses from their European and American counterparts who drew a sharp line between the West and the rest.[145] It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that Muslims could

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138. Ibid., p. 16.

139. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, pp. 8-9. Zemmin writes: 'I somehow picture Aziz al-Azmeh shrugging his shoulders when he states: 'I take it as an accomplished fact that modern history is characterized by the globalization of the Western order'; see also al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, Verso, London, 1993, p. 80.

140. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, p. 1.

141. Salvatore, 'The Reform Project in the Emerging Public Spheres', p. 197.

142. Ibid., p. 197.

143. Ibid., p. 187; see also C. Taylor, 'Modernity and the Rise of the Public Sphere', in G. B. Peterson (ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Volume 14*, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1993, pp. 203–60; and Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2004.

144. Zemmin, 'A Secular Age and Islamic Modernism', pp. 317-318; see also B. R. O. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

145. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 17.

even begin to 'conceive of assuming a subordinate position with respect to Europe'.[146] And, as Schulze writes, in time, more and more Muslims would start to possess 'a new world outlook in which the break with the 19th-century process of modernism was discussed and re-evaluated and the idea of the unity of Muslims was brought to the fore as a means of countering the unfriendly European power bloc'.[147] A key reason for the spread of this new world outlook was printing-press and steamship technology, which enabled newfound mobility and intellectual productivity amongst Muslims, facilitating the sense of a Muslim public sphere.[148]

Print and the Muslim Public Sphere

Print media in the form of comparatively cheap 'newspapers, magazines, and journals opened a stream of words that reached a relatively large readership'.[149] To take the example of the nineteenth-century Ottoman program of reforms, once again, the expansion of bureaucracy that these reforms required would by the end of the century result in half a million civil servants employed in a wide range of newly formed institutions, spanning administration, finance, education, healthcare, transport and communication.[150] Together with military officers, professionals and employees in certain private sectors of commerce, these bureaucrats constituted an emerging educated middle class who provided a new market for print media, including 'newspapers, magazines, novels and plays — many translated from the French, with special fascination for Jules Verne and other science fiction ... — and books on science and discovery'.[151] This new print culture brought news of scientific discoveries, biographies, and advice on travel, health and domestic issues to a burgeoning demographic of people who could read, and even an illiterate population who listened to others read out loud.[152]

Accessibility to current political affairs and their evaluation in the press gave these modern citizens a fresh sense of being participants with opinions and interests. Ottoman coffeehouses also played an important role in this regard, and as the name *kiraathane* (reading room) implies, served as suitable spaces for newspapers and pamphlets.[153] Modern political ideologies of nationalism, liberalism and communism thrived in these coffeehouses and other spaces of

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146. Ibid., p. 15.

147. Ibid., p. 15.

148. N. Green, 'Spacetime and the Muslim Journey West: Industrial Communications in the Making of the 'Muslim World'', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 118, no. 2, 2013, pp. 401-429. On different Muslim opinions about these communication technologies, see T. Hoffman & G. Larsson (eds.), *Muslim and the new Information and Communication Technologies: Notes from an Emerging and Infinite Fieald*, Springer, London, 2014.

149. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, p. 15. Bear in mind that this also included a '... listenership, as items were read aloud' (p. 15).

150. D. Quataert, 'The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914', in D. Quataert & H. Inalcik (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume 2: 1600-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 765.

151. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 69; see also N. Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, C. Hurst, London, 1998 [1964], p. 278.

152. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 69; Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 277.

153. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 69; see also J. R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's Urabi Movement*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, pp. 115-126.

an emergent public sphere, such as universities and other educational facilities.[154] Muslim modernists had been especially keen on 'the periodical press, which [they] established in virtually every community of the Islamic world'.[155] Among them, modern techniques of communication facilitated the ambition of a 'counter-project of modernity that could bear a credible Islamic imprint', which was aimed as much at the common practitioner as the religious elite.[156] The development and dispersion of pan-Islamism was also made possible by the emergence of this public space and the growth in literacy and proliferation of newspapers which had resulted from the advancement of the printing press.[157] With the help of mechanisms of communication such as print media, the reconceptualisation of Islamic normativity by pan-Islamists and other reformists would find wider appeal among an expanding public sphere of contemporary literary Muslims nurtured within clubhouses and coffeehouses, but perhaps most strongly by 'a modern style of public education first addressed to the educated classes but soon to be extended to the 'masses', formerly identified as *al-'amma* (common)'.[158]

Schulze writes that 'side by side with the predominantly Muslim nation states, there emerged the ideal of a homogeneous Islamic community (*umma*), which found a powerful cultural and political expression in the 'Islamic caliphate' of the Ottoman sultan'.[159] And it was Abdulhamid's mass communication and promotion of Ottoman spiritual sovereignty over the ummah which cemented this modern Muslim imaginary.[160]

Muslims who before would have had little to no connection with Ottoman sovereignty, began to do so by the late nineteenth century, as exemplified by the adoption of the Ottoman crescent emblem as a general symbol of Muslim identity.[161] Just as the Red Cross had been formed as a colour reversal of the flag of Switzerland after the First Geneva Convention in 1864, the Ottomans opted to replace the Red Cross with a Red Crescent by later conventions (1929, 1949) as an approximate reversal of the Ottoman and later Turkish flag (except for it being centred and without a star). The Red Crescent became the movement's symbol in most Muslim countries, symbolising the formation of a global Muslim identity. This emblem would later come to mark the moment in history where the idea of a 'Muslim world' would become entrenched with the Islamic Revolution of 1979, when Iran, which had originally chosen to use

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154. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 72.
155. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, p. 15.
156. Salvatore, 'The Reform Project in the Emerging Public Spheres', pp. 185-186.
157. Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate*, p. 23.
158. Salvatore, 'The Reform Project in the Emerging Public Spheres', p. 193.
159. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 16.
160. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 92-100.
161. Ibid., pp. 92-94. Aydin writes that earlier, 'the crescent appeared on the flag, medals, etc., and didn't have any theological significance, but after the red crescent was introduced by the Ottomans as an alternative to the red cross, took on this meaning' (pp. 93-94).

a red version of the Lion and Sun (a traditional Iranian symbol) in opposition to their long-time Ottoman rivals, also switched to the Red Crescent.

Whereas it receded by the middle of the twentieth century, the notion of a 'Muslim world' had remerged during its last decades, with Iran along with Saudi Arabia taking greatest advantage of this with 'competing pan-Islamic campaigns' that equally strategised 'Muslim-world solidarity as their solution to both global and domestic governance crises'.[162] But Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini did not repeat earlier monarchist pan-Islamic campaigns, he 'radically reshaped tropes from both Abdulhamid's imperial as well as King Faisal's (r. 1964-1975) nation-state orientated pan-Islamism, by directly appealing to Muslim public opinion through the tool of mass media'.[163] Nothing so aptly captures Khomeini's 'emergence as spokesman for an illusory Muslim world' as his fatwa against Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988, with which he 'tried to reach subaltern Muslims and Muslim public opinion directly, thanks to a network of Western satellite television channels that seemed terrified of an anti-Western Muslim religious cleric issuing a death warrant for a writer'.[164] This is an illustrative example of how, by the 1980s, print and electronic media would bolster the determination of reformists and other elites to directly reach ordinary Muslims.[165]

3.1.3 Neo-Revivalism

Although Fadhlalla Haeri's ambitions were not as political as those of Khomeini or Abdalqadir, there is still a strong current of anti-Western sentiment discernible in his talks and writings from the 80s, with clear iterations of the civilisational discourse we having been mapping out. We see this type of rhetoric in Haeri's speeches during the period in a number of countries across the world; to take one example from a talk given in Japan:

> Let us examine the situation in Japan, for instance, to see how a spiritual tradition, which was until recently deeply rooted among the people, is beginning to decline. Many of the good habits of the people have become mere rituals which have lost their meaning. Family life is not as strong now as it was twenty years ago. The same is true of loyalty to one's friend and one's employer and morality in general. There is much decadence and corruption. Before, in this country, sport was for people to participate in. Now it has become spectator-oriented because it is copying the decadent West. Tradition now has become a once-a-year annual event. Husbands and wives may dress up in traditional dress only once in their lifetime for a photograph. Values and practices are imported from the West and the old values are no longer nurtured. Traditional Japanese values are those of Islam: honesty, openness, loyalty, love for family, humility, modesty. Women traditionally placed their husbands

162. Ibid., pp. 177-178.
163. Ibid., p. 178.
164. Ibid., pp. 221-222.
165. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 13.

> before themselves, and were subservient and obedient. The situation in the West is not like this and this erosion of values has affected countries throughout the world. The Arab countries where Islam began and grew have lost their traditions and have become arrogant. They have become fat. All the rulers of the Arab countries are dictators. This has nothing to do with Islam. The only Islam is an attempt in Iran which was the most decadent and corrupt country in the Middle East until the Islamic Revolution. Now they are hoping to change, but this change takes time. Fifty years of corruption is not wiped away in five years. We hope and pray for its success, because if the attempt succeeds, then many other countries can learn from it. Japanese culture was based on modesty and contentment. The influx of decadent western values began in 1853 with Commodore Perry. It is alright to have Commodore Perry if the culture is strong in its inner meaning. The Shoguns knew that the code of conduct was not strong enough and that is why they wanted to close the country. Japan is now bowing to the West and does not really wish to do so, so there is conflict. The Japanese personality is facing a crisis. It is not true that the Shoguns vanished in 1867. The Shogun is still there. He is in the White House. He pays his respects to the Emperor. However, only one Emperor can rule. A nation will not be one nation under one rule unless it rules itself. Islam rules the self.[166]

Titled 'The Recovery of Spiritual Values', this talk together with numerous others given around the world during the same few years were collected into a book titled *Living Islam: East and West* (1989). Both the title of this particular lecture and the book itself attest to the Islamic revivalist attitude which permeated Haeri's talks at the time.

An anti-Western attitude and emphasis on social reform can also be found in other talks and writings by Haeri from the same period. For example, a compilation of a series of lectures given by Haeri during a tour in Pakistan in the early 80s, called *Songs of Iman on the Roads of Pakistan* (1983). We see in these talks an explicit warning against embracing 'Western' culture and technology as part-and-parcel of a *kufr* (irreligious, unbelieving) system antithetical to Islam. But we have to be careful here from making premature conclusions, as demonstrated by previous research on Haeri by academics like Hermansen, who seems to have based almost her entire estimation of Haeri on her reading of this one publication.[167] To understand these talks better, we need to consider the context surrounding the talks themselves, which were given by Haeri at various universities and other institutes in Pakistan in November 1982, coinciding with and reflecting the currents of Islamic revivalism that had been sweeping across the country at the time. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (d. 1988) had recently used the very same appeal to Islam made by his predecessor Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (d. 1979) to overthrow him and implement martial law with the promise of an 'Islamic order' (*nizam-i Islam*), a supposedly Islamic system of government by which he would initiate a process of Islamisation that reverberated across the entire sociopolitical landscape of Pakistan.[168]

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166. F. Haeri, *Living Islam: East and West*, Element Books, Dorset, 1989, pp. 4-5.
167. See Hermansen, 'The "Other" Shadhilis of the West', pp. 489.
168. For more in the Islamisation of Pakistan, see J. L. Esposito, 'Islamization: Religion and Politics in Pakistan', *The Muslim World*, vol. 72, no. 1-3, 1982, pp. 197-223.

The book not only reflects the Islamism that had gripped the country at the time, however. It also gives us a glimpse into Haeri's personal quest during this period, which can help us make further sense of the revivalist attitude we find in its pages. Even though Haeri's ambitions were not directly political, his approach to Islamic revivalism was nonetheless centred around social reformation. As part of his efforts at Islamic revivalism in Pakistan, for instance, Haeri undertook an ambitious attempt to build a utopian community there in the hopes to revive an Islamic way of living in its pure and original form as practiced by the Prophet, his family and companions, and based upon the comprehensive teachings of the Qur'an.[169]

Health and Education

Haeri toured Pakistan for the first time in October 1981, giving talks at various venues, such as the University of Lahore. Already in 1981, a few of his followers in the US who were originally from Pakistan returned to their homeland to create a centre at Ahmadpur in Punjab.[170] The centre was established under the name Al-Serat (and associated to the Zahra Trust which Haeri had set-up in America), and soon developed into a massive project that included several schools and alternative healthcare programs disseminated through various clinics specialising in homeopathy, acupuncture, naturopathy and osteopathy, as well as a model village comprised of houses, hostels, a clinic, a school, a mosque, other facilities, and a cotton-mill factory to finance the entire operation.[171]

Haeri's philanthropical work extended to other parts of South Asia, such as Sri Lanka, where Haeri supported orphanages that he had come across during a visit.[172] In southern India Haeri set up, together with locals, charities in places like Madras (Chennai) and Hyderabad which worked with children that had been sold into indentured labour, working in brick kilns or rolling thin beedi cigarettes.[173] The project aimed to help volunteers already engaged with taking in many such children by buying them from the employers, and helped to set up newly created orphanages and schools. As well as the education of children, health was the other main avenue for the philanthropy that Haeri involved himself with in the hope to convey 'the message of Islam' through sincere service, and by setting an example rather than by preaching and proselytising.

An important influence on Haeri had been Chinmayananda's emphasis on serving others through medicine, such as the 'barefoot doctors' program. Inspired by his guru, Haeri had a genuine concern for practical work in the field, with the establishment of numerous clinics in

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169. F. Haeri, 'Introduction', in *Songs of Iman on the Roads of Pakistan*, Zahra, Blanco, TX, 1983.
170. Ibid.
171. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016; Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017; experts from *Nuradeen*.
172. H Raouf, interview, February 2017; Muna Bilgrami, interview, May 2017; excerpts from *Nuradeen*.
173. Muna Bilgrami, interview, May 2017: 'These children rolled so many beedies they lost their fingerprints'.

locations throughout the world and the education of practitioners trained in the Islamicate medical tradition, called *hikma* (wisdom) or *Yunani* (Greek) medicine.[174] Through Noor Health Foundation, a number of clinics were established across India, the first of which was in the village of Pul Pahlad, on the outskirts of New Delhi. Lying 30 minutes from the city, the area was inhabited by 500-600 'untouchable' and 'outcast' vagrants in addition to the 2000 or so villagers.[175] This particular clinic was created at a house gifted to them by a close friend of Haeri, the renowned Hakim Abdul Hameed (d. 1999), founder of the university Jamia Hamdard as well as the successful Yunani and Ayurvedic pharmaceutical company, Hamdard Laboratories.[176]

As well as the training and dissemination of a number of hakims to different locations and the founding and financing of clinics (especially in South Asia), Noor Health Foundation was responsible for scholarly research projects aimed at reviving classical Islamicate medicine. Backed by a considerable investment of Haeri's finances, these efforts would result in the publication of the two-volume book, *Health Sciences in Early Islam* (1983-84), for which Haeri provided the introduction, 'A Discourse on Health'.[177] This book is one example of how, under the name Zahra Publications, the publishing and printing side of Haeri's revivalist project rapidly expanded during the 80s. The printing press at Bayt al-Deen played an important role in this development. Bayt al-Deen housed the largest Islamic bookshop in America at the time, called Books on Islam, which was a mail order service offering the most comprehensive library of Islamic books from the US and abroad. Haeri had bought the business from a couple who had a bookshop in New York (Park Books), and expanded it to include 'more than 400 titles on subjects ranging from the Holy Qur'an, Islamic Practices, Sufism, Islamic Culture and Society, Biography, Medicine, Art, and Scholastic Aids and other subjects'.[178]

Looking back at the various publications under Zahra, and the bi-monthly journal produced at Bayt al-Deen, we notice a special focus on books on health and the education of children, the two areas Haeri gave particular attention to. But there was also a great deal of attention given to the aim to resuscitate lost religious knowledge, by creating a research environment where many long-forgotten classical manuscripts would see the light of day. This was part and parcel of Haeri's efforts to package and deliver traditional Islamic teachings to a general public of modern-educated readers. For this purpose, he spent a great deal of time and money in the endeavour to translate classical works from Arabic, Persian and Urdu for the express purpose

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174. *Bayt al-Deen* (1982).

175. Excerpts from *Nuradeen Magazine*

176. See Hakim Abdul Hameed's CV at hamdard.com [https://hamdard.com.bd/about/hakim-abdul-hameed/]

177. F. Haeri, 'A Discourse on Health', in M. A. Anees (ed.), *Health Sciences in Early Islam: Collected Papers by Sami K. Hamarneh*, Noor Health Foundation & Zahra, Blanco, TX, 1983, pp. 15-19. Meant to unearth much of the history of traditional Islamic medicine, 'The Health Sciences' project in particular, cost Haeri millions of dollars (Talat Hussein interview, May 2015).

178. Quote taken from an advertisement for Books on Islam. Another advert states: 'Our inventory includes Qur'an and hadith, Islamic Philosophy, Metaphysics, Sufism, Political Science, History, poetry, Art and Culture'.

of making it accessible to a wider demographic. For example, Haeri commissioned some of Abdalqadir's more scholarly students, such as Dhakir Yate and others, to translate a great variety of rare books he had accumulated from various public and private libraries across the Middle East and elsewhere. In this manner, a number of rare and old unpublished manuscripts written by notable Muslim figures were commissioned for translation and publication.[179]

Origin

Evidently, Haeri put great emphasis on reaching the common people through print and other media of mass communication as part of his mission to revitalise the Muslim ummah. This itself was only one variation of a wider trend among Muslims of the time to turn towards Islamic values, together with a growing sense of a transnational Islamic identity — a worldwide movement among many Muslims bearing fruit from the efforts of Islamic reformists earlier in the century. With an ever increasing image of trans-Islamism and 'a number of Muslim internationalist infrastructures of an educational, welfare and propaganda nature' beholden to networks in the control of pan-Islamist ideology and allied countries — especially Saudi Arabia and Iran — what was conjured up through these forms is 'the notion of an 'Islamic community' as a distinctive and identifiable entity' directly or indirectly set in continuity with a 'Muslim 'culture' of origin', a culture not as a historical fact, but rather an imagined utopian ideal.[180]

Aziz al-Azmeh has described this inventing of 'Islamic culture' as a 'psychodrama' involving the 'conjuration and proclamation' of often visually pronounced 'tokens of exoticism' such as 'dressing up' and 'exhibitionistic piety'.[181] With support from the 'dramaturgical direction provided by such political or quasi-political organizations as are poised to take over this new political constituency', Azmeh argues, the 'past is invented' and 'sensibilities discovered'.[182] We can again draw a parallel here, between this particular form of inventing tradition with that which took place under the two eighteenth-century revolutions on either side of the Atlantic, namely the American and French, both of which consciously appropriated early Republican Rome as an exemplary society of 'austere mortals' to be emulated.[183] As Taylor notes, 'constitution-founding comes to be invested with something of the force of a 'time of origins', a higher time, filled with agents of a superior kind, which we should ceaselessly try to re-approach'.[184]

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179. Among the translations published by Zahra were *Reflections of the Awakened*, written by Ibn 'Arabi's greatest student and successor, al-Qunawi (d. 1274), and *The Secret Garden* by the renowned Persian poet Shabistari (d. 1340).
180. Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities, p.* 4.
181. Ibid., p. 7.
182. Ibid., p. 7.
183. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 119-120.
184. Ibid., p. 208.

Proponents of a '*Novos Ordo Seclorum*' (new secular order) came to be invested with images of the past through imagining a direct connection to a perceived origin or golden age. This is what led Marx to famously remark:

> The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.[185]

For these revolutionaries, Rome was not a primordial social order to be recovered, but was rather a consciously fashioned model of a historical golden age, to be drawn upon as an image of inspiration to build a republic that may even surpass the original.[186] Use of the word 'revolution' and the completely opposite meaning it took on during these revolutions demonstrates this move quite clearly. The word originally derives from the astronomical term *revolvere*, 'meaning the eternal re-currence of the heavenly bodies, their swinging back to a pre-established point'.[187] It makes sense then, that when used metaphorically in political language during the seventeenth century, it 'meant the exact opposite of a 'revolution', namely restoration'.[188] But the earlier meaning went through a change during the French and American revolutions, transforming the intentions of the revolutions themselves, from attempting to restore something that already existed to the idea of creating something new altogether. That is why Alexis de Tocqueville (d. 1859) was led to believe that 'the aim of the coming revolution was not the overthrow of the old regime but its restoration', and why Thomas Paine (d. 1809) had already labelled it a 'counter-revolution' once it was clear 'that an entirely new order of things was about to appear'.[189]

The distinction we are drawing here becomes all the more apparent when contrasting the basis of authority in the revolutionary eighteenth-century republics with that of the Roman Republic that they seemingly intended to emulate. In Rome, it was the *patres* or elders of the Senate who were endowed with authority, having obtained it by descent and transmission from the founders or ancestors, the *majores*. We get a sense of this principle by looking at the original Latin use of the word 'authority', where the 'authority of the living was always derivative, depending upon the *auctores imperii Romani conditoresque*, as Pliny puts it, upon the authority of the founders, who no longer were among the living'.[190] This we can relate to the broad

185. K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Charles H. Kerr, Chicago, 1907 [1852], p. 5.
186. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 120.
187. H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, Viking Press, New York, 1963, pp. 42 ff.
188. Ibid.
189. Alexis de Tocqueville and Thomas Paine, cited in Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 45, (from L'Ancien Régime, vol. II, Paris, 1953, p. 72).
190. Arendt, 'What is Authority', in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, Faber, London, 1961 [1954], pp. 121-122. The word comes to us from the Latin 'auctoritas', which derives from the verb 'augere', meaning to augment.

anthropological category of 'ancestral authority' considered common to many cultures.[191] That ancestors are dead is no accident. The deceased are unable to take any direct action and are completely free from fault, embodying the predetermined social order of the tribe or society, which only a living member has the potential to disrupt.[192] In Weber's terms, we can call it the authority of the 'eternal yesterday', which, in a word, we can call 'tradition'.[193]

Desire for tradition is essentially 'also a desire for immortality'.[194] The past is meant to serve as the 'unshaken cornerstone' of authority. More specifically, the past is understood as permanent and durable in contrast with our own instability and mortality.[195] For Weber, tradition is a fundamental form of authority, one which helps us to further understand the distinction between power as something taken and authority as something given.

A Crisis of Authority

Although often overlooked by contemporary sociologists, absence of authority had been the key concern for all of the founding fathers of sociology in their inquiry into the challenges of modernity.[196] This is especially the case when authority is understood in line with Weber's emphasis on the central role of voluntary compliance or acceptance in the exercise of authority and on the primary place of legitimacy in distinguishing authority from power.[197] A number of prominent conservative political theorists have been especially keen to emphasise the distinction between authority and power, which Michael Oakeshott (d. 1990) simplifies as 'right' and 'might' respectively, alluding to the latter's need for force.[198] As Hannah Arendt (d. 1974) has argued, 'if authority is to be defined at all, then, it must be in contradistinction to

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191. Social Anthropologist, Meyer Fortes (d. 1983), in particular, had written a number of interesting essays on the topic; such as M. Fortes, 'Pietas and Ancestor Worship', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 91, no. 2, pp. 166-191. Fortes' ideas on ancestral authority were criticised by some anthropologists, like I. Kopytoff, 'Ancestors as Elders', *Africa*, vol. 41, 1971, pp. 129-142, but later defended and revived by others, like C. J. Calhoun, 'The Authority of Ancestors: A Sociological Reconsideration of Fortes's Tallensi in Response to Fortes's Critics', *Man*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1980, pp. 304-319. Also interesting is the correspondence that followed this article in the journal *Man*; I. Kopytoff, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1981, pp. 135-137; C. J. Calhoun, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 16, vol. 1, 1981, pp. 137-138; M. Fortes, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1981, pp. 300-302; S. Drucker-Brown, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1981, p. 475; J. L. Brain, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1982, pp. 546-547; M. Ruel, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1982, pp. 547-548; I. Kopytoff, 'The Authority of Ancestors', *Man*, vol. 17, 1982, no. 3, p. 548; R. Keesing, 'Ancestors, Sociology and Comparative Analysis', *Man*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1983, pp. 185-190; C. J. Calhoun, 'Ancestors, Sociology and Comparative Analysis', *Man*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1983, pp. 602-604. See also the posthumous publication, M. Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; and also, A. Kuper, 'Meyer Fortes: The Person, the Role, the Theory', *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2016, pp. 127-139.

192. Calhoun, 'The Authority of Ancestors'.

193. M. Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright (eds), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958 [1919]. Weber defines authority of the 'eternal yesterday' as 'the mores sanctified through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform' (pp. 78-79).

194. Grieve & Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition', p. 3.

195. H. Arendt, 'What is Authority', pp. 91-141.

196. F. Füredi, *Authority: A Sociological History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 4.

197. M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Bedminster Press, New York, 1968, p. 212.

198. M. Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought: Selected Writings, Volume 2*, Imprint Academic, Exeter, 2006, pp. 293, 229.

both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments'.[199] Authority precludes any use of coercing or coaxing, because it rests on common recognition; the very need to persuade or force someone indicates the absence of authority. Rather than simply a relationship of power, 'the authoritarian relation between the one who commands and the one who obeys rests neither on common reason nor on the power of the one who commands; what they have in common is the hierarchy itself, whose rightness and legitimacy both recognize and where both have their predetermined stable place'.[200]

Arendt's quintessential example of pre-political authority can help us understand this in simpler terms. Because of their role as guides of a pre-established world, parents have typically held an unquestionable authority over children, who are by birth natural newcomers and strangers to this world.[201] Once parents need to argue or beat their child, then authority has been lost.[202] According to Arendt, when you treat your children as equals or act as a tyrant towards them, then you are implicitly conceding your loss of authority over them.[203] For Arendt, that we can question the plausibility of this type of authority (or that between teacher and pupil) today, indicates the fundamental absence of authority in the present age. It is because we no longer share 'undisputable experiences' that are common to all of us that Arendt claims 'authority has vanished from the modern world'.[204] This view of authority helps us to better distinguish between modern revolutionaries who *knowingly* 'relied on the language of the past to endow their claims with authority', and tradition in its original sense as there to affirm the authority of a predetermined social order.[205]

Although revolutionary movements like Jacobinism worked to sideline religious identity, they nonetheless paved the way for a variety of contemporary movements emerging in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that contest Western modernity in the name of a religious tradition, but that attempt to construct society according to their respective utopian visions by bringing together various components of their ontology 'in a distinct sectarian-utopian Jacobin vision'.[206] This is how Eisenstadt uses the word 'fundamentalism', arguing that though religious fundamentalist movements may propagate seemingly anti-modern themes, at closer inspection they demonstrate distinctively Jacobin tendencies — as with their 'secular' counterparts (e.g. communist movements) — such as the construction of elaborate ideologies

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199. Arendt, 'What is Authority', p. 93.
200. Ibid., p. 92.
201. Ibid., p. 91; see also H. Arendt, 'Authority in the Twentieth Century', *The Review of Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1956, pp. 403–417.
202. H. Arendt, *On Violence*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1970, p. 45.
203. Ibid., p. 45.
204. Arendt, 'What is Authority', p. 91.
205. Füredi, *Authority*, p. 11.
206. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, p. 91; see also W. Spohn, 'Eisenstadt on Civilizations and Multiple Modernity', *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2001, p. 504. Although the term 'fundamentalism' is often problematised and at times altogether refuted, a more appropriate alternative has not yet been espoused.

implemented within the public arena in the attempt to reconstruct both man and society according to a 'totalistic' vision.[207] Fundamentalism for Eisenstadt is a distinctly modern phenomenon and fundamentalist movements are 'major vehicles in the construction of multiple forms of modernity'.[208] This affinity with modernity, however, does not mean that these movements are solely 'products of modernity' and not the continuations of their respective traditions.[209] That is the kind of interpretation that results from regarding the traditional elements within fundamentalist movements as superficial, whereas, as Eisenstadt points out, they are deeply rooted within their respective religions, albeit most closely drawing upon the 'especially utopian, sectarian heterodox tendencies' within their civilisations.[210]

Most importantly for our purposes here, fundamentalism can be seen as part of an effort 'to *essentialize* tradition in an ideologically totalistic way'.[211] From this perspective, it is what those in the present do with what is received from the past that defines tradition and the authority it is imbued with, which lies more in the activity of the living than the dead.[212] Tradition is best understood as that which is shaped by the activity of people as well as that which shapes them 'insofar as it is prior to them'.[213] One way of gaging how much a tradition shapes people or is itself shaped by them is by looking at the degree to which it is articulated.[214] The distinction between 'hegemony' and 'ideology' formulated by Jean and Johan Comaroff (1991) is highly useful in this regard.[215] They explain the two as 'either ends of a continuum', where 'hegemony homogenises' on one extreme whilst 'ideology articulates' on the other; one

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207. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, p. 2.

208. Spohn, 'Eisenstadt on Civilizations and Multiple Modernity', p. 505; Eisenstadt writes: 'The modern cultural and political program, the cultural and political program as it crystallized with the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and above all in the Great Revolutions, was indeed greatly influenced by the sectarian proto-fundamentalist movements of the late medieval and early modern era. It is the attempts in these revolutions to implement in the central political arena these utopian sectarian often gnostic conceptions that provide the crucial (even if indeed paradoxical) link between modernity, the modern cultural and political program, and the modern fundamentalist movements ... [which] can — perhaps paradoxically — best be understood against the background of the development of modernity and within the framework of this development. These movements and ideologies constitute one of the social movements in modern societies as movements of protest that developed with modernity. They constitute one possible development within, or component of, the cultural and political program and discourse of modernity, as it crystallized above all with the Enlightenment and with the Great Revolutions, as it expanded through the world and has continually developed with its different potentialities, contradictions, and antinomies' (Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, pp. 39-40).

209. See, for example, Spohn, 'Eisenstadt on Civilizations and Multiple Modernity', p. 504; see also N. Göle, 'Islam in European Publics: Secularism and Religious Difference', *The Hedgehog Review*, vol. 8, no. 1–2, 2006, p. 145; G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, Sage, London, 2007, p. 186.

210. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, p. 3.

211. Ibid., p. i (emphasis mine).

212. G. P. Grieve & R. Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition: Legitimation, Agency, and Counter-Hegemonies', in S. Engler & G. P. Grieve (eds.), *Historicizing 'Tradition' in the Study of Religion*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2005, p. 3.

213. Ibid., p. 7.

214. Ibid., p. 5.

215. J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, Volume One*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991.

is mute whilst the other 'babbles on'.[216] Whereas 'hegemony is primarily implicit, taken for granted, naturalized, habit forming … ideology is explicit, articulated, and so open to contestation'.[217] No particular tradition is, of course, purely on one extreme or the other, and 'the place that it occupies on this continuum will shift with time and place'.[218]

The argument being made here is in line with the influential work on tradition by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), who show how it is especially during periods of rapid social change that tradition is consciously invented rather than unconsciously imitated.[219] After articulating this argument in more detail than I can here, Gregory Grieve and Richard Weiss (2005) write on this point that 'radical historical shifts will tend to turn hegemony into ideology, resulting from critique and engendering further critique, a process especially common with the intervention of a new force that is pursuing hegemony'.[220] This answers the Fundamentalist tendency to seek authority in the form of religious texts through 'selective retrieval from the past' in order to formulate critical reactions to the perceived threat of modernity to their particular traditions.[221] Rather than being bound to concrete political (e.g. government) or social (e.g. body of ulama) authority, validation for such textual interpretation is guaranteed instead by reference to an imagined 'golden age of impeccable conduct'.[222] Grieve and Weiss further write that this kind of 'adherence to tradition is an orientation towards an imagined timeless community, borne of the desire to submerge one's personal identity into a larger community that transcends that individual'.[223] It is because tradition is attributed this timelessness by its exponents that they consider it relevant for them now and for all times.

Utopianism

What we have been exploring in this chapter is how Haeri's efforts to create a community at Bayt al-Deen, and grander ambitions of societal reform globally, were directed by the ideal of a perfect community in Medina which fostered an original Islam during the religion's nascent beginnings. This vision of a utopian Medinan model also had personal resonance for Haeri. Bayt al-Deen not only shared a similar desert climate to that of Medina, but also that of the Karbala of his childhood. Haeri had tried to recreate a similar ambience to what he remembered from his childhood in Karbala, as well as how he imagined it to have been in Medina, having even expressed this fact in some of his talks from the early 80s.

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216. Comaroff & Comaroff, cited in Grieve & Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition', p. 5; see also Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 24.
217. Grieve & Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition', p. 5.
218. Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 24; Grieve & Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition', p. 5.
219. Grieve & Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition', p. 5.
220. Ibid., p. 6.
221. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, p. 185.
222. For an example specifically of Islam, see Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, pp. 108-109.
223. Grieve & Weiss, 'Illuminating the Half-Life of Tradition', p. 3.

I left Karbala at the age of 15, when it was a city of Islam. By that, I mean the following: There were no cars in the city, no hotels, restaurants, no doctors. There was a small isolation hospital outside the city gates where they kept lepers and other isolation cases. Children were born at home; old people died in their own houses. The cemetery was within walking distance from the houses. Anything a normal human being needed for his existence was within a few minutes' walk from the house — clothing, food and the other basic requirements for survival in this world. There was no concrete, no steel girders; the houses were mainly made of mud bricks, so you could expand them easily if you had another child. There were underground cellars to protect you from the heat of summer. It was a city of about 180,000 people and everybody knew everybody else. The old and young mingled. The young respected the old and obeyed them. There was no stress in the city. As far as I remember, there were only two mad people in the city and they were fed and looked after. This is the true picture of what I saw as a Medina model.

When I went back there after completing my studies in the West, it was destroyed. Streets had opened up in the middle of the city, villas had been built and there were cars. To pay for all these luxuries there were banks, and *riba* (interest). The old city where everybody knew and helped his neighbour had gone. In its place was misery and stress with hospitals staffed by allopathic doctors catering to the new-found mental illnesses. Karbala had become a city of superstition with just the semblance of an Islamic aroma.

People still go there to visit the shrine of Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, in as far as they are allowed by the tyrannical regimes and mullahs. The city I had known as a child was finished. It had been a place of harmony, protected by the wall which surrounded it, within which lay a light which overcame darkness and ignorance. Whoever came to Karbala for knowledge was absorbed within it and purified, then sent out again in order to spread the message of *bushra* (good news) — that there is only Allah, that you have come to Allah, that to Allah you are returning, and in the meantime, your task is only to discover this. In the name of modernity, the city is now littered with signs and Coca Cola bottles. Families who had previously lived together are now scattered, husband and wife now cooped up in a tiny apartment — the husband returning home from work to the television screen, while his wife is trapped in a concrete cubicle of a kitchen with her expensive gadgets, which frequently break down. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is exactly what happened in Karbala within a span of 20-30 years.[224]

Haeri's ideals echoed his memories of a Karbala from a bygone era, an impossible feat to synthetically replicate. Basically, his aim was to create a self-sufficient community slightly detached from the world. But what he ended up with instead, was an isolated community largely cut-off from larger society and entirely dependent on him. With all of the costs of his centre still resting on his own personal financial resources, as well as much of the teaching responsibilities, Haeri's vision of a self-sufficient and dynamic community never really materialised. He struggled to find enough teachers and serious students, with most of the people coming more for rehabilitation as former drug addicts or traumatised individuals; as well as many 'ex-hippies' of the counterculture, the community would end up including a lot

224. Haeri, *Songs of Iman On the Roads Of Pakistan.*

of ex-cons and Vietnam veterans.[225] His generosity and ambition, in retrospect, was quite foolish; what Haeri ended up with was a lot of 'hangers-on' reliant on his aid.

End of Bayt al-Deen

There were a number of other complications that only further problematised sustaining the community at Bayt al-Deen. Haeri had problematic issues with some of the surrounding neighbours; there had been some attention from the local press, such as the San Antonio newspaper, which did a spread about a new Muslim village that was going to be built, riling a lot of the locals.[226] Similarly, Haeri and the centre also experienced growing complications with the government, particularly the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Whilst Haeri was out of the country, the ATF had raided Bayt al-Deen under the premise of looking for a suspected armoury they had been tipped about by a neighbour. There was also the case of a man who, after losing custody of his children, had run away with them to Bayt al-Deen, which brought the FBI to the property.

We can observe this crackdown on Bayt al-Deen as part of the bigger anti-cult efforts instigated by the government against religious communes across the United States. The most famous example of this was that which took place against the popular guru, Baghwan Shri Rajneesh, later called Osho (d. 1990), and his enormous commune in Oregon.[227] Many of the same political troubles as experienced by Haeri at Bayt al-Deen were faced by Osho and his commune, culminating in the guru's sudden departure from the country and return to India.[228] Perhaps predictable in hindsight, Haeri also abruptly left America in 1985, never to return.[229] Of the many strategies that the US government used to pressure Haeri, the one that perhaps affected Haeri most directly were a number of tax-liability charges trumped up by the IRS.[230] The case went on for several years before finally being dropped due to lack of evidence from the IRS. But by then the damage had been done. The expenses of the cases only added to Haeri's enormous spending in setting up and establishing the centre. Yet, a diminished community at Bayt al-Deen would continue in one form or another for almost a decade after Haeri's departure.[231]

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225. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

226. Ibid.

227. For a comprehensive study on Osho and the movement he inspired, see Hugh B. Urban, *Zorba the Buddha: Sex, Spirituality, and Capitalism in the Global Osho Movement*, University of California Press, Oakland, CA, 2015.

228. In fact, U.S. federal raids on religious communes and minority groups has been a common political feature in the country at least since the mid-twentieth century. For a substantial archive of contemporary raided groups in Western countries, see S. A. Wright & S. J. Palmer, *Storming Zion: Government Raids on Religious Communities*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015.

229. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

230. *Washington Post*, (August 16) 1987; *Federal Reporter*.

231. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016.

One of the senior students of Haeri had taken over for some time, but by the late 80s, Bayt ul-Deen came under the control of Shaykh Fattah (d. 2018), an American convert who had been initiated into the Rifaʿi order and who had previously been an imam at the mosque in Bayt al-Deen.[232] Fattah was associated with Shaykh Fadhlalla, and would take part at gatherings with Haeri, even in Europe and elsewhere. However, although associated with Haeri, Shaykh Fattah had not been authorised by him and so tensions between many of Haeri's people still resident at the centre on the one hand, and Shaykh Fattah together with his group on the other, were inevitable.[233] Nevertheless, Fattah would remain in charge for a period of about 8 years until in 1996 the property was eventually bought by the Greek Orthodox Church and became the Holy Archangels Monastery.[234]

Other Community Projects

Bayt al-Deen was not an isolated case for Haeri. Most of his financial commitments had been initiated with the intention that they would one day become self-sufficient. The several schools, clinics and orphanages that Haeri opened in America, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan during the mid-80s were primarily established with this aim. But this aspect of the projects diminished with time, with most of them continuing on only in their capacity as charities. The Zahra Trust had been established by Haeri during the early 80s to serve as an umbrella for not only the publication of Haeri's own writings as well as other literary works, but also for his philanthropic activities.[235] These activities also took place closer to home, such as Haeri's support of a fully operational and licensed school, teaching children from preschool up to seventh grade, called 'Zahra School'. Schooling was free and volunteers were welcomed to help run the school. The preschool had six teachers following a curriculum that included motor and sensory education, language arts, science, Arabic, mathematics and basic principles of Islam. An open class method was implemented with every child encouraged to learn at their own pace. The primary school had eleven teachers and the same basic curriculum, with additional subjects of Islamic history and studies, social studies, reading, writing, Spanish, typing, arts and crafts, farming, food preparation and health and safety.[236]

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232. This was the period when the Robert Mullan documentary screened for the first time on Channel Four in the UK (18th of December 1990), *Sufism: The Heart of Islam* (3-part series).
233. There has also been some controversy around Shaykh Fattah, especially because of accusations that he was hurting children, which has even led to people distancing themselves from Haeri for not reprimanding him or doing anything about it. From my Data, it seems that Haeri was ignorant of these accusations, having had no problem in chastising Shaykh Fattah for other issues, such as his involving himself in pop-music and practicing controversial group meditation exercises (Haji Mustapha Interview, 2017). In 1999 Shaykh Fattah moved to Indonesia, where some of his offspring are part the well-known music group *Debu*.
234. See https://holyarchangels.com/.
235. Beside at Bayt al-Deen in Texas, Zahra Publications had offices in London, Karachi and Beirut.
236. 'Zahra School', *Nuradeen*, vol. 1, no. 6, (Nov/Dec) 1981, pp. 52-53.

Another example is the program of educating Muslim prisoners within and around Texas, which some of the people in Bayt al-Deen had instigated through a distance learning course developed by Haeri and ran from the centre. Inspired by the correspondence course he had taken when with Chinmayananda, Haeri had also initiated his own basic correspondence course in 1984, called 'Islam Original', which was meant to cover all aspects of the 'deen of Islam' in '26 easy lessons spread over 52 weeks requiring only 30 minutes study each day'.[237] The course was particularly popular among Muslim prisoners, with approximately three thousand prisoners enrolled in the course, making it the biggest independent movement for educating prisoners at the time and a support network for Muslim prisoners before Muslim chaplaincy had become established in US prisons. Haeri would also visit the prisons to give talks, making several visits to the Huntsville Correctional Facility in particular, where on one visit, accompanied with five of his followers, Haeri gave a short talk to the imams of the institution, followed by another talk and a question-and-answer session with the inmates, ending with prayer and *dhikr*.[238]

In relation to the efforts in prisons, Haeri also supported a half-way house at the New Light Village Apartments close to downtown San Antonia, which could serve as a haven for 200 to 300 ex-prisoners who would come to be fed and housed until they could move on.[239] The project began already at the start of 1981, when a group of Muslims living in San Antonio who saw Haeri as their teacher moved from their separate living situations scattered throughout the city to the New Light Village housing development on the east side of the city. Once again, the people came from a wide variety of backgrounds. The imam and leader of the community was an African American who went by the name Ali Abd al-Malik. In an interview with him from the time, he states: 'New Light is a step. The next step is Dar al-Islam – a community that will be built and run and lived in by Muslims. A community that will provide for those who have good hearts and who desire to be with Muslims. That is the next step'.[240] Plans to create this separate permanent residential place, to be named Safaa City, had been made, but did not get beyond engineering preparations and architectural designs.[241]

Keeping in mind the Islamic revivalist ethos that permeated these philanthropical efforts on the part of Haeri and those around him, we can make an argument that they served a primary motivation of proselytising his particular brand of an original Islam. Sometimes proselytising projects would even take on a more direct form, like going out on road trips to invite people to Islam. One particular mission, for instance, involved a group of men going out

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237. This citation is from an advert poster for the course, attained by me during my fieldwork.
238. *Nuradeen*, vol. 1, no. 3, (May/June) 1981.
239. Fadhlalla Haeri interview, June 2015.
240. *Nuradeen*, vol. 1, no. 3, (May/June) 1981, p. 9.
241. Aliya Haeri, interview, June 2015.

in a Winnebago, singing the *Dīwan* of Ibn al-Habib and meeting a group of Native Americans, who would become Muslim through them.[242] While in Texas, Haeri also toured Latin America numerous times for proselytising purposes.[243] The most common destinations were Brazil, Argentina and Costa Rica, where groups of followers had formed around Haeri's visits, and translations into Spanish of his works as well as a few Islamic classics were undertaken. Some visits were made to establish contact with Muslims in Mexico and to see if there was any potential for a centre there, but nothing materialised beyond some Mexicans coming over to visit Bayt al-Deen. Centres were however opened in Argentina and Costa Rica, with some of Haeri's followers staying behind to manage them. But they only lasted a few years, quickly disintegrating in Haeri's absence.[244]

Searching for a Home

In hindsight, Haeri's vision of a global network of self-sufficient communities seems too idealistic. For instance, all that was left of the Ahmadpur project by 1988 was the cotton factory, which Haeri eventually sold his shares for and left to the locals he had originally partnered with.[245] In addition to offering the local people an alternative that could reduce a perceived encroachment of dependency upon the foreign West, the centre in Pakistan was also meant to serve as an organic environment that would expose Haeri's students visiting from the West to a well-established and organic Muslim way of life rather than a contrived one. Clearly, Haeri hoped to build a bridge between East and West for the sake of mutual benefit. As part of this effort, Haeri had sponsored some of the younger members at Bayt al-Deen to study in Pakistan, as well as Iran, at traditional madrasas in Karachi and in Qom.[246] Haeri would also often send people from Bayt al-Deen for months, an entire year, or longer, as volunteers at the clinics, schools, orphanages, etc. connected to his philanthropic projects in Pakistan as well as other parts of the subcontinent, in villages in South India and Sri Lanka.[247] Haeri's vision was one of cross-pollination; to revive people's faith in the East by sending converts from the West, and for the Westerners to learn some of the sweetness and natural manners of the Easterners.

Haeri's efforts reflect the sense of Muslim solidarity that characterised the last decades of the twentieth century, but they also reveal a personal ambition to find his own home. Pakistan was also the site of one of Haeri's most serious attempts at setting up a base for himself in the East during the mid-80s. He had bought land in Malir, on the outskirts of Karachi, with the intention of building a home for his family and a centre to be called Gulshan-i Zahra ('Zahra

242. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017.

243. Abdul Hadi, interview, November 2016; Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017; Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017.

244. Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017.

245. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016; Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017.

246. Mortaza Morton, interview, March 2017.

247. Haeri also sponsored a pilgrimage to Mecca for some of the adult students of Bayt al-Deen (Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017).

Garden'). A prominent architect had been contracted and designs were made. A group of his followers lived in Karachi, along with some of Haeri's family, who had already moved a year earlier, renting an enormous house with the expectation that the rest of the family would soon come and stay to fulfil their desire to live and raise the kids in an Islamic atmosphere.[248] But just as Haeri was making arrangements to move himself, he cancelled his plans on the advice of a friend who warned him of the instability and crime in the region. Although planning and preparation for the centre had progressed quite far — with the planting of orchards, etc. — the place was abandoned in 1989 and sold only many years later to a family of doctors who created a free fistula hospital on the existing foundations.[249]

Haeri had also visited Kashmir a few times for the same reason, and even bought a property there to set up a centre. But with the outbreak of civil war, he abandoned the project.[250] He made further attempts in other parts of South Asia. India was another favoured location. Having been well acquainted with the country since his time with Chinmayananda, Haeri spent quite some time during the 80s touring India with some of his followers, especially South India, being particularly fond of Kerala and its people.[251] The closest Haeri got was in Sri Lanka, where he had bought land on the east coast near Colombo in the hopes of setting up a new Sufi centre and home for him and his family. But after a few floods and tsunamis had brought down some of the development on this kilometre-long beachfront, Haeri abandoned the idea; the looming civil war here was also a strong deterrent.[252]

Though his departure from America came unexpectedly for his followers, Haeri had never intended for a permanent home in the West and had instead always looked to find it in the East. According to one of his daughters, 'he had what he called Europa-titus'.[253] Hence, even after leaving the US for the UK, it was only a matter of time before Haeri was going to leave England. Haeri owned a beautiful house and orchard in Majorca that he would escape to whenever he could not abide the dreary English weather. Yet, although he preferred the Mediterranean and was fond of his place in Majorca, this was impractical beyond a holiday destination for the rest of the family. There had been similar impracticalities with living permanently in Bermuda, where Haeri had earlier spent considerable time and where there had been a small group of young people he used to teach.[254]

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248. Muna Bilgrami, interview, May 2017.

249. Also abandoned were hopes of setting up an oil refinery business in the country, which didn't get much further than an impressive office in the city (Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017).

250. Abdul Hadi, interview, November 2016.

251. Abdul Hadi, interview, November 2016; Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017; Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017.

252. Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017; Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

253. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017.

254. In Bermuda, Haeri used to rent one of the small private islands, staying there sometimes for up to an entire month. Some of the students in Bermuda would also visit Bayt al-Deen, with one young man moving there permanently and flourishing within the communal atmosphere (Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, March 2017).

At its most extreme, during his years in England in the 80s, Haeri spent more than half of his time sailing around the world on his yacht, *The Radiant*, stopping only temporarily at any one location. Haeri sailed from Majorca to the Red Sea, sailed up and down the East African coast, and across the Indian Ocean to India and the Maldives, sailing the coasts of Pakistan and India all the way down to Lakshadweep.[255] Apparently, having been identified as an Iraqi dissident, Haeri was not able to renew his Iraqi passport and so without an official nationality had decided to take the required exams for a Seaman Record Book or Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC).[256] Through some bureaucratic juggling, Haeri eventually managed to get a passport as a Canadian citizen, which he maintains to this day.[257] This, in many ways, is a symbolic token of how, ever since leaving Lebanon in the mid-70s, Haeri had been travelling extensively looking for a permanent base without ever really finding one. Perhaps this longing for finding a home stretches even farther back to his adolescent departure from Karbala. Regardless, what we see in Haeri's personal quest for finding a home is a sense of having lost something irreplaceable, yet a deep desire to re-form it all-the-same.

3.2 Islamisation

3.2.1 Teaching the Qur'an

> I did not come to America with the intention of a community. Allah had given me enough knowledge and experience in this life to ascertain that there was nothing I could do in America better and more useful then creating a little haven. It was very clear to me that the time for a great community or state to be in Islam is not there. It is not ripe. There is still a lot of deep ignorance and anger and frustration and so on. And I did only what my heart told me was the best possible action, to create a sanctuary, for anyone who has got the right courtesy towards Allah. To be welcomed here, so as to learn, for us to learn how to serve better. So, I did what I could and it is already finished. The next stage is just to get the teachings going and the right courtesy in this domain as best as we know'.[258]

As this quote — taken from video footage of Haeri from 1981 — shows, already after just a few years Haeri was no longer intending to create a utopian microcosm of the ummah at Bayt al-Deen, but rather a fluid community of students.[259] Although they had not met for many years, Chinmayananda had sent a letter to Haeri warning him about getting too involved with the idea

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255. Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017; Fadhlalla, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2017.
256. Muna Bilgrami, interview, March 2017.
257. Haeri's travels were also most often in conjunction with talks that he would give, some of which were combined into a book. In Indonesia, for example, enough interest for his teachings had been generated to result in local translations of some of his works.
258. *Bayt al-Deen* (1982).
259. Ibid.

of creating a community.[260] Sooner or later, Haeri himself became cautious of this fact, intending to create a community that was dynamic and mobile rather than permanently resident, a detail supported by other references from audio and video footage as well as print material from the time, which all tell us how Haeri's aim with Bayt al-Deen had been to offer a 'haven' for a community of like-minded people that could be fluid and constantly changing. Perhaps this had always been the main motive, as suggested by Haeri in the citation above, but Bayt al-Deen was undoubtedly envisaged from the beginning as a social experiment.[261]

Despite the many activities at Bayt al-Deen and elsewhere that Haeri was involved with in trying to promote his ideal, the primary focus for him had always been on translating the Qur'an for the common people. From the very beginning, Haeri had personally focused on teaching the Qur'an by giving regular classes. These lessons initially took place at his own residence as well as among a small community of his followers in San Antonio, and later also at the centre he established in Blanco, until Bayt al-Deen was built on the 140-acre land Haeri had bought not too far from the city. Haeri's efforts with teaching the Qur'an parallel those of his own teacher's with the Vedas. Chinmayananda had brought the Upanishads to the common Hindu layman, displacing it as the exclusive preserve of brahmins. Haeri aimed to do the same with the Qur'an.

Fadhlalla Haeri's classes on the Qur'an during his time in America were tailored for this purpose, to teach the ancient text to a modern Western-educated non-Arabic-speaking audience of laymen. He would give these Qur'an classes on a daily basis, both morning and evening, over several years. The methodology seems to have been that he would first read from a number of existing commentaries accessible to him, and then himself seek inspiration for the verses he was to talk on.[262] The talks were all subsequently transcribed and edited by his students and family members, and then published into a number of books as commentaries on selected *sura*s (chapters) of the Qur'an, which were later revised and republished as a five-volume series entitled *Keys to the Qur'an* (1993). A similar structure runs throughout this series, which is largely comprised of a verse-by-verse commentary varying in length from a single paragraph to a few pages; the three books on a single, longer chapter also have a short introduction and a longer summary at the end which sandwich the main body of text.[263]

Each of the books were originally titled poetically, replicating the traditional Islamic scholarly style of rhyming headings. *Man in Qur'an and the Meaning of Furqan* (1982) is based

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260. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.

261. 'Bayt al-Deen: an experiment'. The article states: 'Not only is the setting an arena of study, but a laboratory in which to see the personal and social dynamics on a mini scale. There are multi-racial and multi-national characteristics to the population at any given time and so the micro-social environments give the person living here an opportunity to see the self-deal with experiences usually only when travelling'.

262. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, January 2014.

263. The first volume includes a forward by Mahmoud M. Ayoub, then professor at the Center of Religious Studies, University of Toronto.

on his earliest commentaries, and is dedicated to Sura 2, al-Baqara, the longest chapter of the Qur'an; although covering a wide spectrum of topics, much of the focus is on how to live as a community, for obvious reasons. The next book to be published was *Heart of Qur'an and Perfect Mizan* (1983), which expounds on Sura 36, Ya Sin, one of the most popular chapters of the Qur'an, often referred to as its heart; this choice was largely on the request of some of the Muslims living in San Antonio. *The Mercy of Qur'an and the Advent of Zaman* (1984) is a commentary on a selection of four shorter chapters, more concentrated on existential issues. *Beams of Illumination from the Divine Revelation* (1985) contains commentary on the final 37 shortest and most often recited chapters, with a similar focus on existential issues and how they personally relate to the individual; because of the familiarity with the short chapters it comments upon, this particular book would become a favourite amongst Haeri's students, with classes on them still undertaken today. Concluding the series and continuing on from his earliest commentary from the beginning of the Qur'an, *The Light of Iman from the House of Imran* (1986) is an exclusive commentary on Sura 3, Al 'Imran, the second longest chapter.

By examining this entire series of Qur'anic commentaries chronologically, we can clearly see how both Haeri's teaching and writing developed during his time in America. The final book in the series, for example, has a far more conventional approach, in contrast to the highly original albeit disorganised style of his earliest commentary. On the one hand, commentary in the earliest book is often difficult to relate to the relevant verse, whereas it is much easier to understand and far clearer to see how the commentary relates to the verses in the last book of the series. But on the other hand, the first book is full of original insights, such as relating the manifestation of 'the Book' to the genetic code contained in every cell of the body. Whilst it is typical in the latter book to find far more conservative explanations of 'the Book', as that which teaches us to differentiate between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, etc.

American Institute of Quranic Studies

An explanation for the development we see demonstrated in this series of Qur'anic commentaries could be that Haeri began to be slightly more restrictive in what he shared during his talks from his own inspirations of the verses, perhaps because of the confusion or controversy it was causing among his audience. This also relates to a general move Haeri seemed to have been making as the decade progressed, from a radical reformism towards a more conventional approach grounded in traditional Islamic scholarship; this we see not only in his writings during the period but also in his social activities and interests, such as the development of a madrasa at Bayt al-Deen.

Officially inaugurated at the First Bayt al-Deen Sufi Gathering, a ten-day residential camp in December 1981, the American Institute of Quranic Studies offered a comprehensive two-year residential course on Islamic fundamentals, taught mainly in English, including not only

Qur'anic studies but many other topics typical in confessional Islamic studies, such as Arabic, Hadith, Prophetic biography, Islamic law, jurisprudence and theology. The courses were especially designed to equip students to function as imams and religious teachers in general society. A number of prominent Shi'i scholars would be helpful in establishing the teaching pattern at the institute. Mahdi al-Hakim (d. 1988), for example, was a renowned scholar who would often come and stay to teach at Bayt al-Deen.[264] Shaykh Abdalqadir al-Murabit was also prominent during this early period, and had befriended al-Hakim some years before in UAE.[265] Abdalqadir had moved by this time to the community in Granada, Spain, where in the summer of 1983 there was a large gathering, including approximately a hundred of his followers from England and Denmark especially. But he would still visit America and attended the second Sufi gathering at Bayt al-Deen in June 1982. His visit and set of talks led to discussion and reflection about the merits of the 'Salafi way' within Islam. Focused on Imam Malik and his Medina-oriented method, this series of discourses given by him at Bayt al-Deen resulted in the publication, *Root Islamic Education* (1982).[266] The Rifa'i Sufi shakyh, Jamali Shehu, also contributed to the development of the institute after his arrival from Yugoslavia for the third Sufi gathering at Bayt al-Deen, along with a contingent of his followers.[267]

A general outline of the daily routine of a typical student at the madrasa – once it was fully operational – is cited here from an interview with Riza Bilgrami, a retired Brigadier employed to be in charge and manage the entire centre:

> A typical day would be, you would start at *fajr* [dawn], when the student comes to the mosque and says *salat* [prayer]. Then there is a physical exercise class for 15 minutes. Then he goes back to his room and cleans himself up and comes and has breakfast. Immediately after breakfast he has four hours of classes in which the subjects are taught. … Then we have a break for about an hour, which is spent in private study or in the library. Then there is lunch and then a period of rest for an hour or an hour and a half. And then he does some outdoor activities like farming or working in the press, and other improvements of Bayt al-Deen, such as landscaping and gardening. Then they come back in the evening, wash up and have supper and do the *maghrib* [evening] prayers, followed by *dhikr*, then *'isha* [night prayers], and then that is the end of the day.[268]

Cautious of the idea of a static group of permanent residents, Haeri hoped that people would stay for one or two years only. The intention was to provide a place for people who could come to stay and study intensively for a period of a few months, two years at the most, and then be able to go back to their day-to-day life, assuredly with an intention that they would serve to

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264. The son of a prominent Shi'i authority, Muhammad Mahdi al-Hakim was an Iraqi scholar who was also a political activist and co-founder of the Islamic al-Da'wa Party. Only a few years after his time at Bayt al-Deen, he was assassinated for his opposition to Saddam Hussein.
265. Hosam Raouf, interview, February 2017.
266. Dutton, 'Sufism in Britain', p. 95.
267. Other teachers included Abd al-Razzaq from Ethiopia and Rasheed 'Abd al-Jami', an American Arabic instructor.
268. From an interview with Riza Bilgrami in *Bayt al-Deen Revisited* (1984).

spread the message further. Hence, rather than a community per se, Haeri's vision for Bayt al-Deen grew to become that of a sanctuary for learning. Bayt al-Deen was to be a prototype self-sufficient modern madrasa, an institute tailor-made for the Western student but that consciously built upon the legacy of medieval madrasas.

Making the Modern Madrasa

When Fadhlalla Haeri established the American Institute of Quranic Studies, the idea of a madrasa or any other institute of Islamic education in the West was a novelty. Yet, it wasn't the first madrasa established in the West. Founded in 1975 in a small town in the northeast of England, the Dar al-'Ulum al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya, better known as Darul Uloom Bury, was 'the first full-time residential and nonresidential school teaching a comprehensive curriculum of Islamic education'.[269] What is significant about this madrasa is that it was a direct descendent of Darul Uloom Deoband, established over a century earlier in India under colonial rule.[270] This is not mere coincidence; the success of the Deoband school and its many subsequent offshoots around the world is due in large part to the modern model they had formulated and followed.

Barbara Metcalf (1982) has studied the emergence of the Deoband madrasa in 1868 within the context of colonial India, and has pointed out its 'modern' characteristics, which served as a template for other Islamic institutions in India and eventually across the world.[271] Metcalf, as well as Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002), show how many movements associated with the ulama and other religious leaders developed with the decline of Muslim rulership.[272] Drawing on Metcalf's work, Moin identifies the culmination of the reformist trend throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in a rapidly changing British India with the birth and growth of the Deoband madrasa, which 'differed from previous madrasas in Islamic history in that it was not endowed by the king or nobility but was run by the contributions of common Muslims'.[273] It is not only in the context of massive social and political change, but also a very significant change in the cultural *zeitgeist* of eighteenth and nineteenth-century India, that this new type of madrasa emerged.

Attributing it to an almost universal dissolution of a hierarchical cosmos, Moin writes that 'the reformist wave that culminated in the Islamic madrasa or college of Deoband and created a new social role for the ulama of South Asia gathered strength in an age that saw the end of

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269. P. Mandaville, 'Islamic Education in Britain: Approaches to Religious Knowledge in a Pluralistic Society', in R. W. Hefner & M. Q. Zaman, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, pp. 237-238.

270. Mandaville, 'Islamic Education in Britain', pp. 237-238.

271. B. D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982.

272. Hefner, 'Introduction: The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education', p. 18; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 8, 25; M. Q. Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2002, pp. 11–13; cf. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, p. 333.

273. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, p. 308 n. 78.

Mughal monarchy and, more generally, the waning of Muslim sacred kingship'.[274] Under colonial rule and in the absence of a central Muslim sovereign, as well as the networks of patronage tethered to him, the ulama 'turned inward toward reform of the Muslim self'.[275] Convinced that the apparent decline of Muslims they were witnessing was a result of their 'neglect of God's law', these learned scholars of Islam took it upon themselves as their duty to 'promote a renewed commitment to the law'.[276] With a waning significance of hierarchy, the ulama now reoriented themselves from the ruling and cultural elite and turned to the wider public of common Muslims, upon whom they now depended in a manner unheard of previously.[277] So, whereas medieval madrasas had mostly relied on endowments from patron elites, modern madrasas like the Deoband school in India would be financially dependent on contributions from the general public.[278]

In India, what this shift in social structure and subsequent reorientation of the ulama from the cultural elite to the commoner would eventually result in is 'the largest movement for Muslim mass education the world has ever seen'.[279] Although 'India's ulama could not agree on the form the new religious education should take', they all agreed on the importance of educating the Muslim masses and all of them aimed to create a new public identity informed by an emphasis on following the sharia.[280] Deobandi scholars, for instance, sought to establish their authority within the community beyond the walls of their madrasa through issuing fatwas meant to guide the Muslim public and rectify religious ritual and practice from 'unlawful innovations'.[281] Styles of dress and other markers of religious social standing previously reserved for the religious elite (*ashraf*) were popularised by the Deobandis among common, especially urban, Muslims who had embraced the reform they advocated.[282] And as part of this reformist ambition, an idealised Islam 'associated with Muhammad and the pristine Muslim community' was favoured in opposition to 'popular customs which gave a local flavor to Islam as practiced in particular communities'.[283]

As in the case of modern education in general, what most clearly marks modern madrasas as different from premodern ones is 'the idea that education and especially educational institutions can be an instrument of change'.[284] Although medieval Muslims attributed

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274. Ibid.
275. Ibid., pp. 239-240.
276. Hefner, 'Introduction', pp. 18-19.
277. Ibid.
278. Ibid., p. 19; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, p. 97.
279. Hefner, 'Introduction', pp. 18-19.
280. Ibid.; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 239-240.
281. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 49.
282. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 20; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, p. 256.
283. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', pp. 49-50.
284. Ibid., p. 42.

considerable 'power' to the transmission of knowledge, education was never conceived of as a force for change, but rather as a pillar of stability.[285] There was, quite literally, a *conservative* character to premodern religious education, which was expected to preserve the status quo rather than challenge it. Berkey is quick to clarify, however, that this conservatism does not mean stagnancy, as we might first assume. Rather, there was an inherent flexibility to premodern Islamic culture that even the ambitions to make it more structured by those involved in forming it could not override.[286] This is in stark contrast to the type of modern madrasa exemplified by the Deobandi founders, who 'explicitly and deliberately jettisoned much of the informal pattern of traditional Muslim education'.[287]

From its outset, the Deoband school aimed to have a regularised curriculum with a standard canon of classical texts and a fixed institutional character with a permanently employed faculty of salaried teachers and administrators.[288] Betraying the influence of modern British educational models, these radical choices 'undermined the informal and highly personalized system of transmitting religious knowledge which had encouraged flexibility and creativity in medieval Islamic educational and intellectual life'.[289] Where before a student would have been appraised through 'a web of personal relationships established over a lifetime', now his progress was measured 'by a series of carefully calibrated examinations'.[290] Whereas conscious effort was taken to avoid teaching 'Western' studies and English, still British-inspired innovations were evident in the organization and teaching methods of the Deoband madrasa, which had been modelled on Christian mission schools and the Delhi College before the Indian Rebellion ('Sepoy Mutiny') of 1857.[291] The presence of European and American missionary schools — mostly Christian but also some Jewish — in places like Anatolia, Iran and India had been particularly influential for both driving and shaping nineteenth-century educational reform among Muslims 'in a complicated *pas de deux* intertwining both admiration for and hostility to Western culture and modes of education'.[292]

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285. Ibid., pp. 45-47. Berkey writes: 'One aspect of this was the reinforcement of hierarchy: But hierarchical relationships were central to medieval Islamic education — from the regimented patterns in which teachers and students sat, with authority literally moving outward from the teacher through his older and senior students to younger and less experienced ones on the periphery, to the frankly paternalistic terms in which treatises on education discussed the teacher-student relationship' (p. 47).

286. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', pp. 46-47; see also, J. P. Berkey, 'Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East', *Past & Present*, vol. 146, no. 1, 1995, pp. 38–65; M. Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350*, *Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 143; B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 34.

287. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 49.

288. Ibid., p. 49; Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, pp. 68-69.

289. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 49.

290. Ibid.

291. Sirryeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, p. 46-47.

292. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 52.

Codifying Sharia

What the establishment and success of the Deobandi madrasa offers us is a primary example of how modern trends and Western values influenced even religious conservatives that explicitly stood in opposition to them. As well as an 'educational model built on a regularized curriculum and institutional structure', Berkey attributes the success of the Deobandi movement to their embrace of print culture.[293] The ulama at Deoband were particularly quick to take advantage of modern technologies such as the printing press, using it to spread their reformist teachings into the wider society beyond the madrasa's walls.[294] Hence, what we see is that although aiming to stay clear of Western content and subjects, by adopting Western styles and technologies, Deobandi ulama were still embracing essentially modern features.

Another prudent example of this kind of indirect appropriation is the process by which colonial efforts at codification and modern procedures distinctive to state legislation would encourage formulations of the sharia devoid of earlier characteristics of flexibility and fluidity.[295] Zubaida points out that prior to the growth of modern secular ideologies, political legitimacy was drawn from notions of the sharia as more a language of contestation than as a precise description of a desired system.[296] 'Religion and legality provided a *vocabulary* of demands and contests rather than a determinate notion of alternative political or legal orders', with the existing system of rule or hierarchy unquestionably taken as a given.[297] Colonial rule, such as that of the British in India, would come to jeopardise this dynamic of sharia with the implementation of judicial institutions modelled on, in this case, late eighteenth-century English common law. Even where religious rulings were retained, like in family law, these were now enforced by judges trained in English common law rather than Islamic law.[298]

Zaman has investigated this matter, pointing out that 'Muslim and Hindu legal experts were initially attached to the courts to advise the judges on religious law, but even this ceased to be the case not long after the consolidation of British rule in India in the mid-nineteenth century'.[299] The development of Anglo-Muhammadan law in India was an outcome of the British legal system and the 'regularising and rationalising utilitarianism and modernism of the colonial administration' in the effort to implement personal and family law for Muslim subjects

293. Ibid., pp. 50-52.

294. Sirryeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 46-47; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 67, 358.

295. B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State*; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, pp. 227-228. One consequence of this was, for example, that sharia law as codified and applied by modern states consolidated many aspects of patriarchal privilege rolling back the modest gains women had achieved up until then (d. Kandiyoti, 'Islam, Modernity and the Politics of Gender', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 94).

296. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity'.

297. Ibid., p. 61.

298. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 212.

299. Ibid., p. 212.

of the Raj.[300] As Berkey puts it, 'those who constructed 'Anglo-Muhammadan law' sought to rescue order and regularity from the jaws of indeterminacy'.[301] Hence, it serves as an informative case of colonial state-interference in nineteenth-century attempts to codify sharia.

More remarkable than Anglo-Muhammadan law itself, however, was the response to it by Indian ulama, such as the Deobandis, who developed a 'rhetoric of invariable law' to counter criticism from the British towards the 'indeterminate and unpredictable' nature of the sharia as it was traditionally formulated.[302] This response to state codification exemplifies a rising view among modern Muslims themselves of sharia as a collection of 'articles of law' that constitutes a universally 'applicable' and unanimously accepted code.[303] Abstracted from people in authority and their desires, the sharia becomes a metaphor for legality.[304] Such codification fails to appreciate the plasticity of the term 'sharia' as more of an emblem than an objective entity, and completely ignores the dependency of any such collection of legal principles upon its relations with the governmental authorities in whose name it is enforced.[305] Sharia is conceived apart from the context of the historical practice of jurisprudence as one with wide latitude in opinions over specific issues, and instead instituted as a condition of 'absolute discretion' based on the reinterpretation of foundational texts.[306] It is the explicit legislation arrived through these foundational texts that together with 'the varied and sometimes discordant rulings of jurists and early Muslims' constitute this universalist sharia, which becomes a 'remote ideal' rendered 'unrealizable and therefore ... utopian'.[307]

What these forms of idealising of Islam indicate is the manner in which Muslim elites of the nineteenth century attempted to produce an alternative narrative for themselves as a means of contesting colonialist assertions of their apparent inferiority.[308] Colonial administrators considered the principles and practices of their colonial subjects as 'barbaric' and relegated them 'to local, folk or customary status' in order 'to elevate the European model of the nation state and its laws'.[309] Their hope was 'to tailor Muslim practices in order that they would synchronise with the demands and rhythms of the nation state that was being crafted in

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300. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', pp. 50-52; Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 63-64.

301. Ibid.

302. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', pp. 50-52. Another example given by Berkey is that of Ottoman reformers who similarly 'set out to codify the sharia in the mid-nineteenth century'. Berkey continues that they 'referred to the sharia as "an ocean without shore". This was a striking choice of words on their part. Medieval mystics had used the phrase to suggest the limitless range of meaning and interpretation which could be found in the expressed word of God. By contrast, the Ottoman reformers employed it to suggest that the sharia as traditionally formulated, with its lack of fixed reference points, was virtually unnavigable, and therefore unsuitable to the needs of a modern state and its citizens' (p. 52). See also, Zaman, The Ulama in Contemporary Islam, p. 24.

303. Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, pp. 11-12.

304. Ibid., p. 132.

305. Ibid., pp. 11-12, 108.

306. Ibid.

307. Ibid., p. 132.

308. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 69-82.

309. Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', p. 167.

embryonic form'.[310] Often, this would be exercised by colonial authorities who relied heavily on a racialisation of Muslims in expressing and executing what they considered was their civilising mission.[311] The Earl of Cromer (d. 1917), for instance, claimed that 'the new generation of Egyptians has to be persuaded or forced into imbibing the true spirit of Western civilisation'.[312] Warren Hastings (d. 1818) expressed similar claims in India, denigrating Islamic criminal law as a 'barbarous construction, and contrary to the first principle of civil society'.[313]

What such rhetoric justified was the implementation of a strictly codified law enforced by the nation state and the displacement of a dynamic criminal law of the community that 'remedied crimes of injury, homicide and injustice by offering persons and communities appropriate compensation and/or retribution'.[314] Replacing the earlier 'communitarian ethos of Muslim public law and ethics', the 'new state-centred morality' would contract itself to the individual by ratifying 'autonomy over community'.[315] Similar processes of legislation occurred in a number of Muslim majority countries under direct or indirect colonial dominance, such as in nineteenth-century Egypt, where religious institutions once integral to the articulation and application of law, came to be isolated from their practical functioning in society, severing the discourse of jurists from actual judicial practice.[316]

With colonialism, the nation state began to play a central role in the moral life of its subjects by exercising 'an overriding interest over all other community interests'.[317] The goal is the dissolution of communal authority so as to allow the state to converge with an atomised individual agent.[318] The individual is imagined as a natural entity independent of social and historical context, for whom 'the modern nation-state emerges as both the agent of change and the guarantor of individual liberation from' socio-historical structures like family and kinship or guilds and churches.[319] What we are looking at in this study is how, in a Muslim context, this has seen the demise of the authority of the ulama class over both the legal and educational sectors of society. We see this clearly playing out under colonial rule, when not only law but also education was being bureaucratised and taken out of the hands of religious elites by the state.[320] The consequences of this are the topic of the following section.

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310. Ibid., pp. 165-166.
311. B. Ashcroft & P. Ahluwalia, *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity*, Routledge, London, 1999, pp. 49-54; Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', p. 167.
312. Cromer, cited in Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', pp. 165.
313. Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', pp. 165-166.
314. Ibid.
315. Ibid.
316. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', p. 213; see also N. J. Brown, 'Shari'a and State in the Modern Middle East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1997, pp. 359-376.
317. Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', pp. 167, 169.
318. D. J. T. Sullivan, 'From the Interstices of Authority', *The Political Science Reviewer*, vol. 36, 2007, pp. 376-377.
319. Ibid.
320. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity'.

3.2.2 Ulama and the New Intelligentsia

Although many medieval madrasas had been established by private acts of charity from individuals rather than governments or other organisations, transmission of knowledge among Muslims has always been 'dependent on the support of social and political authorities'.[321] Hefner points out that 'elites patronized madrasas to promote orthodoxy among Muslim converts', especially at the frontiers of Islamic civilisation.[322] But in our modern age, 'marked by the appearance of a powerfully interventionist state', these tense relations between rulers and ulama are no longer 'intermittent but chronic'.[323] As a result, for most modern Muslim-majority countries today, interference in religious education by the state has become the norm rather than the exception, to such an extent that it has ended any ulama monopoly on education and raised questions about schools and authority that have remained at the heart of Muslim politics to this day.[324]

In his influential work on education in Egypt, Gregory Starrett (1998) relates this impact on ulama authority to the 'functionalization of Islamic education' by the state in an effort to assert a 'synoptic and systematized Islam' compatible with its interests.[325] State officials, intent on homogenising religious knowledge and making it regime-friendly, packaged 'Islam' into 'curricular modules' designed for 'dissemination in mass educational programs'.[326] But it would not be long before 'nonstate actors began to create modular Islams of their own', after being encouraged 'to think of religion in a similarly disembedded, formulaic, and political manner'.[327] State intervention was by no means exclusive to colonial powers and was equally implemented

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321. Hefner, 'Introduction', pp. 4, 8.
322. Ibid., p. 8; see also Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*. The Ottoman Sultans, for example, established madrasas across their conquered territories throughout the empire's period of expansion. At the height of Ottoman power at the dawn of the modern era in the sixteenth century, these madrasas, especially in core territories, had been ranked and regulated according to a strict hierarchy set by state officials that scholars had to pass through, to which Suleiman (r. 1520-1566) added the position of mufti of Istanbul as the highest rank and head of all ulama, as well as regularising 'the procedures whereby select ulama were recruited to government service' (Hefner, 'Introduction', pp. 13-14; see also Veinstein, 1997, pp. 71, 73, 74-76). Hodgson writes on the topic: 'One of the most remarkable features of the Ottoman constitution was the manner of incorporating the sharia and its guardians the ulama into the political organism. The sharia, though as always supplemented or overreached by secular legislation, was given an effective place of honor in the state; and to assure the interdependence of the two, the ulama were to some degree hierarchically organized. Muftis became state officials of great importance, and the head of the ulama the shaykh al-Islam, came during the sixteenth century to have a constitutional position almost on a level with the Sultan by whom, however, he was appointed. The Sultan himself emphasized his character as head of the whole body of orthodox Muslims and their representative against the infidels; and the expansion of the Ottoman empire, and at the end of our period its reverses, were regarded as those of Islam itself' (Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*, p. 195).
323. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 4.
324. Ibid., p. 8.
325. Ibid., p. 12; G. Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, p. 9.
326. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 33; see also Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern'; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 650; D. F. Eickelman & J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p. 38; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, p. 9.
327. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 33; see also Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern'; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 650; Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 38; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, p. 9.

by rulers like the Ottomans and the Qajar, who also worked to functionalise Islamic education for a new and distinctly modern end, creating a broadly shared public culture for the purposes of nation building.[328] As a consequence, a new intellectual class arose with the formation of an 'Islamic public sphere' from 'the classic era of Islamic reform in the late nineteenth century through the structural transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, and the present'.[329]

Preference for institutions of modern education by governments and private elites brought about a Muslim intelligentsia that could contest the claims of ulama, whilst the proliferation of print by the late nineteenth century made available to the people — in an entirely unprecedented extent and often in vernacular translations — the very foundational texts and religious writings that had been the preserve of the ulama, thereby further undermining their traditionally authoritative role.[330] We really see this coming to fruition by the 1980s, when the 'ambitions of state officials and religious reformists' were met with modern mechanisms of 'governance, print and electronic media, and mass education to reach beyond the ranks of the ulama into the consciousness and lifeways of ordinary Muslims'.[331] Fadhlalla Haeri embodied this general trend towards the democratisation of religious knowledge and Islamic revivalism at the time, as well as the tension between the ulama and the new Muslim intellectual class.

In one way, Haeri serves as a great example of the new wave of Muslim intellectuals. With a professional background in science and engineering, as well as a successful career in business, Haeri became an independent and self-funded researcher, student and teacher; with his financial capacity, Haeri could at times have up to 20 people reading and summarising various rare and classical books that he might have acquired. But on the other hand, having been from a well-known family of scholars, Haeri was openly embraced by Shi'i clergy and their

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328. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 8; on Iran, see D. Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, Cornell University Press, London, 1992, p. 29; on the Ottomans, see B. C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002 [2000], p. 85. Some of these rulers intervened directly in madrasa affairs, whilst others, anxious not to antagonize the madrasa establishment, tried to outflank the ulama by founding elementary schools of their own. For example, whereas Ottoman efforts to reform the madrasa system had been rejected by the ulama in the nineteenth century, by the beginning of the twentieth century the state was able 'to launch an ambitious program of madrasa reform', including the opening of a Western-style Faculty of theology in Istanbul in 1908, a state school for the training of madrasa instructors (1908) and the introduction of European subjects such as history, literature, mathematics into madrasas (1910) (Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 15). Sultan Abdulhamid II implemented his own series of educational program of marrying the new styles of European administration and pedagogy with Islamic instruction and Ottoman identity, which 'was carried out with the direct assistance of state-based ulama' (Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 14; see also Fortna, Imperial Classroom, p. 241). After the declaration of the Republic of Turkey from the ashes of the Ottoman empire, Mustafa Kemal abolished Turkey's madrasas and eliminated religious instruction from public education, reversing Abdulhamid's reforms. With his death however, religious education was reintroduced into its schools but under strict state supervision and private religious training remained tightly controlled, as it still does to this day (Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 15).

329. A. Salvatore & D. F. Eickelman, 'Preface: Public Islam and the Common Good', in A. Salvatore & D. F. Eickelman (eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good*, Brill, Leiden, 2006 [2004], p. xiv; Schulze was perhaps the first to mention a 'Islamic public sphere' (see Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*).

330. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', p. 213. Of course, mass higher education and information technology did not only effect Muslims. In India, technological advancements in communication, like printing and telegraph, were as important in the sudden public availability and awareness of hitherto inaccessible religious scripture, for Muslims and Hindus alike.

331. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 13.

communities in the US, Pakistan, India and England, giving talks at various mainstream venues. Haeri met with prominent Shi'i ulama, as well as inviting them to hold programs at his centre in Texas. He had already developed a rapport with some of the prominent Iraqi clerics opposed to Saddam Hussein, such as Mahdi al-Hakim, as well as the prominent scholar and later prime minister of a post-Saddam Iraq, Ayatollah Mohammad Bahr al-Ulloum (d. 2015).

Bahr al-Ulloum was instrumental in inspiring and guiding Haeri through his Arabic publications, which were all written around this time in the space of a few years.[332] These works are a great window into how Haeri was wedged between the traditional authority of the ulama establishment on the one hand and the democratic principles upheld by the new Muslim intelligentsia on the other. Reflecting Haeri's particular inclination and concern at the time, these works were written during a period when Haeri studied sharia intensely, concentrating on Ja'fari fiqh, the mainstream Shi'i school of jurisprudence which he was brought up with. He studied under the aforementioned scholars as well as others, and produced a number of succinct works on very traditional topics, yet with noticeable focus on making the knowledge accessible and relatable to the general public rather than scholars exclusively.

Haeri's Arabic Publications

One of the most significant of Haeri's Arabic books for the current discussion is *al-Fiqh al-mubassat* (1987), which attempts to be a practical and simple handbook on Ja'fari jurisprudence.[333] The book is loosely divided into the two traditional categories of ritual worship (*'ibadat*) and social interaction (*mu'amalat*), generally progressing from aspects of the religion to do with subjects like prayer, fasting and pilgrimage, towards issues within areas like business, inheritance and marriage.[334] It is written in a very matter of fact style, with little to no discussion and a clear-cut concise format very typical of the traditional genre of basic fiqh manuals it replicates.[335] In fact, it replicates them all too well, with little to distinguish it from the dated style and content of premodern manuals. What is noteworthy, however, is how Haeri summarises more comprehensive academic monographs of fiqh for the layman, which in his case is mainly a distillation of the widespread works of Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khoei (d. 1992), with the aim of making it accessible for new converts and other Muslims exposed to a modern lifestyle where access to a religious authority is limited.[336]

Nearly all examples of the Islamic fiqh genre start with regulations pertaining to cleanliness and ritual purity, as is almost the case with *al-Fiqh al-mubassat*, if it were not for an isolated

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332. Many of these Arabic publications were done by the publishing house in Beirut, Dar Az Zahra.
333. This is clearly stated in the book as the rules and regulations of Islamic practice according to the main Shi'i legal school ascribed to the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq.
334. There is also a glossary of technical terms at the end of the book.
335. In Shi'i scholarship these are referred to as *risaalate ilmiyya*.
336. Fadhlalla Haeri interview, February 2016.

and unrelated topic that Haeri chooses to place ahead of it, namely, 'independent reasoning and emulation' (*ijtihad* and *taqlid*). By making this his opening chapter, Haeri addresses the elephant in the room.[337] He defines *taqlid* in its most literal sense as the placing of a cowbell-chain around the neck, which allows him to stress how religious authority is a burden that one should be relieved to place on someone else. Yet on the other hand, Haeri also emphasises the limits of *taqlid*:

> *Taqlid* is only appropriate in the individual rulings (*furu'*, [lit. 'branches']), and hence, *taqlid* is not permissible in the fundamentals (*usul*) of religion. As a Muslim, it is compulsory on one to believe by way of proof, evidence, and gnosis. Likewise, *taqlid* is not permissible in the necessities of the rulings, for example, the obligation of *salat* and *hajj*, because these obligations are established in the sharia and are not in need of the application of *ijtihad*.[338]

As far as the outer aspects of the religion are concerned, following an authority is recommended to 'lighten the load' as it were. But in relation to what Haeri considers the essential aspects of the religion, *taqlid* has no place; authority and accountability rests solely with the individual. We see here Haeri's penchant for relating Islamic revivalism to the individual awakening of the common Muslim, which is highlighted in this work's emphasis on character refinement and other mainstays of a typical Sufi manual. This revivalist drive at the time also encouraged Haeri's ambition to further the dissemination of *al-Fiqh al-mubassat* through translations into Urdu, English and Spanish. But only an English translation ever materialised, titled *Simplified Islamic Law*, and presented to participants of the 1995 Sufi gathering at Gaunts House, Dorset, UK. With his approach to presenting Islam constantly evolving, Haeri was reluctant to publish it, however, and only a draft was ever made available with a few copies still remaining in circulation among some of his followers. As the title of the work highlights, Haeri's efforts to streamline sharia for the Muslim layman replicates a general abstraction of sharia and idealisation of Islam. Indeed, the book explicitly promotes a perceived 'earliest' model of Islam for both private and public purposes.

We also find Haeri's quest for an ideal Islam expressed in his earliest Arabic publication, *Min musnad Ahl al-Bayt* (1986), a collection of Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions as

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337. The issue of *ijthad* and *taqlid* has been at the forefront of many discussions on Islam by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, especially in modern times. As we saw earlier in our thesis, this distinction goes back to a longstanding tension within Muslim scholarship between the degree of precedence given to reason (*'aql*) in relation to the traditional primary sources (*naql*).

338. F. Haeri, *al-Fiqh al-mubassat*. This demarcation is perhaps even more pronounce in the unpublished English translation: 'Taqlid is compulsory only in the branches of the religion, which are collective ritual acts of purification, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, war, etc. It is not permissible to practice taqlid in the root-principles of the religion, which are the essential realizations of Divine Unity, Divine Justice, Prophethood, Imamate, and the Hereafter. This is because a person must realise these principles within his or her own heart through sincere intentions, yearning, witnessing and arrival. Similarly, it is not permissible to emulate another in relation to the basic essentials of the religion, such as the obligatory nature of salat and hajj. These actions are firmly established in Islamic law and as such require no juristic research or study' (Haeri, *Simplified Islamic Law*, p. 15).

transmitted through his relatives and descendants.[339] Meant as a short manual of practical and spiritual advice for scholar and layman alike, the book presents the various citations in a cohesive and concise manner without any additional discussion or commentary.[340] The book was later translated by Dhakir Yate into English as *Prophetic Traditions in Islam: On the Authority of the Family of the Prophet* (1999) and published with a foreword by the well-known Iranian intellectual, Seyyed Hossein Nasr.[341] Although stressing the importance of going back to the roots of the religion, Haeri affirms a position in this work agreeable with the majority of Shiʿi clerics, who favour extrapolation on the basis of religious principles in developing fiqh (the Usuli school) as opposed to the minority view of wanting to limit fiqh to the application of the existing body of authentic traditions (the Akhbari school). This is supported in the foreword to the work by Bahr al-Ulloum, who having been involved in its inception and development, validates the work by emphasising Haeri's religious and scholarly lineage, quite probably with this purpose in mind. Yet there is a clear attempt in *Min musnad Ahl al-Bayt* to present traditions considered irrevocably authentic, whilst at the same time omitting the lengthy chains of transmission of these citations and instead only referencing literary sources where they are available. This streamlining of traditional scholarship echoes the disembodied and bibliocentric features central to modern transformations of religious knowledge. We see this also in the selection of citations almost exclusively from central Shiʿi sources, such as *Nahj al-balagha*, a famous anthology compiled by Sharif al-Rida of sayings, sermons and letters attributed to Ali.[342]

A focus on foundational texts and use of the same central Shiʿi sources are also evident in Haeri's other Arabic works, which are similar efforts to consolidate a plethora of traditional religious scholarship into concise and easily digestible collections. As well as the collection of short biographies of each of the Imams, called *al-Mukhtasar ul-mukhtar min sirat al-a'immah al-athar* (1988), Haeri also produced a two-volume work on *Imam Ali* (1988), with the first volume a concise biography of Ali (subtitled *al-mukhtar min hayatihi wa siratihi*) and the second volume a compilation of his teachings (subtitled *al-mukhtar min bayanihi wa hikamihi*).[343]

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339. Also the Imams, who are deemed as inheritors of the religious authority of the Prophet within Shiʿi theology

340. It is also for this reason that the chains of transmission for the citations are omitted, and instead reference is made to the original literary sources, where the chains of transmission are all available in their entirety.

341. The popularity of the English version is evinced by its recent reprinting and availability at mainstream Shiʿi institutions.

342. Also referenced are a number of classical hadith collections, like *al-Kafi* by al-Kulayni, as well as later intellectual compilations, like *Makarim al-akhlaq* by al-Tabarsi and *al-Muhajja al-bayda' fi tahdhib al-Ihya'* by al-Kashani. The latter was in fact modelled on the *Ihya' ʿulum al-din* of al-Ghazali, drawing from Shiʿi sources of hadith. A few Sunni hadith collections are also sourced, such as the *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, but this is only for one particular topic, namely prophecies regarding the emergence of the Mahdi.

343. The book on the Imams was assembled from selections from the book, *al-Irshad* by Muhammad ibn Nuʿmani al-Akbari al-Mufid. With the work on Imam Ali, the intention behind the first volume was to introduce 'the greatest character in Islam after the Prophet' in order to inform non-Muslims about him and to inspire love between all Muslims in their shared admiration of Ali. This work draws upon numerous

Religion Recentred

What we notice with Haeri's Arabic publications in particular, is his identification with the established Islam espoused by mainstream Shi'i ulama, but also a challenge to its conservatism and the exclusivity of its authority. A significant aspect of this challenge to authority is how ulama remain influential only to the extent they adapt to a modern context 'radically different from anything seen in earlier times', which have drastically changed 'the ways in which claims to authority are put forth as well as the ambiguities that attend upon them'.[344] A telling example of this is the increasing reliance on printed books rather than handwritten manuscripts even among conservative ulama, who made use of these kind of modern technologies to reach an increasingly literate population of mass educated Muslims.[345] As Zaman puts it, 'effects of mass higher education and of print, electronic and other information technologies continue to shape all facets of Islam in ways that were simply inconceivable in a manuscript culture'.[346] Looking specifically at the impact of the printing press and Western styled mass education on the traditional transmission of religious knowledge, Zaman argues how these ultimately incited a decline in the authority of the ulama establishment as well as the traditional role of the madrasa. Even more than direct state rule, it would be these modern innovations it prompted during the colonial era that really challenged traditional ulama authority.[347]

A major contribution to the 'decline' of ulama authority has been the fall in social status of Islamic education, now eclipsed by Western styles of education presumed to offer far more upward mobility and social advancement by the majority of urban Muslims, leaving the madrasas 'primarily to poor students of rural origin'.[348] Despite the emergence of thousands of madrasas in our modern era, from various Sunni and Shi'i orientations with a shared 'emphasis on the need to 'reform' Muslim practices in terms of a renewed commitment to the study of the Islamic foundational texts', these 'burgeoning madrasas could do little to re-enact the organic ties that had once characterized the educational, scholarly, juridical and social practices of many a Muslim society'.[349] Zaman writes that these madrasas were no longer seen 'as the characteristic feature of an urban landscape but as the last bastions of a beleaguered

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traditional sources, such as *Nahj al-balaghah* and *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*. The second volume follows in another long line of classical Shi'i literature that have attempted to compile Ali's various sayings. Drawing from these sources, such as the aforementioned *Nahj-ul-balagah* and Ibn Abi al-Hadid's *al-Alf al-mukhtarah*, this particular work attempts to categorise them in an easy, useful and ordered manner that has apparently evaded such works in the past. The books on Ali have been translated into English as *Imam Ali: A Concise Biography* and *Imam Ali: A Selection of His Sayings and Wisdom* respectively. The latter was also translated by Dhakir Yate and published as *The Sayings and Wisdom of Imam Ali: A Selection of his Teachings and Judgements*.

344. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', p. 206.

345. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, p. 16.

346. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', p. 213.

347. Ibid.

348. D. F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 163; see also Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 18.

349. M. Q. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', p. 213.

Islam' by an increasingly threatened body of ulama.[350] Ironically, this wave of religious homogenisation and bibliocentricity that has challenged ulama authority in the modern era, reminds us of a comparable wave of recentring religious knowledge in the Middle Period, which had brought considerable authority to the ulama class in the first place.[351]

A number of works have clearly shown that the rise of the madrasa system in the Middle Period was part of an extensive recentring and homogenisation of religious knowledge and authority.[352] The establishment of canonical texts and a systematic approach of jurisprudence facilitated a disciplining and restricting of religious authority to a more clearly defined scholarly orthodoxy, yet not without tensions with still existing nonstandard traditions of Islamic knowledge popular among Muslims as far apart as Morocco and Java.[353] As Hefner argues, Islam endured in less standardised forms outside of the circles of the scholarly orthodoxy, in the Middle East and perhaps even more so in territories such as West Africa, western Anatolia, the Balkans, Bengal, Kazakhstan, and the Indonesian archipelago'.[354] Aiming to monopolise what could be considered 'properly Islamic', the ulama orthodoxy attempted to curb the influence of 'individuals who possessed only a modicum of intellectual training, or who might even be illiterate, but who nonetheless claimed considerable religious authority'.[355]

Even though the Middle Period undoubtedly saw the 'development of a homogenous corpus of authoritative Islamic texts that contributed greatly to a growing uniformity of Islamic belief and practice throughout the vast area in which Muslims lived', the fact that most people during the period were predominantly illiterate meant that there was a general dismissive attitude 'toward books and the 'inscripted' culture of the ulama', as expressed by the trope of 'the Sufi master prevailing upon a learned disciple to dispose of all his books'.[356] But with the growth of mass education and print culture from the nineteenth century onwards, 'Muslim societies experienced powerful new pressures to recenter and standardize their still-plural traditions of

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350. Ibid.

351. Hefner, 'Introduction', pp. 33-34; Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', p. 206; see also Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. 13, 43-44, 77. Modern Muslim intellectuals or 'new religious intellectuals' are labels that refer to those who contribute to the Islamic discourse in the contemporary Muslim public sphere, but do so without the type of formal religious qualification or education acquired from madrasas. See also, A. Salvatore & D. F. Eickelman (eds.), *Public Islam and the Common Good*, Brill, Leiden, 2006 [2004].

352. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 10; J. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 189; see also Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus*; R. W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994.

353. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 10-11. Hefner points out two important and interrelated developments in the period reflective of this shift in knowledge and authority. One was the growth of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) into a complex discipline, which by this time 'became the centrepiece of ulama learning and the queen of the religious sciences'. And the other one was the development of a written canon, which, though it did not diminish the status of orality in the transmission ofknowledge, 'came to play an increasingly important role in young scholars' training' (p. 10). See also C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, The Free Press, New York, 1960; M. Lambek, *Knowledge and Practice in Mayotte: Local Discoursesof Islam, Sorcery, and Spirit Possession*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1993.

354. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 12; also Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*; Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*.

355. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, p. 229.

356. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, p. 21; Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 11; Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, p. 244.

religious knowledge', which 'were especially exclusive of popular traditions of religious knowledge' and 'encouraged people to think of their faith as objective, systemic, and exclusive'.[357]

Considering the fact that these modern conditions 'may be inescapable', Berkey points out that a particular by-product of printing technology and 'a more rationalized and institutionalized system of education' is that it undermines the 'organic flexibility' inherent in the preprint transmission of knowledge and contributes to 'the fixing of a tradition in one particular form'.[358] Hefner writes that with 'the rise of modern Islamic education ... transmission of Islamic knowledge had been abstracted from intimate teacher-student relationships, with their habits of dress, bearing, and deference, and repositioned in classrooms and quick-read textbooks'.[359] As informality and intimacy gave way to set curricula and depersonalised settings, 'Islam' began to be perceived as 'a subject which must be 'explained' and 'understood' on the basis of formal doctrinal canons'.[360]

The Effects of Scripturalism

Traces of the flexibility and polyvocality that had dominated the Islamic tradition for most of its history can even be found in the divergency that still exists among ulama, such as between differing Deobandi scholars themselves.[361] But by turning to modern institutional forms, 'Deobandi reformers and others have also served to strengthen the hands of the scripturalists and those committed to one particular, idealized historical model for what constitutes 'Islam', at least under certain conditions'.[362] Although Islamic reformism is nothing new, our modern age seems more amenable to this kind of scripturalist reformism that aims to replace 'the polyvocality which characterized the premodern transmission of knowledge with a 'univocal' understanding of Islam'.[363] As Berkey states, 'Deobandis, and others like them, embraced a "scripturalist" agenda in a very different world than that inhabited by' medieval reformists like Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), whose views have seen a resurgence in the modern era but were previously held as a marginal opinion.[364] The irony that Ibn Taymiyya's tomb became a site of the exact type of veneration and popular customs that he had so strongly opposed during his

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357. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 12; see also Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*.
358. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', pp. 50-52.
359. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 33; see also Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern'; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 650; Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 38; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, p. 9.
360. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 33; see also Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern'; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 650; Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 38; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, p. 9.
361. Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', p. 50.
362. Ibid., pp. 50-52.
363. Ibid., p. 50.
364. Ibid., p. 50.

lifetime is indicative of just how unreceptive such ideas were during the medieval era.[365] This stands in stark contrast to the popularity of ideas such as those espoused by Ibn Taymiyya among Muslims in the modern period.

Examples in support of the changes we have been discussing here can be found in ethnographic observations of Muslim majority societies from the second-half of the twentieth century. In his ethnographic work, *Muslim Society* (1981), Ernest Gellner (d. 1995) presents a model of Muslim society that looks at general social dynamics between rural tribes and urban townspeople through a religious prism, interpreting the tension between the periphery and the centre as a tension between 'Sufism' and 'Scripturalism'.[366] Whilst acknowledging that Sufism in certain variants does also cater to the bourgeoisie of the city, he maintains it as a religion of the unlearned masses in contrast to the studious religiosity of the scholars.[367] Gellner's model has been criticised as an attempt to integrate a miscomprehended version of Robert Redfield's categories of 'Great Traditions' and 'Little Traditions' to the Orientalist distinction between orthodox and non-orthodox Islam, envisaging an urban, hierarchically organised, scholarly Islam contrasted against a rural, egalitarian, folk Islam, locked in an 'unceasing struggle for political dominance'.[368] Yet, even though his metatheory on Muslim society articulated in the book has received strong accusations for popularising a dichotomy between a 'scripturalist, puritanical faith' of the urban bourgeois and a 'saint-worshipping, ritualistic religion' of the 'unlettered countryfolk', some contemporary scholars, such as Martin van Bruinessen (2009), agree that aspects of Gellner's argument have a 'strong plausibility'.[369]

For our purposes, we can focus on Gellner's assertion that 'scripturalism' is in the ascendancy whilst the type of folk Sufism he otherwise calls 'maraboutism' (i.e. the veneration of miracle-working holy men') is in decline, because the social foundations that underpin it are eroded by modernity.[370] We find similar observations made in *Islam Observed* (1968), by

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365. Ibid, p. 50.

366. E. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981; see also Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 136.

367. Gellner, *Muslim Society*; Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', pp. 137-138.

368. Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Georgetown University, Washington, 1986, p. 6. For a more comprehensive list of anthropologists that have rejected the imposition of Redfield's categories upon Islam, see Varisco, *Islam Obscured*, p. 175 n. 13. Gellner takes Redfield's dichotomy further by projecting a combination of Ibn Khaldun's 'eternal circulation of elites' and David Hume's notion of a 'flux and reflux' between polytheism and monotheism onto it (Gellner, *Muslim Society*, p. 54). Religion moves in a cyclical process from polytheism to monotheism and back again for Gellner, who argues that 'popular Islam, with its saints, tombs, and mystics, is polytheism' (Gellner, *Muslim Society*, pp. 1-85; see also Lukens-Bull, 'Between Text and Practice', p. 9). Varying practices are once again grouped together as 'magic' here and depicted by Gellner as superstitious, involving the common people and outside the realms of a 'pure' Islam, reverberating the same age-old claims that Islam is in a constant struggle between pagan magic and pure religion.

369. Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 147; T. Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, p. 6; see also A. H. el-Zein, 'Beyond Ideology and Theology: the Search for the Anthropology of Islam', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 6, 1977, pp. 227–254; Lukens-Bull, 'Between Text and Practice', p. 2; D. M. Varisco, *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005.

370. Gellner, *Muslim Society*; see also Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', pp. 137-138.

anthropologist and contemporary of Gellner, Clifford Geertz (d. 2006), who analyses his own ethnographic material from Indonesia and Morocco, and speaks of the rise of a modern phenomenon of legalistic scripturalism associated with reformists growing in tandem with the rise of mass modern education.[371] Bypassing the authority of traditional ulama, many educated Muslims 'ideologise' Islam by opposing 'popular' religiosity, adhering instead to Islam as a political and social alternative to secular philosophies like socialism and liberalism.[372]

What these observations indicate to us is the necessity to focus on a change in the modern receptivity of such attitudes rather than to be arguing for or against their premodern non-existence. To help us understand this crucial distinction, we can turn to Taylor and what he mentions as the distinguishing of 'good' religion from 'bad' religion, which he finds, for instance, in the idea of dangerous religion emerging in eighteenth century descriptions of past and present polite civilisation.[373] Among the particular categories of 'dangerous religion' was 'fanaticism' and 'superstition', which was used as an extension of 'an existing Protestant vocabulary of condemnation of Catholicism' to demarcate 'rites and cults and practices which partook of magic in their understanding'.[374] But whereas, even in the aftermath of the Reformation, efforts to 'expunge 'magical' and 'pagan' elements' from the 'folk religion' of the masses were of far less significance in a 'parish world' where collective rituals still persisted and prevailed, by the eighteenth century, the kind of narrower religion of 'external' and 'excruciatingly high standards of ethical conduct', as prescribed by the Jansenists for instance, came to be important for 'many strata of the population' where such conduct had already become entrenched by modes of discipline connected with the notion of civility and civilisation.[375]

Appropriation of a Modern Imaginary

What Taylor's argument illustrates, and what is repeatedly being argued in this study, is that it is the receptivity of ideas as a modern imaginary rather than the ideas in and of themselves that is the most significant contributor to secularisation. In his account of our modern imaginary, Taylor describes an earlier 'vertical' vision of society as a hierarchical order that determines the identity of its members but is not determined by them, as it precedes them from a 'time out of mind'.[376] He then goes on to show us how this traditional idea of order is replaced by a modern idea of order that 'animates a social imaginary which presents society as a 'horizontal' reality, to which each has direct access, created and sustained by common action

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371. C. Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971 [1968].
372. Geertz, *Islam Observed*; Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 136.
373. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 238-239.
374. Ibid., pp. 238-239.
375. Ibid., pp. 438, 228.
376. Ibid., p. 392.

in secular time'.[377] So inescapable is this displacement that even those wishing to preserve the older paradigm can't but not come to see the features they want to reinstate of the old order as 'forms to be established, eternally valid perhaps, because willed by God, or in conformity with Nature, but still an ideal yet to be realised, and not already there'.[378]

Taylor's primary example is the Catholic church, which, although officially adopting the earlier order where obedience was owed to a hierarchy within which each found their place, would have to in practice subvert this position. He writes that 'so much of what [the Church] wanted to do required not the re-enactment of existing orders in age-old hierarchies, but the organization of laypeople in new bodies, be it for fund-raising (as with the gigantic campaign to build Sacré Coeur de Montmartre), pilgrimages, and various forms of lay apostolates, some of which later came to be called collectively 'Catholic Action''.[379] Without taking the analogy too far, we can draw parallels between Taylor's observations of the Church with that of the ulama class, which is not exactly an unfounded comparison. Hefner tells us that 'from earliest times, the transmission of knowledge from teacher to disciple also created the network of religious leaders who – in the absence of an initiatic clergy and an institutionalized Church like that of the Christian West – came to exercise religious authority in the Muslim community'.[380] Through unavoidable activities of mobilisation, like recruiting and organising people into membership organisations, conservative ulama, just like the Catholic church, inadvertently undermined the very imaginary it wished to uphold by allowing participants to themselves form new types of collective action.[381] Both are, in a sense, 'reactionaries … often forced to act on this [novel] understanding before they can bring themselves to recognize it'.[382]

What we are talking about here is how ulama unwittingly appropriated a modern imaginary, even as a consequence of attempts at opposing it. A significant example of this type of unavoidable appropriation is the ubiquitous acceptance of the ideal of progress and the tools that embodied it. In his study tying Taylor's narrative to ideas of 'civilisation' and 'progress' in nineteenth-century Arabic literature, Johannes Stephan (2016) examines 'new modes of narration' developing in this literary tradition that reveal 'attempts to imagine the course of history as ruled by the universal principles of progress (*taqaddum*) and civilization (*tamaddun*)'.[383] By promoting stories of human progress conceived along historical terms, Arab

377. Ibid., p. 392.
378. Ibid., pp. 446-447.
379. Ibid., p. 445.
380. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 5.
381. Ibid., p. 445.
382. Ibid., p. 446.
383. Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', p. 350.

thinkers were 'able to share and compare their history with Western history. Thereby, the history of Western civilization became part of their new story about the world'.[384]

Although first only sought by secular intellectuals, this ideal of 'progress' inevitably infiltrated the discourse of the religious ulama also. On the one hand, 'ulama in different areas of the Islamic community now set about to work out a new Islamic theory of modernism' that would position Islam as 'an upholder of progress which, in the spirit of the time, they defined as the most important characteristic of modernism'.[385] For them Islam would be a religion that faced the future, championing the sciences and humanism just as it had been throughout its history and 'in the timeless example set by the forefathers'.[386] But even among ulama who disagreed with efforts to reconcile Islamic theology and modernism, 'this optimism about progress could be sensed'.[387] Schulze gives the example of the prominent Egyptian religious leader, Muhammad Tawfiq al-Bakri (d. 1932), who 'wrote a programmatic treatise entitled *The Future Belongs to Islam*, in which he used numerous quotations from authors of the French Enlightenment in order to explain the progressive character of Islam and celebrate it as an ideal for the future civilization of the world'.[388]

It is largely with the spread of journals across the Arab world and the establishment of bookstores that early twentieth-century print culture became an important vehicle for spreading the ideas of Muslim modernists.[389] Although distancing themselves from innovations espoused by religious modernists such as the Salafiyya, conservative ulama would also have to come to frame their approach within 'modern tropes and modes of discourse', which included appropriating a modern narrative of 'progress' and 'decline' as well as the technological mediums of this discourse, such as the printing press and various propaganda techniques.[390]

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384. Ibid.
385. Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 18.
386. Ibid. Schulze writes: 'Islam was to turn towards the future, it was to be a theology that promoted the sciences and conceived the Islamic heritage as its own humanism. They quite logically traced back their ideals to the period of great Islamic humanism of the 10th to 13th centuries, which had also shown the way to European humanism' (p. 18).
387. Ibid.
388. Ibid.
389. H. Lauzière, 'The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2010, pp. 369-389. For example, it would be through print culture that the slogan Salafiyya (those adhering to the forefathers; the early period of Islam) became strongly associated with the Reform movements of the time. The emergence of the short-lived journal, *al-Majalla al-Salafiyya* (called Salafya Review in English) in Europe, led Louis Massignon to affirm the term as a movement for Islamic modernism, which then in the form of the substantive 'salafism', spread in French by way of Henri Laoust, and by Sir Hamilton Gibb in English speaking scholarship. Massignon's conception filtered back into the Arab world and aided the growing visibility of the Salafi epithet and its development into an established concept. The journal *Salafya Review* itself came out of the Salafiyya Bookstore in Cairo, co-owned by Rashid Rida together with other modernist reformist sympathisers. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a new Salafiyya Press and Bookstore was established in Mecca, which had recently been brought under the dominion of the new Saudi kingdom born out of the Wahhabi-Saudi alliance. This mirrored the transition of many influential reformers, like Rashid Rida, towards Wahhabism and their support for the new Saudi state in the wake of the fall of the caliphate. Both the establishment of the bookstore in Mecca and the transition of these reformers, marked the evolution of the Salafi concept into its closer association with Wahhabism that we find today (pp. 378-381).
390. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, p. 2.

Muslim modernists were eager to praise the periodical press, especially the daily newspapers, which "expressed in its very form the modernists" view of progress', as it demanded one 'to keep up with breaking news and ongoing debates', each issue presenting the latest information superseding any previous statement.[391] Although criticised by conservative ulama for the lack of detailed citations and shallowness that the format necessitated, many among them would inevitably come to make use of that very same medium.[392] For example, the launching of the short-lived monthly journal *al-Haqa'iq* in Syria was instigated by conservative scholars in response to their Salafi counterparts and their own prodigious use of print.[393] In this journal we see that although conservative scholars expressed opposition to the Westernization of Islamic thought, there seems to be an almost unaware acknowledgement of the need for the Western value of progress, which should be achieved 'by borrowing European inventions'.[394]

Ideas of civilisation and progress prevalent at the turn of the century would come to serve as an integral ingredient in a whole range of intellectual currents of the time.[395] Muslim thinkers of various persuasions would all, regardless of their differences, unwittingly incorporate Eurocentric narratives of history and progress into their own narratives of Islamic civilisation in terms of a '(hi-)story of progress'.[396] Considering their impact, how these Eurocentric narratives of progress developed in the first place can be an informative exercise.

The Narrative of Progress

An appropriate place to begin is Taylor's crucial distinction between 'civility' as it was used during the Renaissance and 'civilisation' as it came to be used later on, in that 'civility was not something you attained at a certain stage in history, and then relaxed into, which is the way we

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391. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, p. 16.

392. Ibid. Kurzman gives the examples of *Isha'at al-Sunna* (News of Tradition) in Lahore (1878) as well as *al-Haqa'iq* (Truths) in Damascus (1910).

393. Sirryeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 46-47; D. D. Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, p. 119.

394. Ibid.

395. Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', pp. 358, 362; see also M. Kohn, 'Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilization', *Political Theory*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2009, pp. 398–422; F. Konrad, 'Fickle Fate Has Exhausted My Burning Heart': An Egyptian Engineer of the 19th Century Between Belief in Progress and Existential Anxiety', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 51, 2011, p. 175; F. Zachs, *The Making of the Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, Brill, Leiden, 2005, p. 67; F. Zachs, 'Cultural and Conceptual Contributions of Beiruti Merchants to the Nahda', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2012, pp. 153-182; B. Schäbler, 'Civilizing Others: Global Modernity and the Local Boundaries (French/German/Ottoman and Arab) of Savagery', in B. Schäbler and L. Steinberg (eds.), *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2004, p. 23; S. Sheehi, 'Arabic Literary-Scientific Journals: Precedence for Globalization and the Creation of Modernity', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, vol. 25, no. 2, p. 12..

396. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 71; Stephan, 'Reconsidering Transcendence/Immanence', p. 350; Zemmin, Colin & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 16. Schulze gives the example of the Egyptian Khedive Ismail (d. 1895), who, after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, 'euphorically exclaim[ed] 'my country is no longer in Africa; we have now become part of Europe" (Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, p. 15).

tend to think about civilization'.[397] What this amounts to is a corruption of history, as Robert Nisbet (d. 1996) would call it, which purposes to eradicate old restraints and forever abolish 'the parochialisms and animosities of a world founded on kinship, village, and church'.[398] Nisbet sees the challenge against community by the modern nation-state in providing the basis of meaning in human life as supported by the proliferation of a narrative of metaphorical 'natural' history that 'facilitates a conception of man outside the constraints of his given condition, no longer subject to his intrinsic limitations, and ultimately perfectible'.[399] Rather than on historical events themselves, emphasis is placed on perceived processes of history, understood in varying ways, as for example, Christian providence, progress or social evolution.[400]

For Nesbit, history is meant to reveal continuity rather than change. History actually indicates the persistence of habit and custom against which change can only be understood as a departure from that continuity, in contradiction to the type of 'assumption that history is a more or less continuous emancipation of men from despotism and evil'.[401] For Nisbet, this is an error inherited from Enlightenment thinkers, 'who get away from the 'accidental' character of historical happenings, in order to discover the 'normal' or 'natural' course of change' framed as 'ideal' history.[402] Part of this notion of a 'self-perpetuating progress' that they held was 'the profound conviction that through human reason evils could be corrected or banished from society – that such evils were not necessarily a timeless aspect of human nature'.[403] Though progress from barbaric to civilised is seen as inevitable, this can be aided and accelerated by a rational mind free of ignorance and superstition.[404] Nesbit places this view of history as progress within the wider Western narrative of 'organismic growth' or 'development', where change is 'expressed by analogy with the biological development of a plant or other organism'.[405] Our reliance on this type of narrative can be gleaned from how deeply 'evolution' was conceived along a determinist model of growth and development within history, as well as natural history, despite Darwin's arguments on natural selection as random and accidental running contrary to the notion of an unfolding plan.[406]

In his ground-breaking book, *Time and the Other* (1983), Johannes Fabian discusses how Darwinian evolution came to offer a scientific frame 'in which to place ideas of progress,

397. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 100.
398. R. A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1953, p. 5; see also Sullivan, 'From the Interstices of Authority', p. 378.
399. Sullivan, 'From the Interstices of Authority', p. 376-377; see also R. A. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, Heinemann, London, 1980.
400. Sullivan, 'From the Interstices of Authority', p. 386.
401. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*, p. 214; Sullivan, 'From the Interstices of Authority', pp. 381-382.
402. Sullivan, 'From the Interstices of Authority', pp. 386-387.
403. Ibid.
404. Ibid., p. 388.
405. Ibid. p. 385-386.
406. Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, pp. 80-85.

improvement, and development … inherited from the philosophes'.[407] Fabian's fundamental assertion is that time was secularised by a succession of attempts since the middle-ages, of universalising the specificity of sacred conceptions of time, which were 'thought, but more often celebrated, as a sequence of specific events that befall a chosen people'.[408] He writes, 'different degrees of universalising Time had of course been achieved in an abstract form by earlier philosophical thought', but it was 'probably established concretely and politically in the Renaissance in response to both classical philosophy and to the cognitive challenges presented by the age of discoveries opening up in the wake of earth's circumnavigation'.[409]

Fabian looks to the French Bishop Bossuet's (d. 1704) *Discours sur l'historie universelle* (1681) as one of the last attempts to write a Christian universal history, which 'in many ways anticipated the Enlightenment genre of 'philosophical history'.[410] He quotes Bossuet saying that 'universal history is to the histories of every country and of every people what a general map is to particular maps'.[411] Bossuet's aim was to shed the light of divine providence on an otherwise confusing chronology caused by only sequencing an ever-increasing number of historical facts. Following Goerges Gusdorf (d. 2000), Fabian argues that it was by transforming the message of 'universal history' that Bossuet's Christian myth was replaced with the 'myth-history of reason' by enlightenment philosophes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[412] But for him, this 'secularisation of Judeo-Christian Time was a mild change … compared to its eventual naturalization' in the nineteenth century.[413]

Unlike either sacred or secular conceptions of time that preceded it, the new naturalised vision of time that developed as a means of ordering 'fragmentary geological and paleontological record' did not offer 'a continuous, meaningful story'; its vastness reduced human history to 'a negligible span on the scale of natural evolution', and turned time into 'a purely abstract methodological chronology'.[414] In the face of this 'stark meaninglessness of mere physical duration', social evolutionists held to 'the conviction that Time 'accomplished' or brought about things in the course of evolution'.[415] As Fabian writes, 'theirs was a

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407. J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983, p. 12.
408. Ibid., p. 2.
409. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
410. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
411. Bossuet (1845) cited in Ibid, p. 3.
412. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 5-6. Later on, Fabian quotes Gusdorf (1973): 'It would be naïve to think that Enlightenment conceptions of Time were the simple result of empirical induction. As the 'myth-history of reason', they were ideological constructs and projections: Secularized Time had become a means to occupy space, a title conferring on its holder the right to 'save' the expanse of the world for history' (p. 146).
413. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 146-147.
414. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
415. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

preoccupation with stages leading to civilisation, each of them as meaningful as a sentence leading towards the conclusion of a story.[416]

Fabians tells us that 'theories of social evolution and *vague* ideas of biological evolution were around before Darwin proposed his specific theories of the origin of species'.[417] Herbert Spencer, for instance, had formed his social evolutionist ideas independently of Darwin, but then incorporated elements of the Darwinian thesis once it had become popular.[418] To achieve this, social evolutionists like Spencer tried to re-historicise the type of de-historicised naturalisation of time expressed by geologists as an uneventful neutral time separated from events meaningful to mankind, which Darwin championed whilst vehemently rejecting the assumption that natural selection meant that 'all species were necessarily undergoing the slow modification from some innate law'.[419] In this way, natural histories of evolutionism made sense of coincidental chronology by turning it into a purposeful chronicle of successive stages: 'civilization, evolution, development, acculturation, modernization (and their cousins, industrialization, urbanization), are all terms whose conceptual content derives, in ways that can be specified, from evolutionary [i.e. 'natural'] Time'.[420]

Synthesising Science with Sacred Scripture

It was by embracing narratives of social evolution that many modern Muslim reformers, such as the Egyptian scholar, Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), could so convincingly oppose various forms of popular piety and mysticism as backward and superstitious whilst promoting a rationalist and text-based interpretation of Islam.[421] Abduh embraced evolutionism as especially articulated through the social Darwinism of Spencer, whom Abduh had met on occasion and whose book he had translated to Arabic from the French translation. By responding to European ideas of social evolution and progress, Abduh and others would inevitably appropriate them in their attempt to formulate a uniform and universal religion compatible with science by focusing strictly on texts at the cost of discounting vernacular practices historically 'as integral to the meaning of Islam as was textual scholarship'.[422] Al-Azmeh views this tendency as 'an attempt to generalize the classical precepts in such a manner as to have them merge with a notion of natural law', and traces the roots of this merger to reformist discourse in the late nineteenth century and its dependence on evolutionist

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416. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
417. Ibid., p. 12.
418. Ibid., p. 12.
419. Darwin (1861) cited in Ibid., p. 14.
420. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 17.
421. J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, Brill, Leiden, 1980, p. 24.
422. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 10.

positivism and Darwinism.[423] He shows how an evolutionist concept of religion had allowed for 'the divine chronology of inspiration and prophethood' to correspond with 'the chronology of the secular and the mundane', which then helped to make the equivalence between the universality of the sharia and natural law, based on change as a standard position within Islamic reformism.[424]

The impact of European narratives of progress upon Muslim thinkers is perhaps most clearly evident in the attempt by many reformists to marry science with revelation. Perhaps the earliest exponent of this thesis was Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), who argued against the notion of any conflict between science and the Qur'an through writings such as *Principles of Exegesis* (1892), in which he proposes that 'there is no matter in the Qur'an disagreeing with the laws of nature'.[425] In supporting this claim, Khan discarded 'the proof of anything supernatural', arguing instead that earlier ulama had designated certain events as miracles only because 'the natural sciences had not progressed and there was nothing to draw their attention to the law of nature and to make them aware of their mistakes'.[426] Miracles may be extraordinary but are not supernatural, asserted Khan, who was condemned for what was referred to as his naturist views by prominent Muslim scholars such as Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi (d. 1880), founder of the Deoband madrasa, Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi (d. 1943), a mufti and Sufi teacher associated with the school, and the prodigious pan-Islamist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897).[427] It seems this opposition was also politically motivated due to Khan's loyalty to the British, for, such rational explanations did not lead to similar controversy when later offered by a reformer mentored by al-Afghani himself, namely, Abduh.[428] Whereas al-Afghani criticised Darwinism as materialist, Abduh had embraced it; his obvious affinity to social Darwinism highlighted by his appropriation of Spencer's principle of 'the survival of the fittest' in his commentary (*tafsir*) of verse 2:249 of the Qur'an.[429]

Abduh prefigured an inevitable change. Although earlier attempts at embracing science were opposed as materialist by many ulama, the pervasive presence of modern scientific discoveries at the turn of the twentieth century inevitably led to the popularisation of modern science among their own. This is perhaps most evident with the success of *Kitab al-risala al-Hamidiyya* (1889) by Husayn al-Jisr al-Tarabulusi (d. 1909), who used scientific proofs to justify

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423. Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, pp. 12, 102.
424. Ibid., pp. 103, 111.
425. Khan (1970) cited in M. K. Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', in M. K. Masud, A. Salvatore, & M. V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 242.
426. Khan (1970) cited in Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', pp. 242-243.
427. Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', pp. 243-244.
428. Ibid., pp. 244-245.
429. The obvious affinity to social Darwinism is highlighted by Abduh's appropriation of Spencer's principle of 'the survival of the fittest' in his commentary (tafsir) of verse 2:249, in the second chapter of the Qur'an.

Muslim beliefs and practices. al-Jisr's treatise was welcomed by Orientalists and ulama alike, being translated into numerous languages and influencing even initially sceptical scholars such as Ashraf Ali Thanvi.[430] Soon many more commentators would also advocate a scientific worldview where everything conforms to unchangeable natural laws, whilst still allowing room for the possibility of supernatural events.[431] Only now these were explained in a modern scientific language.[432] So, for example, scientific interpretations of miracles were given, such as 'interpreting the splitting of the moon in terms of earthquakes', or explaining the Prophet's miracle of giving water to drink from his fingers in terms of 'the chemical transformation of air into water'.[433]

Scientific interpretation of the Qur'an developed into a popular genre from the early twentieth century onwards, with works such as *Kashf al-asrar al-nuraniyya bi-al-Qur'an* (1880) and *Tibyan al-asrar al-rabbaniyyah fi al-nabat wa-al-ma'adin wa al-mawashi al-hayawaniyya* (1883), by Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Iskandarani al-Tabib (d. 1889), as well as by the already mentioned Husayn al-Jisr and by Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (d. 1914). Some, like Tantawi Jawhari (d. 1940), produced entire exegeses of the Qur'an based on the discoveries of modern science, something that itself inspired this type of commentary within general exegesis later on.[434] The influence of this line of books synthesising science with Qur'anic commentary continued up into the late twentieth century in the form of more easily digestible booklets, websites, documentaries, etc., and one particular work was instrumental in this regard.

Haeri's Books on Qur'an and Science

In 1976, Maurice Bucaille (d. 1998) — a French medical doctor who served as family physician to President Anwar Sadat (d. 1981) of Egypt as well as to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia — would publish the book *La Bible, le Coran et la Science* (1976).[435] Soon the work would be translated

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430. Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', p. 245. Influenced by Jisr's epistle, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanawi wrote *al-Masalih alaqliyya li l-ahkam al-naqliyya* (Rational Grounds for the Traditional Laws) and *al-Intibahat al-mufida li ishkalat al-jadida* (Useful Notes on Modern Problems) to prove the rationality of Islamic beliefs and practices. As to the conflict between science and the revelation, he argued that new scientific theories are only hypothetical and not based on certainty or conclusive proofs. His criteria of rationality are, however, derived entirely from formal Greek logic and metaphysics (p. 245).

431. Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', p. 245 ff.

432. Ibid.

433. Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, pp. 119-120. Al-Azmeh writes: 'Religious reason therefore resorted to interpretation, that is, imposing upon the text meanings which it could not sustain, being derived from the knowledge and circumstances of an age vastly different to that in which it emerged. The Koranic text, and especially verses alluding to astronomy, came to be understood as if some of its statements were based on a code, whose key was modern scientific knowledge, which in turn is connected to the encoded words by the bond of iconic allusion. Thus, modern means of communication, such as the radio and the telegraph, become keys for understanding the communications between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba which the Koran mentions. Similarly, the statements dealing with heaven and its splitting point to the possibility of a change in the structure of the universe and an imbalance in its order when God wills, by means of cosmic events such as the collision of planets. The division of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharoah's army are explained as Moses's crossing the sea at a shallow point and the incoming tide inundating Pharoah and his army' (p. 119)

434. Ibid., pp. 120-121.

435. M. Bucaille, *La Bible, le Coran et la Science: Les Écritures Saintes examinées à la lumière des connaissances modernes*, Seghers, Paris, 1976.

into Arabic, Indonesian, Malay, Turkish and English, etc., and by the 80s and 90s Bucaille became a celebrity among common Muslims.[436] Although Bucaille was by no means the first in attempting to find harmony between modern science and scripture, his work contributed to popularising it among a wider mass of Muslims.[437] During the 80s and 90s, he became a celebrity among common Muslims, and his work contributed to popularising among them the thesis that the Qur'an is in harmony with natural science. Bucaille sought to prove the divine origin of the Qur'an by giving examples of 'scientific miracles of the Qur'an', that is, how scientific discoveries made much later confirmed what was already accurately predicted in the Qur'an.[438] Many Middle Eastern authors with a background in the natural sciences or engineering were inspired by Bucaille to produce similar books and articles.[439]

Never far from his scientist roots, Fadhlalla Haeri's own commentaries on the Qur'an, in some instances, seem to respond specifically to this association between the Qur'an and science that had become popular with Bucaille's book and the earlier trope it built on that everything science had discovered could be found in the Qur'an. The timely production of his book *Journey of the Universe as Expounded in the Qur'an* (1985) during this period seems to tie directly into the Bucaillean craze that had just exploded across the world. We can approach Haeri's book within this context, undoubtedly as a reflection of the trend, but even more so as a response to it. A paragraph from his introduction reads:

> Our purpose in these chapters is to establish a platform in the sea of ignorance and loss for those of us who spend time and energy on specific aspects of contemporary science, to see if we can extend a bridge onto this platform. In doing so, we can only depend on the openings that come to us from the Qur'an, according to the extent of our abandonment and the manifestation of the knowledge of mercy upon us. We will try to identify this platform in the hope that later on we shall meet others in scientific fields to see how their endeavors fit within the broad spectrum of reality that the Qur'an presents. This is all we can do. The Qur'an does not give us specific mathematical formulae on how matter and energy, under some circumstances, can be exchanged without any imbalance in the formula. The Qur'an does, however, give us a broad description of the whole model which exists at all times and assures us of the perfect balance in every formula in creation. The Qur'an has always been open to challenge. It challenges one to bring forth something that is like it, but then asserts that one would never be able to do so; for it is divine and absolute whereas man's knowledge and endeavors are

436. Bucaille also gave numerous lectures all over the world and appeared in a documentary film dedicated to his ideas: *The Book of Signs* (Malaysia: 1986), directed by Shahrom Mohammed Dorn. In 1989 he co-authored a book with the Tunisian scholar Mohammed Talbi, *Réflexions sur le Coran* (1989).

437. S. Bigliardi, 'Snakes from Staves? Science, Scriptures and the Supernatural in Maurice Bucaille', *Zygon*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2011, p. 794.

438. Bigliardi, 'Snakes from Staves?; see also S. Bigliardi, 'Secret Cousins: Analogies in the Construction of Religious Authority through "Science" in Maurice Bucaille and Claude Vorilhon (Raël)', *Nova Religio*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2016, pp. 34-58; L. Stenberg, *The Islamization of Science: Four Muslim Positions Developing an Islamic Modernity* (PhD Thesis), University of Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Lund, 1996.

439. Bigliardi, 'Secret Cousins', p. 38.

> human, and therefore both limited and relative. The Qur'an is about the absolute, the permanent, the real behind what appears to be real — the substrata beneath the crust.[440]

Work on the book started in 1984, after Haeri had collected a number of verses from the Qur'an that talked about how creation came into being. Containing a similar format to his earlier commentaries, but with additional writing supporting the commentaries on the verses, the result is a cohesive structure that reads much more pleasantly than Haeri's previous work, largely because, unlike his earlier published transcripts, this one was premeditated as a book, with the stated purpose of reaching out to the scientific community.[441] The final product consists of commentary on these selected verses, which have been thematically organised into categorise that offer an overview of natural phenomena and an encompassing narrative of its origins.

When reading *Journey of the Universe*, it becomes apparent that Haeri is not so much introducing science to the Qur'an as he is Qur'an to science. Or more accurately, introducing the Qur'an for an audience who hold a fundamentally disenchanted worldview mainly informed by modern science. We are at once reminded of the advantages of science as well as its limits. The point Haeri wants to leave us with is that our 'current scientific discoveries can be changed, improved upon, expanded or negated, whereas the truths of Qur'an are forever fixed. Therefore, if you want to know whether a scientific or objective situation is true, you have to put it to the test of the Qur'an and not the other way around'.[442] What he have to bear in mind is that although Haeri asserts the superiority of the Qur'an here, it is clear that he cannot ignore the importance of science, and must inevitably make his point from within a modern scientific framework. This is because Haeri's commentaries on the Qur'an are a clear ambition to bring a contemporary interpretation of the text, so as to relevant for regular people, rather than as an object of study for scholars or academics.

What the series of Qur'anic commentaries as a whole illustrate is a development in Haeri's publications, which is most evident when comparing the positive review of *Journey of the Universe* in the journal *Religion* to an earlier negative review of his first published commentary, *Man in the Qur'an*.[443] These reviews indicate how this last commentary on the Qur'an which Haeri had worked on in America marked a major literary step for Haeri, announcing him as a serious author. But the series of books also show us how the team of people involved in the production of Haeri's publications had themselves been gaining experience with each successive book. We see this especially in the maturation of Haeri's writing process with the

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440. F. Haeri, *Journey of the Universe as Expounded in the Qur'an*, Zahra, London, 1985.
441. 'Introduction', in Haeri, *Journey of the Universe as Expounded in the Qur'an*.
442. Ibid.
443. The reviews are: D. Waines, review of *Journey of the Universe as Expounded in the Koran* by Fadhlalla Haeri, *Religion*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1988, pp. 99-100; D. Waines, review of *Man in Qur'an and the Meaning of Furqan* by Fadhlalla Haeri, *Religion*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1990, p. 100.

latter book, which would set a pattern Haeri would reiterate in the production of his future books. It involved Haeri dictating over a number of sessions to someone who would transcribe and then give feedback in the form of questions meant to tease and clarify the original material.

3.2.3 The Islamisation of Islam

Haeri's literary efforts to synthesise science and the Qur'an remind us of a parallel undertaking to reconcile Islam and modernity that emerged during the same time and came to be called the 'Islamisation of knowledge' by some of its main proponents.[444] These include the Malaysian philosopher Naquib al-Attas, who promoted the project in his book *Islam and Secularism* (1978), and the Palestinian academic Ismail al-Faruqi (d. 1986), who considered the movement a means to integrate the scientific method and address what he saw as 'the malaise of the ummah' or global Muslim community.[445] In a reverse engineering exercise of sorts, what early proponents for an Islamisation of knowledge, like al-Attas, aimed to do was to identify and isolate those elements of modern 'knowledge infused with the character and personality of Western culture and civilization', then take the remaining knowledge free of those elements and infuse it with 'Islamic elements'.[446] Similarly, al-Faruqi called for a remoulding of various disciplines of knowledge by reincorporating foundational Islamic principles.[447]

Responses to the Islamisation project have since referred to it as a 'theoretically abstract' approach that has only ever remained as rhetoric mainly concerned with 'critiquing Western sciences or proving the superiority of Islamised science'.[448] What is missing, as Fazlur Rahman and others have demonstrated, is a critical eye turned towards Islamic intellectual traditions as much as 'Christian' ones. By idealising their religion, the call for an Islamisation of knowledge has only worked to marginalise critical approaches to Islam and has achieved, at best, a cosmetic reconciliation between Islam and the modern sciences.[449] A similar critique is even made by recent proponents of the movement, such as by Abdrahamane Traore (2019), who criticises 'the founding fathers of the movement' for directing most of their energies

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444. One of the original proponents of this project was Sayyed Hussein Nasr, a close confidante of Haeri's who has written forewords for a number of Haeri's publications.

445. See N. al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1978; and I. R. Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge, General Principles and Work Plan* (Second Edition), 1981.

446. Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, p. 133; see also A. Traore, 'The Dead Weight that is Hindering the Islamisation of Knowledge', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2019, p. 206.

447. Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge*, p. 7; see also Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', p. 255.

448. Traore, 'The Dead Weight that is Hindering the Islamisation of Knowledge', p. 208-209

449. Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', p. 255. This is in contrast to attempts to remould Islam in light of science through creating a 'new theology', as advocated by earlier figures Muslim intellectuals, such as Ahmad Khan (*jadid 'ilm al-kalam*), as well as more recent scholars, such as Muhammad Mujtahid Shabistari (*kalam i jadid*), who 'considers Islam compatible with the modern natural sciences but asserts that Muslims must seriously examine the epistemological foundations of the modern humanities because they are in conflict with modern scientific methods' (A. Dahlén, *Deciphering the Meaning of Revealed Law: The Surushian Paradigm in Shi'i Epistemology* (diss.), Uppsala University Press, Uppsala, 2001, p. 163).

towards defending Islamisation rather than developing an alternative paradigm to what they perceived to be Westernised sciences. A related criticism Traore makes is their automatic expectation of support from the state for the success of the Islamisation of knowledge project.[450]

Unquestioning reliance on the nation state and its institutions as well as the apologetic formulation of an idealised Islam that we see with the Islamisation of knowledge movement, are reflective of changes we notice taking place in the nineteenth century. The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) which al-Attas founded in 1987 at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), and which remains the main representative of this intellectual Islamisation, reflects the essential role that a civilisational discourse played in this movement. Abstracting a notion of Islamic civilisation was first attempted by Muslim intellectuals of the late nineteenth century, who did this by collapsing the cosmopolitan character of Islamicate civilisation into a simplistic Islamic civilisational model which discarded 'centuries of shared experience with Hindus, Jews, and Buddhists; shamans; Christian Arabs, Greeks and Armenians; and others'.[451] What else we see with the Islamisation of knowledge movement is another development found among earlier Muslim elites, which complemented this moulding of the notion of civilisation as a counter to Western or Christian civilisation; 'Islam' itself was stripped of its diverse traditions and recast 'into a singular world religion comparable to Christianity'.[452]

What the expectancy on the state by contemporary religious reformers — such as those connected to the Islamisation of knowledge project — brings to light is a criticism made against attempts at Islamisation in general, which is that they all can only really be 'superimposed as a surface spray over ... the fabric of modern society ... [in which] processes of secularisation are firmly embedded'.[453] Just like the postcolonial critique to which it owes much of its prominence, Islamisation is better seen as a quest for authenticity and identity rather than an effort to make structural changes to society.[454] The Islamisation movement in Pakistan and the Islamic Revolution in Iran not only exemplify how political discourse that had been dominated by nationalist and socialist slogans in the newly independent Muslim majority states around the middle of the century was being replaced by religious rhetoric in the late twentieth century, but more importantly, the development of a far more enduring and prevalent visibility among the Muslim public at large of a 'culture of Islam' showcasing a new-found religious identity.

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450. Traore, 'The Dead Weight that is Hindering the Islamisation of Knowledge', p. 215 ff.

451. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 8.

452. Ibid.

453. Zubaida, 'Political Modernity', p. 84

454. Masud, 'Islamic Modernism', p. 255. Islamisation grew with the popularity of postcolonial critique among third-world intellectuals of the time and their appreciation of literary works such as *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by Frantz Fanon (d. 1961) and *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said (d. 2003).

Hand-in-hand with an application of Islamic rhetoric from the political periphery to centre stage by government leaders who saw its value in legitimating their political claims, what the Islamic revival of the late twentieth century brought is an overt increase in religious observances and values among Muslims.[455] The Iranian Revolution not only marked the significant role that a turn towards Muslim identity would play on the political level, but also on the personal level, 'in the choice of dress codes, art, education and, of course, religious devotion'.[456] This 'over-Islamisation of Islam' is something that converges fundamentalist and orientalist discourse in their shared emphasis on Islam's 'exoticised' features; for both, Islamic 'culture' is interpreted as an exaggerated Islam imagined as a single unchanging fact with which Muslims are entirely impregnated.[457] With this encroachment of 'Islamism' into the daily life of Muslims, what has resulted is a consequent configuration of a new universalist Islamic 'culture' that we can relate to what Göle calls 'a post-Islamist stage in which Islamism is losing its political and revolutionary fervor but steadily infiltrating social and cultural everyday life'.[458] Directly related to this development of post-Islamism during the late twentieth century, we also find that contest and 'debates over Islamic knowledge moved from elite circles into a restless and mobile mass society'.[459] However, although modern Muslim imaginaries only became prominent among the masses during this period, we have to go back at least a century to get a fair understanding of the tropes and themes upon which these imaginaries were formulated, particularly by Muslim elites.[460]

The Objectification of Religion

Although the prevalence of an increasingly abstracted and objectified Islam grew among a wider demographic of Muslims since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, what we see in the aftermath of the revolution is 'the resurfacing of century old tropes' through rehabilitated racist narratives which 'ensured that later subaltern and nationalist claims for rights would be framed in the idioms of Muslim solidarity and an enduring clash between Islam and the West, giving rise to the Islamism and Islamophobia of the 80s and beyond'.[461] The increasingly entrenched colonial administration of Muslim subjects in the later nineteenth century by the

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455. J. L. Esposito, 'Islam and Secularism in the Twenty-First Century', in J. L. Esposito & A. Tamimi (eds.), *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, Hurst, London, 2000, pp. 1–12.

456. Tayob, 'The Shifting Politics of Identity', p. 261.

457. Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, pp. 56-57.

458. N. Göle, 'Snapshots of Islamic Modernities', *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 1, 2000, p. 94. She continues; Islamism, which made its appearance with the headscarf issue in the secular bastions of modernity on university campuses at the beginning of the 1980s, is today expanded to many spheres of public and cultural life' (p. 94).

459. Hefner, 'Introduction', p. 33; see also Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern'; Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*, p. 650; Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 38; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, p. 9.

460. Tayob, 'The Shifting Politics of Identity', p. 264.

461. Ibid., pp. 4-6.

French, British, Dutch and Russian empires, as well as their treatment of the Ottomans, helped to define a growing discrimination of Muslims.[462] According to Aydin, 'Muslim racializations were everywhere. Even the Ottoman Empire, which went to great lengths to uphold its position within the 'concert of Europe', was fast becoming identified by a distinctive 'Muslimness', already made apparent by how Western journalists reported the Russian-Ottoman war with 'pro-Christian and anti-Muslim bias'.[463] Muslim subjects in the Russian Empire had varied legal status, yet all were defined as Muslims. The Dutch and French empires made legal distinctions between white citizens and Muslim subjects; full equality was almost impossible for Muslims to achieve'.[464] And as we have seen, Muslims under British rule 'were subjected to special scrutiny with respect to loyalty', and virtually given a new legal status through the British Empire's codification and implementation of sharia for the personal and family law of its Muslim subjects.[465]

Aydin writes about the emergence within this context of 'the nineteenth century goal of positioning Islam as enlightened and therefore Muslims as racially equal to Western overlords'.[466] For him, this 'produced the notion of Islam in the abstract, providing the core substance of Muslim reformism and pan-Islamic thought in the early twentieth century ... [that] responded to social Darwinism and Orientalist assertions of Muslim inferiority by claiming that Muslims were also civilized and deserved dignified treatment'.[467] But we can also observe the idea of an abstract Islam in light of what a number of researchers have pointed out in relation to the 'fragmentation of authority' of the ulama, as an accompanying 'objectification of Islam'.[468]

> The changes associated with printing and new institutional arrangements are part of larger developments. Most broadly, in many parts of the world, Islam is undergoing what the anthropologists Dale Eickelman and Gregory Starrett have termed a process of 'objectification': that is, the identification of a precise (and, at least from an anthropological perspective, arbitrary) set of beliefs, values, and practices which are assumed to constitute a normative and timeless 'Islam'. In this, of course, Islam is hardly alone. But as these anthropologists have argued, this represents a sharp break from the premodern Islamic past, with its emphasis upon a living tradition mediated by an oral and personal system of transmitting knowledge, and defined by a principle of consensus, *ijma*', which was in fact quite broad.[469]

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462. Ibid., p. 68.
463. Ibid., p. 60.
464. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
465. Ibid.
466. Ibid., p. 10.
467. Ibid., pp. 10, 131.
468. See Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*.
469. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*; Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. p. 37–45; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*; cited in Berkey, 'Madrasas Medieval and Modern', pp. 50-51. Berkey also writes: 'One aspect of this process of objectification may be the stress laid

Anthropologists like Eickelman introduced the idea of an 'objectification of Islam' to describe what they observed in various postcolonial Muslim societies as the transformation of Islam from 'a discursive tradition of the ulama' to 'a set of reified doctrines and principles from the foundational texts and ready to be 'functionalised' in any particular context'.[470] Eickelman gives us a personal example from his own experiences of doing ethnography in Oman. During his time in 1979, the fact that Eickelman did not join them for the morning prayer was a surprise for the tribe and tribal leader he was a guest of. They had taken for granted that Eickelman would follow all the local practices, because although perhaps aware of other Muslim and non-Muslim traditions, for the tribe these 'were marginal to their social and moral imagination'.[471] In contrast: 'In the same community several years later, a much more conscious sense of tradition had begun to emerge, inspired by the growing cohort of young Omanis who, with the increasing ease of transportation and the expansion of networks of youth met through schooling, military service, and employment, began to question what it meant to be a Muslim.[472] Through these and other modern developments that we have already discussed at length, the trend towards an 'objectification of Islam' would by the late twentieth century reach most Muslim communities.[473]

Haeri in the UK

The rising sense of an objectified Islam abstracted from cultural context is expressly evident among Muslim minority communities in the West.[474] For example, before the 80s, Muslim youth in Britain had been generally both protected and disciplined by the network of power relations formed by their patriarchal authoritarian families, who had managed to replicate South Asian societal structures to some degree. But this would change with the advent of Thatcherism and its capitalist repercussions.[475] The sense of instability that had been caused by mass unemployment and the closure of industries, combined with a new found social mobility among the generation of emerging middle-class South Asian Muslims, weakened

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by reformers in many parts of the Muslim world — in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Egypt, Sudan and North Africa — on 'Islamic law'. The imposition of Islamic law is perhaps the most universal political objective of 'Islamists', wherever they operate. Most of us assume that this is quite natural — that it stems from what Western students of Islam have almost habitually referred to as Islam's emphasis upon law, upon practice and behavior as opposed to doctrine or belief — Islam, as the textbooks put it, not as a 'religion' in the Western sense of the term, but as an 'all-embracing way of life'. But those who argue that Islam is being changed by this process of objectification might say that the very idea that one can identify a precise body of legal principles and doctrine as a conceptually distinct something called 'Islamic law' is an idea foreign to the premodern Islamic tradition' (pp. 50-52).

470. Zaman, 'The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority', pp. 213-214; Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. 37– 45; see also G. Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*.

471. Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 37.

472. Eickelman & Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. 37-38.

473. See Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco*; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*.

474. Ibid.

475. For a comprehensive study on the career of British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher (d. 2013), and the economic and cultural impact of Thatcherism, see E. J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Third Edition), Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2013 [1997].

traditional ties and the relevance of what was seen as an ethnically tainted Islam. Instead, what became appealing was an Islam more ideologically orientated, 'which predicated the unity of muslims not only across national states, but, importantly, across local communities — the unity of individuals as abstract muslims'.[476] When Haeri moved back to London in 1985, he would attract a considerable number of these young and disillusioned British-born children of South Asian Muslim immigrants, who seemed to find with Haeri an approach to Islam that was more relatable with their own values rather than what they had found with the alien Islam of their parents.

Because Haeri would give talks at major Shi'i centres and events in the UK, many of his earliest followers in England were Muslims of Shi'i background with no previous link to Sufism. Initially setting up a centre in West London, Haeri would gather three to four times a week with the few that had followed him to England from America as well as the growing stream of new followers from England, forming a group that was quite diverse, including converts of different descent — European, Caribbean, African, Indian, etc. — and born Muslims from various backgrounds, as well as a proportionally large group of second generation South Asian Muslims. Perhaps having learnt his lesson from the US, Shaykh Fadhlalla decided to abstain from financial assistance for the running of any centre, and by the 90s, the initial centre in London had been sold to the Muhammadi Trust.[477] Another place also in Bayswater was rented for the London group's continued activities and events. Although this had been an active centre, with foreign visitors also coming, it was only kept for a year because of financial restraints. And the weekly gatherings, thereafter, were held at different people's houses. That is until in late 1992, a few from the group got together and began renting a massive house in West London, this time in Brondesbury Park, as both an attempt at communal living and establishing a new Sufi centre.[478]

Owned by a wealthy Sharjah businessman, the house was more a mansion, with seven to eight rooms, a big garden, indoor swimming pool, etc.[479] In the beginning, there were around six to eight individuals living permanently in the property, with quite a few others coming and staying temporarily for different durations. These would include Haeri's followers from other countries, as well as Sufi teachers that had some connection to Shaykh Fadhlalla. Haeri himself would of course spend time at the property, and had a room there, but would stay at his own residence in Berkshire, Spring Cottage, or his apartment in Kensington when in London.[480] The

476. 'Croissants and Roses: New Labour, Communalism, and the Rise of Muslim Britain', *Aufheben*, no. 17, 2009, p. 22.
477. Haeri was closely connected with the *Muhammadi Trust* in London, who would publish some of his publications.
478. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016.
479. The owner in question was Abdul Rahman Bukhatir, best known as a patron of cricket (the league in UAE is named after him).
480. Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017.

Hayder Khana, as it was named, would remain active from 1992 until August 1998, until once more they had to give it up for financial reasons.[481]

Haeri had left England in 1995, and with the loss of the centre in London, the community began to gradually grow apart. On the suggestion of Haeri, some members of the London group moved to Luton and the community remained active, even if not to the extent it had once been. One of Haeri's earliest followers from England, who had been largely responsible for Hayder Khana, would be designated as the community leader, and under his supervision they would carry on meeting regularly for *dhikr* and study circles, and also published a bi-monthly newsletter called *Haydernameh* for a short period.[482] Those left in London would also keep a strong link with the community in Luton, and at times host events in London. Occasional larger gatherings and retreats would also continue, as Haeri continued to visit regularly, having done so as recently as 2017.

Theoretical Islam

One of the key attractions for many of the British-born Muslims that had found their way to Haeri was his informed critical stance on a variety of institutes of authority — from biomedicine as the handmaiden of pharmaceutical companies to the hypocrisy of the religious ulama establishment — that resonated with a decidedly anti-authoritarian generation of Muslims. An account from his earliest follower in England reflects this alternative Haeri was offering:

> He tells us that Shaykh Fadhlalla is giving a talk at the Stanmore mosque in two days' time. Now the Stanmore mosque was then and probably still today the biggest Shia centre in the UK, it's a Khoja centre, but is Shia. Stanmore is just kind of at the edge of London. It was funny because for me, I'd kind of run away from Muslims, and the Muslims I'd run away from were Shia ones, but now, I have to go to a Shia mosque to see him. Me and [my friend] went to that two days later. We sat at the back and he started off that address with just a dynamite for me.
>
> So this is the main Shia centre in London, and he starts off, he says, 'there is a hadith (prophetic saying) in which the Prophet (saws) says to Ali (as), "Ya Ali, our Shia are very fortunate because all of the angels are their servants"'. So, the audience loves this, you know, like 'Goal!', right. Then he says, 'What about you people? Can you all say that all of the angels are your servants? If you can, *alhamdulillah*, if you can't, then stop all this nonsense of Shia, Shia, Shia. You have just created an elitist club that Imam Ali would never join'. Oh… dead silence. And me, I was going *yeah, my man! Ha-ha-ha. Yeah, this is my man!*
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> … And the other one I remember of that day was, he's sat there with jacket and trousers, and he's got a normal hat on, but right in front of him were three or four of these Ayatollah types, these chief guests, with all their turbans and everything. Shaykhna then talks about the *amaama*, the turban. He

481. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016.
482. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016.

> says, 'to wear an *amaama* is a *sunnah* [habit of the prophet], following any Sunnah there is blessing in it *alhamdulillah*, but we must remember the essence and meaning of this *sunnah*. We got to remember the word *amaama* comes from the Arabic word *aam*, which means common. And when our beloved Prophet (saws) wore an *amaama* he was amongst the common people, but these days just because someone has got half a bed sheet on their head, they think they are elite. Nothing *aam* about it. It is now *khaas* [specific, special]. How can you call it *amaama*'.
>
> At that point I just turned around to [my friend], that was my point, [and said to him:] 'this is my Baba [wise elder]. My Baba is here'.[483]

This account offers us a clear example of the increasing loss of ulama authority under discussion. We have seen how by the late twentieth century, ulama authority was clearly undermined by the establishment of modern educational institutions and a Muslim intelligentsia that it produced, as well as the mass availability in print of religious writings previously only available to a privileged few. An important consequent of this democratisation of religious knowledge is that an interest in the major theological issues that had traditionally been reserved for the scholarly elite becomes widespread among a wider demographic of Muslims, who are drawn more and more to the theoretical aspects of religion than the practical and popular religious aspects. Haeri's writings during the period seem to appeal to this intellectual thirst among a young western-educated generation of Muslims in minority communities in the West, as well as in Muslim majority countries.

Haeri's Books on Islam

One of the clearest examples of Haeri's presentation of Islam for an intellectually orientated audience is the book *Decree and Destiny: The Freedom of No Choice* (1991), which was actually one of Haeri's earliest projects, initiated in the early 80s but completed and published some years later. The relatively long process in its completion reflects the complexity of the book's central subject matter, which is perhaps the most tangled conundrum in Islamic theology (and perhaps in philosophy in general), namely the relationship between free will and determinism, which incidentally is what the book was later subtitled as in a revised edition.[484]

As much as it covers very specific theological contentions from a confessional (particularly Shi'i) perspective, *Decree and Destiny* presents these in a format that mainly consists of short self-contained and loosely related subchapters, with headings like 'Measure and Bounds' or 'Freedom, Action and Outcome', which altogether offer a simplified yet multifaceted perspective on general physical and metaphysical laws that Haeri sees as governing human existence. This simple structure and style with which Haeri presents theologically intricate and

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483. Haider Naqvi, interview, July 2016.

484. Muneera, Haeri's wife, was very involved with the production of both editions, the second having changed quite a bit from the first (Muneera Haeri, interview, March 2017).

philosophically dense subject matter for the purposes of making them accessible for a modern audience, is something he would go on to replicate in future publications, which all share a similar orientation towards the general public.

Another aspect of Haeri's writing, noticeable already in *Decree and Destiny*, is how he situates religious contentions within a socio-historical and cultural context that, according to him, can bring a better understanding of the reason such contentions arose in the first place. We see this, for instance, in an early section of the book dedicated to contextualising various theological ideas within a background of Muslim political history. Although this might seem like an obvious approach to take according to our current standards, it was uncommon beyond academic writings when this book was written. This tendency to contextualise is even more evident in two of Haeri's publications in the 90s that were written as a response to academic literature on Islam and Sufism.

We see a more general and inclusive approach in the introductory books Haeri wrote on Sufism and Islam respectively, both of which can be considered to take a historical and contextual approach to understanding the development of the religion.[485] At the time, both *The Elements of Sufism* (1990) and *The Elements of Islam* (1993) offered a concise overview of the religion not easily available, and hence became very popular. To this day, they remain the most well-read of Haeri's writings, having been translated into many languages (including Greek, Indonesian, Finnish and Swedish) and then republished as *The Thoughtful Guide to Sufism* (2004) and *The Thoughtful Guide to Islam* (2004).

Although most definitely still offering a confessional approach, what we see in these books is an appreciation for the interrelatedness of historical context and theological content, and a presentation of the subject matter for a potentially wide spectrum of the population Haeri envisages reading his work, which basically includes the typical 'Westerner' interested in the topic as well as the regular modern Muslim wishing to learn about his or her religion. More specifically, both books were written as a response to academic and other theoretical studies on their respective topics. For instance, Haeri expresses his opinion that 'the majority of current studies on Sufism are of little use in a practical sense'.[486] And in *The Elements of Islam*, Haeri writes:

> During the past few years a plethora of books on Islam has appeared in the supermarkets of mass communication in the West. Many of these have been written to make sense of current affairs and the acceleration of events that are increasingly bringing Islam and the behavior of Muslims into the media spotlight. Most Western writers on Islam and Muslims are alien to the path of Islam. They have not experienced its transformative element and as a result most of their writings remain somewhat

485. Both books were written at the behest of Michael Mann, who at the time was the chairman of Element Books. This publishing house would revise, publish and distribute some of Haeri's early work, as well as a few of his later books in the future.
486. 'Introduction', in Haeri, *Sufism*.

academic and remote, often hailing from an inherent (and therefore unquestioned) attitude of superiority. If a writer is alien to the Islamic transformative process then it follows that most of his observations and commentary on Islam or on Muslim behavior and culture will be generally superficial despite appearing to reflect depth in their analysis.[487]

As this critique so clearly demonstrates, Haeri was in essence addressing an objectification of Islam that he noticed in etic studies of the religion. Yet, in his attempt to respond to these overly theoretical approaches to the study Islam and Sufism, Haeri himself would produce books that only confirmed a view of Islam as an object that can be observed and studied, an attitude towards religion which was now no longer isolated to academics only, but also prevalent among practitioners of those very religions.

An objectified understanding of Islam had become so ubiquitous by the end of the twentieth century that even attempts to respond to it by writers like Haeri could only confirm it. The fact that his book was titled *The Elements of Islam* is indicative enough of this impasse. For a better understanding of this fact we can turn to the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (d. 2000). Drawing upon his findings from a survey of some 25,000 titles in Arabic literature, Smith tried to show us the relatively recent rise of a reified Islam by pointing out an astonishing increase in use of the term 'Islam' since the second half of the nineteenth century.[488] This trend was noticeable in other languages also; to quote Aydin, 'books with essentializing titles such as *The Spirit of Islam*, *Islam and Progress*, *The Rise and Decline of Islam*, *Christianity and Islam*, and *Women's Rights in Islam*' began to appear in the late nineteenth century.[489] Emerging from the pens of Muslim intellectuals, 'these works lumped together diverse Muslim practices and criticized supposed impurities or simply overlooked them', resulting in sweeping generalisations uncharacteristic of the polyvocal tradition of earlier scholarship.[490] Such novel use of the term 'Islam' was 'a departure from the claims of earlier scholars, who rarely

487. Haeri also writes in the book: 'The purpose of this book is to provide a brief, simple and factual account of Islam and Muslims at a time when cultural, racial, religious and other prejudices are prevalent throughout the world. Many of these prejudices, suspicions and fears are disguised behind subtle and civilized veneers; but in a world that is shrinking because of easy communication and travel, bridges between the people of Islam and those who are suspicious or fearful of it must be built. If we look at the events of the recent past, we notice that since the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the dismantling of Communism, the world has been heading towards greater confrontation between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures. I hope this book will cut through what is at present a morass of misunderstanding, misinformation and confrontation so as to reach a deeper and truer understanding. Better understanding can only benefit humankind and lead to greater harmony'.

488. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 115. Smith writes: 'One index that can be set up is that showing the relative frequency of 'faith' and islam, the one being the personalist and activist term and the other gradually more systematized and externalist. We have already seen that in the Qur'an the ratio between these is over five to one in favour of iman. In Arabic book titles until the end of the nineteenth century, islam slightly outnumbers 'faith' in a ratio of three to two. In modern times this ratio jumps to thirteen to one' (p. 115). The survey was originally presented for a conference at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1958, in a paper called 'The Historical Development in Islam of the Concept of Islam as an Historical Development', and can be found in full in, W. C. Smith, *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies, Mouton*, The Hague, 1981, pp. 41-77; (Smith rearranged the approximately 25,000 titles listed in Carl Brockelmann's Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur (1902) chronologically to do the survey).

489. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 8-10.

490. Ibid. On the polyvocality of earlier Muslims, see Berkey, *The Formation of Islam.*

presented their opinions as truth "according to Islam"'.[491] Even in the premodern titles that use the term 'Islam', Smith alerts us to the absence of any use of the word in the modern sense of a religious system.[492] He further notes the commonplace religious use of the Arabic term for system (*nizam*) in the twentieth century in contrast to its relative absence before modern times.[493] Hence, Smith asserts, 'the explicit notion that life should be or can be ordered according to a system, even an ideal one, and that it is the business of Islam to provide such a system, seems to be a modern idea.'[494]

Inventing Islam

One important aspect of the systematising and streamlining of Islam is the elevating of certain interpretations of Islam and a corresponding devaluation of others by both Muslim and non-Muslim elites, which has in turn entrenched a cluster of ideals held by many modern Muslims with the notion of an exclusively 'correct' version of Islam.[495] What we have been exploring throughout the latter part of this chapter is how expressions of a kind of modernist purification became widespread among modern Muslim intellectuals, and how as a consequence, a notion of 'the emergence of putatively purer 'modern' religious sensibilities compatible with scientific rationalism out of earlier, supposedly muddled 'magical' systems' would become embedded as an implicit ideal for many modern Muslims, aiding their self-impression of a movement towards 'purer' Islam.[496] This is in line with orientalist and nineteenth-century colonial ideas of Islam as 'embroiled in a jumble of 'survivals' and magical behaviours'.[497] But that is not to say that the imposition of orientalist typologies directly results in the construction of the ideal of a 'pure' Islam, rather both the category and the categorised 'conspire to emerge hand in hand'.[498]

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491. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 75.

492. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 300 n. 114. Smith continues: 'In earlier times … the Islam by which the community aspired to live was a process, not a organization' (p. 301 n. 116). Even when looking at al-Ghazzali and other similar theologians who seem to espouse a systematic vision of Islam, their conceptions seem "dynamic rather that static", as illustrated by them favouring an activist term like *madhhab* (from *dhahaba*, to go) for law, as opposed to a congealed like *nizam* (system). 'Even the word shariah, denoting the most systematic aspect of Muslim life, means originally a route to be followed, not a network or scheme to be imposed' (pp. 300-301 n. 116). In another paper presented at the International Conference of Orientalists in Moscow in 1960, Smith showed statistical evidence documenting a gradual process of reification in the use of the term '*sharia*' among theologians (*mutakallimun*), again finding it beginning surprisingly late (p. 299 n. 107).

493. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 117. '*Nizam*', incidentally, was a key word for the Islamisation project in Pakistan.

494. Ibid.

495. Hermansen, 'The 'Other' Shadhilis of the West', p. 408.

496. Bailey, 'The Disenchantment of Magic', p. 384.

497. C. Hamés, 'Magic, Islam and Scientific Research', *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Newsletter*, vol. 3, 1999, p. 40.

498. I. Hacking, 'Making Up People', in T. C. Heller, M. Sosna & D. E. Wellbery (eds.), *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA, 1986, p. 228.

> Historically, the term *Islam* was introduced into European languages in the early nineteenth century by Orientalists like Edward Lane, as an explicit analogy with the modern Christian concept of religion; in this respect, *Islam* was just as much a neologism as the terms *Hinduism* and *Buddhism* were. Before that time Europeans used the term *Muhammadan* or *Mahometan* to refer to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. The use of the term *Islam* by non-Muslim scholars coincides with its increasing frequency in the religious discourse of those who now call themselves Muslims. That is, the term *Islam* became popular in reformist and protofundamentalist circles at approximately the same time, or shortly after, it was popularized by European Orientalists. Both the outside 'scientific' observers and the internal ideologues had found an ideal tool in the term *Islam*. Treated simultaneously as a set of changeless religious doctrines and as a sociological unit (now usually assimilated to the Arab minority), Islam became the eternal other, opposing European civilization. The fact that much of Islamic history and culture was left out of the picture was not too great a price to pay for either of these constituencies.[499]

The fact that the sudden prevalence of the word 'Islam' in titles since the late nineteenth century arose due to Western writings and their translations or the responses to them by Muslims, alludes to the key role in essentialising Islam played by both orientalism and the 'orientalism in reverse' it aroused (i.e., 'Orientals' incorporating the perceptions Orientalists have of them).[500] This abstraction of 'Islam' as a religion can itself be seen as part of the larger intellectual programme of 'world religions' in the nineteenth century, as well as the conceptual category of 'religion' as it developed in the 'context of the critique of Christianity in the Enlightenment and the rise of the modern individual'.[501] With the publication of *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962), W. C. Smith would be the first to question a universalist and essentialist idea of religion, largely taken for granted by previous influential writers on the subject, from Kant and Heidegger to Durkheim and Geertz.[502] Certain aspects of Smith's criticism of 'religion' would subsequently be developed by notable authors like Talal Asad, Jacques Derrida, Daniel Dubuisson, Timothy Fitzgerald, Jonathan Z. Smith and Tomoko Masuzawa, all of whom acknowledged 'religion' as a cultural category specific to (usually Protestant) Christian intellectuals and missionaries from Europe, and to some degree North America.[503] All of their works traced the expansion of the European construction of various

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499. C. W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*, Shambhala, Boston, MA, 2011 [1997], pp. xvi-xvii.

500. S. Y. al-Azm, 'Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse', *Khamsin*, no. 8, 1981, pp. 5-26; Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 75; See also Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*; D. Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam*, Equinox Publishing, London, 2011.

501. G. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*, Continuum, London, 1999, pp. 44-45; P. Beyer, *Religions in Global Society*, Routledge, New York, 2006; D. Jung, *Muslim History and Social Theory*.

502. See Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*.

503. J. A. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2012, pp. 2-3; see also P. C., Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988; L. M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1997.

religions, demonstrating how 'religion' masked the globalisation of particularly western concerns as universally human ones; what Derrida aptly labelled 'globalatinization'.[504]

The focus in these works leaned heavily on Smith's ideas about 'religion' as a western construction superimposed in the eighteenth century upon various phenomena, which at closer examination were not so easily parcelled into either of the apparently mutually exclusive categories of 'secular' and 'religious'.[505] Asad argued that the idea of religion as a transhistorical and transcultural reality only dates back to about three hundred years, when it emerged together with its Siamese twin, 'secularism' ('a political ideology premised on the assumption that it is possible and indeed desirable to isolate "religion" from the "secular" sphere'), emphasising that it 'does not adequately capture the communal, embodied and ritualistic practices of 'non-Western' peoples'.[506] Fitzgerald made many of the same assertions, adding that 'the construction of 'religion' and 'religions' as global, cross-cultural objects of study has been part of a wider historical process of western imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism'.[507] Also noting it as involving 'an ideologically loaded distinction between the realm of religion and the realm of non-religion or the secular', he showed how the process of constructing religion and religions allows for the simultaneous construction of an 'imagined secular world of objective facts, of societies and markets as the result of the free association of natural individuals'.[508]

More recent writers on the topic, however, such as Jason Ananda Josephson (2012), have critiqued these genealogies for focusing almost exclusively on western writings, giving the impression 'that 'religion' attained international hegemony unilaterally and without resistance'.[509] Unlike his predecessors, Josephson is not only arguing that 'the European concept of 'religion' expanded as a Western-Christian universalisation … [and] assimilated diverse cultural systems along the way', but that furthermore it was this very 'importation of non-western traditions and interpretations into religion' which undermined and exposed the concept, opening it up for questioning by critics like Smith and Asad.[510] What Josephson is saying is that there has been undue attention given to western contributions in the invention of religion as a universal category, and its subsequent appropriation by other cultures and civilisations has often been considered wholesale. Josephson claims what we need now is more of how the non-Western communities themselves contributed to the invention of religion. But

504. Ibid.

505. V. S. Harrison, *Religion and Modern Thought*, SCM Press, London, 2007, p. 21.

506. Enayat, *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought*, p. 8.

507. T. Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 8.

508. Ibid.

509. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, p. 3.

510. Ibid. Bourdieu's idea of the 'thinkable' as opposed to 'doxa' is useful in understanding how a taken-for-granted category, all of a sudden reveals itself as such.

we find attention given to a context beyond the West already with Smith. Smith persuasively argued how the concept of religion is the product of a long-range process of reification by which we have gradually come to conceive of it as 'an objective systematic entity'.[511] Hence, what we are speaking about is in fact a far more gradual and longsighted development, which although encouraged by colonial interactions, was not caused by it.

Reifying Religion

Our argument here is reminiscent of Eisenstadt's model of multiple modernities, which does not only consider the manner in which religions are reconstructed with modernisation as a break from respective traditions, but also a continuation of them that draws upon elements rooted within the respective civilisation.[512] However, all too often, subsequent applications of the 'multiple modernities' model has led many researchers to emphasise how modern religion breaks away from traditional forms rather than reaffirming them. Similarly, although expanding Smith's initial observations about the essentialising of religion, subsequent critics of the contemporary concept of 'religion' have often managed to obscure the important fact that these conceptualisations did not occur in a void. As we are reminded by both Eisenstadt and Smith, we have to strike a balance between the crucial impact of Western hegemony and the integral role of the traditional civilisation's they impact.

To give an example, the first serious ethnography of Muslims was *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), the result of Edward William Lane's infatuation with all things Egyptian and his consequent immersion into Egyptian society.[513] In the book, Lane divides the behaviours and beliefs he encounters into those he considers 'truly Islamic' and those he sees as superstitious, placing what he considers as mystical and popular practices within the latter category whilst reserving 'religion for more respectable practices'.[514]

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511. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 5.

512. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, p. 3. Examples of this development also abound in other religious traditions. Gyan Prakash (2003) for instance, writes about how the Arya Samaj reform movement attempted to rid their indigenous culture of 'magic' in an effort to recast the culture in the image of Western rationalism whilst at the same time distinguishing itself from the West. Rather than by diminishing the role of religion in favour of science, this was attempted by stripping the former of 'superstition' and endeavouring to disenchant the Vedas (G. Prakash, 'Between Science and Superstition: Religion and the Modern Subject of the Nation in Colonial India', in B. Meyer and P. Pels (eds.), *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA, 2003, pp. 39-59).

513. J. Thompson, 'Introduction', in E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: The Definitive 1860 Edition*, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2003, p. vi; see also J. Thompson, 'Edward William Lane in Egypt', *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 34, 1997, pp. 243-261. Thompson writes, 'Said, in his influential book orientalism, gave Lane a paramount position, calling him one of orientalism's 'inaugral heroes,' one of the 'builders of the field, creators of a tradition, progenitors of the Orientalist brotherhood'' (p. 243). For this classical critique of Lane by Said, see E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, pp. 159-164. Said refers to Lane's book itself as 'an encyclopedia of exotic display and a playground for orientalist scrutiny' (p. 161).

514. R. A. Lukens-Bull, 'Between Text and Practice: Considerations in the Anthropological Study of Islam', *Marburg Journal of Religion*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1999, p. 2. Lukens-Bull writes: 'Edward Lane went to Egypt to study Arabic at Al-Azhar, a school famous for its training of ulama from around the world. Lane's 'narrative relation' to mystical and popular Islam is shaped by his exposure to shari'a-centric Islam. Lane divides

Rather than a nonpartisan depiction of the 'opinion of the locals', Lane's statements and observations throughout the book parallel the opinions expressed by some intellectuals of Al-Azhar University at the time, with whom he became acquainted during his study of Arabic at the university and went on to spend a considerable amount of time with during his stay in Cairo.[515] Some years later, it would be intellectuals from al-Azhar, such as Abduh, who would initiate a modernist movement for reforming Islam. This intellectual climate can be seen as concurrent with Lane's clear division of behaviours and beliefs into those which are seen as truly religious and those viewed as superstitious.[516] In fact, one such practice deemed superstitious by Lane, the *daswa,* would be abolished in 1881 by the khedive who had succumbed to pressure from the European consular representatives and reformers like Abduh to do so.[517]

What this example demonstrates is how an essentialist 'Islam' was produced over time by the combined labours of coloniser and colonised.[518] And more importantly, that these types of interactions only brought to the fore an inclination that was already evident among certain Muslim scholarly traditions — albeit to a much lesser degree — where we notice a gradual conceptual 'shift from 'God' to 'Islam' as the focus of attention'.[519] Meaning, what orientalists often encountered among such intellectuals was an increasingly abstract notion of Islam, less an act and disposition and more a corpus of norms and procedures. With a bias in favour of such attitudes that considered 'Islam' more and more 'as a system and as an agent', orientalists and early ethnographers found it easier to deal with what they observed as an entity, and in the process 'contributed to Muslims' increasing objectification of Islam'.[520] One explanation for this is offered by James Thrower (1999), who argues that it is 'only once religion has ceased to be at the living heart of a culture, that is, when its status has become problematic, that explanations to account for its existence come to the fore'.[521]

Following Taylor's narrative, researchers on religion such as Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (2016) have similarly seen the process by which religion loses its 'assumed natural status' as spanning several centuries, highlighting that 'the spread of non-religion among broader segments of the population' occurs much later after the initial critique of religion by

religious behaviors and beliefs into those which he sees as truly Islamic and those which he sees as superstition. Lane places sufism, saint-cults, and djinn within the category of superstition (1860, pp. 222-246) and reserves religion for more respectable practices' (p. 2).

515. Ibid.

516. Ibid.

517. Bruinessen, 'Sufism, 'Popular' Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 126.

518. Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', pp. 169-170; see also G. Minault, Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, p. 156.

519. S. Scheilke, 'Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life', *ZMO Working Papers*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2010, p. 4 n. 2.

520. Ibid.

521. J. Thrower, *Religion: The Classical Theories, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh*, 1999, p. 3.

elites.[522] Looking at the replacement of the European philosopher's 'belief in God' by 'religion', what they astutely bring to our attention is that philosophical, sociological and psychological theories of religion since the Enlightenment have never been plainly analytical and descriptive, but rather, 'have often taken the form of either critique or apology'.[523] Which brings us back to Smith, for whom a major force in reifying religion is 'the impulse to defend what is attacked', which he marks as particularly dominant in the European Christian case and that of Islam.[524]

Apologia Inevitabilis

Regardless of the nature of his writings, Haeri's literary efforts to revive Islam throughout the late twentieth century must invariably arise as a response to secularity, and as such, only work to reinforce the very modern narratives he aimed to oppose. The idea of Islam as only one of a number 'world religions' is a case in point. Although Haeri hoped to show – through his public-talks and publications – the universality of the Muhammadan message as he envisaged it, he could at best only achieve a view of Islam as a particular, maybe even unique, religious variant among many others.

As well as in his two overviews of Islam and Sufism discussed earlier, this sense of religion is also visible in later publications written by Haeri, such as *The Pilgrimage of Islam* (1992).[525] The book is structured into four sections. The first gives an overview of pilgrimage in other cultures and religions as well as historical precursors to pilgrimage in Islam, especially in Arabia. The second section is an account of the pilgrimage of the prophet Muhammad. The third focuses on the 'outer' pilgrimage to Mecca, looking in great detail at the actual historical sites of pilgrimage, the acts of the pilgrimage, and its various conditions and regulations. The fourth and final section focuses on the 'inner' aspects of pilgrimage, elucidating the deeper meanings of the various acts and sites of the pilgrimage as mirrors of an inner journey to God. Another work from a few years later that follows a similar format is *Fasting in Islam* (2004), which also starts with an overview of fasting in other cultures and traditions before mentioning its physical, mental and spiritual health benefits, and then elucidates mention of fasting in the

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522. Stausberg & Engler, 'Theories of Religion', p. 54. Following Taylor, they write: "Philosophical theories of religion, in particular since the Enlightenment, have not been merely analytical and descriptive: they have often taken the form of either critique or apology. This reflects the emergence of the "secular option", i.e. "the move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace". In this context, we can replace the philosopher's "belief in God" by "religion". In this light, religion, and being religious, have lost their assumed natural status and have become negotiable. This process has taken several centuries, from intellectual critiques of religion to the spread of non-religion among broader segments of the population. The trend to argue for or against religion (and the existence of God) continues in traditional philosophy of religion. Similarly, some of the classical social scientific or psychological theories of religion were informed by anti-religionism (Marx, Freud) or presented religion as something to be overcome (Tylor, Frazer)' (p. 54).

523. Ibid.

524. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 117.

525. F. Haeri, *The Pilgrimage of Islam*, Crescent News, Kuala Lumpur, 1992.

main Islamic sources of Qur'an and Hadith, followed by details on how to perform the fast, and then finally the inner meanings of fasting.

In theory, both books seem to be a commendable effort in not only situating their respective subject matter within a wider context, but also in giving a variety of reasons for their continued relevance. But Haeri's main goal of showing how both pilgrimage and fasting are 'primal expressions of spiritual and social facets of human nature' is short-changed by a, perhaps unavoidable, promotion of Islamic superiority in this regard. In conclusion, what we end up with are further examples of Smith's assertion that the 'almost universal Muslim use of the term *islam* in a reified sense in modern times is a direct consequence of apologetics'.[526] Smith was heavily critical of many modern Muslim reformists exactly because of their apologetic nature; a stamp of apologia that has marred the image of modernists in the eyes of western scholars of Islam as well as Muslim religious scholars.[527]

One example of a book Smith criticised is *The Spirit of Islam* (1891), written by Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1928), a significant Shi'i jurist and political figure from Oudh.[528] In this work, Ameer Ali fashioned Islam into a universal religion comparable to Christianity especially, but also Judaism and Buddhism.[529] Yet for him, Islam is superior, which he tries to show again and again through his constant comparison of it with Christianity.[530] He argues, for instance, that the superiority of Islam is evident by its very name, which 'mistranslates' as meaning to be tranquil or at perfect peace, whereas Christianity derives its name from the designation of Jesus as Christ.[531] The book was written as a clear refutation of Sir William Muir's *Life of Mahomet* (1861). In defending against Muir's many polemical accusations, Ali aligns his interpretation of Islamic values with the humanism and liberalism of his time, writing for example, how whereas women's property rights were only recognised by English common law in 1882, already since the time of Muhammad, Islam had provided women with the right of possessing property and offered them great status throughout its history.[532]

The romanticised account of Islamic history in Ameer Ali's book is most prevalent in his constant glorifying of an apparent Islamic civilisation throughout the text, which he validates by quoting European historians in its praise and highlighting the influence of Muslim philosophers and scientists on Western thinkers. This is exemplified for him by figures such of Avempace (Ibn Bajja, d. 1138) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd, d. 1198), who he highlights as inspiring

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526. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 117.
527. W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957, p. 85.
528. S. A. Ali, *The Spirit of Islam: Or the Life and Teachings of Mohammed*, Darf Publishers, London, 1988 [1902].
529. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 74-75.
530. W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Victor Gollanncz, London, 1946, p. 12.
531. A. Ahsan, 'A Late Nineteenth Century Muslim Response to the Western Criticism of Islam', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1985, p. 184.
532. Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, pp. 246-247, 256.

the likes of Descartes (d. 1650), Hobbes (d. 1679) and Locke (d. 1704), whilst the decline of Islamic civilisation is attributed to an attitude among Muslims of anti-rationalism associated with figures like Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855).[533] Ameer Ali writes in his book:

> For five centuries Islam assisted in the free intellectual development of humanity, but a reactionary movement then set in, and all at once the whole stream of human thought was altered. The cultivators of science and philosophy were pronounced to be beyond the pale of Islam. Is it impossible for the Sunni Church to take a lesson from the Church of Rome? Is it impossible for her to expand similarity – to become many sided? There is nothing in Mohammed's teachings which prevents this. Islamic Protestantism, in one of its phases, Mu'tazlims, - has already paved the way. Why should not the great Sunni Church shake off the old tramels and rise to a new life?[534]

We often find this affinity to Protestantism among Muslim modernists and other reformists. A number of researchers have pointed out how attempts to rationalise Islam by reformists share parallels with reinterpretations of Protestantism in the nineteenth century.[535] Another example is the influential poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), who was a close associate of Ameer Ali and prepared the index for his book *Spirit of Islam*.[536] Iqbal similarly evoked associations with Protestantism, but for him it was exemplified, in surprisingly contradictory fashion to his confidant, by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, whom he calls 'the great puritan reformer'; and describe his Wahhabism as 'a movement of immense potentialities which arose in the eighteenth century, from the sands of Nejd, described by Macdonald as the "cleanest spot in the decadent world of Islam"'.[537]

Iqbal reference to Duncan B. MacDonald (d. 1943), founder of the first American missionary school focusing on Muslims of the Middle East, highlights how Muslim reformists shared a similar attitude towards the Islam of their time with Christian, especially Protestant, missionaries, another key example of which is the influential Dutch-American missionary to the Muslims, Samuel Zwemer (d. 1952). In the opening chapter of his ethnographic work, *The Influence of Animism on Islam* (1920), Zwemer states that even 'the stern monotheism of the Wahabi Reformers was unable to eradicate the pagan superstitions of Islam because they are imbedded in the Koran and were not altogether rejected by Mohammed himself, much less by his companions'.[538] Zwemmer made countless similar statements that portray Islam as involved

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533. Ibid., p. 397.
534. Ibid., p. 454.
535. Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere*, pp. 236-237. These interpretations can even be correlated with the spread of 'an ensemble of legal discourses consistent with very Protestant notions of religion' (Moosa, 'Colonialism and Islamic Law', pp. 169-170).
536. Ahsan, 'A Late Nineteenth Century Muslim Response to the Western Criticism of Islam', pp. 204-205.
537. M. Iqbal, 'Lecture VI: The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam', in M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA, 2013 [1934], pp. 116-142.
538. S. M. Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions*, Macmillan, New York, 1920, p. 4. For Zwemer, this is a battle that exists within all religions, but in contrast to Christianity's success, Islam is failing (p. 1-20). Referencing Gottfried Simon's *The Progress and Arrest of Islam in Sumatra* (1912), Zwemmer writes, 'The missionary is not so much concerned after all with the fact of Animism

in a losing battle to eradicate itself of its superstitious practices. It was this general consensus about Islam that Muslim reformists replicated through their attempts at responding to it, but they did this by drawing on their Islamic heritage.

Aryan vs Semitic Islam

Returning to Muhammad Iqbal, in the same article, he continues by referring to the Wahhabi movement as 'the first throb of life in modern Islam' that inspired 'nearly all the great modern movements of Muslim Asia and Africa, e.g. the Sanusi movement, the Pan-Islamic movement, and the Babi movement, which is only a Persian reflex of Arabian Protestantism'.[539] This glorification of an 'Arab' over 'Persian' Islam can be found in many of his other works, such as in an earlier article by Iqbal called 'Islam and Mysticism' (1917):

> The Moslems of Spain, with their Aristotelian spirit, and away from the enervating influences of the thought of Western and Central Asia, were comparatively much closer to the spirit of Islam than the Moslem races of Asia, who let Arabian Islam pass through all the solvents of Ajam [non-Arab] and finally divested it of its original character. The conquest of Persia meant not the conversion of Persia to Islam, but the conversion of Islam to Persianism. Read the intellectual history of the Moslems of Western and Central Asia from the 10th century downwards, and you will find therein verified every word that I have written above.[540]

What we see in this excerpt is an attempt to portray Islam as pure of foreign cultural accoutrements by invoking a common Muslim reformist tendency to 'valorize the Semitic expression over the Aryan', which was itself a refutation of pro-Aryan orientalist opinions about Islam that proliferated the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[541]

For example, Muhammad Abduh made his argument that it was not the Semitic roots of Islam but the Aryan influence of Sufism which was the cause of Muslim backwardness, in direct opposition to a statement found in an Egyptian newspaper, made by the French foreign minister Gabriel Hantoux, that it was the Semitic origins of Islam that were to blame.[542] The 'scientific' racism associated with social evolutionism as espoused by influential figures like

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in Islam as he is with the utter failure of Islam to meet Animistic practices and overcome them. Gottfried Simon has shown conclusively that Islam cannot uproot pagan practices or remove the terror of spirits and demon-worship in Sumatra and Java. This is true everywhere. In its conflict with Animism Islam has not been the victor but the vanquished. Christianity on the contrary, as Harnack has shown, did win in its conflict with demon-worship and is winning to-day' (p. 18). Another example is Edward Westermarck's *Pagan Survivals in Mohammedan Civilization* (1933). Drawing upon his previous ethnography on Morocco and other works on Muslim cultures, Westermarck uses Edward Tylor's theory of primitive 'survivals' in order to present Islam as a religion overwhelmed with idolatrous and superstitious practices, some of which are deeply rooted within their respective cultures.

539. Iqbal, 'The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam'.

540. M. Iqbal, 'Islam and Mysticism', originally printed in *New Era* (28 July) 1917 and reprinted in L. A. Sherwani (ed.), *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2015 [1944], pp. 155-156.

541. S. Sorgenfrei, 'Hidden or Forbidden, Elected or Rejected: Sufism as 'Islamic Esotericism?', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2018, pp. 145-165.

542. M. J. Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2010, p. 87; see also Sorgenfrei, 'Hidden or Forbidden, Elected or Rejected'.

Herbert Spencer was particularly impactful in tying Semitic ethnicity with Orientalist notions of an essential Muslim difference.[543] This found expression in the notion of Muslim inferiority, as asserted by well-known politicians and thinkers like William Gladstone (d. 1898) and Joseph Ernest Renan (d. 1892), who strongly argued that the fanaticism of Islam and its Semitic roots made Muslims incapable of producing progress.[544]

Philology also played a crucial role in reinforcing racial explanations of a supposed inferiority inherent in Islam. Taking racial theories of Aryan superiority as advocated by fellow French philologist Arthur de Gobineau (d. 1882) and others, Renan claimed that the fixed and immutable character of Semitic languages in contrast to the changing and dynamic capacity of Indo-European languages reflected 'the ineptitude of the Semites in arts and sciences'.[545] To quote Renan, 'in all things the Semitic race appears to us to be an incomplete race, by virtue of its simplicity. This race — if I dare use the analogy — is to the Indo-European family what a pencil sketch is to a painting; it lacks that variety, that amplitude, that abundance of life which is the condition of perfectibility'.[546]

It was in their refutation of such forms of Aryanism that Muslim reformists only reiterated the false-dichotomy between an Aryan and Semitic Islam espoused by Western writers. The double-standards of considering Christianity an 'Aryan' religion whilst simultaneously considering Islam a 'Semite' religion, is highlighted by Hodgson, who writes, 'the immediate background of Islam in the Arabian Hijaz, like that of Christianity in Palestine, is significant; but in both cases, the actual formation of the religion took place in a wider setting, which was at least as important as the local milieu of the founder'.[547] We will return to this dichotomy in the following chapter, exploring how even once racial theories began to subside by the twentieth century, many of the tropes supporting a distinction between 'Muhammadenism' and 'Sufism' would continue. In academic circles, we see examples of this in the works of influential Orientalists like Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) and H. A. R. Gibb (d. 1971), who in *Modern Trends in Islam* (1947) divided Islam into two separate forms in line with an abstract opposition between 'transcendence' (as exemplified by Muslim theology) and 'immanence' (as exemplified by Sufism).[548]

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543. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 68. Later articulated in the works of Orientalists like Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) and Louis Massignon (d. 1962).

544. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 64, 71; Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, pp. 17-18.

545. M. Guida, 'Al-Afghānī and Namık Kemal's Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamist Thought', *Turkish Journal of Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2011, p. 60.

546. Renan cited in Said, *Orientalism*, p. 149. Renan also states that 'Semites are rabid monotheists who produced no mythology, no art, no commerce, no civilisation' (p. 149); see also A. Khalil & S. Sheik, 'Sufism in Western Scholarship, A Brief Overview', *Studies in Religion*, vol. 43, no. 3, p. 358.

547. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*, p. 104.

548. H. A. R. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1947, p. 19.

Chapter Conclusion

In the initial part of this chapter, we focused on Bayt al-Deen as Haeri's attempt at building a utopian community modelled on the imagined Islamic golden age of early Medina, as well as his own childhood ideal of a relatively self-sufficient Karbala. This highlighted for us subtle distinctions between tradition and an essentialising of tradition, or in the words of the Comaroffs, between 'hegemony' and ideology'. Related to this, we were also able to draw a distinction between authority as something taken for granted by people, and authority as an attempt to exercise power through convincing or coercing them. We then took a deeper look at this distinction through the historical case of the final days of the institution of the caliphate. This example concretely demonstrated for us the effects of a transition from a hierarchical social structure to the egalitarian modern moral order Taylor speaks of. Furthermore, we saw how even later attempts to reinstate the caliphate or any other form of a 'divinely' sanctioned regime could now only do so through acknowledging this modern moral order, as so succinctly illustrated by the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The undermining of authority by a modern moral order is also evident in the loss of power and status of the ulama class, which we explored in the subsequent part of the chapter by looking at the formation of modern madrasas and the rise of a new Muslim intelligentsia. Developments that tie into Haeri's own attempts to establish the American Institute of Quranic Studies, as well as a tensive dynamic between his own heritage among traditional ulama and his obvious position as a modern Muslim intellectual. We then looked at a rising reification of Islam that correlated with the emergence of a literate Muslim public in the wake of print culture and mass education. Haeri's followers in the UK offered us a specific example of this objectification of Islam and some of its features, including a disregard for ulama authority and an abstract appreciation of the religion over a practical one. Finally, we turned to an explanation for this abstraction of Islam as a result of apologetics, which is evident in the work of many modern Muslim reformists and also to some degree in Haeri's own writings. But this explanation was prefaced with a caution against ignoring how global responses to western hegemony draw from their respective civilisational roots.

In attempting to offer an explanation for the modern changes undergone by Muslims at large, most of our focus in this chapter has been on their appropriation of Western narratives; specifically those of 'civilisation' and 'progress'. This gives the impression that modernity mainly consists of the East looking to the West for inspiration. But in the following chapter we will see that, to an extent, the reverse is also true.

Chapter 4

Sufism and Authenticity

Carrying on our account of Haeri's time as a Sufi shaykh, this chapter focuses on his efforts to reach out to those disillusioned by the type of Islam that, as we have seen, came to the fore by the late twentieth century. Observing his growth into a more universal spiritual teacher, we will construct a socio-historical contextualisation that can allow us to appreciate some of the reasons for this development in Haeri's evolving role as a teacher from the 90s and onwards. We will look at the emergence of Sufism as a category of mysticism and give particular attention to the theme of authenticity. Important related issues here are an increasing interest in 'Eastern' religions as a source of esoteric knowledge forgotten by the West and the various stages in a psychologisation of religion.

Through his literary output and the development of new communities in Europe and South Africa around his personality and teachings, we can attempt to offer a more complicated portrait of Haeri then that formulated in the previous chapter. Furthermore, we can see how his efforts reflect on a smaller scale more general trends that characterise the culture of authenticity and expressive individualism of late modernity. The first part of the chapter focuses more on the social aspects of Haeri's life during this period, whilst the second moves more towards an investigation of Haeri's teachings on self-knowledge and how they reflect aspects of Taylor's narrative of secularisation that we have been following. With the rise of authenticity and individuality being the overriding concepts of the chapter, we will look more closely by its end at the role of the buffered self which we can say motivates these concepts.

4.1 Psychologisation

4.1.1 Islam for Everyone

> The Quran does not tell us that this way, this unitive awakening, what we call Islam, began 1400 years ago. It calls the first Adamic awakening, the prophet Adam, it calls him a Muslim. The Quran refers to all the prophets and messengers as being in Islam, so it is not something that began 1400 years ago. The prophet Mohammed was the last of the great prophets, the last and the seal of Prophethood. He did not invent Islam, it did not start in Arabia, it culminated in Arabia. We consider all prophets and all religions are Islamic and therefore we also believe that the need of spiritual awakening will continuously occur as long as there is humankind on this earth. There will always be resurgence whenever there is increased materialism, decadence or other forms of oppression in life. The spirit within man will not accept it as a total way of life, and will rebel or want to have its nourishment. And spiritual nourishment is spiritual revival. The answer to your question is yes, but not in the conventional sense that the 'Muslims' will prevail, that is not the issue. The last fifty or sixty years we have given a great deal of emphasis for material well-being. And material well-being is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. The antidote or its equivalent is spiritual wellbeing. The yearning for inner awakening and inner light is certainly increasing, so there is a renaissance and awakening of Islam, no doubt about it.[1]

Haeri gave the above answer to a question on whether he saw a revival or 'renaissance of Islam today?', posed to him during an interview filmed in Ontario in 1990 and broadcasted on Canadian national television in the spring of 1991. Although we can find descriptions of 'Islam' as a state or condition rather than a religion in Haeri's earlier talks and publications from the 80s, emphasis on a 'non-religious' approach to presenting Islam became more prevalent as the decade progressed, and became especially evident since the 90s. Perhaps reacting to the type of objectification of Islam we have been discussing in the previous chapter, Haeri states in the same interview that Islam 'has become a religion instead of a way of life', which is why the majority of Muslims and Muslim leaders today 'are barriers to the discovery of Islam by the rest of the world'.[2] Clarifying Muslims and Islam as being 'two separate things', he asserts that Islam is 'not an ethnic, Arabic or a Middle Eastern preserve', but is 'the way of beingness' meant for all mankind.[3]

The move towards a more universal approach to presenting Islam is discernible even in Haeri's final work in Arabic – written during the late 80s but never actually published or printed – with a focus on the inner meaning of religious rites and rituals and a stress on the deeper commonalities between sectarian or scholastic variations of the religion.[4] Like his earlier

1. J. Giancarlo, 'The Light, Love and Peace of Islam (Transcription of a TV Interview of Shaykh Fadhlalla, Broadcast in Canada in 1991)'.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. F. Haeri, *al-Mukhtar min al-ʿilal wa-al-akhbar*, Zahra, London, 1988.

writings in Arabic, this work is also a compilation of various selections from well-known religious texts, with this particular compendium of citations concerned with the reasons behind everything, why we do what we do in relation to religious practice.[5] In this way, it echoes early literary attempts at mass revival of religious practice through emphasising its personal value and making it more meaningful. The most prominent example of this is Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and his *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), but other works have also been influential in this regard, such as *Asrar al-shar'ia wa atwar al-tariqa wa anwar al-haqiqa* by Sayyid Haydar Amuli (d. 1385). Following the model popular in these books, Haeri used similar categories that distinguished between an outer and inner dimension of religious practice in his own attempt at this literary genre. Although the unpublished Arabic was never printed in its original form, a translation was made later, which initially appeared as the book *Inner Meanings of Worship in Islam* (2002), before being reworked into the more popular version, *Transformative Worship in Islam: Experiencing Perfection* (2013).[6]

An interesting aspect to this work is how closely it resembles that written by Amuli, who was an important inspiration for Haeri and someone in whom he saw a similar ambition to his own aim of synthesising Sunni (especially Sufi) and Shi'i teachings.[7] Amuli's fourteenth-century treatise was a great synthesis of Shi'i and Sufi thought, which argued that the Imams were important guides within both traditions, whilst being 'equally critical of Shiites who reduce their religion to a legalistic system and of Sufis who deny that their origins and doctrines go back to the Imams'.[8] Haeri, in fact, financed an English translation of the book, titled *Inner Secrets of the Path* (1989).[9] Another translation he sponsored, which also reflected similar intentions, was of a mysterious manuscript called *Misbah as-shari'a*, attributed to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and claimed to have been influential on early Sufism as well. Notes from a series of talks Haeri gave on the book served to help the final published version, *The Lantern of the*

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5. Prime examples of this genre are *'Ilal al-shara'i'* by Ibn Babawayh (d. 991) and the already mentioned *al-Muhajja al-bayda' fi tahdhib al-Ihya'* by al-Kashani.

6. The original English title of the book came from what the unpublished Arabic manuscript came to be called, *Irshad al-ibadat* (Inner Meanings of Worship). The later reedit of the translation was undertaken by Haeri's daughter, Muna Bilgrami, who is credited as a co-author of the book.

7. Amuli argued that the Imams were important guides within both traditions and was 'equally critical of Shiites who reduce their religion to a legalistic system and of Sufis who deny that their origins and doctrines go back to the Imams' (E. Kohlberg, "Amoli, Sayyed Baha-Al-Din", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, fasc. 9, Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, London, 1984).

8. Ibid.

9. Another translation commissioned by Haeri with a similar intention to bring Shi'a and Sunnis together, was *The Right Path*, a series of letters exchanged between a prominent Shi'i scholar, Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi (d. 1957), and the Sunni scholar and head of al-Azhar University, Salim al-Bishri (d. 1916), discussing, debating and in dialogue over some key tenants of belief. Other translated works financed by Haeri also focused on spiritual revival, including, *Reflection of the Awakened*, by Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi (d. 1274) and *The Secret Garden* by Mahmoud Shabestari (d. 1340).

Path (1989), which has been very popular and has been through several reprints, especially in Pakistan.[10]

As well as his attempt at synthesising Shi'i and Sufi traditions, these translations were part of Haeri's effort to revitalise the Shi'i mystical tradition (*'irfan*), which was itself part of his greater goal for a grass roots spiritual revival. What we see becoming especially prominent by the late 80s and especially in the 90s is how Haeri did not envisage this Islamic revival as exclusive to Muslims but rather saw it as a universal awakening. The prescient matter for him is the need for us to 'get back to an inner technology', a technology of inner awareness that can serve as an antidote for our modern condition.

> I think we have given excessive attention to the outer technological advancement and outer emancipation from the physical limitations, and we have not given enough attention to the inner potentialities and the inner qualities within man. We have basically created a situation in our civilizations, nowadays, of total discontent: the individual is discontent, the family is discontent, the society is discontent, the nation and the world is discontent. That has a lot to do with consumption, consumerism, excess and this headlong competitive aggressive way to acquisition of the outer. We have been, so to speak, wrongly educated and diverted from the balanced way. We all are subjected to physical limitations, we need to be fed, clothed and sheltered, but we have made that as our ultimate objective rather than inner fulfilment and inner awakening. That is why we all now have to be entertained. Horizontally we are mobile; we are roaming around the world but there is no vertical mobility; we cannot go inward, because in a way our inward is dark and has not been developed.[11]

To be fair, what Haeri is expressing here we see already with his earliest talks (given in San Antonio during the summer of 1979), where Haeri made a similar general critique of modernity, that in our quest to enhance our 'outer' materialistic well-being we have neglected our 'inner' well-being, and so, there is a pressing need for all of mankind to adjust this imbalance.[12]

Inner Technology

From the first few words of this first talk, we get a clear indication that the main epistemological focus for Haeri is to develop this 'inner' dimension of man through self-knowledge. Haeri's early talks given in San Antonio would be transcribed and edited into a

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10. By the time this translation was being undertaken, Abdalqadir and his movement had already begun to distance themselves from Shi'ism, and so the various translations had evaded many of the references deemed to be Shi'i in the original. Hence, despite attempts by some of the most prodigious translators from Abdalqadir's followers to do the job, the translations turned out unsatisfactory. Until it was later re-translated by Haeri's daughter, who made some use of these earlier attempts as well as Haeri's notes. To quote her: 'This small and simple book was most difficult and complex to translate. The translation was begun four years ago by my father, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, when he translated *The Lantern of the Path* during some discourses. Though the task then fell to me to coordinate and execute the final translation, it was not without the considerable help of several scholars that the final version was achieved. A formal translation was first done by Aisha Abdar-Rahman al-Tarjumana [Bewley]. Both hers and Shaykh Fadhlalla's versions were used in translating it anew…' (M. H. Bligrami, 'Translator's Note and Acknowledgements', in Ja'far al-Sadiq, *The Lantern of the Path*, Element Books, Dorset, 1991).
11. J. Giancarlo, 'The Light, Love and Peace of Islam (Transcription of a TV Interview of Shaykh Fadhlalla, Broadcast in Canada in 1991)'.
12. F. Haeri, *San Antonio Talks: June 1979*, Iqra, San Antonio, TX, 1980.

booklet, together with another similarly compiled booklet of talks given some months later at the University of Houston.[13] A lot of the features that would come to typify Fadhlalla Haeri's later works are already present with these talks, such as a casual use of scientific terminology and a penchant for seamlessly relating global issues with everyday individual problems. But what we also find here is an early precedent for Haeri's noticeably contemporary universal tone and language, decisively logical style and measured usage of cultural and religious expressions that attempt to explain a shared singular mystical purpose behind the practices and doctrines of all religions. The result is a comprehensive impression of 'self-knowledge' that would remain the backbone of his teachings.

Though Haeri's tone is more direct and concentrated than his teacher's, traces of Swami Chinmayananda's teachings are evident, such as Haeri's use of Chinmaya's well-known 'Body-Mind-Intellect' (BMI) chart for his own streamlined model of the human self, Haeri having even written an article on the BMI model for the journal *al-Muntaqa* in 1986.[14] This connection never seems to have been concealed and was actually commemorated when the pair of booklets from his earliest talks were later revised and combined into a small book. Both booklets were originally published in 1980 (under the short-lived publishing company Iqra Inc.,) and were later combined and revised (by Elements Books in association with Zahra Publications) into a small book called *The Sufi Way to Self-Unfoldment* (1987), which took both its title and illustration of a blossoming flower for the front-cover from Swami Chinmayananda's *Manual of Self-Unfoldment* (1975).[15]

Explaining the aim of his talks in an introduction written later for the purposes of this later publication, we see Haeri trying to reframe these originally indiscriminate and unsystematic talks within his increasingly evident presentation of Islam as a universal from of self-knowledge.

> These talks attempt to show the gnostic and mystical origin of all religions and indeed the original creation of man himself. They endeavor to relate the inner meanings and awakenings that all these spiritual paths intend to bring about as a result of outer disciplines and practices. There can be no doubt that there is only one message in man's heart, to be fulfilled, to live a life that is honorable and fearless, that has within it no darkness, ignorance or abuse. ... This noble way of living has been described by prophets, gnostics and men of awakening in different fashions, according to different cultures and times. These descriptions of the ultimate way of living show us the role man has to play in his own evolvement, by following a path of correct conduct that will lead him through dynamic action and continuous purification of intentions to freedom from useless and negative anxieties. It is as though Nature intended a certain direction for mankind, yet at the same time has given man a

13. Haeri, *San Antonio Talks: June 1979*; F. Haeri, *Self-Knowledge: Talks at the University of Houston: January 19-26, 1980*, Iqra Inc., San Antonio, TX, 1980.
14. F. Haeri, 'The Model: On Body-Mind-Intellect', *Al Muntaka/Al-Muntaqa*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1986, pp. 70-88.
15. Chinmayananda, *Manual of Self-Unfoldment*, Chinmaya Publications West, Napa, CA, 1975.

> degree of freedom so through experimentation he may discern and understand what was originally intended of him. The sufferings and difficulties, that he experiences, act as danger signals warning him to avoid situations that will cause him anxiety and anguish. Our own inner preferences guide us to learn Nature's way. These talks are published in their present form with the hope that they will be of benefit to other seekers of truth and those who recognize that outer material solutions, necessary though they may be as early steps, cannot in themselves bring about a state of awakening and ultimate fulfilment in man. The author sincerely hopes that the reader will find in them a connecting thread, which is man's ultimate desire for total, unconditional freedom and awakening.[16]

The clearly universalist and consciously non-theological language expressed here can be found in other books written by Haeri that would be published around this time, such as *Beginning's End* (1987), a book published the same year but by a large publishing house, and with a more structured and clear development of his earlier work on self-knowledge.

The book *Beginning's End* was born from an intensive series of question and answer sessions that took place with some of his core students at Haeri's property in Estes Park in Colorado, which served as his summer retreat from Texas.[17] Over a five-week period, the students would ask Haeri any questions they wanted and then would transcribe and structure the answers from the audio recordings of the sessions, resulting in the first draft of *Beginning's End*. Reflecting his own followers, the book was meant to be accessible for 'Muslims and non-Muslims alike', and was expressly written to meet the needs of what Haeri considered to be a 'strong spiritual thirst' among many people he had met who 'preferred an esoteric and less demanding path' than what he had committed to.[18]

In the book, Haeri describes 'gnosis' as 'ultimate self-knowledge', and refers to it as 'a state that has been attained by certain individuals throughout the ages'.[19] He continues:

> In every age, men of self-knowledge have existed who have known that the foundations of this knowledge could not be acquired intellectually. These men knew that self-knowledge is accessible only to those who are prepared to undergo a profound existential transformation in order to acquire mastery over themselves. The names differ — the *sanyasi* in India, the gnostic in the West, the monks of the Far East — but the path is one. In the spiritual traditions of the Near East, from the earliest dawn of civilization, we see the same quest for self-knowledge. It is known in Arabic as *tasawwuf*, or Sufism, and the follower of this Way is called a Sufi.[20]

It should be of no surprise that in his efforts to present Islam as a universal message, Haeri would turn to Sufism as one among many variants of a universal practice by masters of self-knowledge. But for us to formulate some understanding of why exactly this is the case (and

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16. 'Introduction', in F. Haeri, *Sufi Manual of Self-Unfoldment*, Zahra & Element Books, Dorset, 1987.
17. Haji Mustafa interview, March 2017. Haeri bought the property after selling his house in London. The estate contained a number of outhouses that allowed for some of his students to stay there with him and his family
18. 'Preface', in F. Haeri, *Beginnings End*, Routledge, London, 1987.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.

indeed why most of us consider it obvious), it is helpful to have some understanding of how Sufism came to refer to an expression of a modern idea of 'mysticism', and for many was the ultimate expression of this universality that transgressed all religious boundaries, even that of Islam itself.

Sufism as a Modern Category

Following W. C. Smith, Carl Ernst (1997) points out that the use of the suffix 'ism' after 'Sufi' reveals the designation of this term as part of the Enlightenment catalogue of belief systems, and as such, an independent ideology at variance with 'Islam' proper; this discrepancy is noticeable when comparing the term 'Sufism' with the Arabic verbal-noun it is meant to translate, *tasawwuf*, which literally means 'becoming a Sufi'.[21] Although a number of proposed etymologies have been put forward for the word *tasawwuf*, the one most modern historians are in agreement with is the Arabic word for wool (*suf*), because it most concretely attends both to a plausible reason for its use, the abstemious practice of wearing coarse undyed uncomfortable wool, and to an identifiable group of renunciants and ascetics who adopted the practice of wearing such wool in contrast to the linen and cotton worn by the majority of people at the time.[22] But a fixation with historical accuracy has ironically resulted in more confusion then clarity.[23] Concentrating so much attention on the term and its definition is itself a cause of distortion when considering that actual references to individuals as Sufi is actually quite rare, and that from its earliest usage has been applied to varying phenomena.[24]

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21. C. W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*, Shambhala, Boston, MA, 2011 [1997], p. 16.
22. Some of the other proposed etymological origins of the term *sufi* include *safa* (purity) in reference to Sufism's primary focus of purifying the heart, *safwa* (the select) in reference to its essential acknowledgement of the role of divine grace in selecting the saintly, and *suffa* (bench) in reference to 'the people of the bench', a group of poor companions sheltered in a corner of the Prophet's mosque in Medina. Although the controversy and confusion among academics that has surrounded the origin of the Arabic word *sufi* replicates disagreements on the origins of the word among Muslim scholars ever since it first came to be used in the eighth century, the focus with attempts at defining 'Sufi' by the latter has always been didactic in character and a multiplication of definitions and claims of origin have been welcomed, whilst the focus in modern academia and to a large extent modern Muslim religious scholarship, has been reductive in the sense of attempting to identify the most likely origin of the word and the exact group it addressed from its inception. When contrasting modern historiographies of the term Sufi with medieval historiographies, the distinction between their respective purposes becomes apparent. Often found at the beginning of a Sufi treatise, an etymology of Sufi in the emic sense serves a prescriptive purpose, a pedagogical device and teaching tool meant to invoke in the believer a particular 'spiritual or ethical quality' alluded to by a given definition. Similarly found frequently at the start of an academic work about Sufism, an etymology of the term Sufi in the etic sense serves a descriptive purpose, meant to function as a rhetorical anchor in the attempt to accurately inform the reader of the historical emergence of a distinct religious movement.
23. Ernst, *Sufism*, p. 22-22.
24. S. Sviri, 'Sufism: Reconsidering Terms, Definitions and Processes in the Formative Period of Islamic mysticism', in J. Thibon and G. Gobillot (eds.), *Les maîtres soufis et leurs disciples des IIIe-Ve siècles de l'hégire (IXe-XIe): Enseignement, formation et transmission*, Institute Francais du Proche Orient, Beirut, 2012, pp. 17-34. The issue of origin becomes particularly problematic when the terms relation to wool-wearing is stressed, since there is abundant examples of it being applied as a nickname for individuals and groups exhibiting no features of what is seen as ascetical or mystical besides their being known for wearing wool, and perhaps not even coarse-wool at that. Furthermore, when we look at the terms earliest usage, we find it being used as a derogatory expression for some at the same time as a laudable label for others. Even in the sense of Sufism as a concrete tradition, the relationship with extrovert ascetic behaviour, such as wearing coarse-wool, has been one informed by a markedly dialectical attitude. We find them strongly critical of wool-wearing as an act of showing-off and feigning piety. In

The probability of the term 'Sufi' deriving from the word for wool, coupled together with the earliest examples of the usage of the term in relation to individuals and groups involved in radical ascetical practices, encouraged the continuing division of a later 'mystical' Sufism from an earlier 'ascetic' Sufism, which was originally held by orientalists and Muslim reformists alike.[25] It is important to note, once again, that the orientalist dichotomy between asceticism and mysticism did not appear out of thin air, but finds precedent in earlier Muslim scholarship. For example, the famous North African Historian, Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), drew a sharp distinction between an early 'pious tradition of *zuhd* (asceticism)' and a later mystical metaphysics of 'philosophising Sufis' that he felt had corrupted the former.[26] We owe the conceptual distinction between asceticism and mysticism that we find today to Max Weber, who echoes the opinion of medieval Muslim scholars like Ibn Khaldun, in his regard for a simple early ascetic Islam later adulterated by Sufism. But a sign of his own times is that Weber saw Sufism as a form of mysticism originating from 'Hindu and Persian sources'.[27] Whether viewed negatively or positively, the modern study of Sufism largely developed by upholding this division of a Persian 'philosophical flowering' from an earlier tradition of Arabic asceticism and the racial distinction between a supposedly Semitic religion diametrically opposed to an Aryan mysticism that is was founded on.[28]

We saw in the previous chapter how the idea of an Indo-European language group had helped to conflate language and race by spreading the term 'Aryan' as a byword for the distinctiveness of Europeans.[29] Sir William Jones (d. 1974), an eminent orientalist associated with the British East India Company, can be credited with popularising the idea of an affinity between Sanskrit and European languages, as well as Persian.[30] Still the language of international diplomacy in Central and South Asia as well as Persia at the time, Jones was well versed in Persian, which exposed him and others like him to a wealth of Persian literary classics; the word 'Sufi' entered European languages in reference to these Persian literary classics, filled with elegant poetry and odes to the joy of love, 'wine-drinking', dance and music,

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fact, as Sara Sviri states, 'most, if not all, Sufi manuals bear witness to the sharp criticism against the hypocrisy and show-off of ascetics wearing woolen garments' (pp. 30-31).

25. Ibid., pp. 17-34

26. A. D. Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2017, p. 11; see also A. Akasoy, 'What is Philosophical Sufism?', in P. Adamson (ed.), *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, The Warburg Institute, London, 2012, pp. 236-238.

27. Weber, cited in Knysh, *Sufism*, p. 10; see also Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (trans. Ephraim Fischoff), Methuen, London, 1965, pp. 182, 264-265.

28. Khalil & Sheik, 'Sufism in Western Scholarship', p. 357.

29. Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, pp. 49-54.

30. Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, p. 51; see also Said, *Orientalism*, p. 99.

all of which Jones and his contemporaries could only explain as the work of freethinkers far removed from the stern tradition of Arabic Mohammedanism.[31]

Through his writings, Jones further reinforced an Aryan and Semitic dichotomy by side-lining Arab influence and claiming a strong affinity between Persian and Hindu civilisations instead.[32] Ideas of a correlation between Sufi and Vedanta philosophies, or vague connections between Sufism and Ancient Greece, helped formulate the nineteenth-century narrative which held that the 'Semitic' legalism of the Arabs revealed the absence of a natural predisposition that resulted in the inevitable 'Aryan' mysticism of the Persians. Such efforts to delineate a separate category for certain aspects of Islam claimed to have been adopted from Indian, Persian and other Aryan sources, helped to segregate a 'good' orient from a 'bad' orient.[33] The word 'Sufi' and 'Sufism' came to appropriate these and other aspects of the 'Orient' that were attractive to orientalists, and could thus be detached from less attractive aspects of what was considered 'orthodox' Islam or degenerations of it, even when these were of what today would be unequivocally labelled Sufism.[34] In this manner, the term was developed by orientalist scholars of India in the eighteenth century, such as Jones, and maintained by later colonialists in the country, like Colonel Sir John Malcolm (d. 1833), and Lt. James William Graham (d. 1845), who wrote the first separate treatment of Sufism in a European language with his article, *A Treatise on Sufism, or Mahomedan Mysticism* (1811).[35]

Other European writers similarly turned to the term Sufism in explaining what they saw as an Aryan mysticism in opposition to Mohammedanism as Semitic religion. Gottreu Thölluck (d. 1877) wrote the very first monograph on Sufism, suggestively titled *Sufism, or the Pantheistic Theosophy of the Persians* (1821); as the subtitle of Thölluck's study shows, nineteenth-century studies on Sufism perpetuated theories of race in circulation at the time.[36] These treatments of Sufism attributed 'the more sophisticated theoretical and metaphysical expressions of the tradition … to Persian, namely Aryan or Indo-European, influences'.[37] Other scholars of the nineteenth century also saw the artistic expression and metaphysical sophistry found in various Muslim works as betraying 'Aryan (i.e. Persian and Indian) and not Semitic

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31. Ernst, *Sufism*, pp. 8-9.
32. See Jones, cited in Ernst, *Sufism*, pp. 9-10; for the entire essay, see W. Jones, 'The Sixth Discourse, On the Persians', in *The Works of Sir William Jones, Volume 3*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013 [1807], pp. 130-132.
33. Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, p. 51; see also Said, *Orientalism*, p. 99.
34. Ernst, *Sufism*, pp. 3-9.
35. As well as the article by Graham, writings on the topic by the other two were, *The Sixth Discourse: On the Persians* (1807) by Jones and *The History of Persia* (1815) by Malcolm.
36. Khalil & Sheik, 'Sufism in Western Scholarship', p. 357. The original title in Latin was *Ssufismus sive Theosophia Persarum pantheistica*.
37. Ibid.

influences'.[38] For them Islam was an 'arid Semitic religion' that failed to incorporate mechanisms for its own development and so led more sophisticated Muslim minds to look elsewhere for inspiration.

Mysticism as a Modern Category

The nineteenth-century view of Sufism as the 'expression of an 'Aryan' rebellion against a conquering 'Semitic' mindset' would be later propagated by the same writers who would popularise the modern concept of mysticism.[39] For example, Edward Henry Palmer's (d. 1882) *Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of The Persians* (1867), was a formative text in popularising both mysticism and Sufism in England and America; in it the Aryan thesis is taken to an extreme with the assertion that Sufism is simply 'the development of the Primeval religion of the Aryan race'.[40] Likewise, drawing on earlier accounts by orientalists like Jones, Malcolm and Thölluck, 'Persian Sufism' was related to 'similar movements and psychological states known to the West' rather than to Islam, by another influential writer on mysticism, Robert Alfred Vaughan (d. 1857).[41] In his two-volume compendium, *Hours with the Mystics* (1856), Vaughan, like Palmer, incited the popularisation of a growing understanding of mysticism as essentially the highest form of all religion.[42]

The term mystical initially shifted from its traditional Catholic connotations of identifiable devotional practice and biblical commentary throughout the eighteenth century by becoming a pejorative for anti-rational sentiments which explicitly interwove mystical theology with notions of fanaticism, enthusiasm and false religion.[43] Leigh Schmidt (2003) has shown how sectarian connotations of the term 'mystic' would become prevalent with use of the term by liberal Protestants critical towards Quakers and Methodists, much like the Roman Catholic

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38. Ibid., p. 358; see also Arvidsson, 'Aryan Mythology as Science and Ideology', pp. 336-342; Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, pp. 179-206; M. Olender, *The Languages of Paradise Race: Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1992.

39. A. Christmann, 'Reclaiming Mysticism: Anti-Orientalism and the Construction of 'Islamic Sufism' in Postcolonial Egypt', in N. Green & M. Searle-Chatterjee (eds.), *Religion, Language, and Power*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 61.

40. E. H. Palmer, *Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians* (ed. and intro. A. J. Arberry), Luzac and Co., London, 1938 [1867], p. 11; see also Palmer, cited in S. Arvidsson, 'Aryan Mythology as Science and Ideology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 67, no. 2, 1999, pp. 327-354; Khalil & Sheik, 'Sufism in Western Scholarship', p. 357; L. Poliakov, T*he Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe,* Chatto, Heinemann for Sussex University Press, London, 1971, p. 191.

41. J. D. Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America: A Two Hundred Year History*, Caravan Books, New York, 1977, p. 74.

42. R. A. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics: A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion*, John Clark, London, 1988 [1856]. This newfound position can be found in the works of other writers of the same generation too, such as Johann Heinroth (d. 1843) in Germany and Victor Cousin (d. 1867) in France.

43. L. E. Schmidt, 'The Making of "Mysticism" in the Anglo-American World: From Henry Coventry to William James', in J. A. Lamm (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2013, pp. 455-456. Examples of its traditional usage include, the *Glossographia* (1656) of Thomas Blount (d. 1679), who writes: 'Mystical Theology, is nothing else in general but certain Rules, by the practise whereof, a vertuous Christian may attain to a nearer, a more familiar, and beyond all expression comfortable conversation with God' (p. 454). A later example is the *Cyclopaedia* (1738) of Ephraim Chambers (d. 1750), with whom we find an allusion towards the word's impending inference, in his associating to the mystics 'fanatic ecstasies, and amorous extravagancies' (ibid., pp. 454-455).

polemic against French Quietists pointed out by Certeau.[44] The association of mystics with 'unregulated spiritual impulses, 'fanatic ecstasies, and amorous extravagancies' was evident amongst English Enlightenment thinkers like Henry Coventry (d. 1752), who was the first to employ the term mysticism to critique 'sectarian fanaticism' and contrast it with the civic, liberal and reasonable 'spirit of acceptable religion'.[45] Similarly, Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) envisaged an emergent cabal of arrogant mystagogues (*mystagogen*) threatening to disrupt the harmony of true philosophy in one of his later polemical writings.[46] This condemnation of the mystical can be found in many of his other writings also, earliest of these probably being his critique of Emanuel Swedenborg (d. 1772) in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, where we see him going through the ordeal of separating his undoubted indebtedness and admiration for Swedenborg from the mystic he considers him to be.[47]

Although the term still carried these earlier associations with enthusiasm and fanaticism even in the nineteenth century, they were now presented in a decidedly more psychological form where mysticism was seen to be 'the operations of a merely human faculty' being mistaken 'for a Divine manifestation', and so, having constantly the same 'main characteristics … whether they find expression in the Bagvat-Gita of the Hindu, or in the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg'.[48] Precedent for a psychologised approach can be found in earlier explanations of the mystical, such as the common association of 'enthusiasm' with the melancholic, Coventry's placement of the basis of 'mystical devotion' in 'the unruly passion of love' found amongst the sanguine tempered, whose frustrated passions are misdirected from mortal to divine objects, or David Hume's (d. 1776) claim of the passions of fear and hope as the origin of false religion.[49] It was the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (d. 1834), however, who truly

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44. L. E. Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2003, p. 280.

45. Coventry, cited in Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', p. 277; see also Schmidt, 'The Making of "Mysticism" in the Anglo-American World', pp. 452–472.

46. For more on Kant's critique of mysticism, see K. Hart, 'Mysticism and the 'Death of Philosophy', in K. Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 208-219; see also see I. Kant, *Essays and treatises on moral, political, and various philosophical subjects by Emanuel Kant (from the German by the translator of The principles of critical philosophy)*, William Richardson, London, 1798-1799, pp. 175-176. Although mainly an ad hominem towards some of his contemporaries, the essay in question affirms the presence of the 'mystical' inclination as nothing new, and when attempting to delineate the boundaries of his rational philosophy from the irrational enthusiasm or fanaticism (*schwärmerei*) of the mystagogues, Kant is obliged to tackle the father of rational philosophy himself, whom he thus must concede to be also the 'father of all fanaticism in philosophy'. It is this forced attempt to detach the 'good' Plato from the 'bad' that really reflects the lengths to which Kant is ready to go in rinsing out from his critical philosophy what he considers mystical. In line with his later polemical essays Kant sees the *philosophus per inspirationem* or *initiationem* as eschewing the labour of discursive practice needed in formulating actual rational philosophy, and instead indulges in 'supernatural communication' (*übernatürliche mittheilung*) or 'mystical illumination' (*mystische erleuchtung*), which, for Kant, is 'the death of all philosophy'.

47. See S. R. Palmquist, 'Kant's Criticism of Swedenborg: Parapsychology and the Origin of the Copernican Hypothesis', in F. Steinkamp (ed.), *Parapsychology, Philosophy and the Mind: Essays Honoring John Beloff*, McFarland & Co., Jefferson, North Carolina, 2002, pp. 146-178; see also W. J. Hanegraaff, *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven*, The Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 2007; and I. Kant, G. R. Johnson & G. A. Magee, *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings*, The Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 2002.

48. EB (1858:755), cited in Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', p. 282.

49. Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', p. 278.

encouraged our modern understanding of mysticism, through his search for the origins of religion through an approach that looked for it in the predispositions of the human being.[50] In his quest for 'true religion', Schleiermacher would look at other religions besides Christianity and especially at 'religious feeling' as the inner essence of religion, in the hopes to find the 'infinite religion amongst all the finite religions'.[51]

Schleiermacher's influence in nineteenth-century ideas about 'mysticism' is evident in numerous examples from the period, such as a drastic change in use of the term in German encyclopaedias during the second half of the nineteenth century. Gritt Klinkhammer (2009) has identified how 'mysticism' in works such as the Protestant *Real-Encyclopädie* (1862) stood in contrast from older German encyclopaedias on religion, where this new universal notion of mysticism 'found in other religions and believed to reveal a type of primordial monotheism (*Urmonotheismus*)' was non-existent.[52] Likewise, the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1858 replaced the entry 'mystics' with 'mysticism', punctuating the transition of the term from a particularly Christian context towards its modern universalist meaning.[53] Whereas the entry on 'Mystics' in *Britannica* near the end of the eighteenth century referred to it as a kind of religious sect whose principles had been 'adopted by those called *Quietists* in the seventeenth century, and under different modifications, by the Quakers and Methodists', with this later entry, 'mysticism' would officially acquire the more general meaning of 'a global species of religious experience with innumerable subspecies, historical, geographic, and national: Oriental mysticism, Neo-Platonic mysticism, Greek mysticism, German mysticism, Persian mysticism, Spanish mysticism, and French Quietism'.[54] The first entry in *Britannica* of a universal 'mysticism' was essentially a summarised version of Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics* (1856), adopting its terminology, categories and conclusions.[55] We see in his work the influence of Schleiermacher, whom Vaughan wrote an article on in the 'British Quarterly' while at Bath, and who was essential to his understanding of mysticism.[56]

More than any of his contemporaries, Vaughan considered the American Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson (d. 1882), 'chief singer of his time at the high court of

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50. G. M. Klinkhammer, 'The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany: From Mysticism to Authenticity', in R. Geaves, M. Dressler & G. M. Klinkhammer (eds.), *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 132.

51. Ibid., pp. 132-133. The influence of Schleiermacher's (d. 1834) ideas was immense in the study of religions, and was a vital source in the first European book written solely about Sufism by Thölluck.

52. Ibid., p. 133 n. 17.

53. Schmidt, 'The Making of 'Mysticism' in the Anglo-American World', p. 456.

54. EB (12:598), cited in Schmidt, 'The Making of "Mysticism" in the Anglo-American World', p. 457; Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', pp. 282-283.

55. Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', p. 283. Schmidt writes that 'Vaughan's book was widely esteemed, but it also had its severe critics, including Catholic writers who found Vaughan's 'mysticism' a terrible trivialization of 'mystical theology'. It was little more, in this view, than a shallow series of conversations 'over port wine and walnuts', with the occasional 'flirtation' thrown in' (Schmidt, 'The Making of "Mysticism" in the Anglo-American World', p. 469 n. 4).

56. *British Quarterly Review*, (May) 1849, pp. 306-354.

Mysticism' and as a 'true brother of those Sufis with whose doctrine he has so much in common'.[57] On the back of symposiums set up specifically to discuss 'the question of mysticism', Emerson and other members of the Transcendental Club, like Bronson Alcott (d. 1888), would profess, 'mysticism is the sacred spark that has lighted the piety and illuminated the philosophy of all places and times'.[58] Hence, 'mysticism' as a construct found currency in popular religious life through intellectual circles like the Transcendental Club and other New England circles of the nineteenth century in which 'mysticism was being reconstructed at both practical and abstract levels as a domain of esoteric insight and religious exploration'.[59] These circles played a crucial role in the cultivation of a new 'religious culture' that would produce 'the riotous desires for more and more books on mysticism' and a sympathetic psychological approach to religious experience, as exemplified by the influential psychologist of religion William James (d. 1910) in the particular case of New England.[60] The term mysticism would become 'dislodged from both its Catholic and its Enlightenment roots' at the hands of transcendentalists and their sympathisers through a diffusion of theirs ideas, which allowed for a new direction and vision for religion; mysticism was no longer an ancient form of Christian divinity nor part of a critique of enthusiasm and sectarianism, instead, it was becoming loosely spiritual, intuitive, emancipatory, and universal.[61]

Ex Oriente Lux

Researchers on the work of Transcendentalists like Emerson, as well as Henry David Thoreau (d. 1862) and other key literary figures of the American Renaissance, have pointed to a continuation with various Western esoteric traditions that many of them drew upon, such as Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, as well as the legacies of Christian mystics like Jakob Böhme (d. 1624) and Emanuel Swedenborg (d. 1772), the latter of whom they promoted as the archetypal modern mystic.[62] But the significant influence of various revered texts from Asia on Transcendentalism, as well as the wider nineteenth-century intellectual renaissance in America of which it was a part, has also been a topic of interest for many years.[63] As in the case with their European counterparts in the Romantic movement, an embrace of religions beyond the Judeo-Christian fringe was an essential aspect of their enthusiasm for a universalist

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57. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, vol. 2, p. 8.

58. Alcott, cited in Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', p. 285; see also A. B. Alcott, Concord Days, Saifer, Philadelphia, 1872, p. 237.

59. Schmidt, 'The Making of "Mysticism" in the Anglo-American World', p. 461.

60. Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', p. 284.

61. Ibid., p. 286.

62. A. Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 190. For Versluis, transcendentalists 'like Emerson and Alcott ... reveal a intellectualized esotericism' (p. 187). This association with western esotericism is far from trivial, and is in fact an influential presence in the works of many key literary figures of the American Renaissance.

63. See, for example, A. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott* (diss.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1932; see also Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*.

perspective on mysticism.[64] Emerson, for instance, had become especially acquainted with Persian Sufi poetry through the same German translations by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (d. 1856) that had earlier delighted Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (d. 1832).[65]

Emerson had begun to collect translations and reflections on Sufi poetry in a notebook he called *Orientalist*, in which we find his testimony to the East as the primordial source of influence on the ideas and values upheld by him and his heroes.[66] The editor of the published notebook writes in his introduction that *Orientalist* 'summarily establishes Emerson's personal recognition of the East as a principal intellectual and imaginative source of his idealism', and asserts Emerson's conviction that the 'light' of the East 'has the power to transmute ... the crime of materialism into wisdom'.[67] This point is most succinctly expressed by Emerson with the epigraph he inscribed in Latin at the beginning of the book: *Ex Oriente Lux*, 'light out of the East', which became a motto for many New England Transcendentalists who looked to the Orient as a source of inspiration.

The idea of the Orient as a wellspring of inspiration found an early expression in the European image of the questing traveller to the Muslim East who brought back with him ancient esoteric knowledge.[68] This is exemplified by early western esoteric figures like Paracelcus (d. 1541) and his extensive travels, which brought him to an Arabian dervish in Constantinople who would impart upon him 'the supreme secret of alchemistry', the alkahest.[69] Especially with the legend of Christian Rosencreutz (d. 1484) as it publicly appeared in the form of the

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64. The term 'American romanticism' has been evoked by historians in reference to many of these figures because of their many affinities with European Romantics. Besides obvious acquaintances and even points of personal contact like those pointed out earlier, the Americans also shared and indebtedness to Western esoteric traditions and an enthusiasm for eastern religions with their earlier European counterparts.

65. Goethe was something of a hero for Emerson, who was very much instilled with the Romanticism of Europe and remained attached to it through his contact with prominent proponents, like Thomas Carlyle (d. 1881). Baron von Hammer Purgstall's translation into German of Hafez's (d. 1390) Divan, *Der Diwan des Mohammed Schemsed-Din Hafis* (1813) and *his Geschichte der Schönen Redekunste Persiens* (1818), an anthology of Persian poetry spanning over five centuries, would inspire Goethe to publish his *Westöstlicher Diwan* (1819).

66. R. W. Emerson, 'Notebook Orientalist', in R. A. Bosco (ed.), *The Topical Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume 2*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1993, p. 51.

67. Emerson, cited in R. A. Bosco, 'Introduction to Volume 2', in R. A. Bosco (ed.), *The Topical Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume 2*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1993, pp. 13-14; see also B. Tharaud (ed.), *Emerson for the Twenty-First Century: Global Perspectives on an American Icon*, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2010, p. 109; also S. Dunston, 'In the Light Out of the East: Emerson on Self, Subjectivity, and Creativity', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2012, pp. 25-42; for a more critical view, see M. M. Obeidat, 'Ralph Waldo Emerson and The Muslim Orient', *The Muslim World*, vol. 78, no. 2, 1988, pp. 132-145.

68. J. Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, State University Press of New York Press, Albany, 1994, pp. 105-106. Godwin writes, 'The initiatic journey to Islamic soil has been a repeated theme of European esotericism, ever since the Templars settled in Jerusalem and the mythical Christian Rosenkreuz learnt his trade in "Damcar" (Damascus). We find it in the lives of Paracelsus and Cagliostro, then, as travel became easier, in a whole host that includes P. B. Randolph, H. P. Blavatsky, Max Theon, G. I. Gurdjieff, Aleister Crowley, Rene Guénon, R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, and Henry Corbin. There was very likely some element of this in Napoleon's Egyptian campaign of 1797, when he announced to an astounded audience that he, too, was a Muslim; then returned to Paris to convene the Jewish Sanhedrin and to reinstate the Christian clergy' (pp. 105-106).

69. Manly P. Hall (d. 1990) would say in connection to this encounter: 'Paracelcus, the hermetist and the mystic, the original thinker who gained his knowledge not from long-coated pedagogues but from dervishes in Constantinople, witches, gypsies, and sorcerers' (M. P. Hall, *Man the Grand Symbol of the Mysteries: Essays in Occult Anatomy*, Rider & Co., London, 1932, p. 52.

anonymously authored *The Fama Fraternitis* (1614), was the imagination captivated by the notion of the European who returns bearing fruits from a laborious quest in the Orient to attain esoteric knowledge and supernatural skills from mystics of an ancient secret order.[70] Later accounts in the eighteenth century furthered this fascination with the idea of eastern esoteric masters who met in secret, as for example found in the 'Rite of Strict Observance' developed by the German Freemason, Karl Gotthelf von Hund's (d. 1776), or in the autobiography of the Christian Universalist, Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (d. 1817).[71]

Occultists of the nineteenth century, such as Paschal Beverley Randolph (d. 1875), attached themselves to these earlier accounts by claiming to have visited these very same secret masters in the East; he connected Stilling's secret society to Rosicrucianism, which he asserted 'was not originated by Christian Rosencrux, but merely revived, and replanted in Europe by him subsequent to his return from oriental lands, whither, like [Randolph] and hundreds of others, he went for initiation'.[72] Later contributors to the *fin-de-siécle* occultism followed in Randolph's wake, expressing tales of similar meetings with Sufi adepts. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (d. 1891) and her Theosophical Society are perhaps the most prominent example.[73] Like Randolph,

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70. Most probably written by Johann Valentin Andreae (d. 1654), this conceivably fictitious account tells the tale of the mythical founder of the Fraternity of the Rosie Cross, who whilst travelling in the East during his youth became 'acquainted with the Wise men of "Damasco" in Arabia, and beheld what great Wonders they wrought, and how Nature was discovered unto them'. Learning from them and after translating from Arabic the Book M., a book of universal knowledge, he journeyed on at their behest to meet fellow adepts in Egypt and Morocco all the time accumulating more profound knowledge and finally arriving through Spain back to Europe, where, after being repeatedly spurred by the intelligentsia, he founded his secret fraternity dedicated to healing the sick (See T. Vaughn, *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R. C., commonly, of the Rosie Cross*, Giles Calvert, London, 1652, p. 4).

71. Von Hundt's claim was of an initiation into the Order of the Knights Templar and a subsequent instructing of knowledge and authority upon him by the *supérieurs inconnus*, the 'unknown superiors'; somewhat of a precursor to later similar notions advocated by nineteenth and twentieth century occultists. The development of particular Masonic grades, rituals, rites and teachings that insisted on this affiliation, would solidify the connection between Freemasonry and the Templars and the idea that the latter were 'heirs to an Eastern treasure that was of a spiritual and not material nature'. Heinrich Stilling (d. 1817) mentions in his autobiography a secret society that meet 'in Egypt, on Mount Sinai, in the monastery of Canobin, and under the Temple of Jerusalem' (*Heinrich Stillings Leben*, vol. 2, 1835, p. 289). In his encounter with a secret initiate that affirmed the existence of this secret society, Stilling is referred to by this initiate as one of his 'secret superiors' (p. 288). But this fascination also existed in accounts of the time outside of esoteric circles. On his return from travels commissioned by Louis XIV, Sieur Paul Lucas (d. 1737) published a memoir of his journeys, titled *Voyage de Sieur Paul Lucas, Par ordre du Roi dans la Crece, etc*. (1712). In it, Lucas mentions his meeting with a group of dervishes in a mosque in Broussa, Turkey, who had gathered once again after parting ways twenty years before. With them, particularly one from Uzbekistan, he discussed metaphysics and esotericism, learning about the secrets to immortality, the Philosopher's Stone and the current whereabouts of the mythical Nicholas Flamel, amongst other secrets.

72. P. S. Randolph, *Eulis!: The History of Love, Its Wondrous Magic, Chemistry, Rules, Laws, Moods and Rationale: Being the Third Revelation of Soul and Sex: Also, Reply to 'Why is Man Immortal?', The Solution of The Darwin Problem, An Entirely New Theory*, Randolph Publishing Co., 1961 (1874), p. 48. See also J. P. Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1997, p. 147.

73. At an early age, Blavatsky had been exposed to her maternal great-grandfather's 'strange library containing hundreds of books on alchemy, magic and other occult sciences'. Blavastky's great-grandfather was Prince Pavel Dolgorukov (d. 1917), a distinguished member of the Rite of the Strict Observance who was executed by the Bolsheviks. Both the origin myth of freemasonry in the Knights Templar and the notion of the 'unknown superiors' was particularly dominant in the Rosicrucian Masonry introduced into the Russian Strict Observance lodges by Nikolai Novikov (d. 1818). The higher Rosy Cross degrees introduced by Novikov numbered nine in total, connected to a myth of nine secret chiefs, each for a respective degree, who lived in Egypt, Cyprus, Palestine, Mexico, Italy, Persia, Germany, India, and England respectively. Johnson points out how each of these countries figured significantly in Blavatsky's search for these esoteric Masters with whom she had become infatuated ever since her exposure to the myth in Dolgorukov's library. Also, her writings allude to an ambition to follow in the

Blavatsky turned away from spiritualism after claiming to have picked up more practical occultism during 'long travels throughout the length and breadth of the East', and coming into 'contact with certain men, endowed with such mysterious powers and such profound knowledge that we may truly designate them as the sages of the Orient', whom she typically identifies with Sufis, fakirs, dervishes, marabouts, etc.[74]

Historian of Western Esotericism, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1994), has remarked how gradually these Masters, 'hitherto chiefly costumed as Egyptians or 'Oriental Rosicrusians'', would go through a 'Hinduization', represented by the later prominence of Hinduism and Buddhism in her writings.[75] Reflecting the idea of Aryan mysticism we have been discussing, the shift in 'allegiance from the Nile to the Ganges' by Blavatsky was part of a larger Victorian trend where attention shifted from the 'solemn mysteries and initiations of ancient Egypt 'to the holy land of India', regarded as the origin of all religion and mysticism, and thus, for Blavatsky, the cradle of a universal wisdom.[76] Yet, even during her later attention to India, associations with Sufism would still play a factor in the development of her ideas and the Theosophical Society, the organization even initially presenting itself as 'The Sufi Society' in India and having Muslim members belonging to it, whom, according to one of the founders of the Society, William Quan Judge (d. 1896), possessed 'much knowledge of formerly so-called esoteric doctrines, which are common to all religions'.[77]

Theosophy and Victorian Islam

By the late nineteenth century, traditional religious authority had come under question for many Victorians, as science spread 'beyond material science to other fields of critical inquiry with direct bearing on religion, including archaeology, biblical criticism, and comparative religions'.[78] With questioning and doubt waning the authority of longstanding church teachings

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footsteps of earlier Russian mystics seeking 'knowledge and initiation in the unknown crypts of Central Asia' of whom 'more than one returned years later, with a rich store of such information as could never have been given him by anywhere in Europe' (see H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, Tarcher Perigree, New York, 2016 (1888), p. xxxi).

74. Blavatsky makes reference to colleges of 'Secret Science' that exist in the East and refers to 'Oriental Rosicrusians' original to and more superior then their later western counterparts; she champions an 'Oriental Cabala' or 'Occultism of the East' in her first major work, *Isis Unveiled* (1877), which she herself described as the result of an 'intimate acquaintance with Eastern adepts and study of their science' (see H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, 1877, p. v)

75. Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. 328.

76. Ibid.

77. Judge wrote this about Webb in 'Regarding Islamism', *The Path*, (July) 1892, under the pseudonym Hadji Erinn. a Turkish Muslim pen-name among several used by William Quan Judge when he was chief director of the American Theosophical Society during the 1880s and 1890s. He wrote in defence of Islam in 1893 and declared that 'Bro. Webb [was] still a member of the Society, with interest in its progress' (See U. F. Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2006, pp. 60, 294 n. 79). See also B. Huss 'The Sufi Society From America: Theosophy And Kabbalah In Poona In The Late Nineteenth Century', in B. Huss, M. Pasi & K. von Stuckrad, (eds.), *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, Brill, Leiden, 2010, pp. 167-193.

78. This spiritual crisis peaked in the 1870s with an 'agnostic' approach to metaphysics, as marked by the formation of the 'Metaphysical Club' by Boston's intellectual elites, like William James (d. 1910) and Charles Sanders Peirce (d. 1914).

and encouraging a disillusionment with traditional Christianity in 'its inability to confront the scepticism produced by modern science', an importance of the personal ability to discern the 'truth' came to the fore, resulting in the search for distinctly personal spiritual solutions; with an overwhelming abundance of fresh new alternatives to choose from, each spiritual seeker could fashion 'a formula of his own for the universe'.[79]

It was within this context that the beginnings of a wider interest in Sufism in the West was initiated by Theosophists. An early example of the affinity between Theosophy and Sufism is the enigmatic Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton (d. 1890), a celebrity in his own lifetime who aroused both amazement and controversy among his contemporaries.[80] Burton had an eclectic interest in various Western and Easter esoteric traditions, such as the Kabbalah, alchemy and Tantra, but settled on Sufism in later life.[81] It is precisely this kind of an eclectic admixture of occidental and oriental traditions that makes Burton exemplary of the Victorian reception of Islam and Sufism seen among a number of other Theosophists as well.[82]

The most committed Theosophists with a keen interest in Sufism included Albert Leighton Rawson (d. 1902), Carl Henry Andrew Bjerregard (d. 1922) and Alexander Russell Webb (d.

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79. Fishburn, cited in Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America*, p. 70. A clear example of this is Adam Alfred Rudolf Glauer, aka Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorf (d. 1945), who attempted to merge his active interests in Alchemy, Numerology, the Kabbalah, Freemasonry and Sufism, as he learnt of it from the Bektashi Sufi order in Ottoman Turkey, into a single system, which he developed after his return to Europe in 1913, culminating with the book *Die Praxis der alten Türkischen Freimauerei* (The Practice of Ancient Turkish Freemasonry) in 1924. Also, the fact that von Sebottendorf directed so much of his efforts at imparting his 'key to spiritual realisation' to materialists rather than believing Christians, reflects what he, like many other seekers, thought it to be the answer to. Sebottendorf was influential in the Thule Society, the secret occult society that sponsored the Nazi Party, especially before Hitler (d. 1945).

80. 'It would appear from H. P. Blavatsky's *Diaries* (12, October, 1878), that Capt. Burton became a Fellow of the T. S. in Great Britain' (see de Zirkoff, 'Bibliography: Buck, Dr. Jirah Dewey', in H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings, 1881-1882, Volume 3*, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1966. Scholar-adventurer par excellence, Burton was at once expert-swordsman, soldier, spy, scientist, explorer and writer. Standing six feet tall, with a striking profile and a handsome, yet fiercely imposing battle-scarred face, Burton towered above his peers physically, but also intellectually; for instance, he spoke twenty-nine languages and many more dialects, was a pioneer of ethnological studies, wrote numerous books on a variety of topics ranging from falconry and fencing to human behaviour, wrote mystical poetry and translated classics such as the Kama Sutra and One Thousand and One Nights, was an honoured lecturer, diplomat, and so on. One of his most well-known exploits was as one of only a handful of Westerners to have ever performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. He entered the two holiest of cities, forbidden to all but Muslims, disguised as a wandering dervish, refusing to go as an English convert in order to cultivate 'timidity and submissiveness' as a native.

81. E. Rice, *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: A Biography*, De Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 1990, pp. 3-4. Rice has been critical of earlier biographies for ignoring Burton's commitment to Islam. He writes, 'Burton was the first Westerner to write popularly but as an insider about Sufism, yet this commitment remains a blank in biographies of both this and the previous century. Islam dominated his writings in the last fifteen years of his life, and he made several elegiac statements about what he called 'the Saving Faith' that cannot be ignored today. Even then he found other esoteric interests to investigate: spiritualism, Theosophy, the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus, and extrasensory perception (Burton was the first to use the term 'ESP' Extra-Sensory Perception)'.

82. Another influential figure in this regard also considered to have been part of the Theosophical Society, is the Austrian inventor and industrialist, Karl Kellner (d. 1905). He is said to be the mythical founder of the the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), for which the idea of the East as provider of esoteric knowledge was central. Although the order was largely influenced by Freemasonic rites, its members considered these 'pure symbolic work' for which 'practical occult meaning' could be provided to a select few by them due to the 'Rosicrucian esoteric teachings' that were said to have been brought over from the East by Kellner. He apparently became inspired to create the 'Oriental Templars' after coming into contact with the mythical 'Hermetic Brotherhood of Light' during his travels, and is said to have learnt of these esoteric teachings from two Indian Yogis and an Arab Sufi adept, the particular Sufi in question being Soliman ben Aifia (see J. Dvorak, 'Carl Kellner', 1998, https://www.parareligion.ch/sunrise/kellner.htm, 14 November, 2019.

1916).[83] Of all his peers, Webb was the most overt advocate of Islam, having represented the religion at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, as well as founding the first Muslim organization (*Muslim Mission*) and Islamic Press in the United States.[84] Just as how Theosophy endorsed the notion of the esoteric unity of all religions, Webb asserted this position on behalf of Islam, on the one hand promoting 'Mohammedanism' as a 'sensible, pure, every-day religion … far superior to Christianity', whilst on the other hand professing an 'esoteric Mohammedanism' that is 'almost identical' to Theosophy.[85]

In the UK, Theosophists could be found amongst the early Muslim converts affiliated with the 'Liverpool Society' founded by William Henry Quilliam (d. 1932).[86] Quilliam also started a printing press around the same time as Webb, publishing the periodicals *The Crescent Weekly* and *The Islamic World Monthly*, and later contributing to *The Islam Review*, which often commended Theosophy, as for example in a 1915 issue which honours the then president of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant (d. 1933), and her lecture, 'Islam in the Light of Theosophy'.[87] One of the most important early European Sufis, the Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli (d. 1917), had also been a member of the Theosophical Society from a young age.[88] Whilst his associate and fellow Sufi initiate, Rene Guénon (d. 1951), was actually critical of the

83. For more on Rawson, especially his connection to the Ancient Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners), see S. Nance, How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2009, p. 97; see also see J. Kinney, The Masonic Myth: Unlocking the Truth about the Symbols, The Secret Rites, and the History of Freemasonry, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2009, p. 77. On the connection between Theosophist and Sufism more generally, see M. Gomes, *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement*, Quest Books, 1987, pp. 156-157; also K. P. Johnson, *The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavastky and the Myth of the great White Lodge*, SUNY Press, Albany, 1994, pp. 80-89, 232-233.

84. The purpose of the press was for Webb to publish his journal *Moslem World*, as well as books he had written in the hopes of introducing Islam to an American audience. He also established small study-circles. Rawson served as the most productive organiser for these study-circles and also contributed to *The Moslem World*, where the formation of his own organisation was consequently announced, The American Moslem Institute, an American branch to Quilliam's society in England.

85. Webb states: 'I am myself a member of the American Theosophical Society and a firm believer in the knowledge and honesty of the late Mme. Blavatsky. Theosophy and esoteric Mohammedanism are almost identical, but practical Mohammedanism is quite another thing. It is a sensible, pure, every-day religion which we believe to be far superior to Christianity' (Webb, cited in Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America*, p. 60).

86. R. Geaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam*, Kube Publishing, Markfield, UK, 2010, p. 109. Not a Theosophist himself, Quilliam was an initiate of a number of Masonic societies, such as the 'Masonic Royal Oriental Order of the Sat Bhai', and was 'Grand Deacon of the Grand Council of Allied Masonic Degrees of Great Britain and its Dependencies beyond the Seas'. His Liverpool Muslim Institute had been particularly successful at drawing converts and its building contained a well-frequented mosque that could have very well been the first in the UK. In an early study of Quilliam's Muslim community in Liverpool, John Pool encountered a British Muslim woman who had once been an ardent Theosophist; see J. J. Pool, *Studies in Mohammedanism: Historical and Doctrinal, with a Chapter on Islam in England*, Constable and Co., Westminister, 1892, p. 400.

87. Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America*, p. 56. After Quilliam's mysterious exit from Britain the efforts of the movement dissipated only to be channelled into subsequent organized Muslim activities in Britain, especially the Woking Muslim Mission and *The Islamic Review*.

88. Already in 1891, at the age of twenty-two, Aguéli joined the Theosophical Society after being introduced to it by the painter Émile Henri Bernard in Paris, after having moved there a year earlier in an effort to further his career as an artist. During his imprisonment in 1894 for anarchist activism, Aguéli began to read the Qur'an, and at his release travelled to Egypt where he would issue a weekly bilingual newspaper, study at the prestigious Islamic University, Al-Azhar, and be initiated into the Shadhiliyya order, taking the name 'Abd al-Hādī al-Maghribī'; all before returning to Paris in 1909.

Theosophical Society, yet was undoubtedly indebted to it in the formation of his own perennialist outlook of a universal mysticism at the heart of all 'true' religions.[89]

Theosophy was also instrumental in the efforts of Eastern promoters of Sufism in the West during the early decades of the twentieth century, such as in the influential campaign of the Indian musician and Sufi teacher, Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927).[90] After being initiated into the Chishti order by Sayyid Abu Hashim Madani (d. 1907) at the beginning of the twentieth century, Khan was apparently ordered to go to the West to spread Sufism. Although his first talk in America was hosted by the Vedanta Society of Swami Vivekananda, Khan initially presented himself as a Muslim teacher, and only later did his teachings come to take on a universalist character tied to the notion of 'mysticism', in no small part due to various members of the Theosophical Society. For example, it was Bjerregaard who introduced Inayat Khan to popular western literature on Sufism, by writers like Graham and Palmer as well as Bjerregaard himself.[91] Researchers have noted the influence of these writers on Khan's own writings on Sufism as 'the pure essence of all religions and philosophies'.[92] Many of Khan's early and most prominent followers were also members of the Theosophical Society, and, even though he was to a certain extent critical towards the Theosophical Society, he largely promoted his Sufi Movement in both America and Europe by taking advantage of the existing network of Theosophists as well as developing his universalist approach to Sufism by largely borrowing theosophical terminology.[93]

Coming from a family sympathetic towards Muslim modernists like Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Sayyid Amir Ali, Khan had been accustomed to dressing in a British three-piece suit and

89. Guénon had been deeply immersed in Parisian occultism from a young age. Early on he joined Humanidad, a masonic lodge, as well the neo-Masonic Martinist Order and other Occultist organisations, all founded by Gérard Encausse, aka 'Papus' (d. 1916), who himself had joined the Theosophical Lodge, Isis, and then the subsequent Hérmes lodge after the dissolution of the former. But it was when Guénon went on to join the Universal Gnostic Church that he first encountered Aguéli. Guénon had started his first journal, *La Gnoste*, during this time as the official journal for the Universal Gnostic Church. It is in this journal that the Traditionalism for which Guénon is famous for really began materialising as a distinct philosophy and also where Aguéli wrote a series of articles on Sufism, a topic which would gradually become of primary importance for Guénon and many of the others involved with La Gnoste, and subsequently his Traditionalist school.

90. Many of the 'Orientals' that had an influence over various Western travellers, such as the famed Algerian hero Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi (d. 1883), were themselves part of the Masonic and occultist networks forming at the time. After his well-publicised resistance against the French, for which he was imprisoned, Abd al-Qadir was exiled to Syria, where he made a further name for himself by escorting hundreds of Maronite Christians to safety from a violent struggle between them and the Druzes. With the press making much of all his heroic feats, Abd al-Qadir had developed quite a reputation, and many of those travelling to the Orient made a point of befriending the man. Amongst them was Burton, who would be initiated into the Qadiriyya Sufi Order by Abd al-Qadir. Aguéli was initiated into the Shadhiliyya Order at the hands of a close associate of Abd al-Qadir, Abd al-Rahman Illiysh al-Qabir. The two North African Sufis shared an immense knowledge and passion for the teachings of Ibn Arabi, both fostering this interest in their Western disciples.

91. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, pp. 162-164; S. Sorgenfrei, 'Kyrkan för alla, läran för de få: Exoteriskt och esoteriskt i Sufirörelsen i Sverige', *DIN: tidskrift for religion og kultur*, vol. 2, 2017 pp. 48-49.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid. In his Review of Religion, Khan writes: It is the lack of personal mystical influence and the absence of a prophetic Message that necessitated the [Theosophical] Society bringing forward the belief in Masters, that there might be something for the believers to hold on to' (Khan, citied in Sorgenfrei, 'Kyrkan för alla, läran för de få', p. 49).

bowler-hat whilst in India, and only began to adorn oriental clothes after coming to the West.[94] Similarly, ever since his return from the Orient, Aguéli would frequently wear a turban and Arab dress, as did other western Sufis of the time, such as Rawson and Burton.[95] Both those from the East and those from the West would learn to capitalise on romantic associations with the Orient, often blurring the line between 'the Oriental' and the 'Western traveller returning from the Orient'. A later example is the popular esotericist, George Gurdjieff (d. 1949), who initially rose to fame by playing the role of an 'Oriental' mystic, emphasising his connections to the East by adorning himself in Islamic garbs and fashioning his abode in true orientalist style. Many of the accounts of meeting Gurdjieff indicate how, at least in the beginning, he made great effort to ascribe himself with an oriental 'Islamic' persona.[96] But this oriental image obscures the fact that in attempting to translate the various teachings on spiritual development he had appropriated from both eastern and western traditions into the lexicon of the twentieth century, Gurdjieff drew upon the parapsychological terms and concepts of an influential Theosophical Society.[97]

Sufism as Spiritual Psychology

Gurdjieff's teachings and their subsequent development are a great example of the entanglement of esoteric ideas within a psychological milieu, which in some significant ways superseded the influence of his eclectic pickings from various religious sources.[98] Gurdjieff was originally interested in parapsychology and started out as a hypnotist (something he would return to later in life when money was low) and had educated himself extensively in

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94. Sorgenfrei, 'Kyrkan för alla, läran för de få', pp. 71-72; Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, pp. 159-160; Z. Inayat-Khan, *A Hybrid Sufi Order at the Crossroads of Modernity: The Sufi Order and Sufi Movement of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan*, PhD diss., Duke University, Durham, NC, 2006, pp. 73-79, 101-109.

95. Aguéli's self-promotion as an initiate of the Orient had some credit, as he had been given authority by his Sufi Master by being appointed as a *muqaddam*, with the power to initiate others into the Sufi order. He is known to have founded his own secret Sufi society in Paris in 1911 called *Al-Akbariyya*, with the purpose of promoting the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi. Guénon joined this society as well as being initiated into the Shādhiliyya Order by Aguéli in 1912, taking the name Abd al-Wāhid Yahya.

96. Many accounts of meeting Gurdjieff during this early period make specific mention of the Oriental impression they got from him. An early member of his circle in Moscow mentions how the room in which he met Gurdjieff for the first time was 'unusual to a European' in appearance: carpets hung on its walls and draping its doors and windows, also hanging were a 'collection of stringed instruments of unusual shapes', another of 'ancient weapons with some slings, yataghans [Ottoman knife], daggers and other things', 'the ceiling ... covered with ancient silk shawls of resplendent colors ... drawn together in a strange pattern towards the center of the ceiling', 'on the floor ... a long row of big cushions covered with a single carpet', and other strange artefacts all giving a peculiar "impression which was enhanced by a delicate scent that mingled agreeably with an aroma of tobacco" emanating from "a curiously shaped water pipe which stood on a low table in front' of a smoking Gurdjieff 'sitting against the wall on a low ottoman, with his feet crossed in Eastern fashion' (see G. I. Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World: Early Talks in Moscow, Essentuki, Tiflis, Berlin, London, Paris, New York, and Chicago*, Dutton, New York, 1973, pp. 10-12). Gurdjieff also claimed to have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

97. Examples include terms like 'psychic matter' and 'magnetism'.

98. Gurdjieff was baptised, educated and buried within the Russian Orthodox tradition, but nevertheless took great inspiration from the rich Sufi tradition that he was privy to from an early age. He was himself the product of the religiously diverse culture of the Caucasus, but also by the form of Christianity and Islam respectively championed within the neighbouring powerhouses surrounding the region, i.e. Russia, Turkey and Persia.

neurophysiology and psychology.[99] He was also quite familiar with Freud's (d. 1939) ideas and made probing comments on his psychology and the miraculous 'talking cure' of psychoanalysis.[100] Gurdjieff's approach heralded a relationship between Sufism and psychological theories dominant in the twentieth century that students of his — P. D. Ouspensky (d. 1947), Maurice Nicoll (d. 1953) and A. R. Orage (d. 1934) — would further develop by achieving an even deeper involvement with an increasingly influential psychological culture during a period when favourable interest in psychology and psychotherapy was on the rise and would serve a significant role in the New Age Movement.

A relevant example of this is the 'enneagram', which had originally been presented by Gurdjieff as a nine-pointed symbol for his esoteric teachings, but has since been appropriated as a highly popular psychological model of personality-types and self-development.[101] We can see this development of the enneagram within the context of a period when various psychological typologies were being formulated by similarly drawing upon variegated older theoretical constructs through the prism of modern psychology.[102] Though, of course, differing in some crucial ways, we find fascinating parallels in the work of Carl Gustav Jung (d. 1961), who also envisaged the production of a modern spiritualty developed by an accumulation and reinterpretation of earlier knowledge that could be enhanced by science. A striking example is his *Psychological Types* (1921), where he expressed his own theory on personalities — which reformulates the idea of four humoral temperaments in a modern psychological manner — using a hypothetical symbol of a circle with a simple cross inside, dividing the circle into four equal quadrants.[103]

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99. A. Zarkadoulas & A. Christoforides, 'The Autonomous Nervous System in Ideas of Gurdjieff and Modern Neurophysiology', in *The Proceedings of the 15th International Humanities Conference*, All & Everything, 2010, pp. 102-115; G. Lachman, *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius*, The Disinformation Company, New York, 2003 [2001], pp. 185-186. Lachman also mentions Crowley meeting Gurdjieff.

100. S. Rhodes, 'Enneagram Type is with Us at Birth, Part 2: Deconstructing the Freudian Enneagram', *The Enneagram Monthly*, no. 54, 2008, pp. 1-15, http://www.enneagramdimensions.net/articles/type_is_with_us_at_birth_part_II.pdf on 2019-11-14; see also S. Rhodes, 'The Enneagram from a Cognitive Psychologist's Point of View', *The Enneagram Monthly*, no. 65, 2009, pp. 1-4, http://www.enneagramdimensions.net/articles/enneagram_cognitive_psychology.pdf on 2019-11-14.

101. See Rhodes, 'Enneagram Type is with Us at Birth', pp. 7-8. The enneagram today, is popular among a spectrum of proponents aligned with a diversity of New Age groups and religious traditions, self-help and human-potential schools, esoteric societies, etc., as well as within the mainstream public sphere through numerous books and multimedia channels (CDs, DVDs, websites, online videos, social networks), schools, seminars, workshops and retreats available to the public, family and youth counselling, courses at universities, for health care professionals, government agencies, in business and management training, sales, etc.

102. Some notable literature marking the growth of this trend: *Four World-Views* (1907) by Erich Adickes; The heuristic personality types of Adlerian psychology; *Lebensformen* (1928) by Eduard Spränger; *Psychologische Typen* (1921) by Carl Jung; *Physique and Character* (1931) by Ernst Kretschmer; the 'Introduction' in International Journal of Individual Psychology (1935) by Alfred Adler; *Man for Himself: an Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (1947) by Erich Fromm. Some measuring instruments developed during this period from these and other psychological typologies: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; Keirsey Temperament Sorter; Socionics; Big Five Traits or Five Factor Model; Circumplex Model.

103. Jung writes, 'Through the study of all sorts of human types, I came to the conclusion that there must be as many different ways of viewing the world. The aspect of the world is not one, it is many – at least 16, and you can just as well say 360. You can increase the number of principles, but I found the most simple way is the way I told you, the division by four, the simple and natural division of a circle. I didn't

With a Sufi origin implied since the earliest published depiction of the enneagram in P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949), popularisers of the enneagram as a psychological model, especially Oscar Ichazo (d. 2020) and Claudio Naranjo (d. 2019), appropriated other Sufi concepts together with ideas from psychology in their later development of the symbol.[104] Overtly Sufi models of the enneagram would subsequently also emerge, such as *The Diamond Approach*, developed by A. Hammed Ali (A. H. Almaas), together with Karen Johnson and Faisal Muqaddam, from what they had learned during classes with Naranjo in San Francisco.[105] Consequently, numerous Sufi institutes and individuals would come to utilise the enneagram as an integral part of their teachings.[106] Perhaps the most industrious advocate of a Sufi origin to the Enneagram has been Laleh Bakhtiar, who developed her version by drawing on what she calls the 'traditional psychology' of Islam.[107]

Considering that Bakhtiar at one point worked for Fadhlalla Haeri, it is not surprising to find strong similarities between her formulation of a 'traditional Islamic psychology' and that found in Haeri's own response to the enneagram, *The Journey of the Self* (1989).[108] Although no explicit reference to the enneagram exists in its content, the book was marketed with the

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know the symbolism then of this particular classification. Only when I studied the archetypes did I become aware that this is a very important archetypal pattern that plays an enormous role' (see C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types: The Psychology of Individuation* (trans. H. G. Baynes), Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1923 [1921], p. 307).

104. P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown* Teaching, Harcourt, Brace and Co, New York, 1940, p. 287; see also M. Pittman, *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America: The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism*, Continuum, new York, 2011. Pittman writes that 'though not dominant in the text, Gurdjieff's comments on his travels, references to the enneagram – largely allusive, and the references to dervish dances and teachings, have contributed to the perception of the importance of Sufism in his work' (p. 12). Gurdjieff has himself contributed the idea that his teachings have a Sufi source, a view that has since then become cemented within the popular imagination by public performances of Gurdjieffian dances and Peter Brook's film adaptation, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1979). For an account of the Sufi inspired techniques used by Ichazo as part of his program at Arica, see J. C. Lilly, *Center of the Cyclone: An Autobiography of Inner Space*, Julian Press, New York, 1972; also J. C. Lilly & J. E. Hart, 'The Arica Training', in C. T. Tart (ed.), *Transpersonal Psychologies* Harper & Row, New York, 1975, p. 322-351; for Naranjo, see C. Naranjo, *Character and Neurosis: An Integrative View*, Gateways, Nevada City, 1994.

105. Muqaddam later went on to develop his own almost identical version called *Diamond Logos*.

106. Some examples include, Reshad Feild (d. 2016); Himayat Inayati, once head of The Sufi Healing Order and founder of The Raphaelite Work; Samuel Bendeck Sotillos, a traditionalist with an explicit interest in contemporary psychology. Further examples are the student of Shaykh Nazim Haqqani, Burhanuddin Herrmann from Germany, and Hajjah Hamidah from Italy; Sayed Nurjan Mirahmadi in Canada; in the United States, there is Laleh Bakhtiar; in France, there is Philippe Amanoullah de Vos, who has also been influenced by the Guénonian, Michel Valsan (d. 1974). The list can go on with Hilal of the Columbus Sufi Circle, Julian Zanelli of the Australian Centre for Sufism and Irfanic Studies; Faisal Muqaddam, Mahdiah Esther Jacobs Kahn, Emilio Ankur Mercuriali, etc.

107. J. Gomez, 'The Sufi Enneagram, an Interview with Dr Laleh Bakhtiar', *Stopinder: A Gurdjieff Journal for Our Time*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2000. In the interview, Bakhtiar explains: 'While traditional psychology is a part of the religious tradition, it was most clearly expressed in the Greek philosophical tradition. There, emphasis is on the four virtues of Wisdom, Courage, Temperance and Justice, and the vices being too much or too little of these virtues. As these virtues were expressed in the Islamic tradition, the self was described as a circle with a center point which creates the circle and without which there would be no circle. The circle is then described as being divided into three parts (brain, heart, gut) and the circumference as having too much or too little of a virtue which causes an imbalance in the self. This gives 6 points (the line of the spirit or change moving through the 6 points). It was when I got to the 13th century and the work of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi that the 6 points became 9. He was a Muslim Neo-Platonist and said that in addition to too much or too little of a virtue, which are quantitative descriptions, there can also be a complete lack of a quality of a virtue. This then was the Enneagram that Gurdjieff had described.'

108. Aliyah Haeri, interview, June 2017; F. Haeri, *The Journey of the Self: An Islamic View to Understanding the Self and its Unified Nature*, Element Books, Dorset, 1989.

popularity of the enneagram in mind, especially among a growing number of psychologists and within the New Age milieu. We see this especially in the version published by Harper Collins in 1991, which has the subtitle *A Sufi Guide to Personality*, and also why the blurb on the back cover of the book reads, 'This unique guide to spiritual psychology presents Western readers with an Islamic concept of personality — the wellspring of the Enneagram and other Sufi theories of personality'.[109]

Journey of the Self was advertised in popular New Age mediums, like the *Yoga Journal*.[110] And Haeri had been encouraged to write it after giving a talk in the 80s to a group of psychologists and therapists at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University), which had just been established at Palo Ato.[111] Production of the book took around four years to complete, with the close support of Haeri's third wife, Aliya B. Haeri, who perfectly fit the profile of the intended audience of the book.[112] With qualifications in psychology earned from New York University and the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology respectively, and experience working with 'psychics' like Uri Geller, as well conducting a study with twelve presumed psychic children in the UK published by The Human Dimensions Institute (HDI) of New York, Aliya was very much part of a new wave of psychologists interested in altered states of consciousness and spirituality, for whom *Journey of the Self* was primarily intended.[113]

The book was promoted as a seminal work that charted the 'meeting-place of science and spirituality', and provided a universal concept of the self 'found within the revealed spiritual teachings of several world religions and, in particular, the Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions'.[114] Haeri posits his conceptual model of the self as one that can work 'as a basic

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109. See front cover and back cover on the Harper Collins edition, F. Haeri, *The Journey of the Self*, Harper San Francisco, New York, 1991.

110. For example, *The Journey of the Self* was advertised in *Yoga Journal*, issue 104, (May/June), 1992, p. 90.

111. Aliyah B. Haeri interview, June 2017.

112. See 'Acknowledgements', in Haeri, *Journey of the Self*. Although meant to be accessible for laymen, the book was meant for psychologists in particular, with a more theoretically dense text than his other works on self-knowledge and ample references to medieval Muslim philosophers, especially Ahmad Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030) and Ibn Sina or Avicenna (d. 1037). That Haeri focuses on these two writers is telling; not only did they offer an early synthesis of science and spirituality but are also important examples of how aspects of 'self-knowledge' did indeed transcend religious frameworks. For example, the Baghdadi Christian theorist, Yahya ibn Adi (d. 974), was an essential teacher for Miskawayh influencing his valuable work on ethics, *Tahdhib al-akhlaq* (Refinement of Character or The Reformation of Morals), which was the apex of Islamic ethics as it developed into a discipline in its own right in a synthesised form driven 'both by a powerful and ethically-based mysticism, and by a conviction that the systems of Plato and Aristotle were fundamentally compatible' (T. J. Winter, 'Introduction', in *Al-Ghazali on Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires*, Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 1997, pp. lii-liii). To give an idea of its importance, Miskawayh's book remained essential reading for the al-Azhar syllabus well into the twentieth century.

113. A. B. Haeri's other contributions include: 'Overcoming Abuse', *Open Mind: The Mental Health Magazine*, published by MIND (National Association For Mental Health, UK), vol. 69, June/July 1994, pp. 14-15. In the 90s, she would also be instrumental in introducing Haeri's teachings on self-knowledge to psychologists in Britain from Muslim and other religious backgrounds, and later in South Africa was a key collaborator in establishing Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK).

114. Haeri, *The Journey of the Self*, p. 1. It is the shared intellectual tradition of the Abrahamic faiths that Haeri relates to most in his effort to offer a universal psychology in *The Journey of the Self* for a Western readership unfamiliar with Islam. However, as much as Haeri is panders to a Western audience, he still wants to challenge Orientalist conceptions of Sufism. For example, he writes, 'Within this model of the self, aspects of ancient Eastern spiritual teachings as well as Middle Eastern religions or Western philosophies can be found to exist. Islam, being the primal adamic code, predates all of these teachings, although it was unveiled in its totality only fourteen centuries ago. Orientalists, for

foundation or blueprint for any system of self-knowledge or the psychological sciences', and adds 'that this conception can be applied to any system as a blueprint that explains human behavior and provides for it remedies and cures', irrespective of whether you believe in God or not.[115]

Sufi Psychology

The model of human nature explained in *Journey of the Self* was endorsed as 'a genuine spiritual psychology ... into which we can fit various concepts and theories from academic Western psychology', in the foreword to the book by founder of the *Institute of Transpersonal Psychology*, Robert Frager.[116] With roots in the work of William James, Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow (d. 1970), transpersonal psychology emerged in the late 60s and early 70s, within a climate coloured by the counterculture movement; interest in Eastern religions, the popularity of psychedelics, parapsychology, and the growing Human Potential Movement fostered in places like the Esalen Institute, are all important influences that helped form the field.[117] To quote Stanislav Grof, one of the creators of the field of transpersonal psychology and the one to give it its name:

> The renaissance of interest in Eastern spiritual philosophies, various mystical traditions, meditation, ancient and aboriginal wisdom, as well as the widespread psychedelic experimentation during the stormy 1960s, made it absolutely clear that a comprehensive and cross culturally valid psychology had to include observations from such areas as mystical states, cosmic consciousness, psychedelic experiences, trance phenomena, creativity, and religious, artistic, and scientific inspiration. In 1967, a small working group including Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, Stanislav Grof, James Fadiman, Miles Vich, and Sonya Margulies met in Menlo Park, California, with the purpose of creating a new psychology that would honor the entire spectrum of human experience, including various non-ordinary states of consciousness. During these discussions, Maslow and Sutich accepted Grof's suggestion and named the new discipline 'transpersonal psychology'. This term replaced their own original name 'transhumanistic', or 'reaching beyond humanistic concerns'. Soon afterwards, they launched the Association of Transpersonal Psychology (ATP), and started *the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. Several years later, in 1975, Robert Frager founded the (California) Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, which has remained at the cutting edge of transpersonal education, research, and therapy for more than three decades.[118]

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example, have referred to aspects of the Islamic teachings on the self as neoplatonic. The truth is that Plato's writings are an aspect of the adamic teachings and in themselves are incomplete' (p. 7).

115. Ibid., p. 7.

116. R. Frager, 'Foreword', in F. Haeri, *The Journey of the Self*, Element Books, Dorset, 1989, pp. ix-xi.

117. L. D. Elmer, D. A. MacDonald & H. L. Friedman, 'Transpersonal Psychology, Physical Health, and Mental Health: Theory, Research, and Practice', *The Humanistic Psychologist*, vol. 31, no. 2/3, 2003, pp. 159-181.

118. S. Grof, 'Brief History of Transpersonal Psychology', *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, vol. 27, 2008, p. 47.

As pointed out above, Frager was an important exponent of transpersonal psychology and was a psychologist specialising in personality psychology. Frager was also a disciple of the Turkish Sufi Shaykh popular in the West, Muzaffer Özak (d. 1985), and would himself synthesise transpersonal psychology with Sufi teachings with his own book on the topic published about a decade after Haeri's work.[119] The title of his work, *Heart, Self and Soul: the Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony* (1999), is a self-referential example of one of the key themes in western Sufi literature that Marcia Hermansen (2005) has labelled 'Sufi Psychology', which she connects to one of the main features found in Western Sufi movements that 'naturally also take a strong interest in contemporary psychological approaches to personal growth'.[120]

The term 'Sufi Psychology' was first used in the early twentieth century by Reynold A. Nicholson (1868-1945), in reference to a 'psychological science' he found extant within the literary classics of eminent Sufis.[121] Allusions to this psychology had already been made in English from the mid-nineteenth century onwards by earlier orientalists translating or commentating on such works, but it was the prolific Nicholson who framed formulations of the 'self' found within these various texts under a distinct banner and propagated it through a wide array of literary channels.[122] The term 'Sufi psychology' would go on to enjoy some currency amongst the pioneers of research on Sufism, such as Margaret Smith (d. 1970) and Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003).[123] But of interest to us is the earliest usage of the term from

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119. As a disciple of Ozak, Frager took the name 'Ragip' and edited a collection of accounts related to Özak's visits to North America, M. Özak, *Love Is the Wine: Talks of a Sufi Master in America*, Threshold Books, Putney, VT, 1987.

120. M. Hermansen, 'Dimensions of Islamic Religious Healing in America', in L. L. Barnes & S. S. Sered (ed.) Religion and Healing in America, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, pp. 415-420.

121. R. A. Nicholson, 'The Man in Sufism', *Journal of Transactions: Society for (Promoting) the Study of Religions, Volume 1: 1931-1934*, Luzac, London, 1934, p. 36.

122. For his first use of the phrase, see R. A. Nicholson, 'Sufis', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Volume 12*, Morrison & Gibb, London, 1908, pp. 10-17, with a specific mention of 'Sufi psychology' in reference to Qushayri and Ghazzali on p. 13; then in R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, G. Bell, London, 1914, p. 50 (in reference to Rumi); then in the lecture 'The Man in Sufism' (given on the 27th April 1931), in *Journal of Transactions: Society for (Promoting) the Study of Religions, Volume 1: 1931-1934*, Luzac, London, 1934, pp. 34-52 (with the use of 'Sufi psychology' as a subheading and his own description of the three concepts of *qalb*, *ruh*, and *nafs* on p. 36); R. A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalaladdin Rumi, Volume 7: Containing the Commentary of the First & Second Books* (for the Trustees of the 'E. J. W. Gibb memorial'), E. J. Brill, Leiden, and Luzac, London, 1937, p. 54 (in reference to *sirr*), p. 64 (in reference to *qalb*), and p. 285 (in reference to the importance of the 'Light-verse' in the Qur'an (14:35) for Sufi psychology); see also *Prabuddha Bharata (Awakened India)*, vol. 44, 1939, p. 555; *Rumi: Poet and Mystic (1207-1273): Selections from his Writings*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1950, p. 51.

123. Margaret Smith (d. 1970) singlehandedly brought much needed attention to two early Muslims integral in the development of Sufism, namely Rabia al-Basri (d. 801) and Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 857); for Smith on Muhasibi's psychology, see Chapter 6 in M. Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, Sheldon Press, London, 1935; for a discussion on his influence on al- Ghazali, see M. Smith, 'The forerunner of al-Ghazali', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 68, no. 1, 1936, pp. 65-78; for Smith on Rabia, see M. Smith, *Rabia the Mystic & her Fellow-Saints in Islam: Being the Life and Teachings of Rabia al-Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya of Basra together with some Account of the Place of the Women Saints in Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1928. Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003) had a monumental impact on the Western study of Sufism, aiding its transition from being perceived as a doctrine outside of Islam towards seeing it as an integral aspect of the religion. She used the term Sufi Psychology to clarify a number of misconceptions she detected circulating amongst Orientalists around the relationship between God and man as found articulated in Sufi literature, and also attempted to diffuse ideas about foreign influences on Sufi thought by anchoring 'Sufi psychology' to essential Qur'anic ideas and identifying their development within a strictly Islamic context; for Schimmel on Mahusibi's 'system of Sufi psychology', see A. Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*, Fine Books, London, 1978, p. 4; for her use of 'Sufi psychology' as a distinct category, see A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North

what might be considered more of an emic or 'insider' position to promote a 'spiritual psychology' that offered a better alternative to the 'profane psychology' of modern science.[124]

Use of 'Sufi Psychology' from an emic perspective first occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century, with the publication of *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (1959) by Titus Burckhardt (d. 1984).[125] The term found further favour amongst those in the West explicitly referring to themselves as Sufis, being used in a number of publications that were significant in the growth and distinctive development of Sufism within parts of Europe, the United States and subsequently Australia. These include Idries Shah's (d. 1996) hugely popular *The Sufis* (1964), John G. Bennett's (d. 1974) epic *The Dramatic Universe* (1966), Sayyed Hossein Nasr's article 'Sufism and the Integration of Man' (1967), and even as a subheading in the posthumous compilation of Inayat Khan's lectures and talks by his disciples.[126] Subsequent usage of 'Sufi Psychology' has largely been shaped by these earlier treatments of the term, with later uses ranging along a spectrum that includes religious, professional, scientific and academic authors.[127]

Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975, pp. 187-193; for her association of *tawakkul* with 'Sufi psychology', see ibid., p. 119. Two other researchers that deserve mention: Nicholas Heer, with his article 'A Sufi Psychological Treatise' (in four parts), in *The Muslim World*, vol. 51, 1961, (1) pp. 25-36, (2) pp. 83-91, (3) pp. 163-172, (4) pp. 244-258, as well as his editorial for the volume, titled 'Self-Expenditure', pp. 81-82; and Peter J. Awn, with his book, P. J. Awin, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1983 (1978); see also P. J. Awn, 'Sufism', in M. Eliade & C. J. Adams (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion, Volume 14*, Macmillan, New York, 1987, pp. 104-123.

124. The fact that many of the authors that fall into the emic category can also be considered etic category, highlights the problem of delineation between 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. Although academically rigorous, Hermansen's writings, for example, allude towards this interesting problematic of delineating between what is to be considered a study on Sufi psychology and what a study as Sufi psychology. This is part of a larger problematic in the study of Sufism that she herself identifies as the blurring of 'the boundary between an academic study or textbook and an exposition of Sufism as the truth', due to the striking 'presence of Western Sufis in the academic study of Islam', particularly in Britain, France and the United States. Of course, an 'insider' can contribute to the academic study of Sufism, and being an 'outsider' is no guarantee for a thorough and balanced evaluation of the material being studied, yet this inability to distinguish a writing as either part of Western Sufi literature or literature about Western Sufism is of particular concern when it comes to 'Sufi psychology' (See M. Hermansen, 'Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements', in J. Malik & J. R. Hinnells (eds.), *Sufism in the West*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 43).

125. T. Burkhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* [trans. D. M. Matheson], Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1959. Burckhardt never actually used the French equivalent to this term ('psychologie soufie') in the earlier version of the book, *Du Soufisme* (1951).

126. Shah uses the term in connection with what he calls the 'Seven Stages of Man' or the transmutation of the *nafs* through seven levels; see I. Shah, *The Sufis*, Octagon Press, 1964 p. 24-27, and also mention of *lataif* on p. 430. Bennett uses the term in reference to a psychology developed by the Arabs in Spain, which can be considered an exception to the usually weak psychology found in religions of the West in comparison to religions of the East (Islam considered a religion of the West in this instance); see J. G. Bennett, *The Dramatic Universe, Volume 4: History*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1966, p. 352. Like Burckhardt, Nasr also uses the term as a distinct 'branch' of Sufi doctrine more efficacious than modern psychiatric and psychoanalytical methods; see S. H. Nasr, 'Sufism and the Integration of Man', *Journal of the Regional Cultural Institute*, vol. 1-3, 1967, p. 39; alternatively in *The Islamic Review & Arab Affairs*, (September), 1967, p. 12; or in *Sufi Essays*, G. Allen & Unwin, London, 1972 [1967], p. 46-47; For Nasr on the importance of Muhasibi and his work for Sufi psychology, see S. H. Nasr, 'Sufism', in W. B. Fisher (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 452-453. The fact that Inayat Khan never used the term 'Sufi psychology' himself, and yet it still came to be used by his disciples in their compilation of his work, alludes to the growing popularity of the term from the 60s onwards; see the sub-chapter 'Sufi Psychology', in *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, Volume XII: The Vision of God and Man, Confessions, Four Plays*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1967, pp. 38-39.

127. Some examples: Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, a prominent Indian Sufi with an illustrious academic career; he uses the term in his book on the life and works of an influential Indian sufi, *Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ḥusayni-i Gisudiraz (d. 1422) on Sufism*, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1983, p. 87. Dr. Mohammad Shafii is a psychiatrist with a practice in the US, who makes abundant use of the term comparing and contrasting concepts of human development in Western psychologies with the understanding of human development in Sufism in his book,

As well as a label for one of the key themes in Western Sufi literature, Hermansen also uses 'Sufi Psychology' to refer to the development of 'psychological models of transformation and healing' that are based on or at least inspired by 'Sufi spirituality' and are articulated through contemporary psychological expressions within the context of a 'typically American 'therapeutic' approach to religion'.[128] These range from Sufi psychologies 'directly "inspired" by Sufi spirituality' on the one end, to 'holistic therapeutic techniques' with origins 'outside the Sufi tradition' on the other, which include Jungian, humanistic and various transpersonal psychologies, as well as 'eclectic spiritual practices' offered by New Religious Movements or New Age groups.[129] Referencing Frager's work in particular, Ann Gleig (2010) refers to it as an example of 'psychospiritualilty', which she relates to a variety of forms drawn from Western esotericism and psychology, but also non-Western traditions.

> The term psychospiritual has also been applied to mystical traditions, particularly Asian, which include psychological development as an indispensable component of spiritual growth or see psychological and spiritual development as inseparable. Some of these traditions are seen as inherently containing a psychospiritual approach. A notable example, here, is Sufism which aims for a psychospiritual transformation of the human being from a state of ego-centeredness to a state of purity and submission to the will of God (Frager, 1999).[130]

Gleig situates this trend within a wider phenomenon in our contemporary cultural climate of a 'range of therapeutic systems which embrace a spiritual dimension of the human being as fundamental to psychic health and full human development and which utilize both psychological and spiritual methods (such as meditation, yoga, dream-work, breathwork) in a holistic, integrated approach to healing and inner growth'.[131] For Klinkhammer also, the adoption of Sufi practices and beliefs by individual seekers in the west in many instances results

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Freedom from the Self: Sufism, Meditation, and Psychotherapy, Human Sciences Press, New York, 1985. Rev. Gerhard Böwering, is a Jesuit and Catholic priest who uses the term in reference to the writings of a Sufi author of the 12th century in his article, 'The Writings of Shams Al-Din Al-Daylami', *Islamic Studies,* vol. 26 (Autumn), 1987, pp. 231-236. Sachiko Murata is a Perennialist and academic, who uses the term in reference to the relationship between God and man in Sufism – specifically in light of the ideas of Ibn Arabi – in her book, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1992, pp. 54, 90. Michael A. Sells uses the term in relation to various Sufi texts translated in his book, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, Paulist Press, New York, 1996, pp. 86, 100, 105, 128, 142, 336, 349, 367, 376; see also his chapter, 'Heart-Secret, Intimacy, and Awe in Formative Sufism', in E. Waugh and F. Denny (ed.), *The Shaping of An American Islamic Discourse: A Memorial to Fazlur Rahman* (Studies on Religion and the Social Order), Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1998, pp. 165-188, (specifically pp. 168, 178). Sara Sviri is a distinguished academic associated with the Golden Sufi Center, who has made abundant use of the term in works such as, *The Taste of Hidden Things: Images on the Sufi Path*, Golden Sufi Center, Inverness, CA, 1997, pp. 3, 8, 25, 29, 31-32, 47, 188.

128. For Hermansen's use of 'Sufi psychology', see M. Hermansen, 'Dimensions of Islamic Religious Healing in America', pp. 407-422, specifically pp. 416-419; also Hermansen, 'Literary productions of Western Sufi movements', pp. 41-43; M. Hermansen, 'Religious and Cultural Aspects of Islamic Sufi Healing', in J. Pappas, et al (eds.), *Cultural Healing Systems: Beliefs and Practices*, Detselig Enterprises, Calgary, Alberta, 2007, pp. 197-199.

129. Hermansen, 'Hermansen, 'Dimensions of Islamic Religious Healing in America', pp. 415-420.

130. A. Gleig, 'Psychospiritual', in D. A. Leeming, K. Madden & S. Marlan (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, Springer, Boston, MA, 2010, pp. 738-739.

131. Gleig, 'Psychospiritual', pp. 738-739.

from voyaging through the 'spiritual therapeutic market' commonly associated with New Age movements.[132] Klinkhammer's research on the therapeutic character of Sufism in Germany, as well as the observations made by Hermansen on Sufi psychology in America, support an argument they have made, as have others, such as David Westerlund (2004) and Markus Dressler (2009), that Sufism in the West has advanced according to a psychologisation of religion.[133] An argument that can itself be situated within a wider discussion on the psychologisation of religion, as exemplified by Wouter Hanegraaff's (1996) thesis on the 'psychologization of religion and the sacralization of the self', as well as William B. Parsons' (2008) on 'psychologia perennis'.[134]

4.1.2 The Psychologisation of Sufism

We can identify in the work of a nineteenth-century writer such as Vaughan, traces of the two decisive shifts in the development of modern mysticism pointed out by eminent expert on Christian mysticism, Bernard McGinn (2008): one emerging in the earlier half of the seventeenth century with the understanding of mysticism as 'an inner experience' or 'psychological entity', and the other developing in the latter half of the seventeenth century as an 'ecclesiastical reaction against mysticism, which led to the condemnation of Quietism and the marginalization and misunderstanding of the mystical element in Catholicism down into the twentieth century'.[135] The Quietist controversy has been described by historians as the final straw in ongoing tensions between 'mystics' and ecclesiastical authorities stretching back to the medieval ages.[136] It should be of little surprise then that the earliest French orientalist

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132. Klinkhammer, 'The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany', p. 136.

133. See Westerlund, 'Introduction: Inculturating and Transcending Islam', p. 5; Hermansen, 'Dimensions of Islamic Religious Healing in America', pp. 414-420; Hermansen, 'Literary Productions of Western Sufi Movements', pp. 33-44; Klinkhammer 'The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany', pp. 135-136; see also M. Dressler, R. Geaves, & G. M. Klinkhammer, 'Introduction', in R. Geaves, M. Dressler & G. M. Klinkhammer (eds.), *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 5.

134. W. J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1998 [1996], pp. 481-513; W. B. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', in W. B. Parsons, D. Jonte-Pace & S. Henking. (eds.), *Mourning Religion*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2008, pp. 97-123.

135. B. McGinn, 'The Venture of Mysticism in the New Millennium', *New Theology Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2008, pp. 70–71; pp. 70-79; see also M. de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (trans M. B. Smith), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, pp. 267-291.

136. B. McGinn, 'Introduction: Part Two', in *Miguel de Molinos, The Spiritual Guide* (trans. R. P. Baird), Paulist Press, New York, 2010, p. 22. Quietism was largely an artificial systemisation made by its opponents through a discursive process based on ecclesiastical condemnations and the commentary upon them. Whilst mystical figures of counter-reformation Spain became celebrated pillars of Catholic orthodoxy for the most part, some were condemned with heterodoxy, from the earlier Alumbrados (Illuminists) mystical movement of the 15th and 16th centuries to Miguel de Molinos (d. 1696), the apparent 'founder' of the last great heresy movement in the Church, Quietism. Delineating between the two sides has always been problematic due to the close affinity between these various movements; something reflected in the life of John of the Cross and the fact that he wasn't canonised until almost a century and a half – 1738 in fact – after his death. This latter issue seems largely due to suspicions of the similarity between his writings and those later deemed Quietists. In fact, recent scholarship has evinced John's method of contemplation as the main source of inspiration for Molinos, whom he quotes extensively in his *Defense* (see J. D. Nieto, *Mystic, Rebel, Saint: A Study of St. John of The Cross*, Libraire Droz S. A., Genève. 1979, p. 131). Hence, its importation into France in the

accounts of Sufism, which started around this period, strongly related it to Quietism; François Bernier (d. 1688), a physician to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who spent some years during the mid-seventeenth century in the Islamic world, described Sufism as the Quietism of India in his article entitled 'Mémoire sur le quïetisme des Indes'.[137]

We see the association of Sufism to Quietism still present in the work of Vaughan.[138] But what is further of note in Vaughan's account is how he frames Sufism as a psychology, which he does by crafting a psychological model out of some of the thoughts of Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273) mentioned in his *Mesnevi*, all the time drawing parallels with 'Spanish Catholic mystics, Hindoos, Hesychasts, the Quietists, etc'.[139] Similarly, from the section 'The Study of Man' in Palmer's *Oriental Mysticism*, we find the presentation of a Sufi psychology, and in another work he mentions 'a short essay on Psychology from a Mohammedan point of view' by a notable Sufi.[140] Perhaps the most comprehensive depiction of Sufism as a psychology is the one given by Duncan MacDonald on al-Ghazali, which stretches across the last five lectures of his monumental, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (1906).[141]

What we find with Macdonald in particular, is an attempt to explain Sufi mystical experiences from the viewpoint of parapsychology (i.e., as an 'auto-hypnosis' or 'auto-suggestion' of sorts).[142] This harkens back to a sixteenth-century fascination with antinomian Muslim mystics, which often meant that only they were represented in the popular

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17th century brought with it this duality, at once inspiring the influential École Française de Spiritualité (French School of Spirituality) through Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (d. 1629), but also bringing the Illuminés movement, and, of course, the Quietist controversy. With the condemnation of Molinos and of those accused of propagating his Quietist doctrines in France, namely Madamme Guyon (d. 1717) and the Bishop François Fénelon (d. 1715), 'the link through which the mystical and the doctrinal elements in Christianity had contributed to their mutual flourishing was broken', leaving an enduring cleavage between the two up until the late 19th century and the revival of theological interest in mysticism (see B. McGinn, 'The Venture of Mysticism in the New Millenium', pp. 71-72 ff.).

137. This article was published in the periodical, *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans*, in September 1688. The article sparked a view of Quietism as a disguised form of Islam. Quietism also came to referred to as the doctrine of Pur Amour (pure love) since Fénelon; the debate over Quietism involving Fénelon was remembered as 'Querelle du Pur Amour'. Another French example connecting Sufism with Quietism comes from François Pétis de la Croix (d. 1713), a diplomat to Isfahan who studied Rumi's *Masnavi* and visited the Bektashi order during his time there; although he did not publish himself, we see a strong claim made of the Mevelevi as 'perfect Quietists' in the writings of his son.

138. Vaughan refers to the Sufi saint Rabia as 'strikingly similar' to Madame Guyon. He writes, 'While exulting in a devotion above all means and modes, we find the Sufi (in nearly every stage of his ascension save the last) yielding implicit obedience to some human guide of his own choice. The Persian Pir was to him what the Director was to the Quietist or semi-Quietist of France; what the experienced Friend of God was to the mystic of Cologne or Strasburg; what Nicholas of Basle was so long to Tauler' (vol 2: p. 10; and vol. 1, p. 232 for Quietism); see also Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America*, p. 74.

139. R. A. Vaughan, 'Persian Mysticism in the Middle Age', in *Hours with the Mystics: A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion*, John W. Parker, London, 1856, pp. 320-404, with specific mention Sufism as a psychology on p. 332.

140. For Palmer on Sufi psychology, see E. H. Palmer, 'The Study of Man', in *Oriental Mysticism*, pp. 50-68; Palmer attributes the 'short essay on Psychology from a Mohammedan point of view' to 'Kamal al-din Nafasi', in E. H. Palmer, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College*, Cambridge, Deighton, Bell, Cambridge, 1870, p. 71.

141. See the last five lectures, VI-X., especially 'lecture VIII', in D. B. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam: Being the Haskell Lectures on Comparative Religion Delivered before the University of Chicago in 1906*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1909.

142. See A. Knysh, 'Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West and in Russia', *Pis'mennye Pamiatniki Vostoka*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 221.

imaginations of Europeans.[143] Interest with the spectacular and strange continued with the travelogues of seventeenth-century writers like Eugène Roger (1646), which dealt almost exclusively with unconventional and recalcitrant bands of Sufis who opposed political and religious law, labelling them with European appropriations of Sufi titles for the more eccentric types, such as 'qalandar'.[144] In the eighteenth century, depictions of more mainstream Sufis could be found, but again the focus was on the most spectacular rituals performed by these Sufi orders, such as the captivating spinning ritual of the Mevlevi or the piercing ritual, the walking over the backs' ritual, and the characteristic loud dhikr assemblies of the Rifa'i.[145]

The extraordinary rituals of these Sufi orders became an iconic spectacle for the European traveller to the Orient, and, together with the 'wandering' or 'begging' dervishes, laid the basis for the 'exotic, amazing, wonderful and frightening character of the figure of the dervish' embedded in the western imagination through novels, poetry and paintings inspired by their accounts.[146] By the turn of the century, the image of the contemporary living Sufi had been sealed with the term 'dervish', as well as other appropriated terms that had gained currency in the West in reference to eccentric Sufi figures; terms such as 'marabout' by the French in North Africa and 'fakir' by the British in India equally conjured images of extreme ascetics or crazed vagabonds.[147] An apt example of the continuation of the image of the supernatural Sufi in popular Victorian imagination is that of 'Soliman ben Aïssa', who made numerous stage-appearances in Europe and America during this period; he was known as the 'invulnerable fakir' due to his ability to withstand enormous amounts of pain, heat and venomous snake bites.[148]

To some degree, 'mysticism' as a modern category was a result of this kind of infatuation by onlookers of extraordinary 'phenomena' apparently made legible by the mystic through a

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143. T. Zarcone, 'Western Visual Representations of Dervishes from the 14th Century to Early 20th', *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies (KIAS)*, vol. 6, March 2013, p. 44-45. In the sixteenth-century travelogues of Nicolas de Nicolay (d. 1583), for instance, we find the earliest pictures of fantastic dervish figures, as well as descriptions of their unusual attire and the ascetic purpose behind them, such as the heavy iron ring attached to the genitals to prevent sex, for a description of the ring, see N. de Nicolay, *Les Navigations, Pérégrinations et Voyages Faicts en la Turquie par Nicolas de Nicolay*, Anvers, 1626, p. 182.

144. Ibid., p. 45. The lop-sidedness of these early modern accounts becomes apparent when contrasted with the more administrative practical accounts from the time, such as in the 1668 account of the British ambassador of the Ottoman Empire, Paul Rycaut (d. 1700), who gives a description more representative of the variety of Sufi brotherhoods found there, portraying a considerably 'normal' picture of Sufism (p. 45).

145. That the emphasis was almost entirely on these spectacular rituals is well illustrated by the fact that the orders were more commonly known after them by westerners: the Mevlevi being known as the 'whirling' dervishes and the Rifa'i as the 'howling' dervishes (see Zarcone, 'Western Visual Representations of Dervishes from the 14th Century to Early 20th', pp. 51-57, as well as descriptions of rituals of other orders, such as the Qadiri, Helveti and Bektashi).

146. Zarcone, 'Western Visual Representations of Dervishes from the 14th Century to Early 20th', p. 57.

147. Ibid. Both darvish and faqir mean 'poor person' in Persian and Arabic, respectively, and the earlier descriptions prior to such more exotic accounts used the terms to denote Sufis as mendicants similar to Catholic friars (see Ernst, *Sufism*, pp. 3-4).

148. 'What the Flesh can Stand: Horrifying Tests Applied by a Fakir of Morocco', *The Westminster Gazette*, later republished in *The New York Times*, September 10th, 1893. As such an 'exhibition of his powers' indicates, the 'fakir' was still regarded in the Western imagination as accomplishing fantastical feats that could horrify the sensible public whilst fascinating the scientific observer. Soliman ben Aïssa was connected with the Moroccon Aïssawa Sufi order, and was the Sufi adept that inspired Austrian inventor and industrialist, Karl Kellner (d. 1905), to create the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO).

psychosomatic vocabulary that included 'ecstasy, levitation, stigmata, fasting, insensibility to pain, visions, tactile sensations, odors, and the like'.[149] According to Certeau, the isolation and objectification of 'mysticism' only became possible with the emergence of this kind of observer who was unable to participate or believe in the principles upon which it was initially established, and so, came to be limited to the realm of the observable.[150] But Certeau equally stresses that the scientific infatuation in deciphering the isolated mystical 'experience' also resulted in the modern understanding of 'mysticism' in psychological terms as a connection with some 'obscure, universal dimension of man, perceived or experienced as a reality [*un réel*] hidden beneath a diversity of institutions, religions, and doctrines'.[151]

Psychologisation of Religion

In his excavation of '*la mystique*', Certeau writes that with the appearance of this noun, mysticism would delimit a place apart, which 'circumscribed isolatable facts ('extraordinary' phenomena), social types (the 'mystics', another neologism of the time), and a special science (elaborated by the mystics themselves or taking them as its object of analysis)'.[152] Whereas 'mystique' had previously only been used as an adjective always assigned to something else, its 'substantivation' in the seventeenth century, during the proliferation of mystical literature, defined a new area of knowledge and mode of experience.[153] This, in turn, resulted in the formation of a distinct 'mystical tradition' increasingly unfettered by any particular Church, where the testimonies of Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, ancient, etc., could all be gathered within a single category.[154] Furthermore, what Certeau, as well as Schmidt, highlight, is that it would be at the hands of prominent psychologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that the modern psychologised understanding of the category of 'mysticism' would be formulated from these earlier foundations.

Following the genealogical work on the word 'mysticism' by Certeau and Schmidt, William Parsons uses the term 'unchurched mysticism' to refer to the phenomena of 'subjective 'experience[s]' divorced from church and tradition, and the investigation and interpretation of

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149. Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, pp. 14-15.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. In conformity with how modern science had begun to give itself a specific tradition by selectively excavating from sediments of the past, 'mysticism' found itself endowed with a complete genealogy. Similar to how a newly defined 'biology' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries served as the basis for drawing a 'distinction in ancient works (through a split that would have greatly surprised their authors) between what was 'scientific' and could thus enter into the history of biology, and what was theological, cosmological, and so on', a newly 'isolated' mysticism allowed for the fragmentation of an ancient literary corpus in order to extricate a portion belonging to mysticism and simultaneously making it possible to collate a more and more diverse array of references under one noun (see Ibid., pp. 13-14).
153. In his book, *The Mystic Fable* (1992), Michel de Certeau does a grat job of cataloguing the development of 'the mystic' tradition in the Catholic context of early modern France, and identifies its advent through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in recourse to the establishment of a specific domain.
154. Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, pp. 14-15.

such experiences from a scientific perspective'.[155] He similarly traces the development of an 'unchurched, psychological spirituality' back to the sixteenth and seventeenth century, when 'mysticism' first emerged in the form we understand today as a subjective experience unbound to church and tradition.[156] This, Parsons states, is what has allowed for a later psychologisation of religion by 'central psychological figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', such as William James, who 'exclusively focused on religious experience, of which mysticism was seen as its deepest form'.[157] James made personal religious experience the singular subject of his study, and described it as 'the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine'; all other aspects of religion were seen as secondary accoutrements unnecessary for accessing the divine.[158]

Parsons relates a consequence of the conceptualisation of modern mysticism and its increasing psychologisation, as the emergence of a 'modern spirituality' that extricates itself from 'institutional religion', which is portrayed as 'a place where authoritarianism, mendacity, and dogmatism have replaced authentic, living religious experience'.[159] He calls it 'psychologia perennis', in reference to the particularly psychologised form of this spirituality, which relates to the understanding in modern mysticism of the sacred or divine 'as a universal dimension of human nature'.[160] Under the rubric 'psychologia perennis', a variety of influential psychologists advocating different theoretical models and therapeutic techniques can be branched together as upholders of perennialism and vanguards of humanity's evolution into unique individuals, each possessing innate mystical capacities.[161]

> These modern forms of spirituality are concerned with personal religious experience, champion self-development, draw liberally from a variety of religious traditions and often position themselves in opposition to traditional religion, which is seen as dogmatic, authoritarian and oppressive. Traditional Christian spirituality is premised on the belief in a transcendent God who can only be mediated via

155. W. B. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', in W. B. Parsons, D. Jonte-Pace & S. Henking. (eds.), *Mourning Religion*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2008, p. 97.

156. Parsons, W. B., 'Mourning Religion: An Introduction', in W. B. Parsons, D. Jonte-Pace & S. Henking. (eds.), *Mourning Religion*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2008, pp. 4-6.

157. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', p. 98; see also W. B. Parsons & D. Jonte-Pace, 'Introduction: Mapping Religion and Psychology', in W. B. Parsons & D. Jonte-Pace (eds.), *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 1-29.

158. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', p. 98; see also W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1902, pp. 370, 31-32.

159. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', p. 99; see also W. Principe, 'Toward Defining Spirituality' in Studies in Religion', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1983, pp. 127-141; R. C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001; L. E. Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', pp. 273-302; L. E. Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, Harper San Francisco, New York, 2005.

160. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', p. 97; A. Gleig, 'Psychology as Religion', in D. A. Leeming, K. Madden & S. Marlan (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, Springer, Boston, MA, 2010, pp. 729-731;

161. Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', p. 97.

religious authority and institution. Modern forms of spirituality are highly individualized, decidedly psychological, and promote a universal model of an innate inner divinity.[162]

Ann Gleig summarises the argument made by Parsons and finds support for it in Wouter Hanegraaff's identification of certain key features of the New Age, such as an emphasis on 'healing and personal growth', which conflates 'psychological development and religious salvation … to such an unprecedented extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the two'.[163]

Stated as one of his five defining features of the New Age, 'the psychologization of religion and the sacralization of psychology' is understood by Hanegraaff as largely occurring by the gradual adaptation of an 'esoteric religious worldview' to modern society.[164] Hanegraaff asserts this 'psychologization of religion' and simultaneous 'sacralization of psychology' as a characteristic of the New Age, and looks for its origins in various late nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular movements and figures, as well as many psychologists. He mentions movements such as Mesmerism and New Thought and key early contributors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James. But above all others, Hanegraaff rests 'the double phenomenon of a psychologizing of religion combined with a sacralization of psychology' that characterise New Age religiosity, upon the shoulders of Carl Jung.

Jung is singled out by Hanegraaff for both psychologising esotericism and filling psychology with the contents of esoteric speculation, and thereby opening the way for 'a body of theories which enabled people to talk about God while meaning their own psyche, and about their own psyche while meaning the divine'.[165] Parsons expresses the two ways towards disambiguation between psychology and religion in slightly different terms, one in a negative sense, of spirituality characterised by Freud, who turned *religion into psychology*, and the other in a positive sense, of spirituality characterised by Jung, who turned *psychology into religion*.[166] Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition were instrumental in formulating an understanding of religion as 'disguised expressions of deeper, latent unconscious proclivities' projected onto the

162. A. Gleig, 'The Culture of Narcissism Revisited: Transformations of Narcissism in Contemporary Psychospirituality', *Pastoral Psychology*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2010, pp 79–91. Here Gleig summarizes the argument made by Parsons, Schmidt and others; see also, Parsons, 'Psychologia Perennis and the Academic Study of Mysticism', p. 98; Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern 'Mysticism'', pp. 273-302.

163. A. Gleig, 'The Culture of Narcissism Revisited', pp 79–91.

164. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western* Culture, pp. 481-513. Hanegraaff identifies these trends through tracing two historical strands, the 'New Thought' metaphysical movements and the Jungian tradition.

165. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 513; others have also singled out Jung, for example, O. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*, Brill, Leiden, 2001 [2000], pp. 67-70, 68 n. 33; see also D. Burns, 'Seeking Ancient Wisdom in the New Age: New Age and Neognostic Commentaries on the Gospel of Thomas', in O. Hammer & K. von Stuckrad (eds.), *Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and its Others,* Brill, Leiden, 2007, pp. 254-255 n. 11; also R. A. Segal, 'Jung's Fascination with Gnosticism', in R. A. Segal (ed.) *The Allure of Gnosticism: The Gnostic Experience in Jungian Psychology and Contemporary Culture*, Open Court, Peru, IL, 1995, pp. 26-38.

166. See W. B. Parsons (ed.), *Being Spiritual but not Religious: Past, Present, Future(s)*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2018.

outer world, whilst Jung advocated a psycho-spirituality which searched for 'germs of wisdom hidden in the deeper, mystical elements of traditional religion'.[167]

Sufism in the New Age

One important aspect to the dual process of psychologisation of spirituality and spiritualisation of psychology, is brought to our attention by anthropologist, Peter Pels (2003).[168] He acknowledges that a psychologisation of religion did indeed occur through academic research, in disciplines like anthropology and psychology, where we see that 'many of the founding fathers of psychology (Jean-Martin Charcot, Pieree Janet, Wilhelm Wundt, William James, James Braid, and Freud) were experimenting with or convinced of the reality of telepathy, clairvoyance, and like phenomena'.[169] But Pels further argues that, on the other hand, it also developed by 'occultists [who] made a 'discovery of the unconscious' parallel to that of psychology, incorporating a topological conception of the person, one that argued that we need to remove layers of convention to discover a 'true' or 'higher' self or to release the primary force of the will.[170]

We have already explored how Theosophy emerged in the mid-nineteenth century when occultism was coming out of an underground existence and enjoying a popularity among intellectuals and other elites.[171] By the end of the nineteenth-century, the Theosophical Society had become a global organisation with its publications reaching thousands of members in over forty different countries.[172] Important for our discussion is that Theosophy would not only be significant for introducing oriental religious traditions to a general western public, but also in popularising their psychologisation through an underlying assumption of mysticism as a sort of natural faculty of man.[173] In this way, it shares themes common within Romanticism and German idealism of the nineteenth century, similarly evoking 'the idea that the East is in possession of a truth or wisdom the West has lost and can regain only by learning from the East', as well as 'that man's nature is spiritual'.[174] At a time when any distinction between 'psychology' and 'parapsychology' was vague at best, Theosophy succeeded in promoting a

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167. S. Fitzpatrick & W. B. Parsons, 'The Triumph of the Therapeutic and Being Spiritual but Not Religious', in W. B. Parsons (ed.), *Being Spiritual but not Religious: Past, Present, Future(s)*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2018, pp. 35-36.
168. Pels, 'Introduction: Magic and Modernity', pp. 1-38.
169. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
170. Ibid.
171. P. Pederson, 'Tibet, Theosophy, and the Psychologization of Buddhism', in T. Dodin & H. Räther (eds.), *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, & Fantasies*, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2001, p. 152.
172. Pederson, 'Tibet, Theosophy, and the Psychologization of Buddhism', p. 157; see also H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1895, p. 482.
173. Pederson, 'Tibet, Theosophy, and the Psychologization of Buddhism', pp. 159-160; see also C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East, (The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 11)*, Routledge, London, 1991 [1958], p. 529.
174. Pederson, 'Tibet, Theosophy, and the Psychologization of Buddhism', p. 159.

'spiritual psychology' that would set a foundation for the later psychologisation of Eastern religions in the twentieth century by prominent psychologists like Jung.

Jung, together with James, Maslow and a few others, played a crucial role in the spread of a modern, psychological, non-traditional, or 'unchurched' form of mysticism and spirituality.[175] By blurring the boundary between psychology and religion, he anticipated the psychologised spirituality we see proliferating today. Disclosing a remarkable continuity with Theosophy, the professional psychological involvement that followed Jung would further the impression of meditation and other oriental religious practices as psychotherapeutic techniques, and also encourage the idea that the East could offer potent spiritual healing remedies to the West [into becoming] a salient feature of the counterculture movement of the 1960s'.[176] Which brings us to another cruical feature in the psychologisation of religion, that is, the Asian religious traditions themseleves; although interest in them had taken root earlier, with the opening of US borders to Asian immigration in the 1965, variants of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufism especially, came to prominence for a wider demographic part of the alternative religious milieu of the counterculture and the subsequent development of new religious movements.[177] The flowering of Western Sufi groups had occurred within this milieu, where Sufism found expression as a 'spiritual psychology' in harmony with other psychological and spiritual traditions.

Sufism before the second half of the twentieth century had mainly been of eclectic interest for European and American intellectual and artistic elites inspired by earlier trends of Romanticism and Occultism.[178] But during the counterculture era of the 60s and 70s, interest in Sufism widened as journeys to the 'Mystic East' that had previously been the preserve of a privileged few would become popular among a growing number of young European and American travellers; overland journeys to India were becoming popular during this period and North Africa witnessed an influx of Western visitors due to its relative proximity to Europe.[179] Whereas an abstract interest in Sufism in the west mostly developed through an interaction with Persian literature, more practical interest in Sufis had mainly formed from such travels to the Maghreb.[180] One example is how from earlier occultists like Agueli and Guénon, this trend

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175. Fitzpatrick & Parsons, 'The Triumph of the Therapeutic and Being Spiritual but Not Religious', p. 36.

176. Pederson, 'Tibet, Theosophy, and the Psychologization of Buddhism', p. 160.

177. J. G. Melton, 'New Thought and the New Age', in J. R. Lewis and J. G. Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1992, p. 20; P. Heelas, *The New Age Movement: Religion, Culture and Society in the Age of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, Cambridge, MA, 1996, pp. 54-55.

178. Geaves, 'Sufism in the West', pp. 241-247.

179. Recent literature with a personal look back at this phenomenon, includes Robert Irwin's, *Memoirs of a Dervish: Sufis, Mystics and the Sixties* (2011) and Paulo Coelho's *Hippie* (2019).

180. Already since the early modern period, the most accessible and relatable of the Sufi orders for European Christians was the Shadhili Order. An example of early Shadhili influence in Europe is the influence of Ibn Abbad al-Rundi (d. 1390) on St. John of the Cross (d. 1591) and his poem on 'The Dark Night of the Soul'; see M. A. Palacios, *Saint John of the Cross and Islam*, Vantage, New York, 1981 [1941]; for a counter

would continue with those they inspired, like Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998), Titus Burkhardt (d. 1984) and Martin Lings (d. 2005), who in turn through their writings, encouraged individual travellers to North Africa from the counterculture generation.[181]

Also prominent by the 70s, was the rise of the Universal Sufism movement that had been initiated with Inayat Khan's efforts to spread Sufism in North America and Europe during the early twentieth century, through various organisations like the Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society led by Samuel Lewis (d. 1971), Sufism Reoriented associated with Rabia Martin (d. 1947) and Meher Baba (d. 1969), The Sufi Movement led by Inayat Khan's brother and The Sufi Order International established by his own son, Vilayat Inayat Khan (d. 2004).[182] Irina Tweedie (d. 1999), a Russian woman who had been initiated into a Naqshbandi Sufi order in India, had also began gaining followers in the late 60s.[183] Another influential variant of Western Sufism, 'peaking in the 1960s and 1970s search for perennial wisdom in the alternative counter-culture millieu', was the synthesis of explicitly Sufi teachings with the more ambiguous Sufi elements in the work of Gurdjieff (d. 1949) and his student Ouspensky (d. 1947), through popular figures such as John G. Bennet (d. 1974), Idries Shah (d. 1992) and Reshad Field (d. 2016), as well as centres like the 'The Study Society' at Colet House in London.[184]

In his role as a Sufi Shaykh in the West during the late twentieth century, Fadhlalla Haeri straddled between these earlier forms of Western Sufism that could easily mingle with other traditions as well as the emerging New Age movement, and the new form of Western Sufism strongly influenced by Islamic neo-revivalism and the influx of immigration from Muslim countries to Europe and America. Haeri was not alone in this regard, with many other Sufi masters active in America during the 70s and 80s also falling into this dilemma. Haeri had developed a close connection with some of them, having had a particularly close relationship with the Turkish Jerrahi shaykh, Muzaffer Özak (d. 1985), but also the Bosnian Rifa'i shaykh, Asaf Durakovic and the Kosovan Rifa'i shaykh, Jamali Shehu, all of whom would confer authority to him as a Shaykh. Haeri would often visit their respective centres and they would

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argument claiming instead a correlation between the two writers, see J. Nieto, *Mystic Rebel Saint: A Study of Saint John of the Cross*, Droz, Geneva, 1979.

181. For example, the English writer, Robert Irwin, recounts in his *Memoirs of a Dervish* (2015), that during his visit to Algeria in the mid-60s he had found favour among the successors of Ahmad al-Alawi at his lodge in the port city of Mostaganem by producing a copy of the biography of al-Alawi written by Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century* (1959); see Geaves, 'Transformations and Trends among British Sufis', pp. 40-41; Geaves, 'Sufism in the West', pp. 249-250.

182. See A. Rawlinson, 'A History of Western Sufism', *Diskus*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1993, pp. 45-83.

183. I. Tweedie, *Daughter of Fire: A Diary of a Spiritual Training with a Sufi Master*, Blue Dolphin, Publishing, Nevada City, CA, 1986; originally published as I. Tweedie, *The Chasm of Fire: A Woman's Experience of Liberation through the Teaching of a Sufi Master*, Elements Books, Dorset, 1979; see also A. Rawlinson, 'A History of Western Sufism', *Diskus*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1993, pp. 45-83.

184. For a concise genealogy of the influence of Gurdjieff, see J. J. M. Petsche, 'A Gurdjieff Genealogy: Tracing the Manifold Ways the Gurdjieff Teaching Has Travelled', *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, pp. 49-79.

visit his, to give talks and even courses; in 1983, for example, Haeri visited the official centre of the Rifa'i Alami tariqa in Waterport led by Durakovic.[185]

Haeri in Europe

Holding onto 'New Age' and 'Islamic' as two distinct categories of Sufism in the West blinds us from seeing how much they in fact were intermingled. We see this, for example, in the formation of an early Sufi community in Germany that Klinkhammer writes about:

> Having provided seminars combining Sufism and psychotherapy for several years, Abdul Halis Dornbrach, Muhammad Salah Id and Hussein Abdul Fattah, three central figures of the emerging German Sufi scene, founded the 'Institute for Sufi Research' in Berlin in 1979 … [a] year later, the Sufi institute found a rural location in the Lüneburger Heide in Lower Saxony where it was able to open a 'Sufi healing school' known as House Schnede. Salah Id and Makowski rented a house, lived there with a large community, and used it as a convention centre for spiritual seminars. Abdul Halis and other well-known Sufis such as Reshad Feild, the Turkish Halveti shaikh Muzzaffer Ozak and Shaikh Nazim offered dhikr, lectures and workshops. Yoga workshops, classes in humanist psychology, esoteric seminars on energy flow and similar classes were also provided.[186]

We find this same fluidity reflected in the range of Sufi figures that Haeri was associated with in Europe as well as America. During his time in Europe, Haeri was acquainted with Sufis that spanned the spectrum between 'New age' and 'Islamic', ranging from traditional eastern masters who had become popular in the west, such as the Naqshbandi shaykh, Nazim al-Haqqani (d. 2014), to unorthodox western teachers who disregarded many of the formal Islamic practices, like Reshad (Richard) Feild (d. 2016). Shaykh Nazim was a Turkish Cypriot trained as a classical religious scholar and formally initiated into the Naqshbandi Sufi Order in Syria, who started gaining followers in the west in the 70s. In contrast, Feild became involved with the teachings of the influential occultist Gurdjieff and later came into contact with the Mevlevi Sufi order, which then inspired him to establish the Zentrum Johanneshof Sufi centre near Lake Vierwaldstätter in Switzerland.[187] Both Sufi teachers had a close relationship with Haeri, and Feild would in fact be instrumental in regard to the start of two of Fadhlalla Haeri's communities in Europe, one in Hamburg and the other in Gothenburg.

The community in Hamburg was established by Alima, a German media producer who had gone to meet Reshad Feild at a workshop he was conducting in Valbella, Switzerland, after

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185. J. Hazen, *Contemporary Islamic Sufism in America: The Philosophy and Practices of the Alami Tariqa in Waterport, New York* (diss.), SOAS, University of London, 2011, p. 27; see also J. Hazen, *Sufism in America: The Alami Tariqa of Waterport, New York*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2017.
186. Klinkhammer, 'The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany', pp. 136-137.
187. D. Westerlund, 'Contextualisation of Sufism in Europe', in D. Westerlund (ed.), *Sufism in Europe and North America*, Routledge-Curzon, London, 2004, pp. 22-23.

reading a German translation of his book, *The Last Barrier*.[188] Here she would meet Fadhlalla Haeri, who had been invited to talk at the workshop by Feild. Wanting a more authentic type of Sufism not divorced from its original context, Alima was deeply impressed by Haeri and immediately became a student of his. A few weeks later, she would visit him in Granada and also enjoyed Haeri's company at his residence on Majorca and at other events in Europe, eventually inviting him to Hamburg for the first time in 1992.[189] Further visits to Germany followed, the second being in May 1993, for a few days at a Buddhist centre in Bremen, and then a third a year later, again in Hamburg at a centre in Blankenese.[190] The group mainly consisted of native Germans, who had come to the group from various New Age channels. These especially included Western Sufi movements, such as the Sufi Order led at that time by Vilayat Inayat Khan and the Naqshbandi group established by Irina Tweedie. The following is the account of how one of the members of the Group found her way to Haeri:

> I wanted more than just yoga, so I tried Zen meditation. It was Dürckheim in south Germany, Graf Dürckheim, and I was there for ten days, at their centre in Todtmoos. But I realised that Zen Buddhism didn't suit me because you have to sit during the sessions … Then I tried Tai-Chi but realised that wasn't my thing. I talked to my Yoga teacher and asked her if she knew anything else. She said: 'my husband leads a [Sufi] centre in Hamburg'. So I got to tag along and met Vilayat, who became my first teacher … I met him … outside Köln [Cologne] … and then I went to Switzerland, to these retreats, and became a follower of his … I was with him 5-6 years … then I felt I needed to go further … I felt … there is much more and I want to know more. But I didn't leave him straight away, I just felt this way. Then at Easter the year after I saw an announcement in the newspaper they have in Hamburg … and there was a picture of Shaykh Fadhlalla with an announcement that a Sufi shaykh was coming to Hamburg … Me and a friend wanted to go. I got sick and was in bed … yet I still went, even though I had a fever. But Shaykh Fadhlalla was also sick and didn't come to Hamburg … There I met Alima … and she was telling us about the group in Sweden, she had just come back from Sweden a few days earlier … We use to meet every week, she had a group there with different people doing *dhikr*, she taught me how to pray, but I was still with Pir Vilayat Khan, because I wanted to be sure. Then I met Shaykh Fadhlalla. I was very interested, but I wanted to be sure. For Christmas, I then went again, they had this Christmas gathering with Pir Vilayat Khan … And there was this moment when he sat and played the Cello in a corner, and I felt like he is playing for me as a farewell. I felt this is the last time I am seeing him. It was a farewell. I was almost certain, that my time here had ended.[191]

This account represents the typically eclectic feature of the members of the group, but there were also people from more traditional religious backgrounds, like Christianity, and some Muslims of North African and Iranian descent. Around 20 participants gathered regularly in a

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188. Alima, interview, July 2016.

189. Alima, interview, July 2016. Granada was where Abdalqadir had moved since the mid-eighties, and where a burgeoning international community had grown around the centre established by his Spanish students.

190. Alima, interview, July 2016.

191. Sofia, interview, April 2016.

loft converted into a makeshift space for regular Thursday *dhikr* gatherings. A year or so after his last visit in the summer of 1994, the activities of the group faded away. A few of the members, however, maintained a connection with Shaykh Fadhlalla and the larger network of followers.

Föreningen Sophia

The community in Gothenburg was started by 'Rafiullah', a Swedish medical doctor who had similarly read *The Last Barrier* and then decided to translate the book into Swedish. He met Reshad Feild in Switzerland for this purpose, this time at the Sema Ceremony in Zurich also in 1989. Fadhlalla Haeri was recommended by Feild to Rafiullah, who then contacted Haeri in England and went over to spend two weeks with him in the spring of 1990. The meeting was significant for both. Haeri had already visited Sweden in his teenage years as a science student, during an exchange program to Uppsala University, and as a shaykh, he had a particular interest in the country sparked by a suggestion by his former teacher Abdalqadir. In 1988, one of Haeri's students had even visited Stockholm to explore the potential of establishing a community there, but had returned after a few weeks, dejected. Hence, Haeri's meeting with Rafiullah, some two years later, provided the prospect Haeri had been waiting for.[192]

A few months after their first meeting, Rafiullah invited Shaykh Fadhlalla to Sweden, to meet with the meditation group he was a part of.[193] The first talk Haeri gave in Sweden was at an acupuncture clinic of one of the members of the group and would be attended by around 30 Swedish seekers, as well as other attendees associated with Haeri.[194] Another visit to Gothenburg would follow later that same year, and then another more publicised visit in May 1991, giving a talk at a local Waldorf school attended by many who had come to know of the event through local advertising.[195]

A community in Sweden had begun to form around Haeri's visits, and in 1991, some of his Swedish students rented a house they called *rosa huset*, 'the pink house', where they lived together communally and officially dedicated the loft as a Sufi centre.[196] Here they would hold regular *dhikr* gatherings on Thursdays and lessons on the Qur'an on Mondays, as well as other activities, like a three-week intensive course on basic Islamic practice taught by one of Haeri's early disciples from the U.S.[197] The group went under the markedly un-Islamic name Föreningen Sophia (Sophia Association), also sometimes Sophia-stiftelsen (Sophia Foundation), and

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192. Abdul Hadi, interview, November 2016. On his return to Sweden after the meeting, Rafiullah was full of enthusiasm and quickly translated Haeri's introductory book on Sufism into Swedish.

193. Ibid. The initial meeting took place over three days in September 1990.

194. Ibid. Later, a more private gathering took place at Rafiullah's house on the same visit.

195. Ibid. The talk also included quite a few of Haeri's followers from other countries.

196. Ibid. The loft of the house was officially designated as a Sufi centre by Fadhlalla Haeri in November 1991.

197. Ibid.

consisted of a core of around 20 participants of mainly Swedish heritage that had all come from variegated New Age spiritual interests, ranging from the Shamanism popularised by Carlos Castaneda (d. 1998) to Zen Buddhism.[198] Many others would come and go, usually inspired to take part after attending a talk by Haeri but then losing interest or finding it too difficult to commit.[199] A few years later, Rafiullah and some of the members of the group would move to Björboholm, to a small peninsula beside a lake 30 kilometres outside of Gothenburg, where they would live close together and establish a new communal place for gatherings.[200]

Haeri continued to visit Scandinavia often in the coming years, mostly focused in and around Gothenburg, but on occasion venturing to other cities; he visited Stockholm a few times, giving talks at various New Age venues, and Oslo, giving a talk at the University, but especially Copenhagen, where Haeri also had a community of around 15 followers.[201] The Danish community originally bought a house in Frederiksberg that also served as there centre for many years, until they moved out to a new location in Vesterbro.[202] Although it continued in an informal form, the community was officially resolved in 2002 and the property sold.[203] The profits were used to set up a new centre in Gedser, Denmark, called *Sufi Huset*, 'the Sufi House', for a group affiliated with Shaykh Asaf that went under the name World Sufi Foundation and who would hold regular conferences also attended by a number of Haeri's followers from Scandinavia, South Africa, Zanzibar, UK, etc.[204]

For many of Haeri's followers, the events in Sweden were the highpoint of Haeri's time in Europe. With almost a hundred attendees both times, the largest events took place in the Summers of 1993 and 1994, at a traditional Swedish folk high-school in a small town outside of Gothenburg called Mölnlycke. But Haeri's popularity in Europe during the early 90s also grew through well attended events given at other locations, like Dorset in the south of England. As well as local attendees, the events in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and England were also attended by Haeri's students from other countries, and at times Sufi teachers associated with him. But it was further interaction between members of the communities beyond these events that helped to develop a European wide network, even including individuals based in other countries like Belgium. So, it was a great shock and to the dismay of many of his followers, when Fadhlalla Haeri all of sudden decided to leave Europe for Africa. Haeri would still make

198. Ibid.

199. Ibid.

200. Ibid.

201. Ibid.; Abdurrahman interview, June 2020. Some of the followers from Denmark had originally been connected to the Danish group that had been following Shaykh Abdalqadir al-Sufi, at least since 1982; for more on the group, see A. S. Roald, *New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts*, Brill, Leiden, 2004, p. 39.

202. Abdurrahman interview, June 2020.

203. Ibid.

204. The official website of the organisation and conferences: https://www.wsf.dk/.

occasional visits to Sweden, and a few of the members even tried to move and settle in South Africa.[205] But a few years after moving to South Africa, members from the group in Sweden had felt abandoned by Haeri, and eventually sought solace with his friend and fellow shaykh, Asaf, who visited Scandinavia more regularly at the time. Some from Sweden, however, continued their contact with Haeri and the wider network, and in recent times there has been a renewal of Swedish interest in Haeri, leading to his latest visit in 2017.[206]

Sufi Cosmology of the Self

In hindsight, what the early events in Sweden mark is a crucial point in Haeri's career as a Sufi shaykh. It was here that Haeri began to envision a more universal reach for his particular interpretation of the Qur'an and emphasis on inner self-knowledge. In fact, the Qur'an and self-knowledge were expressed by Haeri as one and the same thing. Haeri said during his very first talk in Sweden:

> … outer technology is easy and can be acknowledged and can be learned because it is informatic. The inner requires the courtesies which I tried to, very briefly, give you an outline of. And its ultimate objective is the ability, at your own will, no matter what circumstances you are in, wherever, whenever, simply totally to be. It is your nature. It is our nature to be. It is not something at the end of the journey you will be striving [for]. It is your nature. It is our nature to have that perpetual awareness of pure beingness. At the moment we need to capture it. And as I said, it is a mood. We need to translate that mood into a mode. It is our nature. Otherwise, why are we looking for it? If it is not already there, why are we looking for it? So it is not something somebody can give to you. It already is there. If anything, a person from the outside can remove some of the dust so you can read the book. Your own book. The only book. The one and only book. Imam Ali says: 'It is you who is the Qur'an', but you have to read it. But there is a lot of dust and rust. Worse than the dust and rust are these illusions and these mental images, and if you like, cultural barriers and ethnic barriers and all of that nonsense.[207]

This and many of Haeri's other Sufi talks in Sweden were taped, transcribed and edited into a series of pamphlets by the Sophia group in Sweden. We see in the titles of these talks an echo of the universal message Haeri was presenting. His earliest talks given in Gothenburg had titles such as 'The Sufi Way to the Unified Self' (September 1990), 'The Prescription for Life' (December 1990), 'The Need for a Path' (May 1991), whilst a series of subsequent talks given in Varberg had titles like 'Introduction to Self-Knowledge' and 'Eternal Values, Contemporary Ways' (April 1992).[208]

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205. For example, in the summer of 1998 Shaykh Fadhlalla visited Sweden, when also, a popular recording of the songs and poems from the *Dīwan* of Muhammad ibn al-Habib was made.

206. Haeri also visited whatever was left of the community in Copenhagen on this occasion.

207. F. Haeri, audio recording of talk 'The Sufi Way to the Unified Self', Gothenburg, 14 September 1990.

208. Titles of Haeri's talks in Sweden during this time, gleaned from pamphlets: 'First Sufi Talk in Sweden: The Sufi Way to the Unified Self', Gothenburg, September 14 1990; 'Second Sufi Talk in Sweden: The Prescription for Life', Gothenburg, December 1990; 'Third Sufi Talk in

This universalist and psychologically orientated presentation of Islam is succinctly found in the book *Sufi Cosmology of the Self* (1993), which was produced from transcripts of talks given by him at Hjärtared in Sweden during August 1992. Over a series of eight talks, Haeri chose some 112 key terms taken from the Qur'an and defined them in a way that downplayed their conventional use by Muslims whilst highlighting how each word had universal applicability for all humans. For example, the word *shari'a* was explained as referring to the natural laws and patterns of our physical existence, whilst the word *din* was distanced from its common mistranslation as religion and rather defined as 'life transaction'. In Haeri's words, the *din*:

> … is wrongly translated as religion. There is no such thing. We are not religious people, thank God. *Din* is a path of transacting. Religion symbolises tyranny and terror. And that is what organised religion has done. That is what many of the Arabs have done. They structured the *din* and killed it in themselves. … Once the *din* of Islam, the din of Muhammad, which was the door of inner freedom and outer restriction, was structured, and men started wearing long skirts and became professional 'knowers' [*ulama*], it was the end of it … It's been restricted into a religion now, but Islam is there, and all what you need is a bit of these terms. The Qur'an is for everyone. Take it! And the prophetic way and conduct is accessible to us. You just need to go past the Muslims in order to see Islam.[209]

Important to consider is that this distancing of Muslims from Islam by Haeri, and his presentation of it as a universal spiritual psychology, did not exclude those from Muslim backgrounds. Rather, many of Haeri's Muslim born followers, especially since the 90s, have been attracted to this very aspect of his teachings. In fact, it was some of these students of his who would later revise the transcribed talks from Hjärtared into the more available edition, *Cosmology of the Self* (1997), in which we find the universalist aspects of the talks further accentuated.[210] To take the specific case of one of these contributors, we can look at the account taken from an interview with Sabnum Dharamsi, who met Haeri in the early 90s in the UK.

> A friend of mine who was working in a different organisation said to me come on Sabnum, there is this talk, lets go, it is about spirituality. And I said to her, 'oh okay, maybe'. I was interested, then, in lots of different things, I was interested in Buddhism, I was interested in Christianity, I was interested in sort of all kinds of New Age spirituality. I really didn't know the answer, but I was looking and I was searching. And, I said to her, 'okay, I will come, I am free that evening'. And I said, 'well what path is it'? And she said, 'It's Islam' [laughs]. And I said, 'What! That's not for me'. Even though I had been brought up a Muslim I didn't feel that Islam had the answer for me. So, um… I was really unsure that I would go to this talk. But I went and when I heard this shaykh talking, I finally felt that I had come home. I finally felt that all the big questions that I'd had, and all the little questions that I had in my

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Sweden: The Need for a Path', Gothenburg, May 17 1991; 'Fifth Sufi Talk in Sweden: Introduction to Self-Knowledge', Varberg, April 8th, 1992; 'Sixth Sufi Talk in Sweden: Eternal Values, Contemporary Ways', Varberg, April 11 1992; 'Seventh Sufi Talk in Sweden: Questions and Answers', Varberg, April 11 1992. Also of note is S. Hansson, *Journeys along the Sufi Path: Pakistan: January 1991*, written in Gothenburg, May 1991, which chronicles Rafiullah's visit to the country together with others from Sweden and Fadhlalla Haeri himself.

209. F. Haeri, *Sufi Cosmology of the Self*, Alif, Copenhagen, 1993 p. 19.

210. F. Haeri, *Cosmology of the Self*, Hidden Treasure Press, Gatesville, 1997.

heart were being answered. And I felt this vastness of spirit within him and potentially within myself. I understood how we have within us a *nafs*, an ego-self, and a *ruh*, a spirit, which is limitless and beyond. I understood how I'd always been aspiring actually to Him, for His Perfect Love, for His Perfect Beauty, for His Perfect Majesty, for His Perfect Power, and always finding the world, the *dunya* unsatisfactory. And I understood, finally, why I'd been so unhappy. Because I was trying to look for things in the wrong place. From that point, I didn't look back. I found in, really that teacher, the meaning of Islam for myself, and I found that truth for myself, and I found that, as the poem that I read to you at the beginning says, that my remedy was within me, if only I reflect.[211]

Dharamsi, together with Stephen Maynard, started the Institute of Islamic Counselling and Well Being in 1996 by making use of Haeri's teachings on self-knowledge and refracting them into a psychology format. Offering the only accredited training program and diploma of its kind, as well as a module on the subject at an accredited Islamic higher institute, the couple pioneered the presence of Islamic Counselling in Britain and within the wider arena of psychotherapy.[212] They were also instrumental in developing support for Muslim mental-health through Stephen Maynard and Associates, which completed a 'Department of Health Scoping Report on Muslim Mental Health in the UK' in 2008, and with the establishment of the Lateef Project, a counselling service for Muslims based in Birmingham.[213] Dharamsi and Maynard were only two among a number of psychologists and councillors closely affiliated to Haeri and influenced by his teachings during the early 90s in the UK. What we see in the case of these followers who had a particular orientation towards psychology is only a clearer expression of an attitude found among many of his followers who are less familiar with psychology. What they explicitly reflect is an underlying attitude found among many of the Muslims who had found their way to Haeri since the 90s. What is more interesting than the explicit use of psychological models, is the broader imaginary which allows it.

We have been looking at how, as a consequence of the separation of Sufism from Islam in the nineteenth century, a number of eclectic Western Sufi movements with an emphasis on psychology would come to prominence in Europe and America throughout the twentieth century, and later became popular as part of the alternative religious milieu arising in conjunction with the counterculture of the 60s and 70s. But equally important is how this dichotomy between Islam and Sufism was also becoming an axiom among Muslims by the 80s and 90s. Whether opposed to Islam or seen as 'true' Islam, Sufism served as an ideal vehicle for connecting Muslims to the idea of a universal form of mysticism, initially in the West, but

211. From an interview with Shabnam Dharmasi taken by the English Shi'i-oriented religious channel, Ahlubayt TV.

212. The progression route in Islamic Counselling comprises three qualifications of increasing advancement: It starts with the VRQ's (Vocationally-Related Qualification) Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2), and continues with the Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Studies (CST -L3), and the Islamic Counselling Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4).

213. See also A. Schieffer & R. Lessem, *Integral Development: Realising the Transformative Potential of Individuals*, Routledge, London, 2016 [2014].

eventually also globally. The subsequent growth of an association between Sufism and mysticism among Muslims outside the West is marked by the fact that the term *tasawwuf* is used today in modern Arabic to translate 'mysticism' as it has come to be used in European languages.[214]

Sufi Spirituality

Speaking about his experiences in the mid-80s to the mid-90s, Carl Ernst noted in his *Guide to Sufism* (1997) that he had clearly noticed how the conceptual separation of Sufism from Islam had become a common trope even among those coming from a Muslim background.[215] Writing that prior to the nineteenth century it would have been impossible to even formulate the statement that 'Sufism has nothing to do with Islam', Ernst argues that many modern Muslims are 'taught a story of the Islamic religious tradition from which Sufism has been rigorously excluded'.[216] One side to this, of course, is the 'anti-Sufi' current initiated in the 1800s by reformists that today pervades Muslim societies, but another is the view of Sufism as 'the way to freedom and universality' in opposition to Islam as 'the symbol of authoritarian oppression', expressed by those alienated by fundamentalism.[217]

> Recently I gave a public lecture on Sufism and art at a museum in Washington, D.C., attended by well over a hundred people. In the question period following the lecture, I expected to get inquiries about the topics I had discussed in the lecture. Instead, I was confronted by several people, rising in sequence, who passionately denounced the idea that Sufism could have anything to do with Islam. It became evident that these men were Iranians and Afghans, exiled from their homelands, who blamed fundamentalist interpreters of Islam for all the horrors they had suffered. Yet they were deeply attached to the great Sufis whom they continued to revere, especially the Persian poet Rumi. They could not conceive that their beloved Rumi could have any connection with the hated leaders of the Islamic revolution in Iran or the fanatical faction leaders of Islamist militias in Afghanistan.[218]

We noted in the previous chapter that the Iranian Revolution and the spread of Islamic revivalism throughout the 80s, which saw an overt increase in religious observance and identity among Muslims, also encouraged a new wave of Sufism in the West to take on an exclusively Muslim identity. But as we see here, there is another side to the story. Islamic neo-revivalism similarly saw a corresponding increase in the detachment of Sufism from Islam and closer alignment to forms of New Age religiosity even among those born into Islam.

The rise of this double-sided religiosity among Muslims relates to a similar trend in Christianity, as recently pointed out by Robert Fuller and William Parsons (2018), who argue

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214. S. Sviri, 'Sufism', p. 20.
215. Ernst, *Sufism*, pp. xi-xxi.
216. Ibid.
217. Ibid.
218. Ibid.

that what historically brought about an association between 'spirituality' and 'expressive individualism' also prompted the fundamentalist 'reassertion' of traditional Christian beliefs and biblical authority.[219] As 'affiliation with religious organizations became increasingly associated with a very deliberate decision to conform to traditional authority', many turned away from unquestioning belief and established churches towards 'unchurched, nontraditional, and noninstitutional forms of modern spirituality'.[220] According to Taylor also, proponents of 'spirituality' often express it in terms of an opposition to 'religion', preferring to define their quest 'by a kind of autonomous exploration, which is opposed to a simple surrender to authority; and people who engage in this kind of spiritual path are indeed, put off by the moralism and code-fetishism which they find in the churches'.[221] Fuller and Parsons argue that the epithet 'not religious, but spiritual' began to find traction by the late twentieth century just as 'a dramatic shift toward conservative expressions of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism' became apparent.[222] And as we have been discussing, a similar attitude is evident among Muslims of the same period.

In a survey on Sufi conversion that included members of Fadhlalla Haeri's community in the UK, Julianne Hazen (2014) looked at how those from both non-Muslim and Muslim backgrounds found their way to Haeri and became his followers.[223] What she found among those raised as Muslims was a general 'discontent with Islam as it was practiced in mainstream mosques'.[224] One member, for example, 'explained that she found Islam oppressive as a child because of the overbearing threats of hellfire'.[225] Hazen relates a common expression among her informants that 'before joining Sufism they had difficulty fitting in with other Muslims and did not feel fulfilled by attending the mosques. They had observed hypocrisy and superficiality in the rituals, which initiated an inquiry into what was 'true' Islam as opposed to cultural religious practices'.[226] Hence, as well as outright proclamations of being 'Sufi-but-not-Muslim', affiliation with Sufism has also been expressed as the practice of the 'spiritual essence' of Islam rather than the literalist forms of religiosity apparently associated with 'orthodox' Muslims. A continued identification as Muslim whilst upholding New Age values is not contrary to observations made about the New Age movement. Research on the topic found that already in the 90s, many who could be categorised as 'New Age' had begun rejecting the label, preferring

219. R. C. Fuller & W. B. Parsons, 'Spiritual but Not Religious: A Brief Introduction', in W. B. Parsons (ed.), *Being Spiritual but Not Religious: Past, Present, Future(s)*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2018, pp. 15-29.

220. Fuller & Parsons, 'Spiritual but Not Religious', p. 17.

221. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 509.

222. Fuller & Parsons, 'Spiritual but Not Religious', p. 17.

223. J. Hazen, 'Conversion Narratives among the Alami and Rifa'I Tariqa in Britain', in R Geaves & T. Gabriel (eds.) *Sufism in Britain*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2014, pp. 137-157.

224. Ibid., p. 148.

225. Ibid.

226. Ibid., p. 147.

to call themselves spiritual 'seekers' and often even identifying as members of a mainstream religion, such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and, as in our case, Islam.[227]

Haeri and the New Age

Although no more a theoretical construct then, say, 'Hinduism' or 'Sufism', 'New Age' has been particularly susceptible to criticism because of the fact that even most of those it is meant to define do not identify with the label. With some sporadic use of the term in occult circles during the nineteenth century, the idea of a 'New Age' only really began to be spoken of in the twentieth century, by early popularisers, like the prominent promoter of Theosophy, Alice Bailey (d. 1949), and her publications, *Discipleship in the New Age* (1944) and *Education in the New Age* (1954).[228] This use of the term is evident among a small subculture (later dubbed the Light Movement) of esoteric groups in the UK influenced by Theosophy and its offshoot Anthroposophy, one of the most prominent being Findhorn Foundation and Ecovillage, founded in Scotland in 1962.[229] Places like Findhorn would come to attract adherents of the counterculture from around the world, during which time the term 'New Age' passed on from these 'subcultural pioneers' to a broader demographic of counterculture enthusiasts.[230] With this diffusion, the term 'New Age' itself transitioned from being an 'apocalyptic emblem' for people preoccupied with the coming of a new age, to its use as a 'spiritual idiom' referring to a variety of alternative religious beliefs and activities.[231] Steven Sutcliffe (2003) places this transition from the late mid-60s to the mid-70s, showing prominent counterculture examples (e.g. Woodstock adverts from 1969 and the opening song, 'Aquarius', from the 1967 musical *Hair*) where the terms 'New Age' (and 'Age of Aquarius') still conveyed the idea of 'a coming era'; but it is by the late 70s that the term really became a banner under which a wide variety of alternative religiosity could come together.[232]

Although we can say that the New Age began in Britain already at the start of the 70s, it is only by the decade's end that the movement truly emerged as we know it, particularly in America. With the decline of counterculture and the related commune movement, many

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227. P. Heelas, *The New Age Movement: Religion, Culture and Society in the Age of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, Cambridge, MA, 1996, p. 17; J. R. Lewis, 'Approaches to the Study of the New Age Movement', in J. R. Lewis and J. G. Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1992, pp. 1-2; S. J. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices, Routledge*, London, 2003, pp. 128, 200; S. MacKian, *Everyday Spirituality: Social and Spatial Worlds of Enchantment*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, p. 5; S. M. Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004, p. 25.

228. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age*, p. 26

229. J. G. Melton, 'New Thought and the New Age', in J. R. Lewis and J. G. Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1992, p. 20; see also, York, M., *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*, Rowman & Littlefield, London, 1995, p. 35; W. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, pp. 38-39; Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 51; J. R. Lewis & J. G. Melton, 'Introduction', in J. R. Lewis and J. G. Melton (eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 1992, pp. ix-xxi.

230. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age*, pp. 112, 118.

231. Ibid., pp. 29, 108, 112.

232. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

hippies and others from the counterculture would become early promoters of the New Age Movement.[233] When the movement really came to prominence, however, was throughout the 80s, with the advent of New Age bookstores selling books and magazines as well as crystals, incense and a growing genre of New Age music, but also the alteration of older esoteric bookstores that too came to define themselves as New Age.[234] We see this trend growing in Europe also, where labels like 'Green' and 'Alternative' were often preferred to describe the movement.[235] Offering us a window into a milieu coloured by the New Age, occultism and alternative psychology, below is an account of one Swedish follower's journey through this spiritual marketplace during the period, who eventually found his way to the group associated with Haeri in the early 90s.

> I use to go to church maybe once a month and my parents didn't really have any spiritual interests so I had never been exposed to any spirituality. As a teenager, I was interested in supernatural things, ghosts, telepathy and stuff. Some colleagues of mine who had similar interests took me to 'Vattumannen' [Aquarius], a bookstore full of meditation, psychology, and everything possible. It was a whole new world that had opened up for me. And then there was a lecture group in South [Stockholm] called 'Café Pan', where they had lectures a few times a week on spirituality, healing and such. This was 1986, when I also saw a poster at my Business School on meditation and thought I could go and learn meditation.
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> That was a whole new world that opened up for me after I started meditating. The teacher at that course combined mediation with healing, and that's how I then began with healing and mediation. I was completely absorbed by it. I was also very interested by Alice Bailey and her esotericism. She came from … Theosophy. I read maybe three or four of her books about the invisible masters … I was into that for a while until I felt there was something that didn't quite make sense with it. … I was very much into Theosophy, especially Alice Bailey, and I was very interested in alternative medicine, which I had come across in these groups. … And I had stumbled upon this 'White Eagle Lodge', a Christian organisation that has a lot to do with meditating on Jesus … It is very popular in England with healers who work with energy balancing and laying hands. They use to meet regularly, so I use to go … once or twice a week. But then I felt that it wasn't enough.
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> There was something missing. Afterwards I understood that to be the study of the self, to look inward at the shadows we carry inside, to work through them. So, it was that which was missing. … Then I had bought from 'Vattumannen' one or two books on the 'Ridwan School of Enlightenment', the 'Diamond Approach' by A. H. Almaas. … When I started looking in them, I found what they called psychotherapy for spiritual seekers and realised that is what I needed. So, I went down to Germany, where they were holding a retreat and course outside Bremen, in April 1991. And it was fantastic to come there. One of the teachers had a headscarf but I didn't make much of it. You had to lie down and breath and bring up memories from your childhood, and I thought this is fantastic. And you go through the Enneagram also. It was going to carry on for five years with four or five meetings every year. And

233. Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 54.
234. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age*, pp. 126-127; Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*, p. 16.
235. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age*, p. 128.

then this lady in the scarf was going to lead us is in something. So, we all sat there and we all began to sing *lailahaillallah* and then *Hu-Hu* or *Allah-Allah*. I was completely taken by that experience and asked what it was. Then it was explained to me that the spiritual foundation of the 'Diamond Approach' was Sufism, which I had never even heard of before.

They said it had something to do with Islam, which I was really surprised about because I had known that Islam was an evil religion. In the religious studies book we had at college there was only half a page on Islam, three paragraphs, whilst Buddhism and Hinduism had thirty pages. I had been convinced that there was nothing to find in Islam, so I was so surprised. Anyway, when I got back they didn't have even one book on Sufism in my local library. I ordered some books from Uppsala. And then there was this small spiritual bookshop in Varberg, run by a woman who was into crystals and charms. I went in there hoping they might have something on Sufism. They didn't have anything but she said that it was very funny that I came in and asked particularly about Sufism, because one of her friends in Gothenburg had just sent a poster a few days ago on two Sufi shaykhs who were coming to Gothenburg. She had thrown it away but knew where she had thrown it, and if I came back later she would have found it for me.

The poster said two Sufi shaykhs coming to Gothenburg on the 17th May, and it had a picture of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri and this other shaykh who died a few years ago. … And so, Shaykh Fadhlalla came on the 17th of May 1991, a day I will always remember because that's when I was born, in a way. … I just felt as soon as I came into the gathering and Shaykh Fadhlalla sat there, I just felt this is what I have been looking for, for the last four years. It spoke directly to my heart.[236]

As seeker and then as a spiritual master in the west, Haeri was very much involved within the New Age culture around him; he had visited Findhorn, for instance, and felt his own views resonated with those found in Marilyn Ferguson's book, 'The Aquarian Conspiracy' (1983), one of the essential works to come out of the New Age movement that helped to keep the older idea that a new era was on the verge as an integral narrative defining a purpose for the movement as a whole.[237] In fact, Haeri himself associated the rise of spirituality since the counterculture to the Islamic revival he envisaged. Witnessing a growing popularity of this alternative religious milieu, in the introduction to Haeri's *The Sufi Way to Self-Unfoldment* (1987), the 'manifestation of formal prescriptive Islam' is situated as part of a wider resurgence in mysticism and spirituality arising since 'the sixties and seventies'.[238] This is a revealing statement, which alludes to how the phenomena of late-modern spirituality that the New Age movement really represented would become the other major trend of the late twentieth century, beside neo-fundamentalism, which helped convince academics of a religious 'resurgence' and brought into question the secularisation thesis that religion was in decline.[239]

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236. Abdul Hadi, interview, November 2016.

237. M. Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s*, J. P. Tarcher, CA, 1980.

238. F. Haeri, The Sufi Way to Self-Unfoldment, Elements Books, Dorset, 1987.

239. See G. Davie, G., *The Sociology of Religion*, SAGE publications, London, 2007; see also J. Casanova, 'Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective', *The Hedgehog Review*, vol. 8, no. 1–2, 2006, pp. 7-22; and P. Heelas, *Bringing the Sacred to Life: The Crisis of Traditional Religion and the Rise of Wellbeing Spirituality*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2003.

New Age as Folk Religion

The New Age movement became of interest for academic researchers with its expansion into 90s. But by this time the term itself began to go out of favour among those it was meant to define, leading some scholars to prematurely conclude the end of the movement. A better understanding of the phenomena developed since that initial response, by academics like Olav Hammer (2001), who pointed out that 'the New Age *movement* may be on the wane, but the wider New Age *religiosity*... shows no sign of disappearing'.[240] Later scholars like Sara MacKian (2012), have similarly interpreted the dispersion of the New Age movement in the 90s as the diffusion of a 'New Age sentiment' across a wider 'socio-cultural landscape'.[241] This has resulted in an assessment of the term as a redundant category by researchers like MacKian, who proposes the term 'everyday spiritually' instead.[242] Others who have observed the spread of New Age beliefs and practices into mainstream culture in the last few decades have opted for the epithet 'spiritual but not religious'.[243] Seen today as mainly a middle to upper-middle class interest; a defining feature of the New Age has been this conscious substitution of the label 'religion' for 'spirituality'.[244]

Already in the 1990s, scholars of religion like Catherine Albanese (1993) made an effort to see New Age as more than 'a narrowly defined movement with mostly theosophical roots', towards seeing it as 'a new spirituality', which attests to how by then it had already started morphing into a pervasive 'mood, an atmosphere'.[245] Use of 'New Age' as a catch-all for academics trying to study a variety of trends rather than a specific movement, was acknowledged by them from the beginning, such as by James R. Lewis and J. G. Melton, (1992), who recognised how problematic the term was but nonetheless saw its usefulness as 'there exists no comparable term which covers all aspects of the movement'.[246] Hence, they found it an apt label for 'a synthesis of many different pre-existing movements and strands of thought'.[247] Other early researchers, such as Michael York (1995), similarly understood it as 'an umbrella term that includes a great variety of groups and identities', which, he argued, were unified by the shared 'expectation of a major and universal change being primarily founded on the individual and collective development of human potential'.[248] Similarly, Paul Heelas (1996) described the movement as 'an eclectic hotch-potch of beliefs, practices, and ways of life' that

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240. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, p. 75.
241. MacKian, *Everyday Spirituality*, p. 7.
242. Ibid.
243. Urban, *Zorba the Buddha*, p. 11.
244. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age*, pp. 214-215.
245. C. L. Albanese, 'Fisher Kings and Public Places: The Old New Age in the 1990s', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 527, (May) 1993, pp. 131-141.
246. Lewis, 'Approaches to the Study of the New Age Movement', p. 2.
247. Lewis & Melton, 'Introduction', p. xi.
248. M. York, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*, Rowman & Littlefield, London, 1995, pp. 1-2.

centre around 'the human condition and how it can be transformed'.[249] Even those like Hanegraaff, who were most critical towards what they saw as an indiscriminate application of the label 'New Age' – which has come to mean 'very different things to different people' – still acknowledged it as a 'cultic milieu ... constituting a more or less unified 'movement''.[250]

In the twenty-first century, Hammer (2006) has echoed his predecessors by defining the New Age as a 'common denominator for a variety of quite divergent contemporary popular practices and beliefs ... largely united by historical links, a shared discourse and an *air de famille*'.[251] Reference to it as a fluid milieu has been preferred by many scholars for this reason.[252] But Hammer's matching of the New Age to 'folk religions' seems like a particularly relevant way to understand the movement, because, for one, it helps us contextualise why the New Age has developed in 'an unsystematic fashion, often through a process of bricolage from already available narratives and rituals'.[253] We can see this by observing how New Age comfortably nestles in on one side of the classificatory grouping of terms within the religious dichotomy professed in various guises within the modern study of religion; official, high, elite, pure, religious, orthodox, vs. popular, low, folk, cultural, superstitious, heterodox and magic. Like other forms of polymerous religiosity, the New Age is often defined with the latter group of labels, associated with being at the margins of religion and tinged with illegitimacy, in contrast to the former group of terms identified with religious legitimacy and authority.[254]

The central role played by alternative medicine and forms of healing among New Age seekers strongly supports the idea of the New Age as folk religion. Here Fadhlalla Haeri can work as an interesting bridge between the New Age and more conventional forms of popular religion. Many members of Haeri's communities around the world have been practitioners of alternative forms of health treatment, such as Reiki, kinesiology, aromatherapy, crystal-healing, reflexology, homeopathy, acupuncture and acupressure. But equally, many of them

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249. Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, pp. 1-2.

250. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, pp. 1, 522.

251. O. Hammer, 'New Age Movement', in W. Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, Brill, Leiden, 2006, p. 855.

252. S. Bruce, 'Good Intentions and Bad Sociology: New Age Authenticity and Social Roles', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1998, p. 24; Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 522; Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, pp. 14, 28; P. Heelas & L. Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Blackwell, Malden, 2005, p. 8.

253. Hammer, 'New Age Movement', p. 855.

254. For examples of this use of the dichotomy in defining popular Islam, see M. M. Ghaly, 'Physical and Spiritual Treatment of Disability in Islam: Perspectives of Early and Modern Jurists', *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 105-143. Ghaly argues that this opposition allows for the conceptualisation of an 'official Islam' as some sort of an assemblage that unitarily approves certain practices whilst restricting the permissibility of others, which go on to be practiced as 'popular Islam' by the masses frequently ignoring these restrictions anyway, whilst the permissibility of practices by 'official Islam' is often seen as that given by Muslim jurists who are all grouped as a single unit when in fact they often hold varying opinions. His argument is seconded by the assertions of other researchers on 'popular' Islam, like: Bruinessen's point on magic and healing, that 'certain forms of magic — notably those using verses of the Qur'an for protection or to produce another desired effect — were practised not only by 'popular' magicians but by orthodox ulama as well' (Bruinessen, 'Sufism, "Popular" Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 145); or Kathleen O'Connor's emphasis on the use and propagation of 'magical' practices amongst the scholars and other religious leaders (K. M. O'Connor, 'Popular and Talismanic Uses of the Qur'an', in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an, Volume 4*, 2004, Brill, Leiden, pp. 166-168.

have also been involved with forms of healing associated with popular Islam, such as *hikma* (traditional Islamic medicine) and various forms of healing involving the use of Divine names and the Qur'an, such as *ta'wiz* (talismans). Haeri was in fact a close friend of the renowned Eritrean expert on talismans, Shaykh Beshir Osman (d. 1984), who visited him in America and England.[255] Haeri also formed a friendship with a practitioner of a number of forms of traditional Islamic and Sufi healing, the Chishti shaykh Syed Ikram Hussain (d. 2007), who would in later years spend time with Haeri and his followers in South Africa. During his many trips to Pakistan, Haeri also connected to many Sufi figures popular among the rural people, such as Sufi Barkat Ali (d. 1997), referred to by many as *Pir*, a title especially maligned by other Muslims as part of a superstitious Islam.[256]

Between Popular and Official Islam

A tendency within modern forms of 'popular' religion in particular, which we also find among New Age seekers, is to criticise organisational forms of religion whilst seeking legitimacy through synthesising their ideas and values with science. We also see this tension in relation to more conventional religion with Haeri, who in as much as he envisaged a pure Islam free of cultural accruements, held an appreciation for expressions of Islam deemed 'popular' or 'folk' religion, whilst at the same time being critical of the type of fossilised 'official Islam' he felt was prevalent in Muslim countries.[257]

The contemporary dichotomised view of Muslim beliefs and practices into either 'magical' or 'religious' categories, builds on earlier recurrent notions of 'orthodox' Islam in opposition to 'heterodox' Islam among orientalists and reformists alike, which stimulated the confessional division of a myriad of variegated values and observances into what could be called religion on the one hand and what was considered magic on the other. What we see with Haeri is an inclination towards redressing this dyad between 'popular' and 'official' Islam.[258] On the one hand, his attitude clearly indicates a want to move away from superstition and towards science and reason; he says in one of his early talks, 'I found the absolute truth of the *deen* (life transaction; debt upon us) through the study of physics and mathematics, rather than by blind acceptance. Indeed I was raised in an Islamic environment where there was a lot of superstition, and as a young man I questioned the validity of much I had been taught

255. Haji Mustafa interview, February 2017.

256. Other popular Sufi figures Haeri befriended in Pakistan include Captain Wahid Baksh Sial Rabbani (d. 1995).

257. See Haeri, *Living Islam*.

258. Bruinessen, 'Sufism, Popular Islam and the Encounter with Modernity', p. 145. Bruinessen states that 'one problem with the concept of 'popular Islam' is that it is implicitly defined in contrast to a 'high' Islam ... [which] however, may be conceived in a variety of ways: as 'official or state Islam, as the religion of the (traditional) ulama or of puritan reformists, or as that of the urban middle classes. These are by no means the same, and the boundary between 'popular' Islam and any of these conceptions of 'high' Islam is not at all easy to establish' (p. 145).

concerning the *deen*'.[259] But Haeri also acknowledges a self-disenchantment due to his exposure to science and the modern educational system; in another talk from around the same time, he states, 'I have inherited Islam like all of you, and I had to rediscover it, because of the turmoils and tribulations that inadvertently I had been subjected to through my western education'.[260]

Once again, we have here a dichotomy that Haeri seems to straddle. For example, echoing his childhood in Karbala, Haeri might have criticised some of the practices found at the shrines of Sufi saints as superstitious, but nonetheless held a reverence for these sacred sites and could even offer a 'scientific' analogy to rationally explain their importance; in one case, using the example of nuclear radiation to compare the continuing presence of the deceased saint of a shrine with how 'many years after the original explosion traces of radioactive material can still be found'.[261] On the significance of shrines among Muslims, Haeri writes:

> There has always been some controversy about visiting of shrines amongst Muslims. Some Muslims object to such practices, equating it to idol worship and thus condemning it. However, in its symbolism there can be meaning. The love of visiting shrines comes from devotion and respect for those who have travelled successfully before us along this testing worldly path. A person who was illumined and lived according to divine justice in a world of constant change and apparent injustice is worth remembering. Visiting the tomb of a saint is an attempt to enhance the higher in us. A pilgrimage to holy places will benefit us more if we reflect upon the life values of the enlightened being and tune our soul with his to resonate at a similar frequency. Generally, people's conduct improves whilst visiting a shrine or place of worship. They behave more compassionately and become more tolerant, accommodating and giving. In poor Muslim lands, even with thieves around, you find the shrines are safe as far as rugs, carpets and fittings are concerned. Hardly anyone steals or removes anything that belongs to the shrine even though many amateur and professional thieves visit them and even take refuge in them. In fact, criminals often bring gifts and offerings along with them.[262]

This admiration for shrines expressed by Haeri makes sense in light of his emphasis on Shi'i and Sufi commonalities, the visiting of shrines being a primary one. As well as significant shrines within the Shi'i tradition, especially in Iraq and Iran, Haeri made many visits to prominent Sufi shrines during his travels throughout the years in countries across the world, in Yemen, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Iran, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Morocco, etc. For example, Haeri would tour Pakistan in the early 80s (and again in 2010) specifically to visit the shrines of celebrated Sufi saints.[263] In 1985, Haeri toured India accompanied by Shaykh Ikram, who guided him through visits to many of the shrines of Chishti saints, in for example Ajmer

259. See Haeri, *Songs of Iman On the Roads Of Pakistan*
260. Ibid.
261. Haeri & Haeri, *Sufi Encounters*, pp. 107-108.
262. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 188.
263. These included the shrines of Ali al-Hujwiri (d. 1077), Baba Farid (d. 1265), Bahauddin Zakariya (d. 1267), Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (d. 1274), Sultan Bahu (d. 1690), Bari Imam (d. 1705), Bit Shah (d. 1752), Pir Meher Ali (d. 1937), Qalandar Baba (d. 1979), and several others.

and Delhi.[264] Haeri had already in the 70s visited the famous shrine of Ali Shah in Mumbai during one of his visits to see Chinmayananda.[265]

Even earlier, in the 60s when Haeri was still working as an engineer for the IPC, during a visit to Algeria still recovering from the revolution, Haeri had been drawn to a particular town, Mostaganem. There he discovered the grave of the Shadhili shaykh, Ahmad al-Alawi.[266] After himself later being initiated into the Shadhili order, Haeri travelled many times to Morocco and the rest of North Africa over a period of twenty years, making several visits to Sufi shrines connected to the Shadhili-Darqawi order, including revisiting that of al-Alawi.[267] Also, it was during a visit to a shrine in Cape Town, at the Karamat of Seyyed Mahmud, a Malaccan spiritual leader and adviser to the Sultan who had been captured and brought to the Cape by the Dutch, that Haeri had felt encouraged to move to South Africa in the mid-90s.

4.2 Islam for a New Age

4.2.1 Settling in South Africa

> I was about to go to Sri Lanka. I bought this beautiful seafront. Wanting to have the most stunning centre, I found 10 minutes north of Colombo airport a beach front of about 1 to 2 km with a few thousand coconut trees right by the ocean. So, I wanted to build a centre there, a *khanqa* (Sufi lodge) but in a more modern way, [teaching] Qur'an, etc. And he [al-Gillani] told me, no way, too close, too close to the Middle East. And he would keep on saying 'you have to go as far as you can from Makkah-Madinah, we are heading for disasters', really. So, I remember coming to Cape Town 22 to 24 years ago for the first time. We were facing Antartica, with Hosam, who was there when Alauddin Gilani said go as far [as you can]. And I said [to Hosam], 'we can't go any further'! I followed the signs, really. As Allah says, within yourself and on the horizon. So, I look on the horizon and within myself, and if it gels, then ... .[268]

During an interview with Haeri, he recalled his adamance in following the advice of one of the prominent Sufis he had befriended in Pakistan, the Iraqi Qadiri shaykh, Tahir Alauddin al-Gilani (d. 1991), who told him to settle somewhere that was 'furthest from the Middle East, in a country where the Muslim minority has no chance of taking over power'.[269] It was clear for

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264. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.
265. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.
266. Haeri recalls about the shrine, that from there, the sound of chanting drew him like a magnet, the song remaining in his mind long after.
267. One account of Fadhlalla Haeri's travels to Morocco is given by one of Abdalqadir's earliest and closest companions, Abdul Haqq Bewley, who accompanied Haeri on a trip during October 1980 and recounted it with a three-part article published in the first volume of the *Nuradeen* Journal, vol. 1, no. 1, 2, 3, 1981.
268. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.
269. al-Gilani, cited in F. Haeri, *Son of Karbala*, p. 229.

Haeri that the Middle East was no longer an option. The effects of the Iranian revolution reverberated into the 90s, and, with the end of the Cold War, NATO's security concerns were reorientated towards the Middle East and the political threat of 'Islam'.[270]

Already in the late 80s, Abdalqadir al-Murabit had started establishing a community in South Africa, and, seeing a lot of promise there, had encouraged Haeri to come over. But during the 90s their relationship had more or less deteriorated, and by this time Haeri had himself started giving up on the idea of creating a community. He felt he had fulfilled his societal obligations and the quest now was very much a personal one, to find a good home for himself and his family. Both for the sake of his children and for himself, Haeri really wanted to get out from England.[271] He had been very mobile throughout his adult life, having changed country several times but always coming back to England in between (Haeri had initially moved from Iraq to England and then back to Iraq only to go again to England before moving to Beirut, then he went back to England and America after that, just to once again return to England before finally settling in South Africa).

Haeri made his first trip to South Africa in 1993, when he toured the country for three weeks with his wife Muneera and close friend Hosam.[272] They had been invited by a South African Indian who had on occasion spent time with Fadhlalla Haeri and the community in London at Haydar Khana.[273] The companions travelled to various parts of the country with a friend of their host, the intention being to find a place to settle. It was clear that Nelson Mandela would be released and the future of the country was optimistic. With no more ambition for creating a community, Haeri thought to find an ideal quiet location to live privately. But on a later second visit, some people had got to know of him and talks were planned for Fadhlalla Haeri by their earlier host, near the capital city of Pretoria. This is when Haeri gave his first public talks and it was on this occasion that Haeri would connect with some of his earliest and closest followers in South Africa. Chief among them were the Ravats, a mixed couple who had been running a Persian carpet gallery in the area for the last decade.[274] They would be instrumental in inviting and hosting Haeri in the future, starting with an intimate gathering with Haeri held at the gallery for a group of 15 listeners.[275]

By the third visit, Haeri had decided on a property in the Lowveld, in a town near Nelspruit called Whiteriver. It took a while for Haeri to find the right property, finally moving to Highwood Orchard, a Macadamia farm previously owned by an old German couple.[276] As well

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270. J. Guillou, lecture at Kulturlänken, Märsta Bibliotek, 10 November 2019.
271. Abdul Hadi, interview, September 2020.
272. Muneera Haeri, interview, February 2017
273. Haider Naqvi, interview, February 2016.
274. Majida Ravat, interview, February 2016.
275. Majida Ravat, interview, February 2016.
276. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.

as taking over the Macadamia farm, Haeri developed the property, adding many new buildings and facilities, such as a swimming pool, a greenhouse, vegetable patch, an orchard of various fruit trees, more residential quarters to fit his large family, as well as an extended family including his elder brother and mother.[277] Soon, Haeri would also develop an office complex on the estate, intended for a new business project for producing and distributing semi-dried high-quality fruits like mango.[278] The company was called Zoas and employed some of his followers from America and Europe who had also moved to South Africa to be near Haeri.[279] A few were involved in the setup and management of the fruit business, whilst others oversaw the developments and construction going on at the residence.[280]

All the while, a fledgling group near Pretoria was growing and becoming more established. This also included people from nearby Johannesburg, where Haeri had given talks at a progressive Muslim mosque in Brixton.[281] The community in South Africa was a mixed group, but had a large proportion of Indian Muslims, many of them successful businessmen and professionals.[282] Haeri gave his version of the starting of the community during our earliest conversation:

> You know I am sociable. So there were some of these Muslims. They weren't as boring as the others, and so I began coming here a few times, and my empathy took the best of me, and so I started teaching. … I wasn't intending to anymore. I thought teaching and preaching is over, I just don't want to go near that. They are not awakened anyway. They began to bribe me and encourage me, so I fell into the trap. So, they started building some of this.[283]

From early 1996, a centre with a mosque and later a clinic would be established on the Ravats' land adjacent to the gallery. The architect was himself a student of Haeri's and the construction was undertaken by a company owned by another of his followers.[284] The mosque in Pretoria was not originally Haeri's idea. Actually, it was Shaykh Asaf who had really given birth to the concept during one of his visits to the community in South Africa. And Haeri allowed it, providing it would remain non-sectarian. Reminiscent of Bayt al-Deen, this attitude would remain the bedrock of the centre, as captured in the charter posted on the entrance wall of the mosque; the charter states, for example, that the Rasooli Centre is 'open welcome to all, irrespective of colour, race or madhab, specifically mentioning in relation the last point, that 'the Rasooli members respect the four Sunni and the Jafari Schools of Law, as well as the

277. Mortaza Morton, interview, March 2017.
278. Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017.
279. Haji Mustafa, interview, February 2017.
280. Mortaza Morton, interview, March 2017. Haeri also bought a bush house in the middle of the nearby National Kruger Park, which he would frequent once every two weeks for a few days.
281. Other speakers to have given talks at Brixton Mosque include Amina Wadud.
282. Yunis Ismail, interview, February 2016.
283. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, December 2014.
284. Yunis Ismail, interview, February 2016.

minority Muslim madhabs, such as the Abbadi [ʻIbadi] School (Oman), the Zaydis (Yemen), and others'.[285]

By 1999, the Rasooli centre began to host an annual international conference, bringing together many of Haeri's followers dispersed throughout the world, such as in England, Canada, United States, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Australia, Sweden and Denmark.[286] But the very first South African international conference, in 1998, had been held at Umdeni, a Sufi centre in Belfast that Haeri himself had invested in together with some of his followers. Here too, a Sufi lodge (*zawiya*) and other buildings (including residential rooms) were built on the land, which lay roughly halfway between Haeri's place in Whiteriver and the community in Pretoria. The location for the centre was chosen with the intention that both parties could travel to it more conveniently, but, due to the convenience of the Rasooli centre in Pretoria for the growing community, they didn't make an effort to come out to Umdeni, which was slowly abandoned and uninhabited.[287] Although there were some attempts to revive the centre, it was eventually sold in 2013 and given to the local married couple who had been caretakers of the property.[288] Instead, Haeri would travel the entire distance to Pretoria, which he did frequently enough that he soon purchased a 'River Cottage' nearby as a private residence.[289]

Sufi Writings

Since moving to South Africa, Haeri started publishing poetry, originally collected in a couple of booklets titled *Thirty Windows* (1995) and *Forty Windows and More* (1995). These were then later republished together with many other poems in the book, *Beyond Windows* (2009), for which the distinguished South African poet and author, Don Mattera, wrote the forward. Haeri's poetry is mainly inspired by the Persian Sufi poets Sanai (d. 1150), Shabestari (d. 1340) and Jami (d. 1492). For example, a lot of the same themes expressed in Haeri's poetry can be found in the poetry of Sanai, albeit articulated in a more contemporary style by Haeri. But the influence of other Persian Sufi writings is also evident in Haeri's writings, especially from the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardi (d. 1191), and Mulla Sadra (d. 1640), who is considered one of the most influential Muslim thinkers in history. For example, an important philosophical treatise written by Mulla Sadra, called *al-Hikma al-mutaʻaliya fi al-asfar al-ʻaqliyya al-arbaʻa* (*The Transcendent Philosophy of The Four Journeys of the Intellect*), would directly inspire

285. *The Rasooli Centre Charter*, photographed February 2017.
286. Observing first-hand, the organisation and activities surrounding the annual conference for this international community, as well was general exposure during my fieldwork in South Africa, has revealed how the network of Haeri's followers across the world have come to see more than any other place the Rasooli Centre as their hub, which is ironic considering it was established by another Shaykh than Haeri.
287. Majida Ravat interview, February 2016; Yunis Ismail interview, February 2016.
288. Majida Ravat interview, February 2016; Yunis Ismail interview, February 2016.
289. Majida Ravat interview, February 2016.

Haeri's compilation of poetry called *The Four Journeys* (2014), which had a limited print of copies, each personally autographed and given as a gift by Haeri to students, friends and family.

Haeri has also been influenced by Sufi poetry in Arabic and Maghrebi form, in particular from the Shadhiliyya order he is connected to.[290] Something that had a tremendous impact on Haeri very early on, were the *diwan*s, collections of poems, introduced to him by Abdalqadir, of the Shadhili-Darqawi shaykhs.[291] Haeri selected some of these poems as part of the handbook of litanies for his followers, titled *Path to Light: the Haydari Handbook* (1988). The compilation took some eight years to finish and would be sung regularly at gatherings. As well as the Diwans of Muhammad ibn al-Habib (d. 1971) and Ahmad al-Alawi (d. 1934) found in the compilation, Haeri was very much influenced by the writings of other Shadhili Shaykhs, such as Ahmad Zarruq (d. 1493), Sidi 'Ali al-Jamal (d. 1779) and Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba (d. 1809). With Zarruq for instance, Haeri became attracted to him after coming across his long poem on specific sicknesses of the self, elucidating line-by-line their causes and cures. Haeri put considerable money and effort into obtaining the entire poem, and then tried to popularise it among his students and friends. Another prayer-book of sorts produced by Haeri, and particularly popular amongst his followers, is *Calling Allah by His Most Beautiful Names* (2002), which follows a number of classical Sufi compilations of the Divine names of God – such as by Ghazali, Ibn Arabi and Ibn 'Ajiba – and the popular religious practice of using each of them as a spiritual resources for specific issues to do with health, wealth and other everyday matters.[292]

Haeri had also started writing aphorisms after moving to South Africa, often collecting them into small booklets with titles like *Bursts of Silence* (1995) and *Ripples of Light* (1998). A significant Sufi book on aphorisms to influence Haeri was the *Hikam* of Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Iskandari (d. 1310) and commentaries on it by Ahmad Zarruq and Ibn 'Ajiba, which would inspire Haeri to write his own commentary on the *Hikam* (2004) in later years.[293] The commentary by Ibn 'Ajiba had particularly inspirational impact on Haeri, having found a copy of it in an old bookshop in Marrakech, after which he bought any copy he could find to gift to others. During a trip to Morocco, one of Ibn 'Ajiba's descendants had in fact gifted Hari with a handwritten copy of a rare manuscript of a Sufi manual by Darqawi's teacher, Sidi 'Ali al-Jamal. This has been a very significant work in the forming of Haeri's own thinking. Here he found a concept of non-duality similar to what he had learnt from the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, couched within Sufi terminology and a neoplatonic framework. Although the manuscript had already been translated by one of Abdalqadir's followers, as *Meaning of Man* (19, Haeri worked

290. Haeri was very touched by Ibn Mashish (d. 1227), who was the master of the founder of the order, Abu al-Hassan al-Shadhili (d. 1258) himself. He was particularly affected by Ibn Mashish's eulogy on the Prophet, known as al-Salat al-Mashishiyya.

291. These are Ibn al-Habib, Al-Alawi, Fayturi and Bu Madyan,

292. Some notable examples are found in the work of al-Ghazali, al-Jili, ibn Arabi,

293.

on an abridged translation easier to read and comprehend by a non-Arab contemporary reader. Though the abridged translation was never published, a few copies of it exist among some of Haeri's senior students.[294]

An important Sufi commentary of the Qur'an to have a profound impression on Haeri was *al-Bahr al-madid*, written by Ibn 'Ajiba during his final years. Employing a man in Tangier who was a descendent of Ibn 'Ajiba, Haeri acquired thousands of photocopied pages of Ibn 'Ajiba's handwritten commentaries made from a number of privately-owned old manuscripts. Although Mulla Sadra's commentaries on the Qur'an also attracted Haeri, who likened them to 'a collection of jewels', the only other Sufi commentary of the Qur'an to influence Haeri as much as Ibn 'Ajiba's was '*Ara'is al-bayan fi haqa'iq al-Qur'an* by the Persian Sufi Ruzbehan Baqli (d. 1209). This commentary became one of his favourites after being gifted with a handwritten copy of it by Captain Wahid Bakhsh Sial Rabbani (d. 1995), a Chishti shaykh, who, together with Shah Shahidullah Faridi (d. 1978), succeed the enigmatic Maulana Syed Muhammad Zauqi Shah (d. 1951). These two commentaries, by Ibn 'Ajiba and Ruzbehan respectively, married the Maghrebi and Persian Sufi leanings in the writings of Haeri, who enjoyed the similarity between the two. Haeri had no idea of it at the time, but Ruzbehan's work was in fact one of the main sources Ibn 'Ajiba made use of in his own commentary, an unawareness of this fact arising due to the latter citing the work of the former under the name of someone else that it had been mistakenly attributed to.

Inspired in part by these Sufi commentaries on the Qur'an, Haeri continued writing his own commentaries after moving to South Africa. As a distillation of over twenty years of his teachings of the Qur'an for non-Arabic speaking peoples, *The Qur'anic Prescription for Life* (1999) consists of a collection of verses selected and commentated upon in order to make them 'accessible with easy reference to key issues concerning life'.[295] Indeed, as written in the book, Haeri's purpose with this book was to make 'available the original Islamic prescription for life'.[296] Reflecting this main aim, Haeri's commentaries make constant references to the root meanings of words, to bring out idiosyncrasies and nuances lost in translation. He does not make any attempt at a comprehensive interpretation of the verses, instead concentrating on making them personally relevant for his readers.

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294. Fadhlalla Haeri worked in this abridged translation in South Africa with his long-time friend, Hosam Raouf.

295. F. Haeri, *The Qur'anic Prescription for Life*, Zahra Publications, Pretoria, 1999. This particular work has been through several reiterations, revised and republished in 2000 (2nd), then 2003 (3rd), and again in 2005 (4th); each time the commentary has changed, becoming more streamlined with every new edition.

296. Ibid.

Moving Towards a Secular Presentation of Sufism

Looking at the various Sufi influences on Haeri, we can loosely divide them into two specific streams that interestingly reflect the two streams of Sufi thought which have been most influential in the West, namely, Maghrebi and Persian.[297] Of course, the list above is not an exhaustive one of the influence of Sufi thought on Haeri.[298] Nonetheless, the brief survey of Sufi influences gives us an idea of Haeri's exposure to important Sufi texts. This is significant in order to understand Haeri's movement away from wearing these influences upon his sleeve. For example, one book of Persian poetry that had been particularly near and dear to Haeri from early on is *Gulshan-I Raz* by Shabestari. Although a successful translation of the work had already been done by Zahra Publications, Haeri wanted to embark on a personal translation in light of existing Arabic, Persian and English commentaries on the poems. But this project was never completed. Haeri's reasoning for why is given below:

> Once I embarked on the project, I realized what a complex task it would be, as it is full of symbolism, reflecting Qur'an and ancient traditions. Then I had a vision of Shabistari, joined by some of the other great luminaries of Sufism — Sanai, Attar, Rumi, Ibn al-'Arabi and Mulla Sadra — smiling at me and saying: 'what we did was perfect for our time but you must do something appropriate to your time and culture.' Life within the flower remains the same but the shape and fragrance change. This made me realise the necessity of seeing teachings and traditions in their proper context, if they are truly to be transmitted.[299]

In many ways, *Garden of Meaning* (2019) is Haeri's ode to Shabestari's work, and can be seen as the eventual culmination of the long and altering project his work had inspired. What is immediately clear when reading this book is that a certain sense of neutrality is being attempted by the type of language and references that are being used. This is a significant aspect of Haeri's writings, a growing aversion to using overtly Islamic or even Sufi terminology, which becomes all the more apparent with later publications.[300]

What starts to become evident when comparing and contrasting Haeri's various publications and talks since moving to South Africa with those from an earlier period, is how much of what he is saying is influenced by the readers or listeners he is saying it to. We see it in many of his projects throughout the years, but especially in the publication projects, in in the translating, printing and distribution of ancient manuscripts he financiered, but especially in his own writings. All in all, what we notice in Haeri's attempts to reach and teach those around him is the sense to adapt his presentation of Islam for the demographic he was situated

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297. This is further indicated by his interest in the Sufi classics *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* and *Fusus al-hikam* of Ibn 'Arabi, and the *Mesnevi* of Rumi.

298. Plenty of other early Sufi figures can be added to the list, such as Bayazid Bistami (d. 878), al-Niffari (fl. 10th century) and 'Ali al-Hujwiri (d. 1071).

299. F. Haeri, Garden of Meaning, Zahra, Pretoria, 2019.

300. See appendix for a survey of these later books.

in. Not only did this change with *where* he was, but *when* he was also. Although elements of this strategy are there in his works form the beginning, we begin to see at this stage how with time they would become more pronounced.

The increasingly evident transition towards a more secular and less religious language and style in Haeri's presentation of his teachings on Sufism and the Qur'an within his literary works, serve as a way of gaging how much his work has evolved in connection to whom he perceives to be his readership. The point being, that this change has largely been in response to the modern imaginary and subjectivity of those he seems to have been exposed to, from around the world but especially South Africa. What is noteworthy here is that most of these people are born Muslims, but often those that have been disillusioned by what they have seen of the religion and its representatives, only making their way back to the faith after meeting Haeri.

A Sufi presence among minority Muslim communities in South Africa was pointed out already in the early decades of the twentieth century by Samuel Zwemer, after his visit to Cape Town. Although very little research on the topic occurred throughout the rest of the century, a few studies have emerged since the start of the new millennium.[301] What they all point out is that since the arrival of Malay labourers in the eighteenth century and South-Asian migrants later on, Islam in South Africa had mainly evolved under the influence of Sufi shaykhs and orders. But from the 60s onward, a new reformist campaign was launched against the 'traditional' forms of religious practice associated with these Sufis that had previously pervaded not only the Cape Malay Muslims but that had also dominated 'Indian' Muslims in South Africa.[302] Among the Indian migrants, this campaign was instigated and executed by a network of Deobandi scholars referred to as Jamiatul Ulama Transvaal, which was itself influenced by an association of Muslim scholars in India called the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind that had been established in 1919 as part of the Khalifat movement aimed at restoring the Ottoman caliphate.[303]

With a considerable demographic of Indians, it isn't much of a surprise to learn that the influence of the Deobandi tradition has been extensive upon South African Islam through this network of religious scholars and a number of madrasas and religious schools (such as in Azaadville and Lenasia), which are themselves part of a transnational Deobandi network.[304] Although itself initiated by prominent Indian Sufis, the Deobandi movement has come to

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301. Examples include, M. Haron, 'Sufi Tariqahs and Dawah Movements: Competing for Spiritual Spaces in Contemporary South(ern) Africa', *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2005, pp. 273-297; P. Kaarsholm, 'Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks in South Africa, Mozambique and the Indian Ocean', in *Journal of African History*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2014, pp. 191-210.

302. D. Reetz, 'The Tablighi Madrassas in Lenasia and Azaadville: Local Players in the Global Islamic Field', in A. Tayob, I. Niehaus & W. Weisse (eds.), *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa*, p. 86-104.

303. Reetz, 'The Tablighi Madrassas in Lenasia and Azaadville', p. 87-88

304. Reetz, 'The Tablighi Madrassas in Lenasia and Azaadville', p. 87-88; see also Reetz, 2007, 2010b

categorically represent an avid anti-Sufi alignment for most Indian Muslims in South Africa. Many of Haeri's followers in South Africa were from these communities of Indian South Africans, disillusioned and sometimes disowned by the interpretations of Islam that the Deobandi scholars avouched.

As well as through his publications, Haeri was also becoming a recognised public religious figure in South Africa through active engagements. One seminal occasion was the Intercultural Eid Celebration in Johannesburg on 30 January 1998, which Haeri held together with Nelson Mandela (d. 2013), both dignitaries giving their respective speeches to the large crowd of attendees as well as viewers at home watching the televised broadcast. Throughout his years in South Africa, Haeri would speak at a variety of Muslim and other religious events, becoming a respected and well-known figure across many different religious and spiritual traditions in the country.[305] But Haeri would also be vilified by some sections of the Muslim population in South Africa, especially by Deobandi ulama.[306]

As a result, Haeri's South African Indian followers would most often be those that themselves, willingly or unwillingly, did not fit in with the Muslim status quo established by the ulama in their respective communities. Haeri had himself made many efforts to reach out to these Indian and other Muslim communities in South Africa, but with little result. This lack of receptivity of his teachings among the Muslims was one of the major reasons why Haeri went on to establish the Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK), as well as his continuing movement away from wearing his Sufi influences upon his sleeve.

Academy of Self Knowledge

> One day in a mosque, I realised that I am really getting through to about ten people, four of whom were my own people who came with me. And maybe another 30 who could barely understand, and the rest were completely, they just wanted the usual thing and then get back to their shops to make money. And then that night I had a very clear inspiration that I must establish a teaching, which we called ASK, Academy of Self Knowledge, and I will only sit with people who have been through that course. And it helped … we had a fairly good run here for a while. But now it is morphing into other things … The ASK program is basically the self-soul interplay. The search of identity. That is what the whole program was about. It started with me really pleading, that I want to filter people. Because they are human beings, so we can't have everybody, you see. I wanted to filter those who are serious in search of identity, real identity. Not CV. And that came to me. So, within 2-3 days it was clear. So, I thought I won't meet anybody, unless they have been through it. But then somebody like Shazia [a recent young

305. One example being a symposium by the Ramakrishna Institute of Spirituality commemorating Vivekananda's 150th birthday in January 2014.

306. A recent case that demonstrates this issue is that surrounding the publication of *Hey! Who Am I Really?* (2015) by Yacoob Moosa, who was a leading figure of the Indian Muslim community in Durban until he published this book. Inspired by the teachings of Fadhlalla Haeri, the book and its author were 'excommunicated' by various groups of Deobandi ulama.

> student of Haeri's from the UK present during the meeting] arrives … so what can I do, how can I not accept her. I say come, ASK or no ASK, it doesn't matter.[307]

As noted already, Haeri had begun to move away from using religious terminology by the end of the millennium, choosing a contemporary language more akin to popular science and New Age. In 2004, Haeri launched the online course, Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK), in the hope that this could cover a lot of the ground work of introducing people to the basic concepts and terminology he was using, so that those struggling to follow what he was speaking about would be able to understand him and interact with what he was teaching. The significance Haeri placed on this new project is reflected in the fact that for at least five to six years after the course was made available, he would constantly inquire from those around him if they had done the ASK course.

Academy of Self Knowledge began to take shape in 2002 and was officially inaugurated in 2003, being officially launched online on the 30 September 2003. Further development of ASK continued even after its launch, as a lengthy process involving many of his closest and most well-read students. The intention was to have a one-year course (but allowing for up to two years to complete) comprised of three modules with 14 lessons each. Each lesson would contain the main text of the lesson as given by Shaykh Fadhlalla, and additional supportive material as well as exercises and assignments developed by his students, who could contribute in their capacity as psychologists, scientists, academics, religious scholars, etc.

Haeri would make a number of visits to different locations in South Africa as well as abroad, in the UK and Pakistan for example, to promote and further advance the Academy of Self Knowledge. He made a visit to the UK in the summer of 2004 specifically for the UK launch of ASK. In Pakistan, there was a special event held in March 2005 to introduce ASK. In the US, ASK held its first meetings in 2006, organised by one of Haeri's earliest followers and conducted by Haeri's wife and director of ASK, Aliya Haeri.[308] ASK was introduced to Sweden in 2006 also, with the help of one of the main developers of the course from England, as well as by some from the Swedish community, who advertised it in a local newspaper in Gothenburg.[309]

Eventually, ASK had physical locations in the UK, USA and Pakistan, and in South Africa at the Rasooli Centre in Pretoria. Throughout the ensuing years, Haeri would travel to and conduct workshops at these various locations, answering questions and comments connected to the course, which would be video-recorded and then made available online for those unable to attend the events. There was also a facilitator training program connected to the course,

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307. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, December 2014.

308. One of the events was held at the Eno River Universalist Unitarian Church in Durham, North Carolina, with around 50 participants ranging from doctors, scientists, students, psychologists, business consultants, etc. And another was held at Incarnate Word Chapel, in San Antonio, Texas.

309. The retreat was held from April 15-18.

which was held in South Africa. Efforts were even made to make the course accredited by the University of South Africa (UNISA) and other institutions in the US and UK. A specific resort centre was also planned at Umdeni in South Africa, as a facility for students to come to, for one to four weeks in short intensive retreats where they could meet other students and teachers in a natural environment. But this never materialised. However, from 2004, the annual conference at the Rasooli came to compensate for this and was officially referred to as the annual ASK conference, which brought together a large number of students from across the world to the one location, demonstrating just how central this new project had become for Haeri and his community.

A combination of internet resources and personal contact with trained facilitators, the ASK course was an ambitious attempt to spread Haeri's work on self-knowledge to a wider audience. Haeri had himself benefited from undertaking a postal-course developed by Chinmaya during the 70s, which had inspired him to launch a correspondence-course (conducted mainly by mail) in the 80s during his time in the US. But ASK was not an update of this earlier course, it was a complete reworking that not only made use of the increasingly pervasive presence of the world-wide-web, but also presented the teachings in a language that could confidently suit a new generation of students. Often, but not always, the change in language meant a more generous use of terminology common to New Age literature, as is especially evident in the first module of the ASK project.

ASK Module One

The formulation of the first ASK course was quite clearly a conscious choice made with the intention of separating 'Islamic knowledge' from the historical and cultural 'baggage of Muslims'. At an ASK event in Pakistan, the course was described in just this way:

> The ASK course is, if you will, an unbundling of the spiritual sciences of Islam, freed from the tyranny and baggage of Muslims' sloganeering and religious homilies, not to mention sectarian competitiveness and other divisive doctrinal debates. Indeed, in Module One there is no mention of Islam let alone Islamic terminology. True Knowledge — *Haqq* — must stand the test of time and place regardless of culture and language.[310]

ASK module one was consciously designed to introduce Haeri's teachings with this impression of a universal 'True Knowledge' free from any history or culture. The style and language of the course content as a whole, reads as something that could be quite readily found on a New Age

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310. Quote by Muna Bilgrami from her 'Introduction to the Academy of Self-Knowledge', presented on the 19th of March, 2005 for ASK Awareness Day at the Alliance Francaise in Karachi, Pakistan. Use of the word Haqq (lit. Truth) here as a specific type of knowledge is in reference to the classical Sufi distinction between 'sharia' and 'haqiqa' in reference to an exoteric and esoteric dimension of Islam, respectively. This interesting dichotomy is discussed in more detail later.

or pop-psychology shelf at the bookshop, with words like 'consciousness', 'energy', 'unity' and 'quantum', all betraying these influences.

Module 1 was called 'Cosmology of the Self', and was comprised of the following 14 lessons:

1. Dynamics of Existence and the Nature of Creation
2. Inception and Creation
3. The First Steps of our Journey, Early Childhood
4. Childhood and the Map of the Self
5. Virtues and Vices
6. Patterns in the Map of Existence
7. Perfecting Consciousness
8. Soul Dynamics
9. Relationships
10. Mind Body and Spirit
11. Decree and Destiny
12. Ageing Suffering and Inner Sight
13. Life, the Grave and Beyond
14. Light upon Light or the Absence of Light

We see above how the course marked out various specific stages in the human journey of transformation, from embryo, to childhood, to adulthood, to maturity, to transition, and finally completion. As the titles indicate, the entire course was envisaged as a map, taking you through the journey of life. Echoing the common theme of the 'wayfarer' in Sufi literature, ASK was conceptualised using the analogy of the traveller, starting with the premise that we are all travellers in space and time, and the purpose of the ASK courses is to provide you with the tools for this 'journey'. The first module was designed to provide you with the 'map' for your journey and the ability to read it on both a broad and minute scale.

> Module one is to do with the maps. You have to learn to read the map, and this map is not just outside you. You have to read it inside you. It is unlike any other map that is two-dimensional. This is five dimensional. It has to interact with you to see how true it is. The thing that I feared most has happened, now what? The thing that I thought is going to give me security is not, now what? The person whom I thought is going to give me all, whatever it is, is not, now what? You will be challenged, this is the meaning in the Qur'an, *Allah yabtalikum*, so as you are worn out. It doesn't mean you are not active any more, doesn't mean you are not interactive. It doesn't mean that you are not using your normal worldly skills and so on. These are all necessary but insufficient. So this map we are talking about, module one, is an interactive map. Unless you see it internally in you, you cannot read it anymore, because you have to read your inner map.
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> Initially you have to be taught all of the index of the map; this is to do with the opposites. You have a lot of the outer activity not balanced by inner activity, therefore you are miserable. Now you understand. Now you have to correct it. Or vice versa. You have too much aspects to do with the other

world and non-worldliness, because you know this world is false, you have abandoned it, you can't do that. You have to come back and take responsibility of the physicalities. You cannot deny it. If you deny the physicality, spirituality denies you. This map has to be lived. It is not to be talked about. Care for that which you can care for, that which is beyond you will take care of itself. Take care of your duties and responsibilities, don't talk about your rights. Don't clamour for spiritual enlightenment. Clamour and put it as your responsibility, worldly appropriateness in your relationships. Appropriateness! This is module one. If you don't get the map and the interactiveness of it you can't move.[311]

Self-knowledge is the key theme throughout the course, and is presented as 'the most vital map that any traveller in this world needs'. What is presented is a universal approach to self-knowledge with minimal use of theological terminology, reflected in the variety of assignments and complementary material, ranging from psychological exercises to excerpts and citations from science, poetry, philosophy, as well as different religions. Excerpts and quotes from a diversity of figures are littered throughout the course content (e.g. Aristotle, Goethe, Rousseau, Dostoyevsky, Einstein, Madeleine L'Engle, Marianne Williamson, Pike, Defoe, Emerson, Gibran, Kafka, Krishnamurti, Ghazali, Jafar al-Sadiq, Tagore, Ts'ai-Ken T'an, Lao Tzu, Oumar Ba, Mbiti, Rumi, Chrysostom, de Chardin), as well as old proverbs from different world cultures, such as the Mandinka and Asante, and religious texts like the Bible and I-Ching.

The wide variety of quotes and excerpts from figures of almost every conceivable background, together with the language and style of the ASK content, all indicate an explicit attempt at presenting Haeri's teachings as universal. As a summation of Haeri's teachings on self-knowledge that had developed across the 25 or so years prior to the development of ASK, module one shows us just how much Haeri had gradually decreased the use of typical Islamic terminology whilst increasing the use of terms more closely associated with popular science and the New Age. But Haeri's explicitly Islamic teachings throughout the years also found a place in the ASK course, now repackaged into the second module.

ASK Module Two

The second Ask module was called 'Prophetic Prescriptions' and, in the end, came to consist of 12 lessons:

1. One Creator – Countless Creations
2. One Truth – Countless Realities
3. Patterns in Existence – Allah's Ways
4. The Prophetic Model of Muhammad
5. The Qur'anic Prescription for Life

311. During a talk in which Haeri was introducing ASK in the UK.

6. Acts of Worship
7. Relationships and Transactions
8. Towards Perfection and Enlightenment
9. Principles and Foundations of Islamic Thought
10. Culture and Civilization of Muslims
11. The Individual and Society
12. Remedies and Prescriptions for the Wayfarer.

As indicated by these titles, as well as the original working title of the entire course, 'The Prophetic Revealed Path — Islam', there is no shying away from Islamic terminology or content here. This course is explicitly focused on Islam, but still approaches the subject from a universal perspective, starting with the statement, 'All of the Prophets indicated the same truth'. The course content covers typical sharia issues, like injunctions of what to do and what not to do. But it also aims to outline a socio-historical understanding of mankind. Even the religious prescriptions for what is permissible and what is not permissible is couched in an anthropological and psychological approach. A promotional overview of the course reads:

> Our *deen* is a way life, a way of thinking, a way of eating, a way of worshipping, a way of transacting, and a way of relationships. Every aspect has the appropriate courtesy. To begin with, for a child it's a bit difficult because he does not immediately see the benefit that he shouldn't eat while he is walking; he shouldn't drink while he is running, and so on. But as he gets older he finds that these practices are beneficial because he does not get indigestion. All of these virtues, which are a result of practicing the *deen*, are of immediate direct benefit. We are living at a time when society cannot help the family and individual very much because of the smaller households, and all of the other demands of pleasures and frivolous distractions. Therefore, simply giving orders to young people to follow rituals will not work. But if they realize that they can excel in their studies and exams by perfecting their *sajda* (prostration), how to disappear and have no thought in it, they will certainly do their *salat* (prayers) more enjoyably, and more on time. They will not miss it. There are benefits of salat at every level. So, we need to live our *deen*, and to absorb the benefits of every aspect of the Qur`an and Prophetic teaching. We must be the first beneficiaries, otherwise we will be preaching without partaking ourselves, and that is hypocrisy. That is what so many so-called religious communities suffer from. So the second module introduces us to the *deen*, the *sharia*, the way of life: the way of thinking, moving, transacting; what is correct, what is allowed and what is not; what is forbidden completely and what is despicable and to be avoided. It is all for our own sake. Allah does not need it. You and I need it in order to realize the light of Allah in our hearts. The module shows us how to transform vices into virtues, and how every aspect of the *sharia* is designed to bring about a shift and elevation in the level of our consciousness and awareness.

With its emphasis on how sharia can be of immediate personal benefit to the individual by bringing back meaning to empty ritual, a revivalist sense is still evident in the content of course two. But there is a clearer move towards understanding the contextuality of knowledge, however universally applicable it may be considered. The course sets out to present the perfect

Prophetic model in fulfilling the purpose of life, but with a disclaimer that what is appropriate now may not be appropriate later, or that what may seem right for us internally, may not be right for us externally. This is made clear in the opening paragraph of the course introduction, where it is pointed out that what is considered 'good or bad ... changes constantly'.[312] Hence, what is advocated in the second course is a type of situated ethics with an emphasis on the appropriate or inappropriateness of any action in relation to its context.

Coming back to the travel analogy, having studied the map of the journey in module one, you are then ready to be provided with the means to travel along it (i.e. the vehicle and how to drive and take care of it) with module two. Sticking to this analogy, the third and final module is meant to provide you with an understanding of the terrain and environment of your journey, meaning its current climate.

ASK Module Three

> Having got the map and its details, and the qualification to drive, you also need to have an idea about the local conditions that relate to outside factors, such as weather, safety, security, and other related issues. You'll be foolish to take your car out of the garage if it is likely to hail, or if you know there is a big forest fire a mile down the road, or there are land mines all around you. Besides the foundations of self-knowledge, and self-grooming and accountability, you need a clear understanding of the world you are living in. You need to know how the present local as well as prevailing global cultures have come about. Who are the role models, and what are considered as desirable and sought after activities amongst people? What is the trend in the changing value systems, whether to do with behaviour or material goods? The Prophetic model relates to appropriateness and living the moment. How can you do the right thing in the right way at the right time, if you don't understand the different waves of cultures and civilizations prevalent at the time? This third course gives you a foundation in history, geography, philosophy, and other aspects of human life, to equip you appropriately, at an age that is very different from previous times, and yet similar, in that all of us seek happiness and contentment no matter who we are, or where we are.

The purpose of the third ASK module was to offer a deep contextualisation of our current condition. Titled 'The World as IS', this module was also designed with 14 lessons in mind:

1. Ethics and Values
2. Force and Power
3. Control and Authority
4. Money and Wealth
5. Technics and Technology

312. The full quote: Therefore, this business of good or bad, or which way shall I turn, changes constantly except for the ultimate horizon, which is the ultimate and absolute good. The ultimate objective is that we want to resurrect within ourselves, or reach within ourselves a zone that is constantly reliable. If we can discover the map of existence, and follow the path of correct conduct along it, then we will reach a safe destination or, at the very least, have a safe journey.

6. Science and Discovery
7. Governance and Institutions
8. Markets and Commerce
9. Art and Culture
10. Education and Instruction
11. Intellectuals and Ideologies
12. Gender and the Family
13. Religion and Spirituality
14. Ecology and Environment

The earliest title of this module had been 'Foundational Collapse and the Seeds of Rebirth', which highlights its fairly negative stance towards the present predicament of mankind. Modernity is portrayed as caught between the collapse of an original integrative system (of values, behaviours, etc.) and the rise of a new one. Albeit arguably itself ideological in character, the course content offers a striking critique of ideologisation. From the outset, there is a refutation of what is seen as an underlying 'mechanistic or deterministic' premise which ascribes the collapse of the earlier 'integrative system' to specific causes that can be isolated and identified. The argument made in the course material is that although 'individual events and even broad historic currents may appear to have caused the breakdown of these integrative systems, it is a far too narrow perspective to ascribe to these inflection points an overarching determining quality'.

What is implied is that ideological attempts to reverse the consequences of 'critical moments' in history ('that appear to define the future course of nations, peoples and civilisations') are futile, because they ignore the fact that these events are simply inevitable surface expressions of deeper currents that accumulate force from a continuous stream of earlier events and actions. This critique is followed by a description of what the ASK course aims to offer in response, stating that 'the ASK programme will not try to generate a sense of a lost "Golden Age" to which mankind can return', but 'will affirm that every age is a golden age, if only mankind were to abide by the laws of creation'. The goal is develop within the ASK student 'the capability of seeing beyond the tumultuous unfolding of events to the integrative web that connects these events with themselves and with the past and which in turn derive their meaning from the degree of man's alienation from the laws and decrees of creation'. And as a result, he or she will have the tools 'to effect the movement of events by interacting with them in ways that are conscious of the ultimate abiding principle, and thus add to the possibility of moving the course of history, in small increments, to a path that would lead to greater benefit and harmony to mankind'.

Whilst some of Haeri's most intellectual and well-read students worked on collecting and developing most of the content and material for the third ASK course, no part of module 3 was ever made publicly available. The course was never finalised and the project was discarded by Haeri. Although the contributors met difficulties in completing the course, this change of heart says more about the direction in which Haeri was moving by this time then it does about the failure of the contributing students. As we have seen, all three modules of the Academy of Self-Knowledge were being developed concurrently, but only the first two modules were ever published as course material on the ASK website, which was redesigned and updated in 2010, but later sublimated into *The SFH Foundation* website, launched in 2015. We can only speculate on the real reasons for abandoning the third ASK course. But this much is clear, that it went in parallel with the start of a new phase in Haeri's life. A phase that obviously shows many continuities with his writings from the last three decades, but also diverges in some interesting ways that reflect the influence of those he seems to be writing for.

Muslim New Age

An important fact highlighted from our observations on the development of the Academy of Self Knowledge is how much Haeri relies on his students in formulating and presenting his teachings. As we saw with the creation of the ASK courses, the project largely developed through constant interaction between Haeri and a group of dedicated students. The way Haeri develops his teachings by responding to his students is also apparent in his literary efforts, which, as we have noted, have never been a single person enterprise. From the start of his career as a teacher, but even more so in recent years, the activity around Haeri's publications have been his main way of interacting with his students, and has become a central characteristic of his legacy of being a teacher.[313] Hence, most importantly for us, the move towards a more secular presentation of Islam and Sufism that we see with Haeri on the literary front, is reflective of his continuing interaction with students, and through them contact with the wider world.

From my own experience of the ASK course during fieldwork (2014–17), it became clear that it is very much the first module which has remained popular and found the most traction among both the community of followers around Haeri as well as independent participants of the course. By the time of my fieldwork, the course material for both of the extant ASK modules had been made available as e-books, and both courses are still taught in the form of weekly classes or recurrent weekend workshops offered in Europe and especially in South Africa by

313. Haeri interview, December 2017. He said during the interview: 'In my little life I have seen that the most benefit came to people when they were transcribing this work. Because you go over it many times. It is a displacement. It helps to replace the old neurons. You are suddenly shocked. You go along a particular neural pathway and realise it is a cul-de-sac. It can then be displaced. That is if you are genuine and you trust it. In it is affecting you then it is transformative, not just informative'.

Aliya Haeri. However, many more have undertaken and are familiar with the first module, and it is the first course that is still offered a lot more often than the second. In fact, the first course module is currently being updated. Interesting for our discussion is that the popularity of the first ASK module is not only evident among people without any background in Islam, but also among those from a Muslim background looking for something more 'spiritual' than 'religious'.

As a good example of this trend, what follows is the story of one such South African born Muslim, who was a participant at an ASK course during which I had conducted participant observation.

> Both my mum and dad came from families that were religious, practicing Muslims. And my parents were certainly believers and observed much of the tradition and culture. But for some reason they were not people who prayed every day. My father went to the mosque on a Friday. So that means none of us really grew up praying at home, you know. We fasted, we did some things. We ate Halal meat ... my sisters were well-read, and that exposed us to quite a lot. We did go to madrasa in the afternoons as did all Muslim children. That didn't really make much of an impression ... and then when I turned fourteen, I stopped believing in everything. I was just exposed to something else. I had read Ayn Rand. I was very influenced by that and I was an atheist from there on for a very long time and later on in my life I would become agnostic.
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> ... I went to Joburg when I was 19. It was kind of unusual for a Muslim girl to leave home and go to Joburg and live on her own with friends, non-Muslims. That was hard on my family, and quite brave of me in a lot of ways just to do that. When I was in Joburg, at 19, I had friends who were all activists. There was a lot of political activism happening in those days, and I was exposed to all of that. Also having been in South Africa at that time, you were exposed to a lot. It wasn't just about race. It was about sexuality, it was about gender, it was about all sorts of things. And that is one of the reasons why we have one of the best constitutions in the world. Because everything had come up. Some of my friends were lesbian and that exposed me quite a lot, and my own sexuality. I also started to have more relationships with women. It was always something that ... I know that I have always been attracted to women but not something I could be ever in Nelspruit. I only realised that I could live that kind of lifestyle when I moved to Joburg. ... in the city I was exposed to people who were well-educated and very progressive in their thinking, and that was very interesting for me. Those days were really fun days actually. I was thinking the other day that all the presidents since independence I have actually personally met.
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> ... My lawyer happened to be someone who was on a spiritual path and he was following a Toltec path, which is really the way of the spiritual warrior. He introduced me to it, and for the first time in my life I was actually drawn to something. It felt like divine intervention for me. And so he exposed me to the Toltecs, and I got from him some literature. I started to read the books and knew that until I'd finished those books I couldn't do anything ... I did that for like the next 6 years. I just read and read and read everything. I was looking for a way, looking for something, looking for some meaning. Everything was still spinning in my head, because by now I had moved on from the Toltecs and was reading more. Things really started changing for me when I actually got in to a practice. I had a friend who was a Yoga teacher, and she introduced me to Kundalini Yoga. But before that what I was actually doing was, I realized at some point that I was spinning too much in my head and I had a lot of energy,

> so I did a lot of physical activity. I went to the gym, I did Tai Chi, I was going to Yoga classes, Hatha Yoga, and I was doing martial arts. But when I was exposed to Kundalini, something then really shifted for me. Then things started to change. And then I started to feel better. More grounded. I wasn't spinning in my head so much. I started to see more. I definitely started to become more aware.
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> … As soon as I started practicing, I gave it my all, I practiced every day for three hours a day. And then I did the teacher training pretty quickly after, and then I started to teach. … I ran retreats, workshops, all that sort of stuff. … And then Shaykh Fadhlalla started to notice me at some point. I've known him for a long time. He's known me since 1994, since he arrived in South Africa, because my sister was a student of his. And he'd seen me over the years. … I know that in all my years of exploring spirituality, he was the one person who stood out, one person that seemed more awakened than anyone else. And I had the highest regard for him. But I never really wanted to become a student of his because I thought that he was a practicing Muslim and that part never appealed to me at all. So, I was never keen to become a student of his at all. … I became a student of his when I decided to go to Makkah for Umrah. When I had made that decision, it wasn't because I necessarily wanted [something] spiritual that I wanted to go to Makkah. It was more a friend who was going and she was going past Palestine and I thought that could be fun; for some reason I was interested in going to Palestine. As the months progressed and this was becoming more of a reality, I thought that maybe it would be a good idea for me to maybe see Shaykh Fadhlalla … I wanted to get his advice on what to do on this trip. How to get the most from this trip and how to get the maximum benefit from it, and that really opened the door for me with him. To me it felt like I took one step towards him or to God, and a thousand steps were taken towards me.[314]

What we find expressed in this concise personal account mirrors in microcosm Taylor's narrative of secularisation and the move towards social-mobilisation and self-authenticity. One interesting point for us is how she only became a student of Haeri after first exploring numerous New Age trends, although she had been born a Muslim. And interestingly, even after committing to Fadhlalla Haeri as her spiritual guide, she has continued with many of the practices she had adopted earlier, such as Kundalini Yoga and Vipassana Meditation.[315]

During my fieldwork in South Africa, I have witnessed numerous examples of eclectic religiosity associated with the New Age among Haeri's community of followers. Conversations among some of them often include mention of contemporary spiritual teachers popular in the 'New Age' circuit, like Ekhart Tolle, Sadhguru, Mooji, Adyashanti and A. H. Almaas. The centre connected to Haeri in Pretoria has itself hosted events by new religious movements, such as the Art of Living Foundation founded by Ravi Shankar, and meditation classes by the Brahma Kumaris, as well as regular Yoga classes. In fact, you will find among Haeri's students, established teachers of Yoga and other practices popular in New Age circles, such as different forms meditation and methods of self-development involving the Enneagram. His well-to-do

314. Shameen Yaqub, interview, February 2019.
315. Ibid.

students in Johannesburg, as another example, have held regular sessions reciting and reflecting on the poetry of Rumi translated into English.

Modern Muslim Subjectivities

An interesting issue with South Africa is how it problematises any apparent division between the West and the rest, as it does not neatly fit into either of the categories. But even if we set this issue aside, it is clear that New Age religiosity is much better contextualised according to economic or cultural criteria rather than geographical. What we find among many followers of Haeri coming from a Muslim background, regardless of their geographical location, are characteristics representative of an eclectic New Age seeker we tend to associate with Western societies. What this brings to the fore is a particular perspective through which the middle-class in South Africa have a lot more in common with people in California or even Pakistan with similar material advantages, than say with the underprivileged closer to home.

A number of researchers have looked at the growth in this type of 'spirituality' occurring as a selectively 'hybridised' appropriation of New Age ideas by Muslims in majority and minority communities across the world. And due to its established association with New Age, Sufism has served as a bridge in this process of assimilation by Muslims. From her research in Indonesia, Julia Howell (2007) has observed that New Age spirituality has 'proven highly attractive to many Muslim cosmopolitans over the last two decades, especially when their techniques and concepts have been religiously de-contextualized and psychologized or medicalized'.[316] Speaking on the popularity of New Age movements and methods among Muslims, she writes:

> Some Muslims are prepared to see their techniques for personal and spiritual development as essentially 'Sufi', in the sense that they may enhance self-reflection and purification or deepen meditative awareness. Articles in women's magazines also psychologize spiritual practices like Reiki and Raja Yoga, presenting them as methods of stress reduction that have health benefits and can be used as aids to confidence and concentration in business and study. In that way any competing religious representations of the spiritual forces energizing those techniques can be set aside and the practices adopted without perceived offence to an Islamic faith. The religiosity of such cosmopolitan Muslims can thus be eclectic (in the sense of drawing on practices other than those in prescribed orthodox Islamic ritual) without being syncretic.[317]

As well as from her research in Indonesia, Howell (2005) has also noted the popularity of the global spiritual market place among the urban bourgeoise in Morocco, which Patrick Haenni and Raphaël Voix (2007) have also observed, noting trends to find convergences between

316. J. D. Howell, 'Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks', in M. V. Bruinessen & J. D. Howell (eds.), *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2007, p. 238.
317. Howell, 'Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks', p. 237.

Sufism and Yoga or Zen Buddhism, for example.[318] Similar forms of eclectic subjectivity among Muslims have also been noted among middle-class Pakistanis in Lahore by Alix Philippon (2014), as well as in popular Egyptian literature by Jeffrey Kenney (2015) and Mark Sedgwick (2017).[319] All of these researchers point towards an 'Islamization of the New Age', some emphasising the centrality of individualism in these groups and others the primacy of liberalism. Haenni and Voix for instance, mention the replacement of socialist and nationalist concerns of earlier decades with an interest in individual wellbeing and self-development among these eclectic Sufis.[320] Sedgwick, on the other hand, stresses their preferment of tolerance and peace as more central.[321] Most importantly though, they all support the argument that this type of eclectic Sufism is an expression of 'Modern Muslim Subjectivities', which aim to interlace 'Islamic traditions with globally relevant social imaginaries'.[322] Howell describes this assimilative process well.

> In exercising choice and creating their own ways to meet newly perceived spiritual needs, the new Sufis have inverted the negative valence attached to experiential religiosity in high modern constructions of religion. Also, by being prepared to make use of spiritual and psychological insights and techniques from other traditions and assimilate these to Islam's traditions of depth spirituality, the negative associations once attached to eclecticism in religion are now being partially erased.[323]

We are reminded here, of the observations of Hermansen, Klinkhammer and Westerlund on a psychologisaton of Sufism in the West, and the wider discussion on the psychologisation of religion by the likes of Hanegraaff and Parsons. But for a more complete understanding of the global reach of this phenomenon, we need to consider how psycholoigsation is a process common to contemporary culture in general. For instance, Frank Füredi (1997) argues that modern medicalisation and psychologisation affects all of society, and arises from increasing individualisation and the diminishing of traditional authority.[324]

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318. P. Haenni and R. Voix, 'God by All Means ... Eclectic Faith and Sufi Resurgence among the Moroccan Bourgeoisie', in M. V. Bruinessen & J. D. Howell (eds.), *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2007, p. 242.

319. A. Philippon, 'From the Westernization of Sufism to the Reislamization of New Age, Order International and the Globalization of Religion' [translation of 'De l'occidentalisation du soufisme à la réislamisation du New Age? Sufi Order International et la globalisation du religieux'], in *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranee (REMMM)*, vol. 135, no. 1, 2014, pp. 209-226; J. T. Kenney, 'Selling Success, Nurturing the Self: Self Help Literature, Capitalist Values, and the Sacralization of Subjective Life in Egypt', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 47, 2015, pp. 663-680; M. Sedgwick, 'Eclectic Sufism in the Contemporary Arab World', *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2017, pp. 65-82.

320. Haenni & Voix, 'God by All Means', pp. 244-245.

321. Sedgwick, 'Eclectic Sufism in the Contemporary Arab World', p. 66.

322. D. Jung, 'Modernity, Islamic Traditions, and the Good Life: An Outline of the Modern Muslim Subjectivities Project', *Review of Middle East Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2016, pp. 18-27, pp. 19, 23; see also D. Jung & K. Sinclair, 'Multiple Modernities, Modern Subjectivities and Modern Order: Unity and Difference in the Rise of Islamic Modernities', *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 130, no. 1, 2015, pp. 22-42; D. Jung, 'The Rationale of the Modern Muslim Subjectivity Project', *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2017, pp. 11-29; D. Jung, M. J. Peterson and S. J. Sparre, *Politics of Modern Muslim Subjectivities: Islam, Youth and Social Activism in the Middle East*, Palgrave, New York, 2014; also Sedgwick, 'Eclectic Sufism in the Contemporary Arab World'; Haenni & Voix,' God by All Means', pp. 254-255; Kenney,' Selling Success, Nurturing the Self', p. 665.

323. Howell, 'Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks', p. 240.

324. F. Füredi, *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*, Routledge, London, 2004

Füredi's argument is in line with several cultural critiques emerging in the post-world-war climate, against an apparent 'therapeutic ethos' overtaking Western society. Already pointed out by Peter Berger (1965), but most resolutely argued by social critics like Christopher Lasch (1978) and Philip Rieff (1987), they explain the expansion of a psychological outlook (especially Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis) outside the therapist's office and into areas, like education, politics, law, popular culture, etc., as almost a substitution of religion with a secular moral stance that places the self as its focal point of reference.[325] The triumph of this therapeutic ethos has ultimately brought us a 'therapeutic culture' which has not only impacted Western societies but societies worldwide.[326]

4.2.2 Individual Autonomy and Interiority

In his seminal work, *Invisible Religion* (1967), Thomas Luckmann (d. 2016) aimed to widen the horizon of religion and offer an alternative narrative to the secularisation thesis by emphasising the transformation rather than decline of religion. From his observations during the 60s, Luckmann identified a 'privatization of religion', which supported his critique of what he saw then as the tendency in the sociology of religion to constrain research to institutional religion (especially Churches) and conflate it with religion *per se*. Supported by his observations, he offered instead an alternative understanding of religion to that of a specific sphere of society by identifying modern forms of religiosity which exist outside the boundaries of 'official' religion. His central assertion is that religion cannot be restricted to explicit and highly institutionalised forms, such as the church, but rather must be appreciated as a much wider and diffused phenomenon linked today to various new forms involving specifically modern values, like sexuality, familism, and most centrally, individual autonomy.

The 'exiting of religion from its organized, institutional formation' that Luckmann was referring to can be understood as part of the dynamic by which religion continues within modernity through transformation and change.[327] We can see this transformation of religion 'in late modernity as a result of changing relations between individuals and authority ... a general shift of authority from 'without' to 'within', from external institutions to personal

325. P. Berger, 'Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis', *Social Research*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 26-42; P. Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud*, Harper, New York, 1966; C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations, Norton,* New York, 1978, pp. 13-14; O. J. Madsen, 'Psychologisation and Critique in Modern-day Western Culture', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, vol. 8, no. 5, 2014, p. 193; I. Parker, 'Critical psychology: Critical Links', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, vol. 1, 1999, pp. 3-18; I. Parker, *Revolution in Psychology: Alienation to Emancipation*, Pluto Press, London, 2007; see also J. De Vos, 'Psychologization', in T. Teo (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*, Springer, New York, 2014, p. 1550.

326. E. Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2008; Madsen, 'Psychologisation and Critique in Modern-day Western Culture', p. 194; De Vos 'Psychologization', De Vos, p. 1548.

327. J. R. Ramos, *A Critical Interpretation of Olivier Roy: On Globalization, the Cosmopolitan and Emerging Post-Secular Religiosities*, University of Denver, (PhD Dissertation), 2018, p. 84.

intuition'.[328] One important benefit in Luckman's identification of this kind of invisible religion, is that we are now able to appreciate it as a 'widespread phenomenon that applies to many people who might never use the word "religious" to describe themselves, including many people who might label themselves as secular or even atheistic'.[329] Although later sociologists of religion like Jose Casanova (2006) have critiqued the assumed universality in any claims of a move towards the 'privatization of religion', what Luckmann had observed already in the 60s is still acknowledged by Casanova and others as 'the dominant form of individual religion and is likely to gain increasing global prominence'.[330] In fact, by taking a global perspective to the relationship between individualisation and religion, we can expand the presence of this phenomenon not only in terms of space but also time. When approaching individualised religiosity from a wider perspective, historical antecedents and continuities emerge that counter the notion that it is an exclusively 'post-modern' phenomenon.[331] Casanova points out that 'the expansion of post-materialist spiritual values can be understood in this respect as the generalization and democratization of options until now only available to elites and religious virtuosi in most religious traditions'; as a consequence of the availability of 'privileged material conditions' to common people, spiritual and religious options previously reserved for the elite also become generalised for the larger population.[332]

Taylor himself tells us that the modern 'frontier of self-exploration has grown, through various spiritual disciplines of self-examination, through Montaigne, the development of the modern novel, the rise of Romanticism, the ethic of authenticity, to the point where we now conceive of ourselves as having inner depths'.[333] In his application of *A Secular Age* to Zen Buddhism, Andre van der Braak formulates an understanding of modern spiritual life as a personal search for inner depths, previously located in an enchanted cosmos but now conceived of as within oneself.[334] For him, this is because our 'new self-understanding as buffered, bounded selves required new inner sources of moral power'.[335] It is with the spread of 'therapeutic culture' and an emerging counterculture after the Second World War that this search for 'authenticity' and expressive individualism which had been a penchant among European Romantics (and their counterparts across the Atlantic), would become diffused as a

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328. J. D. Proctor, 2005, *Religion as Trust in Authority*, p. 5
329. D. Jacobsen & R. H. Jacobsen, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, p. 13
330. J. Casanova, 'Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective', in P. Beyer & L. G. Beaman (eds.), *Religion, Globalization and Culture: Religion, Globalization, and Culture*, Brill, Leiden, 2007, pp. 101-120, p. 115; originally printed in the double issue, 'After Secularization', *The Hedgehog Review*, vol. 8, nos. 1– 2 (Spring/Summer 2006): pp. 7– 22.
331. Ibid.
332. Ibid.
333. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 539-540.
334. Van Der Braak, 'Zen Spirituality in a Secular Age', p. 44; see also Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 251, 540.
335. Ibid.

sensibility recognisable in wider society.[336] For Taylor, we can only even begin to speak of a 'decline' of religion after the after the war and especially since the 60s, where we see the diffusion to the general public of an expressive individualism already found among artistic and intellectual elites.[337] In his argument about the development of privatised religious forms oriented around self-fulfilment and 'this-worldly' sources of meaning, Luckmann also acknowledged historical antecedents for the idea of an 'autonomous' individual he observed during the 60s, for which he looks to Romanticism for its modern articulation, its emergence in the 'bohemian fringes' of the capitalist bourgeoise and development with the growth of the middle class.[338]

> The retrenchment of the individual in the 'private sphere' — which, as we indicated, presupposes a special, historically unique constellation of social-structural factors — finds a thematic parallel in the redefinition of personal identity to mean the 'inner man'. Individual 'autonomy' thus comes to stand for absence of external restraints and traditional taboos in the private search for identity. The theme of individual 'autonomy' found many different expressions. Since the 'inner man' is, in effect, an undefinable entity, its presumed discovery involves a lifelong quest. The individual who is to find a source of 'ultimate' significance in the subjective dimension of his biography embarks upon a process of self-realization and self-expression that is, perhaps, not continuous — since it is immersed in the recurrent routines of everyday life — but certainly interminable. In the modern sacred cosmos self-expression and self-realization represent the most important expressions of the ruling topic of individual 'autonomy'. Because the individual's performances are controlled by the primary public institutions, he soon recognizes the limits of his 'autonomy' and learns to confine the quest for self-realization to the 'private sphere'. The young may experience some difficulty in accepting this restriction — a restriction whose 'logic' is hardly obvious until one learns to appreciate the 'hard facts of life'. Content analysis of popular literature, radio and television, advice columns and inspirational books provides ample evidence that self-expression and self-realization are prominent themes, indeed. They also occupy a central position in the philosophy, if not always the practice, of education. The individual's natural difficulty in discovering his 'inner self' explains, furthermore, the tremendous success of various scientific and quasi-scientific psychologies in supplying guidelines for his search.[339]

Focus on psychology and psychotherapy has since Luckmann's time become a ubiquitous feature of modern societies, and today, therapeutic culture or psychologisation is not confined to Western countries only, but is rather an integral part of globalisation. Eva Illouz (2008) considers psychology as 'one of the main cores of cultural globalization', and 'a source of models around which individuality gets organized worldwide'.[340] 'This model', she continues 'is diffused worldwide through university curriculum and training, through the regulated

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336. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 473.
337. Ibid.
338. T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Modern Society*, The Macmillan Co, New York, 1967, pp. 110-111.
339. Ibid., pp. 110-111.
340. Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul*, p. 217.

practice of professional therapy, through the state adoption of therapeutic modes of intervention in society, and through the more informal structure of the market'.[341] This shows how the process of psychologisation has been criticised as not only 'a model for individuals, but also a discursive practice forming and legitimating it'.[342] Psychologisation has become such a ubiquitous and essential aspect of the fabric of modern life that we no longer even notice it; it is as pervasive and invisible as the air we breathe. In fact, a major contention in the critique against psychologisation is that it 'has become such a pervasive phenomenon that it is practically no longer feasible to speak of psychologisation'.[343]

The Buffered Self

Psychologisation has become so ubiquitous today that it naturalises a certain subjectivity which omits 'the importance of interdependence as an inherent factor in agency'.[344] 'Such an omittance is problematic', argue Eduardo Crespo and Amparo Serrano (2010), 'because, as Durkheim pointed out, the development of industrial societies, and the division of labour, gives rise to a curious paradox, according to which, the more autonomous individuals are, the more interdependent they are'.[345] Durkheim himself emphasised the simultaneous autonomy and dependence of modern individuals as a counter to radical individualism that elevated the individual above society.[346] Indeed, Durkheim infamously ascribed a reality to society over and above individuals, as a whole greater than the sum of its parts (i.e. individuals); foremost, society is significant for our survival (food, protection, etc.), it is also the source of the knowledge that is not of our own making but that we inherit (language, technology, laws, rituals, etc.), and is a force that can uplift us through, for example, communal gatherings that offer us opportunities for emotional renewal and transformation.[347]

The general assumption that modernity is largely interrelated with an emerging sense of individual autonomy has been held by most social theorists (e.g. Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Norbert Elias, Theodor Adorno, Zygmunt Bauman, Erich Fromm, Thomas Luckmann, etc.), who all refer to a form of individuality where the individual is understood as comprising of psychological processes of an intra-personal and a-social mind.[348] Together with criticism of how psychology has spilled over from its disciplinary borders into wider society

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341. Ibid., p. 218.
342. E. Crespo & A. Serrano, 'The Psychologisation of Work: the Deregulation of Work and the Government of Will', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, vol. 8, 2010, p. 46.
343. Á. Gordo & J. De Vos, 'Psychologism, Psychologising and De-Psychologisation', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, vol. 8, 2010, p. 6.
344. Crespo & Serrano, 'The Psychologisation of Work', p. 57.
345. Ibid.
346. E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, Free Press, New York, 1964 [1893]; see also D. Jung, *Muslim History and Social Theory: A Global Sociology of Modernity*, Springer International Publishing, Cham, Switzerland, 2017, pp. 36-37.
347. E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Free Press, New York, 1965 [1912], pp. 208-212.
348. Crespo & Serrano, 'The Psychologisation of Work', p. 46.

and the world at large, psychologisation has also been used as a specific critique of this understanding of individuality and the process by which it construes societal issues into personal problems.[349] This criticism of psychologisation is mainly towards its explanation of behaviour as mental processes occurring exclusively within the individual, a primarily self-autonomous entity 'for whom the notion of interdependence is secondary'.[350] To help us see beyond this psychologised view of the individual, Norbert Elias (1978) describes an ideal-type, the *homo apertus* (open human), where the interdependence of individuals can be appreciated as an essential feature of modern society that allows for their autonomy, and contrasts it with an alternative ideal-type, the *homo clausus* (closed human), where individuals are imagined as self-contained with 'an invisible barrier separate[ing] their inside from everything outside'.[351]

The parallels here with Taylor's notion of the buffered self are evident. The modern experience of what Taylor calls the 'immanent frame' is constituted by the 'buffered identity of the disciplined individual'.[352] The idea of an 'immanent frame' is basically Taylor's remoulding of Weber's metaphor of an 'iron cage' as more a 'frame of reference' than an objective reality; that is what the image of a 'frame' instead of a 'cage' or 'shell' invokes.[353] Acknowledging its initial confinement to élites, Taylor wants to show us how more and more people begin to 'imagine their lives as taking place in an 'immanent frame' which increasingly closes itself off to transcendental interference'.[354] Taylor's overarching concept of an 'immanent frame' is his attempt to look at the fundamental framework which makes the very processes of secularisation possible.[355] Our buffered identities embody this frame in which we are enclosed, replacing an earlier porous experience of impinging causal powers and moral forces that now seem 'close to incomprehensible', whilst 'it comes to seem axiomatic that all thought, feeling and purpose, all the features we normally can ascribe to agents, must be in minds, which are distinct from the 'outer' world'.[356]

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349. Vos, 'Psychologization', p. 1547.

350. Crespo & Serrano, 'The Psychologisation of Work', p. 46. We get the sense of a similar distinction to Taylor's Ages of Mobilization and Authenticity, respectively, in one of Elias' later writings. Crespo & Serrano write: 'Elias returned to this idea in one of his last works 'Changes in the I-We Balance' (1990), concluding, that the balance which in the early stages of the development of modern civilization leant towards the 'we' side, has now, in the final stages, shifted conclusively to the 'I' side. Individualization is a global process that creates the possibility for new types of individuals to appear. This transformation occurs in a variety of different spheres, and by and large, is typified by, both, a gradual release from community ties, and the production of a new type of individual; one who has rights, who is, in turn, responsible for oneself, and, to a large extent, his own destiny' (p. 44).

351. N. Elias, *What is Sociology?*, (trans. S. Mennell & G. Morrissey), 1978, p. 119. Bauman (1999) has pointed out that the title of this particular work by Elias is 'The Society of Individuals' and not society against individuals, highlighting the crucial role of mutual dependence in our society; see Crespo & Serrano, 'The Psychologisation of Work', p. 44; see also Z. Bauman, In Search of Politics, Polity, Cambridge, 1999.

352. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 542

353. D. Storey, 'Breaking the Spell of the Immanent Frame: Charles Taylor's A Secular Age' in H. De Vriese & G. Gabor, (eds.), *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of A Secular Age*, Cambridge Scholars, Newcastle, 2009, p. 179.

354. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 543 ff.; Taylor, 'Apologia pro Libro suo', p. 306; see also F. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition: The Concept of 'Society' in the Journal Al-Manar (Cairo, 1898-1940)*, De Guyter, Berlin, 2018, p. 80.

355. Koening, 'Beyond the Paradigm of Secularization?', pp. 24-25

356. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 539

What disenchantment most significantly entails is a dualism between mind and all that is external to it, a dichotomy that would have made no sense in an earlier enchanted world.[357] A significant claim made by Taylor is that our experience as buffered selves and the 'notion that there is a clear boundary allowing us to define an inner' makes it impossible for us to experience the world in the same way as the earlier porous self, for which any sense of this distinction was inconceivable.[358] As Taylor would say, there is an experience here that we have been trained out of and can no longer have, no matter how hard we try.[359] To help us understand this training of the buffered self, we can gain turn to Elias (1939), and his elaborate explanation of a 'civilizing process' which has helped tie modernity to changes in subjectivity accentuated by an 'inner life'.[360] Especially pertinent for Taylor is how Elias demonstrates the diffusion of the novel 'subject/object' dichotomy in relating to the world from social elites to society at large through an integral mechanism of discipline which led 'to the drawing of boundaries, and a withdrawal from certain modes of intimacy, as well as taking a distance from certain bodily functions'.[361] For Elias, the modern self 'experiences the world and itself through a series of separations and distances' between an 'inner world' and 'outer world' that leaves a gap which is experienced and understood as filled with reason or loss'.[362] Following Elias, Taylor acknowledges 'the tremendous shift in manners which accompanies the developing ideal of civility, and later civilization [which] starts off among élites, of course, but then spreads during the nineteenth century virtually to the whole society'.[363]

As it entails the pursuit of an ideal of civility and later civilisation, Elias calls this training the civilising process, and offers us a palette of examples in exactly how it involves a gradual distancing and disengagement.[364] He demonstrates this distancing of bodies especially in

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357. Ibid., p. 30.

358. Ibid., p. 38.

359. Taylor, 'Afterword', p. 375. Taylor writes, 'The porous self is vulnerable, to spirits, demons, cosmic forces. And along with this go certain fears which can grip it in certain circumstances. The buffered self has been taken out of the world of this kind of fear ... True, something analogous can take its place. These images can also be seen as coded manifestations of inner depths, repressed thoughts and feelings. But the point is that in this quite transformed understanding of self and world, we define these as inner, and naturally, we deal with them very differently. And indeed, an important part of the treatment is designed to make disengagement possible. Perhaps the clearest sign of the transformation in our world is that today many people look back to the world of the porous self with nostalgia. As though the creation of a thick emotional boundary between us and the cosmos were now lived as a loss. The aim is to try to recover some measure of this lost feeling. So, people go to movies about the uncanny in order to experience a frisson. Our peasant ancestors would have thought us insane. You can't get a frisson from what is really in fact terrifying you' (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 38).

360. De Vos, 'Psychologization', p. 1548.

361. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 137.

362. M. Ogborn, 'Knowing the Individual: Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias on Las Meninas and the Modern Subject', in S. Pile & N. Thrift (eds.), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, 1995, p. 68; see also N. Elias, *What is Sociology?*, p. 258; A. J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity*, 1992.

363. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 138.

364. One favourite case is that of the fork, which initially appeared at the table of court nobility in France and later Germany and England via Italy at the end of the Middle Ages as an exotic and quite awkward luxury item used to rather ineffectively pick morsels from a common plate. Though adopted by some rich imitators among the rich bourgeoisie, the fork was still confined to a small elite in the seventeenth century. Only in the nineteenth century do we see its common use, which Elias explains as hinging 'on a very slow and profound change in

tracing the gradual exclusion of bodily functions and fluids that takes us from admonishing various public practices like blowing your nose on the tablecloth to abhorrence at the mere mention of such practices.[365] Of particular interest for us is the diffusion of this type of disengaged discipline to society at large in the nineteenth century, and a general restriction on bodily intimacy between people, which is now only reserved for a close few behind closed doors. Although the sectioning-off of bodily intimacy between you and others might make you more disembodied than your ancestors, at the same time, it intensifies the intimacy that is now reserved for a small circle of relations and requires conventions of privacy previously unheard of.[366]

An Inner Cosmos

The development of a private domestic interior crystallises this historically emerging sense of interiority among the general public as a central feature of our modern identity. As Wiltod Rybczynski (1987) writes, before, 'one did not have a strongly developed self-consciousness' just as 'one did not have a room of one's own'.[367] Whereas we can already identify the development of interiorised subjective self-understanding in literary and pictorial developments of the seventeenth century, such as autobiographies, personal portraits, *dorsien*, etc., it is only with later architectural developments that we begin to find this sense of subjective interiority reaching beyond a small group of elites.[368] We see from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, a slow transition in houses, from being constituted of multipurpose rooms towards them containing specialised spaces devoted to a domestic interior.[369] The construction of new kinds of interior spaces meant to secure privacy (the bedroom, bathroom, corridor, etc.) and the accompanying ideas of interior design, helped to shape the formation of a bourgeois *homo interior* whose 'impulse to interiorize' was as much a retreat from the world as it was a means of exercising control over it.[370] This change in architecture could now offer 'a sanctuary from which the world could be safely observed'.[371] In the words of Walter Benjamin

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the subconscious of people ... [who now] have begun to construct an affective wall between their bodies and those of others. The fork has been one of the means of drawing distances between other people's bodies and one's own'. (Elias, cited in S. Fontaine, 'Civilizing Process Revisited: An Interview with Norbert Elias' (trans. A. Blok & R. Aya), in *Theory and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1978, pp. 243-253).

365. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, p. 19; see also Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 138

366. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 140-141. Taylor writes: 'You keep the multifarious functions of your body, its fluids and secretions, very much to yourself, you keep a respectful distance, and you relate to others through voice and visage, via sight and sound, reserving touch for intimates, or for certain ritually permitted moments, like shaking hands' (p. 140).

367. W. Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, Viking, New York, 1987, p. 34.

368. E. Lajer-Burcharth & B. Söntgen, 'Introduction', in E. Lajer-Burcharth, Ewa & B. Söntgen (eds.), *Interiors and Interiority*, 2016, pp. 1-13.

369. C. Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2007.

370. Lajer-Burcharth & Söntgen, 'Introduction', p. 4.

371. Sidlauskas, S., *Body, Place, and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 3; Sidlauskas, S., 'Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the early Modern Home', in C. Reed (ed.), *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1996, p. 65.

(d. 1940), the domestic interior is for the 'private individual ... a box in the theatre of the world'.[372] Yet, it is also 'a stage for acting out one's most intimate feelings with great authenticity'.[373]

More than simply a search for physical wellbeing, domestic comfort was an 'appreciation of the house as a setting for an emerging interior life'.[374] Perhaps the most pronounced example on this link between the domestic interior and the formation of a modern subjective interiority, is Sigmund Freud's (d. 1939) development of psychoanalysis, not only in how the interior served as the location for its development as a science or where its therapeutics was practiced, but also how the interior was employed by him as 'an analogy for the structuring of the psyche', fostering Freud's conceptualisation of the mind as 'divided into discrete, only partially penetrable, chambers'.[375] The beginnings of Freud's innovative formulation of the idea of the unconscious is already evident in his conceptualisation of repression (i.e. that the unthinkable is pushed 'beneath'), which 'presupposes a topographical division of the mind — that is, a division of the mind based on a figurative representation of the psyche by means of a spatial metaphor'.[376] Freud employed the domestic interior as 'an analogy for the structuring of the psyche' with his idea of the unconscious and repression, which 'presupposes a topographical division of the mind ... a division of the mind based on a figurative representation of the psyche by means of a spatial metaphor'.[377]

As we have seen, it is modern conditions of privacy the allowed for the sense of an inner space which we can now discover within ourselves through habits of inwardness and intimate exchanges with close interlocutors, without which 'much of our inner exploration couldn't take place'.[378] According to Taylor, 'the depths which were previously located in the cosmos ... are now more readily placed within'.[379] Hence, for us today, 'the rich symbolism of the enchanted world ... located by Freud in the depths of the psyche', seems like a perfectly 'natural and convincing' move, 'whatever we might think of his detailed theories'.[380] This is because the

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372. W. Benjamin, 'IV. Louis Philipe, or the interior', in 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century: Exposé of 1935', in *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland & K. McLaughlin (from the unpublished original, *Passagenwerk*), 1999, p. 8-9; see also W. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. H. Zohn, 1973, pp. 167-168.

373. Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*, p. 3; Sidlauskas, 'Psyche and Sympathy', p. 65.

374. Rybczynski, *Home*, pp. 35-36.

375. Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior*, p. 4 ff.; Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*, p. x-xi. An echo of the importance of the interior for Freud is his study at his private house in London, which had been consciously preserved after his passing and is now open to the public as the official Freud Museum. As another example, note the symbolism of the domestic in Freud's interpretation of dreams.

376. M. S. Roth, cited in C. Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930*, Virago Press, London, 1995, p. 92; see also M. S. Roth, *Psycho-Analysis as History: Negation and Freedom in Freud*, Cornell University Press, NY, 1987.

377. Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior*, p. 4 ff.; Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*, p. x-xi. M. S. Roth cited in Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, p. 92.

378. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 540.

379. Ibid., pp. 539-540. So, for instance, whereas people previously 'spoke of possession by evil spirits, we think of mental illness'.

380. Ibid., pp. 539-540.

emergence of the modern buffered self is 'accompanied by an interiorization' that forms a buffer between inner/outer or mind/world as separate loci, which consequently opens a 'frontier of self-exploration' with 'the growth of a rich vocabulary of interiority, an inner realm of thought and feeling to be explored'.[381]

Nothing so clearly symbolises this in Haeri's thinking than his presentation of Islam as a map. As we have seen, Haeri's use of the analogy of the map was a dominant approach in the ASK course, and has since then become an integral part of his presentation of Islam as self-knowledge, in books such as *Witnessing Perfection* (2006) and *Spectrum of Reality* (2015). But Haeri's use of the map as an analogical tool initially developed out of his talks in Sweden. In his final talk at Hjärtered in Sweden, Haeri said:

> What we have covered was both very wide and very deep. As a result, you need to spend time and effort to realize it. First you begin to understand it and know it and you see it as a map. Later you will find that this map is really usable by you and you are using it. And then you realise it. You have to do the work, at the pace and speed that you can, and that speed is dependent on your ability to put yourself aside and apply. The more you are in the way, the more you fall away yourself. I can't help that. I am not here as a professional to hold your hand all the time and make a business out of it. It is in your hands. I have during the last days tried to make a map for you, schematically, descriptively, rationally, intellectually, emotionally, and by trying to touch cords within your inner heart. It was very intense. But don't think you have got it. You have simply been reminded of this design, or mapping, or cosmology, within you … if you would like to give it a title, give it the title of Sufi Cosmology of the Self. The cosmos within the self and the self within the cosmos. But don't be mystical about these things. It must be of immediate use to you.[382]

What immediately comes to light in this passage is how the manner in which Haeri expresses his teachings as a map relate to crucial aspects of the buffered self. We see something of this in his presentation of the map as a means to explore your own personal inner-universe, but also as a tool of individual autonomy. But the map also serves to universalise the message Haeri is trying to present by removing it from its religious trappings.

The Reluctant Shaykh

> 'I want to present the map. I'm not interested in preaching. I'm not interested in promoting Islam. It's not my work. I'm not here to apologise for Muhammad or the history of the Muslims. Some other people harangue you forever. Fine, [but] I can't. So, its cartography, its mapping, its neutral, it is pre-culture, post-culture and has its culture, the culture of cartographers. Here it is. Take from it what is useful for you and good luck'.[383]

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381. Ibid., p. 539.
382. Haeri, *Sufi Cosmology of the Self*, p. 99
383. Fadhlalla Haeri interview, March 2015.

During one of our earliest meetings, Fadhlalla Haeri presented himself as a cartographer as clear expression of this ambition. Haeri's self-understanding as a cartographer can help us bridge the apparent paradox we observe in his role as a Sufi shaykh. Although it might not seem like it from his illustrious career as a spiritual leader, in light of the time I have been able to spend with Fadhlalla Haeri, the label 'reluctant shaykh' seems apt. One of the main expressions of this reluctance being his refusal to formally initiate anybody around him according to the traditional Sufi methodology of allegiance. During one of my last interviews with him, Haeri explicitly expressed this reluctance himself: 'I have been fortunate enough to be pushed to this wonderful state in Africa where I have very little connection with anything. Even before then for at least ten years. I have no constituency, no murids, no followers, no concern about whoever is there and whoever is not there. We are now living at a time when if there is somebody, great, if not, even better'.[384]

Haeri's approach to being a Sufi shaykh seems like a satire at this later stage in his life, when considering his continued efforts to free himself of his role as a religious teacher and public figure as he had originally intended when moving to South Africa. Yet, even now, while his role as a religious leader has diminished, still you notice a plethora of activity orbiting Haeri.[385] Perhaps the best explanation for this paradoxical role has been described by Haeri during an interview for the Channel Four documentary, *Sufism: Heart of Islam* (1990):

> What do I say to those who like to follow me as a Shaykh? The person who has discovered the basis of truth within himself and has then moved on to discover the relationship of this basic if you like fundamental knowledge to his environment, it very much differs from age to age and place to place, and from person to person. So, you found shaykhs like successful cooks, a chef who really knows how to prepare a meal that gives you full nourishment. And was also like a doctor. Now there are different doctors who specialise in different areas of sicknesses or prevention or whatever, so every shaykh in a way, outwardly, is different, he may only have a certain type of follower. Then there are shaykhs who have been more recluses, very fortunate ones also, than, if you like, too much in the public. There were shaykhs who led nations. There were shaykhs who created nations. The Sanusi in Libya created a nation out of highwaymen, and after three or four generations they degenerated. In my particular case, my own, if you like, personality is to share whatever I have obtained, whatever I know, in a usable fashion. In the hope that everybody will be a shaykh. The problem is to save ourselves, from the tyranny of our own selves, let alone inflicting tyranny upon others.[386]

When looking back at Haeri's life as a writer and religious leader, a central drive that seems to permeate his efforts is the promethean ambition to make available for people what was once the preserve of a privileged few. We see this in his attempt to teach the Qur'an, as well as more

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384. Fadhlalla Haeri interview, December 2017.

385. Not only has Haeri remained as prodigious as ever on the literary front, but even at his private residence where you get the impression of a sort of extended family of followers; something that is as much the case today in Mpumalanga as it was during the early days in Texas.

386. R. Mullan, *Sufism: The Heart of Islam* (documentary film), Channel Four, UK, 1990.

generally in his approach to being a spiritual teacher. Although this attempt to make Islam more accessible for a wider public, Ghazali's efforts to reach the general public with his *Ihya*, the aim for this thesis has been to situate Haeri within a definitely modern context. A context which has seen 'the rise of the concept 'religion', which Wilfred Cantwell Smith suggests has 'in some ways correlated with a decline in the practice of religion itself'.[387] In his later assessment of Smith's influential work, Asad understands this process of reification as simultaneously referring to both (1) 'a high degree of systematization in doctrine or practice' and (2) a 'mistaking of a word for the thing it names'.[388] To put it in the more poetic words of a Sufi writer who observed in relation to his own context a millennium ago, earlier 'this name did not exist but its reality was in everyone. Now the name exists without the reality'.[389] I find this premise, upon which my thesis has built its argument, captured well with how Taylor illustrates the process by which 'religion' precipitates out as one 'sphere' among others' in society through a process of 'non-saturation'.[390] Haeri's approach can be seen as a way to re-saturate society with Islam, not as an exhibition of religion by Muslims but a universal attitude implicit in the everyday way we are to live our lives.[391]

Three Cs

A recent rendition of Haeri's teachings as a universal psychology can be found in the book, *The Spectrum Reality* (2015), which has the stated purpose of elaborating on 'three complementary forces [that] fuel all quests and movements in life'; indeed, expounding on these three forces of *consciousness*, *connectedness* and *continuity* make up the core of the structure and content of the

387. Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 19

388. T. Asad, 'Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of Religion'', *History of Religions*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2001, p. 209. Although indebted to Smith, Asad alas argues against him in claiming 'religion' as a modern concept, not because it has been reified but because of its siamese twin, 'secularism'.

389. Ali Hujwiri, *Kasfh al Mahjub*, end of chapter 4. The full quote is: Abu al-Hasan Fushanji says: 'Nowadays Sufism is a name without a reality, but formerly it was a reality without a name'. In the time of the companions (may Allah be pleased with them) of Prophet (peace be upon him) this name did not exist, but the reality thereof was in everyone's heart. Now only the name exists, but the reality is vanished. That is to say, formerly the practice was known but no one used to claim, but nowadays the pretence is known and the practice is unknown.

390. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 816 n. 5.

391. Borrowing from Luckmann, we can call it a turn towards 'Invisible Islam'. Credit is due to here to Luckmann's editor. Luckamann said in one of his last interviews that 'the only thing I would change today in *The Invisible Religion* is the title'. He continues, 'it was an editor of the publishing house who invented it, because he imagined that this shocking title would help sell the book'. The subtitle of the book, 'The Problem of Religion in Modern Society', is the main title of the first version published four years earlier in German, *Das Problem der Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft* (1963). Luckamann asserts in fact that 'it's not true that the book speaks of invisible religion. Just as in the Nicene Creed, it refers to visibilia et invisibilia, to the visible as well as the invisible religions; and it really talks a good deal about the visible ones'. Nonetheless, it is the English edition translated by Luckmann himself, together with Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), published at the same time, as well as their joint publication from a year earlier, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), that would cause something of a revolution in the field sociology of religion (see J. Estruch, 'A Conversation with Thomas Luckmann', *Social Compass*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2008, pp. 537-538).

book.[392] Since its inception, this explanatory model of '3 Cs' has been an important vehicle for Haeri to synthesise much of his philosophy into a well packaged model presented in a secular language.[393]

> Fadhlalla: When I discovered the three C's I knew I don't need to have any other invention. Really, it has the whole story. That is what happened in Vienna, when coffee went to Vienna, with it went the stool, the three-legged stool, about 600 years ago. That is the beginning of a café society. The little stool and coffee. The three C's, that is all what there is. To be alive, everything we do is to honour life, no matter what it is. Everything we do is to give value to this life. Then it comes to the quality of connectedness, ease of connectedness. And the continuity of it. Stop time. And connect, stop space. The absolute density. Then after that all that there is left is to have a nice veranda ... [Aliya:] and the fourth C ... Coffee.[394]

Haeri sees humanity as emerging from a history of incremental changes and yearnings to know what is beyond space and time. He suggests that those who reflect will find that we are all trapped within a box defined by space and time, where we are subject to changes (in time) and movements (in space). The very purpose of our existence is to experience the limitations of spacetime in order to truly understand the limitless that lies beyond it. The idea of 'the 3 Cs' is meant to work as an explanatory model to show us how 'all of our drives in life are to do with ending distance or time', and works as a philosophical anthropology for a modern audience of buffered selves, whether they consider themselves Muslim or otherwise. In this way, it reflects Taylor's observation that we all aspire for something more, whatever that may be and regardless of whether we see ourselves as religious or secular.[395]

For example, during many religious or festive events, 'the state of mind of the participant is far removed from the disengaged, objectifying stance, from which the alleged truth of the immanent, naturalistic world-view is supposed to be convincingly evident'.[396] As much as this is evident in the rise of adherents of various pilgrimages and other explicitly religious assemblies, we find it even in normatively 'non-religious' events such as 'rock concerts and raves', which 'also sit uneasily in the secular' because inherent in these fusions is a capacity to 'generate the powerful phenomenological sense that we are in contact with something greater'.[397] Regardless of how the power of these experiences are later explained or understood, the way they 'take us out of the everyday' is enough of a recourse for Taylor to identify them as moments where the 'transcendent can erupt into our lives, however well we have organized them around immanent understandings of order'.[398] A major

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392. Spectrum of Reality

393. For example, Haeri has used his model of the three Cs to explain what he sees as the essential message behind the Biblical tale of Adam and Eve.[393] He has used the concept as a key to explain a number of particular verses from the Qur'an or other Islamic and Sufi concepts; for example, he uses it to categorise some 30 to 40 different Divine Names of God pertaining to each of the forces, such as *al-Hay* (The Ever-living), *al-Jami* (The Gatherer), and *al-Baqi* (The Everlasting), respectively.

394. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview, May 2015.

395. Ibid., p. 5-12, 780 n. 8.; see also Zemmin, 'A Secular Age and Islamic Modernism', p. 309.

396. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 517-518.

397. Ibid.

398. Ibid., p. 518.

reason for this, Taylor argues, is that we still seem to be seeking moments of fusion and feeling that 'wrench us out of the everyday, and put us in contact with something beyond ourselves'.[399] Just like the believer, the unbeliever has not 'fully conquered the nostalgia for something transcendent'.[400] For both, the feeling that they still have 'some way to go' persists.[401]

Likewise, shutting out this feeling is not exclusive to non-believers. 'Many believers', Taylor asserts, 'rest in the certainty that they have got God right (as against all those heretics and pagans in the outer darkness)'.[402] He finds the 'same self-assurance of purity' among various believers as well as non-believers who succumb to strong ideals ('such as a republic of equals, a world order of perpetual peace, or communism'), and explains it as a consequence of a 'premature closure' of transcendence. Being open to transcendence is destabilising, and so, we all shut it out to some degree. But this shutting out becomes particularly dangerous when 'we try to overcome our disorientation by the false certainty of closure'.[403] In Taylor's terms, the denial of 'transcendence' in the pursuit of something more that we all aspire for, only leads to a search for it within the immanent, 'in some condition of human life, or feeling, or achievement'.[404] One group of positions are those that put their trust in the power of reason, that our nature is essentially as rational beings capable of liberating ourselves from superstitious illusions and base instincts. In opposition to this, another group of perspectives maintain that the 'rational mind has to open itself to something deeper', that is, they 'see us as needing to receive power from elsewhere than autonomous reason' and that the sources of this power 'are to be found in Nature, or in our own inner depths'.[405] But both clusters of competing accounts hope to find what they are looking for within the immanent, understood naturalistically 'in terms of a potentiality of human beings' rather than in reference to something beyond human life or nature.[406] In this story, individuality is taken for granted as a 'natural' underlying essence that only requires the erosion of earlier horizons for it to emerge.[407] Taylor terms these 'subtraction stories' to highlight how they are 'stories of modernity in general, and secularity in particular, which explain them by human beings having lost, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge'.[408] He argues that 'subtraction stories' portray our current condition as the result of a peeling away of various accretions that have up until now been impeding an underlying perennial nature hidden beneath the muck all along. An underlying form of this narrative is the sense of 'breaking out of a

399. Ibid., pp. 516-517.
400. Ibid., p. 7.
401. Ibid.
402. Ibid., p. 769.
403. Ibid.
404. Ibid.
405. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
406. Ibid.
407. Ibid., p. 157.
408. Ibid., p. 22.

narrower frame into a broader field'.[409] There is a positive power found in being released into a wider space, whichever way the story is told, 'as the space of the search for Enlightenment, of salvation, or of submission to God', etc.[410] How entrenched these stories are still to our day can be recognised in our common vernacular and vocabulary, or in how even recent postmodern attempts to disregard such narratives must nevertheless rely on the idea of progress to make claims of having emancipated ourselves from the narratives that had *earlier* deluded us.[411]

Seeking Something More

According to Taylor, what the long process of secularisation brings about is the move from a world in which our quest for transcendence is 'understood as unproblematically outside of or 'beyond' human life, to a conflicted age in which this construal is challenged by others which place it ... 'within' human life'.[412] Taylor wants us to look back to a 'branching point' in the eighteenth century, where a 'reaction to the cool, measured religion of the buffered identity was to stress feeling, emotion, a living faith which moves us'.[413] He gives as examples the emergence of Pietist and Methodist movements, 'for whom a powerful emotional response to God's saving action was more important than theological correctness'.[414] A strong sense that 'the very point of religion is being lost in the cool distance of even impeccable intellectual orthodoxy' becomes widespread among the people, who begin to emphasise intensity of passion and genuineness of feeling over 'accuracy in theological formulation'.[415] Taylor states that with the impinging dominance of disengaged reason, this emphasis on feeling only increases and is eventually transposed by the Romantic period into an attitude against

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409. Ibid., p. 769.

410. Ibid., p 577. Taylor writes: 'The actual account of the transition as it has been lived is often a story of great moral enthusiasm at a discovery, at a liberation from a narrower world of closer, claustrophobic relations, involving excessive control and invidious distinctions; and at the same time it has been lived as a liberation into a new broader space, in which masses of people come together outside of the old distinctions, and meet as fellow citizens, as fellow human beings, in a new enterprise, like that of the nation, or the revolutionary party, the 'party of mankind'. We mustn't forget, of course, that from the other the immanent frame side, the party of those who resisted these changes, it has often been experienced as a catastrophic break-down of the most crucial and elementary social bond. The paradigm example here is the French Revolution, in which people were liberated out of their 'estates' into the new space of 'la nation', bonded by the new trinity of 'liberty, equality, fraternity'. There is an immensely powerful moral inspiration here, which has meant that this radical move has been repeated again and again; first of all, obviously in other 'nations' which undertook revolutions, or at least constituted themselves anew on the new basis; and at the same time, this was happening in the new parties which aspired to lead these revolutions, whether they succeeded or not. The partisans, from nationalist movements like 'Young Italy' in the early nineteenth century, right on through the revolutionary anarchist and Bolshevik parties of the twentieth century, and into the terrorist movements of today, see themselves as stepping out of the older, narrower, often network, certainly hierarchical structures, into a broader space of equal comradeship, foreshadowing the new space of the reconstituted nation, or the new purified Islam. We can see this also in a series of 'youth cultures', which have involved a rebellion against the hierarchical role ascription of the family, and a shift to an identity as a member of a larger fraternal movement. The last great one which shook our societies in the West, in the 60s and 70s, was certainly of this kind, challenging authority and attempting to dissolve the distinctions between teacher and student, student and worker, men and women; between work and play, means and ends; all in order to enter a new order in which all could be human together' (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 575-576).

411. Ibid., p. 717.

412. Ibid., p. 15.

413. Ibid., p. 488.

414. Ibid.

415. Ibid.

'desiccated reason' as incapable of reaching ultimate truths. Instead, what is considered crucial is the ability to generate 'deeply felt personal insight [which] now becomes our most precious spiritual resource.

We find echoes of this response to reason in the kind of spiritual life typical of New Age seekers, who Taylor describes as 'heirs of the expressive revolution, with its roots in the reactions of the Romantic period against the disciplined, instrumental self, connected to the modern moral order'.[416] Commenting on the trend elucidated by Paul Heelas' (2003) observations on 'well-being spirituality', Taylor acknowledges that the type of 'selfish' spirituality characterised by psychologisation and individualisation is 'emergent from the expressive revolution' and reveals a subjectivism with a 'focus on the self and its wholeness' as well as an 'emphasis on feeling'.[417] But he further argues that 'lots of seekers today are looking for something more than that', something more to life than the wellbeing and self-development they might have originally confined themselves to.[418]

On the one hand 'they are seeking a kind of unity and wholeness of the self, a reclaiming of the place of feeling, against the one-sided pre-eminence of reason, and a reclaiming of the body and its pleasures from the inferior and often guilt-ridden place it has been allowed in the disciplined, instrumental identity'.[419] Concepts such as 'unity, integrity, holism, individuality' are central for them, with terminology such as 'harmony, balance, flow, integrations, being at one, centred' dominating their language.[420] The search for spiritual 'wholeness' is closely related to a search for physical and mental wellbeing through a language of health and therapy.[421] And more importantly for Taylor, it 'is a culture informed by an ethic of authenticity. I have to discover my route to wholeness and spiritual depth. The focus is on the individual, and on his/her experience. Spirituality must speak to this experience'.[422] However, at the same time, we also find among these seekers a desire to go beyond the 'general subjective wellbeing culture', as evident from the research of Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead and others on the New Age.[423]

Contrary to the simplified manner in which this phenomenon is often perceived by critics against whom Taylor is arguing, such spirituality is not necessarily a trivial pursuit only concerned with moving further towards immanence.

> In particular, in this case, the new kinds of spiritual quest, which include without being limited to those often lumped together under the term 'New Age', are often taxed with being mere extensions of the human

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416. Ibid., p. 507.
417. Ibid., pp. 506, 508.
418. Ibid., p. 509.
419. Ibid., p. 507; see also W. C. Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1999, pp. 21-24, 26.
420. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 507.
421. Ibid.; see also P. Heelas & L. Woodhead, et al., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004.
422. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 508.
423. Ibid., p. 510.

> potential movement, hence totally focussed on the immanent, and/or being a variety of invitations to self-absorption, without any concern for anything beyond the agent, whether the surrounding society, or the transcendent. And, of course, lots of phenomena in this general range do meet these specifications. But the idea that all of them do, that this kind of question by its very nature must gravitate towards immanent self-concern, is an illusion which arises from the often raucous debate between those whose sense of religious authority is offended by this kind of quest, on one hand, and the proponents of the most self- and immanent-centred forms, on the other, each of which likes to target the other as their main rival. 'Look what happens when you abandon proper authority' (i.e., the Bible, or the Pope, or the tradition, according to the point of view), say the first; 'don't you see that we alone offer an alternative to mindless authoritarianism', say the second. Each is comforted in their position by the thought that the only alternative is so utterly repulsive.[424]

What Taylor is trying to clarify is the confusing of 'trivialized and utterly privatized spirituality' with a spirituality increasingly unhooked from national identity or claims of a common civilisational order exemplifying the Age of Mobilization, as well as from a sacralised society in the mould of the ancient regime.[425] Instead, he points to 'a profound dissatisfaction with a life encased entirely in the immanent order [and] the sense is that this life is empty, flat, devoid of higher purpose'.[426] This Taylor sees as 'a widespread response to the world created by Western modernity over the last two centuries'.[427] Yet, whereas in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the search for 'a more direct experience of the sacred, for greater immediacy, spontaneity, and spiritual depth' was interwoven with an identity formed by the Age of Mobilisation and 'a project for restoring civilizational order', once this ideal withers by the late twentieth century, it now occurs 'as a personal search and can easily be coded in the language of authenticity: I am trying to find my path, or find myself'.[428]

424. Ibid., pp. 508-509.
425. Ibid, p. 516.
426. Ibid, pp. 506-507.
427. Ibid.
428. Ibid.

Chapter Conclusion

We started this chapter with a look at how Haeri imagined his sense of religious revival beyond the confines of Islam, and linked it to the popularity of alternative religion since the 60s. As we saw, the growing popularity of these alternative forms of religiosity during the latter half of the twentieth century can once again be related to earlier developments among smaller groups of aficionados, ranging from orientalists and scholars of religion and the emergent category of mysticism to members of significant Western movements during the nineteenth century, in this case, Romanticism, Transcendentalism and Theosophy. We did this by placing particular attention on the emergence of Sufism in the West as a specific category and domain sperate from Islam, witnessed in writings from the eighteenth century and later on through the development of western Sufi literature and new religious movements that emphasised this dichotomy.

After observing the historical development of some of the features that would come to define the move towards a universalist and individualised form of religion that culminated in what is often called the New Age, we saw how Haeri's followers from the 90s onwards represent the growth of a post-modern psychologised spirituality centred on an individual inner search for authenticity, evident in the West but also among affluent Muslims in other parts of the world. By viewing the rise of this spirituality considered antithetical to organised religion as a form of folk-religion, we could appreciate it within a wider socio-historical context that looks towards similarities with the past as well as differences. We explored this further by looking more closely at the critique of psychologisation and individualism, which brought us a more nuanced understanding of modern forms of individualised religion.

This chapter attempted to convey how the growth of modern subjective imaginaries that Taylor talks about are as applicable to current trends among Muslims, both inside and outside of the West. An argument that has been supported by an observation of the content and context around a certain rendition of Haeri's teachings on self-knowledge, namely the online course Academy of Self-Knowledge. The separation of the course into two modules concerned with different aspects of Haeri's teachings that can be roughly seen as individual and social respectively, further highlights for us what is being argued in this thesis as a central tenant of Haeri's teachings and a foundational idea underpinning secularisation according to Taylor. Something we will look at closer In the following chapter by tuning to the historical segregation of the transcendent from the immanent, which can in turn be used to help us understand the salient features of Haeri's presentation of Islam or Sufism in secular terms as a universal of anthropology.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary – A Sufi Sage for A Secular Age

In drawing a conclusion, we can come back to the main research question driving this thesis and focus in on how Fadhlalla Haeri's life and works reflect the modern and secular context surrounding him by looking at how he has come to formulate and articulate his teachings in response to a specific instance of time and place. By holding up his life and works as a mirror of his times, what I hope we have achieved with this work is a glimpse into our present period of history in which not only Haeri is situated, but all of us are still so immersed that it largely eludes any ability to perceive or discern. In order to achieve this to any substantial level, the guiding framework that has been upheld throughout this thesis is the use of Haeri's story as a means to explore a larger historical narrative of secularisation within which he can be situated.

The story of Fadhlalla Haeri has served as a prime example of why we have to look towards the development of some of these salient features of modernity, not as distinct points in a linear chain of progression (or regression), but as part of a myriad of zig-zagging historical processes that make up our complex past. We started this story by looking at the central role that sacred kingship and sainthood played in the Islamicate civilisation which characterised the Afro-Eurasian ecumene during the Middle Period. In agreement with Taylor, we saw how this worked to legitimise a hierarchical social structure that was taken for granted as simply reflecting the natural order of things. We focused specifically on how significant this sacral view of the cosmos was in the formation and identity of Karbala through the saga of Imam Husayn's martyrdom. Important vehicles for this were folk stories about the family of the Prophet, collective ritual during Muharram, as well as other expressions of popular piety. Although oftentimes at odds with the views of the ulama, such communal religious practice is how an apparent cosmic order could be cemented into the people. As a member of the religious elite,

Haeri's own childhood highlighted this tension between popular practices surrounding sainthood and the opinions of ulama, which had become of more concern with the increasing influence of reformists.

It is with what Taylor describes in his own narrative as the detachment of social elites from popular religion that we notice a stronger and stronger drive towards reformism in the early modern period throughout the Islamicate civilisation. During this time, authority was clearly shifting from 'charisma' to 'orthodoxy', from devotion revolving around kings and saints to a loyalty centred around codified religion and written law. We see this culminating with the wave of eighteenth-century Muslim reformers, one of whom, Vahid Behbahani, had a great impact not only on Karbala, but on the scholarly tradition to which Haeri and his extended family were so closely affiliated. But the indigenous incremental developments that a largely self-sufficient Karbala had been witnessing would be overtaken by changes wrought on by the imposing colonial rule that had already drastically transformed the sociopolitical landscape of many parts of the Afro-Eurasian ecumene.

Less ostensible but perhaps more radical was the influence of a new disenchanted worldview which followed the proliferation of an ordered and industrious lifestyle, as much in other parts of the world as in those parts of Europe that inspired it. Modern educational institutions were an important avenue for the widescale spread of this kind of disenchantment and the modes of discipline that encouraged it. A young Haeri had himself gone through this modern educational system, culminating in higher studies in science and engineering in the UK. His years of education and further training after employment simultaneously brought Haeri massive financial success as well as a disillusionment with the materialistic lifestyle that came with it. As we saw, Haeri's interest in existentialists like Albert Camus during this period reflects the paradoxical hope for meaning within what now is experienced as a meaningless universe. Any meaning now occurs exclusively within our mind, making us distance and disengage ourselves from our outer surroundings, whether natural or social. This for Taylor is the defining feature of modern individualism, demonstrated in a polarity between an instrumental individualism based on reason that drives the age of mobilisation, to an expressive individualism focused on feeling that characterises the 'age of authenticity'. The important point to remember here is that with either end of this spectrum of individuality, search for meaning is turned inwards.

Fadhlalla Haeri too echoes this polarity in his own disillusionment with the instrumental-rational outlook that defined his career and subsequent search for meaning during the post-war counterculture era. For Haeri, as with many other privileged young men and women, he found the milieu of a fresh and alternative spirituality appealing. With its emphasis on experience and individual realisation of higher consciousness, this type of spirituality expressed by a variety of new religious forms like neo-Vedanta, Theosophy and Western

Sufism, highlights the sudden popularisation of previously esoteric and exclusive religious knowledge and practices amongst a scale of people that breaks down traditional boundaries of class, ethnicity, nationality, culture and even religion. We see this clearly in the case of Haeri, who's story brings into question the solidity of any of these categories. But by subsequently looking at Fadhlalla Haeri's career as a Sufi shaykh, we also got a chance to reflect on the meeting of Muslims and modernity more generally. Not only has Haeri's personal journey served as a lens demonstrating how entangled our modern global history really is, but his career as a spiritual teacher has also given us an insight into a messier process of secularisation than we usually take account of.

The impression that emerges from such observations and which Haeri's life and works echo in both theory and practice is the importance of considering diffusion or democratisation as a key process of modernity. Throughout this paper, we have looked at how the conditions of the elite became an imaginary, a generalised mode of life, of the masses, through the often-mentioned modern mechanisms of schooling, literacy, media, etc. This is an integral aspect of Taylor's narrative of secularisation. He does not deny the importance of these avenues of diffusion. Yet, Taylor wants to take the discussion further by highlighting 'a more bumpy and indirect' process than that offered by a unilateral view of diffusion which only reinforces the view of secularisation as the sequential decline of religion.[1] Similar to the diffusion of modern ideas and values from elites to the general population, what has been given attention in this thesis is the parallel diffusion of these ideas and values to other parts of the world through the many economic, political and socio-cultural avenues cleaved open by various forms of both historical and contemporary globalisation, as well as the lasting legacy of colonialism. What we have been exploring throughout this work is how the modern imaginary had become inescapable for an increasingly globalised world that now collectively looked to the West. Rather than seeing this diffusion as one-sided, it is much more useful to understand it as involving a number of interactive processes that lead to the dynamic reshaping of modernity itself. Yet, even whilst allowing for this dispensation, European hegemony still remains central to understanding modernity.

5.2 A Post-Secular Narrative

In one way, we can take this as a crisis of authority which can be said to exemplify the transition from an ancién regime to an age of mobilisation, something we have done in this thesis by looking mainly at the demise of the caliphate and the decline of ulama authority. Rather than seeing it as a belated response to modernity, we can deliberate the rise of neo-revivalism in the

1. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 424.

late twentieth century as the circulation of earlier modernist ideas found among a few Muslim elites into an imaginary widespread among people at large. Haeri himself has exemplified this relationship between elites and the masses, through his activities and teachings as a religious leader.

There is much to be said for the fact that Haeri had emerged on the public scene as a religious figure in 1979. Being the year that saw the start of the 15th Islamic century, 1979 serves as an apt marker for an apparent revival of Islam. The dramatic seizure of Mecca — Islam's holiest site — by a group of militants claiming to be led by the long-prophesised redeemer of Islam, the Mahdi, the resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by the Mujahideen and, perhaps most significantly, the Islamic Revolution of Iran, all demonstrated the public presence of a resurgent Islam. This newfound visibility of religion which came to the fore by 1979 was not exclusive to Islam however. Events such as the mass suicide of the People's Temple in Jonestown — having occurred just weeks before the start of the year — brought much media interest and controversy around the growing presence of religious cults and new religious movements. Meanwhile, the significance of liberation theology for the success of the Nicaraguan revolution and the Pope's landmark visits to Ireland and Poland underscored the continuing popular power of Catholicism.[2] The year also ushered in a decade that saw the rise of New Age spirituality among the bourgeois, Protestant fundamentalism in American politics, televangelism in mass media, and religious conflicts across the globe, including in Ireland, Yugoslavia, the Middle East and India. Not only did religion seem to be everywhere all of a sudden, but there was now an unexpected public role for religion in the modern world, both in the sense of it taking on a more visible presence in the 'public sphere' and in it gaining greater 'publicity' among journalists, academics, politicians and the general public.[3]

The return of religion in the form of this sequence of global events brought with it the return of religion to the consciousness of social scientists and other academics, bringing into question the longstanding prediction many of them had held that religion would soon die out. Whereas critics of the secularisation thesis had previously been ignored, they would now begin to be taken more seriously. Perhaps the earliest critic to only later be given attention is David Martin.[4] Ironically, by the time the secularisation thesis began to lose favour, Martin had already began to put forward his own version of a secularisation theory that was more mindful of the type of criticism he himself had been an exponent of.[5] What Martin and others like Jose Casanova instead put forward was a radical reconsideration of what secularisation exactly entailed by framing it within the other paradigm shift that was beginning to establish itself in the sociological study of religion, namely that our

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2. J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.

3. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p. 3.

4. For a classic example, see his early work, D. Martin 'Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization', in J. Gould (ed.), *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences*, Penguin, Baltimore, 1965, pp. 169–182.

5. See for instance D. Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* Blackwell, Oxford, 1978.

contemporary global condition is one characterised by 'multiple modernities', which allowed them to assess the rise of contemporary religious movements and trends as a consequence of modernity rather than an obstruction to it.[6] It was the crisis of secularisation theory at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s that opened up these 'horizons of analysis of multiple modernities' by pioneers like Eisenstadt, who did not see modernisation as a process whereby secularisation dissolves religion but rather viewed it as a process whereby religious tradition is reconstructed.[7]

Notions of post-secularisation that had become popular in the wake of the demise of the classical secularisation thesis implied a sort of 'U-turn' in the secularisation process, which rather than challenging the earlier thesis, instead reinforced it. This point was already argued earlier by Martin, who cautioned use of the term 'post-secular' (or other terms denoting a similar notion) and advocated for a multilateral view of secularisation or indeed 'de-secularisation', by taking into account distinctions within each region, as well as contextualising these processes within the larger framework of Christianity. Rather than a challenge to secularisation per say, what Martin argued against is envisaging secularisation as involving the progressive decline of 'religion'; a misconception wrought by our equating the latter with twelfth-century Catholicism and 'then count[ing] every move away from this as decline'.[8] Similarly, Taylor doesn't discredit the impact of some features of modernisation (industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratisation, technology, etc.) on earlier religious forms, but objects to the view that these modern developments somehow work to 'undermine and side-line religious faith'.[9] In countries considered emblematic of secularity, we even see a rise in religiosity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century; the height of Catholic practice in France for instance has been marked at around 1870 for instance, long after the campaigns of de-Christianisation that define modern French history, and in the case of England, figures for adherence to churches peaks around the beginning of the twentieth century.[10] Furthermore, Taylor argues that the processes of modernity we are speaking of was aided by the success of protestant reform movements in England or counterreformation in France to increase 'orthodox' religious practice by reaching previously marginal practitioners through wide-ranging missions to church the unchurched.[11]

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6. See Schulz for a concise bibliographical review of secularisation theory prior to the publication of *A Secular Age*, in Hedgehog Review, 2006, pp. 170-177; see also Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World.*

7. Masud & Salvatore, 'Western Scholars of Islam on the Issue of Modernity', p. 36; Spohn, 'Eisenstadt on Civilizations and Multiple Modernity', p. 505.

8. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 427; see D. Martin, The Religious and the Secular: Studies in Secularization, Routldge & Keegan Paul, London, 1969, p. 67.

9. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 432.

10. Ibid., p. 424; see also n. 1.

11. Ibid., pp. 424-425.

5.2.1 An Immanent Frame

Rather than denying the 'decline of religion', Taylor's narrative gives us a more nuanced understanding of secularisation, which moves away from seeing this decline as linear and brings to our attention the ways in which religion was affected and altered by modernity.[12] Religion does not remain constant under secularisation but becomes 'different and unrecognizable from any earlier epoch'.[13] But the roots of this transformation lie in the initial and integral development of 'an outlook or mode of life' where the 'immanent' was clearly distinguished from the 'transcendent'.[14] As already mentioned, this is Taylor's connection to the 'Axial' thesis expressed by Eisenstadt and others, who mark out several major civilisations effected by a series of innovations taking place in the first millennium BC that 'have to do with the emergence, conceptualization, and institutionalization of a basic tension between the transcendent and mundane [immanent] orders'.[15] This 'transcendental turn' is seen as not only affecting the ancient civilisations of Greece (Platonism), Persia (Zoroastrianism) and the Levant (Judaism), as well as China (Confucianism and Daoism) and India (Hinduism and Buddhism), but also later civilisations linked to Christianity and Islam in an even more radical mode.[16]

An important factor in the success of religious reformism is the waning of 'sacred' authority and order which works to keep in check an inevitable tension for reform that arises from the original axial division between transcendent and immanent, along with the relegation of the latter to a derivative position.[17] As Taylor suggests, a boundary between transcendent and immanent or supernatural and natural is explicitly marked out in both Christian and Islamic theology by the high middle-ages.[18] However, he is not so interested in looking at the distinction on a theological or

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12. Ibid., pp. 436-437.
13. Ibid., p. 437. This position has been challenged of course. In his assessment of the current secularisation debate, Koenig writes: 'Secularization theory is today facing greater criticism than ever before. The claim that modernization would necessarily lead to a declining social significance of religion has already long been the subject of intense controversy in the sociology of religion. But only the more recent visibility of religion as evinced in fundamentalist movements, ethno-religious conflicts, and migration-driven religious diversity has stripped secularization theory of its former status as virtually uncontested paradigm. Various intellectuals have commented upon the renaissance of religion, "de-secularization," or even a new "post-secular" condition. And within specialized literatures in history, political science or sociology, many authors emphasize the necessity of moving decidedly beyond conventional versions of secularization theory. What exactly the many critics of the secularization paradigm aim to achieve is however anything but clear. Thus, while they claim that secularization theory reproduces an overly linear master narrative of modernity that overlooks the many counter-developments and historical ruptures of religious change, they sometimes draw on the very same narrative to claim that our present time represents a fundamental epochal transition' (Koenig, 'Beyond the Paradigm of Secularization?', p. 23 n. 1).
14. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 143
15. S. N. Eisenstadt, 'The Axial Age Breakthroughs', p. 1.
16. J. P. Arnason, 'The Axial Age and its Interpreters: Reopening a Debate', in J. P. Arnason, S. N. Eisenstadt and B. Wittrock (eds.), *Axial Civilizations and World History*, Brill, Leiden, 2005, pp. 19–49; See also J. P. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions*, Brill, Leiden, 2003, pp. 172 ff; A. Salvatore, 'Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West', in M. M. Khalid, A. Salvatore & M. V. Bruinessen (eds.), *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, pp. 3-35
17. Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*.
18. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 143, 781 n. 19;

theoretical level as much as he is in seeing this 'sorting out' of immanent and transcendent on an experiential level.[19] According to Taylor, we moved from an 'enchanted' world of supernatural forces that were 'not simply in beliefs which people held' but a real experience that people encountered (or felt they were encountering) in everyday life, towards a 'disenchanted' world 'by which it became possible to relate to certain realities as purely 'natural', and disintegrate them from the transcendent, whereby it eventually became possible to see the immediate surroundings of our lives as existing on this 'natural' plane, however much we might believe that they indicated something beyond'.[20]

Disenchantment for Taylor is not 'about what people believe' but about 'the way it is spontaneously imagined, and therefore experienced'.[21] Put simply, Taylor is trying to turn our gaze from explicit ideas to the shared implicit understandings they often become. Focusing on the transformation of implicit ideas of social order, Taylor means to look beyond the theory by which we express our views as a small minority, to the ways in which we imagine our social surroundings as a larger group or entire society, which, as taken-for-granted assumptions, are more often expressed in the 'images, stories, legends', 'common practices' and 'shared sense of legitimacy' they make possible.[22] He refers to these as the 'social imaginaries' that allow us to 'carry out the collective practices which make up our social life'.[23] Borrowed from Taylor's own earlier work, this phenomenological notion inspired by Martin Heidegger (d. 1976) seems vague and unfinished when probed.[24] Nevertheless, Taylor manages to show us through his use of this notion in *A Secular Age*, our 'need of stories which make explicit the implicit views lurking in the tacit background and situated in the long historical process of modernity'.[25]

Taylor attempts to achieve this feat with his model of an 'immanent frame', which allows us to frame both 'religious' and 'secular' within a broader conceptualisation of the disenchantment process.[26] It is this image of an immanent frame that moderns fundamentally share, that Zemmin is largely referring to in praise of 'Taylor's magisterial deconstruction of the oft-presumed binary between religion and secularism'.[27] One of the main reasons he uses Taylor in his own application of the narrative to a Muslim context is because 'Taylor grasps the most profound background understandings of modernity – that is, background understandings common not only to believers

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19. Ibid., p. 143
20. Ibid., p. 143.
21. Ibid. p. 325
22. Ibid,, pp. 171-172.
23. Ibid., p. 172; see also M. Koenig, 'Beyond the Paradigm of Secularization?', pp. 31-32.
24. For Taylor's earlier work on social imaginaries, see C. Taylor, 'Modern Social Imaginaries', *Public Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2002, pp. 91-124; also C. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2004.
25. Zemmin, Colin, & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 4.
26. This much is achieved by Weber himself with his evolutionary model of progress from magic to religion to science; see Weber, 'Science as a Vocation'.
27. F. Zemmin, 'A Secular Age and Islamic Modernism', p. 309.

and non-believers in the West but possibly also to non-Westerners'.[28] Following Zemmin, what has been the ambition of this project is to take Taylor's own story of secularisation as a 'useful heuristic tool' in writing a complementary story of secularisation that gives more attention to the meeting of Muslims and modernity.[29]

It is in this capacity that *A Secular Age* has been used in my thesis *as a narrative and not a theory*. But that is not to say that Taylor's approach is free of a theoretical framework. A theoretical backdrop is evident in Taylor's attempts to go beyond the classical secularisation paradigm, as well as conceptual genealogies of secularisation from the likes of Talal Asad (1993, 2003), by seeking 'to examine the cultural horizon not only of elite intellectual discourses, but also of the mentalities of the wider population'.[30] Taylor stresses that the process of disenchantment, so central to secularisation, should not be viewed as simply a change in our beliefs but a change in the unformulated naïve understanding of our lived background that form these beliefs.[31] Matthias Koenig explains this in terms of what he sees to be Taylor's attempt 'to formulate a philosophical anthropology' in continuation of the phenomenological legacy of Merleau-Ponty, Husserl and Heidegger.[32] This formal anthropology, states Koenig, 'includes the corporeal dimension of human experience, the linguistic nature of human expressiveness, and the moral orientation of human behavior according to 'strong evaluations' ... embedded in a cultural lifestyle that, in contrast to that which we simply desire, contain that which we perceive to be desirable'.[33]

To quote Taylor, 'we have here what Wittgenstein calls a 'picture', a background to our thinking, within whose terms it is carried on, but which is often largely unformulated, and to which we can frequently, just for this reason, imagine no alternative'.[34] Evoking Wittgenstein's metaphor of 'a picture [that] held us captive', Taylor wants to bring our attention to 'something deeper than a theory', that is in fact 'the largely unreflected-upon background understanding which provides the context for, and thus influences all our theorizing'.[35] Disenchantment and the new buffered self-understanding it engenders 'should not be taken as a set of beliefs which we entertain about our

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28. Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition*, p. 308; , Zemmin calls Taylor's narrative: 'the most fundamental background assumptions of modernity shared by all modern people, believers and non-believers alike' (Zemmin, Colin, & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 18).

29. Zemmin, Colin, & Vanheeswijk, 'Introduction', p. 3.

30. Koening, 'Beyond the Paradigm of Secularization?', p. 25

31. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 30, 95, 143 ff.

32. Koening, 'Beyond the Paradigm of Secularization?', pp. 23-48.

33. Ibid., p. 28

34. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 549. Taylor writes that 'one has to get at the connections in lived experience through ideas, and very often ideas which are not consciously available to the people concerned, unless they are forced to articulate them themselves through challenge and argument. Nevertheless, this effort, I believe is very worthwhile, because it enables us to see the way in which we can be held within certain world structures without being aware that there are alternatives. A 'picture' can 'hold us captive', as Wittgenstein put it, in the image I invoked a few pages back' (p. 557)

35. Taylor and Dreyfus are specifically referring here to 'the powerful picture of mind-in-world which inhabits and underlies what we could call the modern epistemological tradition', i.e. Cartesian dualism; See H. L. Dreyfus & C. Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2015, p. 1.

predicament', but should rather be seen as 'the sensed context in which we develop our beliefs'.[36] Hence, although 'many still hold that the universe is created by God, that in some sense it is governed by his Providence ... it is no longer usual to sense the universe immediately and unproblematically as purposefully ordered, although reflection, meditation, spiritual development may lead one to see it this way'.[37]

5.3 An Inside/Outside Geography

We have seen in Haeri's social and literary efforts both a reflection as well as a response to modern Muslim imaginaries, which becomes more complicated when appreciating another side of Haeri's understanding and execution of religious revival related to the rise of an alternative religious milieu commonly called New Age, which initially began among smaller social groups in the West but can now be seen across the globe and mainstream society in more diffused and pervasive forms. With our attention on the emergence of an Age of Authenticity, we have taken a look at the development of modern mysticism and psychologisation as a particular case of this phenomenon. Once again, we see here the transition of eclectic ideas into popular imaginaries, this time with the development and diffusion of a new type of 'spirituality' defined by modern forms of individuality and interiority.

Numerous times throughout *A Secular Age*, Taylor reminds us how the move towards interiority as well as a related sense of individual autonomy occurs with the emergence of the modern buffered self.[38] According to Taylor, 'our modern notions of inner and outer are indeed strange and without precedent in other cultures and times', as is 'our modern notion of the self' that is constituted by it.[39] Even whilst being aware of historical landmarks that show us preludes to the type of inwardness that will come to define the modern self, he makes the assertion that both the notion of a 'self' and the opposition between 'inner' and 'outer' may appear to be universal human expressions, but at closer inspection reveal 'baffling contrasts' as well as 'strands of continuity'.[40] In relation this 'inside/outside geography and the boundary

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36. A. Van Der Braak, 'Zen spirituality in a Secular Age: Charles Taylor and Zen Buddhism in the West', *Studies in Spirituality*, vol. 18, 2008, p. 44; reprinted as A. Van Der Braak, 'Zen Spirituality in a Secular Age', in R. Zas Friz de Col (ed.), *Transforming Spirituality*, Peeters, Leuven, 2016, pp. 637-658; see also his presentation paper 'Buddhism and Individualization: Charles Taylor and Buddhism in the West', at the *2015 World Congress of the International Association of Religions XX1*, Erfurt, Germany; also A. Van Der Braak, 'Zen spirituality in a Secular Age II - Dogen on Fullness: Zazen as Ritual Embodiment of Buddhahood', *Studies in Spirituality*, vol. 19, 2009, pp. 227-247.

37. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 325.

38. Ibid., p. 539.

39. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 111-114.

40. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 111-113.

dividing them', we can see in Haeri's presentation of Islam as a map, a reflection and response to the modern imaginary which the buffered self endears.

Let us explore this by briefly looking at a concept articulated in one of his recent books, *The Spectrum of Reality* (2015), which has the aim of presenting Islamic teachings in the form of a universal psychology with 'a condensed human map of body-mind-self and heart-soul-spirit'.[41] Haeri's 'map of human nature' is constituted of these six categories, divided in two groups of three, which to some extent mirror each other, one side representing the 'outer' and the other the 'inner' dimension of the human. Correlating it to our natural environment, Haeri explains (1) the *body* as generally an autonomic system directed towards maintaining a healthy state. As well as being grounded in nature, the body is also a product of nurture, which has in fact a larger influence, because of its ability to be manipulated. Like the body, (2) the *mind* is poised between both nature and nurture but can be much more susceptible to nurture through training and focus, the aim being to reach stillness and clarity. Mental disorders express and imbalance, whilst equilibrium is the state of healthy mind, which Haeri explains as arising from the activities of the nervous system and the five senses as well as mental faculties like memory, imagination and reason. Related to our identity, (3) the *self* emerges with birth and evolves through childhood, adolescence and maturity, requiring constant grooming and standards of conduct. If nurtured well the self can lead to the soul, which it always seeks to connect to but is distracted by the mind and body. (4) The *heart* here is metaphorical, referring to the source of love and seat of higher intelligence and intuition. It connects the self to the soul and its nature is to be clear and pure. Hence the objective is to keep the heart clean, making sure it is not tarnished or tainted. Otherwise light from within the heart is obstructed from reaching out. This light is (5) the *soul*, which is the life force that connects the absolute with the relative. As the domain 'true spirituality' and the source of consciousness, the soul needs to improvement and is already perfect, unconditional, constant, limitless. Lastly, (6) the *spirit* is supreme cosmic consciousness and eternal life, in Haeri's words, it is 'oblivion'!

To take a brief example to see how this map is meant to be applied: sex or gender is at its most extreme at the gross end, the distinction is most pronounced with the body, becoming less and less pronounced as we move on. A lot of the gender distinction is imposed upon us as children by others, but with maturity and empathy this differentiation becomes less because you can relate to others. Through growth and higher awareness, the male and female within each of us are accepted and integrated, because at the level of the soul there is no distinction. According to Haeri, by attaining this complete spectrum of consciousness, we are able to use the head but follow the heart, which he describes as two mutually exclusive zones of wisdom. The head offers 'worldly wisdom', reason, rationality, moderation of pain and pleasure, whilst the heart offers 'heavenly wisdom' where calculation stops because there is only One. Essentially, Haeri's spectrum of human nature boils

41. Haeri, *Spectrum of Reality*, p. 9.

down to a dynamic between a limited outer dimension and limitless inner dimension. Whether expressed as the relation between head and heart, or seen as the self-soul dynamic, or even as humanity and divinity, the purpose is to balance the two so that the seamless connection between them and the seen and unseen worlds they represent can be realised.

5.3.1 Appreciating the Inner and the Outer

What becomes apparent when observing this map of self-knowledge is the centrality that Haeri affords the division between an 'outer' and 'inner' dimension of a human as separate but connected. For some of us, Haeri's map might remind us of a modern philosopher like Soren Kierkegaard (d. 1855), who understands the human self as limited from without by the constraints of spacetime whilst within itself being unlimited.[42] In the first paragraph of his *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard writes: 'Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity'.[43] For Kierkegaard, the 'self' (or 'spirit') is not a substance but the relation between 'body' and 'soul'; the body is situated within time and place, and so is associated with finitude, temporality and necessity, whilst the soul is not, and therefore associated with infinity, eternity and possibility.[44] Being a synthesis of the psychical and the physical, the essential task of human beings is to hold themselves together.[45] When this synthesis is out of balance, when there is a 'miss-relation' between the physical and abstract, we find ourselves in despair.[46] Hence, 'striving to hold together the limited and unlimited simultaneously' is the 'essential duty, a possibility, that everyone has'.[47] And we have already looked at how Taylor expresses this caution in terms of a misinterpretation of the transcendent within the immanent by believers and non-believers alike.[48]

On the other hand, Haeri's map can also be readily identified with the classical Sufi division between 'inner' and 'outer', most often presented as *shari'a* and *haqiqa*. Although obviously a modern thinker, we have here an example of how Haeri draws upon traditional resources to develop a dialectic between inner and outer which serves as a central theme in his teachings on self-knowledge. Sufis since 'the medieval period', says Joseph Lumbard, 'maintained that observance of Shariah was not complete without realization of *haqiqah* and that realization of *haqiqah* must be grounded in observance of Shariah'.[49] We find the dichotomy working as a key theme to represent

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42. A. H. Khan, 'Charles Taylor: Taylor's Affinity to Kierkegaard', in J. Stewart (ed.), *Volume 11, Tome III: Kierkegaard's Influence on Philosophy (Anglophone Philosophy)*, Routledge, London, 2012, pp. 219-230.
43. S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1941.
44. J. J. Davenport, 'Selfhood and 'Spirit'', in J. Lipitt & G. Pattison (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 239.
45. A. Grøn, 'Time and History', in J. Lipitt & G. Pattison (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 277, pp. 274-291.
46. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*.
47. Khan, 'Charles Taylor', pp. 219-230.
48. Taylor, A Secular Age, p. 769.
49. J. E. B. Lumbard, *Ahmad al-Ghazali, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love*, SUNY Press, Albany, NY, 2016, p. 185.

the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of Islam in many important Sufi writings, such as Ali al-Hujwiri's (d. 1077) *Kashf al-Muahjub*, where 'sharia' refers to that which can change, like rules and regulations, whilst 'haqiqa' is in reference to that reality which remains immutable, such as the knowledge of God. Warning against exclusive focus on either extreme, Hujwiri states that one cannot be maintained without the other, and compares their 'mutual relation ... to that of body and spirit'.[50] Other Sufi figures of the period are known to have expressed a similar symbiosis between these two epistemes, like Abdullah al-Ansari (d. 1088), who famously asserted that 'without the *haqiqah* the *shariah* is useless and without the *shariah* the *haqiqah* is useless; anyone who does not act in accord with both is useless'.[51] Sufi writers of the following generation, such as Ahmad al-Ghazali (d. 1126) and Ahmad Sam'ani (d. 1140) also emphasised this distinction, the latter writing in his *Rawh al-arwah*: 'You must devote your outer aspect to the Shariah and your inner aspect to the *haqiqah*'.[52]

References to an exoteric and esoteric dimension in relation to these terms indicate how the distinction between them was partly rendered from the pairing of the terms *zahir* (manifest, apparent, external) and *batin* (interior, inward, hidden) in the Qur'an.[53] Perhaps most famously by Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), the analogy of the 'shell' (*qishr*) and the 'kernel' (*lubb*) was used to express the outer and inner dimensions of *shari'a* and *haqiqa* respectively.[54] This binary has also sometimes been described with reference to the two halves of the testament of faith (*shahada*), the first part, 'there is no God but God', denoting *haqiqa*, and the second part, 'Muhammad is the Messenger of God', denoting *shari'a*. The two Holy cities of Mecca and Medina have also come to symbolise either sides of this duality. Mecca represents *haqiqa* as it is the home of the Kaaba and was the context in which the earlier period of Muhammad's prophethood took place, as well as the early revelations with verses mainly focused on the individual and existential issues. Medina represents *shari'a* as it is the

50. A. U. Hujviri, *The Kashf al-Mahjúb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. R. E. Nicholson, Brill, Leiden, 1911, p. 383; see also L. Gardet, 'Hakika', in P. Bearman et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0253.

51. Ansari, cited in Lumbard, *Ahmad al-Ghazali*, p. 83.

52. Sam'ani, cited in Ibid., p. 62.

53. For example, both terms appear together in the Qur'an in 6:120, 31:20, 57:3.

54. '*Al-Qishr wa al-Lubb* [The Shell and the Kernel], the title of one of Muhyid al-Din ibn al-Arabi's numerous treatises, expresses in symbolic form the relationship between exoterism and esoterism, likened respectively to the casing of a fruit and to its interior part, the pith or kernel. The casing or shell (*al-qishr*) is the sharia, that is, the external religious law which is addressed to all and which is made to be followed by all, as indicated moreover by the meaning of 'great way' that is associated with the derivation of its name. The kernel (*al-lubb*) is the haqiqa, that is to say truth or essential reality, which, unlike the sharia, is not within reach of everyone but reserved for those who know how to discern it beneath outward appearances and how to attain it through the exterior forms which conceal it, protecting and disguising it at the same time. In another symbolism, sharia and haqiqa are also designated respectively as the '[outer] body' (*al-jism*) and the 'marrow' (*al-mukh*), of which the relationship is exactly the same as that of shell and kernel; and one could no doubt find still other symbols equivalent to these. Whatever the designation used, what is referred to is always the 'outward' (az-zahir) and the 'inward' (al-batin), that is, the apparent and the hidden, which, moreover, are such by their very nature and not owing to any conventions or to precautions taken artificially, if not arbitrarily, by those who preserve traditional doctrine. This 'outward' and this 'inward' are represented by the circumference and its center, which can be looked upon as the cross-section of the fruit evoked by the previous symbol...' (R. Guénon, 'Haqiqa and Sharia In Islam', in J-L. Michon & R. Gaetani, *Sufism: Love and Wisdom*, World Wisdom Inc., 2006, pp. 96-97; see also Guénon's chapters on 'Sufism in Insights into Islamic Esoterism' and 'Taoism', Sophia Perennis, 2001.

place of the Prophet's later life and where he is buried, as well as where the later Qur'anic verses to do with commandments and community were revealed.

5.3.2 Between Two Worlds

The clear division between inner and outer finds numerous expressions in Haeri's teachings, whether in the form of the classical terminology of *shari'a* and *haqiqa*, or defined from multiple other angles as a distinction between humanity/divinity, local/universal, form/meaning, earthly/heavenly, limited/limitless, etc. During a talk in Sweden, Haeri offered a common Sufi analogy to explain this dyad: 'The goblet is Medina. The wine is Mecca. The goblet is courtesy and structure and hierarchy and struggle. The wine is drunkenness with the thrill of the knowledge that Allah is with you'.[55] In trying to explain the interdependence of the two, Haeri says:

> There cannot be a wine without a container and a container is useless without what it contains. You are both. If you identify yourself entirely with the goblet, with your body, then all what you are looking (at) is the shimmering, structure and hardness of the glass. And if you are only concerned about the content then all that you are doing is smelling the aroma and not being able to contain the wine because it splashes out. You are both. You contain the meaning. You are a physical reality that contains a meaning. Both the physical and the meaning have emanated from the same essence. You are both. And you contain both. And you have consumed both. And you are producing both. And that is the puzzle and that is the secret. If you don't get it then...[56]

Haeri's most expressive explanation of this distinction is an analogy taken from the Qur'an of the two oceans that meet but do not mix, which illustrates the crucial point in his message that we consist of two realms, dimensions, 'realities', etc., that both must be acknowledged and appreciated.[57] Otherwise, one is neglected over the other, or even worse, they are confused with each other, leading to dire consequences that affect the individual as well as society at large. These two opposing yet complementary dimensions of human nature are together but do not mix. Like two sides of the same coin that face different directions but are joined together as one entity.

Whether, looking at it diachronically in continuity with a Sufi tradition, or synchronically as a philosophical reaction similar to that of other modern thinkers, the importance of reconciling our dual nature is an evident centrepiece in Haeri's teachings. Many of his projects were formulated around this distinction. We have seen how The Academy of Self Knowledge project was divided in this way for example: as a summation of Haeri's teachings on self-knowledge that had developed across the 25 or so years prior to the development of the course,

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55. Haeri, talk in Sweden, 1994.
56. Ibid.
57. Qur'an 25:5 and 55:19–20.

module one was consciously designed as reflective of *haqiqa*, whilst the other half of the equation, *shari'a*, was developed into the second ASK module. The Academy of Self Knowledge is a good example that showcases for us the centrality of this tenet in his teachings, but it is only one of many attempts to create a catalogue of Haeri's teachings which divide them into 'Meccan' and 'Medinan' categories. We can also use this dichotomy to get a more personal understanding of Fadhlalla Haeri's personal journey. Haeri himself has understood the respective relationships with his two main teachers along the lines of this division, seeing Chinmayananda as the one through whom he became acquainted with *haqiqa* and Abdalqadir as the one from whom he acquired *shari'a*.[58]

In some ways, my work has followed in the old Anglo-Saxon academic tradition of the intellectual portrait 'which considers 'life' and 'work' as an inseparable whole, based on the conviction that the context in which an individual moves reveals important elements of his personality, while his personal trajectory is a key factor for understanding his approach and his ideas'.[59] Hence, what stands out when considering Haeri's literary works in relation to what I argue to be a major theme in Haeri's life, is the sense of being an intermediary between two worlds, as reflected in his literary efforts geared towards translating an ancient, religiously exclusive, experiential and even elitist knowledge, for a modern, secular and general audience. In casting my own narrative over Haeri, I have taken inspiration from Natalie Davis' method of embedding the life and work of an individual within a narrative and historical context, echoed in the title of her book which refers to a 'Muslim between two worlds' as relevant to Haeri in every sense of the phrase.[60] Whether these worlds are conceived of in a geographical, cultural, historical or even metaphorical sense, there is no doubt that Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri stands at the interspace between two worlds.[61]

58. Fadhlalla Haeri, interview with Ali Allawi, February 2014.

59. J. Estruch, 'A Conversation with Thomas Luckmann', p. 533.

60. Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds.*

61. This hit home for me during my fieldwork when I noticed the name, inscribed above the entrance, of Haeri's private apartment at the Rasooli Centre: *Barzakh Manzil.* In Islamic eschatology, *barzakh* refers to the interspace between this worldly life and the afterlife.

Appendix

Haeri's Later Writings

We can observe the trend towards a less religious and more secular presentation of Islam and Sufism becoming increasingly more dominant in Haeri's later publications. For example, in a recent collection of poems, *Look Again* (2019), as well as in recent collections of aphorisms, like *Sound Waves* (2011), *Pointers to Presence* (2013) and *Pointers to Reality* (2020). It is especially noticeable in *101 Helpful Illusions* (2009), a collection of aphorisms accompanied by a brief commentary where religious references are avoided and words like 'self-realization', 'human journey' and 'awakening' are common. References to Sufism rather than Islam do occur in the book, which begins with a forward from Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, a writer and spiritual leader popular in the United States and Europe who readily identifies as a Sufi but not as a Muslim.[1] One major contribution to the style of *101 Helpful Illusions* is the publishing house it was produced and distributed by, O-Books (now also called John Hunt Publishing), who have since their inception focused on publishing 'spirituality, personal development and self-help titles', as well as intellectual works on critical thinking. This has clearly encouraged the move towards a less explicitly Islamic style in Haeri's writings, as is evident in their choice of title and cover for this particular book, as well as in their omission of Islamic references in some of the works by Haeri they have republished.[2]

This influence can be seen, for instance, in one of Haeri's recent works on self-knowledge, called *Witnessing Perfection: A Sufi Guide* (2006). A more detailed and advanced work than his earlier books on self-knowledge, *Witnessing Perfection* has similarly become one of Haeri's more celebrated books, being praised by eminent scholars of religion and in academic journal reviews.[3] Haeri outlines the book in his introduction:

> This is a personal book about spiritual philosophy and is condensed within seven chapters, covering a range of issues concerning creation, realities, truth, the different dimensions of the self, levels of consciousness, perceptions, relationships and enlightenment. God and divine lights are the thread throughout the book. Chapter one describes the foundation of existence and creation. Chapter two deals with the human template and the cosmic unity behind all diversity. Chapter three describes the

1. A good demonstration of this is Oprah Winfrey's interview with Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, in which he talks about a number of Sufi concepts without ever mentioning any religious terminology or explicit references to Islam.
2. See https://www.johnhuntpublishing.com/o-books/
3. For example, S. T. Keating's review in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, Summer 2009, p. 482.

> growth and evolvement of the human self through its journey to the wisdom and serenity of the soul. Chapter four describes the different levels of relationships in creation and their interplay. Chapter five addresses the human purpose and meaning in life. Chapter six discusses the root of the human quest and desire for security and perfection. Chapter seven presents summaries, prescriptions and descriptions of the fulfilled self.[4]

Even more than in Haeri's earlier works on self-knowledge, we find a deliberate attempt in this book to present Islamic doctrines without unnecessary religious or spiritual or philosophical language in the hopes of communicating the message simply and clearly.[5] To compensate for this lack, relevant Qur'anic verses and hadiths were provided at the end of each chapter in the original edition, but, notably, were removed in the republished version by O-Books in 2009.

Another one of Haeri's writings to be picked up and published by O-Books is *Happiness in Life and After Death: An Islamic Sufi View* (2010). After opening with what contemporary science can tell us about death, and a general account of how death has been viewed in other religious and cultural traditions throughout the ages, Haeri 'provides a lucid and inspiring account of life, death and the hereafter, according to an Islamic Sufi perspective'.[6] What we notice with this work is somewhat of a reduction in the use of Islamic terms and there replacement with terminology and concepts that are more generally applicable; the prime example here being the term 'consciousness' and its permutations like 'higher consciousness', 'spheres of consciousness', 'reflective consciousness', that all help to explain various metaphysical concepts in a style less explicitly Islamic. Although Haeri doesn't shy away from using Islamic and Arabic terminology entirely in this and other books, it is used sparingly and in conjunction with a format that clearly aims to present a more scientific and universal understanding of the religious concepts he elucidates.

The publishing house would also put out Haeri's long-awaited autobiography, *Son of Karbala: The Spiritual Journey of an Iraqi Muslim* (2008), which found favourable reviews.[7] Although a personal account of his own life, we see once again an attempt to illustrate the current condition of Muslims through social, political and historical contextualisation. This type of contextualization is also present in his more recent autobiographical work written together with his wife Muneera and published by Watkins, called *Sufi Encounters: Sharing the Wisdom of Enlightened Sufis* (2018). Whereas the earlier biography gives considerable attention to Haeri's early way of life in Iraq and the changes wrought upon him by the impact of modernity, this later book largely skips the early period and focuses on Haeri's many encounters with numerous Sufi masters during his later life as a Sufi shaykh. Once again there

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4. F. Haeri, *Witnessing Perfection*, O-Books, Winchester, UK, 2008, p. xiv

5. Haeri, *Witnessing Perfection*, p. xiv.

6. *Happiness in Life and After Death: An Islamic Sufi View*, O-Books, Winchester, UK, 2010.

7. Production of this book was aided by one of Haeri's sons, Ali Zayn.

is a historical contextualization of these encounters and the general exposition of Sufism given in the book, meant to offer an appraisal of how much of what once was applicable from Sufism no longer can be in our day and age. Both biographies are complemented by a forward from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who has been a friend of Haeri's for many years and shares a comparable biographical background to Haeri, with a similarly curious admixture of Shi'ism, Persian and Shadhili Sufism, universal spirituality and science.

We also find a move towards a less theological and more scientific or modern style even in Haeri's recent commentary on Qur'anic verses, *The Story of Creation in the Qur'an* (2013). Notably, in this work, actual Qur'anic verses are omitted entirely from the main text and only given as references in a footnote at the end of each page-long subchapter of the five main chapters. As the title of these chapters indicates – 1. Emergence of the Universe, 2. Life on Earth and its Diversity, 3. Humanity and its Journey, 4. Wisdom, God-Consciousness and Revelations, 5. End of Life and the Universe – the focus of this book is on verses of the Qur'an that relate 'to the nature of physical phenomena, including the origins of the universe, the nature of light, matter, space and time, and the evolution of biological and sentient beings'.[8] This work is reminiscent of Haeri's earlier book, *Journey of the Universe in the Qur'an*, but in a much easier to read format and with a more explicit commitment to the mainstream scientific narrative of natural history. Indeed, the book begins with a substantial 'Timeline of Creation – According to present day scientific discoveries', where evolutionary history is outlined from the Big Bang and the formation of galaxies to the cellular beginnings of life on earth and the gradual emergence and spread of Homo sapiens.[9] Haeri writes in the book:

> In this book I have restricted myself to expounding upon verses in the Qur'an that describe different aspects of our universe and only occasionally do I refer to our modern day knowledge regarding astronomy and quantum mechanics. As a young scientist I had been amazed by Qur'anic revelations fusing limited consciousness with the supreme Reality. My respect, love and trust in the Qur'an had been my guiding principle towards a better understanding of life and especially that of human nature. This gift has been the driving force behind producing this book for the general reader. Each human being is a microcosm that reflects the macrocosm and this reality is the greatest gift for us humans. Our purpose in life is to realize and experience this great truth and gift. Until a few decades ago science considered particles and fields to be distinct entities. Then came Quantum Theory and its unified view which brought an end to the dualism of matter and energy. The revolutionary idea that there is no separate or independent material reality brought about a considerable shift in our viewpoints in science, as well as in philosophy and religion. Empty space consists of particles and antiparticles being spontaneously created and annihilated. This mysterious suspension is the origin of everything that exists and that can exist. This 'nothing' of space is the womb of the universe. We human beings are within that womb and (mysteriously) contain that womb within us. The large space between the

8. A. al-Adnani, 'Preface', in F. Haeri, *The Story of Creation in the Qur'an*, Zahra, London, 2013.
9. Haeri, *The Story of Creation in the Qur'an*, introduction.

nucleus of the atom and an orbiting electron is considered as empty space and it is there that all 'virtual effects' take place. This is the foundation of our so-called real world; a virtual reality that's ever-changing and is based on inherent uncertainty. The Real is ever constant and is the source of all that is known and unknown. In Truth there is only the Real.[10]

This book can be seen as an attempt to dissolve debate between creation and evolution as opposing accounts of the natural world, as well as any sense of contradiction between science and revelation. But this works both ways. As much as there is a ready acceptance of modern science within the book, there is also an insistence that the great era of modern scientific discovery and technology is coming to an end as further effort and resources now yields less results. According to Haeri, this is because we are now 'nearing the boundaries where the discernible and unknowable meet', and so the only way forward is for our empirical and rational human consciousness 'to yield to higher consciousness and the realm of spiritual insight and imagination'.[11]

Haeri's effort here to synthesise science and the Qur'an are part of a larger plan underlying all of his works. Namely, the aim to 'translate' his understanding of the Qur'an for a 'modernised' public. For example, another commentary on the Qur'an, *The Essential Message of the Qur'an* (2010), was written by Haeri based on his personal interpretations of some of the main topics referenced by the Qur'an, which are categorised in the book into seven topical chapters each with around 11-17 subchapters, as well as a lengthy list of the relevant verses referenced in each of these subchapters making up the second part of the book, so as make the content of the first part less interrupted by the actual verses themselves and easier to read.[12] Besides these books on the Qur'an, smaller booklets with selected verses and short commentary have been published, such as *50 Selected Verses* (2016) and *Sacred Alchemy* (2016). A major project has been Haeri's commentary of the entire Qur'an, titled *Transformative Qur'an* (2020), which has as its focus the 'transformative' effect of the Qur'an.

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10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. The explicit intention of this work was to present the basic message of the Qur'an within its own historical context: 'The difference between the ancient Arabs and today's Arabic-speaking people can clearly be witnessed in the modern Arabic usage as compared to Qur'anic Arabic. The Arabic in the Qur'an is considerably different to the modern versions used by ordinary folks. The Arabic language is rooted in the ancient Semitic tongue, which had remained unchanged for at least 2000 years. Classical scholars of the Qur'an often blame city folks for the corruption of the original Arabic. It is said that some of the Qur'an's language relate to camels, nomadic culture and its special worldview. Therefore, in order to truly understand the full depth of the meanings of the Qur'an, we need to visualize the way of life and mindset of people at that time. This is a major reason why the Qur'an cannot be adequately translated. In addition to the linguistic and cultural barriers related to the full appreciation of the Qur'an, the reader needs to reflect and resonate with its transformative energy. For the door of insights and lights to open upon the inner ear and heart, the approach to the Qur'an must be based on humility, faith and trust in God's ever-present mercy and grace. When opening up to the multidimensionality of the Qur'an, we need to leave behind personal credentials, knowledge and other aspects of identity or separation from Allah's cosmic light. Many years after leaving Karbala, when I began to share the beauty and perfection of the Qur'an with non-Arabs, I realized how impossible it is to simply translate it into another language. The Qur'an is understood by one's total immersion in the Qur'an. My experience of trying to make the message of the Qur'an accessible to non-Arabs encouraged me to write this book' (from the Prologue).

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