Evolving Philosophies of Modern Education in Iran: Examining the Role of Wonder

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of a new wonder that emerged through Iranians' travelling and observing educational progressions of advanced countries during the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. In order to analyze the wonder that affected Iran's modern philosophy of education, the study first discusses the predominant themes within Iran's educational philosophy from pre-Islamic times to Qajar's traditional elementary schools. The second part of the study focuses on examining the element of wonder in philosophy and its evolving form in cultures and societies. Subsequently, the new wonder and the early signs of a modern philosophy of education for Iran are examined in the last part of the study.

Resume

Ce thèse présente un aperçu descriptif de la philosophie de l'Iran de l'éducation moderne. En raison de l'importance de la demande en philosophie et en raison de l'intérêt personnel de l'auteur dans l'émerveillement, le rôle de la demande a été observé dans la philosophie moderne de l'enseignement en Iran. Le premier chapitre situe l'auteur dans les thèmes prédominants de la philosophie de l'éducation dans Iran.La seconde chapitre situe l'auteur et le lecteur dans les expériences d'apprentissage de l'école traditionnelle en Iran au cours de la XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, afin d'observer la philosophie de l'éducation et les motifs derrière cette scolarisation, et afin de familiariser l'auteur avec les motifs sur lesquels la nouvelle philosophie allait plus tard être appliquée. Le troisième chapitre examine merveille dans la philosophie, l'éducation et sa forme évoluee dans les cultures et les sociétés. Le dernier chapitre examine la nouvelle merveille et les premiers signes d'une philosophie moderne de l'éducation pour l'Iran en examinant les récits de voyages et articles de journaux de la population concernée pour le progrès de l'éducation.

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This thesis could not have been completed without the academic and emotional support of my supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth J. Wood. I will never be able to thank her enough because of her constant efforts to help me find the 'real question'. However, beyond the boundaries of this study, she helped me 'wonderstand', and for that I will forever remain thankful to her.

A.A. Milne wrote: 'Sometimes, if you stand on the bottom rail of a bridge and lean over to watch the river slipping slowly away beneath you, you will suddenly know everything there is to be known.' This study was completed because of my Poulad, who is the bottom rail, the river slipping slowly away and *the* everything there is to be known.

Any depth in my questions is because of my dad. Baba, you're my wings. You're the starting point of any travel and you are my destination. Your room in our school is my favorite place on earth, to sit and to be.

This thesis is for my mom: You're my Maman, and this simple fact makes the world be mine.

It is also for my brother Arman, he knows why.

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CONSONANTS

k ک	s س	kh خ	' ع (hamzeh)
g گ	z ض	d د	b ب
l ل	t ط	z ذ	p پ
m م	z ظ	r ر	t ت
n ن	' ع	z ز	s ث
v و	gh غ	zh ژ	j ج
h ه	f ف	s س	ch چ
y ی	q ق	sh ش	h ح

Prologue

A Free-fall With Wonder

Besides the fact that we could feel there was an element missing in the class, the rest of it seemed right. It was the only way to learn about Iran's literature: The main activity in our undergraduate literature classes was listening and writing down what the professors would say about the meanings of the words and the technical elements of a poem. The classes were spacious and with enough lighting. As for the textbooks, one could not complain. The textbooks were all fundamental books of Persian literature. Learning was considered happening when a student could find the elements of poetry, spot the literary techniques, and recite the vocabulary.

This was also something we did for 12 years in school when covering Persian literature. An Islamic awning sheltered the overall aura of literature and thus limited the range of interpreted meanings. There was usually no discussion about the contextual aspects of literature, nor any non-Islamic interpretations. This placed limitations and made the teaching procedure restricted to the literal explanations of the poem.

One day I attended a class on Hafiz poetry. I took out my notebook and pen and thought to myself that this is the end of the road – it was the last course of my undergraduate degree. I started to listen. The pen and the notebook were in front of me, and I was thinking nothing was wrong with this experience except that it was a bit of a grim day. The professor came to the class late. It was as if there was no rush and not a whole book to

be finished for the end of the term. He sat down, selected a very well known and much recited poem, and started to teach. When the class was finished, I knew that two things had happened. First, that the pen and the notebook had remained untouched, and second, that I was a changed person.

What element was there in that session that resulted in such profound change? I can swear it was a physical change. I did not know. The professor, which I will later talk about, selected a poem of Hafez. It was such a famous poem that it is unlikely for any Iranian not to have heard it: In fact it was one of the most cited *God-related* literary works.

I see the light of God in Kharabat:

Don't you find it strange that I can see such light from such a place?

The professor asked if anybody knows what *Kharabat* is. Some students recited the Islamic-Gnostic meaning of the word which is *the heart of the Sufi*. The professor then read to us the real meaning of the word Kharabat, from a dictionary:

Kharabat(Ruins) is a place of prostitution, music, joy, dancing, drinking and lust.

The word that was interpreted as divine was originally a neighborhood for prostitution, for drinking and for playing music – all the things that were prohibited in Islam. It was difficult for many students to hold this to be correct. However, if one does not consider this as the intended interpretation, the poem would have no meaning. Based on the first interpretation, the poem would be something like this:

I can feel the light of god in the neighborhood of earthly pleasures,

Don't you find it strange that I can see such light from such a place?

Should the word in question be interpreted as 'the heart of the Gnostic or the divine' the next stanza would not have a meaningful connection to the first:

I see the light of God in the hearts of the divine:

Isn't it strange that I can see such light in such a place?

When the professor recited the poem again, it all made sense. Yes, the poet intended to mention a place of music, drinking and of other earthy pleasures. How the experience was changed into a magic moment of learning I could not analyze. One thing was clear; had the teacher not known the background knowledge of the students, this moment of learning could not have occurred. The teacher was well aware that most of us have been taught the Gnostic meaning of Kharabat and not the original meaning of this term, and by this knowledge he created a moment of awe, or wonder.

Five years passed. I was reading Learning and Its Conditions by Robert Gagne (1970) in which learning is defined as a 'change in behavior'. Learning by this definition is not easy. In fact it might be extremely difficult to achieve. If learning were considered memorization it would be much easier to think it is happening. But as a change of behavior, it needs many elements: a good textbook, a good teacher, a mentally prepared student, and a good learning environment. Is any other element besides the above mentioned? This makes me wonder about the invisible element in that class that made a transformative effect in me.

It was as if the poet intended to *poke you mentally* to revive your senses. It seemed that he was living up to St. Augustine's thought on wonder, to strike your heart without

hurting it (Verhoeven, 1972). He wanted to suspend you in *wonder*. The word wonder seems the right word for this experience. Howard Parsons writes that wonder, coming from the German *Wunde,* can be a breach in the membrane of awareness, a sudden opening in one's established and expected meanings, a blow as if one were struck [by a strange event] (Parsons, 1969). In the situation described earlier, with the teacher artfully designing a lesson based on the background knowledge of the students, he wonder-struck me, and he could form a change in my behavior: Ever since then, trying to unveil the truth behind the poetry seems the only right thing to do, and it remains to be the only way of dissecting Persian poems for me.

I have experienced education both with and without wonder. After eight years of experience in being a teacher I still become intrigued with the power of wonder in the learning experiences in the class. Wonder is important for me. I cherish wonder as an element of thinking and an element of learning. When there is no wonder in a learning experience, to me it seems that the curriculum is incomplete. I believe that wonder plays a crucial role in the evolution of educational moments, from the start of these moments to the end. Whenever this element is present in my learning – and in my students' learning- the educational experience becomes, colorful and deep.

Introduction

From wonder into wonder existence opens. (Lao Tze)

Importance of Educational Philosophy. The importance of philosophy of education is emphasized in Thomas Hopkins' (1941) statement:

> Philosophy has entered into every important decision that has ever been made about curriculum and teaching in the past and will continue to be the basis of every important decision in the future [...] there is rarely a moment in a school day when teacher is not confronted with occasions where philosophy is of vital part of action. (Behar-Horenstein, Pajak, & Ornstein, 1998, p.4)

Dewey (1916) believed that philosophy is necessary for forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow man. Philosophy can provide a framework for broad issues and tasks in education, such as determining the goals and objectives of an educational system. It also plays a crucial role in developing curriculum (Behar-Horenstein, Pajak, & Ornstein, 1998). It is essential in formulating and justifying educational purposes, and in selecting and organizing basic procedures and activities. According to Ornstein (1998), throughout the development of a curricular process, philosophy of education is the foundation for all elements of curriculum. Also, John Goodlad (1979) points out that philosophy is the beginning point in curriculum decision-making and the basis for all subsequent decisions.

Without a philosophy of education, teachers would be directionless in the whats

and hows of organizing and implementing what we are trying to achieve. 'In short, our philosophy of education influences, and to a large extent determines, our educational decisions, choices, and alternatives' (Ornstein, 1998, p.3).

Moreover, examining the sources of knowledge that come into play in shaping a community's philosophy of education can shed light on the development of an educational ideology within that specific community.

Wonder Within Philosophies. Of all the elements in a philosophy, what I find of great interest is *wonder.* Margaret Mahy believes that we are biologically engineered to have wonder filtered out of our lives (Wald & Elish, 2008). However, it is through wonder that philosophy starts, flourishes and develops. Aristotle believes wonder is the beginning of philosophy: From wonder, questioning arises, and creative inquiry evolves. Wonder bares in itself feelings of a great feeling of possibility (Parsons, 1964).

This quality of wonder can be of importance in philosophy, particularly in a philosophy of education. With wonder in an educator's mind, one can establish new horizons for an educational system, envision new possibilities and question the existing curricular and educational stagnancies. A philosopher of education can wonder about the Perennialist and traditional philosophy of an educational system; what lies behind Perennialism? How is education viewed in this system? Why are there fixed and absolute values in a system while another system might advocate more tolerant values?

Due to my personal interest and the importance of wonder, the overarching question guiding my thesis will be 'What is the role of wonder in Iran's philosophy of

modern education?' In order to examine this I will first need to consider the time where modern education was being shaped in Iran which is the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Iran. This time was characterized by Iran's increasing acquaintance with the West and the accompanying realization of deficiency in many aspects of its society, one of which was education.

In this thesis I will examine how, due to the initiation of contact with the West, new and exotic doors were opened to Iranians, through which they looked at the 'Other' with wonder. These wonder-filled eyes not only looked at political and economical advancements, but also peered into the educational systems of the Western world. This action eventually resulted in the abolition of traditional schooling and the foundation of new conceptualized elementary schools.

Numerous studies[1] address reform and its consequential effects in politics, economy and education. I would like to consider whether there was a seminal change in the philosophy of education because of contact with the West. Was this contact ultimately responsible for shaping a new philosophy of education? Also, if wonder was evoked in the graduates of *Maktabs* by traveling to the West, what and how were the contextual conditions that resulted in that wonder?

This thesis therefore will investigate:

- Which elements and conditions resulted the philosophy of new schools?

- Did wonder have a role in this philosophy?

[1] See Ringer, M. M. (2001). *Education, religion,and the discourse of cultural reform in Qajar Iran*. Also: Ekhtiar, M. D. (1994). *The Dar al-Funun: educational reform and cultural development in Qajar Iran.*

- What nourished this new philosophy of education?

In order to examine the philosophy of modern education in Iran I will first examine the major themes of philosophy of education throughout the history of education in Iran. I will then consider traditional schools' educational philosophy, which affected the curricular activities and trends before modernization. Afterwards I will look at wonder within philosophy, societies and cultures. I will eventually draw upon theoretical secondary accounts of educational observations by travelers; accounts appearing in newspapers and travelogues during the nineteenth and twentieth century. This can provide insight into the emergence of a new philosophy of education in Iran.

Concepts in the Study

The following terms will be used in this thesis and so definitions are provided here for clarity.

Qajar period: The term Qajar refers to a historical period in Iran that spread from 1794-1927. This period was the crux of change and modernization in Iran due to contact with other nations. Indeed, the modernization process did not only happen from the beginning of this period until the end, nor is contact with other world limited to this era. However, within this period, the passion for modernization affected many aspects of Iranian life and mentality. By writing about the Qajar era I am illustrating a period when Iranians came into contact with range of advanced countries. Through these contacts the importance of change was realized and led to advancements in technology, infrastructure and education.

Maktab/Maktabkhaneh: Maktabs are traditional schools in Iran. Although Maktabs were replaced by elementary schools in the Qajar era, their curriculum, philosophy and learning trends survived until the contemporary times. By talking about Maktabs I am referring to historical institutions for alphabet learning and literacy that survived thousands of years and in time dwindled away, giving their place to modern elementary schools.

Perrenialist Philosophy of Education: In this study, Perennialist educational philosophy is a type of philosophy that deals with a realist philosophical base. Its instructional objectives are to educate the rational person, its main focus is on preserving the past, and its main curricular focus is studying classical books and Paideia.

Essentialist Philosophy of Education: In many cases similar to and overlapping with Perrenialist philosophy of education, Essentialist approach to education follows an Idealist path. Its main curriculum focus is for the students to learn the three essential skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The teacher is the sole authority figure in the class and traditional values are explicitly taught and expected.

Sufism/Gnosticism: Sufism and Gnosticism both have specific meanings. Sufism or Taṣawwuf is, according to its adherents, the inner, mystical dimension of Islam. It embraces diverse views and it has a permanent presence in Iranian thinking. Although Sufism or Gnosticism experienced certain prejudiced periods in history, its tolerant ideology is still powerful. I have used the two terms here -without considering the historical technicalities- as an esoteric, spiritual mysticism.

Curriculum: Curriculum in my thesis does not have rigid boundaries and its borders are not

confined within the subject matter or the schoolbooks. I have used curriculum as a broader term for any experience or setting through which learning occurs. Curriculum encompasses everything from the whipping of a child in Maktabs to the games that were either played or never played.

The Study

In this thesis I will consider the Qajar era an important educational period in Iran, from a curricular and from an educational philosophy perspective. The research will be exploratory as it tries to understand the shifts in educational philosophy in Iran in the 150-year period of Qajar dynasty, and examine the role of wonder in the development of these philosophies.

Scholars believe there is no specific method for studying wonder. The sheer diversity of meanings and the fact that no unified vision of the marvelous exists (Marr, 2006, p.2) can cause problems when exploring wonder. In addition, the instability of wonder as a concept and as a word creates fuzzy boundaries between this concept and other elements of thinking such as curiosity, enthusiasm or awe, making the study of wonder inherently problematic (Marr, 2006, p.2). That is probably why Pomian (1990) argues that shaky conclusions can be made when studying wonder.

Considering wonder or its counterparts in a *historically specific socio-cultural environment* might provide a more reliable lens; 'If, as Barbara Benedict has claimed, curiosity took on 'distinct historical shapes' in the early modern period, it is surely important to attend to those contexts that allow us to accurately identify and describe these

shapes and how they changed over time' (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.5). Observing *the location of wonder* among the selves of a community can provide a chance to examine the reasons behind certain behavioral responses to experiencing the 'new' (Marr, 2006, p.3). For example, we can learn much about a society by studying their motivations behind collecting certain objects during a particular period, preferred places of traveling, or their passion for the exotic, the antiquarian or the 'modern'. Examining the interplay of society's behavior in light of elements of common social memory and shared past can reveal how particular wonder surfaces for people of the same background. This is true for Europe from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment (Evans & Marr, 2006), and for Iran during the Qajar period (1785-1925) when the country was responding to the process of modernization.

To track this wonder Pomian suggests looking at behaviors instead of objects (Pomian, 1990). Other research compares the narratives or the famous literary works of the periods under study (Evans & Marr, 2006). Objects, narrations or travelogues are all potential lenses through which exploring wonder is possible. Hence, this section of the thesis will review travelogues and the newspaper contents 'in an attempt to approach curiosity and wonder through early modern eyes' (Marr, 2006, p.6).

Thesis Overview

Chapter one will provide a quick look back at the philosophy of education before the Qajar period. It looks at the three central and recurrent themes in education before Iran. This chapter will cover an extensive period of time, from the Zaraostrian period to the

Islamic era before the Qajar dynasty.

In chapter two, in order to familiarize the author with the specific learning experiences that the students in these schools came across, the Maktab's learning environment will be examined. This chapter will look at curricular activities and central themes of philosophy of education in Maktabs, the traditional elementary schooling and the remains of the old educational system before modernization.

Chapter Three will provide a general literature review on *wonder,* examined because of its importance in philosophy, its formation and rebirth in different cultures. Returning to philosophy of education in Iran, Chapter Four will consider the emerging signs of a new philosophy of education in Iran, when the withered Perrenialist Maktab philosophy would be heavily criticized. This change was caused by travel, observation and wonder at the 'Other'. Such wonder can be seen between the lines of travelogues and reports in newspapers. This wonder will be examined in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 1

A Retrospective Glance at Philosophy of Education In Iran

Oh, Ahuramazda [God], endow me with an educated child; a child who will participate in his community, a child who will fulfill his duties for his society; a child who will strive for the happiness of his family, his city, and his country, an honorable child who may contribute to others' needs. (Yasna, Nos.62-63)

In this chapter, I will provide a cursory and introductory view of the predominant themes in Iran's philosophy of education in order to familiarize myself with the underlying motifs of educating the society. This chapter will cover an extensive period from around 6th century BC to the 18th century AD. I will illustrate that moral and religious education were stressed in the educational systems and rote-learning was also treasured. Also, besides a specific academic setting, there was a parallel curriculum after Islam named Sufism. Sufism was predominant and popular path to learning. It penetrated through informal learning with its wonder-evoking curriculum. In the second part of this chapter, I will illustrate the recurring themes within this curriculum, drawing upon poetry to depict the main trends in this mystic curriculum.

Philosophical Themes of Education

Ethics and Values. Ethics and religion were omnipresent elements of education historically in Iran from the Achaemenid dynasty (546- 330 BC) to the Sassanid dynasty (226-641AD). Flourishing as a cultural-religious procedure, education amalgamated the

process of socialization and personality development. Developing a citizen who is religious and of good moral character was considered a central objective of educational philosophy (Arasteh, 1969).

Schools in Iran had a close tie with religious institutions in the pre-Islamic era, as Zaraostrian doctrine exerted a profound influence on early Iranian education (Arasteh, 1969). The fact that many schools were built inside the fire temples or close to them shows that religion was greatly intertwined with education (Sulṭānzādah, 1985).

Moreover, the closeness of schools with religious centers can point to a religious and moral base behind the philosophy of education in pre-Islamic Iran. Such religious philosophy of education and the teaching of values is highlighted in *Alcibiades* (5th century BC, attributed to Plato) where an Iranian learning tradition in ancient Iran is stated: Four esteemed Persians called 'The Wisest', 'The Most Just', 'The Most Temperate' and 'The Bravest' would tutor the Persian princess on themes such as worshipping the gods and temperance (2001, p.120-23).

Teachers in ancient- Zoroastrian Iran were pedagogues of ethics. Xenophon, a Greek historian of the 4th century BC wrote a partly fictional biography of Cyrus, an Iranian king who reigned during the 6th century BC. In his book, *Education of Cyrus,* the teacher is depicted as a person who explicitly teaches the traditional and moral values and spends most of his time on teaching justice:

> It is said that they go for this purpose, as among us they go to learn their letters. Their rules spend most of the day judging cases among them, for just as men do, of

> course, boys also accuse each other of theft, robbery, violence, deceit, calumny and other such things [...]. They punish also whomever they find to be bringing an unjust accusation. (2001, p. 24)

Xenophon states that among such moral practices, Iranian students judge cases of ingratitude; an accusation for which human beings hate each other very much but very rarely adjudicate. He writes that the curricular focus is mainly on societal values and moral trends of the time (6th century BC), all of which are greatly respected by families:

> They [teachers] also teach the boys moderation. It contributes greatly to their learning moderation that they see also their elders spending the whole day moderately. They teach them also to obey the rules. It contributes greatly to this too that they see their elders strictly obeying the rules. In addition to these things, they learn how to shoot a bow and to throw a spear. (2001, p.24-25)

Street (1975) also highlights that traditional education in Iran was conducted by both home and state, was integrated into everyday life, and was community oriented.

Literacy and Vocational Education. Literacy seemed to have been very important in Iran's philosophy of education before the Islamic period. One of the literary works that illustrates the importance of literacy is Shahnameh (The Book of Kings, written around 1000 AD). The writer, Ferdowsi states that founding elementary schools in every alley is accredited to a king called Ardeshir. The places of these schools as he pictures it were inside fire temples (Sultanzadeh, 1985, p.5).

Arasteh mentions that training for a vocation also was a skill integrated into the

child's curriculum: 'Little is known of this phase, but evidence indicates that from an early age the child spent his evening in learning and preparing for a trade or a profession' (1969, p.3).

The educational traditions that originated in the Achamaenid dynasty (550-530 BC) evolved throughout centuries until the Sassanid dynasty (224-651 AD). The curriculum of the last period before the Arab invasion was inclusive of musical, literary and historical elements.

Among the dominant themes of traditional education, religion remained to have primary focus in the philosophy of Iran's education (Sulṭanzadah, 1985). The association of religion and education resulted in teachers being selected from the clergymen in the Sassanid dynasty. Although these clergymen were not assigned to instruct professional and specialized topics, the art of 'education' generally belonged to their territory. *Nameh-ye Tansar*, an important document from Sassanid time (220-614 BC) shows that religious preaching was assigned to the teachers and educators:

> [There should be] One teacher to teach each [student] their specialty and vocation from childhood, and to earn their living, to organize the teachers and the judges... who are occupied with prayers and preaching. He (The king) ordered the teachers to teach bravery and morality to the warriors of the cities and villages. (Sultanzadeh, 1985, p.15)

Rote-Learning. During the Islamic period which started after 7th century AD, and owing to the supremacy of rote learning where Islam appeared, memory and learning by

heart became a curricular trend in education.[2] Classes inside mosques would follow the Perennialist path of teaching the students the academic classical subjects with the curricular focus of enabling the students to memorize Quran and recite poetry alongside reading and writing.

Also, during the Islamic period, another curriculum flourished in Iran. Sufism, which most probably originated within Iran (Zarrinkub, 1970) allowed diverse themes and experiences within it curricular philosophy, some of which is looked at in the following chapter.

Sufism, a Parallel Curriculum of Wonder

I felt intrigued, even the intrigue felt intrigued

The currents of wonder surpassed wisdom (Rumi)

Elias (1998) describes Sufism as one of the most dynamic and interesting dimensions of Islamic religious and cultural expression:

> It is an umbrella term for a variety of philosophical, social, and literary phenomena occurring within the Islamic world. In its narrowest sense, the term 'Sufism' refers to a number of schools of Islamic mystical philosophy and theology, to the phenomenon of religious orders and guilds (*Tariqat*) that have exerted considerable influence over the

[2] Arabs did not have an alphabet before Islamic period, and until the emergence of the prophet Muhammad, reading and writing was not common among them, in fact only a few of them were able to read and write. Therefore, rote learning was considered an art and poets were admired for that (Sulṭānzādah, 1985).

> development of Islamic politics and society, and to the varied expressions of popular piety and devotion to shrines found throughout the Islamic world.(p.1)

Sufist ideology opposes narrow-mindedness, fanaticism, religious prejudice and ethnic racism and it has thus developed a different philosophy of education.

Sufism has permeated Iranian mentality and has found an almost stable niche in Iranian thinking. Elias (1998) illustrates Sufism as an ideology that encompasses many aspects of life. He argues that Sufism is often seen as the spiritual muse behind much of pre-modem verse in the Islamic world and the idiom of much of popular Islamic piety among other things. During the Islamic period, the lenient and religiously tolerant views of Sufism became popular and highly noted among people[3] and throughout centuries it gave way to moderating the harsh regulations of religious biases (1998).

A noteworthy aspect of Sufism is its educational dimension and curricular objectives. Due to the overall positive image of Sufism, the teachers of this educational system were regarded as ultimate teachers, with their instructional practices being recorded and recited. Elias (1998) explains that Sufi orders served as educational institutions. Such practices inspired not only religious sciences but also music, decorative arts and poetry. Despite certain aberrations of this ideology, 'the Sufi orders have been praised for their capacity to serve as instruments of religious reform' (Elias, 1998, p.1).

[3] Although there were always extreme cases of religious fanaticism that resulted in the execution and killing of the Sufis due of their controversial views on religion, the ideology of Sufism managed to remain as a stabilized perspective up to the present time.

Sufist Philosophy and Curriculum in Poetry: Sufist philosophy manifests itself in certain recurring themes throughout Persian poetry. Poetry seems the right venue to search for these recurring themes:

> Sufi philosophy found a most hospitable soil in the domain of Persian poetry. The Persian poetry of classical times was so extensively influenced by Sufi philosophy that almost every great lyric poet of that period was a Sufi, as nearly every great Sufi of the time was poet. (Zarrinkub, 1970, p.140)

Sufist poetry is a shelter for diverse experiences such as tolerance, love and wonder. There is a path (*tariqat)* that can require you to leave everything behind and sacrifice your life for the cognition of creation and the creator with the help of the above experiences. For example, in Rumi's poetry, one of the most renowned Sufist works of art, wonder is greatly cherished:

There must be a 'wonder' that can sweep 'thought' away;

As wonder consumes/feeds on thought and memory. (Rumi)

In Sufist philosophy of education, rational thinking can be traded with wonder in many instances. Wisdom, here is traded for the art of wonder and having a good life can mean being engaged in wondrous thoughts:

'Although I am in destitute', said the sage,

'I am in the "wonder through wonder through wonder" stage'(Rumi)

Noting the aspect of wonder and intrigue in Sufism, Cole, a Middle East historian writes; 'Mystics wished to employ, in addition, illuminationist and Sufi codes that would allow a more

ecstatic sort of discourse about the believer's relationship to the divine' (Cole, 1989, p.10).

The goals of Gnostic stories are mostly to create the ecstatic discourse and wonder in the reader. Rumi's six-volume book of *Unworldly Poetry* (13th Century AD) starts with an ululation of a bamboo that was cut from the canebrake -representing the human that has been cut away from the creator. The poet begs the reader to listen to what the bamboo has to say: to hear his flaming groans that have become sonnets for countless lovers and individuals.

Moreover, within Sufist curriculum, formal education is not considered a must, and rebellion against the formalities of schooling is pleasant. A poem of Hafiz is a case in point:

We have sacrificed the early morning studies to get intoxicated…

The (pleasant) agony we have dedicated to on our mad hearts, will make many wise men go mad. (Hafiz, 14th century AD)

Perhaps the most important and recurrent theme in Sufist education is love. Love is a constant element in the curriculum and it is an aid to unlock mysteries of creation. Rumi writes:

Love is the astrolabe of the Creator's mysteries.

Besides love and wonder, respecting tolerance is also a major theme in Sufist curriculum. Tolerance in Sufism:

> does more than just hinder hostilities. In this sense of tolerance, the boundaries between *other* and *one* become indistinct and lose focus. The mutual acceptance of the possible open-endedness of truth implies that tolerance entails a dialogue that actually is a resonance in harmony between two parties. Removing the focus on opposing points of

> view obviates the necessity of working out a middle ground between them. (Schlubach, 2005, p.7)

Rumi's poetry can act as a tribune for making the biased boundaries of religion looser, thus allowing room for tolerance:

What is the solution,

O Moslems: for I do not know myself.

Neither Christian, Jew, Zoroastrian nor Moslem am I;

I am not an Easterner or a Westerner, or of land or sea:

Not of nature nor of Heaven:

Not of India, China, Bulgaria,

Saqsin (Schlubach, 2005, p.8)

In another poem advocating tolerance, 'duality in the sense of two opposing stances is removed' (Schlubach, 2005, p.7):

Oh how many Turks and Hindus are there that [feel they] are of the same people:

Yet how many Turks feel alienated from one another,

So the language of no-languages is the [ultimate precious] one

Speaking the language of hearts is much more precious than speaking the same language. (Rumi)

Another Sufist poem integrates tolerance into his poetry. The boundaries of religions

lose focus as he asserts that he sees the same God in every religion. He pictures monks, priests and rabbis all in search of one creator and thus softens the boundaries among religions:

We are countless, all occupied by thy thought

Helas! Thou be'est concealed of our sight.

Thou, the sole beloved!

The bird found thy fine face in every turf

The butterfly enlightened in core of the flame

The mystic recognized thy essence

In every scene and each face.

It means that I am not mad that I knock every door,

I knock every door.

In every route I walk, thy shine is the lone light,

In the tavern and mosque thou be'est the only Lord,

Thou be'est the only Lord.

The reason is thee when I wander drunk,

The reason is thee when I meet with the monk,

The reason is thee when I am praying in the mosque.

(Sheikh Bahai, 1547 -1621)

Sufism curriculum, with its themes of love, wonder and tolerance manifested itself throughout the textbooks of poetry and prose and remained to be popular despite the realist traditional philosophy of schooling.

Iran's Education in History. Schooling in Iran did not experience a smooth history. Throughout time, the rapid invasions and the repeated destruction of schools and libraries mutated the remains of schools and the framework of education. A historiographer illustrates the ambience of education after one of these invasions:

> The mutation of life, the effect of the fate, the rotation of the heavens and the wrestle of this protean world, made the schools well-worn, the scientists disappear, and the learners were downtrodden by the incidents and the cruel times, were afflicted with pain, sorrow and chaos. They [learners] either got diffused or the penetrative sword killed them all. (Juvayni, 2007, p.30)

Hence, philosophy of Education moved toward the eighteenth century in Iran with a faded Perennialist, essentialist approach to literacy, with *studying Paideia* as a predominant trend. Rote learning and educating 'moral, obedient' students were virtuous. Classical subjects were the curriculum focus and excellence in education was deemed valuable. Eighteenth century Iran was under the reign of Qajar dynasty and during this time, educational cycles with such were given in two centers: the *Maktab* for traditional elementary schools and the *Madressah* as centers of higher education. An examination of the philosophy behind the Qajar curriculum constitutes the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Philosophy of Education in Traditional Schools

The traditional schooling system did not have a modern methodology of instruction. Standardized schoolbooks did not exist in Iran before the advent of the modern educational system. (Dustkhah & Yagmai, 1997) The pathway to literacy was through *Maktabs*, the traditional schools in Iran that dated back to the centuries before Islam. In this chapter I will illustrate the learning that was experienced in Maktabs mostly by translating different narrations from Maktabs' students. I will draw upon descriptions of curricular activities in order to search out the philosophy of education in Maktabs. I will argue that Maktabs followed a Perrenialist- Essentialist curricular philosophy.

Maktabs and Their Philosophy in Qajar Era

During 1785 to 1925 elementary education in Iran was governed by the same traditional Essentialist trend that education experienced before. During this time the concept of elementary school as an independent entity did not exist. Classes took place in Mosques, which remained as hosts of the primary schools throughout the Qajar period. (Sultanzadeh, p.54) Maktabs were held in the corners of the mosques or in 'Shabestan's (The prayer halls of the mosques). Classes also were located in the passages, little shops, personal houses of the clergymen, or the houses of the people who would give their residence to the *Mirza* (Clergy teacher) and the owners of the Maktab.

Literally, Maktab means a place to read books or where writing is taught under the tutelage of an *akhund*, mulla (clerical teacher), or *moallem* (teacher), often working alone or

with one or two assistants. Women often served as instructors (*zan akhund*, *zan aqa*, or *molla baji*) in *Maktab*s (Dustkah & Yagmai, 1997).

The Maktab system was the educational center for literacy, and until change introduced later in the 20th century, its status remained static. In such schools education involved direction, control and restraint by the teacher, who was the central authority on the subject matter (Ringer, 2001).

In these centers teaching was performed by a specific mechanism: A group of students gathered around a teacher and memorized verses and alphabet in a domestic setting. 'There was not a high level of instruction and teachers were not monitored. No guidelines or directions were established and anyone could open a Maktabkhaneh' (Ringer, 2001, p.8).

Age and gender had minimal influence in the admission procedure. Girls and boys studied together from about the age of five or six to nine or ten years. Subsequently those girls whose parents favored further education were sent to separate girls' *Maktab*s, though in fact the education of most girls ended at this point.

Maktabs spread throughout the country in three types. One type was the AkhundBaji's Maktabs, schools held by semi-literate women in their houses. The two other types were the Public and the Private Maktabs. The first two are the subject of this study due to their importance and influence in Iran's future changes in education.

The AkhundBaji Maktab

Street mentions that, traditionally, education in Iran was conducted by both home and the state: 'it was integrated to every-day life and community-oriented' (Street, 1975, p.1). Akhundbaji's classes were one of the displays of such integration. Akhundbaji was a title used for women who did not usually have a noticeable breadth of knowledge, but were reliable in life experience. They had the responsibility of teaching students aged 4-7. 'Akhund' refers to a person, either man or woman, who has knowledge higher than the other conventional members of the society. This indicates that although expected to be knowledgeable, most of the Akhundbajis were not well read.

Moral Education. The traditional philosophy behind Akhundbajis' tutelage centered on transferring of objective and moral values of society. Akhundbaji would teach etiquette alongside teaching Quran and would constantly advise students of certain rules:

> When you enter the house, remember to say hello. Do not talk until they ask you something. Eat whatever that is in front of you on the spread. Do not try to reach out your hand to the other side of the spread. When you are done, stand up and say 'Thank you Lord'. Go to the dock and wash your hands. Do not dry your hands with the praying veil and do not blow your nose with the sides of your headdress. (Bozorg Omid, 1983, p.29)

The purpose of education in Maktabs was to briefly introduce children with short scriptures of Quran, ethics, canon law and the alphabet. In these Maktabs, teaching the essential skills (the three Rs) was not integrated into the curriculum and most of the

teaching was conducted verbally. This approach did not necessitate the use of paper and pencil. Besides the explicit teaching of traditional values, there were not many other specific curricular foci. The instructional objective was to educate the rational person and to cultivate the intellect, based on a realist philosophical base in education (Behar-Horenstein, et al., 1998).

There were no specific entrance requirements and regulation that would prevent the students from enrollment. Also, the date of enrolling the classes was not of importance. Students could join the *Maktab* anytime. Since the teaching method was individual-based, the instruction of the new students did not obscure the whole stream of teaching (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.47).

The main literacy activity in Maktabs - as it is pictured below- was to teach the alphabet, a task that would normally have a high failure rate:

> AkhundBajis would sit on cushions and lean on the wall. They would put a little table in front of them and a couple of twigs next to the cushion on which they were sitting. The children would circle around the room, their backs to the wall and if they were a lot they would also use the middle of the room. Each student would bring a pamphlet with them to the class. In the first part of this pamphlet there was the alphabet with the spelling of the letters in order for the students to be able to memorize them. The other part of the pamphlet contained short scriptures of *Quran*: This pamphlet would be considered as the daily textbook. All the students would start their tutoring with this book, although all of the pupils were not on the same

> page with the other students: They would be divided in groups based on their date of enrollment to the *Maktab*. Those who had entered on the same day or the same week would start the lesson together and would start the lesson together and would be called – based on the time's terminology- 'lesson-mates'. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.46)

In many cases instructing the class was the duty of the 'superior students' who acted as teacher assistants. Upon the admission of a newcomer, they were in charge of teaching him/her the alphabet while the Akhunbaji would monitor their progress once or twice a week (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999). This learning process seems compatible with traditional educational philosophy: Education is viewed as instruction, the mind is disciplined and filled with knowledge, the intellectual emphasis is on subject matter, and there is homogenous grouping and teaching of students by ability (Behar-Horenstein, et al., 1998).

Evaluation and Discipline. The process of evaluation involved verbatim testing and corporal punishment. The new-learners would come to Akhundbaji with their pamphlet. They would sit down on their knees, put their pamphlets on the teacher's desk. Akhundbaji would ask them the sections they had been studying. The child would 'deliver' the lesson to the professor verbatim. The success of the child lied in him being able to recite the lesson word by word. If there was a mistake in his/her responses, Akhundbaji would punish the student (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999).

Discipline and rote learning was of such importance that there was usually no time allocated to entertainment. Eghbal-Ghasemi points out the Educational facilities were

mostly overlooked and neglected. The places of instruction were very simple and usually without welfare facilities: Floors were matted with wicker, felt or old rugs. Children would take a mat with them to the school and would sit on them during class. Issues such as the light of the room or other hygienic conditions were all but considered and the children had to quietly sit in a corner and stare at their booklets in the dark in order to see something (1999).

Games in Akhundbakis' Maktabs. Playing was deemed to be unlawful under the regulations of this traditional philosophy of education. However, had the students wished to play games, they would do so sitting and without the Akhund seeing them. Games such as Dot-playing or other games that had a sedentary nature were popular (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.48).

Learning under the Akhundbaji's supervision was not usually a pleasant experience. Dolatabadi, an educational historian of the Qajar period depicts life with the Akhundbajis in his book *The Life of Yahya*:

> This was the way they made me learn how to write and become literate at the age of five; I spent some of my life by being with women who could read simple phrases and had troubled themselves learning Quran based on their religious beliefs. They were [also] usually unable to write. One could find this type of women mostly in the cities and not in villages. Their job was to babysit the children in their houses or in the houses of respected people… how can I reminisce the situation of the houses in which these educators and female

> governesses of the time would keep the children in, especially in the villages? How would they babysit these innocent kids, in what kinds of damp cells, on what unclean carpets and in what nasty conditions? I cannot, by no means consider this period of time as the dawn of my education. (1992, V.1, p.12)

Often studying in Maktabs was considered to be such an ordeal that generating a cause to let the students out of them was deemed to have divine rewards:

> Sometimes a woman or a man would come to Maktab and would inform the Akhund that 'a pregnant woman is giving birth to a baby, take this money and release the children so everyone can pray that this woman can be disengaged from this pain and that the child and mother would be healthy. Akhund would receive the money and free the students and the students would delightedly head home. (Bozorg Omid, v.1, p.11)

Roshdieh, another educational reformist of the Qajar era also mentions the pain and suffering of Maktabs. He writes that freeing the students from the teacher was considered a huge meritorious deed: 'So many pains would it heal and so many prayers would it make come true' (Roshdieh, 1983, p.17).

However, there were a few cases of these Akhundbajis' companionship that were of considerable pleasure for the children. Jamalzadeh, an influential writer fondly reminisces his memories after paying a visit to his first teacher after forty years, with the visit bringing him extreme pleasure (Jamalzadeh, 1975, p.398).

Although Akhundbajis' Maktabs were not compulsory to attend and nor were they a

prerequisite for admission to the next step, the students who took this elementary course were one step ahead of their other classmates in the Public Maktabs. They had already become familiar with the alphabet and with Quran and they were able to write the alphabet and read books other than the above mentioned (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.49).

Public Maktabs

Maktabs were responsible for society's literacy. They were backed by an essentialist philosophy of education that regarded the teacher as the planner of activities, the supplier of knowledge and one who dominates the lesson (Behar-Horenstein, et al., 1998).

Place and Quality. Mostly held in mosques, in the arcades, shops and other places, public Maktabkhanehs consisted of one room and resembled greatly the Akhundbaji's Maktabs. The rooms were usually covered with worn out rugs and the walls were stained and muddy. No hygienic and entertainment facilities is reported from that time (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999). During winter, if the schools were equipped with a wall heater, the teachers would fill it with logs and would light them every morning. The heater of each Maktab had a ratio of firewood. The students would circle around it before the start of the lessons. When the log was burnt they would put the fire in one or two grates, put some ash on the fire – so the fire would not die and place the grates in the middle of the rooms. To help keep warm, some students would also bring clay grates to *Maktab.*

Regulations for Admission. Similar to Akhundbajis' Maktabs, there were no restrictions and requirements for opening a Maktabkhaneh and no special license was

needed to have a school opened. Added to the above, there was no third party controlling the Maktabs. The jurisdiction or lack of it was dependent of an individual's character, knowledge and literacy and there was no authority to identify the owner's knowledge (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999).

The essentialist approach favored grouping the students by ability (Behar-Horenstein, et al., 1998): Hence, entering the schools did not have any prerequisites. Any child in any level of knowledge could join a *Maktab* and based on their own talent and personal abilities could benefit from the education there.

Varying Learning Experiences in Maktabs. Levels of studying were divided into three periods and tailored based on different needs. If there was a merchant or trader's son, his intention of study was to learn Quran and become familiar with writing and alphabet and prepare himself for writing and calculus.

Education was deemed complete when mastery of the concepts and principles of subject matter was reached. Instruction was done based on Iranian Paideia such as: Golestan Saadi, Nessab Sabbyan, Tarsol, Jame' Abbasi, Siagh, sometimes Hafez's poems and Saadi's Boostan (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.50). Had the child been from the lower socio-economic class of the community, his father's inclination was for the child to finish the Quran or at least to be able to recite the prominent short scriptures.

Those who wanted to reach higher levels of academia would complete the first cycle and would pursue higher levels of studies. These were the children of the top brass, the royal ascendants, the ministerial, influential clergymen or the people who wanted to

become clergymen. They would later enter the *Madresah* (centers for higher education) or the classes of the scientists of the time, in which the teaching material was different from the Maktabkhaneh's. For the continuation of the study they would either go abroad or stay in the country and study with the well-known professors of the time (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.50).

The idealist approach to education did not necessitate the use of teaching aids. No instructional media such as tables, desks, blackboard and chalks were present to help foster learning in the school. Akhund, or the owner would sit on a mat with his back to the wall and a box -as his escritoire- in his front. To maintain his authority and dominance over the class he would sit in a way that he could see all the children. Any disobedience from the harsh disciplinary regulations resulted in punishment (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999):

> Often he would put some long and short twigs as a means for punishment beside the box. In some cases there was a bastinado ornating the scene. In some Maktabs there was a basement or a vault. The teacher or the Mullah would use the whip to punish the students. They would imprison the naughty or lazy children there for a few hours. These places were conventionally known as dungeon. (Najmi, 1985, p. 405)

Use of the basement or vault and whipping or imprisoning allowed the teacher to have absolute dominance over the class. With the teacher not being monitored and being the sole authority in Maktabs, many students stopped their education, as it was an ordeal for them to be in class.

Curriculum Foci and Intellectual Emphasis. The curriculum contained a set of trends that had as its goal enabling the students to read Quranic scriptures. Teachers would generally start by familiarizing the students with the alphabet, with spelling, and with the short scriptures of Quran. They would end with classical, difficult books such as 'The History of Persians'.

The following interpretation by Eghbal-Ghasemi (1999, p. 62) shows the curricular foci of the Maktab's essentialist approach:

- To get familiar with the alphabet by syllabification

- To get familiar with Quran through recital and rote learning

- To learn the essentials of religion and practice them in *Maktab*, habits such as ablution and saying the prayers.

- To get familiar with the basics of ethics and religious matters – either verbally or through different books

- To become familiar with the permanent subjects such as Arabic language, logic and rhetoric

- To get familiar with some classical books from Persian literature and to make them familiar with certain aspects of the past through history

- Acquaintance with calculus and the three Rs

- To familiarize students with composition and dictation

- To introduce Calligraphy

- To reach these goals there were certain textbooks to be taught and the books were chosen according to the teacher's taste and sometimes with regards to the ability and talent of the students. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.62)

Compatibility of Subject Matter With Age and Knowledge. The selection of the books - from Persian literature to history- shows the supremacy of the past and shows a focus of backward direction, thus highlighting an existentialist philosophy of education (Behar-Horenstein, et al., 1998). Moreover, these books were originally written for purposes other than elementary education. For example, Nasikh o Tawarikh was a book of historiography, Gulistan was written for preaching morality and had a literary nature and the Divan of Hafiz was a book of artistic poetry that evoked wonder and intrigue. Most of the books were not congruous with the minds of seven or eight year olds. Moreover, the instruction of the alphabet was not performed in an appropriate style. Therefore reading these books usually caused a lot of discomfort for the students and most [of them] dropped out of school in the early years of Maktab (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999).[4]

The incompatibility of the books with the students' level of knowledge caused great discomfort amongst the students of the time. In his educational autobiography, Yahya Dolatabadi, a student of the Maktabs and an advocate for change recollects the dark days of Maktab when he had to struggle with grueling material. He also cherishes the books that were not as arduous:

[4] Even After the emergence and spread of modern schools, age-appropriate and independent Persian literature books could not be developed for the students. In those schools, as well, they would teach old texts and sections of various poetry books would constitute Persian textbooks (Eghbal-Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999)

> From Persian the book that I used to read with vibrancy was the book *Gorby and the Rats*[5]. I used to memorize its verses. I liked that book which was the only book – among the ones that were prepared for me- that was appropriate with my age and my education. (1992, p.14)

The level of difficulty of the textbooks and the fact that they were written for the adult readers troubled the students the most. In his book, Qajar's Modern Schools (1992) Eghbal-Ghasemi provides a note from John Malcolm who, in his own words, was sent on a mission to Iran from India in 1808. He describes the educational difficulties that were imposed on the children:

> In Iran the 5-year-old child is equivalent to a fifty year old in terms of etiquette, speaking and behavior. They start to learn Farsi [of course Persian literature] and Arabic from the age of seven after learning the spelling rules, they start reading the Quran and after that they start learning the rules of Sharia and learn Shiite canon law in order for them to institutionalize the hatred of Prophet's foes. After studying Persian books, they read some books at the level of Hafez and Saadi. Afterwards, they read some declension and morphology, logic, jurisprudence and philosophy. However, the improvement is generally related to the talent, inclination and the interest of the new-learner. (Ravandi, 1977, V.5, p. 96)

In reality few students had an inclination towards this type of schooling. Children preferred following the vocational trend of their fathers to the torment of suffering Maktab, 'Because

[5] The book 'Gorby and the Rats' is a political narration of the hypocritical religious character in the society of Iran throughout the fourteenth century B.C. The book deals with religion as a substance of agony and satire.

their life owed to the first torment and the second ordeal did not have a very constructive effect in their lives' (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.49).

Teacher Aptitude in Public Maktabs. The teacher was the sole authority in Maktabs. He was responsible to teach the children, with the poor quality remnants of a Socratic method and oral exposition. There were two types of teachers teaching in the schools during the Qajar period. One group had not developed a good reputation. Bozorg Omid (1984) writes that certain teachers were illiterate while others were scholarly and acclaimed among the people. They were greatly respected and people were thirsting to gain knowledge and advice from them.

Games and Holidays. The passion of Iranians for poetry and the importance of rote learning are highlighted in the game of poetry that was present in the *Maktabs*. Mosha'ereh[6], a competition in reciting poems, is a very popular game throughout Iran's history (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1998). It was practiced among poets with the objective of increasing their knowledge of poetry. It was one the pastime activities of the children. The teacher (Akhund) would divide his clever and strong students into two groups and they would engage in Moshaereh. One student would read a poem and the other student would recite a poem and its first letter was the same as the last letter of the first contestant's poem. The game would continue until one of the contestants won. Nobody had the right to use one poem twice and the Akhund and the other students would stay vigilant over this issue (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999).

[6] For example: 'To be or not to be, this is the problem', and the other contestant starts a poem with "m".

Grouping and Learning. In the *Maktabs*, the children would be divided into two groups based on whether or not they had studied the alphabet in their previous class : The Akhundbaji's Maktabs. If they were not familiar with the alphabet, the teacher would start the course with teaching the alphabet to the students. The method of instruction was rather homogenous with other Maktabs. Despite certain differences and altered curricula, the main activities of instruction and learning were:

- Teaching the names of the letters without learning their sounds: Alef, Beh...

- Familiarizing the students with different variations of letter, such as their accentuation and their form

- Reading the words with the help of the accents and morphological symbols

- Combining the recited letters together and reading the word

- Spelling and enunciating the words and parsing or breaking the word into letters by saying the accents (movements) of every letter.

The emphasis in these activities was on learning through memorization and syllabification of the alphabet. The passage below provides a picture of a session in Maktabs:

> The first day when the teacher wanted to start the lesson, he would read these […] phrases and the students would repeat them; 'In the name of god, the compassionate, the merciful. He is the opener, the wise, the first of the book [goes to] the knowledgeable creator, the maker, the alive and the capable.[…]

> Then the teacher would read the alphabet aloud -which was at the beginning of the students' pamphlets-, and the students would repeat after him […].
>
> Some time would be spent on learning the names of every letter and after learning the names, they would start repeating their names, their accents and the vowels [that would come on top of each letter]:
>
> Alef; Alef with A, B with E, [would be] Beh.
>
> After sufficient time was put for practicing this part, it was time for spelling the words. For example; the teacher would call for a student and he had to sit – on his knees- in front of the akhund's little box and akhund would say;
>
> "Spell "Ketab"(Book)!" And the student had to say; K with 'eh' = keh, t with = ta, b silent = b, will be: Ketab. …
>
> Again the teacher would say: Did everybody understand? And the students would reply: 'Aye!'. (1992, p.220)

Upon acquiring competency in the alphabet, the students could proceed to reading literary books (Paideia).

Clearly, the reading experiences in the Maktab centered around rote-learning and in many cases verbatim memorization of text-books. The most accepted behavior was conforming and complying with the authoritarian teacher and emphasis on societal values, all of which contribute to a traditional philosophy of education. The experiences of Maktabs prepared a ground for a new wonder in the graduates of this traditional schooling: This

wonder eventually emerged through their observations of the *Other*'s[7] educational system. This thread of wonder will be examined later in Chapter Four. However, before looking at this wonder and in an attempt to grasp the Iranian wonder, I will first examine the nature of wonder in Chapter Three.

7 Other and Self are concepts used by Juan Cole (1996) when describing the changes that the Iranian identity underwent upon Modernization during Qajar Iran.

Photographic Images of Maktabs

A photograph depicting a punishment scene (Falak Kardan-Whipping) in a typical Maktab. Recounting the ordeal of such punishment, a former student writes about his decision to commit suicide :

'We decided to commit suicide. Aghazadeh thought he could kill himself with a knife... and I imagined I could throw myself down from the top floor of Maktab! After we talked it over, Aghazadeh inserted the knife into his abdomen and I threw myself on a tree. I started shouting that my waist and legs are broken…' (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.88)

A room in a Public Maktab. Dolatabadi, a Maktab graduate and an educational reformist bitterly remembers the dark experience of being in Akhundbajis' Maktabs:

'How would they babysit these innocent kids, in what damp cells, on what unclean carpets and in what nasty conditions? I cannot, by no means consider this period of time as the dawn of my education.' (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1992)

Mirza (Teacher) would sit and the students would usually make a circle around him. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999)

CHAPTER 3

Wonder In Philosophy and Cultures

Howard Parsons sees wonder as 'the spark of excitation leaping across the gap between man and the world' (Parsons, 1997, p.32). This perspective can imply a universal meaning for wonder. Nevertheless, wonder has different etymological roots and functions in every language and culture and it has adopted its own localized selfhood and identity.

In order to understand the marvel behind the educational observations of Iranian travelers, I will examine the concept of wonder in the following chapter. I will look at wonder in philosophy by looking at the philosophers' perspectives on wonder. I will then examine wonder through educational, cultural and historical perspectives. I will argue that wonder has localized shapes and that socio-cultural elements are important in forming wonder.

Wording and Philosophy of Wonder. Wonder in Persian comes from the same root as wandering and implies *wandering in thoughts*. In Latin the word mirari means to 'wonder or marvel at'. In the Latin translation of the Old Testament 'miraculum' depicted 'anything wonderful, beyond human power, and deviating from the common action of nature, a supernatural event' (Parsons, 1966). Teeters and Raphael point out that in Spanish there is no direct translation for wonder. The word that can be considered close in meaning to wonder is 'Maravilla' (marvel) (Raphael, S.T., &Teeters, A., 2006). In English wonder lies close to its primitive roots and 'retains the more powerful force of *miracle*' ("Wonder", 2009, Britannica). Parsons (1969) asserts that this meaning is not the equivalent to the real meaning of 'wonder'. Miracle, coming from Latin *miraculum*, causes astonishment and therefore does not have the

same function as wonder. Parsons writes:

> Wonder, from the old English *wundor* might be cognate with the German *Wunde* or *wound.* It would thus suggest a breach in the membrane of awareness, a sudden opening in a man's system of established and expected meanings, a blow as if one were struck or stunned. To be wonderstruck is to be wounded by the sword of the strange event, to be stabbed awake by the striking. (Parsons, 1969, p.85)

With the passing of time and due to a gradual shift in metaphysical viewpoint and stimulated by the rise of natural science, the word *mirari* – wonder at supernatural or things beyond human power- gave its place to a new cognate, *admirari,* functioning as a word to reflect purely natural wonder (Parsons, 1969).

Believing in the supremacy of wonder, Descartes uses the word *l'admiration'* to define this element of thinking in his book *Passions of the Soul*:

> When the first encounter with some object surprises us, and we judge it to be new, or very different from what we knew in the past or what we supposed it was going to be, this makes us wonder and be astonished at it. And since this can happen before we know in the least whether this object is suitable to us or not, it seems to me that *wonder is the first of all the passions*. It has no opposite, because the object presented has nothing in it that surprises us; we are not in the least moved by it and regard it without passion. (p.52)

Many thinkers regard wonder as the base of thinking and a relative component to surprise and awe. According to Parsons (1969) there is a difference between surprise and wonder. He regards

surprise as a product of wonder and not a component of it.

Philosophy of Wonder and Education. Opdal (2001) has argued that there is a distinguishing feature between wonder and surprise; this distinction must be considered important in the philosophies of education that regard curiosity as important. Wonder is a state of mind and it occurs when one is struck by the strangeness or peculiarity of the things met, whereas curiosity is 'conceived of as a confident and focused interest to find something out' (p.331). Opdal states that curiosity can be satisfied and it relates to the 'kind of problems we meet in ordinary daily life or in a technical or scientific setting.' What makes wonder of a different texture than surprise or curiosity is that it directs the brain to some things that are beyond its knowledge. Since wonder points to something beyond accepted rules, one can feel overwhelmed and can experience humbleness accompanied by awe.

Wonder is present in a curriculum, developing creative inquiries such as curiosity and questioning do not seem remote possibilities. Aided by wonder, one can be led into active and creative wonder, which produces curiosity and it is within the realm of curiosity where questions begin. The created questions seek to find an answer. Therefore, wonder leads to curiosity and curiosity leads to meaningful behavior.

Trying to clarify the difference between wonder and curiosity, Heidegger states that curious comes from the root 'care' (cura, care) and it therefore can convey a caring behavior towards a wonder that one has (Parsons, 1969).

By acknowledging the difference between wonder and curiosity, Opdal argues that such distinction justifies an important consideration in the school systems. It is important for

educational curriculum and instructional designers to consider both wonder as well as curiosity (Opdal, 2001). This can also suggest that it is important to have 'creating wonder' as an objective in a philosophy of education alongside other factors of thinking.

However, Verhoeven believes that it is not possible to achieve wonder in the context of general education. 'The phrase 'basic concepts of philosophy', without the slightest irony intended, reminds one of a construction set with handbook for do-it-yourself- addicts. This leads not to philosophy but at best to general education' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.15).

Verhoeven's philosophy of education opposes the mere teaching of believes that general education is the exact opposite of philosophy because one of the objectives of philosophy is to 'defer knowledge as long as possible' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.15). He believes that general education has as its objective 'knowing immediately' and 'no matter how'. *Knowing* and *getting results* is all that general education takes interest in, presupposing the absence of wonder and curiosity. 'Its [general education's] motives lie outside things and outside the subject. They are handed on in splended isolation by a social code in which, by an interesting process, knowledge has somehow become power and thus influence and prestige' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.16). Criticizing this characteristic of education, Verhoeven calls for a different approach while introducing wonder. He says that wonder must not promote this attitude; it must criticize it and depict it as an impossible task (Verhoeven, 1972, p.16).

Verhoeven denies the benefits of general education and withholds giving any credit to this type of education. He says:

General education means nothing, and this is putting it mildly. More clearly

> stated, we should have to say that not only has general education no positive significance- it is an enormous negative force. For general education is the wall the bolsters up mediocrity and shields it from attack by reality. (Verhoeven, 1972, p.16)

Is wonder an element in philosophies of education, either traditional or progressive? Asserting that general education can stop wonder from occurring, Verhoeven refuses to believe any type of true knowledge can be formed throughout education. He believes that since this type of education is 'artificially tailored', it cannot expose the learners to *real knowledge*. He gives a curious point of view when he states that general education 'displays the mountain peaks, but saves one the trouble of climbing them: It even cuts off the approaches' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.18). Hence, it might be difficult for a philosophy of general education to encompass wonder in it.

Verhoeven provides an allegorical example to clarify his notion of general education vis-a-vis wonder. He extends on Plato's allegory of the cave by stating that those very people in the caves are the outputs of general education.

> Plato imagines a group of people who have lived chained in a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of the cave entrance, and begin to ascribe forms to these shadows. According to Plato, the shadows are as close as the prisoners get to seeing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall are

> not constitutive of reality at all, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners.(Verhoeven, 1972, p.19)

General education has in its philosophy or goal to show the shadows and not take the students outside. Verhoeven uses this allegory to argue that general education is only good for the people who are in the cave and it cannot prepare you for the world outside the cave. 'The so-called education that results is a safety measure, to protect the cozy life in the cave' (1972, p.19). In such education there is no chance and no exit way to a real breakthrough to knowledge. He believes that unless some 'intellectual crisis' happens to us, we cannot be able to come out of this mediocrity (1972, p.18). General education will *protect* life in the cave, and does not encourage learners to *wonder out*. In order to initiate wonder and to introduce this element to others, one has to plunge them into it. This does not easily go with general education and its objectives. Wonder is not something that can be artificially aroused and imitated:

> It is something that happens to people. It is an adventure whose outcome one can not foresee, an exercise in free fall and as an adventure it is a prelude to an open and disinterested attitude to life. Wonder situates man outside his world and happens to him from outside his world. (Verhoeven, 1972, p.28)

That Verhoeven believes wonder is a 'halting' and needs not to have results assigns wonder a strange nature. To wonder is not a purposeful action. He locates wonder in the middle of a movement. 'Before and after wonder there is a movement which is the 'normal' state' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.36). When wonder is considered as a halt, a pause in thinking, then to wonder is a 'disinterested act of expression'. Buytendjik states that 'wonder is characterized by a

halting of the thing observed' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.36).

Wonder and Opportunities. One of the elements within wonder is the feeling of opportunities. In wonder lies a potential sense of possibilities that can further change into other states of thinking (Parsons, 1969):

> In the case of man there is not just a startled, curious, caring response. There is a sense of possibilities, called forth by previous and similar novelties which lead him to think, "Have a care!" His nervous system carries within it memories and extracts and extrapolates from them anticipations of what the thing of concern might mean. (p. 88)

At first this sense of possibilities is more or less vague and, even as the possibilities become clarified in thought, retains the vagueness of imagination, memory, and dream. The sense of possibilities may remain at the level of dumb wonder -e.g., astonishment mixed with speechless terror toward a murderer, or blind admiration toward a movie star. It may with meaningmaking activity pass over into the definiteness of sensuously embodied, public, communicable meanings. 'But in either case the vagueness of the possibility remains: the sense of what might be, of future and cathected occurrences. And it is akin to the excitement that has been aroused, excitement that fits and enhances the cognitive sense of possibilities' (Parsons, 1969, p. 88).

The Practice of Wonder. The knowledge of wonder and its practice are of two different genres in philosophy. The knowledge of wonder is pleasant, however the actual act of wonder greatly differs from its knowledge. This distinguishable characteristic of the knowledge and its real practice resembles the philosophy that 'There is a knowledge of philosophy that is not

philosophy, a knowledge of the many statements made by the many philosophers in the course of the centuries' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.12). Reiterating the fact that the essential thing is always something other than mere familiarity, Verhoeven designates a special place for the practice of wonder as opposed to the mere knowledge of it.

Nevertheless, to wonder is not an easy task. 'In wonder everything is at stake. Though modest in appearance, its pursuit is a massive undertaking in which no stone is left unturned' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.12). Verhoeven reflects on this massive undertaking and considers it as '*being away from home*.' Verhoeven asserts that with wonder there comes a sense of alienation. When one wonders, one practices the skill of *defamiliarizing* oneself from the routine knowledge (Verhoeven, 1972).

St. Augustine's perspective toward wonder permeates Verhoeven's book. 'He [Augustine] says that it strikes the heart without hurting it. The heart longs for the new that is revealed in wonder 'in as much as it is like it' and recoils from it inasmuch as it is unlike it' (1972, p.40). What interests me most in this analysis is that an important feature of wonder is considered: It being transitory. This qualification makes wonder hard to achieve and harder to maintain in an educational approach. Nevertheless, despite the transitory nature of wonder, do certain societies and cultures cherish the achievement and sustainability of wonder? I will examine this question in the following section, which focuses on wonder and its effects in cultures.

Wonder Embedded in History, Cultures and Societies

Wonder and Alienation. One of the interesting phenomena that can occur as a result of pure wonder is alienation. 'Plato says that the man who leaves the cave has to get used to the light outside and, once he is accustomed to it, he is no longer able to find his way and his place in the cave' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.85). Verhoeven believes that wonder alienates wonderers from non-wonderers. As a result of alienation, it is hard for either group to engage in a dialogue together: 'even when they are talking about the same thing they mean something different' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.85).

A factor that leads to this alienation is observation: Observation results in wonder and wonder leads to alienation. 'Observation is the gate through which wonder and alienation gain entry' (Verhoeven, 1972, p.86). To observe is to select, and what we choose to wonder about are different and select (Verhoeven, 1972). These selections are based on the background knowledge we have, and based on the society in which its *selves* are developed.

Wonder and Cultures. The meaning, history and aspects of wonder in every culture can be accompanied by ambiguity and diversity. In certain cultures wonder can be *an attitude of mind*, or *the more or less physical phenomena of contemplation* (Evans & Marr, 2006). What kind of *eye and scope* do different societies use? In the cave myth, Plato talks about these different visions:

> If I, as I now am, were to possess the eyes of a spider, I should view everything quite differently. Not only would I see different things, but I would see the same thing differently. I say 'different' because, even in my wildest dreams, I cannot

> imagine what it would be like. I have no idea of it. […] If then I were to sit here and see in turn with the eyes of a butterfly, a frog, a sparrow, a fish, a hippopotamus, a cow; with rolling faceted eyes, with eyes on stalks, with the dewy eyes of a doe, or even with the eyes of another person, with all sorts of eyes which after all are real eyes and can really see – if, after all this, I were to resume again the very special spectacles of my own eyes on which I rely so blindly, I would feel startled and changed. (Verhoeven, 1972, p.87)

Practicing wonder can have different rituals and outputs in every context. Certain nations might wonder at natural phenomena that they have experienced, while others can practice wonder in history and the past. It is important nonetheless, to study the *localized* wonder (Pomian, 1990) to realize the direction of wonder in every nation. To do so, Evans and Marr suggest exploring wonder by several local narratives instead of one grand narrative (2006).

By doing so in the context of Iranian literature, we can feel the ubiquitous presence of contemplation/wonder can be seen. Amanat (1989) reflects on this type of wonder by reciting the well-known poem of Khaqani. The poet, inspired by the ruins of a once glamorous Sassanian (Sassanid) palace of Mada'in, wonders on fate and ironic destinies:

Lo! Thou the awareness-seeking heart, see by the sight,

Make the palace of Mada'in the mirror of your heart.

The poet encourages the reader to reflect on the gone dynasties and their wonder-evoking destinies. Forouzanfar (1971) believes that this famous poem reflects a recognizable resonance in the works of many Persian writers, poets, and historians of pre-modern times who tried to

make sense of the events and upheavals of the past:

> For them *ibrat,* which may loosely be translated as a *grievous sense of historical consciousness*, was the essence of the past. It made them see in the ruins of the once mighty empire, or the records of kings of bygone times, the never-ending cycle of the rise and fall of worldly powers. The Sassanian arch of the palace of Ctesiphon in the above verse was a powerful metaphor for the believer and the skeptic alike. (Amanat, 1989, p.1)

This grievous sense of historical, social and religious wonder has been a stable mental attitude among Iranians: It is a *practice of wonder,* or, as Parsons says, *a leap of excitation between man and his world*.

In Persian, wonder does not come from the root of Wunde - as does in German- but it does come from *wandering in thoughts;* musing on the fates of wicked and good people, quoting poems that were full of irony and ambiguity about the world and its calamities. The popularity of such a frame of mind can be seen as a predominant cognitive behavior among Iranians; enjoying the creation of a *breach in the membrane of awareness,* as Parsons (1969) suggests.

In another example, one of the most-recited quatrains of Persian language, wonder permeates the poet's and the readers' reflection on transitory life:

The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,

And kings the forehead on his threshold drew

I saw the solitary Ringdove there,

And 'Coo, coo, coo"[8] she cried; and

'Coo, coo, coo'. (Ommar Khayyam)

Looking at different phenomena with wonder and with a grievous sense of awareness penetrates different aspects of life, from serious issues of fate and destiny to daily contemplations. This recurring resonance or wonder in poetry can reveal a localized wonder among Iranians. Pomian speculates about the nature of wonder among people by asserting the interests of people bear meaning and represent the *invisible* (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.9). The invisible thread of wonder in Iran is mostly manifested in poetry, as was examined in Chapter Two. The specific socio-cultural wonder in Iran experienced a rapid twist (Kenny, 1995) in the 19th century Iran's when contact with other countries escalated. This wonder allowed a new social and educational self to surface (Cole, 1964). The wonder behind the Iranian observations – and their educational observations in particular- will be examined in the next chapter.

[8] Besides the sound of the birds, Coo in Persian also stands for: 'Where?' In the original quatrain there is a The Cuckoo sits on the ruins and asks: '(Coo)Where? Where is all that'?

CHAPTER 4

Wonder and Philosophy of Education in Iran

> Hossein Gholi Agha in the science of leadership of infantrymen and artillery, if God the supreme wants. Mirza Zaki, a good engineer if God the supreme wants. Mirza Reza in the art of and printing, and refining the sugar to become cubed, if God the supreme wants. Other concern is to commit to working, studying, not doing pointless deeds, not aimlessly wandering, not losing their religion, may God's curse be upon the pagans, amen. Mirza Yahya to become a doctor and surgeon, M.Ali Agha to become a mineralogist, a professional in agriculture and watch making, it is auspicious, congratulations, amen.
>
> (Muhammad Shah's blessings on the dispatch of Iranian students to France in 1844)
>
> (Mahbubi, p.189)

Intellectual biography as a discipline assumes that the life and thought of an individual can shed light on an epoch. Such an assumption is true in the case of Qajar Iran in a 150-year period from 1785 to 1925, in which a trend of traveling to the West initiated. This trend allowed a new 'self' to surface, and thus marked the initiation of changes in thinking patterns of Iranians (Cole, 1996). In this chapter I will briefly describe the conditions that resulted in a series of reforms in Iran during mostly during the nineteenth and twentieth century. I will then draw upon the narratives and travelogues of selected students and other travelers during the Qajar period to illustrate how a new wonder was created in the Iranian self by traveling. I will also include narrations that wondered at educational advancements of the countries.

The Perception of Weakness

During Fat'hali Shah's era (1772-1834), and after the humiliating defeat from Russia in 1813 and 1828, there remained no alternative for Iran but to Westernize and modernize in order to regain its dignified status. During the first decade of nineteenth century, the broadminded crown prince and regent Abbas Mirza initiated the first series of reforms in different fields, one of which was education. He dispatched students abroad, mainly to France to study in different fields (Ekhtiar, 1994).

The second era of reform and modernization took place under Muhammad Shah's reign, which succeeded to throne on 1834. He focused on education alongside other issues and continued Abbas Mirza's educational policies by sending more students abroad.

The policy of sending students abroad 'indicated the widening of the parameters of the perception of Iranian 'deficiency' vis-a-vis Europe' (p.26). Moreover, Iran's deficiency in battles and observing the advancements of the European countries resulted in a new type of belief and faith in the west, and a confidence in the remedial powers of its administrative and educational systems (Ringer, 2001). When the students observed and experienced Western education, Iran's Maktab system went under a lot of scrutiny and was challenged by the host of Western-inspired educational institutions (Ekhtiar, 1994).

Wonder and Nineteenth Century Iran

During the Qajar era, certain concepts underwent scrutiny and noticeably evolved. As mentioned above, Ringer (2001) believes that the parameters of the concept of *deficiency* widened upon contact with the Western countries. Cole (1996) examines the concept of

identity and how it found new implications through contact with the advanced countries. Among these concepts, *wonder* also experienced its own process of evolution. From '*the passion of enquiry*' (Evans & Marr, 2006) that had the sense of grievous awareness (Amanat, 1989), it moved towards a new form that was societal and more deductive in nature[9].

In order to trace a path of wonder, Evans suggests studying the connections between geographical discoveries in each era and the travel undergone. He reflects that such studying can help us plot the move to new priorities in the eighteenth century, a move to an emphasis on imagination, on the *exotic*, on the antiquarian (2006). Marr and Evans propose that these connections might not offer a unique new 'key' with which to gain enhanced understanding of wonder and certain occurrences. Instead, traveling and geographical connections can act 'as vantage points from which to view the intersections and divergences of a *host of currents,* motifs and sensibilities in early modern cultural and intellectual life' (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.4).

In the case of Iran, travelogues and newspapers can serve as such vantage points for a series of shifts in understanding that resulted in educational reform. Eghbal-Ghasemi has gathered excerpts from the students' and travelers' educational observations in his book called *New Schools in Qajar; Founders and Pioneers* (1999). I will use these excerpts in the following sections to examine the wonder behind the travelers' observations.

[9] It should not be overlooked however, that the transformation and/or modification of wonder was something that happened in many nations upon their encounter with the *new*. In fact, Alexander Marr (2006) argues that curiosity and wonder are basic concepts much in evidence during the entire early modern period, constantly interacting are reinforcing each other from Renaissance to Enlightenment.

Travelogues and Newspapers: Wonder and The Formation of a New Self

Wonder and its semantic shifts throughout time (Yeandle, 2002) can be traced in different local narratives rather than a single, unified grand narrative (Evans & Marr, 2006). For this reason I will first examine the wonder-filled lens of two early travelers to the West. In the second part I will look at the observations of some travelers who were once taught in Maktabs and originally experienced learning under a shriveled traditional philosophy. In the last part I will explore some of the newspaper excerpts with regard to educational marveling at the West. In all three parts I will include direct narratives to illustrate the pronounced presence of wonder.

Early Travelers and the Practice of Wonder

One of the predecessors of traveling and writing travelogues, Mir Abdollatif Shushtari set out to India in 1787 and resided there for seventeen years. Marveling about the achievements of India, he wrote in his travelogue about the authorship and printing business there, the freedom of expression, and gave instances and proofs of modern achievements in European countries (Shushtari, p.294). Shushtari describes an insurgence in a city in England, whereby many guards were awaiting for orders to detain a dissident of the king's. Due to the fact that the meeting of the ministers had not been finished and their verdict had not yet been reported, the guards withheld taking any measures against the supporters of this man. Shushtari writes:

> Upon hearing this from the guards, more wonder was added to my wonders. If this chaos and crowdedness had happened in a city in Iran, from Monday until today more

than ten thousand would have been killed and massacred. (p. 254-256)

Here, we see what Parsons (1969) calls wonder, a spark of excitation leaping across the gap between the observer and his world. Wonder adds to itself a more comparative aspect in the above narrative: A dichotomy of *self* and *other* can be seen as forming when the writer compares one situation in two different contexts. Juan Cole (1996) observes the formation of this dichotomy: 'Faced with European military and economic precedence, intellectuals in the non-European world had, additionally, to contend with issues of self-respect, in the shame of defeat and of technological inferiority' (P.35).

The dilemma of self-respect, identity and deficiency are pictured elsewhere by Abulhasan Ilchi (1985). Ilchi was an appointed officer in London and he stayed there for one and a half years. Later, upon his return to Iran, wrote what he had observed in a book titled 'The Wonder-book of Travelers'. The following passages from this book depict his intense wonder [10] towards the Western other who lives in an exotic setting in which everything is almost flawless:

> [...] In the harbor there were big and small ships, of which all had anchored and their [the sailors'] wives had found a spot and set up a little shop, selling several different goods and upon purchasing I had sweet conversations with these ladies; conversations that were not empty of wonder. (1985,p. 120)

In his other memoir, wonder is the invisible thread of the writer's contemplation toward

[10] The term is taken from Greenblatt's depiction of Columbus's voyage. He states that Columbus's journey initiated a century of 'intense wonder' (Greenblatt, 1992)

gender equality in the Western world. He writes:

> Due to the fact that I was wondrous in the party, Mrs. Persil said, 'I see that you are wonder about men and women eating together; be fair, is our way better or yours in which you occult your women?' I said in response, 'Your way is better. [...] I have travelled a lot and I have not seen a lady adorned with such unworldly excellence, appearance and serenity'. (1985, p. 162 &163)

The preceding narrative also has in it wonder tinged with awe and admiration (admirari) towards Britain's architecture:

> There exists many virtues in Great Britain and their houses are built of stone. On the buildings there are drawings of constructions by which the mind goes wondrous and disabled. (1985, p.230)

It can be seen here that wonder was initiated by the emotional and cognitive response at experiencing the 'new or the unfamiliar, and by visiting the exotic' (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.6). Pomian, a leading scholar on Wonder assigns a period for curiosity and wonder and calls it the *age of curiosity; '*A fecund period in which fledgling disciplines, wondrous objects and curious individuals intermingled before settling down into regulated profession and clear methods of enquiry' (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.15). As we seen from the accounts given as examples, contact with the West initiated this age of wonder in the Qajar era, especially in the context of educational marveling.

As Daston and Park suggest, through Iranians traveling and observing the West the traditionally remote passions of wonder and curiosity moved closer together (Evans & Marr,

2006, p.15), and formed an observational trend that can be seen throughout many discourses and practices among individuals.

Travelogues and The Education of Other. Agha Ahmad Kermanshahi was among those who travelled during the Qajar era and admired educational advancements in India. In his book, *Meraat Ol'ahval Jahan Nama* (The Atlas Mirror of Situations) he illustrates the schools of India with enthusiasm:

> They have built advanced schools in Calcutta in which anybody from any race - Muslim, British and etc. can become enrolled , they have hired scholars and instructors from every field and their wages are fully paid by the government…The school pays for the poor people. They have compiled all the reading materials, from the alphabet to advanced subjects in a superior quality. They have written books and pamphlets on general and minute topics of living techniques: From wifehood and husband hood to cooking, carpentering, surgery, construction, painting, sailing, governance, merchandise and etc. They teach the subjects according to age. They have added illustrations to the books so as to reduce the amount of tutorship for the learner, thus intelligent people can comprehend the lesson right away. When one from the British nation completes his studies and learns different languages and is considered competent for civil service, they appoint him a governmental position. Among the Muslim students if one improves and the instructor and the head judge recommend him as ready for preaching and judgment in a specific field, they appoint him as a judge. Because of this method, competent and intelligent people have increased due to the greed for government positions and status. (Haeri, p.302)

Wonder here is generously dispersed. Wonder for many things: Illustrations in the books in order to make them more comprehensible, students receiving equal education from different backgrounds, the instructors being fully paid, the tuition fee system, the design course materials and textbooks and the multiplicity of subjects are setting forth a new framework for education; one that is completely different from the philosophy of Maktab's education. This description also reflects the wonder behind the traveler's observation as he tries to elaborately depict his marvels for the reader.

Students, Observers and Wonderers. In the nineteenth century, with the hope of discarding the meager Perennialist remains of education, and motivated by the advancements of the West, Iranian students travelled to Europe to study. Also, during the government of this Abbas Mirza as the crown prince, the first newspaper in Iran was published (Ravandi, Vol.1, p.532). He initiated the dispatching of parties and students to Europe who, upon their return, would recount to the government what they observed. The students' wonder-struck accounts created a recurring theme that ran throughout the emerging philosophy of education in Iran upon modernization. The cognitive passion of wonder, and what Pomian (1990) views as the cognitive behavior that is the desire to learn about or know the other can be seen in their reports and travelogues.

Iranian students, coming from a society that was then experiencing defeat from the Eastern (Russia) and Western (England) powers observed countries that were in the process of modernization, particularly in education. Below is one of the accounts of one student, Mirza Saleh Shirazi, on Russia's educational advancements:

> Many of Moscow's buildings are for schools. One of them is of Queen Elizabeth's. There are six hundred students studying there. It has twenty-three schools. Food and clothing are provided for the students and the King pays them. The students do not graduate unless they master their subject of study. If the officials want to assign different positions to students, they would have to sit an exam. If they demonstrate competency, they graduate and new students are admitted to the school. […] These are their subjects of study: Theology, architecture, algebra, dancing, reading and writing. Added to the above, they study Greek and Latin languages, Russian, French and English, Austrian, Italian, Turkish and Chinese. They also have two or three other schools. Those schools are sponsored by the townspeople. (Eghbal-Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.99)

Looking at details of schools in the above narrative points out to Mirza Saleh's wonder and curiosity towards such schooling. In the time of travel, Iran's educational system was experiencing decay. Thus, travelers recounted, with curiosity and wonder, the new and the exotic features of education in the west. Adamiat (1977) provides an example on a different note:

> When the party accompanying *Khosro Mirza* left Russia to express their apology from the murder of Russian ambassador Iran, *Amirkabir* was accompanying them. This group paid visits to many important sights of the country. The various advancements of the country had a lasting impression on Amirkabir and deeply affected the future measures taken by him. (p.166)

This lasting –and perhaps wonder-full- impression did not solely affect Amirkabir, the future chancellor of Iran and the founder of the first modern school. It also impacted the future of education in Iran. Amirkabir took notes of his observations from Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The lasting impression invoked certain behaviors that resulted in building a school in Iran that was considered a 'watershed' in the history of education in that country (Ringer, 2001).

Another individual sent to Europe during the reign of Mohammad Shah (1834-1848) was *Abdolfattah Garmrudi.* He gathered his accounts in a travelogue called 'The Four Seasons' in which he advocated for European educational practices. Ravandi (1977) mentions that the Europeans had impressed the writer. Garmrudi writes in his travelogue about the special attention of the government of Austria towards the education and upbringing of children and the youth. He wrote in his travelogue that the Austrian government would reward people who work hard for education, and the King of Austria would later invite these students to his own house and would dine with them. He also adds that they encourage their children not to miss a minute of studying and reading. He asserts that the reason behind the full competency of foreigners and the scarcity of illiterate people in those countries is because of government encouragement. He marvels at the education of the blind writing: 'Even anyone who is blind is taught in scientific schools. They teach them the necessary' (Ravandi, 1977, p.71).

Newspapers as Creators of New Wonder

Another venue for examining wonder is through the published observations of the travelers in newspapers. Newspapers, alongside travelers and students contributed immensely to the social awakening of Iran, and particularly in the case of progressing modern education (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999). According to Verhoeven's argument, observation leads to wonder and wonder leads to alienation from the existent situation. This observation-based alienation can be seen in Newspapers. The educational systems that the observers encountered were distinct from the decayed system of Maktabs, and such contradictions resulted in moments of wonder and infatuation (Cole, 1966, p106).[11]

Wonder in Newspapers and the Genesis of New Priorities. One of the functions of the newspapers was to reflect the news of foreign schools in them. In the following passage taken from Deba newspaper, the shaping of new priorities are observed:

> The government of Germany has devised a strategy so as to encourage all types of people - public and select- to study and upgrade their studies and knowledge: That is organizing various faculties all across the country in which the public shows great interest. The objective of the government is for the public to taste the pleasure of knowledge and free them from ignorance. Most of the commonalty of the territories of Germany have established an intimacy with the sciences and arts through these faculties (associations) and have gained the required education. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.113)

[11] The wonder-evoking and wonder-causing advancements of certain countries in different societal, economical, scientific and cultural fields resulted in the infatuation of not only Iranians, but also many other countries. (Cole, 1966, p106).

The pleasure of knowledge as well as freedom from observing ignorance, are introduced and set forth in the above article. By observing the *Other's* schools, new priorities of an educational philosophy are introduced.

Another newspaper observers *the exotic* multitude of schools and shares his wonder with the readers:

> In Switzerland there are 7000 schools. The number of female and male teachers reaches six thousand and the number of students reaches forty thousand. There, for every three hundred and eighty students there is one school. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.150)

The number of schools, and the adequate number of teachers for students voice new concerns for the educational system of Iran.

Comparative Wonder In Newspapers. Another newspaper published abroad looks at the Russian and French educational expenses through a comparative scope and reflects the importance of education in the West:

> For education the government of Russia spends 2.5 Gherans per person and the government of France 1 Gherans. It is obvious therefore that from the perspective of public education, the Russian government is superior to its French counterpart. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.116)

Education needed not to be only from European countries in order to be reported in newspapers. If a country's educational system resembled Europe's it was newsworthy. Below a newspaper acknowledges Egypt's supremacy in education. The writer marvels at a place where

there are schools for all fields of knowledge and where the sheer number of students evokes his wonder:

> In this country, the number of students studying basic science is one hundred thousand people. There, from every ten thousand people, one hundred and ninety two people go to school. In the Ottoman Empire from every ten thousand people only one hundred people attend school. Had there been no religious practices that did not allow the girls to attend schools […], the predominance of education in Egypt would have been much more than now. Out of one hundred thousand people, only four thousand of them are girls. In Egypt there are special schools for all the fields of knowledge. In addition to military, engineering, medical, law, sciences, linguistics, agriculture and industrial schools, there is also a school for discovering the Copt and Ethiopian languages... the national schools of Egypt have eighty thousand students. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.113)

Wonder is also seen below, when an observer marvels at free schooling in Japan and their concordance with British curriculum:

> One of the schools of that country is the academy of Marine Sciences. The curriculum, discipline and regulations in this school are in complete accordance with British schools in the same field. Second is the free girls school in which girls ages seven to twenty study. The graduates of the school will later be enrolled in government work. (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.114)

Wonder at Others' Education and Mimesis in Newspapers. Regretting the educational situation in Iran, envying the advancement of the *other* and believing in mimesis (Cole, 1966) are also recurrent themes in the newspapers. *Qanun* newspaper is a case in point. Mirza Malkom Khan and a group of liberals published a newspaper that advocated modernization and advancement. The deep regret towards the situation of Iran and embarrassment of the self are seen throughout the lines of this article:

> The greatest hopes are toward the implementation of discipline and the prosperity of our schools. Alas, the attitude of disarray in Iran does not allow these resources of advancement [schools] to get orderly. According to common sense, a student who improves must have certain superiority over certain ignorant people [...]. With thousands of regrets and wonders we see that those esteemed entities that, according to their professors' testimonials, can be the pride of their governments [...] have resorted to kissing the janitors' shoes forty times everyday. (Qanun nespaper, issue 1, p. 2)

Another newspaper, *Hablolmatin* publishes an article from one of its readers which is filled intense wonder. In this article, he has first asserted the importance of knowledge and schooling in advanced countries and has written that in these countries the compulsory and round the clock education has resulted in their triumph and has added that they have named their schools 'factories of human making'. He has thus inferred that, according to the old saying 'step foot in the way that the marchers have gone', it is necessary to reform our schools and Maktabs (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.121).

The comparative and self-critical scope of education is also depicted in Rooh-ol-Ghodos newspaper. In one of its articles, by criticizing the lack of attendance of/towards Iranian schools in comparison with German Schools, especially the German School that was founded in Iran by the support of Eshtesham o Saltanah, the writer analyzes the situation of education in Iran and concludes: 'The schools that the foreigners are in charge of [...] possess all the facilities possible, however the Iranian schools have a calamitous situation'. It asks the government to pay attention to the way the foreign schools are run and apply their policies in Iranian schools (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999, p.122).

The Seminal Effect of Wonderers

A noticeable number of teachers and predecessors of modern school and education in Iran were from the group of elite that had travelled to the West and had developed a unified vision of the marvelous other (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.2). Upon arrival back in Iran they wrote, compiled and translated many scientific and technical books. In fact, Eghbal-Ghasemi writes that the first founder of modern elementary schools in Iran was educated and influenced by the French system of education and by learning the new ways of instruction in Beirut (1996).

Daston and Park believe that the effectual impact of wonder was persistent in intellectual circles well into the Eighteenth century in Europe, 'albeit in different guises to those in which they had previously appeared' (1998). They also believe that the emerging modern sensibilities were shaped by the changing models of eighteenth century curiosity and wonder (Evans & Marr, 2006, p.16&17). Iran's philosophy of education could serve as

an example for their argument: Many of the travelers or students who were dispatched became directly or indirectly involved in the process of education in Iran (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1996) and provided grounds for the foundation of new schools. They reacted to their marvel and wonder by founding schools that greatly resembled the ones they observed in the West. Their wonder and observation constructed a modern Self that was grounded by 'simultaneously identifying Others' (Cole, 1966). Cole also believes that travelers during this time implied, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, that the self could be rescued by imitating of the other (1996, p.36).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Coming from Maktabs, a schooling system that had behind it a shriveled Perennialist approach to education, embraced physical punishment and lacked a structured curriculum and organized textbooks, the travelers set out for Europe. Their previous learning experiences were not of high quality: Clergymen had the role of un-monitored teachers; textbooks were inadequate and corporal punishment always threatened the students. In addition, the supremacy of rote learning and teachers lacking knowledge made the quality of learning experiences even poorer. From such an educational background, travelers set off to the West. What caught their eye alongside other aspects of the modern *Other* was the educational system. The meager education they received in Maktabs vis-à-vis the marvels of new systems of literacy in the west, created wonder and awe. The number of schools, the quality of education, the buildings and specialized textbooks of the schools sparked excitation and wonder (Parsons, 1969) between the travelers and the observed world. The educational advancement of the Other evoked wonder and inquiry in the travelers. Also, as seen in the example of Abbas Mirza and Amirkabir, it guided the education to new horizons, eventually leading to the foundation of new schools in Iran.

Moreover, besides this passion for change and betterment of the schools, observing the *other* opened space for new priorities for education and affected the new educational philosophy that had, besides it passion for change and betterment, a passion for mimesis. Such inclination to imitation could be seen behind the notes that the observers chose to

share with the readers. The students and the newspapers became the tribunes and foundations for change in Iran during the modernization period. Reforming Iran involved an attempt to identify with Europe and follow the 'secret of European strength'; with those involved believing that such resolution would suffice to place Iran on the path toward progress and renewed strength (Ringer, 2001, p. 252, 253).

Reflections: Contemplating with Dewey

The ideas of new systems dawned on Iranian travelers by visiting the schools of countries with value and structure other than Iran's. Observing and wondering at the glamour of the new education urged the observers to modernize education, a goal that was eventually achieved: The first elementary school in Iran was built in 1897 by Mirza Hasan Rushdieh, based on the schools he had observed throughout his training as a teacher in Beirut. Dolatabadi, being educated in a French-based system also helped develop new elementary schools. Moreover, inspired by Rousseau's *Emile,* Talebof, an Iranian educationalist wrote a book called *Ahmad* and discussed his concerns for Iran's education (Eghbal-Ghasemi, 1999). Maktabs, a system that was probably an inheritor of thousands of years of education, gone through many changes and invasions and yet managed to stay standing went under a lot of scrutiny by educational observers. Maktabs were rejected by the dispatched students and they gradually gave their place to modern elementary schools.

The rejection of Maktabs –or any atrophic learning system- has its own benefits and problems: Dewey believes, that rejection of traditional schooling sets new types of difficult educational problems for those who believe in the new type of education. We shall

operate blindly and in confusion, he says, until we thoroughly appreciate that departure from the old solves no problems (1916).

Dewey voices his concern about 'habit of rejection': A philosophy which proceeds on the basis of rejection will neglect philosophical questions aimed at the previous schooling philosophies (1916). Dewey does not want to discard the traditional system overall. He thinks the problem is not the system, but the *experiences* the students are faced within a system. The traditional school he thinks could get along without any consistently developed philosophy of education, but new schools must have a solid reasoning behind their founding (Dewey, 1916). If the new system does not have a clear idea about what its objectives are, it is subject to *haphazard leaps* to the dark unknown:

> Just because progressive schools cannot rely upon established traditions and institutional habits, they must either proceed more or less haphazardly or be directed by ideas which, when they are made articulate and coherent, form a philosophy of education. Revolt against the kind of organization characteristics of the traditional school constitutes a demand for a kind of organization based upon ideas. (P.29)

The revolt against Maktabs and the modernization of schools did not provide an all-in-one-solution in Iran (Ringer, 2001). It also seemed to me that this movement did not change philosophy of education profoundly, as the pedagogical approach remained the same until my time. Although a new system was adopted about a century ago, the pattern of learning in the schools and in my area -literature- remained the same: You are most of the time given a monologue-oriented instruction about the meanings of poetry and you are

asked about them the same way. The poems created to awaken wonder are usually discussed for their literary elements. Memorization is still a way of learning and the sight of wonder-based curriculum is almost barely visible. Wonder is now limited to a few teachable moments and pleasant learning experiences, which can be the case of many educational systems (Opdal, 2001). However, if by any chance, you are faced with one poem that was created to make you wonder, there is a chance that a moment of deep learning can occur, which shows an intriguing potential in the textbooks.

Dewey's appall towards rejection of old schooling seems just when I remember my students, my gray-colored class, an old wooden door, a rusty table and a tough-to-follow curriculum. I saw them one day having difficulty concentrating on their lessons in such a class. So a decision was made: to have the room painted with all the pictures of the new words we had learnt. One wall was covered with a boat and water, and the other had sun with clouds on it. Right there, before our eyes, there was *the* experience: One was repeating the new words, one was drawing crooked lines on the floor and the other was touching up the gray door by splashing the remaining paint. Two out of ten students in that class engaged in street art during their teenage years. One told me the minute he held a brush and colored the wall, he considered himself 'capable'.

I could have neglected the walls, rejected the whole system, and I could have avoided having a wonder-evoking experience for my students. I even could have called the principle an incapable person and could have left the institute, and become a hero for disobeying the authorities. Yet, there is something in me that says 'using the grim walls and the rusty table was the right thing'.

I also feel that the professor mentioned in Prologue had refused to neglect the existent system. He could have rejected standing on the convention-friendly interpretation of the poem. Nevertheless, he was able to create a teachable moment by contemplating the background knowledge of the students. I mentioned earlier that had he not pondered the learning system–that in schools students are taught the Islamic interpretation he could not create a moment of wonder.

Educational philosophy is not a class of poetry, nor is it a gray-walled class with a rusty table to be painted and thus recovered. However, within a greater context of philosophy of education, discarding the existent system and applying a new system might not create an all-in-one solution:

> General principles of the new education do not of themselves solve any of the problems of the actual or practical conduct and management of progressive schools. Rather, they set new problems that have to be worked out on the basis of a new philosophy of experience. The problems are not even recognized, to say nothing of being solved. (Dewey, p.9)

I believe it is important to recognize the problems of any existing philosophy of learning before setting out for a new system. The pattern of educational progress in Iran reminds me again, of Dewey's words:

> My firm belief [is] that the fundamental issue is not of new versus old education nor of progressive against traditional education, but a question of what anything whatever must be to be worthy of the name education... the basic question

> concerns the nature of education with no qualifying adjectives prefixed. What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name of a slogan. It is for this reason alone that I have emphasized the need for a sound philosophy of experience.' (P. 91)

What we need is education, regardless of the new versus old aspect, and something I have interest in: A sound educational philosophy aimed to create wonder, and not a philosophy formed by wondering at the *other*.

Where to From Here?

This study provided a cursory overview of the recurrent themes of educational philosophies in Iran from early years to the pre-modernized eighteenth century Maktabs. It examined the curriculum in Maktabs in order to comprehend the educational philosophy behind such schooling: In fact, it was due to this type of decayed schooling that wonder was evoked when the dispatched students first encountered Western schools. Moreover, examining wonder in different contexts provided the ground to observe the manifestations of wonder in Iran's emerging educational philosophy in nineteenth century. The thesis argued that the evoked wonder in nineteenth century Iranian students (dispatched to advanced countries) influenced the priorities and the new horizons of Iran's modern education.

I believe that any study inquiring about wonder in Educational Philosophy of Iran

will lead to valuable insights. Especially with respect to historical evolution of wonder in communities, it would be insightful to have the answer to the following question: How deep and to what extent did nineteenth century shifts in wonder affect the objectives of education in Iran, and how much change resulted in Iran's educational philosophy?

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