

CANONS

Undergraduate Journal of Religious Studies
McGill University
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CANONS

Undergraduate Journal of Religious Studies

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When I entered McGill in 2007 I had no idea that I would end up in religious studies. Four years later Birks has become a home away from home, and I am finishing a joint honours degree in Religious Studies and International Development. I have learned that religious studies is a thriving discipline that encompasses countless disciplines from theology and languages to law and politics, and that the students of McGill are actively involved in studying all these areas.

This year's edition of *Canons* does its part to represent this diversity—this year's theme is “diversity in religious studies.” Departing from the strong focus on Hinduism and Buddhism in volume VI of *Canons*, our first article is on the oft-neglected religion Sikhism. Sarina has made an informative and literary study of the Japi, and really showcased a distinctive and beautiful religion in the process.

Our second article is on Islam, and is a nuanced study of the reasons for and implications of the practice of mut‘a among Shiites in Hezbollah. Taushif has avoided stereotypical depictions of Islam and the Middle East, and instead presented a politically savvy picture of a long contested practice as it exists now. Our next piece turns the tables both temporally and geographically and makes a historical study of the Orange Order in Ontario from 1867-1914. Brendan's paper showcases an important social dimension of religion in Canadian history, and also highlights the fact that detailed historical analyses are a key component of religious studies.

Our fourth essay highlights yet another dimension of religious studies—this time the philosophical. Jay's essay is a very detailed survey of Sunni scholars' attempts to reconcile the issue of theodicy in Islam, thus demonstrating the fact that old questions continue to have relevance today. The final essay included in this year's volume addresses the key contemporary question of religious stereotypes. Abida addresses the way Islam and Buddhism have been commonly portrayed in the West, and then makes a thorough case for why these stereotypes are inaccurate, and in turn presents a picture of how we can move away from a discourse about the clash of civilizations, and towards one on religious pluralism.

By representing religious traditions from across the world, and from

literary, philosophical, historical, and socio-political angles we have sought to demonstrate that religious studies is a vibrant discipline that seeks to address key issues from history and the present as they occur all over the world. I was drawn to religious studies for precisely these reasons, and I am deeply grateful that I have been allowed to share my passion through this journal.

I have to thank everyone who made this journey possible. This journal would not exist without the generous financial support of the Faculty of Religious Studies, the Religious Studies Undergraduate Society, and the AUS. Nor would it exist without the members of my editorial board, who all worked tirelessly to ensure that this journal presented only the highest quality undergraduate scholarship on religion, and thank you to our contributors for providing it. Finally, to all faculty, teaching assistants, and student in Religious Studies: I could not have done any of this without your inspiration, and for that I will be ever grateful.

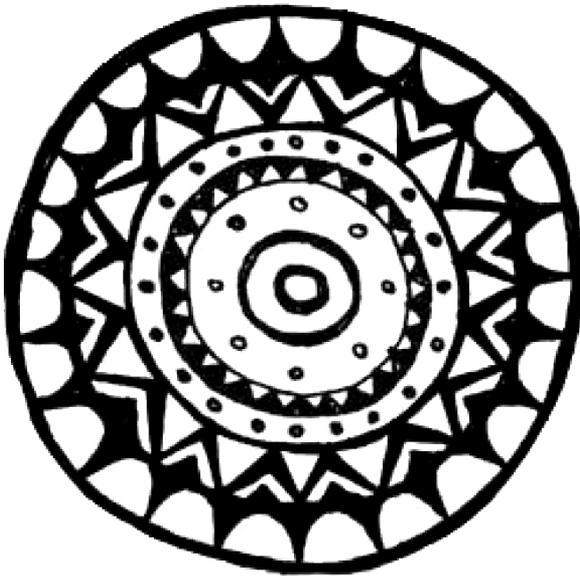
All my best,

Robin Steedman
Editor-in-Chief, *Canons*

DECONSTRUCTING THE LITERARY PARADOXES OF THE JAPJI

**A Contradictory Morning Prayer and its Implications
for the Sikh Religion**

SARINA ISENBERG



Deconstructing the Literary Paradoxes of the Japji: A Contradictory Morning Prayer and its Implications for the Sikh Religion

The Japji, written by Guru Nanak and included at the beginning of the *Adi Granth* is a popular Sikh morning prayer. The *Adi Granth* is the title used by academics to refer to what practitioners call the *Guru Granth Sahib* (Kholi 64). The Japji is unique compared to other prayers in that it contains seemingly irreconcilable paradoxes that challenge the foundations of Sikhism. This essay will use deconstruction to analyze the significance of these paradoxes and their implications for practitioners who recite them on a daily basis.

Before deconstructing the paradoxes from a literary perspective, it is important to emphasize that the Japji is significant as both a religious holy text and as piece of poetry. Mark Juergensmeyer believes that the *Adi Granth* contains not only theological significance, but also literary merit (22). Nanak referred to himself as a poet (G. Singh 26), and his work is therefore a poetic depiction of the Divine. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh describes Nanak's literary abilities: "He explodes human language. He uses poignant similes, analogies, and metaphors to describe that which is utterly ineffable" (12). While the text is highly literary, it is not simply "art for art's sake"—a phrase and mentality coined by Walter Pater in his essay "Studies in the History of the Renaissance" (1507)—rather, Sikh theologians and practitioners consider it to be the "embodiment of the Guru" (Juergensmeyer 22), and thus a means of communicating indirectly with the Divine. Moreover, scholars regard the Japji as the most important section in the *Adi Granth*. W.H. McCleod believes that it is the epitome of Guru Nanak's teachings (*Textual Sources* 4), and Swami Rama argues that it contains the "quintessence of Sikh philosophy" (vii). Given the importance of the text and its dual functions, it seems likely that the embedded paradoxes are both intentional in the prayer and integral to the religion. This essay will mainly treat the Japji as a piece of literature, though it will also make linkages to the religious significance of the text.

Authors of metaphysical poetry—that is, the genre of the Japji (N. Singh 21)—frequently utilize the figurative device of paradox, which is usually analyzed according to the deconstruction method that scholars developed over the last 30 years. M.H. Abrams defines a paradox as "a statement which seems on its face to be logically contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to be interpretable in a way that makes sense" (239). As will be demonstrated later in this essay, the paradoxes within the Japji are both logical and fundamental to the religion. In literary studies, scholars have adopted Derridean deconstruction as a popular method to analyze

paradoxes. Jacques Derrida believes that texts have no determinate meaning and thus contain incompatible and ‘undecidable’ possibilities (69). Different sections of the Japji contradict one another, therefore making it difficult for a reader to arrive at a single cohesive interpretation. According to Abrams’ analysis of Derrida, a deconstructive reading entails “disseminat[ing] the provisional meaning into an indefinite range of significations that [...] always involve an aporia—an insuperable deadlock, or ‘double bind,’ of incompatible or contradictory meanings which are ‘undecidable’” (72). The Japji frequently reaches this point of aporia, and it is possible that Guru Nanak purposely inserted these multiple meanings into the text as a way of making the reader question his or her own belief system. Neither side of the paradoxes can be viewed as more “true” than the other and thus one cannot derive one clear interpretation; however, deconstruction theorists would argue that this inherent contradiction does not detract from the validity of the text, as “the instability of a text is crucial to its intelligibility” (73). The Japji does not have one specific meaning; it contains infinite possibilities of conflicting interpretations that are significant for Sikh theology.

The various interpretations of the Japji and the multiple ways of viewing the paradoxes can be attributed to two key factors: translation and differences in interpretation. This essay’s analysis of the Japji’s paradoxes is done through a close reading of an English translation of the text. The particular translation being used was carefully constructed and the translator, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, states that she attempted to recover the “meaning and rich philosophical import of the poetry” (32). She refers to previous translations as unwieldy, archaic, and androcentric (33), whereas this particular translation is quite suitable for a modern, globalized society. However, it is noteworthy that all translators intentionally or unintentionally incorporate their own particular worldviews into their translation. Rama describes this phenomenon: “Every generation has to make its own translation of the classics [...]. The idiom changes, the images acquire different shades, the words shed their old connotations. Not infrequently a people read themselves in a translation” (viii). Thus an analysis of the paradoxes derived from a translated text might vary from an analysis based upon the original. Furthermore, every individual’s interpretation is subject to change based upon one’s own unique experience. Bhogal asserts, “understanding is predicated upon the existence of prior judgments and understandings (the hermeneutic circle)” (74). It is impossible for one to interpret a text with complete objectivity, as the communicated Word to the reader is not the fixed written words themselves, but how these words are understood and recontextualized (Bhogal 93). This analysis is applicable to any written text, be it religious, literary, or otherwise; all texts are analyzed according to both the translator’s and reader’s perspectives. The paradoxes presented in this essay are consequently understood in the context of the unique viewpoints of both the translator and interpreter. Despite this degree of

subjectivity, there is an underlying cohesive theology that pervades these layers of translation and interpretation.

The aforementioned discussion on the significance of the Japji as a literary and religious text, the theoretical approach to paradox, and the subjectivity of interpretation has provided a foundation upon which to analyze the various paradoxes in the Japji. There are five key paradoxes within the Japji: fate versus freewill, the need to record for posterity versus the inability to truly capture the Will, the Divine as many deities versus the Divine as one Name, the One as Form or Formless, and desire to know and describe the Divine versus the incapacity to fully grasp the magnitude of the Formless One. Each of these paradoxes is integral for understanding Sikhism. The first paradox of fate versus freewill relates to an individual's ability to make decisions regarding his or her life, as opposed to living without agency along a predestined path. Different *pauris*—the word used to describe a stanza of the Japji (Rama vii)—present the two contradicting sides of this paradox. In *pauri* two, Guru Nanak demonstrates a fatalist perspective: “The Will determines what is high and what is low;/ the Will grants all joy and suffering” (2). The individual has limited control over the events experienced in his or her life or even over his or her emotions. This outlook is furthered in *pauri* 33:

It is not ours to speak or stay silent,/It is not ours to ask or give./
It is not ours to live or die./It is not ours to gain riches that rattle
the mind./It is not ours to have consciousness,/knowledge and
reflection,/It is not ours to be liberated from the cycle of life
and death./That One, whose power it is, regards Its doing. (33)

This *pauri* suggests that an individual should not even attempt to assert agency, as the Divine controls every action and word. Practitioners are expected to be humble and to trust the One to guide their lives. The repetition at the beginning of each sentence is referred to as an anaphora, which reinforces that followers must let go of an illusion that they possess agency, and accept the omnipotence of the One. Conversely, in *pauri* 34, Guru Nanak introduces the notion of freewill: “The earth is [...] the place for righteous action./In it are colourful beings and lifestyles./[...] We are judged on every action performed;/The One is true, Its verdicts truly just” (34). If the Divine judges an individual's actions, then that individual presumably has the choice to engage in different activities. Sikh theology considers this freedom to exist within the “Realm of Duty” (*Dharam Khand*), one of the five realms in Sikhism, wherein humans are active agents provided with the opportunity to act ethically and purposefully (N. Singh 13). In these two adjacent *pauris*, Guru Nanak says on the one hand that the Divine determines everything, and on the other that the Divine judges one's choices. These two notions cannot be reconciled and this contradiction seems intentional.

This paradox is further complicated in *pauri* 37, where it states that the only way to be true is “By following the Will” (37). This quote raises many self-reflexive and metaphysical questions, such as: How can a person know the Will? Why must the Will be followed if it is going to be enforced regardless? Can a person ever diverge from the Will if all actions are considered predestined? These questions are unanswerable and bring the reader, who considers both interpretations to be equally true, into a state of aporia or deadlock. Since the Japji does not seem to favour either fate or free will, the reader is left with an irresolvable paradox.

The second paradox is similarly baffling and also lacks any form of resolution. This paradox regards practitioners’ abilities to record the Divine in writing. Some *pauris* suggest that the Divine is ineffable, while others advocate for the act of recording in order to improve understanding. *Pauri* 12 argues that the Divine is inexpressible: “No words can speak of remembrance,/Attempts to explain are later regretted./No paper, pen or scribe can describe,/Nor any philosophizing help to realize,/So wondrous is the immaculate Name” (12). It seems impossible to successfully record or remember the Name as all previous efforts to do so have failed. In addition, *pauri* 36 states that within the Realm of Beauty, “the faculties are honed in unmatched splendour. Words fail to describe./They who try lament their lack”(36). It is considered futile to attempt to characterize the Word. The inability to depict the One is especially prevalent in the Realm of Beauty (*Saram Khand*), which is “where the human faculties and sensibilities are sharpened and refined. It is a magnificent region, one whose beauty cannot be adequately described” (N. Singh 14). These *pauris* offer a meta-commentary upon the Japji itself. Guru Nanak attempts to document the magnificence of the Ultimate Reality and yet he also includes the message that the Divine can never be recorded. Ostensibly Guru Nanak purposely inscribes both messages. To further complicate the matter, the Japji praises the use of words and writing: “by words we name, by words we acclaim,/ By words we know and sing and praise,/ [...]By words all our actions are written” (19). Words provide practitioners with knowledge, and are seemingly crucial for religious practice. However, according to *pauri* 36 the human mind cannot comprehend the magnitude of the Divine and would have nothing to record in the first place. Thus, the Japji says that humans are unable to mentally grasp the Divine and should not attempt to record the One’s attributes, and yet the Japji also stresses the fundamental importance of remembering and recording a conception of the Divine. As in the previous paradox, the text reaches an aporia wherein no “right” interpretation exists.

The final three paradoxes relate to the very nature of the Divine. All three of these binaries do not quite reach aporia because the text offers explanations that make both sides of the paradox reconcilable. The fourth paradox relates to

whether Sikhism conceives the Divine as consisting of multiple deities versus one united being. In *pauri* five, Guru Nanak refers to the Guru as various Hindu Gods and Goddesses: “The Guru is Shiva, the Guru is Vishnu, the Guru is Brahma,/ the Guru is Parvata, Laxmi and Saravatic” (5). Upon first reading this *pauri*, one might assume that Nanak is proposing a God that incorporates all of these divine entities; however, scholars tend to interpret this passage as “poetic appellations for the Divine” (N. Singh 37). Gursaran Singh states, “The Guru made the task of the devotee easier by using the names of the various Avatars to which his hearers were attached as names of the same one God. He only wanted that the people should turn towards One Master and not worship the Avatars who were at best only His servants” (9). Although the text might seem to advocate for multiple gods, it is essentially delivering a monotheistic message. This message is further evident in the *Mul Mantar*, which is the opening formula to the Japji that “serves as the Sikh credo insofar as it articulates the nature of the divine as experienced by Nanak” (Shackle and Mandair xxvi). The statement is “IkK Oan Kar/Sat Naam”, which translates to: “There is One Being/Truth by Name” (N. Singh 4). This wording is often translated “in conformity to the rationalized idiom of monotheism” (Shackle and Mandair xxvi). Sikhism believes in one omnipotent God. It might seem contradictory that this God can assume the identity of multiple avatars, while simultaneously being one entity; however, as demonstrated in Gursaran Singh’s analysis, interpretations of the Japji that advocate for polytheism counter fundamental Sikh theology. This paradox is therefore not quite so abstruse, particularly in contrast with other depictions of the Divine in the Japji that serve more complicated functions.

There is a great deal of contradiction in relation to whether the Divine has form or is formless. The Japji contains many passages where God is described in detail. In *pauri* three, the text lists a variety of conflicting attributes: “Some sing praise of the power that creates and destroys,/ Some sing in awe of the giving and taking of life./Some sing of the thereeness, the utter transcendence,/ Some sing of the hereness, the close watch over all” (3). It seems unfeasible for one being to contain all of these binary qualities; however, a being could contain such opposed qualities if he or she was formless in a way that humans cannot quite fathom. Nevertheless, if the Divine is indescribable, then it would be superfluous to assign various adjectives to It. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh believes that these adjectives can be reconciled with the conception of the Divine as formless because they serve as a reference point to connect with the Being: “Although the Transcendent Reality is beyond all human terminology, words are important for they give us an inkling of the Formless One” (10). Thus, the descriptive words merely aid with the conceptualization of such an abstract entity. Despite this rationalization for the Divine being depicted as form, *pauri* 16 explicitly highlights that the Divine cannot be described: “To speak or think of the

Creator's deed/Is beyond calculation" (16). If it is futile to describe the Creator, then why does Guru Nanak constantly attempt to do so? Towards the very end of the prayer, the Divine is actually referred to as formless, while simultaneously being described with form in a later *pauri*: "In the Realm of Truth, the Formless One is at home,/Gazing upon Its creation" (37). The One has no form and yet has some kind of apparatus that enables vision. This notion of the One being both form and formless is articulated in a direct quote from Guru Nanak: "[The Divine] has neither any form nor outline. But when I searched and sought, I found Him permeating every heart" (Bilawal quoted in Shan 51). Although Guru Nanak believes that ultimately God has no form, he insists on having perceived the Divine in his followers, which would imply some form does exist. Singh, and Shackle and Mandair provide two different ways of reconciling this paradox. Singh states, "At the core of Guru Nanak's message is the understanding that all forms (*saguna*) are informed by the Formless (*nirguna*). Infinite and formless, the Ultimate Being is inherent within all forms and yet remains transcendent" (N. Singh 2). God is both Form and Formless because the two identities are not as diametrically opposed as they appear—the two attributes can simultaneously exist and influence one another. Similarly, Shackle and Mandair believe that these two conceptions are necessary for a complete understanding of the Divine: "For Nanak the experience of the One cannot be attained by simply overcoming such binaries either through annihilation of opposites, or by elevating one term over the other. Rather the unity proper to the Absolute can only be represented as paradox, namely, the intersection, coincidence and interplay of opposites" (xxviii). They believe that it is necessary to represent the Infinite One as a paradox because there is no other way to properly conceive of such a Being. Although this paradox can be reconciled to mean that the Divine is metaphysically both form and formless, there does exist a strong belief within Sikhism that the One is ultimately formless. In the final stage towards union with the Ultimate Reality, the Realm of Truth (*Sach Khand*), the Timeless One is perceived as truly Formless and united with the individual in a transcendent union (N. Singh 15). If the Divine is formless in the final realm, then that seemingly should be Its true form. It is difficult to prove which, if any, of these conceptions is true, or which is more strongly supported in the Japji; therefore, this paradox is another that is left unresolved.

The last paradox questions whether it is possible for anyone to "know" the Divine. *Pauri* 26 argues that no human can comprehend the One: "Nanak says, only the True One knows Itself./ That babbler who presumes to say/Is marked as the fool of fools" (26). Here, the Japji again engages in meta-commentary as it claims that no one—except the One—can know the Divine, and yet it spends a great deal of time attempting to describe this Being. Later in the prayer, Guru Nanak proposes that only certain people can know the Ultimate Reality: "Saints from many worlds live in the Realm of Grace./They know bliss, for the True

One/is imprinted on their minds” (37). If the True One is contained within the minds of Saints, then they must know It, but how could they know the Divine if only It knows Itself? In yet another section, the Japji explicitly states that no one can know God: “Extollers extol but cannot fathom You,/Like brooks and streams that flow to the ocean,/ not knowing its expanse” (23). This statement integrates the two previous *paurs*: some may think they know the Transcendent One, but really they cannot comprehend the full expanse of the Divine’s greatness. Singh provides an explanation for this paradox: “Sikh morality seeks the Eternal One, within our day-to-day existence. It is based on drawing the Ultimate Reality into the human situation” (N. Singh 8). Thus, it is indeed impossible to know the Divine, but humans must reductively attempt to appropriate knowledge of this Being in order to make It relatable to the human experience. Although Singh’s argument explains the paradox, it does not explain Guru Nanak’s meaning and intention behind including such contradictory statements within one cohesive prayer.

The questioning nature of the paradoxes coincides with Sikhism’s teachings of personal reflection, self-reliance, and a removal of excessive ritual practices. Given the evident thoughtfulness put into the writing of the Japji, the aforementioned paradoxes are clearly intentional. At the conclusion of his life, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, allegedly transferred authority of the Guru to the book (the *Adi Granth*) and to the community (the *Khalsa*) (Juergensmeyer 23). Guru Gobind Singh would arguably not have transferred this authority to such a controversial text had he not believed that the inherent contradictions were fundamental to the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak’s usage of paradoxes coincides with his desire to have his followers interrogate the inner workings of their own minds (N. Singh 6), in order to consequently orient themselves towards a new reality. Balbinder Bhogal believes that “in order to study the sacred scripture, one must acknowledge the importance of self-understanding both internal and external to the scripture’s context” (73). By containing diametrically opposed beliefs, the Japji makes practitioners question aspects of themselves and their environment. Guru Nanak ostensibly does not want his followers to merely accept his message as truth. Instead, he wants them to engage critically with his message and trust their own interpretations. The three aforementioned paradoxes cause a practitioner to reconsider his or her ability to make independent choices, his or her knowledge of the True One, and his or her conception of the Divine. None of these paradoxes can be completely explained and justified, and thus a practitioner who recites these paradoxes on a daily basis is engaged in a constant process of re-evaluating his or her belief system. The Guru’s teaching “strives to convince one of the existence of God within oneself and make one self-reliant” (G. Singh 15). Thus, practitioners of the Sikh faith who adopt this mentality have trust in the Guru Granth Sahib and in the Khalsa, but most importantly, they trust themselves

to know the pathway to the Divine. Furthermore, this level of self-trust causes practitioners to question the validity of some well-accepted truths and practices of other religions and cultures. Guru Nanak discouraged renunciation, useless ritual, and excessive mortifications (Rama 24). He wanted to “bring his people back to a religion of simplicity and sincerity, to wean them from the worship of stock and stone, [and] restore them to the pure worship of their ancient fore-fathers” (Shan 15-16). Through critically thinking about the paradoxical nature of Sikh theology, practitioners have learned to question the actions they perform on a daily basis. The paradoxes allow people to look inward and evaluate their belief system, while also looking outward to engage in dialogue with their environments.

The effect of these paradoxes is arguably more strongly felt when practiced within a religious ritual rather than deconstructed in an academic study. According to Bhogal, an emotionally engaged interpretation is superior to a rationalized semantic translation (88). Guru Arjan compared the sacred text to a nutritious food that must not only be eaten, but savoured (Arjan as quoted in N. Singh 39). Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh interprets this analogy in a way that coincides with Bhogal’s argument:

Not through elaborate conceptualizing, but through a full and rich relishing of the sacred poetry, the individual obtains liberation from all finite confinements and from the ever-continuing cycle of birth and death. The poetry of love and devotion is to be approached with reverent wonder; it cannot be pruned into with mere intellect. (39)

Therefore, despite the desire to intellectualize the Japji, the prayer can only be fully comprehended when treated in a delicate manner. This approach is achieved through daily recitation because it allows one to reflect frequently upon the text’s meaning and its significance to one’s life. Therefore, one can eventually arrive at the source of the text’s power.

The Japji is recited in the morning and every day of the week. These two aspects of the practice have varying implications for the paradoxes. First, the Japji is recited in the morning because this is the time of day most conducive to comprehending the Divine: “[The Japji] is recited at the break of dawn when the mind is fresh and the atmosphere is serene. Described as the ambrosial hour in the Jap, dawn is considered most conducive to grasping the divine Word” (N. Singh 45). If the mind is most clear in the morning, then it is more able to recognize the beauty and significance of the paradoxes. The second aspect to the practice is that the Japji is recited on a daily basis. The term “jap” actually means “repetition of a spiritual formula” and it is a time-honoured method of concentration that is believed to be a gateway to realizing the Divine (Kohli 158). By repeating

the prayer everyday, the message of the prayer becomes embedded within a practitioner's consciousness, and eventually accepted as truth. In his book *Japji: Meditation in Sikhism*, Swami Rama asserts that the grace of the *Adi Granth* is received more reverently through repeating the prayers (14). He outlines a four-step mediation process towards achieving *Omkara*, the fountainhead of life:

The first step is to constantly remember the mantra. The second step is to remember the mantra with a singular feeling of love and devotion. In the third stage, japa becomes an unconscious habit. One is busy doing his duties and japa is simultaneously going on. [...] In the fourth stage, feeling deepens, which swallows all other interrupting thoughts and feelings, and the sound is absorbed by the great blissful silence within. (Rama 13)

The recitation of such paradoxical statements in a meditative manner causes a practitioner to internalize their message, and come closer to the Divine and enlightenment. Furthermore, practitioners learn to be more open-minded as they come to realize that the world does not exist in binaries of black and white, but rather it is a mixture of shades of grey. Concepts, people, and religions with strong differences can actually be quite similar and are able to coexist in ways that were previously inconceivable. Although upon an initial academic reading the paradoxes might appear illogical, through mediation their true meaning is deciphered. By reciting the paradoxes daily, practitioners internalize the belief that it is necessary to think critically about their religion and environment, but they also learn to focus on their own self-improvement in order to connect more with the Divine.

The Japji contains many paradoxes that initially seem to contradict with various Sikh teachings. However, deconstruction reveals that these paradoxes are not only logically coherent, but fundamental to the basis of the Sikh faith. They cause practitioners to develop a critical approach to their own religion, which makes them more self-reliant individuals. Moreover, through the daily meditative repetition of the Japji, practitioners internalize its paradoxical, but enlightening, message. There is something inherently beautiful about a religion that is confident enough in its theology to present contradictory teachings to its practitioners with the goal of having them focus upon their own internal development. Frequently, various religious teachers strive to make their own faiths look as if they are composed of one solid, consistent body of texts; thus, it is refreshing that Sikhism proudly exposes contradictions within the same prayer, while simultaneously providing the means of reconciling these notions.

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MUT'A AND HEZBOLLAH

The Politicization of Sex

TAUSHIF KARA



Mut‘a and Hezbollah: The Politicization of Sex

The practice of *mut‘a*, or temporary marriage, is one of the most mysterious processes in the contemporary Islamic world. Shrouded in ambiguity and competing judicial discourse, *mut‘a* is gaining popularity and becoming more prevalent in Lebanon amongst young Twelver-Shī‘ite Muslims, many of whom are active supporters of the Hezbollah movement. As the practice of *mut‘a* becomes more widespread, so does the stigma surrounding it. Although it is permitted under Twelver-Shī‘ite Sharī‘a, some in Lebanon tend to associate it with extramarital fornication, or *zinā*, and even prostitution (Galey and Katerji). In its pre-modern Islamic form, *mut‘a* was about the fulfillment of natural sexual desires for travelling soldiers who could not adequately sustain a family. *Mut‘a* must come to be understood as the pre-modern Islamic tradition that it is, and as an embodiment of Twelver-Shī‘ite ethics towards sexuality and the laws of nature. Although its use may have become distorted over time, the legal reasoning behind it remains largely intact, as the case of Hezbollah’s sanctioned temporary marriages illustrates. Hezbollah has drawn on the existing legal precedent to re-birth the practice of *mut‘a* in order to allow for its soldiers to utilize it in the traditional way, but also, and more significantly, as a political tool to exert influence over an increasingly sexualized youth base.

Mut‘a, which literally means “marriage of pleasure,” is a contractual agreement or ‘*aqd*, in which “a man and an unmarried woman decide how long they want to stay married to each other, and how much money is to be given to the temporary wife” (Haeri 1989, 1). Declared illegal soon after the Prophet’s death in 632 by Caliph ‘Umar I, *mut‘a* is permitted only in the Ja‘farī school of law, from which Twelver-Shi‘ism draws its judicial basis (Hallaq, 35, 272). The concept of *mut‘a*, which predates Islam, arose out of pre-modern, tribal processes in which it served as an alliance between a local tribeswoman and a man from elsewhere, usually a stranger (Haeri 1989, 49). The context of such an alliance varied and more often than not it was a function of traveling, long-distance trade, and even pilgrimages (Haeri 1983, 233). However, as the practice was translated to an Islamic context it took on certain legal ambiguities.

Qur’ānic evidence on the subject is almost non-existent, with one single *surah* vaguely referring to *mut‘a*: “So those of them [women] whom you enjoy, give to them their appointed wages”(Qur’ān, 4:24) Here, the word ‘enjoy’ is translated from *istima’*, which is from the same root (*m-t-‘*) as *mut‘a* (Murata, 12). This *surah* (verse) provides the textual evidence for most who support *mut‘a*. Disputes around the topic have arisen in large part because of the lack of precise Qur’ānic evidence, leaving jurists to look at the Sunna (example) of

the Prophet Muhammad as well as past legal reasoning. There is little ambiguity about the Prophet's feelings towards *mut'a*. He explicitly approved of the practice, as evidenced through his recommendation of *mut'a* to his own soldiers (Haeri 1989, 63). The ruling of Caliph 'Umar I banning *mut'a* gave rise to the subsequent controversy and discontent around the practice in the Islamic world. 'Umar "equated *mut'a* with fornication and ordered the penalty of stoning for those who continued to practice it" (Haeri 1989, 63). His ruling sufficed for the Sunni community, but was rejected by Twelver-Shi'ites and deemed illegitimate because it "goes against both the text of the Qur'an and the Prophet's Tradition" (Haeri 1989, 63). Twelver-Shi'ites go on to negate the ruling of 'Umar by citing a glaringly clear saying of Imam Ja'far-I-Sadiq, the namesake of the Ja'fari legal school: "I do not like a Muslim man who passes out from this world without having practiced one of the Prophet's traditions. One of these is *mut'a* of women" (Haeri 1989, 49). Thus there is historical and textual basis for both sides of the debate surrounding *mut'a*, which specifically relates the presence of *mut'a* marriage in Shi'ite communities and how it differs from Sunni perspectives on the subject.

Although there are many structural differences between temporary marriage, *mut'a*, and permanent marriage, *nikāh*, the primary distinction is that "the objective of *mut'a* is sexual enjoyment whereas that of *nikāh* is procreation" (Haeri 1989, 50). That is, the debate centers on the contradictory views of human nature and sexuality stemming from Sunni and Twelver-Shi'ite principles. It is this very distinction that forms the basis of the Twelver-Shi'ite argument as well as the Sunni discontent towards *mut'a* and its purpose in the Islamic world. *Mut'a* is understood as a contractual 'lease,' as opposed to *nikāh* which is viewed as a 'sale;' the sole purpose of the lease being to ensure temporary sexual fulfillment (Haeri 1989, 60). Imam Ja'far-I-Sadiq stated himself that "there will be no *mut'a* without two things: a stipulated period and a stated dowry" (Ghori, 30). The concept of a 'lease' or 'rent' is imperative to the understanding of *mut'a*, because without that agreed stipulation of time and associated compensation, *mut'a* would constitute *zinā*. The contract echoes permanent marriage in that it calls for a declaration of intent to marry and acceptance, but in the case of *mut'a* the declaration is to be made by the woman and the acceptance by the man immediately after (Ghori, 30). However, the actual legal formation and contractual arrangement is not what propagates the debate. Rather, it is the discrepancy between the Shi'ite and Sunni views of sexuality and human nature. Although both Sunni and Shi'ite groups can be said to acknowledge human sexual drive (male in particular), the Sunni *ulama* (scholars) stress the importance of permanent marriage as a solution to that drive, where the Shi'ite *ulama* "seek to contain it by prescribing a morally acceptable means to satisfy it" (Haeri 1989, 64).

Scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr perhaps best conceptualizes the Shī'ite position on the practice:

Considering the fact that permanent marriage does not satisfy the instinctive sexual urges of certain men and that adultery and fornication are according to Islam among the most deadly poisons, destroying the order and purity of human life, Islam has legalized temporary marriage under special conditions (Nasr, 229).

Sexuality and male sexual drive are normal and necessary parts of life in Shī'ite ideology, and *mut'a* is an acknowledgement and recognition of that powerful, natural force. If it is from this logic that *mut'a* is justified in Shī'ite discourse, then its existence does not seem as contentious as it is made out to be, but may rather be viewed as a logical step in the pursuit of maintaining social harmony. Modernity has brought with it the “pressures of a highly sexualized environment,” to which modern *mut'a* is a response (Walbridge, 146). According to an American Shī'ite scholar, Shaikh Berri, if “corruption” is to “let the young men and women fall in the traps of adultery, weird sex, homosexuality,” and the purpose of *mut'a* is to prevent such corruption, then “temporary marriage is one of chastity and love, and a form of decency and conservatism and not an indecency” (Walbridge, 146). The use of *mut'a* in the modern Islamic world by organizations like Hezbollah, and elsewhere, must then be looked at through this lens if it is to be understood.

Lebanon has seen an increase in *mut'a* marriages since the 2006 war with Israel, especially in Hezbollah hubs like southern Beirut (Ghaddar, 1). Although Hezbollah party leaders themselves are not permitted to partake in *mut'a* marriages for “security reasons,” the broader Shī'ite population in Lebanon is actually encouraged to do so (Ghaddar, 1). Intuitively, the use of *mut'a* by Hezbollah, which is an Islamic *militant* organization in addition to a political party in Lebanon, is not surprising because, as noted earlier, the practice itself evolved out of the needs of soldiers and pilgrims in pre-modern times to satisfy their sexual desires. Thus, for Hezbollah's members to participate in *mut'a* marriages seems logical and even prerequisite to the creation and sustenance of a strong army. However, it is not only the soldiers that are privy to *mut'a*; it is all the supporters of Hezbollah. This poses the question, then, as to why Hezbollah permits *mut'a* marriage at all. The answer, in fact, is a dual one that addresses both the sexual desires of the young Lebanese Shī'ite population in keeping with core Ja'farī values, as well as the strong socio-political control that Hezbollah seeks to maintain over its supporters.

Hezbollah was birthed out of Iranian revolutionary ideology, and its leaders share similar values. Although *mut'a* was always permitted in the Shah's increasingly Westernized Iran, it was after the 1979 revolution that the Ayatollah Khomeini encouraged it further (Ghods, 645). This is because the institution of "temporary marriage serves as a fundamental tool in the current regime's efforts in controlling individuals' behavior in a manner that is consistent with Islamic precepts" (Ghods, 645). The situation of Hezbollah in Lebanon is very similar to that of Iran in that after gaining political power from its success in fighting Israel, Hezbollah had to manage a "community that was shaped by the secular leftist trends of the 1970s and 1980s, and the cosmopolitan culture embodied by Beirut" (Ghaddar, 2). Hezbollah's leaders needed to handle a progressive, sexualized group of young men and women in the most sensitive way possible so as to ensure political control, while still maintaining religious integrity. *Mut'a* was the answer: "Hezbollah decided it is easier to allow sex under certain religious titles in order to keep control over the community" (Ghaddar, 2). It must be made clear however, that for Hezbollah the sexual aspect of *mut'a* comes second to the political power that arises as a function of it; that it is "only a matter of more control rather than being more tolerant" (Ghaddar, 2). The use of *mut'a* marriage by Hezbollah is not necessarily a perversion of the practice of temporary marriage as it has been known historically, because it does indeed serve its purpose as a necessary sexual outlet. Nevertheless, the primary function of this aspect of Shari'a in Lebanon is not to acknowledge the natural and powerful sexuality adorned to humans by Allah, but to sustain political power.

The prevalence of *mut'a* amongst Hezbollah followers has strong cultural implications in relation to the role women play in the practice. Regardless of how widespread *mut'a* becomes in Lebanon, or to what extent Hezbollah promotes it, it will not cease to be socio-cultural taboo in the region. The general attitude towards *mut'a* is not a positive one, which is partly because of the 'legalized' sex trade that evolved out of it after Hezbollah legitimized it (Ghaddar, 2). It is not surprising that *mut'a* can be read as a type of glorified prostitution or even sanctioned fornication, because there are unambiguous similarities between them. The analogy by scholar Ali Qa'imi on the process of *mut'a* demonstrates that "He who gets involved in a temporary marriage is like he who rents an inn or a hotel..." (Qa'imi, 4) This correlation between a *mut'a* wife and a hotel room illustrates the way in which the practice of *mut'a*, and indeed the status of women overall in Shi'ite society, are viewed. The ambivalence around and blatant disregard towards female sexuality is characteristic of Shi'ite ideology. *Mut'a* exists to satisfy the sexual needs of *both* parties, but a clear predilection is made towards the male, deeming his desires 'uncontrollable.' This denies females equal sexual status and importance while simultaneously perpetuating the negative connotations associated with *mut'a* marriage.

An important way in which Sunnis delegitimize *mut'a* is by outlining that it “excludes such things as inheritance, divorce, allegiance, forswearing, and *zihār* (repudiation),” and by pointing out the problems associated with pregnancies (Ghori, 32). Although children born out of *mut'a* marriage are considered legitimate, the “*mut'a* wife is not legally entitled to financial support (...) if she is pregnant” (Haeri 1989, 59). This is problematic for two reasons. First, a *mut'a* wife is obliged under contract to not refuse intercourse with her husband, but she is also burdened with the responsibility of preventing pregnancy (Haeri 1989, 55). Second, the husband has the ability to deny his paternity if *mut'a* does indeed result in pregnancy without being subject to *li'an* (“oath of damnation”) (Haeri 1989, 55). This subjects the *mut'a* wife and her potential child to legal legitimacy, but also to perpetual cultural stigmatization without any financial support or recognition from the husband. A French survey of Shī'ism in Lebanon confirmed that “temporary marriages are sources of conflicts, in particular with regard to the children born from them and who the presumed father refuses to recognize” (Weiss, 377). If a purported basis for *mut'a* is to sustain sexual desire while preserving social harmony, the issues arising out of pregnancy seem to negate such values.

Mut'a marriage is indeed one of the most misunderstood practices in the Twelver-Shī'ite tradition, but it may also be one of the most resonant to modernity. It can be concluded however, that *mut'a* exists as an answer to natural human sexual desires within the context of Islam's emphasis on social harmony. The use of *mut'a* by Hezbollah demonstrates two sides of the same coin in that it presents the true sexual nature of *mut'a* as suggested by Shī'ite ideology, as well as the socio-political and cultural implications of *mut'a*. However, the mutation of temporary marriage could very well be the answer to contemporary problems in Muslim societies. It enables sexually active Muslim youth to channel their actions to reflect certain Islamic values, while also providing an avenue against prostitution, adultery, and extra-marital fornication. Although the practice as it is currently observed is not without its negative ramifications, these issues are cultural and will evolve with increased education on the subject. The proliferation of *mut'a* in a way reflects the evolution of Islam, or at least how Islam has come to accommodate the pressures, sexualized or otherwise, of the West and of modernity. The freedoms offered by modernity, both sexual and otherwise, can be tailored to suit Islamic ethics – and *mut'a* is a preliminary example of such a compromise. The only question is whether this compromise will be as temporary as the marriages themselves.

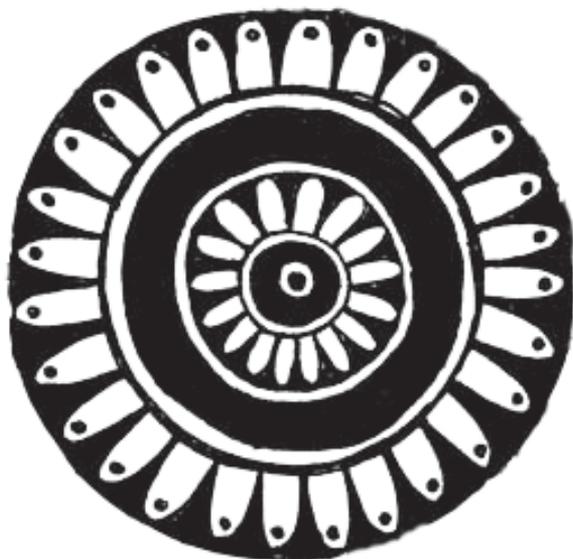
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**“THE MAPLE LEAF FOREVER,”
THE ORANGE SASH AND THE
EMERGENCE OF AN ENGLISH
CANADIAN INSTITUTION**

**The Influence and Appeal of the Orange Order in
Ontario, 1867-1914**

Brendan Shanahan



“The Maple Leaf Forever,” the Orange Sash and the Emergence of an English Canadian Institution: The Influence and Appeal of the Orange Order in Ontario, 1867-1914

“By the late nineteenth century, an exclusively Irish Protestant identity was no longer definable [in Canada], as it likely coalesced into a larger British Protestant identity....The institution most obviously associated with, and emblematic of, this transformation was the fraternal society known as the Loyal Orange Order” (McLaughlin 73).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Loyal Orange Association, better known as the Orange Order, was one of the most widespread social and political institutions in Canada. Carried across the Atlantic by Irish Protestant men in the pre-Confederation era, the Order spread throughout Canada as its members constructed community lodges in settlements across the country. By 1900, more Orangemen were found in Canada than in the whole of Ireland, and the Association counted three of Canada’s first five prime ministers among its numbers (Kaufmann 44). In no province was the Order more prolific than in Ontario, where an Orange lodge was located in virtually every community and Orangemen held control over the municipal government of Toronto (Houston and Smyth 1980, 88). However, in the forty-seven years between the foundation of the Canadian Confederation and the outbreak of the First World War, Irish Protestants did not represent a major source of Canadian immigration. How then does one account for the influence that the Orange Association maintained throughout Ontario society and the appeal that the Orange Order held among Canadian-born Protestant males from 1867 to 1914?

While a large Irish-Canadian Protestant population in Ontario clarifies the origins of the Orange Association in the province, this factor explains neither its longevity nor its continued social attraction. In actuality, the appeal of the Ontario Orange Order is explained by its inclusive Canadian Protestant identification and by the use of local Orange lodges as venues for social, economic and political interaction. While the historian must be hesitant to construct motives for historical actors, it is evident that Orange lodges provided concrete incentives for Canadian Protestant males to join the Order. For instance, membership in an Orange lodge offered Protestant men a venue for fraternisation, forms of participatory entertainment, the security of mutual insurance, employment opportunities and access to a vast political network. Furthermore, the Order’s longevity in Ontario

is explained by its transfer, adaptation and reconstruction of Irish Protestant ideologies that evolved in the province and merged with broader Canadian Protestant beliefs and common anxieties. The durability and widespread appeal of the Orange Order in Ontario thus lay in its broad appeal to ordinary Canadian Protestant males and their daily concerns. As lodges demanded neither class, nor political, nor denominational conformity, the Orange Order provided a unique forum that enabled interactions among Canadian Protestant men that promoted and helped to shape inclusive notions of an emerging English Canadian identity.

The Loyal Orange Order was founded in 1795 as an Irish Protestant defensive association that promoted loyalty to the British monarchy and addressed Protestant fears of rebellious Catholic influence in Ireland. Named in honour of Protestant King William of Orange's successful 1690 Irish military campaign against Britain's Catholic King James II, the Orange Order was established in the northern Irish town of Loughall as a secret male society open to Protestants of all creeds (MacRaild 2005, 1-3). The impetus for the establishment of this association lay in the exacerbation of "extreme economic, political and religious rivalry" between Protestants and Catholics and fears among many Protestants of an impending republican rebellion (Houston and Smyth 1978, 252). In Ireland, Orange lodges functioned as places of social gathering for Protestant men. In addition to serving as locations where Orangemen repeated promises of loyalty to Britain's monarch and empire, lodges were centres of discussion for a wide range of community affairs (Houston and Smyth 1977, 11-13). Despite prevailing sectarian distinctions between Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists, the Order spread across the island, and by 1835, Orange lodges numbered around 1,500 in Ireland (Houston and Smyth 1978, 252). Since Orange lodges offered sites of social interaction for Protestant males of all backgrounds, the Order supplied a definitive notion of Protestant "Irishness" that complimented the denominational and ethnic identifications of the Irish Protestant population.

Transported first by Irish Protestants in the British armed forces, the Order was soon brought to Canada and spread with rapidity as Irish Protestant settlers transferred the institution of their home country to their North American settlements. According to historian Hereward Senior, it was "by means of the military lodges that Orangeism took root" in Canada as Irish Protestant soldiers stationed in British North America often chose to settle along the Upper Canadian frontier upon decommission. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, former soldiers recreated the Orange lodge network in these settlements (Senior 1968, 14). Soon after, Irish Protestant migration to Britain's North American colonies increased enormously with the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. In fact, from 1825 to 1845 alone, "about 450,000 Irish went to British North America" (Houston and Smyth 1980, 16-18, 21, 32). In this pre-

Famine migration, the majority of settlers were Protestants, as historian D. H. Akenson writes that during this era, “the Protestant-Catholic split is best defined as 2:1.” Among settlers, the colony of Upper Canada (the future province of Ontario) was the prime destination (Akenson 4, 9). A large percentage of these Upper Canadian colonists evidently remained loyal to the Order, for the majority of lodges in pre-Confederation Canada were found in the future province of Ontario (Senior 1968, 252). While the Order did not gain the approval of the English elite in Toronto and Kingston owing to the association of Orangemen with violence and vigilantism, Orangemen proselytised among fellow Protestant settlers and attracted new dues-paying members across the expanding frontier. Due to increasing numbers and the proliferation of new lodges, the Canadian Orange Order was confederated in 1830, while each lodge retained a high degree of autonomy and preserved control over its expenses (Wearing 579-580; Elliot 111; Akenson 169-170; Houston and Smyth 1978, 252-253). 1854 marked the final year of mass migration from Ireland to Canada as the estimated number of migrants dropped from 22,900 in that year to 6,106 in 1855 (Akenson 14-15, 31-32). As the natural source of Canadian Orange membership was significantly reduced after 1854, what then accounts for the popularity and influence of the Orange Order in post-Confederation Ontario?

The Orange Order retained significant societal influence in late nineteenth-century Ontario primarily because the Irish-Canadian Protestant population was a sizable force across the province. To put the size of the Irish Protestant immigration to Canada in perspective, Akenson writes that “from the end of the Napoleonic Wars until the mid-1860s, emigrants from Ireland exceeded those from England and Wales and from Scotland in almost every single year and indeed, until the mid-1850s usually exceeded the *combined* total from the rest of the British Isles.” Ontario received the bulk of this population, for sixty-six percent of Canadians of Irish ethnicity lived in that province in 1871. At the time of the first Canadian Federal Census in 1871, Ontario’s Irish-born population remained the province’s most sizeable immigrant community (Akenson 4, 9). Clearly, the roots of the Orange Order’s strength in Ontario lay with the size of this Irish-Canadian population which remained a predominately Protestant group.

The spread of the Orange Association is therefore largely explained by the geographic expansion of the Irish-Canadian Protestant population of Ontario. For instance, from 1854 to 1860 an unprecedented enlargement of cultivated farmland in western and northern Ontario was mirrored by the construction of hundreds of Canadian Orange lodges. It was no coincidence that “practically all” of the new lodges were found in Ontario because so many of those farmer-settlers were Orange Irishmen who brought the Order to their new communities (Kaufmann 44; Houston and Smyth 1980, 24). In fact, by 1870 Irish-Canadian

Protestants were so dispersed across Ontario that lodges could be found in “all but twenty-five of the province’s settled townships” (Houston and Smyth 1978, 255). The Orange lodge network also developed in concurrence with evolving avenues of employment as Irish-Canadian Protestants constructed lodges in the new “resource towns of the north” in the 1870s and 1880s. Similarly, Toronto saw its number of lodges increase from seventeen in 1870 to fifty-nine in 1920 as farmers migrated to the city in search of urban employment (Houston and Smyth 1980, 46, 49; Jenkins 2005, 363). Owing to the decentralised nature of the Orange lodge network, it is unclear precisely how many Canadian men were members of the Orange Order at any given time, with estimates for the turn-of-the-century period ranging from the low approximation of 40,000 to the highly improbable number of 200,000 (Houston and Smyth 1977, 46; Houston and Smyth 1990, 187). It is clear, however, that Irish-Canadian men remained the dominant source of the Orange Order’s membership in Ontario. Such dominance is evidenced by the research of sociologist Eric Kaufmann, who found in sampling 1901 Ontario lodge records that while “29% of Ontario’s Protestant population was of Irish ancestry, 61% of Orangemen were of Irish ancestry” (Kaufmann 57). Although a recognition of the size and geographic reach of the Irish-Canadian Protestant population in Ontario explains why this population could mobilise significant political and societal influence, such factors do not explain why so many Protestant men of Irish ancestry (and soon Protestants of other backgrounds) were drawn to the Association. To understand such an affinity, it is necessary to first examine social features that attracted men to the Order.

The Orange Order was highly useful for Irish Protestant immigrants and Irish-Canadian Protestants in facilitating the social acclimatisation of immigrants and internal migrants to new communities as lodges commemorated Irish historical memory and maintained links with Ireland. Despite low levels of Irish Protestant immigration to Canada in the post-Confederation era, for immigrants that did arrive in Ontario, Orange lodges aided in their social adaptation and job searches as fellow Orangemen could offer both legal and real estate advice (Houston and Smyth 1990, 181). Moreover, just as Irish Protestant settlers had named new townships in honour of their former hometowns, the construction and designation of Ontario’s Orange lodges by Irish-Canadian men served to connect Canadian-born Protestants to the homeland of their forebears (McLaughlin 60). Inside lodges, the songs and stories of Orangemen paid homage to the Old Country and reflected a desire to maintain a symbolic and nostalgic attachment to their ancestral home (Clarke 124). More tangibly, Ontario’s Orange newspaper, *The Sentinel*, kept Irish-Canadian Protestants informed about issues pertinent to their Orange brethren in Ireland (Jenkins 2007, 139). Irish-Canadian men were clearly interested in such news, for when an Irish Home Rule Bill was passed by the British House of Commons, Canadian Orangemen demonstrated in solidarity with

the Orange Irish cause as 12,000 Orangemen marched in one 1914 Toronto parade urging opposition to the bill that was soon due to become law (Currie 405). In fact, borrowing strategies from Irish-American nationalist associations supportive of Irish self-government, Canadian Orangemen also provided Ulstermen with funds to resist the imposition of Home Rule (McLaughlin 94-95). Since the Orange lodge network provided Irish-Canadian Protestants with a venue to remain both connected to their heritage and involved in the contemporaneous affairs of their ancestral homeland, it served many of the functions of contemporary Canadian immigrant societies and ethnic institutions. However, the Orange Order was much more than an ethnic institution, and its social appeal stretched far beyond the limits of the Irish-Canadian population.

In the post-Confederation period, the Orange Order's greatest social appeal in Ontario rested on the use of Orange lodges as central meeting places for Protestant men of all denominations and backgrounds. As Ontario Orangemen made very clear, Orange lodges did not lay "claim to exclusive loyalty" or "exclusive Protestantism;" the offer of membership was open to any male Protestant willing to swear fealty to the British monarch (LOABNA 1904, 4). Across small-town Ontario, Protestants of English, Scottish, Welsh and even First Nations and German ancestry took up this offer and joined the Association (Houston and Smyth 1980, 93-95). As late nineteenth-century Liberal MP Richard Cartwright noted in his *Reminiscences*, men made this decision often because lodges provided "some sort of social gathering" (Thomson 4). This appeal was particularly pertinent in western rural Ontario where population densities were low and distances between churches were great (Houston and Smyth 1980, 35). Here, the Orange lodge served as a community centre for Protestant males, for it was within the local lodge that men shared stories, exchanged gossip and provided newcomers with useful contacts (Houston and Smyth 1980, 96, 113). Furthermore, in Victorian and Edwardian Canada, the lodge provided a respectable venue for socialising in both rural and urban areas, as its commitment to decency and moral uprightness was bolstered by its status as a Christian men's association and by the common presence of local Protestant ministers (Jenkins 2005, 371).

Moreover, membership in the Orange Order provided diversion and secret rituals for Protestant men in Ontario seeking participatory entertainment. Orange affiliation offered involvement in Ontario's annual Twelfth of July parades (celebrating William of Orange's conquest of Ireland) in an era when that day "was a public holiday in all but name" (Clarke 110). On the Twelfth of July, Orangemen donned the Orange sash, wore their full regalia and marched across town either carrying banners or playing in bands (Akenson 278; Houston and Smyth 1980, 104). While these celebrations occasionally turned into violent encounters between Protestants and Catholics in Toronto, across the province these

parades served an important social feature as they helped to relieve “the monotony of frontier life” (Clarke 114; Houston and Smyth 1978, 261). Furthermore, as each lodge maintained unique “signs and passwords” and met in secrecy, the Orange lodges appealed to the curiosity of Protestant men. Like prior Masonic organisations, the symbols, regalia and rituals of the Order presented Protestant men with diversion in an era before the introduction of mass entertainment and widespread community sports (LOABNA 1904, 17, 38; MacRaild 2005, 77).

Moreover, the Orange Association thrived for it provided Protestant men of all social classes the recognition of their peers, the possibility of social advancement and a venue for open debate and discussion. In an era when few institutions afforded labourers the same measure of social recognition as bourgeois businessmen, the Orange Order stood out as a major exception (MacRaild 2007, 39). Inside Orange lodges class hierarchies were less rigid than in the workplace or inside middle-class social organisations. In fact, in Toronto’s lodges of the 1890s, “working-class men were just as likely to fill positions of leadership as were their non-working class brethren” (Houston and Smyth 1980, 102, 106). Since an Orangeman’s position within his lodge was determined either by his degree of membership (often based upon the longevity of a man’s membership) or by his elected status as an officer, any Protestant male could potentially achieve a high rank within his lodge and advance his personal social status (LOABNA 1904, 49). Additionally, this democratic atmosphere predisposed men to use Orange lodges to discuss and to debate pressing non-sectarian issues such as temperance, potential prohibition and labour legislation (Thomson 33-34, 36, 49). Because differing opinions emerged throughout Ontario’s Orange lodges with regard to such subjects, stereotypes that assume monolithic societal views among Orangemen are woefully inaccurate. In actuality, the societal appeal and historical social significance of the Orange Order lay in the organisation’s ability and willingness to offer venues for interaction and discussion among Protestant men of all classes and ethnic backgrounds. In providing this unique location for such exchanges, the Orange Order actively promoted the evolution of a diverse and inclusive English Canadian Protestant identity.

Following Confederation, the Orange Order also attracted thousands of new members in Ontario because its lodge network offered mutual aid, potential avenues of employment and a grassroots political network. From 1867 to 1914, Orange lodges remained important features in Ontario society largely because the Orange Association’s commitment to mutualism guaranteed its members basic measures of social insurance. According to the 1904 Constitution of the Canadian Orange Order, the first two goals of the institution were to “unite fraternally” Protestants of all backgrounds and to “give all material aid in its power to distressed members and those dependent upon them” (LOABNA 1904, 9). This

mutualist ethos was not a minor concern for Orangemen as the leading Orange song, “The Sash,” did not contain the lyrics, “Now you look after me old boy/And I’ll look after you,” without reason (Houston and Smyth 1980, 112). Honouring this ideology, in times of sickness or unemployment Orangemen could expect varying degrees of assistance from fellow members. Across rural Ontario, relief frequently took the form of crop donations or visits by local doctors that were paid for by the Orange lodge, while in urban areas, assistance was usually allocated directly in cash distributions from the lodge’s relief or sickness funds (Houston and Smyth 1980, 127-130). Orangemen were also assured an informal benefit fund in the event of their untimely death, which supplied financial assistance to widows and children and also enabled a “decent burial” (Senior 1972, 137). Lastly, in times of grave sickness, lodges provided non-material comfort as well for “each lodge had its sick committee whose duty it was to visit members who were ill and confined to their homes” (Houston and Smyth 1980, 130). Prior to the introduction of government social insurance, this mutualist ethos represented a “kind of welfarism” that undoubtedly appealed to Canadian Protestant men of various backgrounds (Senior 1972, 137).

Membership in the Orange Order also provided favourable employment opportunities as considerable social pressures were exerted upon Orange employers to provide jobs to fellow Orangemen while lodge networks served to dispense political patronage at the provincial and municipal levels of Ontario politics. Orange businessmen often employed fellow Orangemen owing to an expectation of hard work from lodge brethren, loyalty to the Association and considerable societal demands. Moreover, Protestant men knew that in times of hardship, membership in a local lodge often meant the difference between employment and unemployment, since Orange employers were expected to take on a Orangemen when “faced with the choice of hiring a fellow Orangemen, another protestant or a catholic” (Houston and Smyth 1980, 127-128). Furthermore, due to the alignment of many Orangemen with the provincial Conservative Party, when the Tories were in power a man’s membership in an Orange lodge held the possibility of lucrative patronage appointments. For instance, in 1915 Orange representatives in Ontario’s Provincial Parliament held considerable sway over civil service appointments as they controlled one in three seats in the legislature. Although provincial politicians of the early twentieth century dispensed patronage with increasing caution owing to mounting pressures for bureaucratic reform, Orange parliamentarians still often found public employment positions for fellow Orangemen (Walsh 649; Bartley 19, 22, 26) The most (in)famous and powerful network capable of dispensing patronage in this era lay with the connection between Toronto’s Tory-dominated municipal government and the city’s Orange lodges. The Order’s lodges virtually controlled Toronto municipal politics, for between 1845 and 1899 twenty of twenty-three of the city’s mayors

were Orangemen while Orange representation remained prominent on the city council (Bégin 73). Due to this political situation, in pre-World War I Toronto, “[l]inkages to public employment” were often only “accessible through the Orange-Tory network” (Jenkins 2005, 371). Thus, historical geographers Cecil Houston and William Smyth conclude that “many Protestants may have been encouraged to join” the Association because “[m]unicipal patronage was received through the Order” (Houston and Smyth 1978, 43). Once more, the Orange Order’s appeal was strengthened by the opportunities that its lodge network could afford any potential English Canadian Protestant male.

Though never a uniformly homogenous partisan force, Ontario Orangemen held considerable political pull while Orange lodges offered the Conservative Party both potential candidates and venues from which to launch electoral campaigns. Houston and Smyth underscore that the Orange Order was actually “an ineffectual party machine” because its Ontario members rarely voted *en bloc* for the preferred party of the Orange leadership, the Conservative Party (Houston and Smyth 1980, 149). In fact, Liberal Oliver Mowat was repeatedly re-elected premier of Ontario and his government held power from 1872 to 1896 owing to the thousands of Orange votes that were cast in his favour in successive elections (Senior 1972, 152). However, it must also be stressed that “[t]here can be no doubt that the Orangemen were a power in the land” for their “association with the national Conservatives was firmly cemented” (Houston and Smyth 1980, 149). Largely due to this relationship, Orange membership held a tactical appeal for Tory politicians and the Order did attract an inordinate number of English Canadian Conservative politicians, regardless of their ethnic background. For instance, while three of the first five Canadian prime ministers, Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir John Abbott and Sir Mackenzie Bowell, were members of the Order, none were of Irish Protestant heritage (Bégin 163; LOABNA 1908, 2). Similarly, considerable incentive existed for potential local candidates to join the Orange Order for in Ontario politics, Orange lodges provided “a forum from which campaigns could be launched” (Houston and Smyth 1980, 157). Nonetheless, while Orangemen comprised a significant voting force in Ontario politics from 1867 to 1914, the key to the Orange Order’s political influence lay not in the delivery of a purported voting bloc. On the contrary, the real power of this institution was found in the use of Orange lodges as venues for political interaction. It was within the walls of the Orange lodges that Protestant Canadians nominated candidates, discussed the merits of future representatives, and offered their support if a candidate was amenable to their views (Houston and Smyth 1980, 56-58). In providing this venue of discussion for so many Canadian Protestant males, the Orange lodge underpinned much of English Canadian male democracy in Ontario from 1867 to 1914.

Lastly, the longevity and vitality of the Orange Association and the appeal of the Order can be explained by the convergence of Irish Protestant ideologies, British imperial identification and an emerging English Canadian identity within the Orange lodge network of Ontario. Houston and Smyth argue that the primary rationale for the success of Orangeism in Canada lay in its commitment to an “ideological garrison” mentality which called upon its members to promote and to defend the British monarchy and the British Empire. Transplanted from an Irish Protestant context, these Orange garrison principles were reflective of and adapted to the concerns of mainstream Anglo-Canadian Protestant society. In Canada, such concerns usually centred upon the growing power of the republican United States and the influence of French Canadian Catholics within the Dominion of Canada (Jenkins 2005, 391; Houston and Smyth 1977, 12).

The Orange Order thus reflected mainstream English Canadian ideologies and concerns in post-Confederation Ontario in bolstering its commitment to the British crown and Empire while recognising and adapting to an emerging English Canadian identity. In the Victorian and Edwardian periods, deference towards the British monarch was expected of all Ontario Orangemen as the announcement “God save the Queen” served to open lodge meetings, while a serious offence in the Order’s 1904 Constitution was defined as speaking “disrespectfully of the King, or any member of the Royal family.” This affinity for the monarchy was not atypical among English Canadians, for Canada was still an imperial dominion, the majority of Ontarians were of Irish or British ancestry and “God Save the Queen” served as the nation’s anthem (LOABNA 1869, 4; LOABNA 1904, 39). Thus, this promotion of the British monarchy served to distinguish the Canadian political system from that of the United States for both Orange and non-Orange Protestants alike. Moreover, the Order’s promotion of the British Empire and the Canadian Order’s symbolic recognition of Canada’s central position within the Empire also converged with contemporaneous English Canadian Protestant values. In 1900, Orange MP Clarke Wallace pronounced a speech in the House of Commons in which he encouraged Canadian involvement in the Boer War stating that “[w]e are one and indivisible empire, and disloyalty to one part of the empire is disloyalty to all” (Pennefather 1984, 99). This imperialist ideology was hardly out of the ordinary for an English Canadian, for such views were reproduced in nineteenth-century Ontario school textbooks which articulated the “ideological imperatives of the British Empire” (Walsh 652, 657; Pennefather 1977, 171; Houston and Smyth 1990, 77; McLaughlin 78-79). Moreover, the Orange Order also recognised these imperial connections within the contexts of an emerging Anglo-Canadian identity. For instance, in post-Confederation Ontario, maple leaf symbols were worn prominently on Orange insignia to compliment the shamrock, thistle and rose of the British Isles. Furthermore, Ontario Orangeman Alexander Muir’s song, “The Maple Leaf Forever,” reflected a growing English Canadian

identification among Orangemen that nonetheless emphasised close imperial ties. Since this song (which praised the union of the shamrock, thistle and rose under the maple leaf) gained a popularity that extended far beyond Orange circles and became known as English Canada's unofficial national anthem, it represented the Canadian Orange Order's ideological connection to mainstream English Canadian conceptions of their identity (Di Stasi).

Furthermore, Orange resistance to the extension of French Canadian Catholic influence outside of Québec reflected commonly-held English Canadian apprehensions of Catholic power, while such opposition demonstrated the Canadianisation of the Orange Association. According to geographer William Jenkins, in the late nineteenth century, concerns in Ontario's Orange lodges of "Rome rule" were directed largely upon "their domestic effects" (Jenkins 2007, 138; McLaughlin 75). While most *fin-de-siècle* Canadian Protestants were no longer fearful of the "fires of the Inquisition," many did treat Catholic priests with suspicion as Catholic *curés* were viewed as agents of the pope (Shortt 1, 12). In one peculiar instance, Orange labourers "turned away in disgust" midway through one 1890s speech by Canadian Catholic labour leader Daniel O'Donoghue not because they disagreed with his politics, but because during his address "it was discovered his philosophy was based upon the Papal Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*" (Nicolson 40). Such action, based solely on sectarian prejudice, was not the manifestation of a fringe, right-wing Protestant nationalist ideology. On the contrary, this walkout by Toronto's Orange labourites reflected the biases, fears and concerns of many Canadian Protestants. For example, from 1889 through the 1910s, whether in the halls of legislative assemblies or at the meeting grounds of political pressure groups such as the Equal Rights Association of Ontario, thousands of English Canadians made known their opposition to the proliferation of francophone Catholic public schools. These activists sought the elimination of French Canadian Catholic education across the Canadian West and in Ontario (ERA 3; Miller 369-378). In this campaign against the dual "alien" influences of the French language and the Catholic Church, the Orange Order provided thousands of enthusiastic participants and served as a nationwide communications network for the movement (LOABNA 1908, 7). In the case of Ontario, Orangemen led efforts against francophone education as lodge members inspected French Canadian Catholic schools and reported unfavourably on the quality of francophone parochial instruction to the premier of Ontario, James Whitney. Yet, as was found throughout English Canadian Protestant society, diverse opinions emerged among Orangemen regarding the appropriate course of action to take in response to francophone instruction in Ontario. For instance, the writers of *The Sentinel* spoke favourably of compromise with Ontario's (English-speaking) Irish Catholic hierarchy to end francophone education, while Orangemen who aligned with the Equal Rights Association would have

criticised all forms of denominational instruction that laid “claims upon the public exchequer” (Barber 235, 243). In this regard, the concerns of the Orange Order’s members were at the centre of mainstream English Canadian Protestant anxieties of the time. The longevity of the Orange Association is thus explained in the Canadianisation of the Order’s outlook and by the diversity of opinion which existed under the banner of an Orange, English Canadian identification.

In 1914 the Orange Order was neither an immigrant society nor an ethnic institution in Ontario. Instead, it was a national association, as its lodges served as sites of interaction for male Protestants of all backgrounds and classes. While a majority of Ontario’s Orangemen could certainly claim Irish-Canadian ancestry, this fact alone hardly explains the longevity, appeal or influence of the Order. To understand why this institution remained relevant in an Ontarian setting, the Orange Order must be understood as a mainstream English Canadian institution. Open to Protestants irrespective of national origin, the Order became a distinctly Canadian association in both outlook and ideology. Moreover, the Order also provided incentives for membership as lodges offered social, material and political benefits to Canadian Protestants who joined. It is impossible to say precisely what attracted various Protestant men to the Order for each man would have had differing and overlapping reasons for joining. Additionally, it would be impossible to say that the mutualist economic incentives for Orange membership explain the institution’s widespread reach and appeal without neglecting the ideological and political underpinnings of the Order that enabled Protestant men of such diverse backgrounds to unite and provide mutual measures of social insurance. Thus, it is more useful to recognise that diverse and complementary incentives brought together thousands of Ontario’s Canadian Protestants into a network of Orange lodges. Owing to the diversity of the Orange Order’s membership and the focus of its ideology, in Ontario, the Loyal Orange Association became truly an English Canadian institution. The influence and appeal of the Ontario Orange Order thus lay in its broad appeal to ordinary English Canadian Protestant males and to their daily social values, economic interests and ideological concerns.

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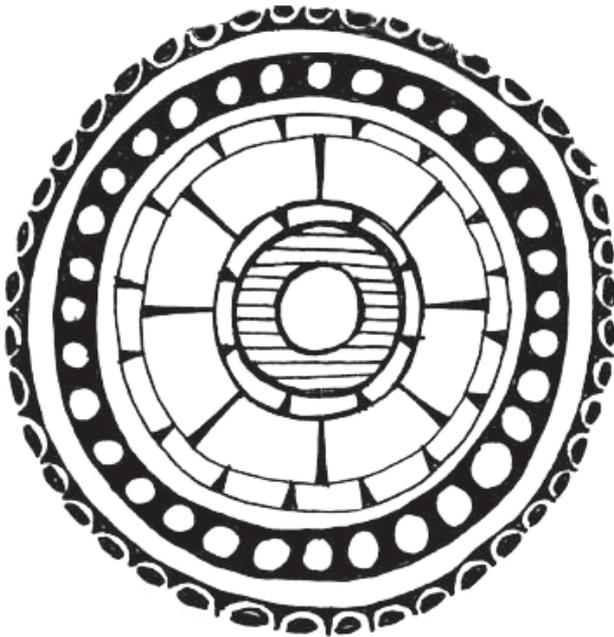
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ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

JAY ALEXANDER BROWN



Islamic Philosophy and the Problem of Evil

This study is a survey of several Muslim scholars, both medieval and modern, who have offered explanations of the nature of evil. More specifically, it is a discussion of theodicy and the “problem of evil” in an Islamic context, searching the works of these scholars for answers to this “problem” both explicit and hidden. Secondary questions will also be raised. What explanation is offered for the small number of theodical treatments in Islamic philosophy in comparison to Christian philosophy? Also, apart from the classical “problem of evil,” what additional problems of evil have Muslim thinkers raised? First, I will outline the history of theodicy prior to its adoption by Muslim scholars. Next, I will examine the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, a famous theologian of the 11th century, and possibly the first to publish an Islamic theodicy. Then I will discuss the contributions of four additional thinkers who have either developed or disagreed with the conclusions of those who came before them. Ultimately, I will question whether it is possible to synthesize the views of these various scholars into a generally coherent Islamic theodicy.

Theodicy and the “problem of evil”

The word “theodicy,” coined in the 18th century by German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, is a compound of the Greek words “*theos*” and “*dike*” – “God” and “justice” (Ormsby 3). While the word has assumed multiple definitions over the years, this study will use that of Paul Badham: “The attempt to justify belief in the limitless goodness of God in the face of the manifest suffering and evil in a world that God is believed to have created” (Badham 241). A second and effectively synonymous definition is that of Eric Ormsby: “The attempt to demonstrate that the divine justice remains uncompromised by the manifold evils of existence” (Ormsby 3).

The so-called “problem of evil,” a specific formulation of theodical thought, is found in the apparent contradiction in the simultaneous assertion of these three statements: (1) God is benevolent, (2) God is omnipotent, and (3) evil exists. According to those who posit this problem, its solution must entail the elimination of one of its three axioms: either evil does not truly exist, or God is either incapable of abolishing evil (compromising God’s omnipotence) or unwilling to abolish it (compromising God’s benevolence). Denying any one of these three axioms seemingly violates the teachings of all Abrahamic religion, hence the “problem.” While the word “theodicy” is a relatively recent invention, the “problem of evil” is quite ancient. It is found in Christian philosophy as early as Irenaeus in the second century CE, having first been developed by

Greek philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus (Inati xi). Twentieth-century philosopher John Mackie proposes two categories of solution to the “problem,” adequate and fallacious (Mackie 47). In his view, an adequate solution is one which compromises one of the three propositions, whereas a solution must be fallacious if it maintains each of the propositions. It is a useful classification scheme, though the value judgments inherent in his nomenclature are not immune to challenge.

Islamic theology has also dealt with an alleged “problem of destiny.” This conundrum concerns the reconciliation of divine predetermination with both free will and divine justice. If God punishes those whom God has destined to punish, how can we consider God just, and in light of destiny how can humans be considered free? Ibn Sīnā raises this second problem alongside the first problem; for the sake of focus, this study will address only the first one, referred to explicitly as the “problem of evil.”

Although popularized by Christian thinkers, the “problem of evil” can be applied in the Islamic context because Islam shares with Christianity the concept of evil and the belief in an “all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-compassionate creator God” (Badham 245). Yet, while Islamic theodical treatments have indeed been issued, they are decidedly fewer in number than their Christian counterparts (Mermer). Eric Ormsby, author of *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, corroborates these claims: “[The] problem of evil does not appear to assume the dominant position in Islamic theology which it often occupies in the Western tradition” (Ormsby 4).

Paul Badham, Dean of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, argues that the issue of theodicy is inherently less pressing for Muslim thinkers. Consider that “Islam” is the verbal noun of the Arabic word “*aslama*,” meaning “to submit” to God’s will. Hence a quintessentially Islamic attitude, according to Badham, is one of submission to whatever God has chosen to will; questioning this will or seeking its justification is considered, while not necessarily un-Islamic, subordinate to the superior goal of spiritual submission (Badham 246). Perhaps this notion of an “Islamic attitude” can be linked to the conventional wisdom that the Islamic religion, in contrast to Christianity, is more orthopraxic than orthodoxic (Ruthven 4). That is to say, while conformity of belief is essential to Islamic identity, at least insofar as one pronounces the *shahādah*, Muslim thinkers are generally more concerned with the nuances of correct action than with the nuances of correct belief. Consequently, among the scholars whom I will address – with the exception of the famous but rather unorthodox Ibn Sīnā – there is less investigation into the particulars of evil than one might expect, and more of an implied acceptance of evil accompanied by brief explanations of its

nature and lengthy discourses on how to act in light of its presence.

Ibn Sīnā: A comprehensive theodicy

Abū ‘Alī al-Husayn Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn Sīnā, known as Ibn Sīnā or by his Latinized name, Avicenna (Inati 175), was a prominent scholar of the 11th century CE, born to a Persian family in present-day Uzbekistan. A master of many disciplines, he wrote several seminal treatises dealing with the philosophy of evil, including *Kitāb al-Shifā’* (*The Book of Healing*) and *Al-Ishārāt wal-Tanbīhāt* (*Remarks and Admonitions*). Ibn Sīnā was perhaps the first Muslim thinker to treat the classical “problem of evil” as it is formulated in Greek philosophy (Inati 65). Indeed, his thought is indebted to two particular traditions: Islamic theology, by which God admits unqualified omnipotence, and Greek philosophy, by which God’s power is limited in various ways. The tensions between these two positions play out in his theodicy (Inati 5). I will approach pertinent aspects of his philosophy through the work of Shams C. Inati, professor of Islamic Studies at Villanova University.

In order to understand how Ibn Sīnā views evil, one must understand how he views good. Echoing Plato and Aristotle, he equates existence (Ar: *al-wujūd*) with goodness (Ar: *al-khayr*.) The degree of goodness of a thing is measured by the degree of its existence; the most absolutely good thing is thus the most absolutely existent thing – God. Meanwhile, existents lesser than God are deemed good by the presence of the particular goodnesses which correspond to their nature. For example, it is in a knife’s nature to have a sharp edge, so a sharp knife is a high-quality knife; it is in a human being’s nature to have two eyes, a keen intellect, and a charitable demeanor, and so a kind, intelligent person with sharp vision is rich in goodness (Inati 66). Since evil is the opposite of good, and good is identified with existence, Ibn Sīnā identifies evil with privation, or the lack of existence (Ar: *‘adam*.) Operating under this basic principle, he develops an incredibly complex schema for categorizing and explaining the nature of evil.

Ibn Sīnā understands evil to be of two basic types: “metaphysical” and “moral.” “Metaphysical evil” itself is afforded two subcategories: “essential” and “accidental.” Ibn Sīnā defines essential metaphysical evil as a “privation of being.” This privation cannot be understood as an absolute privation, for absolute privation would negate being altogether, leaving nothing to which the predicate “privation” could be affixed (Inati 67). Rather, essential evil is the partial privation of being within a being that does exist. More specifically, it is the privation of a perfection which is fixed in the nature of a particular being: for example, the wings of a bird, the eggs of a mammalian female, or the charitable nature of a human being. A woman without wings would not be an example of essential evil,

but a sterile or selfish woman would be. Alternately, consider the phenomenon of death. Human death in general is not evil, for it is the natural culmination of a human life. Death at the age of five or twelve or twenty-two, however, would fall under the category of essential evil, for it is a privation of the normal human lifespan. Essential evil, hereby, does not *exist* in a technical sense; it is an absence of existence (Inati 79).

As the second subdivision of metaphysical evil, accidental evil is further subdivided into two types: existing and non-existing. Existing accidental evil is defined as that which withholds perfection from other beings or destroys an already-existing perfection, such as a cloud withholding sunlight from a plant or a fire burning the skin of a man (Inati 86). Existing accidental evil is only considered evil with respect to the effects of its actions; in and of itself it must be considered good, recalling that existence is inherently good (Inati 89). Finally, non-existing accidental evil is similar to essential evil in that it consists of the privation of perfection. Whereas essential evil is the privation of a natural perfection inherent to a particular being (a rational mind for all humans, or enough money to comfortably live), non-existing accidental evil lies in the desire for an “additional perfection” above and beyond what is requisite for the species (an uncommonly genius mind or conspicuous wealth.) This desire is defined as evil for the same reason that essential evil and non-existing accidental evil are defined as evil: it is a cause of suffering.

Ibn Sīnā’s second major category of evil is “moral evil.” I will defer a thorough discussion of moral evil until a later point in this study, for other philosophers have expressed the concept in ways more immediately comprehensible. Suffice it to say that Ibn Sīnā identifies moral evil with ignorance, specifically with ignorance of God as the eternal First (Ar: *al-’awwal*, one of God’s attributes according to the Qur’ān 57:3) and a consequent identification with the transient physical body (Inati 125). However, since human nature is to possess and identify with a physical body, it can be argued that the nature of a human is to entertain moral evil. And if God is the creator of all nature, what does this say about God?

Ibn Sīnā presents not one but multiple theories in his attempt to solve the “problem.” Here is a basic enumeration of his theories: (1) Evil is a necessary means for good in the universal order, (2) Human evil is a result of human free will, (3) God is only responsible for creating existence, not for creating nonexistence, and (4) God is unable to create a world free from evil. I will now discuss these theories one by one.

(1) Consider the example of the carnivorous lion (Inati 145). To its prey,

the lion is a perpetrator of evil. Specifically, it would be classified as “existing accidental evil.” But as one of God’s creatures, the lion has its rightful place in the universal order, and the so-called circle of life necessitates the creation and destruction of all the world’s ephemeral creatures. The lion’s activity is perfectly in line with the nature of the universal order, and the universal order – the whole rather than its fractions – is God’s primary concern (Inati 145). This explanation does leave room for a rather obvious critique: Why would a benevolent God create a universal order that entails pain and suffering for each of its components?

(2) Speaking now to moral rather than metaphysical evil, humans are endowed with a certain measure of free will and a measure of capacity for knowledge. Yet, the capacity for knowledge necessarily implies its opposite – the capacity for ignorance – and free will introduces the inevitability of acting in accordance with this ignorance (Inati 153). This point demands a similar critique: Why would a benevolent God, who freely creates by divine will, imbue man with such a pitiful nature? Said Nursi attempts to answer this very question.

(3) God is the creator of all that exists. However, evil, if defined as privation, does not exist, *per se*, and does this not free God from responsibility? (Inati 148). This theory is supported by the Qur’ān 4:79: “What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil is from yourself.” At best, this theory could only solve the problem regarding evils which are privative in nature, leaving “existing accidental evil” still unexplained; moreover, it does not address the more subtle question of why God would create a system which admits nonexistence within that which does exist, leading to suffering.

(4) This brings us to the most heretical, and most philosophically effective, of Ibn Sīnā’s propositions: that God has created the universe in such a way because it is in God’s nature to do so. Here we see his Greek philosophical influence playing tug-of-war with his Islamic desire to maintain God’s omnipotence. Ultimately he denies *unqualified* omnipotence (Inati 147). A benevolent God, he muses, necessarily creates the best of all possible worlds, and so this world must be considered as good as it can possibly be, and yet this world admits evil. Hence, it appears God is unable to create a world without evil. The word “necessarily” is instrumental in Ibn Sīnā’s razing of God’s unqualified omnipotence, for to assert that God *necessarily* does anything is to assert that God’s will is not absolutely autonomous. Indeed, Ibn Sīnā contends that God is not the eternal First due to any choice on God’s part to be such a thing, but because of God’s own essence (Inati 147). Presumably, the same logic can be extrapolated to describe God’s essence as the Omnipotent (Ar: *al-qādir*), another one of God’s attributes found in the Qur’ān.

Ibn Sīnā achieves a satisfactory and “adequate” solution to the “problem of evil” by denying one of its three fundamental postulates, which is that God is absolutely omnipotent. God may be conventionally omnipotent, but not absolutely, for this omnipotence is part and parcel of God’s necessary nature. All else that follows from God follows, in this manner, from necessity.

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī: A challenge to Ibn Sīnā

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī was a Sufi mystic and theologian of the 11th and 12th centuries. He was born and raised in present-day Iran and is best known for *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, or *The Renewal of the Religious Sciences*, which helped render Sufism acceptable to mainstream Islam. He is also known for his criticism of Ibn Sīnā, reckoning him “chargeable with impiety” and “tainted with heresy” (Field 440), which makes him a perfect second source for this study. I will examine al-Ghazālī primarily through the scholastic work of Eric Ormsby of Princeton University.

Having taken umbrage with Ibn Sīnā’s compromising of God’s omnipotence, al-Ghazālī defends the importance of piety in Islam, proclaiming, “we should therefore consider [the Greek philosophers] as unbelievers, as well as the so-called Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā” (Field 440.) While addressing the “problem of evil,” he frames it in different language: “A compassionate person does not see someone afflicted... without rushing to remove that from him, if he is able to remove it... [God] is able to remove all [afflictions] and yet, He leaves His servants in travail to disasters” (Ormsby 252). Affirming both evil and divine omnipotence, al-Ghazālī now appears to set divine benevolence up for interrogation. The most logical way to justify benevolence at this point is to somehow justify evil as *actually good*, and this is precisely what al-Ghazālī attempts to do by proposing that suffering is medicinal.

As a preliminary to what could be called the “tough love” defense, to use a modern term, al-Ghazālī reminds the reader that God is described as “compassionate,” not “all-pleasing.” He illustrates this distinction through the parable of two fathers, one who punishes a deserving child and one who refuses to do so. The father who chooses to inflict suffering is actually the compassionate one, for he instills in the child the concept of justice. Human suffering, then, is a deserved punishment for the committing of some sin or another (Ormsby 253). The suffering of sinners also occasions gratitude in those who are virtuous, serving as a reminder of the benefits of following the virtuous path. If it were not for suffering, there would be no indication that one is committing evil. Such doctrine implicitly upholds the “free will” defense championed by Ibn Sīnā, without claiming that it solves the “problem of evil” singlehandedly.

This is an example of what Mackie would call a “fallacious” solution to the problem, for it maintains all three axiomatic propositions; the fallacy, however, is not evident to al-Ghazālī. To this solution, al-Ghazālī adds that worldly suffering is meant as a preventative device against eternal suffering, as separation from God in the afterlife is the worst type of suffering and God does whatever God can to steer humans on the righteous path (Ormsby 256). To write “whatever God can” is not to insinuate that God suffers from any incapability, only that God limits God’s own options in choosing not to revoke or infringe upon the free will afforded to human beings.

Al-Ghazālī offers a second potential solution, which is to deny that evil truly exists. Perhaps evil is only apparent to those who lack the scope of vision to discern its ultimate goodness. For example, he conjures up the scenario of a poor farmer whose roosters, donkeys, and dogs are all slaughtered by a band of jackals. While the farmer’s family mourns their devastating loss, the farmer smiles because he trusts that all of God’s actions are ultimately good. He awakens the next morning to realize that his village had been ransacked by invaders and all its residents taken captive; the lack of animals on his property had tricked the invaders into believing the property was uninhabited (Ormsby 256). Note the implications of this anecdote for Islamic practice: the farmer, as the protagonist, is the one who trusts unequivocally in God’s goodness and does not stoop to question divine justice. Could this be read as an attack against the philosophers, including Ibn Sīnā, who lacked the humility to grant that God knows the full extent of what man can only know partially? Ormsby suggests that al-Ghazālī wrote with the aim of exhorting believers to become *mutawakkilūn*, ones who abandon themselves to the will of God (Ormsby 257). To whatever extent he philosophizes and rationalizes God, al-Ghazālī only does so as a means to the end of ascertaining proper faith.

‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadānī: Evil as necessary for good

‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadānī, a 12th-century Sufi scholar and disciple of al-Ghazālī, suggests that evil exists as a necessary concomitant of good: “Whiteness can never be without blackness; heaven is not fitting without earth... Things are explicable through their contraries. Muhammad’s faith cannot exist without the disbelief of Iblis [i.e. the Devil]” (Ormsby 66). This theory has precedent in al-Ghazālī’s own usage of the contrary in his assertion that suffering befalls the unrighteous to glorify the well-being of the virtuous.

Ormsby supplies the following objection, which appears to have been formulated by contemporaries of al-Hamadānī, though Ormsby does not name any particular objector. The objection: al-Hamadānī’s fallacy stems from

confusing the properties of the contrary with the properties of the correlative. It is the correlative that is only explicable through its partner term; for example, the correlatives right and left (or north and south) would be conceptually meaningless without one another. But black and white (or good and evil) are mere contraries and are not mutually implicative (Ormsby 67). Still, one may ask whether there is validity in saying that evil, if not strictly necessary for good, somehow highlights the good and renders it better than it would otherwise be. Such a theory will later be introduced by Muhammad al-Ghazālī.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Evil and spiritual purification

Said Nursi was an early 20th-century scholar of Kurdish background, commonly known by the title “Bediuzzaman,” or “the wonder of the age.” His most notable achievement is the *Risale-i-Nur*, or *The Epistle of Light*, a collection of Qur’ānic commentaries written during a lengthy imprisonment at the hands of Ottoman secularists. Although he offered no systematic theodicy, he wrote extensively on the nature of evil. Once again, I will approach his philosophy through the distillation of a modern scholar, this time through Yamine Mermer, associate professor of religion at Indiana University. Nursi echoes Ibn Sīnā’s supposition that existence is pure good while non-existence (privation) is pure evil. Mermer claims that this is the “preferred explanation for evil in Islamic thought” as well as in scholasticism, a Christian theological school that was heavily indebted to Aristotelian philosophy and championed by Thomas Aquinas (Mermer). Compared to Ibn Sīnā, Nursi writes with a tone that is more spiritual than philosophical, utilizing discussions of good and evil to illustrate his own experience and express the Muslim spiritual goal of closeness to God.

Nursi considers all beings mirrors reflecting the divine attributes. A loving creature reflects God’s attribute as the all-loving (*al-wudūd*); a strong creature reflects God’s attribute as the all-strong (*al-qawīy*); a forgiving creature reflects God’s attribute as the all-forgiving (*al-ghufūr*); etc., but only in God are these attributes perfect and eternal. Nursi proposes two layers of being inherent in all individual creatures: the externally apparent, transient body, and the essential, reflected divine quality of being. While all individual instances of being are destined to decay and perish, the divine qualities are undying. Pain and suffering – Nursi’s understanding of “evil,” in concurrence with the earlier philosophers – are linked with death and transience. But this “evil,” to the spiritually discerning, is actually a God-given blessing. As pain begs to be alleviated, so it impels the creature to turn its attention from the transient to the divine, from temporal existence to the wonder of God. Nursi calls on the Qur’ān 4:119-120 to make this point: “All that take Satan rather than God for their master do indeed, most clearly, lose all.” Suffering may therefore be viewed as an admonishment to the

sufferer who has forgotten the Creator, a call to dissolve one's ego in the superior being that is the divine mystery. This is the spiritual fulfillment of unification or *tawhīd*, one of Islam's primary virtues.

In summary of Nursi's position, and with regard to solving the "problem of evil," evil cannot be accurately referred to as existing. It is a privation – not of fixed physical perfections, as per Ibn Sīnā's category of "metaphysical evil," but of divine understanding – and a delusion caused by identification with the transient body. At the same time, this delusion is a valuable gift, for it aids in the human purpose of seeking God. When confronted with poverty, one seeks the all-wealthy (*al-ghaniy*); when confronted with deafness, one seeks the all-hearing (*al-samī*.) Lest this sound insensitive to those who experience such extremes of earthly suffering, recall that Nursi formulated this doctrine during his lengthy and brutal imprisonment, viewing his unfortunate circumstances as a golden opportunity to seek *tawhīd*.

Muhammad al-Ghazālī: A contemporary perspective

For a final perspective, this one from an intellectual contemporary, let us consult "The Problem of Evil: An Islamic Approach" by Muhammad al-Ghazālī. This article is not an example of extensive philosophical treatise in the manner of Ibn Sīnā or Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, nor is it contemplative musing in the spirit of Said Nursi, but rather a user-friendly distillation of what Islam has to say regarding evil, designed with a diverse audience in mind. At the time of the article's publication in 1997, Dr. al-Ghazālī was Head of the Department of Social Sciences at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan (Cenkner 252). He is currently presiding as judge over the Pakistani Supreme Court Shariah Appellate Bench ("March 10").

Muhammad al-Ghazālī stresses that Islam is a *voluntary* submission of human discretion to the will of God. The degree of free will afforded to humanity distinguishes humankind from angels, who have in their nature only the capacity for worship (al-Ghazālī 70). Superficially, this may appear to imply that angels are spiritually superior to humans. Yet al-Ghazālī argues the opposite. It is this dual option between good and evil which allows humans to "surpass all angelic levels of spirituality," for to commit good acts by one's own volition is far more rewarding than to do so merely by design. Developing this point, al-Ghazālī additionally argues that good depends on evil for its own goodness: if it were not for greed, generosity would have little meaning; if there were no hunger, fasting would offer no merit (al-Ghazālī 71). In his words, "the very realization of good is contingent upon the possibility of its opposite" (al-Ghazālī 72). The root of evil in humankind for Muhammad al-Ghazālī, drawing upon the Qur'ān 12:53, is the

corruption of the “inner human intention,” marked by an imbalance favouring material, worldly urges over attention to God (al-Ghazālī 74). It is al-Ghazālī’s position that humankind is encouraged to enjoy the realm of sensations and to strike a balance between earthly and spiritual concerns. Evil lies not in indulgence but in excessive and inappropriate forms of indulgence.

Although Muhammad al-Ghazālī does not formulate the classical “problem of evil,” his ideas, taken together, happen to offer what Mackey would call a fallacious solution. God is both omnipotent and benevolent, and yet evil does exist, but precisely because of God’s benevolence. For God has given human beings the opportunity to reap immense spiritual reward through choosing to follow the right path, an opportunity contingent upon the ability to choose otherwise. This free will, and its associated powers, are privileges and responsibilities granted to humankind. Despite this measure of power afforded to humanity, God may nevertheless be considered omnipotent, as the doctrine of omnipotence does not imply that God is the *sole* bearer of power but only the broker of all power. Ultimate and unlimited authority rests with the omnipotent God, who may choose to delegate any measure of free will to God’s creatures.

In summary of this position: (1) Evil exists as a natural corruption of human free will, (2) God is omnipotent as God freely chooses to grant humanity this will, and (3) God is benevolent as God knows that the gift of free will, in spite of its inevitable corruptions, offers humans the possibility of a spiritual satisfaction far superior to anything attainable by creatures that have not received this gift.

Concluding statements

This study has aimed to provide a summary of key Muslim figures’ attempts at theodicy and explanations of the nature of evil. I must acknowledge the limitations of this study before presenting my conclusions. One such limitation is the small sample size of the study, consisting of five Sunni theologians; presumably history has witnessed many Islamic theodical treatments, Sunni or otherwise, which I have not dealt with. Another limitation concerns my reading of these five theologians through the lenses of English-language scholars, as there is an inherent danger of distortion in using the English language to discuss precise concepts originally formulated in Arabic. With these caveats in mind, I am able to present the following conclusions.

Ibn Sīnā provides the most exhaustive analysis of evil found in classical Islamic theology. He introduces the privative theory of evil, a feature of Greek thought, into the Islamic worldview, an introduction with long-lasting

repercussions (Ormsby 27). While his discussion of “metaphysical evil” is enlightening, he only succeeds in solving the “problem” after he compromises divine omnipotence through handicapping God’s ability to create a world without evil, a solution that was later condemned as un-Islamic by Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī. Ibn Sīnā’s somewhat-underdeveloped notion of “moral evil,” also described in privational terms as a lack of knowledge, sets the stage for later inquiry into the origin and purpose of ignorance and suffering.

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī reintroduces omnipotence while re-defining benevolence to justify suffering. He takes issue with Ibn Sīnā’s irreverent attitude by explaining that it is “good form” (Ar: *adab*) not to bring objections against God (Ormsby 264). Having suggested that suffering exists to purify moral fortitude – suffering being identified yet not conceptually equated with evil – al-Ghazālī is able to argue that evil is only what we perceive through the distorted lens of ignorance. This allows him to solve the “problem” without sacrificing any of its three postulates; or, depending on whether one reads his argument as justifying evil as good or denying evil altogether, he may achieve his solution by sacrificing the existence of evil.

Said Nursi continues along these lines, accepting Ibn Sīnā’s privational theory of evil and al-Ghazālī’s notion of evil’s hidden goodness. To Nursi, as to al-Ghazālī, the perception of evil is a result of a lack of divine understanding. Where al-Ghazālī frames this suffering in terms of God’s compassionate punishment of the sinner, Nursi describes it as a blessing designed to dissuade over-identification with the worldly and transient. By disassociating evil from suffering, suffering being a beneficial aspect of the divine purpose, Nursi helps resolve a question one might beg of al-Ghazālī: If suffering is proof of justice and compassion, and it only befalls those who deserve suffering, why do bad things happen in an apparently arbitrary fashion to apparently good people?

Al-Hamadānī’s suggestion that good cannot exist without evil, known as the “necessary concomitant” defense, is criticized by opponents on the basis that good and evil are “contraries” rather than “correlatives,” and only correlatives are mutually implicative. Muhammad al-Ghazālī salvages a scrap of this suggestion by proposing that evil, while not strictly necessary for the existence of good, grants goodness a more satisfying quality; although whiteness can exist alone without blackness, the extent of its whiteness is not appreciated without the presence of its contrary. Muhammad al-Ghazālī also employs the free will defense, a defense that is not without its critics. Mackie, for one, objects: “If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could He not have made men such that they always choose the good?” (Inati 13). Muhammad al-Ghazālī responds by explaining that God

created humans with the ability to choose between good and evil because the resulting struggle allows for the achievement of a goodness far superior to the goodness of angels, who know no other way.

Is it possible, then, to synthesize a generally coherent Islamic theodicy? Each of the discussed philosophers following Ibn Sīnā, unwilling to theologially compromise God’s omnipotence and benevolence, have approached the “problem” by questioning the nature of evil. Evil is justified or denied in various ways: as an illusion caused by human ignorance, as a compassionate punishment, as a spiritual purifier, as a necessary foil for the free choice of good. While these solutions are too varied and singular to shoehorn into one explanation or portray as inherently complementary, they do share the fundamental feature of compromising or qualifying the existence of evil. Underlying and tempering each of these Islamic theodicies – excepting, allegedly, Ibn Sīnā’s – is a recognition of the importance of a proper Islamic attitude, which is the submission of all human faculties to the will of God. This divine will may be investigated yet must not be challenged, and may never be fully understood.

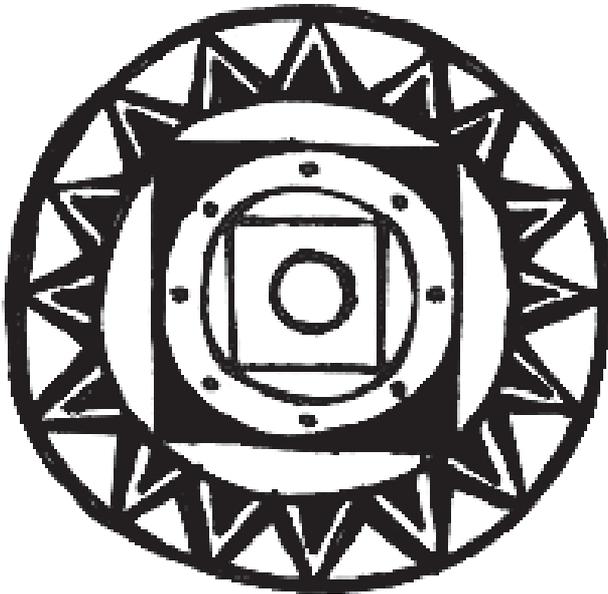
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THE “PACIFIST MUSLIM,” THE “MILITANT BUDDHIST”?

An Analysis of Religious Reductionism and Pluralism

ABIDA KASSAM



The “Pacifist Muslim,” The “Militant Buddhist”?: An Analysis of Religious Reductionism and Pluralism

Though many have argued that technological and scientific progress would exempt religion from our contemporary society, it nevertheless remains that religion is not in ebb. On the contrary, a global resurgence of religion in the 21st century has been widely noted (Thomas 4). Speaking on religion in the 21st century, Tony Blair stated that in a time of globalization, religious faith will comprise of two roles:

Positively, it will encourage peaceful co-existence by people of faith coming together in respect, understanding and tolerance, retaining their distinctive identity but living happily with those who do not share that identity, [but conversely,] it will work against such co-existence by defining people by difference, those of one faith in opposition to others of a different faith (2008).

Blair continues to argue that the major dividing lines of the 21st century will be based on religious and cultural ideology, as political ideology was for the 20th century (Blair 2010). It would thus follow that religious faith is of inarguable significance for our contemporary world. Additionally, religious faith is capable of reinforcing or blunting certain global public values by means of its interpretive range, from insiders to outsiders. By exploring specific religious traditions in both Islam and Buddhism, one discerns the variety of roles that religions play as perceived divisions in the clash of civilizations as well as in creating pluralism.

In a broadly cited article in *Foreign Affairs* titled “The Clash of Civilizations?” Samuel Huntington writes,

The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate the global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington 1).

The civilizations he refers to differentiate from each other by history, language,

culture, tradition, and most importantly, religion. He further argues that people of different civilizations have different views on the relation between God and humanity, the individual and the group, the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, and equality and hierarchy (Huntington 5). It is thus perceived that these are differences of fundamental importance in contemporary society – differences that are the most difficult to overcome.

Furthermore, in his article, Huntington makes numerous references specific to the clash between Islam and the West. This is most likely the case because this notion of the clash of civilizations first emerged in Bernard Lewis' "The Roots of Muslim Rage". In it, Lewis argues,

In the classical Islamic view, to which many Muslims are beginning to return, the world and all mankind are divided into two: the House of Islam, where the Muslim law and faith prevail, and the rest, known as the House of Unbelief or the House of War, which it is the duty of Muslims ultimately to bring to Islam. But the greater part of the world is still outside Islam, and even inside the Islamic lands, according to the view of the Muslim radicals, the faith of Islam has been undermined and the law of Islam has been abrogated. The obligation of holy war therefore begins at home and continues abroad, against the same infidel enemy. (Lewis 1)

With overarching and essentializing statements such as that, it is no wonder that Islam, despite its 1.57 billion followers, remains largely misunderstood in Western society (Miller 1). Akbar Ahmed explains that because most people in the West do not understand the complexity of Muslim society through the varying models of acceptance, preserving, and synthesizing, they "reduce the understanding of U.S. relations with the Muslim world to good versus evil, and divide Muslims crudely into moderates versus extremists" (Ahmed 32). In a post-9/11 world, the indefatigable qualification of the practice of "terrorism" as "Islamic" offers both a description and explanation of the events of 9/11 (Mamdani 18). In this way, it is no longer the market (capitalism), nor the state (democracy), but culture (modernity) that is upheld as the divide between those in favour of a peaceful, civic existence and those inclined to terror (Mamdani 18). Likewise, when one looks at the image contemporary Western society has painted of Islam it is often equated with conflict. The headlines of newspaper articles will read 'Israel arrests two Muslim clerics in 'terror links'— 'Islamic insurgents loot UN compounds in Somalia' – 'Islamic groups likely involved in bomb attacks: Indian police', abetting the tendency to equate religious fundamentalism or even, general modern violence with Islam. If however, one were to critically analyze it, Haynes defines

contemporary religious fundamentalism as, “a return to the fundamentals of a religious tradition and strip away unnecessary accretions” (Haynes 161). Thus, religious fundamentalism can be understood not as extremism, but instead, as a revived commitment to the fundamental tenets of the faith. Furthermore, in an article entitled “Jihad vs. McWorld”, Benjamin Barber argues,

‘Jihad’ is a rich word whose generic meaning is “struggle”—usually the struggle of the soul to avert evil...strictly applied to religious war, it is used only in reference to battles where the faith is under assault, or battles against a government that denies the practice of Islam (5).

In this way, singularly focusing on the extremist representation of jihad overlooks pervasive principles that say ‘according to the Qur’an, killing a person unjustly is the same as killing all of humanity’ (5:32). The discrepancy between Islam as it is largely perceived by the West and often overlooked interpretations lend credence to the notion that perhaps the clash of civilizations is rather, as the Aga Khan says, “a clash of ignorance” (Khan 5).

The apparent clash of civilizations is not limited to Islam as it can also be understood in the context of Buddhism. Lara Braitstein, assistant professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism at McGill University, described the “invention of Buddhism” as the work of a British Orientalist named Brian Houghton Hodgson in the 1800s (Buddhism: Origins). During this time, the British colonialists tried to extract some “authentic” sense of Buddhism from native practitioners in India and soon developed a theory that the Buddha was an Aryan. These colonialists accounted for the transcendent rationality and brightness of the Buddha as a result of being white, and the progressive distortion of Buddhist purity was the result of the inferior practices of the local coloured people. The Buddhism then brought to the West was that of pacifism. Accordingly, contemporary Western society largely views Buddhism as a religion of unwavering peace, non-violence, selflessness and meditation (Smith 112). Furthermore, Buddhism perceives material attachment as the result of ignorance, which in turn leads to suffering. In this way, although one’s material needs may be taken care of in the West, suffering (*dukkha*) remains – for which Buddhism offers an antidote (KHEMA 74). This notion of Buddhism as an organic remedy survives even today as Buddhist philosophies are now being mined for treating suffering in the field of nursing (Rodgers 214). While there are websites, such as dharma.com, to purchase your e-enlightenment and news headings that relay “Buddhist monks offer prayers for world peace on Tripitaka festival”, it is no surprise that Buddhism has become an icon of religious peace – a ‘way of life’ that Western society can adopt without guilt. Similarly, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, (the head of state and the spiritual leader of Tibet)

is internationally revered as the epitome of Buddhism, propagating “world peace, ‘inner values’ and the need to overcome conflict with dialogue” (Contenta 2010).

Nevertheless, as Lei Kuan Lai (Rongdao), sessional lecturer at McGill University, once joked, “Buddhists really don’t meditate as often as everyone thinks they do” – thus, there is more to Buddhism than the oversimplified view accepted by the West (Buddhism, Modernization, and Globalization).

An article by Stephen Jenkins presents an alternative to the conception of a pacifist Buddhism. He argues,

We can see from the example of the *Ārya-Bodhisattva-gocara-upāyaviśaya-vikurvaṇa-nirdeśa Sūtra* that Buddhist kings had conceptual resources at their disposal that supported warfare, torture, and harsh punishments. The exploration of its intertextual details opens up an ever-wider view of a sort of Buddhism strongly at odds with the pacifist stereotypes. Here, an armed bodyguard accompanies the Buddha and threatens to destroy those who offend him. Torture can be an expression of compassion. Capital punishment may be encouraged (Jenkins 1).

This insight stands in stark contrast to the known or envisioned history of Buddhism adopted by the West. Additionally, in contemplating contemporary Buddhism, Robert Florida explains that even though Buddhism advocates pacifism as something to be nurtured on an individual level, Buddhist states have often been compelled to defend themselves, or, as has been the case in Tibet, actively engage in violence against oppression (Florida 463). The reality is thus that the reductionism of Buddhism to pacifism is just as flawed as that of Islam to militancy.

These apparent clashes of civilizations can be overcome through education and an acknowledgement of some sort of common thread that binds all humans – those of faith and those without. Lewis may argue that Islam was never prepared, either in theory or in practice, to accord full equality to those who held other beliefs and practiced other forms of worship, however there are those who indeed believe and act otherwise (Lewis 3). His Highness the Aga Khan, Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, is often seen as a beacon of pluralism. In *Where Hope Takes Root*, he offers,

There is clearly a need to mitigate what is not a “clash of civilizations” but a “clash of ignorance,” in which peoples of different faiths or cultural traditions are so ignorant of each

other that they are unable to find a common language with which to communicate. Those with an educated and enlightened approach...are of the firm, sincere conviction that their societies can benefit from modernity while remaining true to tradition. They will be the bridge that can eliminate forever today's dangerous clash of ignorance (Khan 30).

If one accords any truth to the above statement, then there must be a corresponding recognition of Islam as having at least one interpretation other than that of the extremism discussed previously. To emphasize, in contrasting the apparent clash of civilizations, Azim Nanji explains,

Civilizations can no longer be seen as monolithic, unidimensional or static entities that can be easily essentialised...through dialogue, their diversity should instead be protected and promoted to better understand our shared contributions to humanity's cultural heritage (Nanji 1).

Therefore, the idea is not to oversimplify the religions of the world, but rather, to find a common thread running through each, and adhere to it. In contemporary society, Islam is often argued to be an exclusivist religion, but Ali Asani emphasizes the need in the 21st century to fully embrace the Qur'anic teachings on pluralism (Asani 56). The Qur'an is pluralistic as it affirms, "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another" [49:13]. In order to overcome the clash of ignorance, it is imperative that such Qur'anic teachings are accepted by Muslim practitioners and acknowledged by Western society at large. This is the only way society can truly conquer the politics, global clusters, and boundaries that impede it in order to aspire to moral horizons beyond the Islamic and Western divide (Nanji 62).

In a similar sense, the religious tradition of Buddhism can also be interpreted as lending itself to pluralism, thus surmounting the apparent clash of civilizations. One such interpretation is contained in an interesting concept of Mahayana Buddhism, that of the Bodhisattva, a being that commits him- or herself to all of humanity, irrelevant of their faith. Masao Abe explains, "whereas the Arhat has only his or her own enlightenment in mind, the Bodhisattva vows to achieve enlightenment not only for him- or herself but also for the sake of all sentient beings" (Sharma 89). In this sense, he or she acknowledges all beings and postpones his or her entrance into *parinirvana* (final extinction) in order to help other humans also attain it. Yet another belief to be considered is the doctrine of *upāya-kauśalya* which can be translated as "skill in means" or "skilful means." In explaining its origin, John Schroeder says that the Buddha knew it would be

useless to preach universally or speak as if everyone is the same, thus he was aware of the sensitivities in different “pedagogical styles, meditation techniques, and religious practices that help people overcome attachments” (Schroeder 4). He goes further to compare the Great Sage Sākyamuni as a “Great Physician” who knows the different types of illnesses of sentient beings and who can therefore offer the best “medicine” to suit their needs – he knows when to hold back, when to remain silent, and when to prescribe the appropriate antidote. Schroeder adds, “To preach Buddhism without such sensitivity, we are often told, is “bad medicine”” (7). The underlying principle of Buddhism behind these beliefs is that there are many paths up the mountain. For this reason, one need not be a Buddhist in order to be enlightened. Indeed, enlightenment liberates one from all identification with historical or cultural movements. However, Buddhism says that these are all superficial. John B. Cobb, Jr. characterizes the enlightened perspective as the “positionless position” (Religion Online). From this perspective, one can be open to whatever truth and wisdom is discoverable in any tradition, and thus there is complete openness to learning by way of dialogue with others. Additionally, Cobb supports Buddhism’s pluralist position by claiming, “At every level except the ultimate level there is willingness to change or be transformed through the dialogue, but all of this must be for the sake of an enlightenment that relativizes everything else” (Cobb, Religion Online). Buddhism, understood in this manner, is not only tolerant of other religious traditions but even inviting towards all religious dialogues that can potentially aid one on the path to enlightenment. In this way, it is hard to argue that Buddhism lies on the fault lines of conflict.

Of course, there are sceptics who will certainly conceive of religion as having overstayed its welcome within our now rational, scientific society. That being said, there will also remain those who perceive religion as a driving force for good. Through the above analysis, it can be understood that the common trope of ‘militant Muslim’ can just as easily be the ‘pacifist Muslim’ just as the ‘pacifist Buddhist’ can be the ‘militant Buddhist’. These are simply labels, interchangeable signifiers grounded in the interpretations of the religious practitioner and observer, and the representations of contemporary society. Thus, to remain rigid on these labels would make one guilty of the oversimplification and reductionism of the religious traditions. It is in this sense that the pronounced clash of civilizations is really nothing more than a clash of ignorance. In establishing this, it can be argued that both Islam and Buddhism, as well as all religious traditions, have the capacity for fostering pluralism through education and internal dialogue. In doing so, contemporary society may overcome these gaps of ignorance and allow all to proceed along their many paths up the mountain.

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