# Civility in the Enchanted City:
## The *Malfūzāt* of Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn Awliyā'*

### *Efsunlu Şehirde Edep:*
### *Nizâmeddîn Evliyâ'nın Melfûzât'ı*

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## Abstract

Civility has been variously described as a social norm, an attitude, even a virtue. The wide variety of ascriptions attached to it indicate as much its versatility as its indispensability for the construction of a sustainable society. Yet how widespread is civility, across history and societies? This is a question that attempts to wean the concept off its often-Eurocentric conceptualization, wherein civility was tied to the 'civilizing process' described and championed by Norbert Elias. This article undertakes a study of civility in a very different social context, by zooming onto the Chishti *khānqāh* of Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn Awliyā' in early thirteenth century India. The underlying contention is that civility in this milieu was expressed through the key Sufi vocabulary of *adab*, *futuwwa* and *gharīb nawazi*, it was not tied to the civilizing process of a Leviathan State. Rather, it was the individual moral self, trained and elevated by a charismatic Shaykh, aided by the comradeship of the *khānqāh*, and grounded in a world that was resolutely 'enchanted' that made the acquisition and solidification of civility a feasible process. This article seeks a sociological examination of that project.

**Keywords:** Civility, Sufism, adab, futuwwa, civilizing process

## Özet

Edep, kimi zaman sosyal bir norm, bir tavır ve hatta bir fazilet olarak çeşitli şekillerde tanımlamıştır. Kavrama atfedilen tanımların çeşitliliği, onun, sürdürülebilir bir toplumun inşası adına vazgeçilmezliğine olduğu kadar çok yönlülüğüne de işaret etmektedir. Peki ama edep tarihte ve toplumlar arasında ne denli yaygındır? Bu soru, edebin Nobert Elias tarafından tanımlanan ve savunulan "medenileşme süreci" ile ilişkilendirildiği, kavramın ekseriyetle Avrupa merkezli bir kavramsallaştırmadan sıyrılmasını sağlamaya çalışan bir sorudur. Bu makale, oldukça farklı bir sosyal bağlamda, on üçüncü yüzyıl başlarında Nizâmüddin Evliyâ'nın Hindistan'daki hankahı özelinde edep kavramını mercek altına almaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışmada ileri sürülen fikir, belirtilen sosyal çevredeki edebin, Leviathan devlet tipi bir medenileşme sürecine bağlı olmaktan ziyade, âdâb ü erkân, fütüvvet ve garib-nüvâzlık (garipleri gözetme, kollama; onlara hoş davranma, gönüllerini alma) gibi temel tasavvufî terminoloji aracılığıyla ifade edildiğidir. Bilakis, edebin kazanılmasını ve pekiştirilmesini uygulanabilir bir süreç haline getiren şey, hankahtaki ihvan kardeşliğinin desteğine ve hankah içinde kararlı bir biçimde sürdürülen "efsunlu" bir dünyaya dayanarak, etki sahibi bir mürşidin terbiyesi altında tekâmül eden bireysel ahlâkî benliktir. Bu makale, söz konusu uygulamanın sosyolojik bir incelemesini amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Edep, tasavvuf, âdâb, fütüvvet, medenileşme süreci

…the Prophetic subtlety of human closeness and empathy, the *firāsa* that is the discernment of spirits…a sense of wonder at the brilliance of creation and the marvel of other souls. The Quran invites us to see the world as wonderful, as a vast display of God's signs, of which human beings are the most remarkable of all. When we regain the lovely enjoyment of admiring the brilliance of creation in the world and in other people, we will start to reclaim the natural human virtue of empathy and courtesy, which is the foundation of all moral existence.[1]

## 1. Conceptualizing Civility

A disciple once presented himself to Khwāja Ajall Shīrāzī, seeking instructions on the spiritual path. The Sufi master gave him a simple task: "What you do not prefer for yourself, do not prefer it for others too, and wish for yourself only that which you would wish for others." The disciple returned soon after, he wondered if the Khwāja would now give him the prayers or litany formula necessary for the spiritual path. The Khwāja asked him about the first task. When the disciple remained silent, the Khwāja smiled and said since he had not remembered the first lesson, how should he be given another?[2] This story, from the *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, is narrated as part of a sermon on the basis of spiritual progress. The other segment from the same discussion details abstinence from worldliness. The first segment prescribes a model of relations with others, the second a model of the self in the world. Both help us construct a vision of civility, the chief variable this article seeks to investigate.

Civility is a phrase as varied in its definition as it is in its practice. It qualifies as "both a social condition and a normative value." An everyday example is of lining up in queue, waiting for one's turn, allowing the other to speak without interruption, and so on. More broadly, we may include "the tolerance for free speech and, at the same time, the avoidance of hate speech; the acceptance of 'deviant' cultural norms and habits as practised

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1    Abdal Hakim Murad, "Taqwa in An Age of Distractions," *Islamic Horizons*, (November 2018): 28-9.

2    Amir Hasan Sijzī, *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād* (New Delhi: M.R. Publishers, 2007), 158-60.

by ethnic minorities; and the lending of a helpful hand to those in need" as examples of civility. Civility is then at the most basic the "recognition of the other".[3]

Over the past few years, there has been a recognition for "understanding civility as a normative ideal of social behaviour which varies in content over time and from one cultural context to another."[4] This was a necessary correction to the Eurocentric concept and trajectory of civility. Delineating a roadmap for the sociology of Islam, Salvatore proposes to "reconstruct a rather transversal notion of civility and emancipate it from its dependence on a unilateral Western heritage one needs to take into account non-Western experiences and trajectories."[5] In the case of the Islamicate, Salvatore sees Sufism not "confined to a purely spiritual level or to a mere private sphere," but rather a potent force which through "its elastic yet formative relation to Islamic normativity" became "a major—if not the principal—arrow of Islamic civility."[6]

The present study proposes to examine this civility, by taking the case study of the teachings of Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn Awliyāʾ, the preeminent Sufi Shaykh of the Indian subcontinent during the pre-Mughal period. This article will pursue three objectives. The first is identifying the specific form of civility propagated through the Shaykh's teachings. A second objective is to study the social imaginary of the thirteenth century Delhi *khānqāh*, to probe what built and sustained

its worldview. This objective is ancillary to the first one, it is only by locating the subjects epistemologically that we can come to terms with their worldview. In other words, it makes no sense to study a 'view-out-of-nowhere', it is crucial to ground it in the background of its subjects. A third objective is to examine how an alternative conception of civility, such as the one being probed, can help widen the idea of civility itself, by taking it from a passive to a more active frame.

The *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, a seminal Sufi text in the genre of the *Malfūẓāt*, serves as the primary reference for this article. Written by Amir Sijzī Dehlavī, a high-ranking officer of the Sultanate, and a devout disciple of the Shaykh, the book records over fifty of the author's meetings with the Shaykh. Most of these meetings chronicle detailed public sermons of the Shaykh, alternating between his counsel, and tales of former Sufi masters. The text's focus therefore is not a neat, impersonal historical account, rather it is on "the remembered past, on former human experience as a key to unwrapping God's (and humankind's) purposes in the world." Similar to the texts on other key Sufi figures, the writing is hagiographical, which brings about an "endless perplexity to researchers seeking to reassemble the positive facts of Sufi history." At the same time however, as a hagiography, it shows us the "Muslim views of India's history seen from the 'inside'."[7] Hagiographies embellish, exaggerate, but they nonetheless provide us the entry point, the critical mass necessary to approximate a social imaginary different than ours.

The example of Baranī is instructive here. A Delhi noble, he was connected to both the Sultan's court and the Shaykh's *khānqāh*, he

3 Britta Baumgarten, Dieter Gosewinkel and Dieter Rucht, "Civility: Introductory Notes on the History and Systematic Analysis of A Concept", *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire* 18/3 (2011): 289-312.

4 ibid. 290.

5 Armando Salvatore, *The Sociology of Islam: Knowledge, Power and Civility* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016): 43.

6 ibid. 80.

7 Nile Green, "Between Texts and Territories: An Introduction," in *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012): 10.

was in fact a disciple of Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn. In his *Tārikh-i-Firoz Shāhī*, Baranī says that the city of Delhi witnessed a mass spiritual revolution in the thirteenth century, owing squarely to the intervention of the Sufi saints, and their hospices. A great number of people had pledged allegiance at the hands of the Sufi Shaykhs, and with their spiritual help, the two forms of devotion, mandatory and supererogatory, became a habit, worldliness was shunned, and a spirit of renunciation took over people's hearts. In the realm of public behavior, Baranī notes that "the hearts of most Muslims had turned towards righteousness, honesty, piety, justice and religiosity were visible in the transactions of the people."[8]

How do we evaluate this statement? Using fuzzy logic or approximate reasoning, we may place it anywhere in the spectrum of "true, very true, completely true, not very true, untrue, etc."[9] This provides us the necessary scaffolding to appreciate a counter-scenario, without nit-picking or engaging in zero-sum games over its absolute historical veracity. And while we "may never actually attain an idealized realm of complete neutrality or objectivity," this shouldn't prevent us "to aspire in the direction of a greater understanding of the phenomena under discussion."[10] The article therefore walks a tightrope, to both investigate, and *imagine* an alternative vision of civility.

## 2. The *ʿAjāʾib* and the Gharīb

The two wings of Sufism, the ascetic-moral, and the mystical, anchor the *Fawāʾid* too; the

Shaykh's sermons tap into everyday routines, spiritual discipline, praiseworthy traits, but also refer to fabled men, mystical powers, and events beyond rational grasp. The mystical elements are where we are firmly in the realm of the enchanted. Yogis levitate, dervishes fly, mountains speak, *awliyāʾ* predivine events, the world is soundly held in place by the force of both the Shaykh's charisma and his follower's belief in him. The Shaykh affirms the reality of the evil eye (العين) and magic (السحر), he interestingly brings up the example of the Muʿtazila who denied it.[11]

What can be said of the *qiṣṣa* genre and the *ʿajāʾib* literature may well be repeated for the *Malfūẓāt* too: their 'incredible' nature makes them less than palpable to modern readers, who are trained in a "certain epistemological strictures" and for whom "factuality, rather than sincerity, is paramount."[12] In a revealing sermon, the *Fawāʾid* expounds upon the three modes of acquiring knowledge: sensory, cognitive, and divinely guided. The final category relates to the prophets and *awliyāʾ*, who can intuit knowledge which others may reach only through cognitive labour. In another sermon, the Shaykh explains *karāma* or miracles as actions that the intellect cannot decipher.[13] This is where the *Fawāʾid* returns to the idea of *ʿajāʾib*, which Iṣfahānī defines as "the state of astonishment that results from not knowing the cause of a phenomenon."[14]

The medieval period was the high noon of *ʿajāʾib* literature in the Islamicate world. Representative of this genre is the author al-Qazwīnī, known for the *The Wonders of Creatures and the Marvels of Creation*. The

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8    Ziāuddīn Baranī, *Tārikh-i-Firoz Shāhī*, trans. Ishtiyaq Ahmad Zilli (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2015), 208-9.

9    Lotfi Asker Zadeh, "The Concept of A Linguistic Variable and Its Application to Approximate Reasoning—I", *Information Sciences* 8/3 (1975): 199-249.

10   Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 49-50.

11   Sijzī, *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, 368.

12   Pasha M. Khan, *The Broken Spell: Indian Storytelling and the Romance Genre in Persian and Urdu* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 161.

13   Sijzī, *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, 370.

14   Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-alfāẓ al-Qurʾān* (Deoband: Darul Maʿarif, 1993), 547.

book is cross listed as both cosmography and geography. If we are to stretch the modern definition of encyclopedias, to accommodate both the known and the possible, the *ʿajāʾib* tradition fusing both natural history, geographical wonders, and fabulous humans and animals, may well figure as an early proponent. In these texts, the "geographical and zoological projections of marvels and monsters resonate within a larger theological universe populated with jinn, demons, angels, saintly marvels, and prophetic miracles, all in concert with broad currents of salvation history."[15]

von Hees makes two pertinent observations with regards to the *ʿajāʾib* literature. Firstly, rather than limiting it to the supernatural, fantastic or fairy-tale, it is far more accurate to see the *ʿajāʾib* literature "as themes that evoke astonishment." The broader focus brings into relief the idea that "in the medieval period, *ʿajāʾib* was perceived not as opposed to science but as encouraging it." Al-Qazwīnī embodied this idea: *ʿajāʾib* for him was "the beginning of the inquiring search that ultimately leads to the cognition of God."[16]

The aim of these wondrous texts is beyond mere pleasure, it is the Quranic injunction to reflect often upon the natural word and to "turn to the sign of the marvelous as a path toward understanding the divine order of existence". For al-Qazwini, the "pursuit of the strange and remote as part of the perfection of the mind in a progression toward greater awareness, which is only achieved after studying the various branches of knowledge (*al-ʿulūm*), purifying one's morals, and disciplining the lower self (*riyāḍat al-nafs*)."[17]

Perusing these texts, either in the written or oral form generates *ḥayra* or bewilderment as "a transformative experience that takes the partial, creatural intellect beyond itself."[18]

In this sense, the *Fawāʾid* bridges the two wings of Sufism, the ascetic-moral and the mystical. Rivers listen, as do water springs; trees sprout up in an instance; the sky is held afloat by the angels; the prayers of the dervishes bring rains on parched land. Anecdotes and parables from the natural world couple with exemplars of ascetic-moral behavior; the pairing is bound by the common theme of miracle or wonder. In the case of the former, the wonder is apparent. In the latter it is latent, as the wonder results from the perfection of one's character and conduct. In an assembly, the Shaykh favors the latter over the former; he observes that the performance of miracles is a hindrance on the spiritual path. The true seeker pursues steadfastness in the pursuit of (divine) love.[19]

The *Fawāʾid* expounds upon this steadfastness through Quranic injunctions, prophetic practices, and the lofty behavior of past pious predecessors, the themes return to a combat of the four enemies, i.e. *dunyā*, *shaytān*, *nafs*, and *shahwa*, which may be translated respectively as worldliness, the devil, the lower human self, and desires, respectively. The emphasis on refraining from worldliness is especially strong. The renunciation of the world however did not entail running away from it per se or sacrificing one's basic needs or basic social norms. The renunciation espoused by the Shaykh relates to a personal disposition, manifest both in speech and deeds, having an inclination neither to hoard, nor develop attachment to material objects.[20]

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15  Travis Zadeh, "The Wiles of Creation: Philosophy, Fiction, and the 'Ajāʾib Tradition", *Middle Eastern Literatures* 13/1 (2010): 25.

16  Syrinx von Hees, "The Astonishing: a Critique and Re-reading of Ajāʾib Literature," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 8/2 (2005): 105-106.

17  Zadeh, "The Wiles of Creation," 30.

18  Khan, *The Broken Spell*, 184.

19  Sijzī, *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, 246.

20  ibid. 160-2.

If one puts ghee, pepper, garlic, and onion into a cauldron and adds only water, the end result is known as pseudo-stew. The basic staple for stew is meat; there may or may not be other ingredients. Similarly, the basis for spiritual progress is leaving the world; there may or may not be other virtuous practices.[21]

At the *khānqāh*, no food grains were allowed to stay in the storerooms for greater than a week, lest the habit of accumulation creep in. At the end of his life, the Shaykh asked that the entire treasury be emptied out. On receiving a huge amount of money from the Sultan, the Shaykh had them distributed immediately. Even before becoming the head of the *khānqāh*, Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn was loath to accumulation, even it be a coin. This is in line with the way of the Chishtī *tarīqa* in India, the fountainhead of which is Moʿīnuddīn Chishtī, often referred by his title Khwāja Gharīb Nawāz. *Gharīb Nawāzi* is a word common to both Urdu and Persian. By *gharīb*, the reference is to both the stranger as well as the destitute, while *nawāzi* means hospitality. *Gharīb Nawāzi* therefore means kindness or hospitality to the strangers/the poor.

The word *gharīb* is part of the same semantic field that encompasses ʿajab and ḥayra. The *gharīb* is distinguished by the quality of being peerless in the genus/type to which it belongs.[22] In that sense, he is a stranger who inhabits "a certain spatial circle—or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries⸺but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and

cannot be, indigenous to it."[23] The *Fawā'id* spells out the ideal dervish type, the one "who has passed beyond considerations of time or place," who is neither "uplifted by any joy" nor "depressed by any sorrow," a person who has traversed "beyond the domain of this world."[24] The Sufis, whether in residence or travel, had "adopted homelessness as a way of life and were not strangers as ordinarily understood, they were at home everywhere but nowhere in this material world and constituted thus a special type of stranger."[25]

Early in his youth, Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn sought to move away from the city, a space which held no comfort for him. His attempts to find a dwelling outside the city however proved futile, and he was led back to the city. A young man met him after prayers; his appearance marked him from the 'people of the unseen,' and he asked Niẓāmuddīn: "What strength, what benefit is there in retreating from people and immersing yourself in God? Strength and benefit is in staying amongst people, yet being immersed in God." His words had the desired effect for Niẓāmuddīn decided to stay in the city.[26] His master Baba Farīd preferred solitude, residence in uninhabited places, yet he had foregone it, to instead reside in the town of Ajdhon. The hospice catered to an unending stream of visitors, yet Baba Farīd would treat first-time and long-time visitors both with equal attention and care.[27]

Rosenthal quotes al-Tawhīdī that "the *gharīb* is in fact the real *qarīb*, the person unrelated to the outside world and related to the spiri-

21 Amir Ḥasan Sijzī, *Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam ad-din Awliya Recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi as Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, trans. Bruce Lawrence (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 88.

22 Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, 604.

23 George Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 143.

24 Sijzī, *Morals for the Heart*, 211.

25 Franz Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," *Arabica* 44/1 (1997): 54-58.

26 Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-Fuʾād*, 622.

27 ibid. 386.

tual world, man's true and only home."[28] The *khānqāh* was the earthly hospice, catering to earthly needs, yet fundamentally positioned to prepare the believers for the permanent hospice of the hereafter. The *khānqāh* catered to a bustling local community, yet its doors were equally open to the outsiders. Both in times of scarcity and tribulation, disciples would flock its doors, and the Shaykh would not disappoint them. The Shaykh who was the most *gharīb* and *qarīb*, became the patron of all the *gharīb* who came in his refuge. Rare would be the visitor who would return empty-handed from the *khānqāh*. Khalīiq Nizami is perceptive in noting that the *khānqāh* of Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn functioned as a welfare center.[29] By welfare, the reference is not only to the provision of material needs, but also spiritual ones. The former was provided through daily food, gifts and aid, the latter through the public sermons, private counsel and the daily routines observed in the *khānqāh*.

The *Fawā'id* distinguishes between two forms of devotion: mandatory and supererogatory. The mandatory forms of worship, whether through prayers, remembrance or pilgrimage accrue benefit to the individual alone. The supererogatory ones however bring "benefit and comfort to others, whether through the expenditure of money or demonstration of compassion or other ways of helping one's fellow man." Their rewards, both for the individual and society, are incalculable.[30]

## 3. *Iḥsān*

The place of civility in our collective lives is unquestionably important. The problem is finding a cross-cultural and cross-temporal definition of it. It is, to paraphrase one leading political philosopher of the last century, a value "like happiness and goodness, like nature and reality, the meaning of this term is so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist."[31] The philosopher in question was Isaiah Berlin, the quote is taken from his celebrated speech 'Two Concepts of Liberty.' Berlin's division of liberty into two separate realms, the positive and the negative, was valuable in broadening the boundaries and interpretations of liberty.

The case of civility can likewise benefit from being phrased in the negative and the positive. In its negative, passive avatar, civility puts a premium on restraint, of one's passions, one's lower selves. In a more expansive, positive, and active avatar however, civility would demand us certain duties, pushing us well beyond our comfort zones of doing the bare minimum, to instead engage in activities that may not yield immediate benefits, but which nonetheless are helpful for spiritual and societal reasons. The idea of active and passive, positive and negative civility is gleaned from Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn's teachings.

> The master observed: "The conduct of human beings with one another is of three kinds. The first kind is that whatever a person does neither benefits nor harms another. Such conduct replicates the order common in the mineral and plant world. The second kind is that whatever a person does brings only benefit to his fellow man, not harm. This is better. But the third kind is still better: that whatever a person does benefits another and even if someone harms him, he does not retaliate but exercises forbearance. This is the conduct of the righteous."[32]

28    Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," 58.

29    Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Introduction," in *Morals for the Heart*, 32.

30    Sijzī, *Morals for the Heart*, 95.

31    Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 168.

32    Sijzī, *Morals for the Heart*, 346.

The first type is passive; the variety of civility we are most accustomed to settling for. The second is a slight improvement over the first. It is the final type, seemingly impossible, closer to the realm of the heavenly kingdom than the earthly one, that comes closest to describing Ḥażrat Niẓāmuddīn's teachings, but also his lived example. Once, a disciple rose in the assembly and informed the Shaykh that certain people in the city were speaking ill of him. The Shaykh responded that he had forgiven them. He asked the people gathered in the assembly to likewise forgive them and not harbor enmity against them. For, "what place would it be if people were to occupy themselves with slander and hatred against the other?" In another instance, the Shaykh visited the grave of a person who had constantly slandered him. He prayed for his forgiveness.[33]

This is *iḥsān* civility, a beautification of one's character, and through it, a perfection of one's relations. The word *iḥsān* is taken from the Hadith Jibril which spells out the three dimensions of religion: imān (beliefs), islām (practice/worship) and *iḥsān* (perfection/excellence). The study of beliefs is through the sciences of *aqīda* (theology), of practice through *fiqh* (law), and of *iḥsān* through *tasawwuf* (Sufism/spiritual excellence). *Iḥsān* draws from the root of ḥ-s-n, translated as beauty. To do *iḥsān* is to therefore beautify something, perfect or, complete it. Actions, qualifying for the bare legal minimum, are perfected through a greater degree of efforts, until they approximate the lofty stage of *iḥsān*. *Iḥsān* is to seek less than what is owed, and to give greater than what is due. It is manifest in two ways, by bestowing kindness upon others, but also through beauty in knowledge and beauty in actions.[34]

Characteristic of the Sufi *tarīqa*, *iḥsān* is tied to the restraint of one's lower self (*nafs*), with social life becoming both the theatre for good character as well as the means to perfect it. The *Fawāʾid* draws a distinction between two types of human behavior: the one emanating from the *nafs* (lower self), and the other from the *qalb* (heart). The nafs behavior is deflected by the *qalb* one, the former is the place of "enmity, turmoil, and strife," while the latter nurtures "tranquility, contentment, and gentleness." If confronted by the former, the disciple is urged to not resort to a tit-for-tat, a *nafs*-to-*nafs* clash would only result in an endless cycle of strife.

The antidote to *nafs*, and the strife it engineers is a behavior emanating from the heart.[35] Reciprocity does not govern the behavior, the principled position of *iḥsān* does. In this heightened, practiced state of mindfulness, anger from the other is met with patience and forbearance, a behavior praised as beautiful in the *Fawāʾid*.[36] In the same spirit of *iḥsān*, if a conflict occurs among two parties, one of the two should seek to cleanse his heart of ill-feelings towards the other. He will find that eventually the discord between the two of them will lessen.[37] Elsewhere, the Shaykh expounds the way of the dervishes: they are kind to those who're kind with them, but also with those who aren't.[38]

## 4. *Adab* as Location

Ibn ʿAbbās was once in congregational prayer with the Prophet. As the sole follower, he was expected to stand next to the Prophet who was leading the prayer. He, however, kept breaking the prayer and retreating to the back row. The Prophet inquired as to why he kept moving

33    Sijzī, *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, 462-4.
34    Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-alfāẓ al-Qurʾān*, 236.
35    Sijzī, *Fawāʾid al-Fuʾād*, 562-4.
36    ibid. 610.
37    ibid. 464.
38    ibid. 432.

back. Ibn 'Abbās said, "How can I stand and pray next to the Messenger of the Lord of the Universe?" The Prophet was pleased with his beautiful conduct. (حسن ادب) He prayed that Ibn 'Abbās be granted deep knowledge of the religion.[39]

The anecdote from the *Fawā'id* introduces the interwoven concepts of *adab* and *ḥayā*. *Ḥayā* is ordinarily translated as shame. The translation, however, falls well short of conveying the meaning of the original. *Ḥayā* is conceived not as disgrace, but as a sense of modesty, bashfulness, a heightened degree of self-awareness and self-reflection relating to both one's thoughts and actions. Al-Ghazālī, for example, advises people to imagine a pious person observing them during their prayers, should they seek presence in them. He then asks them, if a mere mortal can bring about a positive change in their prayers, then do they not feel *ḥayā* when they are in front of their Master and Creator?[40] Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya finds *ḥayā* as *murāqaba* or watchfulness before God and a presence of the heart (حضور القلب) with Him.[41]

The *adab* a person achieves through their spiritual efforts is manifested in their actions or behavior. This is the idea of *maqām*.[42] A variant of *maqām* is *muqām*, meaning "being placed."[43] *Adab* can therefore be conceived as correct location. The inward states are stages for the seeker's spiritual journey. The journey speaks to the dual nature of humans as both rational and animal. For an individual, the

onward ascension from the latter to the former is actualized "when the former subdues the latter and renders it under control," it is then that "one has put both of them in their proper places, thereby placing one's self in the right place."[44] The outward relates to how the individual situates themselves to their peers and guide, but also to God and a God-ordained cosmic and moral order.

*Adab* therefore returns to an awareness of one's station, both present and potential, and the demands the intermittent journey calls for. *Adab* helps us realize the human subject as the 'relational self,' related at varying levels, to a cosmic order, as well as to ones' family and society. It is concerned with "the discipline of body, mind, and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's self, society and Community."[45]

## 5. *Adab* as Habitus

The *Fawā'id* draws a distinction between *lisān al-qāl* and *lisān al-ḥāl*, the former is limited to mere speech, whereas the latter is embodied through deeds and states. If a Sufi master espouses renunciation while remaining worldly themselves, their words are unlikely to be effective, for theirs would be a *lisān al-qāl*, not *lisān al-ḥāl*.[46] On a similar note, the Shaykh recounts the story of a dervish named Bu Ali who once sought to know from an acquaintance about his *akhlāq* or character. His acquaintance replied that he did not possess good *akhlāq*. The dervish was

39   ibid. 500-2.

40   Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī, *The Beginning of Guidance* (London: White Thread Press, 2010), 69-71.

41   Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-Sālikīn (Ranks of the Divine Seekers)*(Leiden: Brill, 2020), II: 511.

42   Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, "Muʿjam Maqālīd al-ʿUlūm fī l-Ḥudūd wa-l-Rusūm," *Arabic Lexicon*, accessed August 2023, http://arabiclexicon.hawramani.com/المقام/

43   Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 77.

44   Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, "Al-Attas' Concept of Taʿdib as True and Comprehensive Education in Islam," *SeekersGuidance*, December 2009, accessed July 7, 2021, https://seekersguidance.org/articles/general-artices/al-attas-concept-of-tadib-as-true-and-comprehensive-education-in-islam-wan-mohd-nor-wan-daud/.

45   Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 105.

46   Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-Fuʾād*, 774.

indignant, he asked how could he not possess *akhlāq*, having written so many books on the subject? To which his acquaintance smiled and said, "I did not say Bu Ali does not know about the nobility of character, I said he does not possess it!"[47]

If we are to conceptualize *lisān al-ḥāl* as the acquisition of *akhlāq*, we must return to the concept of *adab*. In his definition of *adab* as "correct knowledge and behavior in the total process by which a person is educated, guided, and formed into a good Muslim," Lapidus identifies it as a "part of an interrelated set of concepts that constitutes the basic vocabulary of Islamic belief and makes up a Muslim anthropology of man."[48] A useful way to understand *adab* is to see it as consisting of two components, one of temporal *ḥāl*, the other as consisting of a disposition, a habitus that is more permanent. As a tool of sociological inquiry, the term habitus was revived and creatively utilized by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Bourdieu's chief concern throughout his academic life was to figure out "how can behavior be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?" The concept of habitus was key to unravelling this puzzle. For Bourdieu, habitus "expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination."[49] Elsewhere, he explains habitus, as "that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions."[50]

Al-Ghazālī employs the example of learning a skill like calligraphy to explain the circular mind-body relationship. It is only through repetition and perseverance that calligraphy becomes a "firmly-rooted attribute" in the soul of the calligrapher, it is through repetition that "he comes to write naturally with a beautiful hand, whereas he had earlier done so only artificially."[51] The acquiring of good character follows a similar trajectory. At the outset, it is achieved "through self-discipline, by means of imitating the actions which result from such traits so that they may ultimately become part of one's nature." The actions must be repeated, to be performed by simulation "until they become part of one's habitual nature." And the more one performs the action, "the greater will be the reward, the purer and clearer the soul, and the stronger and more deeply-rooted the good traits of character."[52]

Similar to al Ghazālī, Ibn Khaldūn relies upon the example of a craft to explain formation of a trait, wherein "any skilled activity, craft, or profession, such as the scribal profession, and any manual, ritual, or intellectual skill, such as poetic, linguistic, and scientific abilities that are acquired as a result of instruction, practice, and repetition, form a habit."

> A habit, "*malaka*" in Arabic, is more than just a learned semiautomatic activity as in the English sense of the word. It bears

47   ibid. 778-80.

48   Ira Lapidus, "Knowledge; Virtue, and Action: The Classical Muslim Conception of Adab and the Nature of Religious Fulfilment in Islam," in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (California: University of California Press, 1984), 39-40.

49   Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 214.

50   Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993), 86.

51   Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali on Disciplining the Soul: Kitāb Riyādat al-nafs & on Breaking the Two Desires: Kitāb Kasr al-shahwatayn: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya' 'Ulum al-din)*, 2nd ed., trans. Timothy Winter (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2016), 35-6.

52   ibid. 33.

the meaning of the Latin, habitus—an acquired faculty, rooted in the soul. Each activity "gives the soul a special coloring that forms it." This mark, imagined as a corporeal trait, is made deeper and more permanent as a result of constant practice and repetition.[53]

The "special coloring" is taken from a passage in the *Muqaddimah*:

> The soul takes shape by the process of acquiring such habits. An action done once adds an attribute (*sifa*) to the essence of the soul. With repetition it becomes a "condition" (*ḥāl*) that is not firmly established. After more repetition it becomes a habit (*malaka*), that is, a firmly established attribute.[54] [55]

*Adab* therefore is not pregiven; it is actualized through *malaka*, the routines and the discipline of repetition. It deals with the "formation of the person," it is 'a position that brings together *sharī'a*, theology, philosophy, and Sufism' with *sharī'a* being "the dimension of Islam that exposits the law to be observed" whereas "theology and philosophy deal with the structure of the soul and the rationale for ethical behavior." Lapidus notes that "Sunni-Sufi Islam rejects self-cultivation in detachment from the world," the ideal to be pursued is instead *adab*, by which the reference is to "a cultivated way of living in the world, without being absorbed by the world or fleeing from it," it is "a life journey toward self-realization and religious salvation that can only be achieved by cultivating clear vision, ethical responsibility, honorable relations with one's fellow man, and sincere worship."[56]

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53 Lapidus, "Knowledge; Virtue, and Action," 53.

54 Quoted in ibid. 53-4.

55 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 638.

56 Lapidus, "Knowledge; Virtue, and Action," 59-60.

*Adab* as *malaka*, as a habitus is crucial to ensuring that civility does not become, what some have characterized as a "precarious acquisition."[57] It gives specificity and purpose to the rather abstract but worldly crucial ideal of civility, through active self-discipline it becomes a habitus, as opposed to staying as just a temporary condition. *Adab* in this reading is resolutely individual-driven and individual-focused, guided and mediated by a Shaykh or a similar charismatic authority. There is no Leviathan-like state hovering over society to 'civilize' it, rather it is the moral individual, responsible and ready for their own action, who becomes the prime engine of civility. This poses an interesting, if troublesome question: Can there be a model of civility without first having a model of a moral human agent? The final section closes off on this note.

## 6. The Relational Self

The modern human belongs to the class of "politically integrated subjects, which is to say that they are not integrated in a metaphysical or cosmic-moral order but instead in the metaphysics of the state and its nation." There is thus "a deep sense of loss, the loss of the sacred, of a state of wholeness, of the spiritual anchoring of the self in the world, in nature, and in…a moral cosmology."[58]

The expansive conception of civility this article has favored presupposes and demands a community of strong moral agents to lead it. The question we may rightfully be afraid of asking is, do we have such a community at hand, and more worryingly, do we have a working mechanism to produce the moral agents that formulate it? In other words, is there a concrete program to instrumentalize

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57 Baumgarten, "Civility: introductory Notes", 290.

58 Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 104-8.

it in practice, to make it a habitus, a *malaka*, a disposition that's well-grounded?

Charles Taylor draws our attention to the 'buffered self,' a new understanding of the self in the cosmos which was "not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers"; it was created in part by disenchantment, but also by the newfound confidence to engage in a "moral reordering."[59] This was a self "not open to normative demands from any site external to itself." And to be "the source and makers of all value" was to make "all talk of our moral behavior as something responsive to callings from source outside ourselves as at best sheer projection and at worst, irrational, an abdication of human agency and the rigors of individual responsibility."[60]

This is a key motif in the disenchantment process. It speaks of the changes in human attitudes vis-à-vis the natural world, but more importantly, it also points at the changes within the human self. Disenchantment is more than just the loss of magic and fables, it is the enfeeblement of the moral self, the "exclusion of all external callings," the "absence of agency, reducing us to mere receptacles for our desires and their satisfaction."[61] The idea of agency in the disenchanted world is therefore limited to satiating one's wishes, it is conceived "entirely in terms of the pursuit of the gratification of ones desires and moral sentiments."[62]

The distinction between the buffered self and the non-buffered self therefore boils down to the question of allowing sites outside the self

to influence it, to alloy it within some kind of moral order. A more eloquent term for the non-buffered self is the relational self, as an entity perfectly aware of its relation within the cosmos, as an aware agent within a hierarchy, as a social being bound and responsible for the other. As *adab* actualized, the relational self is part-dream part-reality, it occupies center stage in the project to imagine a different kind of society. It is also a project to imagine a different kind of the human self, one which is harmonized into a state of well-being with itself and its social and natural environment.

What the constellation of Sufi ideals allows us, is to critique our present models, to peg them to a higher standard. As the ideal type, they mirror utopia. But "it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point." And because "we lack resistance to the present," the "creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist."[63]

## 6.1. Conclusion: Re-turning (to) the World

Disenchantment is a state of not being in the world, a turning away from the world, a state of imbalance separating humans both from their natural and social ecologies. It follows then that to return to the world, to be in a state of enchantment is to undo the processes which brought us to this stage in the first place. This is the project of re-enchantment, which at least at the level of the individual, may well take roots if we, following the lead of the Sufis, return ourselves to a state of *ḥayra*, of ecstasy, at the presence of being alive and human.[64]

59    Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 27.

60    Akeel Bilgrami, "What is Enchantment?" in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan Antwerpen and Craig Calhoun (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 152.

61    ibid. 155.

62    ibid. 153.

63    Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H Tomlinson and G Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 108.

64    Abdal Hakim Murad, *Becoming Living Things*, Cambridge Muslim College, Cambridge, June 9,

This is a project wherein we attune ourselves "to the life principle to being in the world, seeing it as *gulestān* (the rose garden), to recognize that although we are part of this, this world bespeaks another garden which is more real, which is in the pre-past and the future." It begins in the radical simplicity "to intuit in the miracle of living things, and to be in living things, to recognize that you yourself are a living thing." This a state of *ḥayra*, "the sheer amazingness of stuff, this bewilderment of which the Sufis speak…to be completely amazed by everything." It is the possibility, at once dramatic and delightful, to be "like the dervish that takes off his rose petals and dances like a *qalandar* in the *kharābat*, the tavern of intoxication which is what the world is designed to be, our natural matrix is a beautiful and ecstasy-inducing place."[65]

This is the possibility and backdrop of the expanded notion of civility that this article has favored. It is *iḥsān* civility, a beautification of the self and its surroundings. To return to it is a tall task, we are left with scraps of the dreamscape, we have textual signposts holding us afloat, but not much by way of living, mass actions. However, if we are to de-cannibalize our present, we must make a start. If civility is a project of fashioning a sustainable society, we must return to the state of wholesome being, a state of being 'in the world,' alive to its mysteries and promise, joyful of what it beholds, even more joyful towards what it points. It is this state that can power civility and uphold it. In the secular madness that we inhabit, this *ḥāl* is nothing short of a miracle, a *karāma*. But it is a *karāma* that is open to the *awliyā'* and laity alike, it is a *karāma* indispensable for the running of a human society.

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2022, accessed June 11, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbyBx-uivSw.

65 ibid.

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