

In a Foucaultian Perspective Sufism As An Art of Existence

Abstract

This work is composed of two parts. In the first part, we examine two principles of Antic culture, namely ‘to know oneself’ and ‘to take care of the self,’ which are linked strictly one to another, by underlying some similarities between this culture and sufi practices. And in the second part we focus merely on sufism, its conceptions and practices concerning the improvement of the self which is supposed, in sufism, to be linked internally to the exploration of the truth. In fact, the present work, which sees sufism not only as an abstract search for truth but also as an art of existence with its concrete implications, focuses on some strict connections between the (search for) truth and sufi practices which prepare the sâlik (the seeker) to receive the truth by refashioning his whole existence.

Key Words:

Sufism, Self, Askesis, Ethos, Aletheia, Sâlik, Seyr-u suluk.

Foucaultcu Bir Perspektiften Bir Varoluş Sanatı Olarak Tasavvuf

Özet

Yazı iki kısımdan oluşmaktadır. Birinci kısımda Antik kültürün birbirine sıkı sıkıya bağlı “Kendini bil!” ve “Kendine özen göster!” prensipleri kısaca incelenir ve bu bakımdan Antik kültürle tasavvuf arasındaki ilişkiye işaret edilirken, ikinci kısımda benlik terbiyesine yönelik pratikleri yönünden münhasıran tasavvuf üzerine yoğunlaşmakta ve bu yapılırken Foucault’nun “benlik teknolojileri” nosyonundan yararlanılmaktadır. Özü itibarıyla bu makale “hakikat (arayışı)” ile benliğin biçimlendirilmesine yönelik tasavvufî pratikler arasındaki sıkı bağlantıya dikkat çekerek, tasavvufun salt bir hakikat arayışı değil, ama aynı zamanda somut içermelere sahip bir yaşama sanatı olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Tasavvuf, Nefs, Askesis, Ethos, Aletheia, Sâlik, Seyr-u suluk.

* Assist. Prof. at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Philosophy Departement, Sakarya University, Turkey.

My own interest has turned from the study of the art of living to its practice; or, rather, I have come to realize that to study the art of living is to engage in one of its forms.”

A. Nehamas, The Art of Living

But we want to be the poets of our life — first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters.

Nietzsche, The Gay Science

Introduction

This essay consists of two parts. In the first part I briefly examine two principles of Antic culture namely ‘to know oneself’ and ‘to take care of the self,’ which are linked strictly one to another in Antic culture. In this regard there are certain convergences between Sufism and Antic culture. In the second part I concentrate on Sufism, especially on its practices which aim to improve the Self. For this I refer mainly to Foucault’s notion of “technologies of the self”.

Equally important, this essay aims to show that there is a strict connection between the search for the truth and practices which one applies in order to refashion one’s self. In other words, this essay emphasises the ethics, that is to say “relation to one’s self” in Sufism *both as a way of life and search for the truth.*

I. Antic Culture and Technologies of the Self

Foucault defines the aim of his last 25 years’ studies as describing the history of different methods by which men elaborate themselves according to the “games of truth” that are related to the specific techniques which are referred by man to understand themselves (Foucault, 2001: 26).

Thus, Foucault intended to display that man is a historically constructed being and hereby he can refashion himself. These are the crucial motivations that shaped Foucault’s studies around crime, madness, criminality and sexuality.

In his studies, Foucault concentrates on the concept of governmentality, which designates different relations: relation between state and its subjects, relation between man and things and relation of the self with himself. The last category is the most important in the context of my work since it is the one that yields the idea of ethics of the self. Thus, Foucault defines *ethics as the relation to the self* and he works on this issue in the second (*The Use of Pleasure*) and third volumes (*The Care of The Self*) of *The History of Sexuality*, his last book.

Although Foucault had insisted on the weakness of the subject who is manipulated and oppressed by different forms of power as a ‘docile body’ in his early studies, he started to consider the subject as an agent who has the capacity of autonomous action toward the end of his life (McNay, 1994: 133). In other words, Foucault, initially, was concerned with the social construction of an individual by different patterns of power, but later he came to a position to emphasize the autonomous

aspects of the subject who can re-create himself through everyday practices. In this frame, it seems that Foucault counterbalanced the analysis of the *techniques of domination* with an analysis of *techniques of the self* in order to provide a ‘complete’ examination of the subject (McNay, 1994: 134).

Techniques of the self are specific practices by which the individual constitutes himself as a subject within systems of power. However, these systems of power are specific ones through which the individual makes operations on his own body, soul, behaviors and thoughts in order to refashion and improve his self (Foucault, 2001: 26).

Foucault illustrates the notion of techniques of the self in his study of Ancient Greek and Roman Christian morality in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of The Self*. He makes an important distinction between *morality* as a set of imposed rules and prohibitions and *ethics* as the real behaviors of individuals in relation to the rules and values. Techniques or technologies of the self are situated on the level of ethical practices. These practices vary from the concrete techniques that are applied to manage and order the daily existence to the spiritual significance attached to these activities. It is through a series of practices which may constitute an ‘art of existence’ that individuals work to interpret their existence. In Foucault’s words, ‘arts of existence’ are,

“[T]hose intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life in to an oeuvre, that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria” (Foucault, 1985: 10-11).

‘*Epimelesthai sautou*’

The care of the self is an ethical principle or an attitude that leads people to cultivate and educate themselves, that is to work to improve themselves. This ‘cultivation of the self’ can be briefly characterized by the fact that one must ‘take care of oneself.’ It is this principle of the care of the self that establishes its necessity, presides over its development, and organizes its practice (Foucault, 1986: 43). In ancient times this was often understood to involve a “cultivation of the soul” (Foucault, 1986: 45). In earlier times this was a matter of self-mastery, but over the course of history it became a matter of learning to shape one’s own inner character (Foucault, 1986: 67).

In *Alcibiades*, Socrates insisted on the care of the self (*epimelesthai sautou*) that it should be the main task of all man. When you take care of your body, you do not take care of yourself, since body (or body alone) is not synonymous of the self. The self is not a tool, not a clothing nor it is something that can be possessed as a thing. It is not in the principle of body that uses these means but in that of the soul. Therefore if you want to take care of yourself you must essentially take care of your soul. That is why Socrates said “this word which says ‘know yourself’ orders us to know our soul” to Alcibiades (cf. *Alcibiades*).

The rule of care of the self is not only a principle of the order of the city but also a crucial rule of social and individual behavior and the art of living. Foucault argues that the occidental tradition of philosophy has, frequently, emphasized the Delfic principle “*know yourself*” (*gnothi sauton*) and obliterated the principle “the care of oneself”

(*epimelesthai sautou*). However, these two principles are merged into each other in Greek and Latin texts. This was the implicit character of the whole Greek and Roman culture and explicit feature after Plato's Alcibiades. One must take care of oneself in Socrates conversations, in Xenophon, Hippocrates and in the neo-Platonic tradition that begins with Albinus. Taking care of the self comes before as the principle of knowing oneself. The possibility of the occurrence of the second step (knowing oneself) depends on the realization of the first step (taking care of the self). In other words, the principle of care of the self is prior to that of knowing oneself and the second is subordinated to the first (Foucault, 2001: 28-29).

Stoics and Epicureans

Foucault examined the Stoic notion of *askesis*, which means 'remembrance' as a technique of the self. According to Plato, you have to discover the truth that can only be found in yourself. On the contrary, Stoics believe that the truth is not in the individual but in "logoi", that is, the doctrine of instructors. The individual learns what he has heard, and then he transforms the expressions which he heard to the rules that are governing his behaviors. In Stoicism, the self-examination is remembrance of what you have done and what you must do.

In Christianity, asceticism is always related to certain renouncements from the reality and the selfhood, and these retreats are a necessary step to move beyond the given reality and reach another level of reality. These renouncements are determinate characteristics of Christian asceticism. In contrast, in Stoicism "askesis" is not a renouncement from the self but a straggle to develop the self by means of self-master.

We can find the equivalent of "askesis" in Greeks, that is *paraskeuazo*, which means 'preparation'. "Paraskeuazo" necessitates a series of exercises in order to attain a higher level of existence. Thus, *aletheia* becomes *ethos*.

Greeks named the two poles of these exercises *melete* and *gymnasia*. "Gymnasia" means self-education and "melete" means meditation. "Premeditatio mallorum" is a well known exercise of meditation practiced by Stoicists. It is an imaginative and ethical experience.

Stoicists elaborated on three kinds of reduction of future misfortunes. First, you imagine what can happen at worst and you admit it intellectually as it really happens. Second, you do not imagine neither the future nor probable events but the present ones. For example, you do not think about your future or probable exile but you should imagine that you are actually exiled and tortured. As for the third step, you must think of these exercises and you must know that they are not real misfortunes. Thus, the individual would admit the future and the present event at the same time and he would become more sober, strong and calm in facing misfortunes.

Whereas "melete" is an experience that aims to educate the mind, "gymnasia" is an education within the concrete situation and it is based on a long tradition: sexual diet, abstinence, physical privation and other rituals of purification. By means of these exercises, Stoicists aimed to free from the exterior world. For example, in *De Genio Socratico* of Plutarch, one makes very hard sportive activities or one sits down at a table

with beautiful meals thereon, and one waits in silence looking at them without eating anything in order to test himself.

Epikuros' way occupies a position that can be defined as the middle of the two poles. He constructed his position on the observation of representations. The philosopher refers to two metaphors to explain his thoughts: you must be like a "watchman" that controls the access to the city; that is to say you must be the watchman of your course of thoughts. Second, you must be like a money-changer; this means that whenever a thought comes in your mind you must think of the rules to evaluate it. In other words, to be like a money-changer requires that you try to decipher what is laid on the roots of your intellectual representations. To sum up, Epikuros aims to control the representations by means of a continuous interior examination (Foucault, 2001: 54-59).

Christian asceticism: obedience and meditation

Christianity, which aims to reach the salvation of the soul, established a series of rules and principles for the transformation of the self in order to discover the truth. Therefore, for Christianity, only the purified soul can be illuminated.

Foucault talks about a technique of the examination of the self which is elaborated in the framework of monastery life, which is based on two principles, namely obedience and meditation. Obedience means that the master as a director of conscience has a whole control over the behaviors of the disciple. Thus, the disciple renounces his own will and obeys the order of the master. This is a way of constructing the self under the control of the master and following the well-determined rules. Indeed, this is very similar to the role of *murshid* in Sufism.

The second characteristic of monastery life is meditation, which is regarded as the best method. This is the obligation through which the disciple concentrates on God by trying to purify his heart from the worldly things. The aim is to meditate on Divinity. This technique, which was originated in Orient traditions, aims to meditate continuously on Divinity by examining and controlling the course of thoughts (Foucault, 2001: 69-70).

II. Sufism as an Art of Existence

The Sufism or *tasawwuf* is a "mystical"¹ dimension of Islam, which reflects the need of the individual to transcend formal religious practices in order to attain a high

¹ The word *mysticism* etymologically derived from the Greek word *myein*, which means 'to shut one's eyes to' (Schimmel, 1982: 17). *Mystification* also, a derivation of the word, has a negative connotation in the common language which means 'to cover the reality'. However the inner travel of the *Sufi* aims to un-cover the veils of existence by purifying (*tasfiya*) one's soul. *Kashf* is one of the most important notion in Sufism, which means 'to discover' secrets (*esrar*) of existence and not to 'mystify' them. Secret (*sirr*) is for someone who has not discover it yet. If one considers its *own* terminology, one may argue that *tasawwuf* is based on the aim and effort of uncovering the secrets of existence both in himself (*anfus*) and throughout the creation (*afak*) rather than on what the Greek word *myein* suggests. Because of this terminological reserve we prefer to use this word in quotation marks. Let us continue this issue with a quotation about the issue "secret" in Sufism: "Shaykh-ul Akbar [Ibn Arabi] says:

level of spiritual fulfillment. The Sufis are represented in all schools of thought in Islam and found in all Muslim communities.

In their practices there are many meditations and solitary or group recitation of prayers. They seek to attain inward purification by means of various exercises. This requires certain knowledge of the self which demands, in turn, a struggle with one's own self, therefore it is said that "Sufism is wholly self-discipline" (Nicholson, 1975: 26).

In Sufism when we speak of knowing or cognition we refer to the self-knowing that leads to the knowing of the Divine. This principle is based on a saying of Prophet Muhammed: "Whoever knows oneself, knows one's Lord." (*Man arafa nafsahu fakat arafa rabbahu*). This is very similar to the Delfic principle "*gnothi sauton*".

The origins of Sufism can be traced to the heart of Islam in the time of the Prophet, whose teachings attracted a group of scholars who came to be called "ehli suffa", the People of Suffa, because of their practice of sitting at the platform of the mosque of the Prophet in Medina. There they engaged in discussions concerning the reality of Being, and in search of the inner path they devoted themselves to spiritual purification and meditation in order to realize the existence of the Divine (Schimmel, 1982: 34-37).

According to al-Kalabadhi, sufi author of *et-Ta'arruf*, Sufism means,

"withdrawal from the world, inclining the soul away from it, leaving all settled abodes, keeping constantly to travel, denying the carnal soul its pleasures, purifying the conducts, cleansing the conscience, dilation of the breast, and the quality of leadership [in virtue]" (Al-Kalabadhi, 1935: 9).

'It is said and experienced that the secret of knowledge corresponds to *ma'rifat* to one who knows it, and those of experienced condition (*hal*) to the wisdom therein God wishes, and those of truth (*haqiqah*) to what is brought by sign (*ishara*)' ... The first level of secret is active which requires a capacity to perceive what is uncovered and to rely only on benevolence that comes from God. The second is passive, and in this level all guides are left behind. This knowledge is reached at the depth of contemplation (*murakaba*). As to the third level, it is so thin that ... one can not speak of it without using a language in ciphers. This [final level] is active/passive. It is based on discovering the unity (*tawhid*) and is called *es-sirr ul sirr*, namely secret of secrets" (es-Sufi, 1982: 26). To conclude, the Sufis refer usually to a laconic, metaphorical and even ironical language to express themselves or prefer to remain silent on purpose. It can be said that here there is twofold reasons of their attitude. First, it is based on an esoteric conviction according to which the Road (*tariq*) is not open to everyone but only to ones who are capable and worthy of it. Second, they are well aware of limits of language as Wittgenstein says succinctly: "one must remain silent about unspeakable". Consequently, the word *mysticism* derived from *myein* in Greek cannot be appropriated to describe Sufism; for, if Sufism proposes to engage in a path of search for Reality, throughout which *secrets open* themselves to one who dare to surpass everyday preoccupations where man is usually embedded, it should be said that Sufism invites man, at least in theory, to *open* his eyes widely about Reality.

The Sufi is called a ‘traveller’ (*salīq*) who advances by slow ‘stages’ (*maqamat*) along a ‘path’ (*tarikāt*) to the goal of knowledge of Reality (*ma’rifāt*). The Sufi is also called a ‘seeker’ (*murīd*). In Sufism, the knowing of the self (*nafs*) has a central importance, for it is the very condition of the supreme knowledge, namely *ma’rifāt*. The Sufi says “look in your own heart, for the kingdom of God is within you”. He who truly knows himself knows God, for the heart is a mirror in which every divine quality is reflected (Nicholson, 1975: 70). One must, then, keep his heart like a clean mirror. We may refer to a famous Sufi symbolism to explain this: The spirit (*ruh*) and the soul (*nafs*) engage in a battle for the possession of their common son heart (*qalb*). *Ruh*, here, means the intellectual principle which transcends the individual’s nature and *nafs* means the psyche. *Qalb*, the heart, represents the central organ of the soul. It is, in a sense, the point of intersection of the ‘vertical’ ray, the spirit, and the ‘horizontal’ plane, the soul. Inasmuch as the *nafs* has the upper hand, the heart is veiled by it. If, on the contrary, the *ruh* gains the victory over the *nafs*, then the heart will be transformed in to *ruh* and will at the same time transmute the *nafs*. Then *qalb*, the heart, reveals itself as what really is, that is as a mirror of the Divine Mystery in man. In this regard, a seeker must be in a constant struggle to purify his soul. This is both an intellectual and a physical effort to transform the self in order to attain to a higher level of existence.

Mucahada–i Nafs and Sayr–u Suluk

The struggle with the *nafs* has been defined as the great struggle (*al-jihad al-akbar*). The concept derives from the popular saying of the Prophet. He said to Muslims when they were coming back from a battle, "You have returned from the small struggle but not from the greater one." Then, he was asked, "What is the greater struggle?" He answered, "The greater struggle is the struggle which against one’s self (*nafs*), and that is between the two sides of your existence."

The struggle with one’s *nafs* is a main issue in the tradition of Sufism. Thus, a Sufi master says “do not struggle with neither the Christians nor the Jews but your own *nafs* and don’t abandon this task until it died” (Ed-Darkavi, 2000: 18). This requires indeed a self-master and discipline. The first and foremost requirement is the purification of the soul. The process is generally very long and difficult. This struggle for self-discipline depends on some determined rules and exercises practiced on body and mind in order to refashion the self. The struggle with one’s soul consists of three main stages.

1. *The carnal soul*: In the first stage, one struggles against the carnal soul or *nafs al-ammara* as it is called by the Sufis. *Nafs al-ammara* is the tendency in man to disobey God, and to take pleasure in evil deeds and thoughts. This inclines man towards gossip, backbiting, vain talk, pride, selfishness, lust, hatred and jealousy. The struggle to overcome *nafs al-ammara* involves the purifying of the body, tongue, mind and heart, in brief a whole human existence.

2. *The reproaching soul*: When a Sufi succeeds to subjugate the carnal soul, *nafs al-ammara*, he enters the second stage of purification in which he is able to respond readily to the call of the reproaching soul, which is called *nafs al-lawwama*. It is the

nafs al-lawwama, which reproaches man for his evil deeds and impels him to acts of mercy and generosity.

3. *The contented soul*: After the stable establishment of this stage in the Sufi's heart, the Sufi enters the third stage, which is known as the station of the contented soul, *nafs al-mutma'inna*. In this stage, the Sufi develops to the fullest tendency to obey God and to act in perfect harmony with God's commandments. This is the phase where the soul is reconciled with all other stations of the path, such as poverty (*faqr*), patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shuqr*) and trust in God (*tawaqqul*). In this stage the soul finds perfect satisfaction (*itimnan*) in being governed by the heart, the Divine mirror in man. Here, the Sufi becomes truly free from fear and grief (Ögke, 1997: 83-96).

In this stage, a Sufi is filled with love, mercy, kindness, and a burning zeal to help others. In order to reach this highest station (*maqam*), a Sufi must constantly strive to control his ego, to curb his anger and impatience. He must eat less, sleep less, talk less, and reduce association with other people. Sometimes he withdraws completely from the worldly activities (*inziva* or *halvat*) and occupies himself entirely with the remembrance *ziqr* of God and meditation (*tafaqqur*).

Ashq and Ma'rifat

During the spiritual journey (*sayr-u suluk*), which is one of the important phases of "mystical" experience, which is attained by a traveller (*salik*) on the "mystical" path, is the state of *fana fi Allah*, 'extinction of the self in God'. This is the transition to the state of *baqa billah* or the 'eternal life in union with God'. By passing away from the self, the individual does not cease to exist, but is permitted to enjoy the supreme "mystical" experience in union with God. Therefore, Sufis say about *fana* and *baqa* that 'dying to self' is really 'living in God'. Nevertheless, it should be stated that the Sufi's aim is not to become like God or personally to participate in the divine nature but to escape from the bondage of his unreal selfhood and thereby to be reunite with the One infinite Being (Nicholson, 1975: 88). Thus, he is fully absorbed in the Love (*ashq*) of God which gives him an everlasting awareness of the all-pervading presence of God (Al-Kalabadhi, 1935: 120-132). As the great Persian Sufi poet, Hafiz said centuries ago for all times: "*He whose heart is alive with love, never dies*".

Love is a life philosophy for a Sufi who regards Sufism not as idle talk/discourse (*kâl*) but as a praxis/experience (*hâl*), as Fuzûli, says: "*Aşk imiş her ne var alemde / İlm bir kıl-u kâl imiş ancak*." To put it succinctly, love¹ is a form of existence for the Sufi through which he aims to move beyond life and death that is beyond everyday troubles and the fear of death. Yunus Emre expresses it very well in these lines:

*Kon ölüm endişesin âşk ölmez bâkidür
Ölmek senün degüldür çün nûrun ilâhidür*

Love (*ashq*) has an utmost importance in the literature of Sufism. The Sufis call themselves *ahl-i ashq*. Love as a supreme expression of purifiedness of the heart, is found in the core of Sufi theosophy. It is by love that Sufi contemplates universe as the

reflected image of Divine, conceiving macro-cosmos that is hidden in micro-cosmos that is in himself.

Love is the divine instinct of the soul impelling it to realize its nature and destiny. The soul is the first-born of God: before the creation of the universe it lived and had its being in Him. During its earthly manifestation, soul is a stranger in exile (*gurbat*) and love, then, is an expression of desire of return to its home (Nicholson, 1975: 102-112). Love, like *ma'rifat*, is a divine gift (*ihsan*) in its essence, but not something that can be acquired. However, the seeker must work to become worthy of *ihsan* by purifying his soul in a constant struggle for himself (*mucahada-i nafs*). Education of *nafs* which aims to a moral transmutation of the "inner man" by mortification of the lower soul is thus the chief work of the seeker. It occurs by "dying before death". However, when they say "die before you die", they do not mean to assert that the lower self can be essentially destroyed, but that the lower can and should be purged of his attributes, that is ignorance, pride, envy, uncharitableness etc. Thus, the lower qualities of the soul are extinguished and replaced by the opposite ones which lead to the contemplative life (Nicholson, 1975: 40-41).

Truth and Everyday Practices

In Sufism the search for the truth *is embedded* in everyday practices. The Sufi does not search for the truth only in his mind or heart. He does not neglect everyday aspects of existence while he refashions his soul, because it is a holistic effort that is in question. Thus, this struggle for the transformation of one's soul as a main way to attain the truth is expanded in every point of the life, especially in everyday practices. This is why the Sufis consider that "the states (*ahval*) are products of deeds (*amal*)" (Kelabazi, 1992: 129). This means that the practical dimension of the search for the truth in Sufism is an unavoidable dimension of it. Therefore the traveler in the path of truth should examine and revise every aspect of his life even "in all the smallest, most everyday matters".

In brief, everyday practices have central importance in the intellectual, spiritual and physical education of the Sufi. To exemplify this, let us examine briefly the eleven principles of the Naqshbandi order. The following eleven principles show the exercises and aims of this order (*tariqa*). The first eight were formulated by Khodja Abd al-Khaliq al-Ghujdawani, and the last three were added by Khodja Bahauddin Naqshband.

Yad Kard: Remembrance, or making mention. It is both oral and mental. Repeating the *dhikr* is imparted to you so that you may attain the beatific vision. Khodja Bahauddin Naqshband said, "The aim in *dhikr* is that to make heart to be always aware of al-Haqq [The Truth, a Beautiful Name of God], for its practice banished inattention".

Baz Gasht: Restraint. The person saying the *dhikr* when engaging in the heart-repetition of the blessed phrase [*shahada*] should intersperse it to help to keep one's thoughts from straying. The aim is to master one's thoughts.

Nigah Dasht: Watchfulness. Over wandering, passing thoughts when repeating the blessed phrase.

Yad Dasht: Recollection. Concentration upon the Divine Presence in a condition of *Zawq*, foretaste, intuitive anticipation or perceptiveness, not using external aids.

Hosh dar dam: Awareness while breathing. This is the technique of breathing control. Khodja Bahauddin Naqshband said, "the external basis of this order is the breath". One must not exhale in forgetfulness or inhale in forgetfulness.

Safar dar watan: 'Traveling' in one's homeland. This is an interior journey, the movement from blameworthy to praiseworthy qualities. Others refer to it as the vision or revelation of the hidden side of the *Shahada*.

Nazar bar qadam: Watching one's steps. The *saliq* (traveler) should be watchful during his journey. Whatever kinds of countries through where he is passing, he should not let his gaze be distracted from the goal of his journey.

Khalwat dar anjuman: Solitude in a crowd. The journey of the *saliq*, though outwardly it is in the world, inwardly it is with God. Leaders of the order have said, "In this order association is in the crowd and disassociation in the *khalwat*". A common weekly practice was to perform the *dhikr* in the assembly.

Wuquf-e zamani: Temporal pause or awareness related to time. Keeping account of how one is spending one's time, whether rightly and if so giving thanks, or wrongly and if so asking for forgiveness. In this state of reckoning (*muhasaba*) the *saliq* evaluates every hour that has passed: what is he doing in complete Presence with God or in complete presence with the worldly everydayness?

Wuquf-e adadi: Numerical pause or awareness related to number. Checking that the heart *dhikr* [said in the heart, silently] has been repeated the requisite number of times, taking into account one's wandering thoughts. It is said that Khodja Bahauddin Naqshband considered numerical awareness as the first stage of esoteric knowledge.

Wuquf-e qalb: Heart pause or awareness related to the heart. Forming a mental picture of one's heart with the name of Allah engraved thereon, to emphasize that the heart has no consciousness or goal other than God. This is the meaning of the word "Naqshband".²

Conclusion

Sufism has a holistic search for the truth, the main part of which is struggle for the transformation of the self, which reminds the notions such as *askesis* in Stoicism and *paraskeuazo* in Greeks. In this search, *theoria* is not separable from *praxis*, but these two sides of human existence are interpenetrated with each other.

The Sufi is one who searches for the truth in himself by knowing himself. According to Sufi theosophy man is micro-cosmos (*alam-i sagir*) in which succinctly found the macro-cosmos (*alam-i kabir*). The Sufi is to purify himself, for the truth opens itself in him and for him.

² <http://www.arhes.uga.edu/~godlas/11Naqsprin.html>

One approaches the truth by knowing oneself which necessitates, in turn, a whole *ethical* attitude encompassing every aspect of human life. This is, to be sure, an art of existence, absent in modern societies as stated by Foucault:

“What strikes me is the fact that in our societies, art has become something related only to objects and not to individuals or to life ... But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art?” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 237)

It is possible to define the separation or gap between *theoria* and *praxis*, which started from Descartes to Husserl as a reason for this situation. Consciousness has been privileged and thus other aspects of human existence have been obliterated. Foucault, again, speaks of a displacement of the hierarchy of the principle ‘knowing oneself’ and those ‘taking care of oneself’. These two principles belong essentially to Antic culture where they considered that the former is the product of the latter. However in modern societies ‘knowing oneself’ constitutes the main principle characterized essentially by an *episteme* where *cogito* has a privileged place. This caused a gap between *ethos* and *aletheia* in search of Reality in modern times since man started to ignore that they are part of cosmos and then cosmos became a subject which is opponent of humankind. In this frame, the will to know transformed into will to power.

On the other hand, *ma'rifat* in Sufism is given as a result and a gift of the effort to know oneself accompanied-preceded by the transformation of the self. It is given to *saliq* (traveler/seeker) who has taken care of himself by purifying his soul. At the end of this travel (*sayr-u suluk*) he may reach a higher level of existence where *Haqiqa* opens itself slowly which depends on his capacity of contemplation (*muqashafa*: uncovering). Thus *saliq* becomes *a'rif* who may decipher and read signs (*ayat*) in creation the core of which is, in Sufi theodicy, man himself.

Consequently, *sayr-u suluk* is an art of existence, throughout which *ethos* ends up with *a-letheia*. That is to say, the double effort of knowing and improving of the self is crowded by the contemplation of the Reality as a gift of *sayr-u suluk*. To conclude, let us give the word to Mevlâna, who says in his *Open Secret*: “Tomorrow you'll see what you've broken and torn tonight / thrashing in the dark / inside you there is an artist you don't know about”. *A'rif* is then a person who discovers and knows the *artist* inside himself.

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