ALI SHARIATI
AND THE MYSTICAL TRADITION OF ISLAM

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis presents Dr. Ali Shariati vis-à-vis the mystical tradition of Islam, focusing particularly on his inner spiritual and mystical orientation. Shariati is well known as a sociologist of religion, as a political activist, and as "the Teacher of Revolution" in Iran. Yet in his much neglected personal writings he reveals quite a different dimension of his being, a dimension which is clearly mystical in character. This study investigates the hidden mystical aspect of Shariati, and analyzes its relation to the other aspects of his personality. What is disclosed is the existence of a continuous struggle between Shariati's intellectual convictions and his spiritual intuitions, or rather between his mind and heart, as well as Shariati's repeated attempts to reconcile these two conflicting dimensions of his person.

RÉSUMÉ

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Cette thèse présente le Docteur Ali Shariati par rapport à la tradition mystique de l'Islam, étant axée surtout sur son orientation spirituelle intérieure et mystique. Shariati est bien connu en tant que sociologue de la religion, activiste politique et "maître à penser de la révolution" en Iran. Pourtant dans ses écrits personnels, trop souvent oubliés, il laisse paraître une toute autre dimension de son être, dimension nettement mystique. Cette étude se penche sur l'aspect mystique caché de Shariati et analyse la relation de celui-ci avec les autres aspects de sa personnalité. Ce qui se dévoile, c'est l'existence d'une lutte continue entre les convictions intellectuelles de Shariati et ses intuitions spirituelles, ou plutôt entre sa tête et son coeur, ainsi que les tentatives répétées de Shariati de concilier ces deux dimensions conflictuelles de sa personne.

DEDICATED WITH UNBOUND REVERENCE

To Shaykh Syed Ali Ashraf who saved me from the confusions and limitations of Shariati's world, and showed me the worlds beyond and above it.

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PREFACE

In dealing with Shariati's works, one encounters a number of problems. The first, and indeed the main problem in trying to understand Shariati stems from the fact that his character is elusive and multi-layered; thus it is hard to ascertain exactly "who" he is. This problem comes in addition to the fact that whereas it is not too difficult to analyze a person's thought, it is extremely difficult to analyze a person's experiences, feelings, sentiments and emotions.

The second problem arises from his style of writing, which is more poetic and sensational than scholarly. Often, when Shariati becomes excited or emotional, he changes the verb tense within a single phrase, or he forgets to include the verb, object, or subject altogether. This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that with the exception of Kavīr all of Shariati's personal writings--which are the main source material for this study--have been put together and published, unedited, after Shariati's death. His style is often didactic and digressive, and he tends to loose track of his original focus. Another stylistic problem is his lack of clarity and precision; Shariati presents views and opinions without specifying whose they are, he even fails to specify if these are his own ideas or those of someone

else which he has incorporated into his own thought. Finally, even when he discusses other theories, he often fails to clarify whether he agrees with them or not.

The third set of problems arise when making translations. It is difficult to convey in English translation the same feeling which is present in the original Persian, especially since Shariati is very particular about the words he chooses to make his point. The freedom of choice which he had is not available to the translator of his works. Therefore, the translations, at times, miss the depth of feeling which is expressed in the original text, and are rather flat in comparison. Another difficulty in translating stems from Shariati's habit of taking a word and assigning it a deeper meaning. For example Shariati uses dūst dāshtan, which normally means "to like," to refer to a state even higher than love. Therefore I have translated it as "selfless Love" (written with a capital "L"), whereas I have translated ʿishq varzīdan as "selfish love" (written with a small "l"). All of the translations in this work are my own, excepting the passages taken from An Approach to Understanding Islam, and Art Awaiting the Saviour, works by Shariati which have already been translated into English. In the translations I have tried as much as possible to follow the original text. I have made free translations only in those cases when a literal translation would have been too awkward and would have obscured the meaning of the text.

The fourth problem in conducting this study is in terms of transliteration. I have used the system of transliteration adopted by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, with certain modifications. The transliterated words in direct quotations, however, have been reproduced according to the original author's system. I have used the commonly accepted English spelling of Ali Shariati's name rather than its exact transliterated form. I have also used the recognized English spelling for relatively common words such as Iran, Islam, Sufi, Sufism, and for the proper names of well-known figures. Finally, the Persian names of authors who have written English works appear in the Bibliography as published by the original authors.

Shariati mentions numerous people in his writings. It has proved impossible to identify all of them; however, most of the names have been identified in the notes at the end of each chapter. Since Shariati wrote these names as they sound in their original languages, without using any specific system of transliteration, there is no way to be sure of the exact spelling of some of the lesser-known figures.

Finally, there is the "problem" of the mysterious Professor M.E. Chandel. As I was nearing the completion of this thesis I asked my friend, Mr. Maasoumi, to help me find the identity of Chandel, whose name appears several times in Shariati's works. Shariati quotes from Chandel

directly and indirectly, and in Kavīr introduces him as one of his role models. In addition, Shariati gives a detailed biography of Chandel in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī. Mr. Maasuomi informed me that Chandel is a fictional personality created by Shariati, for reasons unknown. According to his account, Dr. Karīm-i Surūsh, a prominent contemporary Iranian thinker and a committed supporter of Shariati, declared in a private conversation in Tehran in mid-1981 that there is no real person by the name of Chandel and that he is Shariati's invention. From that time on, Shariati's supporters and sympathizers in Europe and the United States have conducted numerous investigations to identify Chandel, but have been disappointed in their attempts. They have been unable to trace him either through his name or through the title of his books which have been mentioned by Shariati. Nor have they been able to gather any information from Tunisian intellectuals. (Shariati claimed that Chandel was born in Algeria, but was raised, and had lived in Tunisia.)

While conducting my own research, I had already noticed several discrepancies in reference to Chandel. In relevant footnotes Shariati writes his name as M.E. Chandel,[1] simply as Chandel,[2] as A.H.D. Chandell,[3] as Shand,[4] and finally as Schandel.[5] Thus there was already some confusion surrounding his identity. To be certain, however, I organized my own search under author and title, and also contacted several Tunisian friends, but with no

result. Meanwhile Mr. Maasoumi informed me that Yann Richard, in Abstracta Iranica,[6] in reviewing Shariati's collected works Volume 13, second edition (Hubūt dar Kavīr), has expressed his uncertainty about the identity of Chandel by putting a question mark after his name. With these considerations in mind, I returned to Chandel's biography which was given by Shariati, and observed that not only is there an amazing similarity between Chandel's background and that of Shariati, in terms of their heritage,[7] the year of their birth, 1933, is the same as well. In addition, Shariati's pen name was Sham (meaning candle) which, in French, is written as Chandelle. Yet when written in Persian Chandel and Chandelle sound the same. Thus taking account of all these factors, it seems most probable to conclude that Chandel is Shariati's self-projection.

NOTES TO PREFACE

1. Ali Shariati, Guftuguhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 878 and 1013.
2. Ibid., p. 713.
3. Ali Shariati, Mā va Iqbāl, p. 135.
4. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 893.
5. Ali Shariati, Guftuguhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1066.
6. Yann Richard, in Abstracta Iranica, #7, p. 151.
7. See Appendix II of this work.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, ALI SHARIATI: A BURNING SOUL IN THE BONDAGE OF A MILITANT IDEOLOGY

Ali Shariati is perhaps one of the most influential social thinkers in the Muslim world who, despite his widespread teachings, has remained unknown even to most of his followers.[1] His unexpected death deprived him of witnessing the results of his work and effort, which to some extent was crystalized in the Iranian revolution of 1979. His death also deprived his friends and followers of knowing him better, since had he lived and participated in the revolution it is likely that he would have become the first president of Iran, and history would have taken a different course.

Shariati clearly advocated a social revolution, so much so that no one could imagine him as anything other than a freedom fighter. Yet he had another aspect which deserves attention, an aspect which was completely different, yet must be seen in complimentarity to his popular image. This aspect, although hidden under the stormy clouds of revolutionary ideas, was nonetheless present and shining. It gave meaning to Shariati's political theories and protected him from becoming an

empty utilitarian or pragmatist. It is for these reasons that we should study the hidden aspect of Shariati, his mystical dimenesion, and in its light view his political teachings.

Unfortunately Shariati has been misunderstood and to a large extent mistreated by modern scholars, intellectuals and even his own followers. Some Muslim critics, representing a mystical trend in Muslim scholarship, have accused him of being unintellectual, and having a "scanty and superficial" knowledge of Islam.[2] Other critics have accused him of being a reactionary Muslim who distorted Marxism and talked about revolution without understanding it.[3] Others have admired him and portrayed him as a pragmatic revolutionary figure who used Islam as a means to bring about revolution, without necessarily being deeply devoted to Islam,[4] and have even speculated about the influence of Christian Liberation Theology on Shariati and have suggested that he was trying to produce an Islamic Liberation Theology.[5] Lastly there are his admirers and his followers that have seen him as a devout Muslim, who after studying Islam and modern Western thought, came to the conclusion that there was no way for man to live other than as a believer, a believer in God. This prelimenary conclusion, in their view led Shariati to a series of progressively deeper insights concerning man and religion: firstly, that Islam was the best and most complete religion for man: secondly, that true Islam

was preserved in Shi^{c}ism: thirdly, that true Shi^{c}ism was represented in Twelve-Imam Shi^{c}ism: fourthly and most significantly, that ^{c}Alid Shi^{c}ism (the followers of ^{c}Alī) as opposed to Safavid Shi^{c}ism (establishment oriented Shi^{c}ism), was the true and most perfect form of Twelve-Imam Shi^{c}ism.

Most of these views of Shariati have some element of truth in them, yet at the same time are incomplete and one-sided. Their common short coming is that they fail to grasp the entire range of Shariati's thought--and more importantly--they fail to grasp Shariati as a man, as the being behind his social theories.

My intention in writing this work is not to defend Shariati from valid criticisms. His thought was at times limited, contradictory, even confused. Yet many critics, familiar with only one manifestation of his thought, have used facile terms to describe Shariati such as "utilitarian," "pragmatic," "unintellectual," "reactionary," and have even implied that Shariati was dishonest.[6] These terms and statements point beyond Shariati's social theory to himself. It is my hope to present Shariati in his entirety and thus challenge the reader, both the critic and the admirer, to understand him as a whole, to gain insight into his character, his spirit, his inner world. For it is only after one has tried to come to terms with all elements of his person

that one can make an honest and valid assessment of his thought, let alone of his character.

To understand Shariati we should consider how all the elements of his thought and person, from his work as a social activist to his mystical reflections, fit together. Shariati's mystical aspect does not appear in his regular works, rather, it shows itself in a category of writings which he terms kavīriyāt.[7] Though these writings are few, in comparison to the rest of his works, they preserve the reflections which flowed from Shariati's heart and soul, rather than from his mind. In referring to his life and works, Shariati writes:

> "My existence" is only one "word" and "my living" is only the "saying" of that word, but in three ways: lecturing, teaching, and writing. That which only people like is lecturing; that which both people and I myself like is teaching; that which makes [only] me satisfied--when I do it I feel that I live rather than work--is writing. My writings are also of three types: "those pertaining to society" (اجتماعیات), "those pertaining to Islam" (اسلامیات), and kavīriyāt. That which only people like is "those [writings] pertaining to Islam," that which both people and I myself like is "those [writings] pertaining to society," and that which makes [only] me satisfied--when I do it feel that I live rather than work or write--is kavīriyāt.[8]

Thus it is clear that the kavīriyāt writings are the best source for understanding the essential Shariati, the man behind his social theories, revolutionary ideology and

popular image, the man who lived and experienced life deeply and profoundly.

After reading Kavīr and Hubūt (the two main kavīriyāt works) one is quickly lead to conclude that Shariati was a great soul who found himself compelled to be a political activist and revolutionary intellectual by the external pressures and expectations of his society. Yet it is only after careful re-readng that one reaches a clearer understanding of Shariati and realizes that these pressures and expectations were internalized to such a degree that one can no longer call them external factors. In other words, Shariati was so convinced that the central truth of Islam was the message of social justice, and that revolution and martyrdom was the only path to bring social justice into existence, that he had no choice but to be a revolutionary thinker.

This latter passage was a description of Shariati's mind and intellectual convictions. Yet he was also a sensitive being, full of artistic subtleties, fine feelings and impressions. His soul was on fire, yearning to find peace in God. This yearning and burning, although ignored and even suppressed by Shariati, made him undergo profound experiences which crossed into the realm of mysticism. He was also familiar with Islamic mystical writings; he admired great saints and drew inspiration from them. In his own life experiences, Shariati came in contact with many major intellectuals and scholars; yet

the one who influenced him the most was the late Professor Louis Massignon, whose contemplative character and noble soul impressed Shariati so deeply that, in referring to Massingon, Shariati writes: "Verily this is his [Massignon's] heart that is palpitating in my breast."[9]

Thus we see in Shariati two categories of thought, activity and experience: the first arising primarily from his mind and intellect, the second from his spiritual sensitivities. What becomes apparent in kavīriyāt is that these two aspects of Shariati were in constant interaction and confrontation, and the outcome of the struggle was usually in favor of his mind. The reason for this lay in an aspect of Shariati's thought which we mentioned earlier: his intellectual conviction that the central truth of Twelve-Imam Shi ism was the message of social justice and revolution. This conviction was so strong that he interpreted everything in its light. Thus he not only interpreted Islam, but even the most profound and subtle experiences of his soul in such a way as to fit within the frame-work provided by his mental convictons. To be more precise, it was not Shariati who interpreted the world to serve his ideology in a utilitarian way, rather it was his ideology--his convictions and his firm belief in his faith, as he understood it--that moulded his insights and experiences to fit within its perspective.

To understand how Shariati was able to interpret, even misinterpret, his life experiences and thoughts in

this way, we should realize that he saw himself as an intellectual and believed it was his task to convey the message of Islam, i.e. the message of social justice and revolution. In his view:

> ...an intellectual's job is different than that of a philosopher, a theologian (ʿālīm), and mystic (ʿārif). An intellectual is not a person who states what he perceives as truths, rather he responds to what people need. His job is a prophetic work, conveying the "message," what is useful for "guiding" the tribe, not only for work. The job of an intellectual is very important, evasive, and significant (خطير). Sometimes his reliance on "truth" is easily turned into betrayal [that is] if this "truth" diverts people's attention from the vital and urgent realities. This is [what could be called] "deceiving truths."[10]

Thus it was that a burning soul, a soul which could have roamed the world, as many great saints had done, in the mystic quest for God, was destined to be trapped in the bondage of a militant ideology.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Apart from the fact that all of the publications by his followers and sympathizers deal with Shariati's social and political teachings and lack any reference to his personal writings, even those who do refer to Shariati's discussion of spirituality and mysticism lack the proper understanding of its significance for Shariati. Here are two examples to illustrate this point. The first comes from my own personal experience. In 1982-3, when I was studying in the University of California, Riverside, I met a long-time sympathizer and advocate of Shariati, who had apparently known Shariati while in Iran. One day he complained to me about this "vague notion of ʿIrfān" to which Shariati referred in his writings. "Whereas I fully understand and support equality and freedom," he said, "I cannot understand what is ʿIrfān and why it is so significant that Shariati puts it prior to the other concepts in the title of his work ʿIrfān, Equality and Freedom."

The second example is that of Majid Sharif. Mr. Sharif has been a supporter of Shariati from as early as 1968. He has published many articles on Shariati, and was the chief editor on the editorial board which oversaw the publication of thirty volumes of Shariati's collected works in Iran. Yet in a recent interview in Sweden (Hobout: a Persian political-cultural review, No. 1, June 1990, Goteborg, Sweden) he made the following remarks. After admitting that Shariati's thought had an "ʿIrfāni substance" to it (p. 23), he argues that Shariati had also "a kind of laic [secular or undenominational] tendency" (p. 27). In this laicité "instead of seeking the justification of what is on the earth in the sky, we bring that which has been treated as heavenly--including ʿIrfān--to earth."(p. 30) Sharif concludes that one of Shariati's contributions was that he "brought ʿIrfān from the sky to the earth and gave a tangible human and political aspect to it."(p. 30) Yet in the light of this study, we would argue that Sharif has socialized and politicized Shariati's concept of and orientation towards ʿIrfān, which not only limits its scope, but fails to recognize that Shariati's authentic "I" (as we will see in Chapter VIII of this study) was a purely spiritual one and absolutely independent of social and political concerns.

After citing this misinterpretation, however, we must also recognize the contribution which Majid Sharif has made in regard to understanding Shariati. Sharif's previous remarks come in response to the question whether or not Shariati's thought has been influential after the

Iranian Revolution of 1979. Sharif's answer is basically no. The reason for this, he argues, is that Shariati's thought has an ʿIrfānī substance and therefore unless one has "attained" to that substance one cannot attain the level of creativity necessary in order to advance the influence Shariati's thought. It is unclear whether Sharif means that one must understand this ʿIrfānī substance or actually "rise" to this level in terms of one's experience and state of spiritual maturity. Sharif, more than any other scholar who has written on Shariati, is to be credited for having recognized two important points: firstly, that Shariati has this ʿIrfānī or mystical aspect, and secondly, that one needs to understand and/or possess it oneself if one is to advance Shariati's thought. However, from Sharif's misinterpretation of Shariati, we can infer that although he has understood this essential characteristic of Shariati, he himself is not firmly rooted in it.

2. Hadi Sharifi, book review On the Sociology of Islam, in Muslim Education Quarterly, pp. 89-92.

3. M. Ārmān, "Prublimātīk-i Vābastagī," in Nazm-e Novin, pp. 37-8.

4. Kamal Abdel-Malik, Towards an Islamic Liberation Theology: Ali Shari ati and His Thought.

5. Ibid.

6. See for example works by ʿAlī-i Mir Fitrus such as Pindār-i yak "naqd" va naqd-i yak "pindār".

7. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. ix. Kavīriyāt is the plural of kavīrī, meaning that which pertains to kavir or the desert. Kavir is also the title of Shariati's autobiography.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 88.

10. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhāʾī, p. 1267.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY[1]

Ali Shariati, commonly known in Iran as Dr. Shariati, was born in December 1933, in Mazinan, a small village in the province of Khurasan, in the north-eastern part of Iran. His father, Taqī-i Sharīʿatī, was a famous, though unconventional, cleric and scholar,[2] who came from a long line of distinguished men of learning. Shariati's ancestors were reknown both for their piety and their knowledge of Islam. Furthermore, it was a tradition among his ancestors to leave the city and the centers of learning at the end of their scholarly careers, and devote themselves to the contemplative life in the seclusion of Mazinan. In his autobiographical work Kavīr, Shariati gives moving accounts of his ancestors' lives, and even recounts miracles ascribed to them by the villagers.[3]

Taqī-i Sharīʿatī, however, discontinued this tradition and took up residence in the city of Mashhad where he eventually founded the "Center for the Propagation of Islamic Truth." Here he taught Qur'an and other Islamic subjects, yet from an untraditional perspective. Taqī-i Sharīʿatī's approach to Qur'anic exegesis was to examine the circumstances of the specific

revelation and interpret the text in its historical setting.[4] This approach was not unknown among the ʿulamā, however what made his approach unique was the high degree of emphasis which he put on historical circumstances.

Ali Shariati learned Arabic and Qur'anic recitation and exegesis from his father. He completed his primary school and high school education in Mashhad, and eventually entered Mashhad Teacher Training College, graduating in 1953. Shariati was still in high school when he joined the "Center for the Propagation of Islamic Truth," and he soon became its most active member by lecturing and publishing articles on Islamic issues. It was through his activities in this center that Shariati came into contact with the "God-Worshipping Socialists' Movement," and eventually joined it. The influence of this movement on Shariati is evident in his first major publication, entitled "Islam the Median School," published in 1955. In the introduction to this work, Shariati publicized the ideology of the God-Worshipping Socialists by presenting a summary of their basic principles. Three years later Shariati published a book called Abū Dharr which was a translation of an Arabic work by Jūdat al-Saḥḥār. In this book Shariati refers to Abu Dharr as "the first God-worshipping socialist."[5]

In 1956 Shariati entered Mashhad University, College of Literature to pursue a Master's degree in foreign languages (Arabic and French). The years in which

Shariati was studying in Mashhad, as un undergraduate and later as a Master's student, witnessed the height of the struggle of the Iranian people, which culminated in the nationalization of the oil industry under the leadership of Dr. Muṣaddiq (Mossadegh). The C.I.A.-sponsored coup in 1953, which reversed the course of events and resulted in the overthrow of Musaddiq's government, was followed by a long period of naked repression. The National Resistance Movement, which was the main opposition group, came under severe persecution, and in 1957 Shariati, who had by now joined this organization, was arrested along with his father and twelve other people from Khurasan. They were sent to Tehran, imprisoned and tortured, but eventually released.[6]

Despite these disruptions in his life, Shariati completed his studies and in 1959 won a state scholarship to study at the Sorbonne in France as a result of the high marks he had obtained for his Master's degree. It is commonly believed, due at least in part to Shariati's own emphasis, that at the Sorbonne he studied sociology and history of religion. However, his Ph.D. dissertation was found to be on medieval Persian philology.[7]

While in France Shariati came into contact with Professor Louis Massignon, who triggered in Shariati a new, inner transformation. Massignon exerted such a

powerful spiritual influence on Shariati's soul that Shariati writes,

> I cannot imagine what my life would have been had I not known Massignon, without him, what an impoverished soul, a shrivelled heart, a mundane mind, and a stupid world view I would have had... His heart now throbs in my breast.[8]

Shariati also added that the beauty of Massignon's spirit had a greater impact on him than the Professor's scientific and intellectual genius. Shariati, in addition, met Jean-Paul Sartre and Georges Gurvitch (the one-time comrade of Lenin and Trotsky[9]) and apparently worked with Gurvitch as his teaching assistant. He later referred to Sartre and Gurvitch as those who "taught me how to think."[10]

Apart from his academic pursuits, Shariati spent much of his time as a political activist. He was an active member of the Iranian Students' Confederation which opposed the Pahlavi regime. He was also one of the founders of the Liberation Movement outside of Iran (a movement whose leaders later became members of the first revolutionary government in Iran after the 1979 revolution). Meanwhile, Shariati kept close association with the National Liberation Front which was fighting for the independence of Algeria, and wrote articles for Al-Mujāhid, the Front's publication. He was also very active in support of the Palestinian struggle.

Upon his graduation in 1964, Shariati returned to Iran, but was arrested at the border and imprisoned for six months. After his release he was denied permission to teach at a university level, and so Shariati started to teach in a rural high school in Khurasan. In 1966 he was offered a teaching post as an assitant professor at Mashhad University. There Shariati organized a course on the history of religions, whose great popularity alarmed the authorities to the extent that they terminated his job.

During this time, a newly formed center in Tehran for research on, and the advocation of Islam, called Ḥussainīya-yi Irshād, attracted Shariati's attention. He moved to Tehran in 1967, and in the six years that followed, his name became synonimous with Ḥussainīya-yi Irshād. It was at this institution that Shariati found the relative freedom which he needed in order to organize public lectures and academic courses on Islam and related issues, and to present them in a manner similar to that of Sir Muhammad Iqbal, i.e., redefining Islam in the light of modern social sciences. Iqbal, as a Muslim who had combined the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of his personality, was an attractive figure for Shariati, and his influence on Shariati's life was permanent.

Shariati's courses in Irshād received unprecented popularity. For instance, six thousand students attended his courses in the summer of 1973.[11] This popularity did

not go unnoticed by the governmental authorities, and consequently Ḥussainīya-yi Irshād was closed in September 1973 and Shariati went into hiding.

In November 1974, in order to gain the release of his father who had been taken hostage by SAVAK (the Iranian secret police), Shariati turned himself in. He was held in prison for five months, during which time he was placed in solitary confinement and was severely tortured. Finally he was released due to international pressure on the Iranian government, pressure mounted primarialy by the Algerian government and the community of French intellectuals. Yet even after Shariati's release, he did not gain freedom, as he was virtually under house arrest.

On May 16, 1977, Shariati managed to deceive the governmental authorities[12], obtained a new passport and escaped to Europe. However, he was found dead in his apartment near London, three days later. The Royal Coroner reported the cause of death to be a massive heart attack. Yet since Shariati's family did not permit a complete autopsy, this verdict remains tentative.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. In this chapter we limit ourselves to a more or less chronological presentation of the main events in Shariati's life. A discussion of his more personal and spiritual dimensions, which were alluded to in the Introduction, is omitted here, as it is the subject of the entire thesis, and will be explored in detail throughout most of the following chapters.

2. Ervand Abrahamian, The Iranian Mojahedin, p. 105.

3. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, pp. 5-13.

4. A. Sachedina, "Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in Voices of Resurgent Islam, John L. Esposito ed., p. 193.

5. Yādnāma-yi Shahīd-ı Jāvīd ʿAlī-i Sharīʿatī, pp. 8-9. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī was a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, known particularly for his asceticism and his insistence on the just distribution of wealth.

6. Ibid., pp. 13-15.

7. See Chapter III, Previous Works, p. 24 and p.29, note 44.

8. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 88.

9. Ibid., p. 84.

10. Ibid.

11. Suroosh Irfani, Revolutionary Islam in Iran, p. 120.

12. Shariati's full name was ʿAlī-i Sharīʿatī-i Mazīnānī, but everyone knew him only as Ali Shariati. When he applied for a passport he used ʿAlī-i Mazīnānī as his name, and apparently since there was no record of Mazinani in the files of the police the passport was issued to him. In Iran, this version of Shariati's story is commonly held to be true. According to another version, however, SAVAK knew the identity of ʿAlī-i Mazīnānī, but allowed Shariati to get the passport and leave Iran in order to assassinate him outside of Iran, as they were afraid of the reaction it might cause if they killed him inside of the country.

CHAPTER III

PREVIOUS WORKS ON SHARIATI

No independent, critical study on Shariati has yet been done, as far as I am aware. There are, however, a number of written works on Shariati which appear either as sections of books, as book reviews or as independent articles analyzing and/or criticizing his thought. These works include articles written by scholars such as Hamid Algar, Yann Richard, Ervand Abrahamian, Shahrough Akhavi, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Mangol Bayat-Philipp and Daryush Shayegan.[1] Excepting the first two (Algar and Richard) whose analysis we shall discuss in more detail, none of the subsequent authors mention anything regarding Shariati's personal spiritual or mystical tendencies.[2]

The first scholar to introduce Shariati to Western readers was Hamid Algar, in 1979. He translated eight of Shariati's lectures and published them, along with an introduction written by somebody "who was close to Shariati" (Gholam Abbas Tavassoli) and his own forword, under the title On the Sociology of Islam.

In his brief forword, Algar states that although the Shi^{c}i ^{c}ulamā have the leadership of the Islamic movement in Iran, a number of intellectuals have played "an

important role" in that movement. Among these intellectuals who "endeavored to integrate the fruits of modern learning with traditional belief and thus evolve a new Islamic idiom capable of securing the allegiance of the secularly educated," Algar singles out Muhandis Bazargan[3] and Ali Shariati as having been "particularly significant."[4]

In introducing Shariati, Algar's tone is sympathetic, yet scholarly and objective. He realizes that the topic of this book could raise questions about the notion of Islamic sociology and Shariati's qualifications for formulating such a sociology.[5] Algar states that Shariati was primarily a sociologist who "went to Paris to continue his studies in sociology and related fields,"[6] and "pursued the evolution of his distinctive theories on the sociology and history of Islam"[7] later on at Ḥusaynīya-yi Irshād in Iran; yet despite this, Algar also confesses that this book (On the Sociology of Islam) "does not pretend to offer a complete scheme of Islamic sociology, nor did Shariati himself claim to have developed a complete scheme."[8] Nevertheless, Algar claims that he is presenting Shariati's work "as a stimulus to thought among Muslims"[9], since he believes that Shariati's "original and courageous mind"[10] had enabled him to formulate "a number of totally fresh concepts relating to the sociology of Islam,"[11] which are reflected in this book.

Algar's second work on Shariati is contained in his book The Roots of the Islamic Revolution. This book is a collection of four lectures on the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which he delivered at the Muslim Institute in London six months after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and published in 1983. The third lecture is entitled "Islam as ideology: the thought of Ali Shari ati." In this work Algar continues in the same sympathetic tone as was present in his first work, calling Shariati "the major ideologue of the Islamic Revolution."[12] He expands on the themes which he had briefly mentioned in his previous work.

According to Algar it was Shariati who paved the way for a majority of educated Iranian youth to follow the leadership of Āyatullāh Khumaynī and for this reason Shariati was "one of the major figures in the Revolution, second only to Ayatullah Khomeini himself."[13] Algar also reiterates that Shariati "continued his formal studies in sociology"[14] in Paris, and explains that there he engaged himself in "a profound and systematic study of Marxism."[15] While admitting that "this debate and dialogue with Marxism left a certain imprint"[16] on Shariati, Algar nonetheless maintains that this imprint was not in terms of "absorbing any ideas of Marxism," rather it was "merely in the sense of confronting certain problems at the forefront of Marxist dialectic in order to be able thoroughly to refute them."[17] Thus according to Algar,

Shariati's sociology was not influenced by Marxism, rather it was a revolutionary Islamic sociology:

> [Shariati] made it plain that his sociology was committed, that it drew its values from Islam and had as its purpose the correct understanding of the contemporary reality of Iranian Islamic society, and that it has as its purpose the change and reform of that society.[18]

Another crucial factor in Shariati's sociology, according to Algar, was his active involvement in the political struggles of his time; Shariati had a "living commitment" and his sociology was formulated in the process of a revolutionary struggle.[19] Finally, it was Shariati's "systematic presentation of Islam in a manner and idiom which was able to secure the loyalty to Islam of large numbers of young educated people in Iran who had been alienated by secularism and materialism"[20] that contributed to his popularity among the younger generation in Iran. Algar adds another interesting remark in connection to Shariati's influence. Although it is well known that Shariati's supporters were mainly from among the secularly educated youth, Algar informs us that Shariati had "a great influence upon the younger ulama" as well.[21]

Concerning the possible influences on Shariati, Algar agrees that Shariati had "assimilated Western philosophy, sociology and thought,"[22] but he rejects the view that Shariati had borrowed from these other systems of thought.

He admits, however, that Shariati derived some of his concepts from Franz Fanon:

> In Shari ati's case, what he derived from and maybe carried over into his own thought from the works of Fanon was the notion of alienation, the notion of cultural, psychological alienation and damage brought about by imperialism.[23]

Although Algar states that "Shari ati's main strength lay in his exposition of sociology," he is also aware that Shariati had some exposure to metaphysics; but, observes Algar, in this realm Shariati had "a rather weaker grasp."[24] This point comes up during the discussion which follows that lecture, in response to a comment from the audience that Shariati was a "crypto-Sufi." Algar points out that Shariati never really explained what he understood to be the Sufi view regarding tawḥīd, therefore it was difficult to compare his own understanding of tawḥīd with that of Sufis.[25] Furthermore, Algar argues, Shariati "understands Sufism to be equivalent to Ḥallāj, and Ḥallāj is by no means a typical representative of Sufi tradition."[26] The identification of Ḥallāj with Sufism, Algar argues, arose from Louis Massignon's influence on Shariati and the fact that Massignon "sought to promote him [Ḥallāj] as a typical representative of Islamic spirituality."[27]

Thus Algar's presentation of Shariati, as revealed in these two works, focuses mainly on Shariati's political and social teachings and portrays Shariati as a Muslim

sociologist whose original work in the field of the sociology of Islam was a fundamental factor in bringing a vast number of secularly educated youth back into the fold of Islam and in preparing them for the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Nikkie Keddie, following Algar, was also one of the first scholars to introduce Shariati to Western readers. In her book Roots of Revolution, which was published in 1981, Keddie includes an article by Yann Richard entitled "Contemporary Shi^{c}i Thought" in which there is a fairly lengthy discussion of Shariati.[28] Richard's presentation focuses mainly on Shariati's concept of ^{c}Alid and Safavid Shi^{c}ism.[29] Richard reproduces Shariati's table of comparison which gives a quick description of, and contrast between, the principle elements which comprise each type of Shi^{c}ism. This enables the Western reader to understand Shariati's views in contrast to the dominant traditional view of Shi ism prevalent among Shi^{c}i thinkers. Although Yann Richard states that he has seen Shariati's autobiography Desert (Kavīr), which he observes is "composed in lovely poetic language,"[30] Richard's discussion--like that of all the subsequent scholars--focuses solely on Shariati's public lectures. In a later publication L'Islam Chi'ite,[31] he also refers to Bā mukhātabhā-yi Āshnā, which he has apparently read. Yet again he concentrates on political themes, in this

citation discussing Shariati's position vis-à-vis the Mujāhidīn-i Khalq.

After admitting that "the style and the context of Shariati's lectures did not encourage literary or scientifically argued works,"[32] Richard goes on to give his assessment of Shariati. His appraisal is basically sympathetic and positive. Shariati's success in attracting students and young Muslims, Richard maintains, lies in "the originality of his position."[33] This originality, he explains, had to do with Shariati's acquiring first hand "knowledge of modern ideologies...without ceasing to be a believer."[34] This unique combination enabled Shariati to become the eminent speaker of--and for--those "Iranians who had only recently come to modern studies and who wished to understand, in order to refute, the ideologies of Western aggressors."[35] Shariati became "the ideologist of the revolt"[36] largely by formulating his concept of ᶜAlid Shiᶜism. In this way Shariati not only "detached himself from the petrified official Islam rejected by idealist youth," but he also "brought a new and combative meaning to Shiᶜi concepts,"[37] which contributed to his becoming "the teacher of revolution."[38]

Richard admires Shariati's "energetic thought" as an Iranian solution to the problems of Iranian intellectuals,[39] intellectuals who "found in Shariati a revolutionary Iranian Shiᶜi response:"[40] Nevertheless he

draws our attention to the weaknesses in Shariati's work. Richard's first criticism concerns Shariati's selective use of information. Although his familiarity with Western culture and religions was systematic, the images which Shariati conveyed to his listeners were often one-sided and incomplete. Richard writes that Shariati's "knowledge of the West was schematic,"[41] yet he not only failed to reveal to his audience his great respect for the "Christian mystic Massignon" or openly admire the "democratic ideals of many Western countries, but some of his polemics indicate that Shariati was not interested enough in the systems he combatted to study them closely."[42] According to Richard, another of Shariati's weaknesses lies in his neglect of Iran's history, and in his failure to make an accurate analysis of the role which the ʿulamā have played in the politics of Iran after the Safavids. Richard's final criticism is Shariati's lack of precision:

> Shariati...takes the traditional theory of ijtihad, mixing it with democratic principles, but makes no historical or theological analysis, so that it is hard to know his precise position.[43]

Richard also is credited as having made the surprising discovery that Shariati's actual Ph.D. Dissertation was in the field of Persian philology.[44] Yet Richard admits that "this Muslim sociologist" had "studied religious history and sociology" as well.[45]

Overall we see that Yann Richard's presentation, like that of Algar and other scholars, emphasizes Shariati's political and social thought. Although he has seen some of Shariati's personal writings and describes Shariati as a "religious and somewhat mystic spirit"[46] and as "a person whose courage and spiritual qualities demand respect,"[47] Richard does not go further than giving us only this vague allusion to Shariati's spiritual dimension.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. See the following works:

Hamid Algar, preface to his translation of On the Sociology of Islam, by Ali Shari ati, and The Roots of the Islamic Revolution.

Yann Richard, "Comtemporary Shi i Thought," in Roots of Revolution, by Nikki Keddie, pp. 202-229, and L'Islam Chi'ite.

Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shari ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus eds., Islam, Politics and Social Movements, pp. 289-297, and The Iranian Mojahedin, pp. 105-125.

Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, pp. 143-158, and "Shariati's Social Thought," in Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi ism from Quietism to Revolution, Nikki R. Keddie ed., pp. 125-144.

Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Ali Shari ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in Voices of Resurgent Islam, John L. Esposito ed., pp. 191-214.

Mangol Bayat-Philipp, "Shi ism in Contemporary Iranian Politics: The Case of Ali Shari ati," in Towards a Modern Iran, Studies in Thought, Politics and Society, Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim, pp. 155-168.

Daryush Shayegan, Qu'est-ce qu'une révolution religieuse?, Chapter V, Section 4, "Un Idéologue type: 'Ali Shari'ati,", pp. 216-231.

2. Of these latter scholars (Abrahamian, Akhavi, Sachedina and Bayat-Philipp) Sachedina is the only one to even mention a work from Shariati's personal writings. A student and acquaintance of Shariati, Sachedina was given a copy of Kavīr by Shariati with the following inscription: "It is an account of a distressed and confined soul, which should be read with patience...". Although Sachedina refers to Kavīr in his article ("Ali Shari ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," Voices of Resurgent Islam, see his note 2, p. 213), it is only in order to follow the process of Shariati's "intellectual development." We should also note that whereas Akhavi, in one of the articles cited above ("Shariati's Social Thought," pp. 143-144), refers to Shariati's deep personal piety, he does not make any mention of Shariati's spiritual or mystical tendencies.

We should also add that in his introduction to the second edition of Kavīr, p. x, Shariati mentions that an Iranian scholar by the name of Dr. Badi , who resides in France, has written a critical review of Kavīr in a French journal, Le Carrefour. However, in this article Dr. Badi

describes Kavīr as "black magic:" magic for the power of the "pen" (meaning Shariati's style of writing is magical), yet black for the "impression that it leaves on the sentiments of the reader." (The quotations are from Shariati.)

3. Muhandis Bazargan was Iran's first Prime Minister after the Islamic Revolution. For more information about him see Ervand Abrahamian, The Iranian Mojahedin, pp. 81-83, and Yann Richard's article in Nikki Keddie's Roots of Revolution, especially pp. 213-215.

4. Hamid Algar, preface to On the Sociology of Islam, by Ali Shariati, p. 5.

5. For the discussion on what is Islamic sociology see Islamic Sociology: An Introduction, by Ihyas Ba-Yunus and Farid Ahmad.

6. Hamid Algar, preface to On the Sociology of Islam, by Ali Shariati, p. 6.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

10. Ibid., p. 6.

11. Ibid.

12. Hamid Algar, The Roots of the Islamic Revolution, p. 71.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 74.

15. Ibid., p. 75.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 76.

19. Ibid., pp. 95-96.

20. Ibid., p. 80.

21. Ibid., p. 88.

22. Ibid., p. 94.

23. Hamid Algar, The Roots of the Islamic Revolution, p. 96.

24. Ibid., p. 86.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj was a mystic originally from Tur (Fars, Persia) who also resided in Basra, Baghdad and Khuzistan (in Khurasan). He was famous for his ecstatic utterance "I am the Truth." He was crucified as a heretic in Baghdad, 309 A.H./ 922 C.E. Ḥallāj was the life study of Massignon. It is true that Shariati did refer to Ḥallāj in his thought and works; however, I disagree with this statement made by Algar on the basis of Shariati's wide exposure to and appreciation of mystics and mystical literature. See Chapter VII, Shariati, a Mystic?, which follows in this work.

27. Ibid.

28. See Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, pp. 202-229. There seems to be some confusion about this article, since it is the only article in this book that is written by someone other then Keddie. Consequently those referring to this article have mistakenly attributed it to Keddie. For example see Hamid Dabashi, "Ali Shariʿati's Islam: Revolutionary Uses of Faith in a Post-Traditional Society," The Islamic Quarterly, pp. 203-22, and also Kamal Abdel-Malek, Towards an Islamic Liberation Theology: Ali Shariʿati and His Thought.

29. By ʿAlid Shiʿism Shariati is referring to the followers of ʿAlī, those who fight for justice and against oppression. By Safavid Shiʿism Shariati is referring to establishment-oriented Shiʿism, religion as the tool of the dominant power.

30. Yann Richard, in Roots of Revolution, by Nikki Keddie, p. 216.

31. Yann Richard, L'Islam Chi'ite, p. 225, footnote 13.

32. Yann Richard, in Roots of Revolution, by Nikki Keddie, p. 216.

33. Ibid., p. 222.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., p. 215.

37. Yann Richard, in Roots of Revolution, by Nikki Keddie, p. 220.

38. During and immediately after the revolution people referred to Shariati as the teacher of revolution. There is even a song in honor of Shariati which was widely distributed and which bears this title.

39. Yann Richard, in Roots of Revolution, by Nikki Keddie, p. 225.

40. Ibid., pp. 222-223.

41. Ibid., p. 223.

42. Ibid., p. 224.

43. Ibid., p. 225.

44. Shahrough Akhavi, "Shariati's Social Thought," Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution, Nikki R. Keddie ed., p. 126.

45. Yann Richard, in Roots of Revolution, by Nikki Keddie, p. 215.

46. Ibid., p. 217.

47. Ibid., p. 223.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOURCES

The main source material for the present study consists of Shariati's personal writings. His polemical works, however, which were delivered as public lectures or as formal instruction in the University of Mashhad and were later transcribed by his students and published, have also been consulted. Numerous other works on Shariati, published by his supporters after his death have also been used. These works are mainly collections of speeches by Shariati's father, close friends and students delivered at the many gatherings in commemoration of his death, and different biographical accounts of his life. All these works are in Persian and no translation of them into a Western language has appeared so far. Scholarly analysis and evaluation of Shariati's thought by Iranian and Western scholars are also utilized in the discussion and evaluation of the significance of Shariati's thought.

His strictly personal writings, i.e. writings which have not been combined with lectures, are in four books: Kavīr, Hubūṭ dar Kavīr, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, and Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī. As these are the most significant works for this study, we should discuss them in some detail.

1. Kavīr

The most important work in the first group of writings (his personal writings), is a collection of articles by Shariati under the title Kavīr. The material from this book serves as the primary source for much of the discussion in the chapters which follow in this study. Literally translated kavīr means desert. Its significance for Shariati, however, is multi-faceted. On one hand kavīr is where Shariati was born and raised, and on the other hand it symbolizes man's place on earth after his fall. It is also the place where contemplatives have always chosen to live in order to conduct a spiritually-oriented life, a life with which Shariati identifies throughout this book. And lastly it is the title of one of the chapters of Kavīr. Kavīr is a unique work since it is a collection of Shariati's personal memories of certain events in his life, his dreams, and visions, his ideals and symbols all expressed in highly poetical language. It is thus a reliable mirror of the inner dimensions of Shariati's life. It abounds with quotations from, and appraisals of saints and mystics of different religions. The most significant reference is in the Introduction where, after identifying with the twelth century Persian mystic ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī[1] and calling him "my brother," Shariati quotes a long passage from the latter in place of his own introduction. Shariati states that after reading this work of ʿAyn

al-Quḍāt he feels that he himself has written it. It is in Kavīr that Shariati confesses his preference for writing over and above lecturing and teaching, and identifies with those segments of his writings which he calls kavīrīyāt as being "the thing" through wich he lives.[2] It is also in Kavīr that Shariati expresses doubt about its publication and the publication of similar works, and mentions that this is only three hundred pages of nearly ten thousand pages of his writings, all of which are comprised of words which are each "a piece of my being."[3]

2. Hubūṭ dar Kavīr

The second most important work in this group is Hubūṭ dar Kavīr, i.e. the fall of man from heaven to earth. Unlike Kavīr, which is a collection of different articles, Hubūṭ is only one article from beginning to end. Shariati's digressive style of writing is best exemplified in Hubūṭ. Hubūṭ has neither introduction, nor formal "body" and "conclusion." The whole book is a continuous digression from one theme to another, without a formal transition place. It starts with an account of the creation of man who is at the same time Adam and Shariati.

> No "one" made me. God did. Not in a way that "someone wanted" since I had no one, my one was God (کَسَم خدا بود), the One of those without any one. It was He who made me. In a way that He wanted. He neither asked me [how to make me], nor asked that "other me" of me. I was an ownerless clay. He blew me from His spirit into it [the clay], and left me alone on the earth and under the sun.[4]

Hubūṭ ends with a plan for creation, a creation different from the existing one, a creation that brings heaven to earth and thus brings about everlasting peace and joy.

> I come back; return! [I] seek anew the heaven that I once left. I wash off my hands from that primal sin, rebellion; I conquer all the rooms of my primal heaven from my own self [that is] nature, history, society and self. There me, love, and God will engage in a plot to lay the foundation of the world anew, [and] start the creation one more time. In this

> eternity without beginning (ازل) God will no longer be alone. In this world I will no longer remain a stranger (غریب). We [will] eliminate this firmament (فلک). We [will] tear the veil of the unseen, bring down the Kingdom of Heaven (ملکوت) to the earth: [bring down] heaven in which all the trees are forbidden trees, [to the world, of] which our artistic hands are the architects.[5]

Thus the central theme of Hubūt is creation. Shariati gives a moving day by day account of the seven days of creation and specifically the story of the Covenant which for Muslim mystics is at the heart of religion. He gives a moving eye-witness account of that event and from there he moves on to tell the story of his acceptance of God's trust, his subsequent learning of the "names" and Satan's refusal to bow to him. In other words, Shariati sees himself in the place of the first man, Adam, and recounts the story from his perspective without there ever being a distinction between the two persons.

In Hubūt, Shariati gives an interesting interpretation of Satan's rebellion which is mystical in nature. He states that it was love that prevented Satan from bowing to anybody except his Beloved.[6]

> Everybody put down their head in prostration, except Satan who rebelled. Now that God is choosing [selfless] Love (دوست داشتن), he is calling [selfish] love (عشق ورزیدن) to prostrate in front of it. He [Satan] who is the old and great lover of God becomes rebellious out of hatred; the jealousy of love destroys the love also. [Satan] becomes rejected by love and the enemy of

> Love. But in recognition and rewarding of love, God gives a free hand [to Satan] to revenge His friend, His intimate trustee, His similar kin (خویشاوند هانند) and His student of His Upanishadic lessons, so that [in this way] He would reward love as well as test Love.[7]

The result of this experience is a feeling of boundless freedom and responsibility which characterizes man in Islam. This is how Shariati pictures man's exalted place in creation:

> God's spirit in my being (جانم), His trust on my back, His pen in my hand, the wisdom of names, the knowledge of the "Veda," on the tablet of my heart; the Universe (کائنات) in bowing respect (رکوع) in front of me, the angels in front of me in prostration, and I, in the Kingdom of God (ملکوت) free....[8]

While the pivotal theme of Hubūṭ is creation, Shariati makes his usual digressions and makes several unorthodox statements, statements which contribute to the significance of Hubūṭ in terms of understanding Shariati's full character. In one place where he is describing the loneliness of Imām ʿAlī, Shariati moves on to discuss his own loneliness, a theme which he had so profoundly elaborated in Kavīr. And quite interestingly he mentions that his formal and informal studies have had a personal and existential reason, that is an inner yearning, a search for an acquaintance:[9]

> And how much I used to search history and the earth and rush--thirsty and restless--in search of a face on which I could read a line of acquaintance (آشنائی), for finding an eye in which I could see a flash of acquaintance, and in search of hearing

> a word from which I could smell acquaintance; and [finally] I found [it].[10]

Having been exposed to Shariati's political and social ideas one can expect that at this point Shariati would refer to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī,[11] Imām Ḥusayn, Franz Fanon, etc.... Yet the "acquaintance" or rather "acquaintances" whom he discovers are quite unexpected:

> I found Socrates and Buddha, and all the unknown writers of the Upanishads and composers of the Veda[s], and that unknown and bereaved poet who has put his head on the wall--in the shadow of the ruined temple (بنتخانه) of Lagash City, and in mourning for his idol--which the savages from Ashur have plundered--composes wailing songs, and every night, when the world stops its ugly usual, daily fuss, I hear his tearful groaning and his sorrowful hymns.[12]

He continues, including Prometheus, his brother Atlas, their mother Themis, Eve (the only companion of Prometheus in his loneliness), ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and Abū al-ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī[13] in the list of those whom he has found in his historical search for acquaintances.

Another of Shariati's digressions in Hubūṭ focuses on art. Shariati's fascination with art and literature is not unknown and statements such as "my soul would get quenched [only] by philosophy, mysticism (عرفان), literature, art, history and religion,"[14] or "literature (کتاب) and art was my shelter"[15] are abundant in his writings. However in Hubūṭ Shariati reveals a different level of this appreciation in connection to another quite

surprising confession, a confession that there was a period during which he was not an orthodox believer:

> Even in those years that I did not believe in God, the years when I had broken my hereditary [traditional] god (خدای موروثیم) and had not yet reached to my God, the God of the world (خدای جهان) and denied metaphysics absolutely, the deepest pleasures that caressed the center of my being (مغز جانم) and warmed it up was to read the texts of beautiful hymns and benedictions of religions. In Sumerian, Babilonian and Acadian tablets, and in texts of the Upanishads and the Avesta and prayers of the Chinese of thousands of years ago and even in the primitive benedictions of North American Indians I would find sayings which informed my being (جانم را خبر میکرد) and would feel a [kind of] beauty and rapture which [I would feel] in the works of the most outstanding Realist writers of my own era and my own language; and in the Psalms of David, and in the book of Society, and in the hymns of the Upanishads I would read thoughts and sentiments which had kinship and an intimate play with the invisible fibres of my perceptions and feelings....[16]

This period, however, did not last too long and in fact served as a transformation period to lead Shariati to a higher degree of realization of Truth, wherein he was compelled to testify, in a tone similar to a <u>waḥdat al-wujūd</u>[17] Sufi, that:

> ...all things in nature are He, all faces are His face, all voices are His voice, all beings are His being and now I am so close to Him and He is so close to me that "He is closer to me than my jugular vein."[18]

This experience of God's presence was so overwhelming that Shariati devotes many pages of Hubūt to express it, addressing God in an intimate manner of a friend in sentences such as:

> It is You who are the beauty of every smile, the sweetness (nectar) of every kiss, the sugar of every sherbet, the inebrity ( ) of every wine, the warmth of every hope, the delicateness of reflection, the stature of wish, the ray of every flame; the gravity of the earth is from you, the pleasantness of spring is from you. It is You who are the greenness of grass, the blueness of the sky.[19]

Another important issue that Shariati reveals in Hubūt is his understanding of the degrees of religiosity of believers. This is not a new notion in Shariati's thought, since he has explained it in quite a detailed way in his works in the social sciences. The fresh aspect of it, however, is that in Hubūt Shariati's explanation takes on a spiritual and mystical color.

> [At] the base of the cone of every society and every period are kal-an'ām, [who are] sometimes the misled and the religious, higher than them are often [those] weak in faith or irreligious and the intellectuals, and at the summit a few bright stars: the [truly] religious.[20]

3. Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā

The third book of this group is Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, To Acquainted Addresses. This book is a collection of twenty-nine letters written by Shariati to his father, wife, children, close friends, and so on, between the years 1971-1977. It also includes the text of a public lecture, a piece addressed to God, two last will and testaments, and an incomplete note. Twelve of these letters are addressed to Shariati's son Iḥsān,[21] three to his father, three to his wife, two to Mr. Mīnāchī,[22] two to an unknown woman (who apparently was an avid participant in Shariati's public lectures), one letter to his daughters, one letter to Mr. Ḥujjatī-i Kirmānī[23] one letter to "the friends at Irshād," one letter to "a Brother," one letter to "a Friend," and one letter to "an unknown" (ناشناس).

Whereas some of the letters reveal Shariati as a political activist who discusses different social and political issues, his letters to Iḥsān reveal the mystical tendencies of Shariati. Occasionally, they picture the turbulation that Shariati had experienced from the early years of adolescence. In one of his earliest letters to Iḥsān, Shariati discusses the relationship between freedom, justice, and love, and states that these three elements are so strongly interrelated that anyone of them without the other two is "a lie."[24] As we will see in

later chapters, Shariati believed that all the major social movements of history have been different manifestations of man's yearning for either freedom, equality or a mystical dimension of life (ʿIrfān, usually translated as mysticism).[25] In this letter, however, Shariati uses the word love instead of mysticism, hence implying that the two are interchangable. This view shows a greater influence of love mysticism on Shariati than one might expect.[26] In the same letter Shariati promises to send mystical books for Iḥsān to read.[27]

In the next letter Shariati shares an interesting passage:

> My entertainment (تفریح), amusement (تفنّن), and spiritual enjoyment (لذّت روحی) is in reading Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Bacon, Kant, Descartes, Nietzsche, Hegel, Goethe, Spengler, Būʿalī (Ibn Sina),[i] Rāzī,[ii] Ghazālī,[iii] Ibn Rushd,[iv] Mullā Ṣadrā,[v] Mīr Findiriskī,[vi] Mīr Dāmād,[vii] Ḥājī Mullā Hādī-i Sabzivārī,[viii]..., and more than these Lao-tzu, Confucius, Buddha, the Veda, the Upanishads, and Nanak,[ix] and more than these Ḥallāj, Junayd,[x] Fuḍayl-i ʿIyāḍ,[xi] and Abū Saʿīd-i Abū al-Khayr,[xii] and Sharḥ-i Taʿarruf,[xiii] Kashf al-Maḥjūb,[xiv] al-Maʿārif,[xv] Manṭiq al-Ṭayr,[xvi] Tadhkirat al-Awliyā,[xvii] Maṯhnawī,[xviii] Maqālāt-i Shams,[xix] and in poetry, Lupichini(?), Dante's Divine Comedy, Paul Valéry,[xx] Jones, Shakespeare, Goethe,...and sometimes Shāhnāma,[xxi] and most of the time Ḥāfiẓ,[xxii] and always the great and dear Maṯhnawī, and some pieces of Niẓāmī,[xxiii] and many pieces of Sanāʾī[xxiv] and ʿAṭṭār,[xxv] and in some moods Nīmā,[xxvi] and Akhavān,[xxvii] and Shāmlū,[xxviii]... and the mystical and philosophical music of India--even though it is not

> easy for me to understand, and to the same degree it is deep and inspires reflection...and also the glorious and powerful symphonies of Beethoven, and sorrowful hummings of Bach which are all fervent prayers (مناجات) of a pious (عابد) and loving poet, who is overflowing with faith, sentiment and intelligence (شعور) to God....[28]

In a letter dated the last night of the year 1976, and written on the last pages of Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī,[29] Shariati recounts how twice Rūmī's Mathnawī had saved his life. The case of the first incident is particularly interesting since it shows a direct influence of Sufism on Shariati:

> And Mawlawī[i] twice saved me from dying: the first was the years of adolescence (سالهای بلوغ), [the years of] psychological crisis. Because, I had started reading primarily with the works of [Maurice] Maeterlinck.[ii] And [considering] those doubious and aimless (بی سرانجام) thoughts which maddened a genius like him, it is obvious what they would do to the mind of a twelve-year-old student of the sixth grade. This mental dispersion (تشتت فکری) became stormier and more maddening in the world of Sufism that had strongly attracted me [in my state of] immaturity.[30]

This mental crisis, Shariati explains, became so intolerable that he decided to commit suicide. Yet on his way to the pool in which he had decided to drown himself

> suddenly, attachment, my only attachment to this world, in this life, made me hesitate: Mathnawī! [And by the time I arrived] at the vicinity of the pool this sentence had become clear and complete in my mind; life: nothing, a futile daydreaming (خیالبافی پوچ), but it has this benefit of [being able to] be happy in it with the Mathnawī, and with it journey

> [through] the world and grow.... I returned. Life and death were two equal arms of a scale. But the Mathnawī made the side of life heavier, and defeated the [side of] death of which it had no share.[31]

The second case, Shariati narrates, had to do with his experience of powerlessness when he first entered the Sorbonne in 1960. By this time Shariati had grown into a conscious and mature man who was not easliy swayed. Yet the reality of this experience was overwhelming:

> At the height of youth, I had culture, Ideology, responsibility, and so on. But the magnitude of this giant of steel, who is sleeping on gold and sex and whose name is "the world-conquering Western civilization," and is playing the role of the sole civilization of humanity, made me tremble. With this provision of culture and faith, alone, can I confront this dark demon so that it does not swallow me with one pounce and I do not get digested in his rock-and quarry-digesting stomach? Who can, in this loneliness and exile, in this square of gladiators, give to this captured me some power so that I can fight with this wild, rabid cannibal ghoul and tame it?[32]

Once again Shariati turns to Rūmī and seeks help from him:

> Without any hesitation I asked for [a copy of the] Mathnawī to be sent to me from Mashhad, the only great spirit which blows into our weak bodies and makes us invulnerable and our hearts invincible (روئین دل) against the attacks of this civilized Mogul which massacres the hearts.[33]

Shariati continues, describing how Rūmī's Mathnawī enabled

him to survive the alienating impact of Western culture:

> And me, who had spent the nights with the great Mawlānā [Rūmī], when, in the morning [I] passed by Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, Sartre, the Sorbonne, Collège de France, and respected professors, creditable culture (فرهنگ معتبر), and golden civilization,...[I] had the glance of a wise-man, the smile of a generous man, the behaviour of an aristocrat, and a prince-like and gentlemanly feeling.[34]

On an adjacent note to this letter, which is also written on the back cover of the Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī, Shariati uses an artistic image of an airplane to teach Iḥsān how one should fly and rise above all the obstacles and attractive forces of the world:

> Flying should be learned from the airplane, the greater and thicker the masses of cloud, the higher the flight of the conscious (هوشیار) still-winged bird, which is the concrete manifestation of the flight of man's spirit. The airplane always flies above the clouds, [a] flight under the direct radiancy of the sun. The further from the gravity of the earth, and the pressure of the air, and the darkness of the infidel clouds, the more comfortable, enjoyable, and assured the flight, and the more invulnerable against the highest mountains, [and] strongest storms,...a flight under the light of the sun, with two wings.... Two wings, the first wing Abū Dharr, which has grown on your left side, and now I send the second wing--Mawlānā--, with the hope that in that dense atmosphere and cloudy sky,... despite that strong earthly downward pull, you would have a comfortable, nice, balanced and assured flight at the hight, above all the atmospheric currents, and dangerous, breaking atmospheric

> storms, in the heart of the sun, [in] the breast of the sky which rains revelation.[35]

In the next letter, which dates about a month after the above-mentioned letter, Shariati complains of a continuing existential pain, which reveals that the existential pain he experienced as an adolescent never completely left him despite the fact that he no longer lacked direction or responsibility. This letter is a clear indication of the mental, psychological, and spiritual struggle that was constantly churning inside Shariati, keeping him always at the brink of a nervous breakdown:

> Right now not only lecturing, writing, working, responsibility, research, leading, thinking, knowledge, reforming, and giving guidance (ارشاد) are basically not considerations for me, even living is impossible for me. My problem now is "being" (بودن) in which I am badly puzzled (در آن گیجم درمانده‌ام), and I am in such a state that even breathing is difficult for me, and everyday is [such] a pain for me [that] I only think how to spend it and nothing more.[36]

This state is not a new phenomenon in Shariati's life; as he confides to Ihsān, he has periodically experienced similar states of anxiety:

> In that short time of being together, too, I was not myself. It was the time when I struggled only to stay alive, the only way was to forget myself, that is, not to be myself, otherwise it was impossible to tolerate myself and I would die.[37]

This theme is recurring in Shariati's letters and he discusses it with people who were close to him. In a letter to his father, about five years before the previous letter to Iḥsān, Shariati refers to the same pain and the same agony:

> I cannot go after my job and my career anymore, I cannot think for one second about tomorrow. This pain has made me too restless and too incapable of being able to think about myself and get quiet and make calculations [about my life]. I cannot even do research in a collected and scholarly way. Even studying, which has been my usual job, has become difficult for me. I just want to scream and inform people about the "disaster."[38]

Again, in an incomplete letter to his daughter, written just a few days before his death while aboard a ship crossing the English Channel, Shariati asks: "Where am I going? To where am I pulling this injured body which is tired under the lashes of pain and branding?"[39]

Another important theme that is revealed in Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, is Shariati's faith. The significance of this point becomes more evident when we keep in mind that one of the accusations that was raised against Shariati by his opponents was that he used Islam to advocate a Marxist ideology.[40] Even some of his contemporary admirers regard him as a utilitarian thinker who has formulated his revolutionary ideology within the framework of Islam because he had no way to communicate with the Muslim masses other than Islam.[41] Both of these interpretations of Shariati appear incorrect when one

takes into account the frequent references to Shariati's belief in God and Islam which he makes in these personal letters.

In his last letter to Iḥsān, dated about a month before his death, Shariati--who had just fled from Iran to Belgium--discusses his plans for the future. In the context of this discussion, Shariati expresses gratitude to God for keeping him motivated despite the constant defeats and set-backs in his life, and emphasizes his purpose in life to serve people for the sake of God:

> Thanks be to God that I have received all these regular and recurring defeats and I have not budged. ...The psychologists say that each generation cannot bear more than one defeat, and I am preparing myself for the sixth or seventh defeat. Defeat or victory, what difference do they make? It is for politicians, athletes, and business people that these two words are opposites. For us what counts in the end is living up to being human (انجام وظیفه انسانی), the following of God's path.[42]

Again he praises God for enabling him to live his life within the perspective of faith and responsibility:

> Thanks be to God that even though I was not a good husband or a good father, I did not spend one hour of my life for my own sake,
> (ساعتی ازعمررا سر در آخور خویش نداشتم)
> [Literally: I did not put my head in my own feeding trough for [even] one hour], and did not live except in a feverish state for the sake of faith and people.
> (خرد در تب و تاب ایمان و مردم زیستم)[43]

In a long letter to God, apparently written after Shariati's release from prison, Shariati talks again about

his faith and its role in his life: "I do not get defeated, faith and love have made me invincible."[44] Later he refers to his faith:

> Faith? Have I spent my life except in that, and have I lived a moment except for that? In my land I have even cherished and created faiths stronger and more limpid than my own faith.[45]

He concludes:

> But I do not get defeated. If I become the loneliest of the lonely ones, still there is God. He is the substitute for all not-havings (او جانشین همه نداشتن هاست). The curses and praises are all useless and futile. If all the people turn into rabid wolves and from the sky fear and hatred shower on me, You are my eternal kind and unhurtable [One]. Oh Eternal Shelter! You can become the substitute for all of the shelterlessness.[46]

In an early letter to Humāyūn,[47] Shariati recounts how this faith manifested itself in the day to day lives of himself and his colleagues:

> Does not He [God] know that ever since we got entirely busy with Him, even sleeping, eating, visiting, and even living, and [spending time with] wife and children was not considered a sign of generosity by us, and ever since we devoted the pen to Him, we spared not even an article for our job and spared not even once a month a letter to one's wife, and my brother Minachi embarrassed me in his tolerance of pain and testing, and you in generosity and sincerity would embarrass both me and Mīnāchī.[48]

And again:

> One must live and enjoy the gifts of the material world,...have a job, take care of wife and children, enjoy oneself, rest, and also in one's spare time, on the side, do some good works for society and religion. Yes, but sometimes it happens that the heavy burden of a responsibility of a thought, responsibility of the fate of a nation, a faith, and an era is put on the shoulder of one or a few people, and here "the musts" change.[49]

4. Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī

The last book of this category is Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī (Chats in Solitude). The book is apparently in two volumes. Unfortunately the first volume, which probably contains information on the sources of the book and the system used for arranging the material, was not available to me.

The second volume contains sixty essays of different lengths, pertaining to different subjects. In the section for appendices there are fifteen more essays plus five interviews and one last essay which serves as a statement of Shariati's world view. In this last essay Shariati answers the question "what are we?" by the via negativa, explaining "what we are not." He declares that "we are not materialist," and "we are not Marxist," expounding numerous reasons under each heading. As far as the appendix is concerned, it is not clear why these fifteen essays have been included here rather than in the main body, and we do not get any clues as to whether the interviews are real or imaginary.

The book has been compiled after Shariati's death and the writings are apparently part of those nearly ten thousand pages each of which comprising a "piece of [his] being" that Shariati has mentioned in Kavīr.[50] However, we do not know why these specific essays have been chosen for inclusion in the book. The essays throughout the book

have a peculiar structure. Sometimes they start in the middle of the sentence, many times they do not have a conclusion, none of them carries a date (of writing) and over all they are chaotic in style and structure. The reader's immediate impression from this book is that Shariati was deeply influenced by Existentialism. This realization comes to the reader both directly, through some of Shariati's statements, and indirectly, through the subject matter.

The characteristic themes of Existentialism such as the absolute freedom of man, and his consequent absolute responsibility for the direction of his life find expression in more than one place in this book:

> Everybody has the right to choose [the direction of] his life himself. Everybody is responsible for his prosperity. Everybody should try for his own happiness, tranquility and interest. How base and despicable are the souls that are hoping for the sacrifice of others. This is the dirtiest kind of begging.[51]

His belief in the inherent potential of man is another permanent trace that Existentialism has left on Shariati:

> Whatever happens in life, I cannot believe that I have been wrong in my understanding of man. I will not lose my faith in man. I cannot imagine that man is an ordinary being, a natural phenomenon, it is not possible for man to be of the same material as nature. But sometimes my intellect says that this world is the world of "contingences," [and] except

> for God Who is the Necessary Existence, all the rest are contingent existence, all, even man.[52]

Meanwhile Shariati is deeply religious and can never believe in an Existentialism based on materialism. His Existentialism is one that has its roots in Divine Destiny.

> Everybody lives as he wishes, and does as he pleases. Otherwise what is the difference between a caliph, a sultan,...an owner of an ownership document who tries to make the spirit, taste, desires, and feelings of people conform with the content of [his] constitution...a liberal, a humanist does not think this way, especially if he believes in Divine Destiny (تقدیر الهی) and human determinism (جبر انسانی) and [in] inevitable and destined fate (سرنوشت مقدر و محتوم). It is for this reason that I have a strong belief in liberal, determininst humanists. (انسان دوستانِ آزادیخواهِ جبری مذهب سخت مؤمن، مؤمن)[53]

The existential pain that has briefly surfaced in other works of Shariati shows up strongly in this book. In many places Shariati talks about his experience of despair, hopelessness, darkness, and fear:

> Before, in the general darkness and fear-inspiring winter that governed the world, under the black tent, talking was difficult for me since the reptiles, and even birds and fish too had no familiarity with me and I never talked to them about myself and alas, I talked about them and talked about whatever they talked about, yet I would see the dead and ugly light of stupidity in the eyes of every audience...and therefore either I would keep silent in pain, or would try in vain, and at the end I was left

> with nothing other than a feeling of loneliness and alienation and distance, and everyday I would escape more from outside and crawl into myself, and [even] now that I have fire...Alas, to whom can I say that in the light of the fire I find myself lonelier, and once Your fire lit up the earth I found it [even] uglier, and myself more alien on it [the earth], and the faces, once the light of Your fire--oh Friend--shed on them I found them more dreadful, more stupid and more hostile.[54]

In another place Shariati talks about his experience of aimlessness and perplexity:

> The words have suddenly lost their meanings, all the colors have changed ...as if I have reached the end of everything [and] there is no more than a few steps left to the border of non-existence, I know that behind me there is nothing, and no one whose visit would tempt me to turn my face towards the world. In this world I have seen many colors, and many people, read many books, and gone to many places, and now I feel like a man who is returning from a big exhibition who has toured its every corner has seen everything...but I do not know where to return. This is what frightens me. Books, travel, poetry, freedom, serving others, loving everyone, forgiving--especially the enemy--religion, sunset, the sea, desert, music, loneliness, imagination, keeping silent, writing, talking and great people were [all] nice blessings that would always make me full of joy, gave meaning to my life and filled it, ...and among them loneliness, what a solid fence, safe shelter, nice companion it was, a great, beautiful region full of whatever is desired. And now...it has turned into a deserted, empty, and pain-creating house, I am afraid of setting my foot in it [even] for one second.[55]

At times this agony and despair grew so much that Shariati exclaims in pain, "I have no ties whatsoever with living (زیستن)."[56]

It is quite logical to think that a person who is experiencing all these turbulent states, and suffers so much from all these dark pains should be tired of them, and wish for a state of serenity and peace. But Shariati was an exception to this rule. This sick soul[57] did not feel satisfied with peace and quiet. In fact, he reveals that he has always asked for pain, but not the kind of "base, everyday, mediocre pains and sufferings"[58] that some other people experience. Instead,

> My prayer has always been this: that Oh my God pour great sufferings, tall pains, and beautiful, exalted and sacred turbulences (التهاب‌های زیبا، متعالی و مقدس) on me. I like many beautiful and exalted pains--even though they melt me--more than mental peace (خوشبختی), absolute tranquility, and [even] Buddha's Nirvana.[59]

With this background in mind, now we can listen to one of Shariati's revealing stories:

> Now my prayers have been answered. God searched and searched and searched and [then] poured on me the most ruthless killing pains that He knew, that were in His creation; and He had tested them on great ascetics, great monks, the great (اولوالعزم) Prophets, famous heros, powerful souls, and wonderful and enduring yogis and has brought them to tears.[60]

Shariati continues,

> But eventhough this pain brought ʿAlī, Muhammad, Noah, Johna, and Moses to tears and had them plead with God to relieve them, I kept my patience, and did not move to save myself...and thus told God that I was surrendered and would not cry.[61]

The result of this perseverance was that "I passed this test."[62] Shariati then goes on to explain how God searched again and since He could not find anything in this world that could bring him to his knees, then He went to "the heart of Hell" and took the most searing fire of Hell and poured it on him,[63] but he did not give in and perservered.

> God poured this fire--the kind of fire that made Muhammad impatient and he could not take it and God helped him to cool himself down and throw his burning body in [the waters of] Zamzam--on me too, but I,...I do not know what to say, I waited? I did not wait? But...it was a strange state, melting and impatience and pain would bring my bone marrow to boil and pressed me hard, but I did not show much impatience, it was unbearable but I bore it. Whatever it was, I could keep myself on my feet I could still stay alive. There was groaning, there was a secret drop of tear, there was complaint, but mostly inside myself.[64]

Here Shariati gives a clue that helps to understand his earlier statement in Hubūt that there was a time when he did not believe in God.[65]

> I kept it [the groaning, tear and complaint] inside this thin, boney chest of mine,...so that nobody would understand, [so] that the clergy (روحانیون) would not know, so that

> my father would not understand, and that the fanatic, religious people would not find out that the Sufi flower has so intoxicated my mind (ماغم) that I have lost my heart, and Sufism, Irfān, and Indian mysticism have sent my faith and my patience and my inherited ancestoral religion to Nirvana instead of me, and have melted me in raptures of Shams-i Tabrīz, and have thrown me into the consuming...fire.[66]

This painful and back-breaking experience could have dealt a blow to anyone's patience and endurance, but Shariati tells us that he endured it patiently:

> I was lost in the flames, but of course I was burning, but still sitting on my hunches, quiet, peaceful...and was not saying anything, I mean, with this not saying anything I was telling God that I will tolerate this too, I will wait it out...and God realized that it is so, and...He thought, and searched and searched, but He did not find any pain that was more tormenting [than the one He had already given me], there was no fire which was more fervent [than the one He had already poured on me]...He thought, and suddenly at the end of the twelth millenium, which was the era of faith and the time of certitude ...suddenly He created a pain which was not heretofore in His creation, and created a fire which was never even in His Hell. And thus it was that at the end of the twelth millenium, the end of the era of knowledge and certitue, He called me to His Presence, and poured the pain of ignorance (بی خبری) on my heart,...and lit the fire of doubt in my mind, and now...what a difficult test it is![67]

Shariati's existential pains were not a phenomenon of his later years. As he explains they were always with him

and they started very early:

> The more I grew, the smaller the world became, the deeper I got, the more superficial existence became, the wiser I became, the more the sky grew stupid, the more I became familiar with myself, the more others became strangers, the more needy I became, the more the earth turned poor, the more alive I became, the more death-stricken life became, and woe!, how difficult it was, and how much worse it was growing, and I do not know what would have happened if...if those two had not come to my help, what would I do![68]

And again:

> ...I have a different kind of pain. The pain of a soul who is imprisoned in a body, the pain of a human being for whom the world is too small and yet he has been deprived of [spending even] a moment as he wishes, to chat with the one he likes, to talk about what he wants. He wanted freedom, they did not give it. He wanted justice, they did not give it. He wanted to inform people, they did not let him. He wanted to erase the stains of poverty, degradation, abjectness and ignorance from the face of his nation, it did not work. He wanted to guide a shelterless and guardianless caravan but they forced him into the idleness of house arrest (خانه نشین). He wanted to spend all his life in devotion (ارادت) to his teacher[i] but death separated them. He wanted to Love someone (دوست بدارد) [but] the English Channel took her from him.[ii] He wanted to stay in his beloved Africa and give life to this, his dear continent that is shaped like a heart, [but] it did not work. He wanted to fly in the exalted world of lofty ideas and sing along with great geniuses, [but] they attached him to a carriage along with a few draught horses. He wanted to talk about his ideas, they do not understand. He wanted to talk about his belief, they

> do not let him. He wanted to talk about himself, [they said] Oh! that is dangerous. ...He wanted to be the creator of freedom, he became the captive of chains.[69]

Apart from the existential pains, one is also struck by the role played by the mysterious Professor Chandel[70] in this book. In Kavīr Shariati had briefly mentioned Chandel among his models. Yet it is in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī that he declares

> More than any other writer and thinker,...both in terms of scientific thinking and faith, I am under his wonderful (تکوینی) influence.[71]

And,

> Nobody has captivated me in his world like Chandel [has].[72]

This deep influence seems to have been the result of the affinity which Shariati felt between himself and Chandel since he claimed to have known Chandel in a way which no one else did. Shariati writes, "Chandel, this astonishing soul, whom apart from me [only] a few know well."[73] The extent of influence is so much that in some of the essays which appear in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati's writings and Chandel's writings are so closely intertwined that one cannot understand where one stops and where the other one starts. We can understand this situation if we realize that Chandel's writings had a very unique place in Shariati's mind to the point that "Everytime I read some of his works I wish I was their writer."[74] Fifteen essays deal with Chandel, they are either about him or mix his writings with Shariati's. In

view of all this, it seems reasonable to assume that the title of this book, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, (Chats in Solitude), has been taken from Shariati's reference to "Chandel's Les Causeries de la Solitude."[75]

There are several other themes in this book that are worth noting. In one essay Shariati states that after many years of being puzzled about the cause of Ṣādiq-i Hidāyat's suicide he has finally discovered it. The cause, Shariati explains, was "philosophical despair, philosophical doubt, the pain of doubt, suffering and the turbulence of ignorance (بی‌خبری)".[76] Then he goes on to say that man in this world is anxious to know what is happening beyond the heavens, but has no news about it, and the reason that man, unlike other animals, is standing on his feet is to look at the sky to see if he can find any signs.

In one of the interviews that are included in the book in answer to the question "what is your best work" Shariati makes a distinction between himself and the masses and states that the best book for himself is Kavīr, and the best books for others are books one and two of Islāmshināsī (Islamology).[77] Other interesting themes are "servanthood is better than being worshipped,"[78] "God has created man, but man has created God,"[79] and "everyone is in search of someone (هرکسی گمشده‌ای دارد) and God was in search of someone."[80]

As we have seen in this chapter on Sources, each one of these four books sheds a different light on Shariati, and presents him in a different way. Whereas Kavīr and Hubūṭ reveal the more mystical dimension of Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, and Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī show the effects of Existentialism on him as well. Also in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati's faith in God becomes undeniably transparent. To know Shariati in his entirety, we can now argue, is simply not possible without discovering and considering those aspects of him which are revealed in these works. At this point we can turn our attention to themes from Shariati's thought which are relevant to our study, such as man, art and religion, as well as his role models, and focus on them in detail.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, a Persian Sufi, accused of heresy and executed in Baghdad in 526 A.H./1132 C.E.

2. This appears on page nine of his introduction to the second edition of Kavīr. In a foot note to this section Shariati quotes Shams-i Tabrīzī as having said "that scribe wrote three kinds of things: one he himself read, and nobody else did, one both he himself read and others; one neither he read nor others" in aparent allusion to his own writings with kavīrīyāt corresponding to the first group. (See note 28. xix which follows.)

3. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. ix.

4. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 3. This quotation is from the first few sentences of the first paragraph of the first page, but the page number reads three due to a peculiar pagination system that counts the title page as the first page and the blank back of that page as the second and naturally starts the text on page three.

5. Ibid., pp. 203-204. The theme of aloneness is a favourite theme for Shariati and plays a major role in his view of man as an exile who has fallen to this world but finds no rest in it due to his yearning for his homeland.

6. Compare Shariati's view of Satan with that of ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt in Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology, by Peter J. Awn, pp. 134-150.

7. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, pp. 26-27. See Qur'an 7: 11-17. See Preface p. v, and also compare this use of terminology with that mentioned in note 4 of Chapter VI, Shariati's Role Models.

8. Ibid., p. 27.

9. In Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati explains his use of "acquaintance" to mean

> the way that Salmān [the Persian] and Muhammad look at each other, [the way] ᶜAlī and Fāṭimah look at each other, [the way] God and Adam look at each other; light and heat are acquaintances in the fire;

[acquaintance means] the way that someone sees himself in water and the mirror--no, [still] higher, better, and closer, and more intimate than all of these.(Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 910)

10. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 102.

11. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī is a special figure for Shariati, to the extent that Shariati identifies his Islam with him: "I am Muslim, and my Islam is Abū Dharr's Islam, and that is all." (Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1317)

12. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 102.

13. Abū al-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī, a famous Arab poet and prose writer, from nothern Syria, d. 449 A.H./1058 C.E.

14. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 110.

15. Ibid., p. 109.

16. Ibid., p. 110. Shariati clarifies what he means by "inherited" or "traditional" god as being "...a creation of the disturbed mind of a human being who has become alienated from himself, and in lieu of losing the belief in himself has found belief in him [god], and since he has been alienated from himself, and consequently ignorant of all the values and potentials that are in his 'human self' (خود انسانی), he worships them in a fictitious existent (موجودی موهوم) that is the external manifestation [i.e., self-projection] of his inner [qualities] (درون خویش)." (Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī-yi Inqilābī, pp. 99)

17. Waḥdat al-wujūd means literally "unity of being."

18. Ibid., p. 189. This is an allusion to Qur'an 50: 16.

19. Ibid., p. 191.

20. Ibid., p. 103. Kal-anʿām comes from the Qur'anic verse VII: 179, "Many are the Jinns and men We have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle (kal-anʿām),--nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning)." Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān, pp. 395-6.

21. Shariati had three children. The oldest one is Ihsan, and the two younger daughters are Sūsan and Sārā. At the present they are in self-exile in Europe. It is

curious that Shariati chose these unconventional names for his children; one would expect him to choose names such as Abū Dharr, Fatimah, Zaynab, ʿAlī, Ḥusayn, and so on.

22. Mīnāchī was one of the main organizers in Ḥusaynīya-yi Irshād.

23. Ḥujjat al-Islām ʿAlī-i Ḥujjatī-i Kirmānī was very active in the opposition movement against the Shah. He lectured in Ḥusaynīya-yi Irshād and other centers of religious activities. In the conflict between Shariati and other religious figures (which eventually resolved in Shariati's favor) Ḥujjatī remained neutral due to his sympathy for Shariati. This was despite his closeness to Āyatullāh Murtaḍā Muṭahharī and others. After the Islamic Revolution, Ḥujjatī was the representative of the Province of Kirmān in the Constitutional Council and later he was Tehran's representative to Parliment for two consequetive terms. He is very sympathetic to Shariati and in his many articles, which have been published both before and after the revolution, the influence of Shariati is apparent.

24. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 78.

25. See Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī-yi Inqilābī, pp. 42-7.

26. This may reflect the deep influence of Rūmī's thought on Shariati.

27. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 79.

28. Ibid., p. 85. References within this quotation are as follows:

i. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), a famous Muslim physician and philosopher, d. 428 A.H./1037 C.E. in Hamadhan.

ii. Rāzī, probably Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a reknown theologian from Ray, d. 606 A.H./1209 C.E.

iii. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, a reknown theologian, jurist and mystic from Khurasan, d. 505 A.H./1111 C.E.

iv. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the "Commentator of Aristotle," a master of Qur'anic sciences, law, physics, medicine, biology, astronomy, theology and philosophy, originally from Cordova, d. 595 A.H./1198 C.E.

v. Mullā Ṣadrā (Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ṣadr al-Dīn), a theologian and mystical philosopher from Shīrāz (Iran), d. in Basra 1050 A.H./1642 C.E.

vi. Mīr Findiriskī (Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī), a famous mystic philosopher, a contemporary of Mullā Ṣadrā and the Safavid King, Shah Abbas.

vii. Mīr Dāmād (Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir al-Astarābādī), a reknown Persian philosopher, theologian and poet, d. 1040 A.H./1630 C.E.

viii. Hājī Mullā Hādī-i Sabzavārī, a Persian mystical philosopher continuing in the tradition of Mullā Ṣadrā, d. 1289 A.H./1878 C.E.

ix. Nanak, one of the founders of the Sikh religion.

x. Abū al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad al-Junayd (Junayd), a famous Persian Sufi from Baghdad who expounded the "sober" style of Sufism, d. 298 A.H./910 C.E.

xi. Al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ, a Persian Sufi from Khurasan, later residing in Kufa and Mecca, d. 187 A.H./803 C.E.

xii. Abū Saʿīd Faḍl Allāh ibn Abī al-Khayr, a Persian mystic from Khurasan, d. 440 A.H./1049 C.E.

xiii. Sharḥ-i Taʿarruf, a Persian commentary on Kalābādī's "Doctrine of the Sufis," by Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad-i Bukhārī-i Mustamlī (d. 434 A.H./1042 C.E.).

xiv. Kashf al-Maḥjūb, a famous Persian treatise on Sufism, written in the fifth century by Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Hujwīrī, a Sufi from Khurasan.

xv. Maʿārif, a book on mystical themes written in Persian by Bahā'-i Valad, Jalāl al-Dīn-i Rūmī's father.

xvi. Manṭiq al-Ṭayr (The Discourse of the Birds), an allegorical mystical poem by Farīd al-Dīn-i ʿAṭṭār.

xvii. Tadhkirat al-Awliyā, an extensive prose work detailing the lives and sayings of Muslim mystics, by Farīd al-Dīn-i ʿAṭṭār. Farīd al-Dīn-i ʿAṭṭār was a Persian mystical poet from Nishapur, d. circa 627 A.H./1230 C.E.

xviii. Mathnawī, a long didactic, mystical poem in six volumes, by Jalāl al-Dīn-i Rūmī.

xix. Maqālāt-i Shams, discourses attributed to Rūmī's master, Shams-i Tabrīzī. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Tabrīzī was a wandering darvish, whose meeting with Rūmī precipitated a sudden mystical transformation in the latter. Shams-i Tabrīzī died in 645 A.H./1247 C.E., possibly murdered by Rūmī's jealous disciples.

xx. Paul Valéry, a French poet, critic and writer of essays, d. 1945.

xxi. Shāhnāma, a traditional Persian epic poem written in the fourth century A.H. by Firdawsī.

xxii. Ḥāfiẓ (Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Shīrāzī), a Persian mystical poet from Shīrāz, d. 792 (or 791) A.H./1390 (or 1389) C.E.

xxiii. Niẓāmī (Niẓām al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Ilyās ibn Yūsuf), a celebrated Persian poet who studied under the Sufi Shaykh Āqā Farrukh Rayhānī, d. 576 A.H./1180 C.E.

xxiv. Sanāʾī (Ḥakīm Abū'l-Majdūd ibn Ādam-i Sanāʾī-i Ghaznavī), a Persian poet and mystic, d. 1131 C.E.

xxv. See above, note 28. xvi.

xxvi. Nīmā, controversial contemporary Persian poet, commonly referred to as "the father of free style" poetry in Iran.

xxvii. Mahdī-i Akhavān-i Thālith, a contemporary Iranian poet (1928-1990).

xxviii. Aḥmad-i Shāmlū, one of the most popular contemporary poets of Iran.

29. Kulliyāt-i Shams yā Dīwān-i Kabīr, the Dīwān of Jalāl al-Dīn-i Rūmī.

30. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 99. References within this quotation are as follows:

i. Jalal al-Dīn-i Rūmī, also known as Mawlānā and Mawlawī, a famous Persian mystic and poet, disciple of Shams-i Tabrīzī, the founder of the Mawlawiyya order of Sufis. He was born in Balkh and died in Kunya 672 A.H./1273 C.E.

ii. Maurice Maeterlinck, Belgian symbolist poet and playwright who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911.

31. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

32. Ibid., p. 100.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 101.

35. Ibid., p. 105.

36. Ibid., p. 108.

37. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

38. Ibid., pp. 36-37.

39. Ibid., p. 264.

40. See for example Ali Sharati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1246, where he lists all of the accusations which have been levelled against him.

41. Hasan al-Ḥanafī, an Egyptian political activist, and editor of al-Yisār al-Islāmī had expressed this view in a private conversation in 1988.

42. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, pp. 262-263.

43. Ibid., p. 263.

44. Ibid., p. 269.

45. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 270.

46. Ibid., p. 286.

47. Humāyūn was a well known merchant of the Bāzār and the founder of Ḥusaynīya-yi Irshād. He was very supportive of Shariati. When a conflict arose between Shariati and other lecturers and activists at Irshād, lecturers and activists who were either influencial religious leaders like Murtaḍā Muṭahharī or were supported by the major ʿulamā, Humāyūn eventually sided with Shariati. This decision led the latter group to abandon and denounce Irshad, which, in turn gave Shariati complete freedom to organize the program of Irshad as he wished.

48. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 137.

49. Ibid., p. 146.

50. Ali Shariati, Kavir p. ix.

51. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhāʾī, Vol. 2, p. 1095.

52. Ibid., p. 1096.

53. Ibid., p. 1097. The sentence here is incomplete and vague. Shariati starts to make a comparison, but never completes it. The theme and the point that is under our study, however, is clear in the sentence.

54. Ibid., pp. 1187-8.

55. Ibid., pp. 1231-2.

56. Ibid., pp. 1236.

57. The concept of the "sick soul" was introduced by William James in The Varieties of Religious Experience, see especially Lectures VI and VII. Basically it refers to the type of religious individual who suffers from chronic melancholia and is perpetually distressed by the sense of sin and evil. This character imbalance, however, can serve as a stimulus to spiritual growth, in which case the individual unifies or transcends his divided and conflict-ridden personality and can raise even to the level of a mystic or saint.

58. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhāʾī, p. 891.

59. Ibid., p. 892.

60. Ibid.

61. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 892.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., p. 893.

64. Ibid., p. 900.

65. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 110. Also see note 16 of this chapter.

66. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, pp. 900-1.

67. Ibid., pp. 901-2. The reference to the "end of the twelth millenium" is perhaps an allusion to Zoroastrian cosmology. According to Zoroastrianism, cosmic history is divided into four periods of three thousand years each, for a total of twelve thousand years. The fourth period or cycle in the phase of the "good religion," which includes the advent of three saviours at the end of each millenium. (Gherardo Gnoli, "Zoroastrianism," in Encyclopedia of Religion, Mircea Eliade, editor in chief, Vol. 15, pp. 585-6.)

68. Ibid., p. 1156. Shariati does not explain here who those two people were, but we can infer from his statements in Kavīr that he is probably talking about Massignon and S. Bodin.

69. Ibid., p. 912. References within this quotation are as follows:
   i. Probably Louis Massignon.
   ii. Probably S. Bodin.

70. For a discussion of Chandel's identity please see the preface to this work, pp. vi-viii.

71. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 708.

72. Ibid., p. 713.

73. Ibid., p. 690.

74. Ibid., p. 708.

75. In one of the essays in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati briefly introduces this work of "Chandel."

76. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 887. Ṣadiq-i Hidāyat (1902-51) was a famous contemporary Iranian writer.

77. Ibid., pp. 1261-2.

78. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1012.

79. Ibid., p. 1192.

80. Ibid., pp. 1145-6. For a translation of the entire piece see Appendix II of this work.

CHAPTER V

SHARIATI ON MAN, ART AND RELIGIONS

1. Man

One of the most fundamental elements in the discussion of someone's thought is his view of man and his place and role in the universe. This becomes even more significant when we deal with Shariati, since he himself believed that "the world view of anyone depends on how he sees man."[1]

In his lectures Shariati introduced man as a two-dimensional being that is comprised of a body and a soul. Following the well-known story in the Qur an,[2] Shariati portrays man as a being made of clay with God's spirit breathed into him. Hence man is a dichotomy of body and spirit, of the material and the spiritual. But as a revolutionary activist whose message is social revolution, Shariati is not content with such a general description and needs a more dynamic presentation of this story. Thus he continues:

> Man is a dual being and combination of two opposites, two contradictory elements: Allah/Satan, spirit/mud, the spirit of God/putrefied slime. This is the essential contradiction (تضاد و تناقض) in man's being that creates the evolutionary [perfecting]

> movement; this is the dialectic which exists in man's creation. God took mud--the sedimentary dust, the dry and clay-like dust which is sedimented as a result of the flood [which is movement] and becomes frozen and hardened like beaten pottery clay out of which nothing grows, and which covers the earth like a stony cover and suffocates and kills all the seeds and sprouts inside itself--the putrefied slime (thesis) "then [God] breathed into him [man] from His spirit" (anti-thesis). Out of the eternal struggle between these two contradictory elements movement, struggle and responsibility is created, and evolution and the going of man towards God (the absolute height of perfection) becomes realized (synthesis).[3]

This is a dynamic presentation of the story of man's creation which is very much in line with Shariati's presentation of Islam as a militant ideology. In Kavīr, however, Shariati gives a more mystical interpretation of man. This interpretation is crystalized in the title of the last chapter, "Man, a god-like [being] in exile." Man is a god-like being whose face is always covered with a shade of "grief," a grief resulting from the realization that he is "more," and beyond and above whatever exists and that "whatever is" is not enough for him.[4] Moreover, Shariati explains, man sees an essential estrangement between "his pure self" and the world that surrounds him. He also realizes that a part of him has been corrupted by nature "without his presence," without his consent. These realizations make him feel like a stranger in this world and make him feel disgusted with his condition of

alienation from his self. Consequently a yearning for "home-land" and "kinship" wells up from inside him. Thus the notion of "dualism" inhibits man's faith right from the beginning of history; creation is divided into "the world below" and "the world above," this world and the next, and man attempts to contact and communicate with the latter (i.e. higher realm) by breaking loose from the former.[5]

This second interpretation of man's situation in the world is very significant; in it Shariati mentions several important elements of his thought. These include the notion of man being a "god-like" entity "in exile:" man finding "essential estrangement between 'his pure self' and the rest of the world:" the idea of the existence of the corrupted and co-opted self: and concepts such as "home-land," "kinship with God," and "yearning for 'proximity' and 'contact.'" These themes and concepts are clearly mystical in orientation. Yet even if one overlooks the mystical tone apparent in these instances, one cannot miss it in other, even more direct statements. Similar to a true mystic who preaches the transcendental unity of religions, Shariati testifies:

> The disturbed and distressful cries of Gilgamesh under the Summerian sky, the torturous struggle of Buddha for salvation from karma and reaching Nirvana, the painful cries of ʿAlī in the seclusion of the quiet nights in the date orchards in the vicinity of Medina, and also the rebellious and frustrated wrath of Sartre and [Albert] Camus from the "stupidity and

> meaninglessness of this world" are all different manifestations of the anxious soul of man who finds himself alone and a stranger on this earth and imprisoned under this ceiling, and who knows that "this house is not his home."[6]

Grief is an essential feature of man in Shariati's view, and a key for understanding the reason behind man's appreciation of the "fall season," "silence" and "sunset." The "elevated souls" and "deep hearts," Shariati observes, prefer these times and conditions since, in experiencing them, they feel themselves closer to the end of this world.[5] And why is grief and the feeling of the end of the world an important feature of man? Shariati's answer is that the limitation of the world is better realized by the souls which have been elevated above it and grief is a manifestation of this realization.[8] These elevated souls also enjoy the states of "intoxication" and "selflessness" (بی‌خودی), since it is only in these states that

> the many ties that connect them to that which living requires [what is required by living] is broken, and the heavy burden of existence (هستی) falls off the shoulders of the spirit, and the suffocating and wearisome pressure of being (بودن) is lightened, and it is only in these moments of weightlessness that the memory of being in exile is forgotten and the ugly face of existing (هستن) disappears.[9]

Thus man, as a god-like being in exile, experiences grief as a result of the realization of his situation and yearns for his home-land and for communication with his "kin." But since he cannot experience that for which he yearns,

he seeks to forget his present situation through intoxication and selflessness.

Shariati sees in history clear evidence for his understanding of man. The fact that there have existed so many different religions--both ancient and modern--points to a common ground out of which they all have grown. This common ground is, according to Shariati, the realization that "this house is not [man's] home."[10] Many historians of religion interpret the history of religion to be the manifestation of man's experience of helplessness in the universe and his attempts to overcome it by inventing magical forces and gods, and they conclude that there is no objective reality called God; yet Shariati sees in the same process a different force at work:

> Man, the lost one in this strange land of dust (خاکستان ناآشنا), who has seen himself imprisoned under this low and strange sky, worried and persevering, on his way in search of his "lost paradise"--[a paradise] that he knows exists--has prostrated himself in front of whatever [thing] in which he could see a sign of that [paradise]. And whenever he has realized the uselessness of that [thing], without his certitude in that "I don't know where" [i.e. paradise] suffering any blow, immediately he has sought another sign. And what has never gotten extinguished in all these untiring searches is the cries of this prisoner in exile who still is scratching the walls of this world to open a hole to the outside.[11]

The anxiety that man has experienced in this process has manifested itself in three separate, yet interrelated forms: namely religion, mysticism, and art. According to

Shariati, religion is the "struggle of man who is 'polluted with existence' (آلوده خاک) to purify himself and return to God from earth, [and to] give sacredness" to nature and life; mysticism is the manifestation of the anxiety innate in man who is like "a falcon imprisoned in a cage and throws himself against the wall and is restless for flying. And in yearning for his homeland [he] tries to abolish his own existence, which is the cause of his imprisonment 'and has itself become his veil;'" and art is the manifestation of a soul which is not satisfied by "that which is," and "who finds the world in front of himself cold, ugly, and even according to Sartre, stupid."[12] Within this framework a man of religion, an artist and a mystic all have a common experience: the feeling of estrangement in this world. Yet the artist, contrary to the man of religion and the mystic, has no knowledge of the homeland except perhaps as a vague memory. Therefore he tries to adjust himself to this world by giving it more life and beauty, derived from that vague memory.[13] Thus for Shariati, religion and mysticism are "doors" that enable man to go out of this "prison" whereas art is only a "window" through which man can look outside and enjoy the scene of liberty.[14]

In these statements we see a mystical view of creation and man's role and place in it. There is yet another description of man in Kavīr which, although different, is nevertheless complimentary to the former

one. In this description the dualism that we learned earlier emerges, but this time in a different dimension:

> Everyone is two people....In every Muslim one Bū ʿAlī [Ibn Sīnā] and one Bū Saʿīd [Abū Saʿīd-i Abī'l-Khayr] live. Live? No, fight. In the "I" of every Chinese [person] "Confucius" and "Lao-tzu" are struggling with each other. Anyway everyone has an Aristotle and a Christ hidden in him. Isn't man a "small world?" Then he has East and West in his self. And man is a "hesitation" and an eternal vacillation [between these two].[15]

This eternal vacillation, however, does not need to be constant, and in fact one normally ends up more on one side of the scale;

> Everyone is a purposless panic [sic.]. A wandering and homeless Dante in the unknown land of the nothingness (هیچستان نامعلوم) of barzakh (neither/nor) until suddenly he winds up on the path of a Virgil who pushes him to the West and to the path of Descartes, Confucius, Aristotle...or he winds up on the path of a Beatrice who pulls him to the East, to the desert of Lao-tzu, Buddha, Ḥallāj, Plotinus, and Christ, and finally either in the sky or on the earth.[16]

Man's position within the entire range of "East" and "West," of Aristotle and Christ, is not permanent either. Through some miraculous event one can be thrown permanently to the opposite side, a side one had previously not known to exist. Shariati writes:

> But sometimes a miracle happens in a life. A person who has fallen to his West, from the barzakh of irresolution, and from the emptiness of vacillation, or the useless pains of hesitation and has established himself there and has erected a palace

> and has an exalted and prestigous place, suddenly thunder hits him on the head and in a fire, in an astonishing revolution, at once the horizons in front of the eyes are changed, the sky above the head is changed, the earth is changed, the breathing air is changed, the look is changed, and the heart is changed, and imagination is changed and...the world, universe (هستی) and even God are changed and ...a different birth and a different life [begins]....[17]

This type of sudden change is, of course, a mystical transformation of life and Shariati cites Rūmī, Ibrahīm-i Adham,[18] Moses, Buddha, and Mītrā[19] as historical examples of such transformations. These examples testify both to Shariati's understanding of the two-dimentional nature of man and of the possibility of a miraculous transformation from one's rational side to one's spiritual side. And as we shall see in the following chapter (Chapter VI, Shariati's Role Models) Shariati saw himself as having experienced a similar change as a result of his contacts with two individuals, Louis Massignon and S. Bodin.

2. Art

As we saw earlier art is, according to Shariati, one of the manifestations of man's yearning soul. In his view, a deep-rooted feeling of anxiety which has resulted from the experience of estrangement in this world and which habitates the depth of man's conscience is the source of three "marvelous and immaterial manifestations" that have always accompanied man, namely: religion, mysticism, and art.[20] Art is, furthermore "the manifestation of man's creative instinct in continuation of this existence which is the manifestation of God's creativity."[21] This creative instinct is an essential feature of man because he is the vice-regent of God in the world; this enables him to continue the work of his Master. There is however, another manifestation of the same instinct and that is science and industry (صنعت). Yet the two differ drastically in their purpose. Whereas art tries to free man from nature by providing for him what he cannot get from nature, science and industry try to give him even more of what nature has,[22] and thus make man dependent on and imprisoned by this world. Put in a slightly different language,

> Science is the struggle of man to know what exists. Technique and industry are defined as: the means and the mental struggle of human beings in order to benefit from as much as is possible of that which is. But art consists of the struggle of human

> beings for benefits which should exist, but do not.[23]

Art is, furthermore, the trust that God bestowed on man which, by man's acceptance of it, enabled man to become God's vice-regent on earth.[24]

> God entrusted art to man. He offered it to the earth, the sky, the mountains and oceans; none accepted it.[25]

God's motivation in giving man this trust has to do with His knowledge of man's weakness. The role of art is to fulfill man's "feelings of need and agitation, loneliness and most of all, his need to transcend, that is separate himself from tangible, material needs."[26] Thus Shariati disagrees with Aristotle's description of art as an imitation of nature,[27] since art is "imitating precisely what is beyond the tangible, beyond nature, in order to decorate nature in its image, or to make something the human being wants to be in nature and does not find."[28]

The difference between art on one hand and religion and mysticism on the other hand, is that whereas the latter two "distract man from reality" (ارواقعیت بازش میدارد) so that they "lead him to the truth (حقیقت)", the former serves as "a philosophy of remaining"[29] in this world; and it does so by trying to give to this world what it lacks and thus complete it through its attempts to bring closer that which "is" to that which "should be."[30]

For Shariati, all art is either a manifestation of the anxiety (تعهد) of man who is mourning the deficiency and inadequacy (نقص) of the world, or a demonstration of his creativity in order to complete the world.[31] This explanation of art inextricably denies any need for the imposition of formal categories or formulations on art. Therefore, for Shariati, setting rules for art is as ridiculous as trying to come up with rules and manners for worrying or getting angry.[32] The only possible way to set criteria for judging art is to derive them from the art itself, that is, derive them from the essential features of art such as its origin and its mission, and this criteria, in Shariati's view, is abstractness or abstractability.

> The human being is becoming conscious. The more conscious he becomes, the more he can sense the abstract which he himself represents. That is, as I see it, art brings consciousness to the unconscious soul of the human being because art, awakening the sense of the abstract, allows us to come to know God.[33]

So the more abstract (from matter) art gets the more authentic it becomes. Thus sculpture, painting, music and poetry represent increasingly higher grades of art, with poetry being the most perfect, since "poetry is the absolute abstraction."[34]

Any discussion of art inevitably has to address the issue of the message of art and the responsibility of the artist. Shariati links this to the themes of man's

alienation on the earth and his creative instinct which he has inherited, so to speak, from God. He explains art as being

> the manifestation of the creative instinct of man...so that [through it] he would make up for the lack that he feels in this world and thus he would diminish his disgust and his restlessness...and would bear [the burden of] living in this exile and interacting with the mass of strangers.[35]

He claims that this explanation

> ...clarifies the two unsolvable problems in art which have not been solved yet. One is the problem of 'the message of art, and the responsibility of the artist' and whether there is such a responsibility or not and if yes what is it? The other [problem] is 'is art for the [sake of] art or for the society?'[36]

Shariati does not explain exactly what he means but he claims further that his explanation--or in his own words, his justification--not only gives a clear answer to these problems but it also clarifies the vague meaning of 'art for art' and the complicated meaning and different and contradictory interpretations which are given to 'art for society.'[37]

Another related issue, which has always been debated in relation to art's mission, is art's social place (پایگاهِ اجتماعی). It is often asked why art has always been either in the service of religion or in the service of nobility. Shariati's answer to this question is simple. The friendship between religion and art is due to

the fact that they are kins[38] and have come from the same source, i.e. man's yearning soul.[39] He continues,

> But the growth of art on the lap of nobliity is because the affluent people, the more they possess the things that this world has, the more they feel its inadequacy [even in a deviant way] and art is born out of this feeling. But the poor and working people, who are deprived of many things that this world has and are always struggling to get [these things], imagine the world to be rich and [therefore] they feel their own poverty not the poverty of the world.[40]

The interrelation between Sufism and the arts of music and poetry has been noticed by both Sufi scholars and Sufi musicians.[41] Shariati not only acknowledges such an interrelation but he sees it as inevitable due to the fact that they have a common origin in the spirit of man. Further, Shariati discusses the idea of art's kinship with, and interdependence on religion and mysticism to explain this connection between Sufism and music and poetry.

> The arts are the most religious and most mystical creatures of this world. [They] have been born on the lap of religion and mysticism and have drunk from these two breasts. Every art is an ascension, or the delightful anticipation (شوق) of an ascension in which the more the artist is released from the burden of 'existing' (هست) the further his sidrat al-muntaha from the earth and the more he feels the light and warmth and sacredness of 'beyond.'[42]

The notion of beyond serves as a stepping stone for Shariati to enter into the realm of Sufism:

Art is a discussion of the beyond and it is expressing what should be but is not. And it is for this reason that music, despite all its mistreatment by Muslims, has never left Sufism and this is...why our ʿIrfān, as soon as it opens its eyes, throws itself on the lap of poetry, or in a better interpretation as soon as it opens its eyes, it talks with the language of poetry. And the meeting of these two sympathetic kins who feel the same pain is the most beautiful and the most moving event of the history of spirituality (معنویت) of the meaningful East. Since ʿIrfān, whom the pain of estrangement has made restless with poetry--which is obviously not the language of conversation of this world--and with the aid of the words of poetry--which are the swift-winged and passerine angels of the World Above--and also with the hints of its peculiar music...facilitate the flight of the impatient and restless soul from the bondage of this stuffy and vague exile.[43]

3. Religions

One of the best places to see the tri-layered structure of Shariati's work and thought which was alluded to in Kavīr, [44] is in his view of religions. Whereas in some of his presentations Shariati argues that not only is Islam not a new religion, it is the only religion that has ever existed,[45] and ʿAlid Shiʿism as the only branch of Islam which contains its original message, in other instances he extends the validity of religions to include all the Semitic religions. There he divides religions into two main groups: those led by Abrahamic (i.e. Semitic) prophets, and those led by pseudo prophets (non-Semitic religions). He expresses his favor for the first group by recalling that only the Abrahamic prophets are recognized by the Prophet of Islam. He argues that,

> The quasi-prophetic leaders of Iran, India, and China, and the moral and, quasi-prophetic leaders (رهبران اخلاقی ومعنوی و بیغمبر گونه) of Greece were all without exception either on their father's side or on their mother's side connected to one of these three dimensions [of despotism, exploitation, or stupefaction (استعمار)].[46]

He continues,

> On the other side of these we have a chain of prophets called Abrahamic prophets who without exception and with the tasrīh (explicit remark) of the Prophet of Islam himself--who says there has not been any prophet unless he has tended the sheep, and the Prophet means the prophets of his own

> chain since he does not recognize the others--and with the taṣrīḥ of history are members of the shepherd class, or connected to the craftsmen who, in the age of agriculture, belong to a strata of society lower than shepherds.[47]

Yet in Kavīr, Shariati demonstrates a clear belief in the validity of all religions. Furthermore he acknowledges that it is only in ʿIrfān that the real essence of religion is to be found. He acknowledges that there is a place above and beyond all religions, where true believers of all religions meet and in which there is no room for theological or philosophical differences. This idea is found in Shariati's discussion of S. Bodin, a French Catholic whom Shariati admired and respected as one of his role models:

> She was a fanatic (متعصب) Catholic and being Christian was in her nature (آب و گل). ...but at the same time she would find my spirit--me who lived outside of the border (حصار) of her beliefs--to be from the same substancce as that High Truth (حقیقت متعالی) in which she strongly believed. And [thus] she would demonstrate that high up there, there is a place that if two souls reach and meet each other there, even if they had flown from two estranged (بیگانه) religions, the two religions will also make peace and will become one.[48]

Historically speaking, the notion of the validity of all religions has been expressed by two distinct types of people. First there has been a group of people who, due to their frustration with sectarian conflicts, have advocated the view that all religions are but different

paths to the same goal, the same truth. Members of this group have not necessarily had an experience of this truth, but adhere to it out of humanitarian concern and with the aim of countering the bitterness and violence generated by sectarianism.

The second group which adheres to this doctrine is mystics. Mystics, regardless of their theological convictions or philosophical points of view, have always been the pioneers of peace and tolerance. They have not only talked about these notions but have lived them. Their belief in the idea that different religions are different manifestations of the same truth has emerged out of their experience of a particular mystical state. Within this state the mystic enjoys such an overwhelming vision of the essential unity of beings, that he is forced to conclude that all the differences could only belong to the world of forms. Mystical literature abounds with testimonies of mystics in regard to this experience. ʿAzīz-i Nasafī has summarized this conclusion centuries ago in quoting the following verses of Rūmī:[49]

چون به بیرنگی رسی کان داشتی موسی و فرعون دارند آشتی
چون که بیرنگی اسیر رنگ شد موسی با موسی در جنگ شد

When you reach to the colorlessness
that you had before,

Moses and Pharaoh are in peace.

When colorlessness became captivated
in the world of colors (forms),

> The likeness of Moses got into a fight with the likeness of Moses.[50]

With the testimonies of mystics in mind, we should return to the last passage that was quoted from Shariati, and we realize that the place to which he refers, the place above all religions, is the same place that mystics have reached in their experience of the unity of being. Although we cannot, at this point, simply assume that Shariati was a mystic, we can assume that his testimony as to the validity of all religions comes from more than humanitarian concerns, otherwise it would appear in his ijtimāᶜīyāt or at least in Islāmīyāt writings, rather that in Kavīr, the place where he writes for himself[51] and gives an account of his distressed soul.[52]

Thus, in studying Shariati's view of religions we see several different trends of thought. Since Shariati himself does not integrate them into a clear, coherent structure we are forced to make our own assumptions and conclusions. As we mentioned earlier, Shariati makes at least three distinct statements concerning religion (and religions). He claims that ʿAlid Shiᶜī Islam is the most perfect manifestation of religion; it is the only religion to have preserved its original message, hence it is the only true religion. His motivations for this statement are two-fold. Firstly, he is aware of his context; he is addressing an audience raised in a Shiᶜī milieu and striving to inspire them with the "Islamic" message of social justice and revolution. Secondly, he has his own

conviction about the truth of ʿAlid Shīʿi Islam; from some of his own personal statements and actions he seems to be a sincere believer in ʿAlid, Shīʿi Islam, the religion of social justice. In other instances, Shariati claims that all Semitic religions are valid. This statement is made in the context of a course which Shariati gave on the History and Understanding of Religions, at Ḥusaynīyah-yi Irshād. He recognizes that the young intellectuals whom he is teaching need to know about religion--its advent, growth and development--as well as other religious traditions and philosophies. Yet he also recognizes the need to present this material "responsibly," within a schematic view which still emphasizes the social and revolutionary aspects of religion over against the more passive, self-introverted manifestations. Finally, we see in Kavīr that Shari ati believes in an exalted place above the boundaries of formal religions, a place where all differences dissolve in an overpowering vision of unity.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 164. This is the title page for the last chapter which starts on page 305, but due to an error in printing it is actually found on page 164.

2. Qur'an 32:7-9, see also 15:29 and 38:72.

3. Ali Shariati, Bāzgasht (Return), pp. 398-9.

4. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 305.

5. Ibid., pp. 305-6.

6. Ibid., p. 307.

7. Ibid., p. 308.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid. It is interesting to note that in a footnote to this sentence Shariati explains that according to Rūmī, this burden is the burden of freedom and choice.

10. Ibid., p. 307.

11. Ibid., pp. 306-7.

12. Ibid., p. 309.

13. Ibid., p. 310.

14. Ibid., p. 311.

15. Ibid., p. 96.

16. Ibid. Beatrice probably refers to Beatrice Portinari, the woman to whom it is believed that Dante dedicated most of his poetry.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibrāhīm ibn Adham was a Persian mystic born in Balkh (Khurasan), d. circa 161 A.H./777-8 C.E.

19. Mītrā is one of the major deities of ancient Iran. He later became the supreme god of the mystery cults which were popular in the Roman empire, and is also

referred to in the Avesta and Zoroastrian texts. ("Mithra," in Encyclopedia of Religion, Mircea Eliade editor in chief, Vol. 9, p. 579.)

20. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 309.

21. Ibid., pp. 310-11.

22. Ibid., p. 311.

23. Ali Shariati, Art Awaiting the Saviour, p. 20.

24. Qur'an 33:72.

25. Ali Shariati, Art Awaiting the Saviour, p. 22.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 21.

28. Ibid., pp. 21-2.

29. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 310.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 311.

32. Ibid., p. 313, footnote.

33. Ali Shariati, Art Awaiting the Saviour, p. 23.

34. Ibid., p. 26.

35. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, pp. 310-11.

36. Ibid., p. 311 footnote.

37. Ibid., footnote.

38. Ibid., p. 312, footnote.

39. Ibid., p. 309.

40. Ibid., p. 312, footnote.

41. For example see Syed Shāh Khusro Hussainī, Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Husaynī-i Gīsūdirāz (721/1321-825/1422): on Sufism, especially Chapter 3, pp. 110-172, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality. For an example of the works of Sufi musicians see Hazrat Inayat Khan, The Music of Life.

42. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 315. Sidrat al-muntahā is the point beyond which the Angel Gabriel was not able to accompany the Prophet Muḥammad during the Prophet's Miʿrāj.

43. Ibid., pp. 315-6.

44. Ibid., p. 3. See Chapter I, p. 4 of this work.

45. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī-yi Inqilābī, p. 262.

46. Ali Shariati, Tārīkh va Shinākht-i Adyān, (The History and Understanding of Religions), p. 184.

47. Ibid.

48. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 95.

49. ʿAzīz al-Nasafī was a Persian Sufi who died circa 700 A.H. The quotation is taken from Rūmī's Mathnawī, Book I, Lines 2526 and 2525, p. 126.

50. ʿAzīz-i Nasafī, Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil, p. 375.

51. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, pp. ix and xxi.

52. See Chapter III, Previous Works, p. 26, note 2.

CHAPTER VI

SHARIATI'S ROLE MODELS

In order to understand the multi-faceted character of Shariati, it is necessary to find out which individuals influenced him the most. In Kavīr Shariati devotes a full chapter to this discussion entitled "My Idols," or "My Beloved Ones" (معبودهای من). In this chapter Shariati lists sixteen contemporary individuals and thirteen historical figures who had--each in their particular way--shaped his personality and his thought. A quick survey of this chapter and the list of names reveals the vast array of knowledge to which Shariati was exposed, including sociology, philosophy, literature, art, music, study of Religion, and so on, all of which perhaps we could categorize as the Humanities. Some of these individuals, moreover, had a more direct influence on Shariati's character, on his heart and his soul. To better appreciate these people and their contributions to Shariati's intellectual and spiritual formation, we shall go through the list briefly and consider these individuals one by one.

Louis Massignon, the French Orientalist whose masterpiece on Ḥallāj[1] has earned him global recognition,

comes out as the most prominent figure from the pages of Kavīr. He is also one of the few people whom Shariati recognizes as having had a major role in the formation of his character (سامانِ دل). Of the thirty-one pages in the chapter, eleven pages are devoted to Massignon, a clear indication of the special place he held in Shariati's life. He acknowledges Massignon's expertise on Islam and even invites other Orientalists to follow in his footsteps.[2] Yet what really touches Shariati is Massignon's spirit.

> Even though Massignon was the greatest Islamisist of the contemporary world, the beauty of his spirit and the glory of his humanity, and his delicate and rapturous feeling affected his friends more than his intellectual genius.[3]

Massignon was not the only eminent individual whom Shariati had met in his life; yet whereas the influence of most others was intellectual, Massignon's influence was spiritual.

> I revered (تعظیم) Gurvitch, whereas I sanctified (تقدیس) Massignon. Lefebvre[i], Sartre and Gurvitch filled my mind, quenched my intellect, and taught me how to think. Jean Cocteau[ii] surprised me and I always thought about him with an impressed astonishment, [about] this colorful and multi-dimensional soul. But Massignon, I Loved him, and paid devotion to him (ارادت میورزیدم). [He] quenched my soul, and filled my heart.[4]

What was in Masignon that had such a moving effect on Shariati, a self-proclaimed "lonely monk"[5] of the desert?

Undoubtedly, it was a spiritual quality that emanated such powerful attraction. Shariati testified that it was the unceasing beauty and faith undulating in Massignon's heart[6] which enabled Shariati to receive from him undescribable gifts such as

> the caressing and delightful warmth of a heart inflamed with fires and mysterious and unknown volcanic eruptions which [stem] from the inner world of the unknown (عیب درون) and metaphysics of heart in soul.[7]

It was this inner quality which made Shariati become Massignon's self-proclaimed[8] disciple and explain his semi-fanā-fī-Shaykh experiences in such moving fashion.

> You should sit close to him, leave your heart with him, incarnate (حلول) in him, drown in him,...open the arms of your feelings and your soul, the mouth of your heart and the mouth of your understanding (حالِ تمست را) in him and on him and with precision, carefulness, thirst, indigence (نیازمندی), humbleness, surrender, persistence, trust, patience and perseverance, find all the roads, doors, windows, and even the smallest holes that open [and lead] to his miracle-filled and mystery-filled, secret-filled innermost and put yourself...on the course of these paths, windows and holes and sit and wait, and then see, find, and feel that oh...what colorful, marvelous and mysterious and unusual springs well up inside you, and flow, flow, and flow (سرازیر میشود) and gradually you feel...that you are getting filled and filled and filled with all the things that are not here, are nowhere, are non-existent (اصلاً نیست), and you [can] hear the sound of the pouring of these invisible miraculous currents, inside yourself, clearly and explicitly if you listen to it,...be silent, bend

> your head inside yourself and press your ear gently on your heart. What a feeling, what a musicality have these sounds, the sound of the pouring of mysterious rivers, streams, and springs, drizzling rains, thunderbolts, showers, floods and the uproar of waterfalls, and then, the growing of heaven in the burnt and empty desert of the heart.[9]

To be able to enjoy such a deep spiritual appreciation and such a definite experience of someone's spiritual presence it is necessary to possess some kind of spiritual awareness or spiritual perception. This is well demonstrated by the fact that the other well-known scholars who have had a similar spiritual appreciation of Massignon and have described him in similar--and at times identical--terms as Shariati's descriptions, are those who have a definite and concrete affiliation with the spiritual life.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, for instance, is one such scholar. After admitting that he is talking from "the perspective of the Sufi tradition itself"[10] and more specifically as a follower of the "Ibn Arabian School"[11] of Sufism, he acknowledges the great spiritual character of Massignon and identifies his most salient feature to be "a profound and universal appreciation of things spiritual."[12]

Like Shariati, Dr. Nasr is aware of the great scholarly contributions of Massignon and his intellectual capacity, and acknowledges them frequently.[13] Yet what makes Massignon important, in his view, is the combination

of a "deep peity with a penetrating intelligence," a quality that "Massignon possessed to an eminent degree."[14]

Another reference to the spiritual nature of Massignon is given by Anne-Marie Schimmel. Her account of Massignon comes very close to that of Shariati both in form and content. She recalls him as "a figure made of white light, radiant, with his completely spiritualized noble face, and with those intense eyes."[15]

She also talks about the letters she used to receive from Massignon concerning the problems she had encountered while studying Sir Muhammad Iqbal. These letters were not only full of relevant information on the subject, but also always contained "a mystical sound to them."[16] In short, in Schimmel's view--and she acknowleges that there are many others who share this view--Massignon was a man who was transformed completely by faith and love to the extent that he "conformed to what most of us would call 'a saint,'"[17] a saint who "had reached a state of fana"[18] that would elevate him to the statue of "l'homme de lumière."[19]

The person who emerges as the second most important figure in Kavīr, and whose role Shariati describes as complementary[20] to that of Massignon in his own spiritual formation is a "fanatic Catholic,"[21] by the name of Solange Bodin. She was affiliated with the Richilieu Center and apparently Shariati met her during his visits and retreats there. Her premature death, having drown in

the English Channel, was quite traumatic to Shariati. He writes:

> And you my great teacher of wonderful lessons! You whom the vengeful hand of death--at the time that my thirst, for drinking the drops that you poured from the eternal spring of your mystery-filled heart in the golden cups of the words, had made me impatient--[took away from me and] left me alone in this burned and terrifying desert....[22]

Or again:

> What should I say? "Go and mourn until the Day of Judgement!" What is the use? The sea does not have mercy anyway.[23]

The way Bodin influenced Shariati was purely spiritual but in an indirect manner. She taught Shariati simply through her being and living. In fact she did not teach, since "she herself did not know"[24] how exalted, lovely and precious she was, but rather Shariati learned from her on his own.[25] Shariati learned from Bodin "the art of 'seeing,'" a "new look,"[26] in which a fresh picture of life shone. It is very interesting to note that Shariati distinguishes between Bodin's spirituality and that of Massignon in a way that could be called popular and devotional spiritually, and intellectual spirituality respectively. The difference between them had to do with the difference in their perspectives:

> I saw a new picture of life and the world in the look of Bodin which was surprising and unknown for me. When she and Massignon looked at this sky, what they saw, bore no resemblance with each other.[27]

To better illustrate the difference between the two, Shariati refers to Pascal as having said "the heart has reasons of which the intellect is not aware," and states that "Bodin had reasons of which Massignon was not aware."[28]

As was mentioned in the section dealing with Shariati's view of man, he saw man as constantly vacillating between his rational and mystical sides, with very few individuals fortunate enough to meet someone who would turn their world upside-down and bring them to the full realization of their mystical dimension. Rūmī, Moses, Buddha and Ibrāhīm-i Adham were, according to Shariati, among this priviledged group who underwent the miraculous transformation as a result of being hit, as Shariati describes it, with a thunderbolt that struck them in the head and gave them a new birth after making them die to what they were before.[29] Furthermore, Shariati confesses that Bodin was, for him, that thunderbolt.[30] He acknowledges that before meeting Bodin he used to see the world through the eyes of philosophy and to understand it through thinking and intellectuation; but Bodin caused a deep inner transformation in him:[31]

> And I who saw the world through the skeptic...eyes of Maeterlinck found a new "seeing" from this opium that the cupbearer (ساقی) poured into my wine [realizing] that this task does not get done by lesson, book, and class and as ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt has said, "this task needs pain not pen."[32]

Yet Bodin was not alone in his effect on Shariati, Massignon was also very instrumental. And since their influence was complementary to each other, they were thus both necessary in Shariati's spiritual transformation. "And so it was," Shariati explains, "that with the help of these two I got to the border of the East and West of the world and the East and West of myself;"[33] meaning that he was liberated from the misery that is the lot of the majority of people, the life of disequilibrium. Shariati continues,

> ...All religions, philosophies, scholars, literary men, and artists are either on the earth or in the sky, either in the East or in the West, and there is a third group which is both on the earth and in the sky, both in the East and in the West--and these are mediocre people--and there is a group which is sometimes on the earth, sometimes in the sky, and these are base, unstable, hollow, and at times dirty souls.[34]

But there is another possible alternative, that of rising above the two and ascending beyond the realm of opposites where there is only Unity, and Shariati claims that Massignon and Bodin helped him to realize such an ascension to equilibrium. He continues:

> But those two [Massignon and Bodin] taught me that man's spirit could grow and expand to such an extent that it fills the space between the earth and sky, and [could] become an eagle whose wings are spread over East and West...[and] in whose look, understanding, and palpitation of his heart this world and the hereafter would join one another like two seas and then the soul who lives, sees,

> thinks, understands, Loves (دوست میدارد), and falls in love (عشق میورزد), and worships in such a world is in a state that even the grasp of imagination is too short to reach him and his world.[35]

The experience which Shariati describes has a very definite mystical tone. Whether or not this is his own experience is open to the reader's discretion; yet the whole progression of the pages in Kavīr which follow gives a strong indication that Shariati in fact did experience this state:

> [In] the eye of the soul who has filled the distance between earth and God...contradictions, distances, inconsistencies, distinctions, and boundaries...all manifest in a generic (عام), homogeneous (یک جنس), exalted, marvelous, infinite, and abstract unity.[36]

This is a state which defies explanation and does not lend itself to any description. "How could one describe," Shariati asks,"the picture of things and the color of states (رنگ حالات) in the eyes and hearts of the soul who is standing by the window which displays this world and the hereafter [simultaneously]."[37] The answer is clear, it is not possible. Therefore in order to understand we should experience; and in order to experience "with all our power we should get closer, closer, and closer to such a soul and see and feel those pictures, colors, and meanings."[38] And if one can get to this place and bring one's soul into contact with the soul who has reached the state of unity, then one can experience a new and marvelous world where all the categories of earthly

experiences become irrelevant. Shariati observes that Ibn al-Fārid talked about this very same state when he said that "my hands talked while my tongue heard; and while I was listening by my eyes I saw with my ears."[39]

Whether the source of this knowledge was an actual experience, or intellectual realization, or a combination of the two, it remains that Shariati attributes it to the influence of both Bodin and Massignon. They were the architects who together shaped, or as Shariati puts it, created his spirit:

> These two are my mabūd. I say mabūd since the great Alī says that "whoever taught me a word made me his slave." Undoubtedly this [word that Alī means] is not the kind of word that is taught in books and classrooms. [It] is that kind of word which makes the human being. Just as everybody has two deaths [he] has also two births. And in this new creation, those who teach such word or words are the creators of the spirit of man.[40]

It is interesting to note that the phrase "my beloved ones " which is used by Shariati as the title of the section which included many people who influenced him, is used in this sentence in a very exclusive way to refer to Bodin and Massignon alone. This indicates the great importance Shariati attached to spiritual maturity and spiritual knowledge vis-à-vis purely intellectual values and knowlege. And this is why the chapter that covers more than 30 people who each contributed in a particular way to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual formation of Shariati begins with Massignon and ends with Bodin, the

two people whom Shariati believed to embody a magnificent degree of spiritual attainment.

Although Massignon and Bodin were the main architects of Shariati's spiritual formation, there were still others who had the same effect, in lesser degree. Shariati's father, for instance, was one of them, and naturally the first one to influence Shariati.

> My father, the first builder of the first dimensions of my soul! The person who, for the first time, taught me both the art of thinking, and the art of being a human being (من انسان بودن). [He] poured into my mouth the taste of freedom, honor (شرف), continence (پاکدامنی), dignity (متانت), purity of spirit (عفت روح), and the steadfastness, faith and independence of heart, immediately after my mother weened me.[41]

His father's instruction came, mainly, through books and thus one might want to call it an intellectual formation. Yet when we consider the nature of these books we can understand why Shariati regarded it as a spiritual influence. Shariati pictured the world he experienced as exalted yet simple.

> What a great and [yet] small, full of talk and [yet] silent, humble and [yet] proud, valuable and [yet] inexpensive and nice world. ...[M]y father, and his library, and his two thousand silent friends and I, the lone inheritor of the inheritance of my ancestors.[42]

The crucial point is found in the idea of his ancestors. It was due to them, their nature and their way, that Shariati's soul was touched. They were

> men of religion and [yet] did not pollute it with the world; men of talk (مردان سخن) and [yet] did not praise anybody throughout their lives, and [who] did not pour the Word which belongs to God at the feet of pigs.[43]

Thus they were "men of knowledge, dignity, generosity, faith and spirit."[44]

Another person whose influence was similar to that of Bodin and Massignon was Abū al-Ḥasan-i Furūghī.[45] Shariati admitted that his study with Furūghī was not long, but he emphasized that it was deep.[46] The term "talammudh" with which he described his study under Furūghī, is rather curious in that it is a technical word used in theological seminaries. It was Furūghī who taught him something that Shariati only later could fully appreciate through his relationship with Massignon and Bodin.[47]

> It was he [Furūghī] who, for the first time, taught me to what extent man--a cherished (ارزشمند) and trained (پرورش) soul of man--can grow, and how great it can be, and "become."[48]

Professor Chandel also appears to have been a very interesting figure for Shariati, due to his multi-dimensional personality, a characteristic which was always attractive to Shariati.

> [He] was always vacillating from Buddha to Descartes and always rose

> above the East and the West and the past and the future and heaven and earth.[49]

Alexis Carrel[50] was also among the people whom Shariati praised as a model and mentor. However, he does not specify whether his influence was direct or indirect.

> Alexis Carrel...was a great experience for me, that is, seeing religion through the eyes of science; [he] was a human being with two wings, the kind that I always desire.[51]

Finally Shariati acknowledged his connection with and his admiration for René Guénon by including his name in his list of models and by calling Guénon's conversion a "migration."

> Guénon...was the rebellious soul of Europe who rebelled against the boundage of this civilization of money, work and force, and fled to the East, and what a great and deep migration [that was].[52]

In addition to the first group of individuals whose influence on Shariati was spiritual, there is another set of people who influenced Shariati intellectually and whom Shariati acknowledged as having filled his mind, quenched his intellect and taught him how to think.[53]

Jean-Paul Sartre was perhaps the person who had the greatest intellectual influence on Shariati.[54] Shariati was well acquainted with Sartre's thought while still studying in Iran, and had even done some work on him for his M.A. thesis. It appears that the notion of man's free will, a concept which Sartre emphasized and used as the basis of his Existentialism, had a deep and lasting

influence on Shariati. We find, in turn, a great echo of this theme in Shariati's thinking, even though he never openly admitted it. In Shariati's eyes, Sartre was the best example of the futility of man's search for meaning outside of the domain of God.

> ...in him [Sartre] I saw how a human being could have the disposition of a lonely wolf, fearless, forlone, invading (مهاجم), aggressive (گستاخ), independent, [and] a stranger (غریب).[55]

Furthermore, Sartre was, for Shariati, the embodiment of the "spirit of humanity" of Europe which inevitably was led to rebellion.

> This "spirit of humanity" of Europe which has been imprisoned in this dirty (پلید) steel body of machine and money, and with what torture, has rebelled, out of fear of suffocation; this victim of Church and capital, disgusted with the world and religion, which [out] there [in the West] are [but] two sides of a fake coin.[56]

George Gurvitch, whom Shariati praised as the "world's genius of sociology,"[57] also had a substantial impact on Shariati in that he

> gave a sociologist's look to my eyes and opened a fresh direction and a vast horizon in front of me.[58]

A person whose intellectual contribution Shariati acknowledged enthusiastically was Professor Jacques Berque,[59] who apparently taught him a useful methodology in sociology of religion.

> Professor Berque...showed me how one can see religion from behind sociological looking-glasses and by

> virtue of this very great lesson, hundreds of thousands of useless [pieces of] information (دانستنی‌های بیهوده) which I had learned here and were of no use to me, all became useful and worthwhile.[60]

In the area of comtemporary schools of thought, Shariati acknowledged his indebtedness to Schwartz[61] and Henri Lefebvre by admitting that they

> acquainted me with the new insights of today--not in the sense of this century but today in the sense of after World War II--in the field of ideological problems.[62]

As we have already seen, Shariati had a great interest in and respect for art. Art, according to Shariati, played a very important role in man's life, and, along with religion and mysticism, was the great manifestation of man's yearning soul. Thus it is not surprising to realize that part of his intellectual formation was artistic appreciation, especially in the field of painting and music.

> Carola Grabert, Jacquline Chezel, Kātib Yāsīn [and] Claude Bernard toured me in the world of art: the paintings of Picasso, Chagall, Van Gogh, Tintoretto, Lacroix...and music: the great classical symphonies; the sonatas of Kastin DeFin(?) whom I like as much as I like Socrates and from whom--not that I have understood new things, no [rather]--I have learned new understanding.[63]

Franz Fanon, the reknown freedom-fighter of the Algerian Revolution and a close friend of Shariati, naturally found a place among his favorite figures: Shariati's friendship with Fanon developed during the

Algerian Revolution in which both of them were active. They both believed that the solution to the problems of the Third World lay in the rejection of Western culture and in some kind of a return to one's own culture. Since Fanon was not the only person to advoacte the theory of a return to one's authentic self, it seems curious that he alone is included by Shariati among the people who had a spiritual and/or intellectual influence on him. One cannot but wonder what was unique about Fanon that elevated him in Shariati's view. We can only speculate that perhaps it had something to do with the fact that, unlike a great majority of revolutionaries who fought--and died--for the freedom of their own people, Fanon

> sacrificed his life for a captive nation with which--except in being a human being--he had no ties.[64]

The list of historical figures who influenced Shariati, like the contemporary figures, came from a vast range. They included prophets, people from the house of the Prophet, Companions, philosophers, mystics and saints. From among the prophets Shariati mentioned Abraham, "the hero, liberator and rebellious" Moses, the "love-inspiring (دوست داشتنی), and pure Jesus who has the tenderness of love and beauty of a soul", and Muhammad "the man in whose breast the heart of Jesus palpitates and in whose hand is the blood-stained (خون آلود) sword of Caesar."[65] From the house of the Prophet, Shariati praised ʿAlī "the man who is, or the kind which should be and is not," Ḥusayn

"who gave spirit to freedom," and Zaynab "who gave life to the bloody revolution of her brother with her eloquent tongue and her fearless and vigilant (هوشیار) soul."[66]

Buddha, the great mystic of ancient India, had a special place on Shariati's list, but not as a prophet, a founder of a new religion or school of thought, but as an artist:

> [As for] Buddha...I regret that [people of] Indo-China did not know him and called him prophet. He makes a bad prophet, but is a great poet. He is a mysterious, great, and wonderful model. He is a highly beautiful and exciting myth which has incarnated in the body of a...prince.[67]

Outwardly Shariati showed no interest in philosophy and philosophers, and in his popular lectures and works attacked them. Yet quite frequently, in his personal thought, he was very much interested in and naturally influenced by philosophy. This interest not only manifested itself, as we will see later, in explicit acknowledgement of his appreciation of philosophy, but was also obvious in his admiration of philosophers such as Sartre, Nietzsche, and Socrates.

> And Socrates,...as much as I don't like him and his gang [of] Plato, Aristotle, Alcibiades, and Xenophon and others...this is in politics, [but] in scientific reflection (انعکاس علمی) and greatness of soul (عظمت روحی), I like this brave and genius man very much.[68]

From among the mystics, Shariati listed ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, Suhrawardī,[69] and Ḥallāj as his favorites. In refering to Ḥallāj, Shariati quoted Maurice Barrès[70] who, in expressing his admiration for Voltaire, called him "mon autre moi-même" and admitted that "it is in such a way (تعبیر) that I can talk about him [ʿAyn al-Quḍāt]."[71]

It is worth mentioning that Shariati expressed great admiration for other mystics in other chapters of Kavīr. Yet as far as the discussion of his role models is concerned, he named only the three mystics cited above. In closing, it should also be noted that it is rather curious that these three mystics whom Shariati admired belonged to a special category of Sufis. These three--and only these three--are the Sufis who have been martyred at the hands of exoterically inclined religious authorities.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Louis Massignon, The Passion of al-Hallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam.

2. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 104.

3. Ibid., p. 84.

4. Ibid. Shariati distinguishes between two kinds of love: purely spiritual love, and love mixed with other, different interests. He uses the term dūst dāshtan for the former one, and the term ʿishq varzidan for the latter. It is the former one that he uses to express his feelings for Massignon. For a further explanation see Chapter 4 of Kavīr which is entirely devoted to this theme (pp. 59-77). See also Preface, p. v of this present work. References within this quotation are as follows:

i. Henri Lefebvre, a French philosopher and sociologist, one-time theorist of the French Communist Party.

ii. Jean Cocteau, a French poet, librettist, novelist, actor, film director, and painter, d. 1963.

5. Ibid., p. 237.

6. Ibid., p. 83.

7. Ibid., p. 86.

8. Ibid., p. 66. It is worth noting that the word which Shariati uses for disciple (hawārī) has a Christian connotation and is used exclusively for Jesus' disciples.

9. Ibid., pp. 86-7.

10. Daniel Massignon, ed., Presence de Louis Massignon, Hommages et témoignages, p. 51.

11. Ibid., p. 58.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., pp. 50-1, 53, 61.

14. Ibid., p. 60.

15. Daniel Massignon, ed., Presence de Louis Massignon, Hommages et témoignages, p. 272. Compare this with Shariati's description of Massignon's face and eyes in Kavir, pp. 79-81.

16. Ibid., p. 273.

17. Ibid., p. 272.

18. Ibid., p. 273.

19. Ibid.

20. Ali Shariati, Kavir, p. 98.

21. Ibid., p. 95.

22. Ibid., p. 105.

23. Ibid., p. 93.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., pp. 93-4.

26. Ibid., p. 98.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 94. I have given the exact translation of Shariati's words. The well-known quotation of Pascal, however, reads "the heart has reasons that Reason does not know."

29. Ibid., pp. 96-7.

30. Ibid., p. 98.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., pp. 97-8. The reference to wine and cupbearer here is quite curious, since Shariati usually tries hard to avoid controversial terminologies.

33. Ibid., p. 98.

34. Ibid., p. 99.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

37. Ibid., p. 100.

38. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 100.

39. Ibid. In the relevant footnote Shariati mentions that this idea is taken from Ibn al-Fārid̤'s Dīwān, but I could not identify this reference in Ibn al-Farid's work. Ibn al-Fārid̤ was a reknown Sufi born at Cairo, d. 632 A.H./1235 C.E.

40. Ibid., pp. 98-9. Maʿbūd literally means both the beloved and the object of worship. In Persian the first meaning is predominant, whereas in Arabic the latter is usually intended. Shariati artfully combines the two meaning by implying the Arabic connotation of the word through linking it to the word ʿabd used by Imām ʿAlī.

41. Ibid., p. 88.

42. Ibid., p. 89.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Abū al-Ḥasan-i Furūghī (1926-1959) was an eminent Iranian scholar who was at one time president of Tehran's Teacher Training College, and later a professor at Tehran University. In addition Furūghī taught Louis Massignon Islamic history and mysticism.(Ali Shariati, Bāzshināsī-i Huwīyat-i Irānī-Islāmī, p. 288)

46. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 90.

47. Shariati mentions that Jean Cocteau "showed" him this lesson again, but one gets the impression that Cocteau's approach and influence was intellectual.

48. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 89.

49. Ibid., p. 101.

50. Alexis Carrel was a medical scientist who received a Nobel Prize for his work. He was also the author of a work entitled Prayer. This work was translated by Shariati and published under the title Niyāyish, along with three other works by Shariati which pertained to the same subject. Carrel attempted to formulate a type of "Christian humanism" to counter Marxist materialism. (See Ervand Abrahamian, The Iranian Mojahedin, p. 106. Abrahamian writes that Shariati translated a work by Carrel named Self under the title of Khīsh. I have seen Shariati's translation of Niyāyish, which includes a translation of Carrel's work. However I have not come across any work of Shariati, translation or otherwise, under the title Khīsh.)

51. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 101.

52. Ibid. René Guénon (1886-1951) was a French traditionalist, and eminent figure in the study of religions and metaphysics. He was very attracted to mysticism and gnosticism, both on a personal and intellectual level and converted to Islam in 1912.

53. Ibid., p. 84.

54. In Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā (p. 245), Shariati writes, "I am an existentialist, of course [by that I mean] my own particular existentialism [which is] not repetition, emulation [or] translation...[of the founder of that school].

55. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, pp. 90-1.

56. Ibid., p. 91.

57. Ibid., p. 84.

58. Ibid., p. 90.

59. Jacques Berque was a French sociologist and orientalist. He held the Chair of Contemporary Islamic Social History at the Collège de France and was Director of Study for l'École Pratique des Hautes Études. He, along with Massignon and Henfy Lefebvre, was a contributor to Esprit, a radical Catholic journal which was sympathetic to several Third World liberation struggles and entered into a Marxist-Christian dialogue. (See Abrahamian, The Iranian Mojahedin, p. 108)

60. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 90.

61. Schwartz, unidentified. Shariati does not give any first name.

62. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 90.

63. Ibid., p. 91.

64. Ibid., p. 101. Franz Fanon originally came from Martinique.

65. Ibid., p. 102.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., pp. 102-3.

68. Ibid., p. 103.

69. Abu'l-Futūh al-Suhrawardī (Shaykh al-Ishrāq) was a mystic philosopher and the founder of the Illuminist school of mystical philosophy. He was executed as a heretic in 587 A.H./1191 C.E.

70. Maurice Barrès was a French author, journalist and political activist (1862-1923).

71. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 103. The French quotation is given in its original language.

CHAPTER VII

SHARIATI, A MYSTIC?

As we have seen throughout this study, Shariati displayed the deep influence which the mystical dimension of religion had on his character. We can easily discern this influence whether it is revealed in his inner tendencies, in his personal experiences, in his appreciation of the lives and works of contemplatives and mystics, or in his overall views. We will now make a closer examination of the influence of mysticism on Shariati, beginning with his innate orientation, and following the manifestations of this orientation in his personal experiences, and in his attitudes and views. Throughout this chapter we should seek to answer a central question: can we consider Shariati a mystic?

Perhaps the most significant point that we should bear in mind, regarding the influence of mysticism on Shariati, is that his interest in it was, in its origin, innate and independent of his religious beliefs and practice. We remember from his own statement in Kavīr, that even during that period when he did not believe in God, he was interested in reading mystical texts. We also recall that when his understanding of life became so

pessimistic that he decided to commit suicide, the only thing that prevented him was his desire to read the Mathnawī.

Shariati himself was aware of the distiction between mysticism and religion and explained it briefly in a statement which he ascribed to "Professor Chandel":

> I have not come to believe in religion through [the influence of] a prophet. I am and have been a "religious soul," and cannot but be otherwise. This soul has come to me through inheritance and is me myself, and how could someone [cut off] himself from himself, and get free of himself?[1]

Sharing the belief held by all mystics, Shariati also believed that being a "religious soul" is different and independent of believing in, and belonging to a specific religion:

> A man can become Muslim without being a religious soul, and can be religious without becoming Muslim, and can be a religious Muslim. And it is possible for him to be a religious Muslim, and then he and Islam break apart from each other and he remains religious, or a believer, a believer who is not Muslim anymore, that is, he does not practice Islam; and [one] can be a believer without any religion [or faith], and can be a believing Christian or Jew or Buddhist....[2]

This innate interest, however, was strengthened through certain experiences that started quite early and continued throughout his turbulent life. Shariati relates one of his early experiences:

> I remember exactly that I was in grade five. As soon as I entered the

> school, suddenly the bell rang. The kids thought that it was the school's bell, but I trembled and was transfixed in my place. My head turned and I saw that the blue sky over my head was turning in joy. They took me to the class and I sat at my bench. I saw a window opened in my class room and I stood at it for the first time and saw the sun that, with its golden sparkles, was smiling at my fervent, childish face. Above that I saw that suddenly a star, like a shooting star that rose from the heart of the blue sky and shot, with a green and pentagonal light, and with [the same speed as] the dazzling acceleration of imagination came to earth and went into my eyes. I felt its passage in my brain like [the sensation of] a nervous twinge inside, or the passage of a hot memory from the depth of the soul, or the appearance of the shining light of thunder from the heart of the night. From there the arrow, with the same acceleration that does not fit in the imagination, went even further inside, and I felt its trace in my chest as it passed through and went to the left side of my chest and entered through the auricle of my heart and immediately fell into the streams of blood and drowned, and I did not know where it had hidden itself.[3]

Shariati was well aware of the similarity between this story and the story of the Prophet. He not only acknowledges this similarity, but ventures to explain the similarity of the consequent events as well, and their particular significance for the Prophet Muhammad and for himself. He begins:

> Many years passed, and I was wondering what kind of event this was and what it meant. Is this not the story of the Honourable Prophet? That in

> childhood suddenly they [the angels] poured on him from the sky of the desert and spread him on the earth, cut open his chest and left a light in it as a trust and left..., until that night [in] the cave when that green light rose from his soul and talked to him by the tongue of God, and caused his heart to overflow with wisdom.[4]

He continues, correlating not only the extraordinary experiences, but the messages of these experiences as well:

> I also had a fate--in my capacity as a slave--similar to that of the Prophet, in that that angel brought him the message, "oh you [who] covered yourself in a cloak, get up...," and [gave me the message,] "Oh you alone in the crowd of people, oh silent [one] in the uproar of talk, oh defeated one who had hidden himself from himself in the colorful wrapping of victory, I see by my colorful miracles what people do not see. Get up and kill those "I"s that have thrown themselves at you and are [in fact] your evil ego and free your neck from the clutches of the people, and wash in the tears of your eyes the desires that have tainted the pure mirror of that divine self, and polish it with the file of asceticism so that the light of the candle would reflect in it, and you, the one who has lost himself in the crowd of others, found yourself in it again. Then take this steel idol of pride out of the ka^{c}bah of [your] heart and smash it at the feet of the golden minaret of the temple of Monotheism and liberate yourself and bring down your head--out of thirst--to the shore of the sea and drink to satiety from "the green ^{c}Alid springs" and confess yourself--oh you captivated by that Christian in the confidential privacy...of the beautiful church of the Holy Spirit, and free [your] heart from the shackles of name and shame and leave the religion and the world to the

> people of religion and the people of the world [respectively] and instead of these two, take up and pick pain, and groan, and do you know what comfort and joy there is in groaning?! that the wolf groans... that God groans....[5]

This and similar experiences were evidence concrete enough to convince Shariati of the reality of the experiences of mystics and the reality of the spiritual world. He exclaims:

> Wow, what a spectacular and wonderful place is the Kingdom of the Spirit...and I--who have been the traveler in this Kingdom for years, and have searched all corners of this Kingdom, and have gone there, and have seen it...and have been there, and stayed there, and lived there, and have explored there and have watched and have learned and gotten acquainted [with it]--I know what is happening there.[6]

It was also these experiences that contributed to his belief in the transcendental unity of religions as is evident in the following passage:

> And I [have passed] through all borders and all gates and have stepped in to the Kingdom of the Spirit and the city of the heart, [I] have become the true acquaintance, and the true knowledgable [man] of this mysterious Kingdom and city, [I am] that friend of [C.G.] Jung, disciple of Buddha, disciple of Jesus, companion of Muhammad, burnt by <u>ʿIrfān</u>, a pillar of Sufism, an <u>ʿālim</u> of religion, Chinese monk, lover of wisdom, and now the owner of wisdom, [I] have communication with spirits, [I am a] theosophist...see what stations I have and to what ranks I have attained.[7]

The innate tendency towards mysticism, Shariati believed, was present not only in himself, but was a propensity innate in all human beings. It had its roots, according to Shariati, in man's feeling of estrangement in this world, and in his consequent yearning for his homeland (i.e. Paradise) where he had once lived in proximity to God, and the memory of which still remains with him, preventing him from feeling satisfied in this world.

> Pessimism, anxiety, rebellion and aching for escape have been mixed with the nature of this great prisoner of earth [man] from the beginning, and disturbance has made its home in the depth of his consciousness.[8]

This yearning, moreover, manifests itself in three historical forms common to and present, in one way or another, in all human societies; these forms are, namely, religion, ᶜIrfān and art.

> [I]t is from this secret place [the depth of man's consciousness] that three wonderful and unmaterial manifestations that have always accompanied man, have grown: religion, ᶜIrfān, and art.[9]

As we have mentioined earlier, in the sections dealing with art and religions, Shariati understood that these three manifestations each function in a different way. Whereas art helps man to cope with his life in this world, by making the world more like man's original homeland, religion and mysticism help him to cope with his life by

showing him the way out of this world.

> Religion and mysticism...guide man from exile to [his] homeland, [they] distract him from "reality" to bring him closer to the "truth." Religion and mysticism are both restlessness in this world, and the philosophy of escape...but art is the philosophy of remaining [in this world].[10]

Although these manifestations differ in their function, they are all still related to one another due to their common source. Shariati describes this relation in an Islamic context:

> The kinship between religion, mysticism and art has been witnessed by history, too. The arts are the most religious and the most mystical creatures of this world. [They] have been born on the lap of religion and mysticism and have been fed by these two breasts.... And it is for this reason that music, despite all its mistreatment by Muslims, has never left Sufism. And it is thus that a complicated problem in the field of Persian literature becomes clear; that [is] why our mysticism [ʿIrfān], as soon as it opens its eyes, throws itself on the lap of poetry, and...as soon as it speaks, it talks with poetry, and the meeting of these two sympathetic kin who feel the same pain is the most beautiful and most moving event of the spiritual history of the meaningful East.[11]

This yearning, Shariati states, is what distinguishes man from animals, and is the main reason for the emergence of primitive religions.[12] Shariati understood ʿIrfān to be also the "manifestation of man's nature for going towards the unknown (غیب), [for] discovering and knowing the unknown."[13] He avoids identifying this

"unknown" because, he explains, the answer differs depending on different mystical traditions. Yet the consensus among these traditions, according to Shariati, is that man is always drawn to seek it (the unknown).[14]

> What is common [among all mystical traditions] is [the belief] that mankind is, in principle, a seeker of the unknown (نجیب جو) and the agent of his movement and evolution is fundamentally this very seeking of the unknown. If what is obvious and perceptible were enough for man he would remain stagnant. But since it is not enough, he moves and this movement guarantees his evolution. Thus contrary to what materialists say, that man's inclination towards the unseen causes his decadence, the inclination of man towards that which <u>is</u> causes his decadence.[15]

Viewed in this way, <u>ʿIrfān</u> becomes a strong social factor and it was thus that Shariati saw <u>ʿIrfān</u> as a powerful force operating throughout man's entire history. He argued that in studying history we find that all social movements and schools of thought have stemmed from three main currents: <u>ʿIrfān</u>, equality, and freedom.[16] In other words, every time man has moved to establish a new system or a new way of life, he has been inspired by his inner yearning for God, by his drive for equality, or by his drive for freedom.

Yet, Shariati regretfully observes, all these attempts have failed since they have changed from movements into institutions which inevitably function as hindrances to man's material and spiritual evolution.

> The biggest tragedy is this: that man, in his reliance on worship and love and mysticism, which are the agents of an exalted and meaningful worldview and ... [which] give meaning to man, became enslaved by asceticism; and in [his] quest for freedom [he] became enslaved by capitalism, and in [his] love of justice [he] became enslaved in a Marxist order in which the first thing that is negated is man's freedom, and his existential worth (ارزشِ وجودی).[17]

Despite this grim picture, Shariati was optimistic that it was possible to correct things and put them back on the right track. To do this, he observed, it was necessary to release man from these enslaving institutions and guide man towards God.

> What should we do here? Either we should recite al-Fātiha for man and all his needs and all the dimensions of his existence, and throw them all out and go towards...Nihilism and that Khayyām-style Sufism and see what will happen, or if we are responsible in front of man, we should save God, as that main source of love, mysticism, value and [as That which gives] meaning to man, existence, and life, from this superstitious petrifying heap that exists in the world in the name of official religions, and [we should] release justice and freedom from capitalism, and [we should] save human equality from Marxism.[18]

This positive appreciation of ʿIrfān, as we will see shortly, was accompanied by criticism of the social

function of mystics and mystical traditions. At times this apparent contradiction caused much confusion for Shariati's readers. Yet for now, we should continue with our original theme, exploring Shariati's feelings and experiences rather than his formal position on and critique of mysticism.

Shariati was a great admirer of mysticism, mystics and mystical literature which he read avidly. For him ʿIrfān was the core and the heart of religion.

> All religions, apart from the laws that they have concerning the [material] life, economy, politics, ethics, and so on, possess a mystical root. The essence of each religion is basically this mystical sentiment. Whether this religion is Eastern or Western, whether it is polytheism or monotheism does not make a difference, because these [distinctions] have to do with the kind, and evolutionary degree, of the religion [and not its essence].[19]

In his personal works Shariati openly admits his fascination for mysticism, and at times identifies with mystics in an unmistakably direct manner. We have seen examples of this in previous sections, but here we should consider several more examples:

> I am one of the co-travelers of ʿAṭṭār's heavenly journey. In search of Sīmurgh, I too took flight, along with twenty-nine love-filled birds.[20]

Again,

> We were three, I remember, three persons: Jesus, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and I. Those whose mind is tied to their eyes, and [whose] understanding is the abject slave of history and geography

> are not my audience; I am talking to those who can see and understand what goes on beyond the wall of time and away from the narrow court of space.[21]

And again,

> I am the Ḥallāj of the town [so] that nobody knows what is my language, what is my pain, what is my love, what is my religion, what is my life, what is my madness, what is my lamenting, what is my silence.[22]

Of Ḥallāj, Shariati also writes:

> Ḥallāj reached to a white certitude and warm peace (آرامش گرم).[23]

In Kavīr Shariati lists ᶜAyn al-Quḍāt, Suhrawardī and Ḥallāj as his favourite Sufis.[24] He refers to Ḥafiẓ as well:

> His [Ḥāfiẓ's] soul has filled the distance between heaven and the earth.[25]

In one instance Shariati even compares himself with the Malāmatī people, observing,

> What pleasure did this Malāmatīah people experience. Now I feel well the meaning of their deep work. These pious, pure hearted and chaste people who would try to make people suspicious of them and acted in a way as to have their friends and relatives accuse them of the things that were too far removed from them [to be true].[26]

Shariati admired mystical figures of many traditions:

> And in India [I admire] many, and more than them all [I admire] Buddha, this mysterious soul that is not like a human, the unusual being who has fallen on earth by mistake [and consequently] had to associate with people, the people who turned him into a prophet. He is not a prophet, he is

> a great poet, the greatest poet who has emerged in the [history of] man's life.[27]

Elsewhere he writes:

> Radhakrishnan, great soul and luminous sun.[28]

Again,

> [Man,] when he relies on intuition (اشراق), love, and virtue, he reaches to miracles that are...wonderful, [and] reaches to such depth of finesse of soul which is exciting. [He] becomes a person like Hallaj, like Buddha, whose grandeur of soul is unimaginable to us.[29]

Shariati, as we have previously seen, had a special reverence for the "great soul Mawlawī" (Rūmī).[30] In Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati indicates that he felt overwhelmed by the spiritual magnitude of this great Sufi:

> Mawlawī...is very sober and harsh. He scares me, the heaviness of his soul makes me impatient. It is not possible to become his companion. Everytime I have attempted to walk with him, I have found myself like a weak, injured and handcuffed captive whose chains have been tied to a wild and swift-footed horse who is pulling him by his feet while he [the horse] is running.[31]

Shariati acknowledges the greater spiritual magnitude of Rūmī, compared to his own, which is reflected in their respective works:

> My book is Kavīr [desert] and his [Mawlawī's] book is a paradise that he has grown in the desert. I have come so far as to see this prosperous pasture of life, that [people] graze in and strut [in], as a desert, [but] Mawlawī has passed this stage, and on

this prosperous desert pasture [he] has built, planted and grown a life.[32]

Elsewhere Shariati praises both Rūmī and his teacher, Shams-i Tabrīzī:

> I can never keep myself away from the admiration and belief in a man like Shams-i Tabrīzī, and Mawlawī. When I confront these people, it is as if I were in front of a sun. They have such a greatness. When I see Mawlawī, it seems as if he is at the top [he holds the highest rank] of all human beings that we know, in terms of inner growth, spiritual growth and human character.[33]

Again,

> André Gide has taught us, precious lessons, but it would be foolish if we sit at the conversation of Gide and Nathanaël before having sat years in between Shams and Mawlānā.[34]

Of Shams-i Tabrīzī Shariati again writes:

> Now I understand why Shams-i Tabrīzī was restless all his life [but] could not utter one sentence, could not compose one line of poetry. It is not possible. For writing, lecturing and composing [one] should remain at the level of Mawlawi. If you step over the border of Shams-i Tabrizi you are not under your own control anymore; there is the place of anguished (رفتن بار) dancing and drunken and painful movements, it is not the place of sitting and talking.[35]

Finally, Shariati claims to have a "Shams" of his own:

> Oh you Shams-i Tabrīzī,...I have a shining Shams [literally sun] too, who suddenly took my books and burnt them all and sacrificed all my knowledge for attachment, and drowned all my gatherings and learnings in that emerald-coloured pool, and taught me many volumes of Mathnawi,...and that flame that you had thrown to your

> great and powerful prey he too threw to this wild prey and burnt his heart and turned him to Mawlawī...and kindled the candle of his existence from that fire.[36]

Shariati does not divulge the identity of his "Shams," other than telling us that it is not Massignon or S. Bodin. However, in the continuation of the preceeding paragraph he describes ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in an interesting way, perhaps implying that the latter is his "Shams", whereas Shariati is ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's "Mawlawī":

> Oh you Shams-i Tabrīz, if you had run after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt you would have damaged your own reputation and would not have troubled him since he was not the prey for your trap, since he was a Shams like you and had hunted [many] Jalāl al-Dīns and had made [many] Mawlawīs.[37]

Shariati's description of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt takes on a further twist in the remaining part of the chapter, which is written in a very symbolical and ambiguous manner, allowing the reader to identify ʿAyn al-Quḍāt with Shariati himself.[38]

Shariati also enjoyed reading mystical literature and spent much of his time pondering over these works. He apparently read mystical texts of different traditions, and like a true mystic, could relate to them all. In a lecture on Indian religions, he displays his deep reverence for the Vedas in the following manner:

> Some...writings and hymns of the Upanishads are permeated with such an exalted soul and great mystical thought that I can in no way believe that they are unconnected to the

> Unseen (غیب). Now, in what way, and through which medium, and [through] which people [are they connected to the unseen] neither I know, nor does history.[39]

In Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati makes similar remarks:

> But the Upanishads, ah what āyats and what sūrahs. I can hardly believe that these are the words of humans of two thousand or three thousand years ago, no it is not possible [for these to be words of humans].[40]

And again,

> These [the Upanishads] are the incantations (اوراد) of my loneliness and my intimate invocations (اذکار) and the hummings of my soul. What pleasure I have received from them, I have made love to each one of its words, with each of its sentences I have stayed up many nights, it is an [enthralling] story.[41]

We have already discussed Shariati's passionate interest in reading the Mathnawī.[42] In Hubūt he advises his readers,

> Go find the Mathnawī and read it. It is good to addict yourself gradually to reading the Mathnawī. Addicted! You know what I mean?[43]

In Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī Shariati mentions other examples of mystical literature. He compares Ibn Farid's "beautiful Sufi poetry" with that of Hafiz and expresses his preference for the former.[44]

Shariati also read the texts of ancient Iranian religions and drew inspiration from them. He comments:

> The story of the Shaykh and the Christian [in ʿAṭṭār's Mantiq al-Ṭayr][i] is an exact replica of the story of Mihravih and Mihr,[ii] which is

> a story full of wonders of religion and ʿIrfān and art and literature and poetry and symbolism, and beauty, and sincerity [of devotion] (اخلاص), and selfless generousity (ایثار) and sacrifice, and pain, and torture.....[45]

We also recall that in Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā Shariati lists Sharḥ-i Taʿarruf, Kashf al-Maḥjūb, al-Maʿārif, Manṭiq al-Ṭayr, Tadhkirat al-Awliyā, along with the Mathnawī and Maqālāt-i Shams, and the Vedas and Upanishads as the books which he read for "fun, amusement, and spiritual enjoyment."[46]

And finaly, as was mentioned in the Chapter IV, Sources, in which we introduced Hubūṭ, even when Shariati was in such a state of existential confusion that he denied metaphysics absolutely, nevertheless he writes:

> **the deepest pleasures that caressed the center of my being and warmed it up was to read the texts of beautiful hymns and benedictions of religions. In Sumerian, Babilonian and Acadian tablets, and in the texts of the Upanishads and the Avesta and the prayers of the Chinese of thousands of years ago and even in the primitive benedictions of North American Indians I would find talks which informed my being ...and in the Psalms of David,...and in the hymns of the Upanishads I would read thoughts and sentiments which had kinship and an intimate play with the invisible fibres of my perceptions and feelings....[47]**

Shariati's interest in mysticism, mystics, and mystical literature inevitably left some impressions on his thought which surfaced from time to time. I have chosen to discuss several themes in detail, in order to highlight the strength of this influence.

Tawhīd: Regarding tawhīd, Shariati's understanding tends more towards the perspective of waḥdat al-wujūd (literally "unity of existence"), a perspective which is prevalent in Iran specifically due to the influence of Ibn al-ʿArabī on Iranian thought. This influence has been transmitted in at least two ways. Firstly, it has been transmitted through the strong current of theosophy which has existed in the religious centers of Iran and among religious intellectuals, and which has been undeniably influenced by Ibn al-ʿArabī. This current, known primarily as Ḥikmat or sometimes as theoretical ʿIrfān, has, to a large extent, advocated Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought through the teaching of his works, through the writing of commentaries on these works and so on. Secondly, the Sufi tradition in Iran has been instrumental in popularizing Ibn al-ʿArabī's views, especially through mystical poets such as Rūmī, Irāqī, Jāmī, etc.... Thus it is not surprising that Shariati's view of tawhīd reflects the perspective of waḥdat al-wujūd. He writes:

> The [meaning of] life is the searching of "halfs" after [the other] "halfs". Is not waḥdat al-wujūd the desired object (غایت) of creation?[48]

It should be noted, however, that Shariati formulated his view of tawhīd in a way particular to himself. He explains:

> In a tawhīdī world view the realm of existence (عالم وجود) is a unified, connected body that is alive and conscious [and] that thinks, and feels, and creates, and chooses.... In this simile you find both nature, and God.[49]

However, Shariati clarifies,

> I do not say body and soul. I do not say it [the realm of existence] is a body that yet is soul. I say an alive body; Existence is a "great man" (انسان کبیر) just as man is a "small existence" ("عالم صغیر"). God is the thought, will, consciousness, creativity and life of this body which is called nature.[50]

Put in a slightly different way, God is, according to Shariati,

> that original focul-point of life and movement of the world, the palpitation-filled and motion-filled heart of existence, the soul, whose body is this great and impression-filled nature.[51]

Transcendental Unity of Religions: Shariati's belief in the transcendental unity of religions has already been highlighted in the context of previous discussions. We shall simply refer to these previous presentations.[52] We should also point out that, for Shariati, tawhīd and the unity of religions are related.

> I believe,...since knowledge is the agent of salvatioin, the Vedas are right, [since] ethics are the agent of salvation, Zoraster is right, [since] love for God is the agent of

> salvation, Taoism is right; [since] love for all human beings is the agent of salvation, Christianity is right; but on one condition, and that is: all these [things] be explainable within one superstructure, within one world view, and based on one principle, and that is tawḥīd.[53]

Ikhlāṣ: Shariati's life, as well as his words, bore witness that it was necessary to have sincerity (ikhlāṣ) and to fully devote one's material, intellectual, and spiritual resources to God. Although an emphasis on sincerity is not uncommon among pious Muslims and, in itself, does not necessarily point to a mystical tendency or influence, Shariati's emphasis on sincerity went far beyond the average Muslim's understanding of the term. His insistence on constant self-examination and vigilance against the temptations of the ego self is similar to that of the Sufi Muḥāsibī.[54]

In his discussion of sincerity, Shariati often refers to the story which appears in Rumi's Mathnawī concerning a pious ascetic who rejected the opportunity to go on jihād. This man had fought in many wars, despite his ego's insistence that he avoid war and enjoy life. One day, as he was preparing for another jihād, he realized that his ego was supportive of him. By re-examining his motivation, the man realized that his ego was now enjoying the fame and prestige associated with being a warrior for the cause of Allah. Thus in order to purify his motivation, the man refused to go on jihād, remaining home instead. Shariati repeats this story in more than one

place and urges people to be constantly vigilant of their intentions and motivations, since "even the mujāhid who is welcoming death might have 'existential impurity'" (خودی و خودش).[55]

Shariati combined this awareness, the awareness of the ego-self's power to spoil even the most sincere efforts, with the understanding that it was of utmost importance to free oneself from the boundage of "self." One of Shariati's better known formulations, concerning the interplay of man and society, is the notion of "man's four prisons". These four prisons are, according to Shariati, nature, history, society, and self, the latter being that self which "imprisons that free and humane 'I' in itself."[56] Shariati argues that we can free ourselves from the first three prisons with the help of science and scientific methodology. Yet the key to the fourth prison lies within the heart of human beings.

> It is possible to become free from the prison of nature by natural sciences, from the prison of history by the philosophy of history, from the [prison of] social order and social determinism [the prison of society] with scientific, economic, and political sociology... But the biggest prison--that is [called] self (نفس) in our culture and ethics--is the prison of one's self. We see that the man who has been freed from those three prisons, today has become [even] more imprisoned by himself. Here it is not possible to get freed from oneself with science because science was the means that freed us from the other prisons. Now this very knowledgable [one] that wants to use knwoledge as a means, "himself" is

> imprisoned. With love, [and] only with love, is it possible to get freed from the fourth prison, with "understanding ʾīthār" [selfless giving], with reaching to ikhlāṣ--if one could.[57]

Geography of the Word, and Relative and Absolute Truth: Another important concept that Shariati has put forth is the"geography of the word." According to Shariati,

> In science a theory is either true, and consequently is always and everywhere true, and it should be mentioned that it is true and it should be stressed (like the roundness of the earth)...or it is false and consequently is always and everywhere false and should be attacked and criticized. But in society, apart from the logic of a theory, another factor should be considered in [one's] judgement and that is the peculiar "time-place" in which that theory is expounded. This is how sometimes a "truth" becomes the agent of "falsehood," and a "service" [becomes] the means for "betrayal."[58]

The "geography of the word" thus advocates the relativity of "truth" over and against the absoluteness of truth. The relativity of truth, whether social or metaphysical, has always been recognized by mystics, and in the Qur'an, in the story of Moses and Khiḍr, it finds clear expression.[59] Shariati discusses "geography of the word" in the context of social phenomena and not in relation to metaphysical truth, nevertheless the influence of mysticism is obvious. This influence becomes clearer

when Shariati discusses the process of man's taking on different truths in his life.

> Man at various junctures takes on diverse truth[s]. At each juncture he has a [different] dimension, and at each dimension he is a different being, and his world becomes a different world, and inevitably finds a different look, and a different language.[60]

A related discussion appears in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, concerning the definition of dunyā (this world) and ākhirat (the hereafter). Shariati disagrees with the concept by which the realms of existence are divided into "here" and "there," "nature" and "metaphysics" and so on. His definition of dunyā and ākhirat is refreshing.

> Spirit and body, matter and mind, dunyā and ākhirat exist in our look, our heart, and our thought. That which is commonplace, ugly, base and close, whatever has any shade of profit, that which is "directed towards one's self" is worldly, is material and physical. On the contrary, that which is splendid, is high, is beautiful, exalted, and far, and anything that has the nature and attributes of truth, and that which is "directed towards the other, and others" is ukhravī [other worldly], is spiritual.[61]

Shariati continues, explaining that what emerged between Rūmī and Shams-i Tabrīzī, and

> the mysterious and exalted attraction that connects Salmān [the Persian] to the Prophet Muhammad on one hand, and St. Paul to Jesus, on the other hand, is other worldly, whereas what connects Amir Muʿizzī [the poet] to Sultan Maḥmūd [Ghaznavī] is worldly.[62]

Similarly, Shariati observes, that which is established between hearts (i.e. love) can be either "worldly and natural" or "spiritual and transcendental."[63] In response to the objection that transcendental love cannot be found on the earth, and rather it should only be sought in such literary classics as The Divine Comedy, or Dīwān-i Shams, Shariati replies that this objection stems from the lack of appreciation (or rather ignorance) of the difference between reality and truth, and exclaims:

> Truth (حقیقت) is higher than reality (واقعیت). Truth has an existence peculiar to itself. Whether it be or not, the truth is the truth and it is.[64]

Having discussed, in detail, several themes which bear the influence of mysticism, we should now consider some of the negative remarks which Shariati makes in relation to mysticism in general, and Sufism in particular. These remarks, surprising though they may seem to the readers of this study, are understandable and reconcilable in the whole context of Shariati's life and thought.

To understand these comments we should first bear in mind that Shariati distinguished between a current of thought and an institution. A current of thought, in his view, is dynamic, forceful, progressive and oriented towards change. An institution, however, is static, reactionary, and oriented towards stability. So as long

as a current of thought is not an institution, it keeps its valuable characteristics; yet once it becomes an institution it operates to maintain the status quo and inevitably looses its vitality. Secondly, in order to understand Shariati's criticims, we should bear in mind the difference between an individual and an institution. Within an institution that has a negative social impact, there still may exist individuals who, despite adhering to the institution's goals, themselves possess positive characteristics and who themselves are capable of making a positive impact on society. Finally, we should bear in mind the difference between an individual's personal characteristics, characteristics that may even raise him to the level of being a model for others, and his social impact in terms of his contemporary socio-political context.

These distinctions, it appears, were not particularly clear for Shariati and at times would become so muddled together that he could make two contradictory comments about the same issue, apparently without realizing the contradiction. In one instance Shariati draws a grim and cold picture of mystics and implies that the quietness and peace which the mystic experiences is, in reality, empty, bitter and dark.

> But the mystic (عارف) before he dies in the world, the world has died in him. ...The four directions of the world do not have any meaning for him. His horse is without any passion under his thighs, without any place or

> direction, without any circus, his note book without an owner, his pen without any follower,and his tonge without an audience, his words all orphans...neither a visit calls him out of the house, nor any imagination enters into his retreat; neither the sound of someone's steps shakes the cave of his retreat, nor does his window swallow the green light of a caress; neither has he a greeting, a question, a laugh, an appointment, nor has his ear the pleasure of hearing the sound of a wine cup's tinkling...nor has his eye [the joy of seeing] the countenance of a flower, nor has his skin [the joy of feeling] the spring breeze....[65]

Yet when Shariati discusses his ancestors, who left position, fame, and the "leadership of the people"[66] in order to retreat to the small village of Mazinan and remain there in seclusion, he defends their actions as the only way for true believers to survive:

> this is the philosophy of remaining human in an era when life is deeply polluted and remaining human is extremely difficult and everyday a jihād is needed to remain human and a jihād everyday is not possible.[67]

He even praises ʿAllāma Bahman Ābādī, one of his ancestors, who had gone into the seclusion of silent meditation in retreat, as

> an afflicted and wandering soul, in the cage of a body, [who] had lowered his head to his chest [in contemplation], and was in the process of [creating] creations full of love, full of poetry, full of divine beauty.[68]

In another instance Shariati attacks the contemplative

life, claiming that

> Bodily love...and sitting in seclusion, purifying the soul, and training that Godly soul that has been thrown into man from the celestial world...are both false, incomplete, and a deviation from man's nature, and [the purpose behind] the creation of the world.[69]

Then again, he praises mysticism, observing:

> That mystical (عرفانی) dimension of ʿAlī grew in the history of Islam as a very limpid, exalted, and deep [form of] Sufism and as a very ripe and tender [manifestation of]... Irfan.[70]

When we make a closer overall examination of Shariati's writings, it seems that his criticism of mystics and mysticism is rooted primarily in their social dimension, or rather in their tendency towards social indifference.

> [A] loving and frenzied heart does not get any place with only asceticism, inner purification, and cleansing of the nafs, because man is dependent on society, and life and material, and cannot save himself alone. The individual is moving within the caravan of society and cannot chose his way independent of it.[71]

Again, despite the personal admiration that he had for Ḥallāj, Shariati strongly rejects him as a model for the Muslim masses:

> [Ḥallāj] consistently sinks into the fire of the memory of God Who is most certainly within him at that station. But what if Iranian society consisted of 25 million Ḥallājs? It would be like a lunatic asylum when they all rush into the streets shouting "Kill me! Kill me quickly! I cannot bear

> it! I have nothing! There is nothing in me but God." Such burnings are of a kind of spiritual insanity.[72]

Regarding another of his favorite figures, Rūmī, whom Shariati had praised as "this great and wonderful spirit that has filled our sky and from whose uproar our history still shakes,"[73] Shariati voices the same criticism:

> When we look at Mawlawī it seems that in terms of inner and spiritual growth, and the growth of human character, he is at the top [rank] of all human beings that we know so far [throughout history], but his presence in the Balkh, or in Kunya, or in the Islamic community of his time is not any different than his absence. Because he is so imprisoned in the boundaries of his inner and Godly quarantine that he does not sense anything, neither oppression, nor the Mongol War, nor the Crusades.[74]

Thus we see that what Shariati attacks is not <u>ʿIrfān</u> as a positive force, as "the only thing that has given man his existential value (ارزشِ وجودی), that has really given life grace and meaning, and has made a meaningful, substantial, purposeful spiritual interpretation,"[75] but mysticism as quietism:

> I am opposed to Sufism [since] it is [the process of] getting absorbed in the stormy, foggy, borderless, directionless, and endless sea of sick melancholy (حالاتِ سودائی) hallucinations and melancholy sensations (احساساتِ مالیخولیائی بیمارگونه).[76]

This contradiction can be also explained as the manifestation of the conflict between Shariati's mind and heart. Whereas his "being," his heart, as "the bearer of those dear trusts"[77] that he had inherited from his

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ancestors, was attracted to mysticism, his mind, which was an intellectual's mind, could not tolerate the reality of social injustice and the mystics' seeming indifference towards it. His intellectual mind warned him,

> It is not possible to have freedom, and mystical sentiment, and ethical and existential sincerity unless before that the [social] system be a system that frees man from the bondage of material life and the captivity of economy.[78]

Yet since his innate tendency towards mysticism was so strong, he only expresses his regret at its one-sidedness, rather that rejecting it altogether:

> With this outlook, ʿIrfān...fosters man at this zenith of sentiment and spirit and in connection with the great transcendental focal point of the world. But alas, that it prevents [man] from the [kind of] life that is based on intellect, justice, and economy.[79]

Recognizing this contradiction between mysticism and social justice, Shariati tried to reconcile the two. First he rejects any generalization about mysticism:

> [Only he] who judges in a one-dimensional fashion regards ʿIrfān as being superstition, vain, and stupefying [all the way] to its root.[80]

Following that, he tried to have a wholistic approach, and drew two opposing functions for mysticism, the first on a personal level and the second on a social level. He writes,

> On one hand we see that [ʿIrfān] has established an exalted connection [between man and God]. In no other

> school [of thought] is an exalted human being produced to the same degree as in ʿIrfān. ...The great revolutions have produced great heroes, but when we compare their human character with the mystical character of our [mystics, we realize that] they are incomparable. Negation of all of those selfishnesses, weaknesses, and personal fancies which exist in every being, and basically struggle with all those forces that comprise my nature...all these are not small issues.[81]

Yet, regarding the social implication of mysticism, he writes,

> On the other hand [mysticism] has produced a negative and vain person who is the best gift for executioners, [forces of] oppression, reactionary forces, colonializing forces and the like.[82]

Shariati's two-dimensional explanation, however, does not ultimately solve the contradiction, nor does it really reconcile mysticism's two opposing funcions. Thus Shariati resorted to his previous paradigm, according to which the three social forces--ʿIrfān, equality, and freedom--which have fuelled the engine of history, are integrated, and according to which they find their proper place in Islam, most notably in the family of the Prophet Muhammad, and particularly in ʿAlī.[83]

According to Shariati, it was only in Islam that all these three currents joined each other, since Islam

> simultaniously relies on all three dimensions, in a coordinated fashion. The spirit and root and nature of Islam (like all the other religions...) is ʿIrfān. But its emphasis is on the problem of social justice and the fate of others.[84]

ʿAlī was the best example of this integration, as he was "the perfect manifestation of these three dimensions."[85] Thus ʿAlī was also the best role model for man to follow:

> Prayer is beautiful [only] in the face of ʿAlī, from whose sword death rains, and from whose tonge--humbly--groaning, and from whose eyes, tears. It is for this reason that we see that both the civilized, thinking, Western man, such as Descartes, is smaller and lower than him [ʿAlī], and the Eastern, Indian mystic, wiseman [is lower as well]. He [ʿAlī] is flying like a high-flying eagle, with both wings, in existence, above and beyond all of us. And with what power![86]

Yet ʿAlī was not a modern intellectual, and thus Shariati could not introduce him to the intellectual strata of his audience, nor to himself, as the practical model for the present era. It was in this connection and in search of a practical role model that Shariati discovered Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who was "one like ʿAlī (علی گونه)," [87] yet who belonged to the present era and was recognized as an intellectual. The attractiveness of Iqbal, for Shariati, lay in the fact that

> Iqbal is not a mullā about whom we can say he has gotten his religion from hujra, nor is he a Sufi about whom we can say he has gotten it [his religion] from the khānigāh [monastry]; No, Iqbal is an intellectual (روشنفکر).[88]

Shariati saw in Iqbal an authentic model for Muslim intellectuals. He writes:

> I see in his personality that, once again, Islam has created a model for its self-conscious, afflicted, but

> distressed generation in the twentieth century. [It has] chosen a consuming and inspiration-filled Eastern soul from the land of culture, of spirit and intuition, [it] has put the great thought of the West--the land of civilization, intellect, and science with all the power of creativity and progress-- in his mind, and then equipped with this kind of provision [he] has known the twentieth century.[89]

Iqbal's success, according to Shariati, lay in his ability to mould himself according to Islamic guidelines, by using the knowledge he had gained both from Islamic and Western education. Shariati writes:

> [Iqbal] has been able to mould himself, on the basis of all the knowledge that he has--thanks to the rich culture of New and Old [civilizations]--and according to the model that his belief system (i.e., Islam), has provided. This is Iqbal's biggest success and the biggest [source] of his grandeur in the twentieth century and in our society.[90]

Shariati believed that Islam had lost its original vitality and dynamism because of the gradual separation of the different elements that were originally integrated in it.[91] The situation of present day Islam, according to Shariati, is not that Islam has become destroyed, but rather that it has become fragmented.[92] The consequence of its fragmentation is that each one of its parts and dimensions have been picked up, nourished and developed by a certain group of Muslims. This has allowed for the blossoming of Islamic

culture; yet Islam as a unified body and force, as a unified ideology, has never recovered its original state. The same could be said for ᶜAlī, as the best model of Islam; after his death, the three dimensions of his personality likewise have become fragmented. Hence the personality of Iqbal took on its great significance for Shariati. And Shariati, who had been searching for a role model to connect him to ᶜAlī, discovered Iqbal as the best example of the integration of all the different dimensions of Islam.

> [Iqbal] not only tried to gather the scattered dimensions and shattered parts of the Islamic ideology--the lively Islamic body that has been cut into pieces in the course of history by political deceits and/or by contradictory philosophical and social tendencies, where each piece is kept among a group [of Muslims]--and compile them and reconstruct them; not only is his masterpiece the book The Reconstruction of Religious Thought, but his greater masterpiece is the formation of the rare, multi-dimensional, and whole character of himself. [It is] the reconstruction of a "whole Muslim" in his own person.[93]

In Iqbal Shariati found the reconciliation of ᶜIrfān and science and technology for which he had so desperately sought.

> [Iqbal] is precisely a great mystic with a limpid and free-of-material soul. At the same time he is a man whose view of science, technological

> progress, and advancement of human reasoning (تعقل بشری) in our time, is full of respect.[94]

In other words, Shariati found Iqbal's Irfan desirable because

> it is not an intuition and sentiment--like [that of] Sufism and Christianity and the religions of Lao-tzu and Buddha...--which is belittling of science, the intellect, and scientific advancement.[95]

Consequently Iqbal's appreciation of knowledge and science was not contradictory to his (Iqbal's) mystical tendencies, since what he perceived as science

> is not a dry science, like that of Francis Bacon and Claude Bernard, which is only [imprisoned] in the bondage of discovering the relations between [different] phenomena and material appearances and the employment of natural forces in the service of material life.[96]

Rather Iqbal's reconciliation of these elements was unique, since in Shariati's view, it was authentically Islamic, in contrast to other attempts at reconciliation:

> At the same time [Iqbal] is not a thinker who [merely] assembles together philosophy and intuition, science and religion, and reason and revelation, as very inadequately as did Dārā Shikūh and others.[97]

There was yet another element in Iqbal that attracted Shariati even more; the special emphasis which Iqbal placed on pain, love, and action, three elements which were so much part of Shariati's life experiences. This,

as Shariati understood it, was the essence of Iqbal's secret.

> Iqbal's "secret of self" is this: apart from the fact that the "mystical- religious consciousness" in comparison with the "philosophical-scienetific consciousness" is of a different kind, what distinguishes [the former] is that this consciousness is moulded with the three elements of "pain," "love," and "action." Three elements of which Hegel's complicated philosophy and Francis Bacon's "dry, scientific eye" are deprived, [and the lack of which] has made the powerful civilization of the new era so harsh and spiritless, and [has made] the contemporary, advanced man cold and stone-like...and so weak and vulnerable.[98]

Thus Iqbal allowed Shariati to reconcile several contradictory factors. Firstly, Shariati could reconcile pain and love, that were the essence of his mystical tendencies. Secondly, he could reconcile responsibility and action, that had their roots in the influence of Shariati's intellectual convictions, whether through existentialism, with its emphasis on man's innate responsibility, or through Marxism, with its emphasis on "praxis" and action.

> Iqbal in his mystical journey with the Qur'an has reached to this principle, i.e., the primacy of action and responsibility in man.... Which is what Humanists or existentialists or radicals try to lead man to, with the negation of religion and the denial of God.[99]

This was the kind of mysticism that satisfied both Shariati's yearning soul and his nagging mind; it

addressed his social life as a Muslim intellectual and his private life as a devout lover of God who mourned his Beloved's absence. This, for him, was the "authentic mysticism," "Qur'anic mysticism."

> Sufism says...if the times do not go well with you, you put up with the times. But Iqbal, the Sufi, says, if the times do not go well with you, you fight with the times. Man in Iqbal's ʿIrfān--which is neither Indian Sufism, nor religious fanaticism, rather it is "Qur'anic ʿIrfān"--should change the times. The Qur'an's Islam has replaced "heavenly destiny," in which man is vain and null, with "human destiny," in which man has the fundamental role.[100]

This brings us to the question which we posed at the beginning of this chapter: can we consider Shariati a mystic? It is not easy to reach a definite answer, as any answer would depend on how we define a mystic or mysticism. R.C. Zaehner, in Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, refers to the definitions of Sufism, which he extends to mysticism in general, given by Sufis themselves. He categorizes these definitions according to three criteria: "Some [definitions] describe an attitude to life, others a state of soul, yet others a relationship to God."[101] Judging by the experiences and statements which Shariati has revealed concerning his inner dimension, we find that he does meet the three criteria in the above definition. Thus, according to this definition we can broadly answer yes, Shariati was a mystic. We see, however, that he distances himself from any institutional form of mysticism

in general, and Sufism in particular. His criticism of institutionalized mysticism, as well as his criticism of the apparent social apathy of most mystics, sprang from his deep intellectual and moral convictions concerning the need for social justice. Shariati felt a great need to reconcile his strong mystical orientation with his equally strong moral convictions, not only in his thought, but in his person as well. This leads us to our next chapter, wherein we will discuss how Shariati understood himself and how he attempted to reconcile these two dominant traits in his own person.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 749.

2. Ibid., p. 751.

3. Ibid., pp. 737-8.

4. Ibid., p. 738.

5. Ibid., pp. 738-9. Probably the Christian referred to is S. Bodin.

6. Ibid., pp. 1109.

7. Ibid.

8. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 309.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 310.

11. Ibid., pp. 315-16.

12. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī, p. 62.

13. Ibid., p. 64.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., pp. 64-5.

16. Ibid., p. 61.

17. Ibid., p. 48.

18. Ibid., p. 49. We should note that Shariati argued that in Islam all these three elements find their proper place. Thus Islam, as a religion based on mysticism, equality, and freedom, is the solution to man's historical quest. We should also note that this particular chapter of Khudsāzī is a transcription of one of Shariati's speeches, and therefore Shariati deliberately emphasizes the social and Islamic dimension of the issue. Additionally, "Khayyām-style Sufism" refers to ʿUmar Khayyām, a controversial medieavel Persian poet, who was perhaps even a mystic. In his poetry he encourages his audience to abandon orthodox behaviour in

favour of drinking wine and enjoying the pleasures of life. Some have interpreted his poems mystically, however most have taken them literally.

19. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī, p. 65.

20. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1127.

21. Ibid., p. 939.

22. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 184.

23. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 252.

24. Ibid., p. 103.

25. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 912.

26. Ibid., p. 689.

27. Ibid., p. 906.

28. Ali Shariati, Tārīkh va Shināākt-i Adyān, p. 57.

29. Ali Shariati, Nīyayish, p. 148.

30. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 278.

31. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, pp. 907-8.

32. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 617.

33. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī, p. 82.

34. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhātabhā, p. 282. Nathanaël is a character which appears in Gide's work Les Nourritures terrestres (1897).

35. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 268.

36. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 996.

37. Ibid., pp. 996-7.

38. Ibid.

39. Ali Shariati, Tārīkh va Shināākht-i Adyān, p. 137.

40. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 906. It is important to note that Shariati uses the word āyat for the verse and the word sūrah for the chapter, words which are exclusively used for the Qur'an.

41. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 907.

42. See Chapter IV, Sources, pp. 41-3.

43. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 617.

44. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, pp. 909-10.

45. Ibid., p. 863. References included in this quotation are as follows:
i. For the story of the Shaykh and the Christian, see ʿAṭṭār's Manṭiq al-Ṭayr, pp. 67-88.
ii. Mihrāvih and Mihr are Eve and Adam in Mitraism (an ancient Iranian religion).

46. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā, p. 85.

47. Ali Shariati, Hubūṭ, p. 110.

48. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1129.

49. Ibid., p. 1254. See also Chapter VIII, Shariati through His Own Eyes, p. 163, which follows in this work.

50. Ibid., p. 1255.

51. Ali Shariati, Mā va Iqbāl, p. 168.

52. See p. 117 of this Chapter (VII), and Chapter V, Shariati on Man, Art and Religions, p. 83. See also Chapter VIII, Shariati through His Own Eyes, p. 163, which follows in this work.

53. Ali Shariati, Mīʿād bā Ibrāhīm, p. 463.

54. Massignon emphasized the importance of Muḥāsibī in this resepect as well. See Louis Massignon, Essai sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane, pp. 221-5.

55. Ali Shariati, Takhassus, p. 19. See also Ali Shariati, Tārīkh va Shinākht-i Adyān, pp. 266-7.

56. Ali Shariati, Nīyāyish, p. 151.

57. Ibid, p. 152.

58. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1272.

59. Qur'an XVIII: 60-82.

60. Ali Shariati, Introduction to Kavīr, p. xxix.

61. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1072.

62. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, pp. 1072-3.

63. Ibid., p. 1073.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., p. 846.

66. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 7.

67. Ibid., p. 9.

68. Ibid., p. 13.

69. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā, pp. 276-7.

70. Ali Shariati, Mā va Iqbāl, p. 31. It is interesting that in a footnote relating to this sentence, Shariati states that he is not concerned about the misuses of Sufism and ʿIrfān, since every school of thought has misuses.

71. Ibid., p. 40.

72. Ali Shariati, An Approach to Understanding Islam, p. 11.

73. Ali Shariati, Mā va Iqbāl, p. 108.

74. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī-yi Inqilābī, p. 82.

75. Ibid., p. 42.

76. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhātabhā, p. 97.

77. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 11.

78. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī, p. 147.

79. Ali Shariati, Tārīkh va ShināKht-i Adyān, p. 156.

80. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī, p. 83.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid., p. 87. See also Shariati's An Approach to Understanding Islam, pp. 10-11, where Shariati refers to ʿAlī and Ḥusayn as the "individuals who form the components that built the distinct and distinguished individual human beings" in Islam.

84. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī, p. 87.

85. Ibid., p. 89.

86. Ali Shariati, Nīyāyish, p. 155.

87. Ali Shariati, Mā va Iqbāl, p. 28.

88. Ali Shariati, Khudsāzī-yi Inqilābī, p. 53. Hujra is a small room in which students in the Muslim seminaries live and study.

89. Ali Shariati, Mā va Iqbāl, p. 39.

90. Ibid., p. 41.

91. Ibid., p. 28.

92. Ibid., pp. 28-9.

93. Ibid., p. 101.

94. Ibid., pp. 34-5.

95. Ibid., p. 35.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., p. 172.

99. Ibid., p. 38.

100. Ibid., pp. 36-7.

101. R.C. Zaehner, Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, p. 5.

CHAPTER VIII

SHARIATI THROUGH HIS OWN EYES

After having considered how other people have described Shariati, and after having discussed in detail some of his views, ideas and personal experiences, we now have some picture of Shariati as a whole person, we now have some understanding of the man who existed behind and beyond his public image. Yet in order to have a deeper insight into his whole character, it is necessary to know what Shariati thought and felt about himself. There are only two of Shariati's works which contain self descriptions. The first description appears in Kavīr under the title "A Letter to My Friend." Since this letter contains most of the significant information, I have used it as the main source for this chapter. However, I have augmented this information with additional points which are contained in a second self description. This latter description appears in a similar, but untitled letter in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, written to a woman whom, at least at one time, Shariati regarded as a companion. Shariati writes of her as one "in whose face I read the lines of acquaintance."[1] This letter, however, is in response to her accusation that Shariati had hidden his

real personality under several popular images and was thus deceiving people.

The letter that appears in Kavīr is a reply to a friend who had written a biographical work on Shariati and had published it with Shariati's picture in a book edited by Professor Lavāsānī.[2] Shariati starts by thanking his friend who "has been a leaning post in times of falling and a soother of my wounds for years,"[3] and continues, explaining that his purpose in writing this letter is to "correct your assessment"[4] and to tell his friend that "you do not know me either."[5] This correction, Shariati insists, is not motivated by selfish reasons, nor to seek approval from people:

> You know that I do not have the malady of showing off or fame-seeking, and [that] obscurity and loneliness are my two permanent, confindent and confederate friends, and I have never broken this covenant. Therefore, I do not care about what you have called me in that book [nor do I care about] how people would consequently know me. And you know despite all the faith that I have in people's fate and [that I] have devoted all my life to people and adore this word [i.e. people], yet I have never worried about the way in which they know me [nor] what they say about me. Because, neither do I value myself [enough] to have the temptation [to want them] to know me correctly, nor do I believe in the insight and understanding of the masses that [I would care about] how they would see me...and I always think about people's fate, not their opinions.[6]

After clarifying his motivation for writing this letter, Shariati explains how he understands himself. He

observes that from among all the attributes that one can use to describe him, he prefers sincerity and truthfulness,[7] anything else being only a partial description:

> I do not want to say that knowledge, nobilitiy, genuis, purity, bravery, art, and so on, that you have suspected of me, are all baseless in me. Perhaps they are all in me, and perhaps even with the same intensity that you have mentioned, but [they] do not satisfy me, since I am something else, and [I] do not see that true and essential color of my essence among this chain of attributes that are set [by you] next to each other.[8]

Yet to define who or what is his essential self is a difficult task even for Shariati. The question "who am I," or rather "which 'I' is me" has given rise to a tumulteous process of introspection. He writes:

> I think your soul is great and high enough to be able to feel the terror of this hesitation. What horror is greater than this, [that] someone sees strangers inside himself...that they have mixed with his own self (خودِ خویش) and have made themselves similar to him in such a way that now I do not know which one is me.[9]

Shariati is not a stranger to tumult and suffering. At one time he could endure great physical, mental, and psychological hardships by retreating to the "temple" of loneliness; yet now even this solice has been taken away from him:

> My art and my biggest art [was] the art of living in myself. It was this that would make me immune from all these useless other things and from

> people. Whenever I was with others I would see myself alone, only by myself I was not alone. But, now I do not know who is my Self. Which one is it? Whenever I am alone some identities attach themselves to me [claiming] that they are me and I gaze with fear and distress and alienation in each one's face and do not recognize myself. I do not know which one am I...I do not know whether to ask "which one of those 'I's is me" or "which one of those 'I's am I?" Then who is the one who hesitates and searches, hurried and confused, among these "I"s? Am I not that? If yes, then who is the one who is even now showing this "I" to me? Ah, I get tired! I should leave it. I leave it but how can I tolerate it? Up to now I only had the pain of tolerating others, and now tolerating myself has become even harder [than that]. You see how I have been deprived of loneliness as well?[10]

We are lead to ask: who are these "I"s? How many of them are there? Shariati enumerates several of them. The first one is Shariati, the pious Muslim:

> One "I", [is] the product (ساخته) of Madinah, whose direction of prayer is Kaʿbah, and whose faith has been formed in Hirāʾ,[i] and whose spirit and excitement and emotions are formed under the hands of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, ʿAlī, Abū Dharr, Salmān [the Persian], ʿAmmār, Yāsir, Summayyah,[ii] and so on.[11]

The second "I" is Shariati the philosopher:

> [This "I" is] a stranger to Madinah, [it] does not feel the faith, from head to toe [it] is [full of] intelligence, dry logic, philosophy and two plus two equals four. [It is] the product of Athens and cherished by Socrates, and has come all the way to Plato, Aristotle, Bū ʿAlī [Ibn Sīnā], Ibn Rushd Ibn Khaldūn, and has gone to Hegel, Descartes, Kant, and Sartre, and has fallen into knowledge and surfaced in the Sorbonne.[12]

There is yet another "I" which is different from the previous two:

> One "I" [is] a stranger to both of these. [This is] the one that has become more famous than the other ones ...the one that you have described in my name and under my picture that is: young and a writer,...and vigilant, and in short the best model for commercial advertisement.[13]

Here Shariati gives us an important clue for understanding him, a clue that has not been recognized by those who have studied him. He confides,

> [T]his "I" [according to which] everyone knows me, is more foreign and more a stranger to "me" than all the other "I"s. I feel precisely that it is my dress, with the same nice and particular meaning of the word dress, and especially the form of ifti^{c}āl....[14]

He continues,

> So far whatever I have written, no, whatever I have published [in fact] he [i.e. the public "I"] has done it, whatever I have said, he has said it, whatever I have done, he has done it, and whatever people say about me they have said about him.[15]

The last "I" that Shariati introduces is the activist and revolutionary Shariati:

> Another one of these is the hero "I"...whose entire spirit and being is filled with valour, and love of having a good reputation (ننگ ناموس) and self-sacrifice and closeness to people (مردم دوستی). [He is] filled with love for the people, [he is] adventurous, and loves dangers; [nothing] except revenge cools him down, nor does [he] get satisfied with anything except victory, [he] has no

> wishes except to break the enemy, and [nothing] except people's applause and fighters' praises and the breaking of chains brings him to excitement and joy.... In the prison headquarters of the Paris Police it was [this "I"] who entirely ablaze with that fire, for three days and nights talked with Monsieur Guiouse! Those words that have captured you so much were his words, and you also know only him from me [but] I want to show you another person.[16]

Amidst these numerous "I"s, even Shariati cannot seem to resolve his original question, which one is he? He presents, however, two seemingly contradictory responses to this dilemma. The first response is characterized by the pain of confusion:

> I do not say that I am the one who is hidden under this appearance and nobody sees [me]; under this appearance there are [several] persons from among whom I do not know which one is me. And this is the dreadful distress that now pains me.[17]

Yet his second response indicates that there <u>is</u> an authentic "I":

> But among all these "I"s that are mixed together, the one that is the most proficient--and you do not even have a sign of it--is the "I" that has captivated me for sometime now. With a solid, strong, and mature countenance, not hollow, empty, and thin like the others--vague, and temporary appearances, distant and unknown phantoms. This one was the most hidden among them and dawned later than the rest. Its place was at that veiled and hidden depth of my conscience. It boiled up from the depth of my nature and rose from behind the dark and condensed clouds of my "existence" (بودن). For years--filled entirely with excitement and with hope and delight--I watched its rising. Waiting for it [to] show

> up was very long and very difficult. I said [to myself] this is the one I was searching for. Yes, I am this very same one, I discover myself and witness the growing of my truthful and pure self. What a successful and comforting intuition.[18]

He describes this "comforting intuition" more definitely and in clearly spiritual terms:

> The words of the Upanishads are right that "nothing is happening outside. Whoever looks outside in expectation, will remain there and will die. [Re]turn to yourself, there you will find everything, because everything is there. Outside is darkness...." Buddha was right, Nirvana is inside. Buddha's Nirvana is this very "I" in whose arms I find myself now. It is this very self of me. The self that I have excavated from among a pile of appearing "I"s. I cleaned its face from all taints and contaminations. It became brighter, became more recognizable. Oh! How beautiful it is and how authentic and how nice. All the goodnesses, glories, exaltations, and sanctities are all in this. It is this and whatever is other than this is scum and bubble, and deceit, lie and mirage; [whatever is other than this] is an hallucination and vanity.[19]

We should observe, however, the context in which Shariati judges the other "I"s to be false and vain. In the untitled letter from Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī he does not totally reject the other "I"s; rather he sees them as insignificant only in comparison to his authentic self. He claims "I like all my 'I's...even I like the one that people know and like. None of them is bad."[20] He even defends his most external and foreign "I", his "dress," his popular image, claiming that even this "I" is full of

sincerity, frankness, and dignity.[21] Yet the previous theme, recognizing the falsity of the other "I"s, reappears further on in "A Letter to My Friend." Shariati criticizes Camus, Descartes, and André Gide for not having reached further than the initial stage of attempting to prove the existence of their "I"s. He criticizes them for "not having reached the question of which one am I?"[22] They failed to understand that, in some sense, all of their statements were right; all of their "I"s exist. Yet even more signficantly, none of these "I"s are authentic. Shariati explains,

> One "I" thinks, there is another "I" that feels, there is another "I" that rebels, and there are [many] other "I"s, other "I"s that are all there, but are all false.[23]

Having read Shariati's glowing description of his discovery of his authentic, beautiful and sacred "I", we now expect him to state that it is this "I" which emerges to reveal the falsity of the others. Yet he retreats back to his previous confused hesitation:

> The true "I" is a different one. Which one? It is here that I am compelled to discontinue to talk. I cannot [talk more]. It is at this very place that the heavy and painful silence arrives.[24]

Yet on the letter's next page Shariati speaks again of the experience of having found his hidden Nirvana:

> I do not know how Lao-tzu and the writers of the Upanishads and Buddha... and even our own great mystics (عرفا) [felt, those] who have suffered so much and have practiced

> asceticism in search of that real and hidden-in-one's-self "I", [who] have suffered so much...until they have found [it] and known it, [I do not know how they] felt! I do not want to say what I have found is what they have talked about. I do not want to say...what I have found behind my appearing "I"s is the same as Nirvana. It is not it, but I know that the Nirvana that is hidden in me is this very thing that I feel myself to be.[25]

Shariati describes what he has found in clearly mystical terms, terms similar to a mystical description of the unity of being:

> Right now, I am wondering what to call what has risen from behind these unstable appearances and is filling me entirely. I? God? The Absolute Truth? The Absolute Being? No, I do not like to capture it in the form of any name. I do not like to taint it with any attribute--however pure it might be--why whould I name it? Am I going to teach? Am I going to show [it] to anybody? ...When we look from the surface, we see the words that like bubbles, each a different size, show themselves on this sea; apart from each other, apart from the sea. When we look from underneath, we do not see the bubbles of the words anymore, the bubbles become all one: an absolute unity of being of all the meanings: the sea. And the sea too is the sea [only] as long as we are sitting by the shore. It is the sea [only] as long as I am the one who sees [it]. If I threw away the one who sees, and the shore, I become the sea, the shore becomes the sea, [and] the sea [itself] is not the sea anymore. What is it? Here again the silence arrives.[26]

Shariati indicates that he is aware of the process necessary to reconcile the conflicting "I"s. It is necessary to transcend them all by attaining to that authentic "I", an "I" which, according to this last

passage, appears to transcend even itself. Yet in reading Shariati's statements, it is unclear whether he has actually completed this process, partially completed it, merely knows about it, or perhaps mistakenly believes that he has completed it. He makes the following statements, in the order given:

> Right now, day and night, I am searching all those "I"s that this foreign nature has, through deceit and "without my presence" imposed on me, in order to sacrifice them all at the feet of "him" who has stepped [into my inner being] by his own miracle (اعجاز). As the blood money for this Isma il I will not accept any ransom. Since I know "I am my own veil and should get out of the way."[27]

Next he writes:

> Now like a snake that comes out of its skin, I have come out of my Bāyazīdness.[28]

Yet he concludes:

> I do not believe that my staying alive will last for many years, something will happen, living has become difficult ...and I do not know why. But I know that another person has stepped in inside me and it is he that has made me so impatient that I feel I cannot fit in myself anymore, [I cannot] rest in myself.[29]

Thus we must end this chapter with questions. Had Shariati found his authentic "I"? Had he reconciled--transcended--all the different "I"s which manifested in his person? Had he passed beyond the pain of confusion to that attributeless "I" which transcended all names and description? We should now, in our

concluding chapter, seek not only the answers to these central questions, but also attempt to reconcile the various, often contradictory, themes and perspectives which have arisen in the previous chapters, analyzing them in reference to the spiritual and mystical dimension of Shariati which manifests so clearly in what is--by his own definition--his most authentic self.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX

1. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1218. See Chapter IV, Sources, pp. 60-61, note 9 for Shariati's definition of acquaintance.

2. There is no information available about this book, nor its author.

3. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 44.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 42.

6. Ibid., p. 43.

7. Ibid. It is significant to note that writing about the same issue in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī (p. 1218), he mentions nobility (بزرگی), dignity (شرافت) and humaneness (انسانیت) as "the things by which I am dear, sacred and true."

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

10. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

11. Ibid., p. 47. References within this quotation are as follows:

i. Hirā' is the cave where the Prophet Muhammad would go on retreat and where he received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel.

ii. ʿAmmār, Yāsir and Summayyah, (son, father, and mother) were three of the first converts to Islam. They were all tortured in order to renounce their faith. Summayyah died under torture, becoming the first martyr of Islam. ʿAmmār survived, emigrated to Abyssinia and took part in the Hijra.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 48. Iftiʿāl is the maṣdar of the eighth form of "doing" (faʿala). When the root of the word dress (libās) is taken in the eighth form it becomes iltibās, which means concealing or obscuring. Thus

Shariati is stating that this "I" is not only a dress for him, but it is also conceals him or makes him obscure.

15. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 48.

16. Ibid., pp. 48-49. While Shariati was in Paris he participated in a demonstration which took place in front of the Embassy of Congo, protesting the murder of Patrice Lumumba. After the demonstrators attacked the Embassy and set it on fire, the French Police attacked and arrested many people, including Shariati, and imprisoned them in the city jail. While in jail Shariati interviewed another demonstrator, Monsieur Guiouse. This interview was later published by the African Journal Tugu(?), under the title "Conversation of Ali and Guiouse." (Yādnāma-yi Shahīd-i Jāvīd ʿAlī-i Sharīʿatī, p. 31.)

17. Ibid., p. 48.

18. Ibid., p. 49.

19. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

20. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhāʾī, p. 1219.

21. Ibid., p. 1220.

22. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p. 52.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 53.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 56. The final sentence of this quotation, "I am my own veil...." is an allusion to a poem by Ḥallāj. For more information see Louis Massignon, The Passion of al-Ḥallāj, Vol. 2, p. 61.

28. Ibid., p. 57. This sentence is an allusion to a statement made by Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī, a famous Persian mystic, who claimed that God made him so oblivious to himself that he came out of his Self as a snake comes out of his skin. See Muḥammad ʿAbdur Rabb, The Life, Thought and Historical Importance of Abu Yazid al-Bistami, p. 165.

29. Ibid., p. 58.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

A review of the material presented in the preceding chapters reveals one predominant theme, which is the dual nature of Shariati's personality: Shariati possessed two deeply rooted tendencies, the first was his predisposition towards mysticism, the second was his firm commitment to social justice and the upliftment of the masses. Shariati's family served as the starting point for both of these influences, influences which remained with him throughout his life. The contradictory nature of these tendencies was the cause of the many difficulties, frustrations and pains that Shariati continually experienced. On one hand Shariati had inherited a contemplative and mystical tendency from his ancestors, who were themselves contemplatives and mystics. This influence was quite obvious and clear for him. He admits:

> [I] am the prince of this dynasty that generation after generation has been ruling over the [vast and] borderless land of loneliness and magnanimity and [I am] the bearer of those dear trusts.[1]

He explains the trusts as

> this temptation of loneliness and love of escape and [love of] retreat that has been in my ancestors' blood.[2]

On the other hand, Shariati's father discontinued the tradition of his ancestors, remained in the city and devoted himself to social and political activity. Shariati's father understood and taught Islam as a militant religion devoted to social equality and social justice, and thus instilled an element of militancy in young Shariati. This militancy was further strengthened by the social and political atmosphere of Iranian society, an atmosphere which grew in intensity and turbulence until Shariati's death.

Thus the contradiction between the "passivism" of a contemplative life and the activism of a revolutionary-oriented young intellectual also intensified as Shariati grew up.[3] His membership in the group "God-Worshipping Socialists" is a good indication of an attempt to reach some reconciliation between these two influences. This contradiction at times presented itself in the dilemma of "myself versus the people," wherein Shariati questioned whether he should devote his life to personal growth and strive for individual evolution and perfection, or whether he should devote his life to the masses and help them to grow collectively and achieve social evolution in the form of a revolution. Understandably, Shariati vacillated between the two. For example, for seven years he was the main speaker at the weekly meetings of the Islamic Association of High School and University Students and presented Islam as a socially

committed ideology, yet at the same time he was strongly attracted to mysticism and writes:

> seven, eight, ten or twelve years ago...I was sick with love (سودا زدگی) for ʿIrfān, Sufism, and Buddhism, and even though [this love] was apparent in some of my works such as "Me? What am I?," yet it did not become evident.[4]

By the time Shariati was leaving Iran for France, to pursue his doctorate degree, he had reached a firm conclusion, he would devote his life to people and sacrifice his personal growth and evolution. In regards to this decision, many years later Shariati wrote to his son that whereas some people are lucky to be born in a juncture of their history wherein what people expect of them is identical to their personal taste, talent, and predisposition,

> I did not have the same chance when I was at your age. Consequently there is no resemblance or complete comprehensive agreement between "what I did," and "what I was." If I was born in an era of our history that there had not existed an issue called social responsibility and popular commitment (تعهّد مردمی) and each student would chose the direction of his education, research, and his inner and intellectual evolution according to his personal motivation, talent and predispositions, or if I was an intellectual in Switzerland or Norway, undoubtedly the way that I would have chosen [for my life to go] would be different than [what it is] now. I was cut--according to my talent, mentality, type,...insight, inclinations, and personal predispositions--for chosing a way

> that passed through philosophy, ʿIrfān, literature, art, and especially poetry.[5]

Once in France, Shariati found himself amidst a very ripe and stimulating environment. The anti-imperialist struggles of many countries such as China, Cuba and Vietnam, were still central issues, along with the Algerian revolution, which was particularly intriguing for Shariati. They provided an ample opportunity for the development of political awareness and action. Yet being at the Sorbonne, among eminent thinkers such as Sartre, Gurvitch, Massignon, and so on, gave Shariati an opportunity for intellectual and personal growth. The attraction of Existentialism and Eastern philosophies and religions, on one hand, and Marxism, Liberalism, and Humanism, on the other, rose from the specific elements which Shariati saw in each of them and which addressed his contemplative side and his activist side respectively.

However, the atmosphere in France also caused Shariati's old dilemma--the dilemma of "myself versus the people"--to resurface once again. With many opportunities present to satisfy his thirst for philosophical and mystical knowledge, Shariati was once again pressed to reconsider his decision. It was a difficult choice to make and Shariati apparently had a hard time making decisions. The many pages of Kavīr, wherein he talks about his experiences in France, reflect his tribulations. It was most likely then that Shariati discovered, or

perhaps rediscovered, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who was in many ways similar to Shariati. Iqbal's decision to return to the East, to Islam and Iqbal's active life-style appealed to Shariati and simplified the decision he had to make. Following Iqbal's path, Shariati once again devoted his life to his vision of "active" Islam.

Yet this decision, attractive though it may have seemed to Shariati, was not able to ultimately resolve his dilemma. While his conscience was satisfied, his soul was still yearning for God, for the unseen, for "that place which is not here," and he still yearned for seclusion and loneliness. He discovered what satisfies the conscience does not necessarily satisfy the soul, and he concluded that the conscience and the soul are not the same. Regarding those moments when he expereinced the duality between soul and conscience, Shariati writes:

> Ah, what suffering! At those hours I felt that "soul" (روح) is different than "conscience" (وجدان), and nobody has made this discovery. What stupid philosophers [are they] who know the conscience as a condition (حالت) in the soul. I have felt precisely that they are two and each has a separate mood and temper.[6]

He explains his experience of realizing the duality of soul and conscience:

> My soul was suffering from their [his students' and sympathizers'] presence. My heart desired (and from this I realize that heart is the soul itself, and it is an accurate realization) that none of them were there, and there was only I and the Shatt al-ʿArab, and Shatt al-ʿArab and me;

> no [there was] me, the night, and the Shatt al-ʿArab.[7]

He continues,

> My conscience, how much it reproached me. You are disgusted with these nice people who love you to the extent of worshipping [you], for the sake of ...the enjoyment of your heart and soul? Shame on you!..All this much pure and hot sincerity that is obvious in the tone of their voices and in the light of their eyes for seeing you and talking to you, [is] nothing?...These poor fellows, how do they know what is going on inside of you. Otherwise they would not look so [admiringly] at you and call you the Iqbal of our era, the tongue and feeling of our generation....[8]

Thus the struggle between Shariati's heart and mind or his soul and conscience went on apparently without any final resolution. Although he periodically attempted to end this struggle by siding with one or the other dimension of his character, all his decisions turned out to be temporary resolutions. Meanwhile, Shariati did his best to hide his inner struggle from his supporters, friends and family, and was quite successful in this effort. He did not even disclose the nature of his problem to his son, who was naturally Shariati's closest student and follower. Whatever traces of his agony emerged in his letters to Ihsan, they were only references to the symptoms and consequences of his inner struggle.

Shariati's inner struggle also affected the upbringing of his children, his son especially. We get a hint of Shariati's painful dilemma in a passage from

Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, wherein Shariati recounts the tragedy of a father and son:

> A father who is not deceived by life and the world, and has no pretext [for living], and from all of [the things of this world] his heart is warmed only by his lonely child...whose visit gives consolation to his bitter,...wounded and painful soul; but he is groaning from a pain that has no cure, he is ailing from a pain which is contagious, dangerous; what should he do? Could Jesus, Kant, Muhammad, and Socrates show him a way?[9]

Shariati then goes on to explain the dilemma more specifically. If the father stays with the child and spends his life with him and takes care of him and raises him, then the child will inevitably become sick with the father's disease. If the father leaves the house and takes shelter in loneliness and seclusion, then the child would be lonely, sad, fatherless, and his future unknown. Shariati states that the father has been struggling with this problem for twelve years. He continues,

> Jesus, Kant, Socrates, Muhammad, Buddha all tell him [the father] that if you love your child more than yourself, get away from him, save him from the danger of association with you, do not live with him, separate your house from his...he is young, he is more worthy than you for life, for remaining [in this world], do not spoil his life with yourself. The more you love him...you have sacrificed him for yourself, and you ar not that kind of father. Jesus, Muhammad, Kant, Socrates, and especially Buddha all know, they all witness that he loves his child more than himself. They know that he is

> good enough to conceal himself for the sake of his child.... Who is This? Me.[10]

In order to "save" his son, Shariati tried to keep Ihsan between Abū Dharr and Rūmī, hence striking a balance between social commitment and spiritual growth.[11] He thus guided Iḥsān along the path of Iqbal, even though he recognized that Iḥsān belonged to a new generation.

> Contrary to fifteen or twenty years ago, when the situation required Islam to consider the social problems and to find a realistic tendency--over against the absolute idealist, metaphysical, personal, and spiritual tendency that it had--and this situation made me choose a "useful," educational and scientific direction and consequently I picked up sociology, and history--instead of [following] the direction of my taste and my personal predisposition, the need that is felt today is the reconstruction of the ideology of Islam in terms of its thought, philosophy, world view and the place of man (انسان شناسی).[12]

Quite appropriately, the best role model to follow on this path is Sir Muhammad Iqbal. Therefore Shariati refers Iḥsān to read, study, and know Iqbal.[13]

Yet Shariati was not ultimately sure that he had done right to push Iḥsān in the direction of Iqbal, since even Iqbal was not able to quench Shariati's own thirst for mystical knowledge. It is quite possible that Shariati is referring to this situation when he complains,

> How anxious I am! I do not know whether I should be satisfied or dissatisfied. Should I reproach myself or praise myself? Have I done

> a bad thing or a good thing? I have become trapped in a difficult tragedy.[14]

This hesitation and anxiety accompanied Shariati throughout his life while he tried, with some success, to ignore it and stick to his decision of following Iqbal's path and serve God by serving people.

The conflict between the different dimensions of Shariati's personality manifested in more than one way. From the previous chapter, (Chapter VIII, Shariati through His Own Eyes) we remember Shariati's confusion concerning his true identity, his authentic "I". At one instance he seemed to have found his authentic "I" which had been "veiled and hidden [in the] depth of [his] consciousness,"[15] the "I" which contained "[a]ll the goodnesses, glories, exaltations and sanctities."[16] This was a spiritual "I", and Shariati claimed not only to have found it, but to have transcended the veil of himself and his personality in attaining to his authentic self.[17] Yet the process of transcending all contradictions and opposites should result in the attainment of peace. By peace, we mean a deeply-rooted spiritual peace, a peace which is founded in, or at least reflects the Absolute and Unified Reality of God which transcends all contradictions. We do not mean the mere silencing of disagreement through artificial or superfiscial reconciliations. Furthermore, by peace we mean mystical experience, not intellectual formulations. Shariati,

however, despite his claim to have transcended his conflicting "I"s, seemed content to let them co-exist within his person. Several years after writing the letters which served as a basis for Chapter VIII, Shariati through His Own Eyes, Shariati wrote another piece which was pub..ished in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī. In this work he not only defends the co-existence of several "I"s, but even praises these "I"s:

> [the fact that I have chosen] to be a little bit philosopher, a little bit writer, a little bit mystic, a little bit poet, a little bit Liberal, a little bit dignified, a little bit thinker, a little bit scholar, and so on, is this contrarity and contradiction? Is this deceit and a lie? Must I throw them away? If someone in this world--where no coquetry deceives him, and no attraction captivates him--does not find a companion and an answer for that secret and lining [innermost] "I" of himself, then is not the most humane amusement for passing the meaningless and vain life to habituate himself to gain enjoyment from being good, staying pure, making sacrifices, thinking, writing and talking about the beauties of knowledge, virtue, art, spirituality (عرفان), love for people (مردم‌دوستی) and dignity. Should we deprive [ourselves] ...even from the satisfaction of conscience (وجدان) [in this] useless life which is passing even more unelessly, now that we are deprived of the satisfaction of the soul?[18]

It seems, from the passage above, that Shariati once again sided with his conscience, at the expense of his soul.

We had mentioned, in the Introduction to this work, that we should consider all the elements of Shariati's

thought and person, from his work as a social activist to his mystical reflections, and try to determine how they fit together. From what we have seen thus far, we can account for the different, often contradictory types of writings due to the existence of the many "I"s within Shariati's personality. Each "I", from Shariati the pious Muslim of Madinah, to Shariati the Existentialist, represented an aspect of his person, and each was responsible for one trend or tendency which is discernable in his thought and writings. Yet the existence of many "I"s within one personality also indicates a state of confusion. Although Shariati claimed to have reconciled them, his later words and life experiences bear witness that he did not. We accept that Shariati did find his authentic "I", and that this was a spiritual "I". Yet he was evidently unable to let go of the conflicting, other dimensions of his life and person, and thus rise above the conflict to a new spiritual height. The fact that Shariati continued to complain about the agony of confusion and distress, and the pain of doubt, and the fact that, to the end of his life, he spoke of Islam as a religion of social justice and revolution, indicates that he could not side entirely with his spiritual dimension. In other words, he could not let go of his moral and intellectual convictions concerning Islam as the liberating ideology of the oppressed.

Yet how can we reconcile the fact that Shariati claimed to have sided entirely with his spiritual dimension, with the fact that he did not do so. We can suggest one possibility. Unfortunately it is not possible to set a strict chronological order for much of Shariati's writings. However, if we assume that the passages from Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī wherein Shariati talks about how he was tested by God[19] were written after "A Letter to My Friend" (the basis of Chapter VIII, Shariati through His Own Eyes), then we can suggest that Shariati did in fact choose his spiritual dimension, and enjoyed the peace and tranquility that inevitably followed; yet he was not able to sustain this decision, and the pain and turbulence of doubt eventually came back to haunt him.

Why could this have happened? What made it possible for the doubt and confusion to resurface in Shariati, after having experienced such strong spiritual states? The answer may again lie in that aspect of his personality which he inherited first from his father, and which was strengthened by the socio-political conditions of his era and which lay at the heart of his understanding of Islam, i.e. ʿAlid Shiʿism. The strength of Shariati's religious convictions, convictions concerning Islam's message of liberation from oppression and social justice, undermined the potential of his spiritual growth.

In Shariati we see the conflict between mind and heart, between intellectual, ethical and moral convictions

and spiritual gnosis. As we mentioned earlier, one of the best illustrations of the tension between these two aspects, in an Islamic context, is in the Qur'anic story of the meeting between Moses and Khidr at the junction of the two seas. Shariati, like Moses, yearns for spiritual gnosis, for attaining to that hidden mystical potential within himself. Yet Shariati, also like Moses, cannot surrender his attachment to his moral and ethical convictions, convictions which are not bad in themselves, yet exist as hinderances and veils in the light of a higher spiritual truth. We see that Shariati had many continued attachments, attachments to the philosopher "I", the existentialist "I" and so on. As a Shi^{c}ite Muslim raised to rever the principle of the Justice of God, as a young intellectual living in the turbulent social and political climate of twentieth century Iran, and as the son of political activist Taqī-i Sharī^{c}atī, he could not let go of his understanding of Islam as the message of social justice, and this was his greatest attachment, his thickest veil.

We cannot call Shariati utilitarian, pragmatic, dishonest or unintellectual: confused, yes. His faith, his sincerity, his ethical convictions, his sacrifices and his aspirations for the upliftment of the masses deserve respect. Yet in the light of a higher truth, these convictions and aspirations are revealed as limitations, as false attachments. Thus it was that a burning soul, a

soul which could have roamed the world, as his ancestors had done, in the mystic quest for God, was destined to be trapped in the bondage of a militant ideology.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX

1. Ali Shariati, Kavīr, p.11.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. It shoul be emphasized that Shariati's understanding of Sufism was lacking both in depth and comprehensiveness, and was more sentimental in character. He was either unaware of the tradition in Sufism which emphasized an active social role for its adherents as part of the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, or he ignored it all together. The history of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi Order in central Asia and in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent is a clear example of this trend in Sufism which was apparently not considered by Shariati.

4. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 901, footnote.

5. Ali Shariati, Bā Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 84.

6. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1165.

7. Ibid. The Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab is the place where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers join. This quotation is a reference to the story of Shariati's trip to the city of Abadan. Abadan is located at the shore of the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab. After Shariati's lecture, his students took him there for a boat ride and his experience is described in this passage.

8. Ibid., p. 1166.

9. Ibid., pp. 860-61.

10. Ibid., pp. 861-2.

11. See Chapter IV, Sources pp. 43-44, especially quotation noted 35.

12. Ali Shariati, Ba Mukhāṭabhā-yi Āshnā, p. 87.

13. Ibid., p. 90, see also, p. 93.

14. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1175.

15. See Chapter VIII, Shariati through His Own Eyes, pp. 160-161, especially quotation noted 18.

16. Ibid., p. 161, quotation noted 19.

17. Ibid., pp. 162-164.

18. Ali Shariati, Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, p. 1221.

19. See Chapter IV, Sources, pp. 54-55, especially quotations noted 64, 66, and 67.

APPENDIX I

CREATION[1]

I have included this poem because it is a good sample of Shariati's style of writing; but even more significantly, I have included it because it is centered on the theme of God's motivation for creation and reflects the well known hadīth that God was a hidden treasure and wanted to be known. This hadīth is particularly favored and often quoted by Sufis in their writings.

Everyone is in search of someone, and God was in search of someone.[2]

Everyone is two, and God was One, and how could He be [remain] One?

Everyone exists to the degree that he is felt, and God did not have anyone to feel Him.

Magnificence is always in search of an eye to see it.

Goodness is always anxious for some[one] to understand it.

And beauty is always thirsty for [a] heart to love it.

And power is in need of someone to tame.

And pride is in search of [another] pride to break.

And God was Magnificent and Good, and Beautiful, and Powerful, and Proud,

But did not have anyone.

And God was the Creator; And how could He not create.

He spread the earth, and lifted up the skies,

The mountains rose, the rivers flowed, the seas opened their arms, and the storms began, and lightening struck, and rain and rain and rain....

The plants grew, and the trees bent towards each other, joining their heads together, and the green pastures appeared, and blooming jungles arose, the insects taking flight opened their wings, and the birds groaned, and the tiny fish filled the seas.

And centuries passed, and were passing, and the diverse trees, colorful flowers, and animals....

"In the beginning there was nothing. There was the Word and that Word was God!"[3]

And God was One and apart from God was none.[4]

And with non-being how could there be being-able-to?

And there was God, and with Him was non-existence.

And non-existence did not have ears.

There are [some] words [meant] for saying that if there were not any ear we would not say [them].

And there are [some] words for not-saying, words that never bring themselves to the baseness of being said.

The good and great and transcendental words are these [words].

And the wealth of anyman is the same as the amount of the words that he has for not-saying,

The impatient and intolerable words, that are like the restless flames of fire, [and] each word has captured an explosion in its midst.

They are in search of their audience.

If they find [it], they quiet down.

And if they do not find it, they set the soul on fire from within, and at every moment they kindle frightening and burning fires inside.

And God had many words for not-saying.

His inside was overflowing with them.

And how could non-existence be His audience?

And there was God and non-existence,

There was nothing apart from God.

In non-being was not-being-able-to, [and] with non-being is not-possible-to-be.

And God was alone,

Everyone is in search of someone, and God was in search of someone.

NOTES TO APPENDIX I

1. This poem in presented, without title, as Shariati's own work in Guftugūhā-yi Tanhā'ī, pp. 1145-6. However it appears in longer version in Kavīr, pp. 295-304, under the title "The Hymn of Creation" and in a footnote Shariati states that it is a free but loyal translation from one of Chandel's works.

2. Literally: Everyone has a lost one, and God had a lost one.

3. An allusion to the Gospel of John 1, 1.

4. An allusion to a tradition quoted by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt,
"There was God and there was nothing with Him."
(كَانَ اللهُ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ مَعَهُ شَيْءٌ)

هر کسی گمشده ای دارد و خدا گمشده ای داشت

هر کسی در پا است، و خدا یکی بود و یکی چگونه میتوانست باشد؟

هر کسی به اندازه ای که احساس میکند هست

و [illegible] کسی که احساس کند نداشت

عظمت ها همواره در جستجوی چشمی است که آنرا ببیند

خوبی ها همواره نگران که آنرا بفهمد

و زیبائی همواره تشنه، دلی است که به او عشق ورزد

و قدرت نیازمند کسی است که در برابرش رام گردد

و غرور در جستجوی غروری است که آنرا بشکند

و خدا عظیم بود و خوب و زیبا و پر اقتدار و مغرور

اما کسی نداشت

و خدا آفریدگار بود

و [illegible] میخواست بیافریند

[illegible] را گسترد

و آسمان ها را برافراشت

و [illegible] و رودها سرازیر شدند و دریاها آغوش گشودند و طوفانها

[illegible] و [illegible] برگرفت و باران ها و باران ها و باران ها

[illegible] و [illegible] و درختان سر بهم دادند و مراتع سرسبز پر از کشت و جنگل

[illegible] حشرات بال گشودند و پرندگان بال برداشتند و

[illegible]

و قرن ها گذشت و میگذشت و درختان کوه کوه، گلهای رنگارنگ و جانوران

" در آغاز هیچ نبود ، کلمه بود و آن کلمه خدا بود" !

و خدا یکی بود و جز خدا هیچ نبود

و با نبودن چگونه تواستن بود؟

و خدا بود و با او عدم بود.

و عدم گوش نداشت

حرفهائی هست برای گفتن

که اگر گوشی نبود نمیگوئیم

و حرفهائی هست برای نگفتن، حرفهائی که هرگز سر به ابتذال گفتن فرود

نمیآورند

حرفهای خوب و بزرگ و ماورائی همینهایند

و سرمایه، هر کسی باندازه، حرفهائی است که برای نگفتن دارد

حرفهای بیقرار و طاقت فرسا

که همچون زبانه های بیتاب آتشند

کلماتش هر یک انفجاری را در دل بند کشیده اند

اینان در جستجوی مخاطب خویشند

اگر یافتند آرام میگیرند

و اگر نیافتند روح را از درون به آتش میکشند و هر لحظه حریقهای دهشتناک

و سوزنده ای در درون بر میافروزند.

و خدا برای نگفتن حرفهای بسیار داشت

درونش از آنها سرشار بود

و عدم چگونه میتوانست مخاطب او باشد؟

و خدا بود و عدم جز خدا هیچ نبود در نبودن نتواستن بود، با نبودن

نتوان بودن

و خدا تنها بود،

هر کسی گمشده ای دارد، و خدا گمشده ای داشت

APPENDIX II

A TRANSLATION OF "CHANDEL'S" BIOGRAPHY

Chandel was born in 1933 in Ṭilimsin[1] Algeria. His mother had Mongol roots and his father was a mixture of Arab (on his mother's side) and French (on his father's side).... [His] father, who was from the family of Protestant ministers (علمای روحانی) had a high religious and scientific education, and he was a clever, reflective and chaste man who had spent all of his life in political and intellectual struggles for the sake of Algerian society and for the sake of his own social and religious ideas, and had not compiled anything except name, book, and faith; [the essence of] all his achievements in life was that he had passed all the stations on life's path yet his foot had not slipped into any slime, nor had his robe been tainted with any contamination.

Chandel was born and raised in this family. He had inherited mystical subtlety combined with harshness and tolerance and mixed with gentleness of spirit...from his mother, and [had inherited] the scientific and logical thinking and ethical and political spirit from his father, and had himself cherished these heritages and had added [more] things to them as well.(Guftugūhā-yi Tanhāʾī, p. 708)

NOTES TO APPENDIX II

1. In the original text this word is written as طلمسن. However, since the entire piece is taken from one of Shariati's speeches, and has not been edited by him, this is quite likely a mistake on the part of the person who made the transcription and should read Tlemcen, which is the French version of Tilimsān (in Arabic).

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