

Sufismus und Theologie - Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in der islamischen Glaubensdeutung by Reza Hajatpour (München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2017) 165 pp., ISBN 10: 3495488774 / ISBN 13: 9783495488775 (hardback, £62.00; E-book as PDF or ePub, £32.91).

Mysticism is a religious phenomenon open to different interpretations, and it receives varying expectations from its followers, which corresponds to the nature of the religion. All religions act with the schools of thought and doctrines within the same religion. In his book *Sufismus und Theologie - Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in der islamischen Glaubensdeutung*, Reza Hajatpour addresses the most important aspects of mystical theology. The investigation is primarily intended to analyze the approaches of teachings and understandings from the offer of Sufi beliefs and the associated controversy, which compared to the apologetic and dogmatic interpretation of the beliefs and also characterizes the limit and transgression of an Islamic-mystical theology.

Reza Hajatpour's work comprises an introduction, twelve chapters, and a final remark. In this study, I will categorize the chapters into various parts: The first sections will develop definitions of the conceptual bases of Sufism, such as mysticism, *taṣawwuf*, and *ʿirfān*, and will furthermore discuss the possibility of Islamic mysticism or its foreign-determinism. Later, we will discover topics and debates about asceticism, music, love, and beauty. The last part will be about remarks, critics, and offerings about the book's content for possible new approaches.

Firstly, the author mentions *taṣawwuf* and mysticism and explains that *taṣawwuf* is translated as Islamic mysticism. Although there are

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certain similarities in terms of content between these two terms, there is no semantic equivalence between them. Hajatpour brings various pieces of evidence from ancient scholars such as al-Bīrūnī, al-Qushayrī, al-Suhrawardī, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, and Ibn Khaldūn, and their explanations about the original form and usage of *taṣawwuf*, like the clothing, wool, philosophy, pre-Islamic indicator. The writer believes that the term *taṣawwuf*/*ṣūfī* was not identified in the time of the Prophet. However, over time it became more prominent, and *ṣūfīs* stood up from other Muslim communities in terms of their ascetic lifestyle. He says *taṣawwuf* is not a science but a teaching of inner transformation and experience and is multi-dimensional. Mysticism is derived from Greek and can be translated as secret knowledge. The author shares the opinion that mysticism is the art of recognizing things to discover the hidden meaning; so, there is no logic of the mind, but it furthermore requires silence as an opening to see or hear the inside. About the terminological debate, Hajatpour clarifies *ʿirfān* as cognition/insight, which means God-knowledge and attaining redemption of the man. There are different ways of cognition, such as of the philosophers who prefer logic, mind, and analysis and of the gnostics who prefer to leave all this. The author indicates that *ʿirfān* aims to reveal the truth and is a practical way of a spiritual experience of the truth and a higher level. On the other hand, *taṣawwuf* has a defined shape and ritual enriched with a guide. Whether Sufism is foreign-determined or takes its root in Islam is not grounded in historical sources, and there is no exact information on the emergence of Sufism. Influencing factors such as Christian priests, Hinduistic and Stoic thoughts, or Persian philosophy are all important facts that shaped and interacted with Sufism. Hejatpour provides references from various sources like *Tārīkh al-falsafah al-ʿArabiyyah* (al-Fākhūrī), *The Mystic of Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (Reynold A. Nicholson), *Nafaḥāt al-uns* (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī), *Mystische Dimensionen* (Annemarie Schimmel), *Zur Frage Nach der Herkunft und den Anfängen des Sufitums* (Richard Hartmann). Hajatpour remarks that there was a spiritual development during the emergency of Islam, and it gained a new character that encountered other cultures over time.

After the debates about the framework of Sufism, the book refers to particular discussion contents belonging to the history of

mysticism. Hajatpour addresses *sharī'ah*, *ṭarīqah* (path to God), and *ḥaqīqah* (reality) as the mystic's triple path to God. All of them depend on each other, and the first and second paths are two steps of piety that lead to truth. The first path will be achieved through performing practical worship, and the second is a level where one has to attain practical experience. He shares the opinion that the introduction of the three terms into *taṣawwuf* was, on the one hand, an attempt to harmonize Sufism with theology and, on the other hand, to question the reduction of faith to external and speculative reasoning by traditional theology. Hajatpour maintains that all these ascetic processes appear through two aspects as states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) and share the traditional acceptance of *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl*. Furthermore, he differentiates *sharī'ah* and *ṭarīqah* with the concept of will (*irādah*). A *ṭarīqah* is a voluntary act where the believer achieves different *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt* in his mystical path.

Last but not least, the author picks out diverse themes with controversies, such as mysticism and asceticism, love, perfection, and music. First of all, Hajatpour believes that asceticism is not a contradiction to formal worship. Instead, it is an increase, an eternal remembrance of God, an extended interpretation of piety. The mystic does not deny the world, but he gets rid of the dependency on the world. Holding on this basis, the writer takes position to other topics of his book. Music has been a debate in Islamic tradition since the first centuries, and there is a general admission that music is unwelcome and should be avoided. However, in Sufism, music and some are fundamental phenomena that cannot be denied. After mentioning the legitimacy problem of music, Hajatpour summarizes that the same is an essential component of Sufism which is a collective experience whose rules are not to be neglected. He points out that not appearance should be judged but rather intention.

Depending on this, Hajatpour clarifies in the following two topics the relationship between mysticism and love and beauty. The mystical teaching is connected with love and beauty and results in transcendental aesthetics. Everything in the world exists with the existence of God; so, therefore, the world embodies only the beautiful. Hajatpour relates his point of view with God's mercy and grace. This leads him to the idea of unity, endlessness, and the abolition of duality. Furthermore, he explains that the idea of unity

(*tauhīd*), which is an existential experience, takes place through love. The human being is stimulated and God is attracted through love and it arises personal unity and freedom. Hajatpour remarks that human doesn't want a limited existence and strives for endless selflessness through an unlimited existence.

The criticism of the book can be dealt with in several contents. First of all, it is remarkable that Hajatpour attributes his arguments to reliable sources. In all chapters, we can find ancient and respectable scholars such as Abū Naşr al-Sarrāj, 'Alī al-Hujwīrī, al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Khaldūn. They are not only from the same region and same school, rather he selected scholars from East and West, belonging to Sunnī and Shī'ī beliefs. Besides the primary sources, the book is enriched with recent researchers' works. The salient is that the book offers viewpoints from scholars affected and shaped by the dominant paradigm, which we can find in traditional historical Sufi research.

Hajatpour believes that the idea of perfection (*kamāl*) is older than Islam and, therefore, should be analyzed in historical continuity. He continues that the Qur'ān does not mention that human beings are not destined for perfection. Hence, one may assume there is a contradiction between the mystical thought of perfection and conventional theology. Everything except God is imperfect, so how can man acquire perfection? Furthermore, if anyone acquires perfection, then the thought of obedience would be removed. Another discussion about perfection affects the human being in terms of ontological and epistemological dimensions. The author clarifies this problem by saying that acquiring perfection does not exclude fulfilling religious duties. After all, the approaches and arguments that Hajatpour proposes as a solution to this problem seem one-sided. The thought of perfection can be discovered in a possible and requirable kind of position. Firstly, he could strengthen the thought of perfection with various narratives of the Prophet Muḥammad. Naturally, perfection is connected with humanity; therefore, it had been discussed before Islam. Secondly, perfection is not only to protect and maintain obedience or to worship but also to stand clear from sins, dishonest behavior, and immorality. Being active is not only about running over perfection and trying to get it through at a high level and under hard conditions.

Another criticism is about the last chapter, which approaches the idea of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Hajatpour indicates that this is a single truth and being that is the reason for the whole existence. This explanation affects debates about the possibility of the unity of God and his creation, especially God's existence, attributes, and deeds and how they are united with the world. With etymological interpretations addressing the difference between divine existence and the existence of the creation and handling the unity of existentialization, Hajatpour offers the disputation about *waḥdat al-wujūd*. However, we can remark that he does not mention the most important defenders of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in Sufi research. Because of the complexity of this topic, it would be more beneficial to develop the idea of unity with references to the great Sufi Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and referring to him. Al-Qūnawī is the most important representative of the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. It has been claimed that the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* was used for the first time by al-Qūnawī, but other sources referred to other names. Indeed al-Qūnawī mentioned two places in his texts, but these are not suitable to be interpreted in the sense of existence. Instead, they should be understood as literal meanings. Nevertheless, al-Qūnawī is one of the most famous followers and commentators of Ibn al-ʿArabī, who had significant influences on the history of Sufism and Islamic thought. Al-Qūnawī started to systematize the thought of existence and conveyed the deep knowledge and accumulation of Ibn al-ʿArabī.

Consequently, we can say that the book focuses on various issues which are discussed in Sufism research. The work has a kind of simplicity and is reader-friendly in terms of the categorization of the topics. Nevertheless, the themes require knowledge and background information and should be interpreted by academic readers. All perspectives, questions, and debates addressed in the book are important to comprehend, and scholars in the field of Sufism and philosophy can benefit from the work.

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