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The Plight of Aesthetics in Iran

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The Plight of Aesthetics in Iran

Majid Heidari

Abstract

Richard Rorty believes that philosophy in the West is the result of a conflict between religion and science. In fact, philosophy seeks to clarify the border between religion and science, so neither of them would be able to overstep its explanatory or predictive potentialities. He remarks that we do not have such a thing as philosophy in the East. This paper intends to ask two questions: what is the nature of the comparable conflict in an Eastern country, Iran, and what are its effects on aesthetic studies? I will draw on the idea of the conflict between theology and mysticism. The main difference between these two sides is the methods each uses to achieve the truth: literal and symbolic interpretation. This conflict happens inside religion and not between religion and science. Consequently, all aspects of society would assemble under the influence of a single paradigm, religion, that dominates all other aspects, including philosophy and science and their practitioners. Nevertheless, with the introduction of modern science and philosophy, and also the historical exhaustion of mysticism, there is a new type of conflict. Now, religion finds itself jointly in conflict with both modern philosophy and science. What is at the center of this conflict is aesthetics.

Key Words

aesthetics, conflict, mysticism, philosophy, religion, theology, science

1. Introduction

Believing both in a benevolent creator and in the results of modern science might seem to be intellectually irresponsible to some well-educated people who study philosophical texts of the past one hundred years or so. In fact, neither religion nor science has the ability to fully explain or predict the world we live in. Richard Rorty, in a lecture on "The Compatibility of Religion and Science," examines the ideas of James and Dewey on "intellectual irresponsibility."^[1] It seems quite justifiable for a philosopher like Rorty to talk about the compatibility of religion and science because through examining this relationship he can get closer to a better definition of the border between these systems in a democratic society. Consequently, neither of them can make promises he is not able to fulfill.

Rorty briefly clarifies the boundaries of science and religion and the times they may overstep these boundaries. In fact, science and religion are competing paradigms for explaining the world. He asserts, "Although there are alternative descriptions of things, descriptions useful for different purposes; none of these get close to the way things really are." He finds such a description at the heart of the functional description in the pragmatism of James and Dewey. From a pragmatic viewpoint, we may not find any description of things

thoroughly detachable from our needs. Rorty finds Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida supporting a conception of truth that is against the correspondence theory of truth that regards truth independent of our needs. For the sake of argument, he believes that there is no definite way to test the correspondence between our conception of reality and the way things are actually in themselves.

Rorty's lecture mainly centers on the rejection of the idea put forth by some scholars who consider religious people as intellectually irresponsible. He claims that there are some people who do not feel any tension when they are asked to present a justification for their life while their life seems to be smooth and happy. Therefore, philosophy or philosophical reading and thinking are not an urgent need for everybody, and we cannot condemn such people for not taking intellectuality as seriously as some others do.

As we know, there are different approaches to the relationship between science and religion, from complete convergence to absolute divergence. [\[2\]](#), [\[3\]](#) The proponents of each side seemed to be more inflammatory earlier, for example in the seventeenth century, and more peaceful recently, in the postmodern era. Now scholars talk about a constructive approach or integrative approach or they try to find ways that religious and scientific discourse can add to each other. [\[4\]](#), [\[5\]](#) For example, McGhee Orme-Johnson asserts, "Bruno Latour offers an argument for what constitutes the purposes of religion and science, and argues that because of these purposes religion and science do not have a connection. Stephen Jay Gould says that while religion and science are inseparable, there is no convergence between the two. I have suggested ways to understand their arguments and still allow for a converging connection between religion and science."[\[6\]](#)

The contradiction between scientific and religious ideas, as Rorty claims, might not be necessary to resolve. These ideas are two different ways of explaining the world; however, one may seem to be crude and simplified, that is, religion, and the other refined and precise.

For Rorty, since the beginning of modern science, religious beliefs and scientific beliefs serve different purposes, the former to predict and control things in space and time and the latter to give our life a kind of purpose. Religion may overstep its boundaries by trying to have a predictive function and science may overstep when it tries to convince us not to believe in God.

At the end of his lecture, Rorty draws some conclusions that perhaps could add more weight to the purpose of this paper. Rorty believes that philosophy had a mediating function between science and religion in the Western culture. There has been a conflict between religion and science since the Renaissance, and philosophy was responsible for resolving this conflict. He says, "We developed this thing called philosophy as an academic specialty precisely because we are in a civilization with a conflict between science and religion and we invented this third discipline to be the mediator." He claims that in Eastern civilizations there has not been such a conflict between religion and science, so we don't have a discipline called philosophy.

As far as this idea is related to my home country, Iran, I can agree with Rorty that there was not such a conflict in Persian culture between religion and science. Most scientists or thinkers were primarily religious, and we did not nearly have any major secular scientist or someone like Galileo.

Here in this paper I would like to ask two questions. First, I would like to find out if, as Rorty believes, there was not such a conflict between religion and science in Iran, then what kind of possible conflict did we have instead? Secondly, how has this conflict affected aesthetics and related studies?

2. The conflict

Regarding the first question, a brief historical look at Iran's philosophy is helpful. Iran's history is conventionally divided into two eras, before the Muslim conquest of Iran (651) and after that. The most prominent philosopher of the first era was Zarathustra, who is mainly considered a prophet rather than a philosopher. However, in the second era, Avicenna was the most significant Islamic philosopher.

Mostly, Islamic philosophy was the result of the first translations of Aristotelian philosophy. Early Islamic philosophy starts with two independent lines. The first line was al-Kindi (801-873), Rhazes (854-925) and their followers, who were closer to Neo-Platonism, and the second line was the Aristotelians of Baghdad, like al-Farabi (872-951). These two lines merged in the philosophical and scientific investigations of Avicenna (980-1037). He was the first philosopher whose philosophical writings had internal consistency, a system of independent parts based on the syllogistic logic of Aristotle. His philosophy marked the end of ancient and the beginning of scholastic philosophy. Avicenna's thoughts were dominant in Islamic philosophy afterwards.^[7]

Among Islamic philosophers, we may find a very few who had some nonconventional ideas, like al-Razi. "There were even thinkers who seem to have been influenced by Greek skepticism, which they turned largely against religion, and [Ibn ar-Rawandi](#) and Muhammad ibn Zakariyya' [al-Razi](#) presented a thoroughgoing critique of many of the leading supernatural ideas of Islam."^[8] Their critique was partial, and they always remained devoted to the religion but asked a few different questions. For example, al-Razi asked, "If God is the creator of the world, why hadn't he created the world before he created the world?"

We may say that the dominance of Avicenna on Islamic philosophy is comparable with Descartes' influence in the West. Descartes, contemporary with Galileo, was more of a scientist than a philosopher. He intended to reach a kind of certainty in philosophy that we could find in mathematics. Avicenna, on the other hand, was a religious person who intended to justify Islamic theology with rational philosophy. He tried to prove the existence of the soul and God with some strong logical reasons. Both Avicenna and Descartes proved the existence of God, mainly under the influence of Aristotelian metaphysics. But the difference I would like to stress is the most essential and inherent one in their approaches to philosophy. The difference is in the point of intellectual

departure, the stand each of them takes to start his philosophizing. The one who only believes in God and not much in religion starts with doubt, and the one with faith to God and religion, Avicenna, starts with a kind of confidence that can usually be found in religious people.[\[9\]](#)

For Avicenna, there seems to be a kind of confidence that is derived from his belief or faith in God, a benevolent creator or, as he philosophically described it, as a "necessary existent" in comparison with human existence, which is contingent. We may claim that such a faith, or strong dependence or devotion, is not rooted in philosophical investigations, for certain, as Aristotle himself believed in the "necessary source of movement who is unmoved; everlasting being engaged in never-ending contemplation." Aristotle's version of God seems to be more acceptable for a philosopher or even a scientist in Western thought.

But Avicenna had made himself exceptionally familiar with Aristotle; he was also a very competent scientist and, at the same time, a very devoted Muslim. We can clearly see that while he is rather meticulous about propositions in his exegesis on Aristotle's metaphysics, he is rather easy-going concerning religious ideas and dependence on metaphysical realms. We might be inclined to ask if Avicenna was intellectually irresponsible? This question sounds quite ridiculous, at least to those who are familiar with his philosophical and scientific texts. So we may think that there are two possible suppositions here. The first one is that a religious person, aside from his philosophical knowledge and investigations, would at least have some unreasonable and unjustifiable thoughts. The second supposition is that religion gives us a kind of certainty and devotion we cannot find either in philosophy or science, since Avicenna was both a competent scientist and a fervent philosopher.

I would go with the second supposition, as I think Rorty would. It seems that religion has a prominent feature that always comes first, that is, a religious person always suppresses other intellectual investigations and occupations in favor of a religious set of ideas, and it appears that we cannot call it an intellectual irresponsibility since we can see the same approach both in ordinary people and in some philosophers (and scientists).

This feature of religion, the suppression of conflicting ideas, gives rise to a kind of conflict. In the Western tradition, religion is in conflict with an exterior realm of science, and philosophy works as a mediator between the two sides. But it seems that in the Eastern tradition, the conflict happens inside the realm of religion; there is an intrinsic conflict between two different interpretations of religion, namely theology and mysticism. The first believes in the literal exoteric interpretation of religious propositions, and the latter in the symbolic esoteric interpretation of those propositions.

This conflict is partially different from what Bertolacci finds. He believes that, "Outside the narrower scope of philosophy and its history, it is interesting to note how the introduction of a foreign pagan discipline, like metaphysics, into a monotheistic social context, like the Islamic one, determines either the accordance or the antagonism between philosophical theology

and revealed theology, or, in other words, between the quintessence of Falsafa, on the one hand, and the speculation of Kalām, on the other. The study of the ways in which this confrontation took place in the Islamic culture of the Middle Ages may shed light on the contemporary debate on the relationship between reason and faith and contribute to the promotion of dialogue among different cultures.”[\[10\]](#)

Here Bertolacci understands the conflict between reason and faith, in other words, between a field that tries to reasonably justify religious propositions (Kalām) and a field that tries to practice reason and logic apart from religious preconceptions (philosophy). Both fields are Islamic; however, they both include a great deal of faith and reason and we can also find mystic inclinations in both groups. So it seems that the difference here between philosophical theology and revealed theology, as Bertolacci understands it, is categorical and linguistic. The conflict between faith and reason is more of a Western conflict than an Islamic one.

Therefore, the conflict in Persian culture is, as this paper claims, a methodological difference between mysticism and theology. While the former sets up a spiritual odyssey to find the truth, the latter uses logic to reach it. Both theologians and philosophers may have mystic attitudes and may even shift from theology to mysticism.[\[11\]](#) Despite this, the difference between them remains as one of the most prevailing cultural features, that there are some people who care about the surface side of religion and those who intend to find the core meaning.

Classic Persian literature comprehensively elaborates on the conflict between these two sides. Those who are religious try to act as closely as possible to theological findings, and those who believe religion is only a way to achieve a higher personal truth, the truth that all existents are just One (the idea of Unity of Existence). We may claim that this conflict is the main theme of classical Persian literature.

The nature of this conflict is quite different from the one we find in Western culture. This conflict is not between two competing paradigms, but is within a single, suppressing system that emphasizes purity, faith, and acceptance of truth on both sides. The result is the integration of all aspects of life, including political, social, personal, and scientific realms. Consequently, the tolerance of different ideas and perspectives is difficult or nearly impossible and would lead to accusations of heresy.

With the introduction of Western or modern perspectives in philosophy and science, a competing paradigm arises. Mysticism, which was an old and difficult practice that was exhausted over time by the struggle against the suppressing and overwhelming power of theology, gave its place to newer and stronger realms, that is, modern philosophy and science.[\[12\]](#)

Therefore, in the modern period we came to the same conflict as in the West but with a considerable difference. Traditionally in Iran, philosophy and science were part of a bigger paradigm of religion, and distinguishing between the two did not seem practical. Presently, postmodern interpretations and dialogues

can be used by the religious paradigm to widen its dominance, and to present pluralistic and pragmatic interpretations of its existence with the interest of keeping its dominance. Thus, from one side, religion emphasizes its dominance through conventional means like theology and a weakened, controlled version of mysticism, and from the other side, it uses the potentialities of newer interpretations of science and philosophy while being fully aware of their inefficiencies to empower its dominance. Here stands aesthetics: a representative of paradigms of modern science and philosophy.

3. Aesthetics and mysticism

Aesthetics is the field that brings up the nature of the conflict discussed above. Since in Islamic teachings making pictures and statues is unwelcome, academics who intend to study aesthetics have to find the roots of aesthetics in mysticism, in which there exists various discussions of beauty. The kind of beauty we can find in mysticism, however, is an ontological one that is the result of the creation of God. Conventionally, it is said that God was a hidden treasure that wanted to be known. As a result, He created the world to be understood and appreciated. So the job of humans is the appreciation of that beauty. This appreciation is the same as falling in love with God. So beauty and love are at the beginning of the creation of the world. Hafez says:

When beamed Thy beauty on creation's morn,
The world was set on fire by love new-born.

Thy cheek shone bright, yet angels' hearts were
cold:
Then flashed it fire, and turned to dam's mould

The lamp of Reason from this flame had burned,
But lightening jealousy the world o'erturned^[13]

Aesthetics in Islamic philosophy is important, since "Many of the problems of religion versus philosophy arose in the area of aesthetics."^[14] The reason aesthetics is more problematic for Islamic philosophy is that it is a new and subjective field of study. As we know, aesthetics found its present connotation in the eighteenth century, with the definition of Baumgarten. After the eighteenth century, aesthetics regarded fine art as an independent field of philosophy. Before the introduction of aesthetics to Islamic dialogues, Islamic philosophy was occupied with poetry and saw it as a logical form. "One of the interesting aspects of Islamic philosophy is that it treated poetry as a logical form, albeit of a very low demonstrative value, along the continuum of logical forms which lie behind all our language and practices."^[15]

Recently, however, Islamic academics who intended to study the aesthetic aspects of their cultural heritage needed to have more than poetry, so they had to look for a broader perspective to study. Islamic theology rejects the idea of image-making or other kinds of art for different reasons. Therefore, mysticism appeared to match the goals of the academic field of aesthetics. Mysticism is the field in which scholars can find long discussions about love, beauty, creation, and truth. These terms are very similar to those we find in

modern Western aesthetics. Accordingly, mysticism is the field that can be used for aesthetic studies. However, beauty in Western aesthetics is related to humanity or nature but, in Islamic mysticism, beauty is an ontological and holy idea. The meaning of fine art, therefore, is not reachable in the realm of Islamic aesthetics.

There are few books on Islamic Aesthetics dealing with the conflict presented here. Gonzalez, in a book called, *Beauty and Islam, Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture*, attempts to theorize a formulation showing the presence of aesthetic thought and tradition in Islam. He uses the term "aesthetic phenomenology" to show how Islamic art and beauty can be justified. He asserts, "Aesthetics, and particularly aesthetic phenomenology, forms a specific and new field, which is still not taken into account in the realm of Islamic studies, although it is fully integrated into contemporary analytical works on art and art theory."^[16] He finds the same conflict presented in this paper, the fact that phenomenology is a Western philosophical tradition that sounds inappropriate for Islamic cultural order. But he believes we shouldn't jump to the conclusion that aesthetics did not properly exist in Islam. Instead, he refers to a book written by Vilchez that outlines the history of aesthetics in classical Arabic thought. But Gonzales himself confirms that this book, in spite of its name, has a historical, sociological, and descriptive point of view, and scholars should look for some aesthetic foundations. He states, "Very few scholars take the initiative to use aesthetics as theory and method in order to understand the conceptualization and the forms of works of art."^[17]

Traditionally it is believed that "religious knowledge is unquestionably the highest form of knowledge."^[18] Such a presupposition leads to the idea of Islamic science, which seems to be independent from Aristotelian methodology. Islamic scholars also talk about shifting from Western human sciences to an Islamic one, the need for reforming and conceptualizing the human sciences from Islamic perspectives, and the need for Islamic grounds for human sciences. What actually happens, however, is some historical investigations that find diverse quotes from different Islamic figures and texts about different issues without any integrative approach or theory.

One example is interpreting Persian miniatures that seem confusing. The confusion lies in the fact that most Persian miniatures follow the same conventions, such as no tendency to imitate nature, two dimensional flat scenes without perspective, decorated background, extension of light all over the scene, and unreal colors. There are very few aesthetically idiosyncratic paintings whose painter has put his or her fingerprint on the work.

Persian painting was an inseparable part of book decoration, a major art in Iran. A group of artists would get together under the supervision of a patron, usually a king or a member of royal family, to design, write (calligraphy), bind, and decorate a literary text. Painting was just one of the processes of making this work of art. Little by little, these arts or skills separated from each other until each stood on its own traditions and the conventions that influence them to the

present day.

It seems that any study of Persian miniatures has to consider that, first, Persian painting was an integrated part of making beautiful books, it was not an independent art, and second, while Persian painting slowly became independent, it was not fully to the time of Qajar (1784-1925) and when it did become independent, the specific rules of creating and interpreting this art was never clearly discussed.[\[19\]](#)

The most popular theory for interpreting Persian painting is a mystic theory that considers Persian paintings as representation of the Other World. Nasr believes that the 'non-three-dimensional' character of Persian miniature is "a recapitulation of space of another world and concerns another mode of consciousness."[\[20\]](#) He views European perception of perspective during the Renaissance as a kind of betrayal of natural perspective. In this theory, all pictorial elements of Persian paintings are the symbol of the "imaginal world" or *alam al-khial*.

As a matter of fact, *alam al-khial* is a metanarrative that is highly inclusive in the way that it can interpret any pictorial element of Persian miniatures with a fixed, simplified viewpoint. In this approach, we can simply interpret elements like space, time, movement, color, and form as symbols of a secret language referring to some metaphysical ideas. However, this approach does not have enough explanatory potentiality to describe and interpret Persian painting.

Therefore we may say that, while Persian paintings represent real figures, the underlying reasons and justifications have remained unclear. These paintings have their roots in Chinese paintings and old Iranian illustrations (Mani), that narrated classical Persian stories under the influence of Islamic culture. As different traditions have mixed together and evolved during a long history, one cannot find any aesthetic theory underlying Persian paintings.

4. Possible approaches to aesthetics in Iran

Two main options remain for an academic scholar of aesthetics in Iran. The first and most popular approach is working on different aspects of Islamic cultural heritage and imposing on them Western aesthetic classifications and discussions to make them capable of being the subject of scientific study. This approach is mostly affected by historicism, and it (un)intentionally strengthens the political power relations and cultural conventions. Also, academic scholars who use this approach will win most of the budgets allocated to universities, and their research results enjoy greater attention. In this approach, the incompatibility of method, approach, and the subject of study is ignored, making the result semi-scientific. For example, they study subjects such as mosques' arabesque and calligraphy with the principles of Western aesthetics in a scientific way. However, the *raison d'etre* of these handicrafts does not match any Western theoretical framework. Islam has encouraged arabesque and calligraphy mainly because they do not involve any pictures.

The main reason for their dominance in Islamic tradition is first, ideological, and then, political, not by the free will of

artists. People who made them had not considered themselves as independent subjects who create beautiful objects but were thinking about making the mosque, or "house of God," as beautiful as possible based on the teachings and norms of the tradition. Imposing any Western theoretical framework on studying these handcrafts ignores the main reason for their formation. Most importantly, they are pure forms without any content and can only be interpreted symbolically.

The second approach is discussing and studying modern Western aesthetics. The problem with this is that such discussions mainly happened in the Western culture, and adopting them to domestic perspectives and cultural situations mostly results in superficial adaptations of the original discussions. The outcome will, most probably, not be acceptable either within the country or outside of the country within the Western academic world. Aesthetics scholars with such an approach will remain suspended between the two incompatible worlds of West and East. Such academics will remain marginal in comparison with the central world of Western intellectual culture, and regarded as nonconventional inside the country.

To summarize the condition, we may say that the tension of the second group is mainly the result of the kind of conflict we had between the Sufists and theologians. This historical conflict resulted, as can be clearly seen from the political and social situation of the society in the exhaustion of the Sufists' perspective. This means that the literal interpretation of religion managed to suppress the symbolic interpretation of it. But with the introduction of modern science and philosophy, religion has found new rivals.

In the meantime, philosophy has become rather secular, linguistic, analytic, pragmatic, and pluralistic. In the past, philosophy could help religion most when religion was in need of logical justifications. But now philosophy remains far from any hardline justifications and keeps its distance from both religion and science. Philosophy still attempts to discuss science and religion but does not try to justify them in any way. So now, for religion in Eastern culture, both philosophy and science are rivals and religion has to fight on two fronts, modern philosophy and modern science.

And, oddly enough, we can clearly see that religion benefits most from the critiques that both science and philosophy make of themselves. Religion has the capability of using all the improvements and influence of science or philosophy. Every improvement can be regarded as getting closer to the truth that religion claims, and every philosophical or scientific assertion shows the absurdity and incapability of superficial earthly human knowledge in comparison to spiritual knowledge.

5. Conclusion

As we know, in the mid-eighteenth century the academic field of aesthetics developed as a distinct area of philosophy. Andrew Bowie truly asserts, "The often hyperbolic importance attributed to art toward the end of the eighteenth century evidently has its roots in the decline of theology and the disintegration of theologically legitimated social orders."[\[21\]](#)

Self-consciousness is an important feature that can be related to the autonomy of aesthetics. Self-consciousness replaces the reliance on God, and beauty replaces the idea of divinity. Such modifications in Western intellectual culture led, in a corollary fashion, to the academic field of aesthetics.

The conflict between religion and science, which was mediated by philosophy, enhances these modifications. Some may find these modifications as improvements and some may disagree. However, this is a controversial question for Eastern academics that sometimes reaches the level of obsession. The discussions related to the definition of modernity and post-modernity are seriously followed in Eastern intellectual cultures. Scholars are eager to find whether these modifications were actual improvements or not, or if they follow the same path.

Rorty's formulation of the Western conflict might seem to be an oversimplification of a larger and more sophisticated problem. But all in all, it is helpful and enlightening. In an Eastern Muslim country like Iran, theology won over Sufism. The conflict was ongoing for about five centuries, since the Safavid Empire. Sufism was suppressed by its rival, which had more political and social power. As universities and academic fields of science were introduced to the country, new rivals for religion seemed to appear: philosophy and science. Interestingly, all these rivals managed to coexist at the cost of some modifications on all sides. Religion tried to look more scientific, logical, and up-to-date, while philosophy tried to look supportive of the basic ideas of religion, and science tried to find justifications for religious habits and actions.

Any academic researcher in the field of aesthetics who intends to carry out his or her research free from social, cultural, and political norms or conventions will face a dilemma between Western and Eastern perspectives that seem to be different and even contradictory in their most basic approaches and methodology. However, they may share the same terminology.

The first step in solving any aporia is formulating the problem. The conflict between theology and mysticism, as seen here, is the first step to moving forward. In religious contexts, the problem is typically formulated based on metaphysical beliefs and ideas, and this sometimes leads to more confusion and misunderstanding of the problem. This paper was a struggle to provide the basis for further dependable formulations of this aporia.[\[22\]](#)

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Endnotes

[1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn2F2BWLZ0Q>.

[2] Hossein S. Nasr, *Spirituality and Science, the Essential Sophia* (World Wisdom Inc., 2006).

[3] James Proctor, *Science, Religion, and the Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[4] *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and science*, ed. Philip Clayton (Oxford University Press, 2006).

[5] McGhee More Johnson, *Finding Connections Between Religion and Science* (MQP in Religion, 2015).

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[7] *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, Robert (Cambridge University Press, 1995, 1999), p. 445, pp. 40-42.

[8] Oliver Leaman, "Islamic Philosophy," *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (2015), pp. 13-16.

[9] The following quotes from these two thinkers, I suppose, have never been compared to each other.

Avicenn (980-1037) starts his book, *The Metaphysics of Healing*, as follows:

"We shall indulge whatever the truth itself reveals of its form, giving evidence against the one who disagrees by means of what [the truth] shows and holds back of itself. That our time be not wasted and bound up by repudiating and sufficiently opposing every school of thought We shall endeavor, as far as possible, to exhibit the truth arrived at by our predecessors and to excuse what we think they have overlooked unintentionally. God has spared us all this [trouble] and has, in fact, assigned it to people who have exerted their utmost effort in achieving it and interpreting their books Part of what the measure of our search has yielded, despite the short space of time we spent therein, is given in the books that we have written and called collectively *The Healing*. God is the source of our support and strength, and in Him we place our trust. From here we start our exposition." Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of Healing*, Translated by Jon McGinnis (Brigham Young University Press, 2009).

Descartes (1596-1650) starts his book, *Meditations on Philosophy*, with sentences like the following:

"I am here quite alone, and at last I will devote myself, sincerely and without holding back, to demolishing my opinions. I can do this without showing that all my beliefs are false, which is probably more than I could ever manage. My reason tells me that as well as withholding assent from propositions that are obviously false, I should also withhold it from ones that are not completely certain and indubitable. So all I need, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, is to find in each of them at least some reasons for doubt. I can do this without going through them one by one, which would take forever: once the foundations of a building have been undermined, the rest collapses of its own accord; so I will go

straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested." Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Jonathan Bennette (2010-2015).

[10] Amos Bertolacci, "Arabic and Islamic Metaphysics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (SEP, 2015), p. 444.

[11] There are numerous historical famous examples of theologians who shift into Mysticism like Molavi and al-Farabi.

[12] Toby E. Huff asserts, "Inevitably conflict would arise between the philosophical and metaphysical presuppositions of Hellenic culture and those of Islam. On the philosophical level, there would be a major intellectual conflict over the idea of natural causation..." in *The Rise of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 28.

[13] Sonnet number 146.

[14] Oliver Leaman, "Islamic Philosophy," *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (2015), pp. 13-16.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 13-16.

[16] Valeria Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris/Institute of Israili Studies, 2001), pp. 1-5.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 1-5.

[18] Toby E. Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 28.

[19] Robert Hillenbrand, *Persian Painting* (London, New York: University of Cambridge, 2000).

[20] Hossein S. Nasr, "The World of Imagination and the Concept of Space in the Persian Painting," *Islamic Quarterly* (1968), 134-139.

[21] Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche* (Mannchester University Press, 2003), pp. 1-3.

[22] I would like to dearly thank the reviewers of *Contemporary Aesthetics* for reading through my paper carefully. Because of their comments this paper, I believe, improved significantly and I, myself, learned a lot. I sincerely appreciate their contribution to this paper.