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Comparing the Position of Faith in the Ideas of Kierkegaard and Ibn Arabi with Emphasis on the Meccan Revelations

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Abstract

Faith and belief as well as ratification and believe in the doctrine have always been regarded as key concepts in Gnostic doctrine either in the field of practical gnosis or theoretical gnosis. Defining faith and the ways to explain it depend on the presupposition that faith should be regarded from the perspectives of two well-known mystics. This research tries to explain faith from the perspective of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (the father of theoretical gnosis) and Kierkegaard (the father of Existentialism); it also presents an inferential analysis and phenomenological description. For Ibn Arabi, faith is a knowledge and perception including both spiritual aspect of mysticism and a posterior aspect. This virtue is the performance of beliefs. In this manner, faith is a path through which heart gathers reason and religion. Thus, ratification and belief are the prerequisite to enter the path of theoretical mysticism. Hence, walking in the path is acquirement of the real knowledge. Religion is essential for mysticism and finding truth. On the other hand, Kierkegaardian faith does not presupposes religion and legal ethics; but it goes beyond to a meta-rational and meta-ethical domain. Faith is one of the arenas of human existence. Man should be in love to be able to go beyond reason. It is important to be aware that for Kierkegaard, faith is mostly blessings and mercy of God; it is a gift from God rather than the practice of religious orders, acquisition of spirituality, and achieving truth. Although both moralities and religious affairs are intended, it is mostly in form of life within the community as it is a social contract obliging people to observe collective laws and obligations.

Keywords: Faith, Knowledge, Existence, Theoretical mysticism, Practical mysticism, Mutations.

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Introduction

Mysticism and mystical vision have always had its place in theology for the distinction from philosophical and scientific knowledge in the hearts of believers. The great mystical teachings and the seekers in the divine path are always in search of language, information, and signs in order to acquire a drop from the sea of perfection and God's mercy that will be inspired to them. In fact, allegorical, metaphorical, and symbolic language is limited to express the least acquired teachings due to intuition; but the only way to analogize perfect divine nature to human aspect is the employment of such language:

If the water of sea cannot be captured

It should be tested as much as thirsty

Undoubtedly, the situation of a mystic is a life in the valley of isolation that echoes the pain of separation from eternal beloved and deity as expressed;

Listen to the reed (flute) It is telling

How it is complaining about separations

The languages of reason and philosophy as well as the language of science are incapable for becoming close to the situation of the burning and isolated mystic in the valley of isolation in order to be his companion to his internal experience. Language targets signification, not implication. The will of man is important for reaching the sea of revelation. It requires strict determination and a firm will.

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi and Kierkegaard, with their own peculiarities, opened ways in which human beings can understand the mood of mystics using allegorical and descriptive language in both practical and theoretical aspects. One by acquiring a knowledge from ratification and hearty belief as well as practicing that; the other by practicing lack of belief and fly to the never-land. This passage, highway, or hall is called faith.

Faith is the inner and ideological ratification, which acquirement, position, or mood. It also may be inner knowledge to see being from manifestations or to see hidden aspects from manifestations and expressions. One falls in love and disregards all evidences and logical arguments.

Faith from Perspective of Ibn Arabi and Kierkegaard

Faith, theoretical understanding of this issue and comprehension of various opinions pursuant to this subject are constructive elements of any philosophical, mystical, and theological

discussion. Faith is one of the key issues and keywords in a mystical system either the purpose is theoretical or practical mysticism.

Faith to ideological, cultural, and political beliefs or any kind of appearance leads a believer to be firm on the beliefs; in this way, he will adopt all his actions and practices in line with the faith. He will conduct advertising activities to objectify them. Faith of believers to any belief may be regarded by others as merely incorrect understanding of a phenomenon, subjective reduction of a psychological phenomenon, misinterpretation of a false advertising pattern, or an absurd profession that has been regarded as certainty by agent or believer while he is committed and loyal to it.

However, belief and believing may be epistemic categories or a perception that has not been reduced to the level of knowledge; hence, a believer cannot acquire its results through a logical analysis if one considers logical knowledge, which is the common subject of studies in current Western epistemology. In this manner, a person achieves a degree of personal knowledge for differentiation of the acquired knowledge in terms of intuition and immediacy or by perfections and premises internal pilgrimage; he cannot share the results and observe the consequences of his deterministic aggregation. The believer has observed the discovering issue personally, he has been capable to enjoy only himself, and he has taken the advantages. Such experiences will remain in secret and intimacy forever. In theoretical aspects, he can present his personal experience and observation by knowing the least analogical and metaphorical use of concepts as much as identifying details of receivable orders from supreme origin and sacred shrine of the person. Here, the author has tried to describe the understanding from a wide range of faith element from two great mystics Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi and Kierkegaard. Certainly, this research does not aim to propose a new hypothesis for general understanding of this issue; thus, all ideas of the author are presented by presupposition of “it seems to me”. The author believes that reflection on these two issue is very difficult but it requires investigation.

Before entering the personal ideas of author in the research with respect to the comparative nature of this study, it is necessary to present a general description of faith from the perspectives of Ibn Arabi and Kierkegaard.

1. Faith from the Perspective of Ibn Arabi

In his valuable book the Meccan Revelations volume 14, chapter 160, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi talks about knowledge and calls faith “ratification.” After submitting to Islam and certainty in this submission and satisfaction, ratification is regarded as one of the levels of humanity.

After mentioning stages and recognition teachings including Islam, faith, and Ihsan (perfection) in this chapter, he regards Islam and submission as servitude of servant to Truth and subjugation of servant to Truth is a result. Here, God provides what the servant says and asks in his prayers from God. In this way, God subjugates the servant to Himself.

Ihsan (perfection) is a spiritual observation; although it is practiced in an objective form for the servants, the meaning of seeing God is represented as observation of God, insight essence, and introspection rather than material eye. However, seeker servants can acquire divine insight. The essence of manifestations and inner insight of God to appearances and instances are represented more in form of perfection of Ihsan while servants of God use their material eye only for material observation and appearances.

It seems this chapter tries to show that faith and practicing belief has not only practical dimension but it needs theoretical and affirmative dimension.

By presenting this chapter about knowledge and perception of staged pattern of Islam, faith, beneficence, and perfection of Ihsan, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi counts criteria for the field of mysticism as division of hierarchy and stages. With a ranking in this classification, he aims to determine the place of each since passing stages is one of the most important mystical thoughts in for of belief. By referring to Islam in the first stage of submission, satisfaction, and subjugation, he notes that the more a servant is hardworking for acquiring satisfaction of God, the more he will be capable for receiving revelations and he is key acquiring for divine revelations and divine gifts; it is subjugation, Islam, and submission. Thus, subjectivity of servant in acquiring blessings and gift depends on the extension of his capability. Since God's satisfaction is not from the type of needs, submission, and servitude, God's satisfaction is equal to the satisfaction of servant from God's satisfaction if one understands by the mystical pattern that man is created "for Truth". Therefore, Islam refers to the voluntary subjugation to God by his own actions, for the sake of his Lord, to attract more endowments and more manifestations. After this stage, faith is proposed. For Muhyiddin, it is belief in Islam and ratifying it.

Ratification seems correct only when there has been an idea in advance; thus, ratification is possible. It seems necessary for connecting Muhyiddin's understanding in ratification of faith to Islam to be aware that true submission should met at first; then, ratification of a verdict will appear reasonable. Hence belief to it comes with faith.

When a servant is thoroughly submitted to God's satisfaction, he considers his own satisfaction in a stage below than God's satisfaction, and he enjoys his situation, he ratifies it with an affirmative perspective and issues some ideas in line with the satisfaction. Therefore,

mental form is Islam and ratification is the cognitive affirmation although it is found in presence with hearty ratification in Islam. However, submission is not mere Islam and ratification is a condition for it with the practical necessity.

Then, Ibn Arabi introduces the stage of beneficence that is the discussion on observation and seeing results. If servant is decorated with divine eyes, he passes the appearances and enters the realm of mystical seek. In this stage, he connects to the sublime position and High being. After submission and practical actions, he can see the manifestation of God in himself. After ratification and belief, he sees God in the position of perfection of Ihsan in appearances and manifestations of God behind absence and heart of manifestations and creatures as he sees God in creatures with a direct knowledge.

This description is a superficial understanding of the book of Meccan Revelations. For further investigation, it is better to begin with the book and its references on this issue.

On knowing and knowledge of stages: Islam, faith, perfection of Ihsan beneficence, subjugation to Islam, and belief of faith, and perfection of certification.

God states in Quran, “قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا”; it means, “The bedouins say, ‘We have believed.’ Say, ‘You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], ‘We have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts.” (Al-Hujarat: 14). “هل جزاء الإحسان إلا الإحسان” meaning “Is the reward for good [anything] but good?” (Al-Rahman: 60). In a correct hadith, it is argued about the difference between faith and perfection, “فالإسلام عمل والإيمان تصديق والإحسان رويه أو كاليويه”. It means that Islam is practicing and faith is ratification and Ihsan, observation, and observation, or something like observation.

Therefore, Islam is subjugation and obedience while faith is ratification and Ihsan (perfection) and observation. Every person possesses all attributes and their orders emerge for him, God’s manifestation covers him in a form so that he cannot deny the manifestation and he will not show them in unnecessary conditions; then, he helps Lord due to refusal to manifesting it in unnecessary conditions. This stage is excellent for the person who has become close to Him from his dignity. He is believer, perfect, and submitted to Islam. Since God does what his servants like, he is subjugated to God; in this position, he says God “رب اغفر لي” meaning God forgive me (Noah: 28) and God forgives him because he is truthful in his sayings. In this situation, many benefits have been taken from people due to their ignorance and their refusal to perform purification so that some may reject God. In this regard, God says, “يا أهل الكتاب لا تغلوا في دينكم ولا تقولوا على الله إلا الحق”; it means “O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth” (Nisa: 171). Therefore, the need of truth in for itself in manifestation is more than the need of manifested object to be manifested.

Lord has prevented to manifest himself and his Truth for us in some stages such as absenteeism, gossiping, and concealing secrets although all are right; they are forbidden for owners as attributes, thus He is the hidden appearance. Accordingly, Ihsan is observation from the side of God and it is speaking of “as it seems”; faith is from God and creature to its truth. In the same way, Islam, for mystics, is nothing but telling about Truth, which is certain. Hence, it is not necessary to talk about knowing and it is not necessary to broadcast what is observed because the body of free men is the tomb of secrets. “وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ”; it means “That is [merely] your saying by your mouths, but Allah says the truth, and He guides to the [right] way” (Ahzab: 4) (Ibn Arabi, 2012: 440-442).

In fact, Ibn Arabi counts indicators of ignorance in rejectors. He describes them in the stage of purification due to their ignorance and use of reason; they have never been able to acquire knowledge about the heart of divine secrets. Therefore they reject Him. In addition, he asserts that God must manifest Its appearances through His essence; not the servants should objectify themselves due to having the same knowledge in the stage of living, affirmation, and not cognitive because they have this attribute in themselves. God asks His servants not to objectify the negative attributes deposited by God in them in positive level.

In addition to expressing his purpose, Ibn Arabi counts imagination and fancy as tools for spiritual journey; he sees faith inside the heart. Although understanding and perception by reason is acquiring, it becomes in presence by imagination. Imagination is an intermediate whereby a person can observe presented manifestation inside his heart.

It is now reasonable to state that God introduces Himself and inspire faith since He loves His manifestation and appearance. Therefore, if a person seeks divine knowledge, he must find a way in which God introduces Himself to him; this way is called faith.

In a Qudsi Hadith that talks about filling heart with Truth. There is a condition so that “وسعني” (The heart of believer servant has the capacity for me.) From this expression, Ibn Arabi concludes that only a believer’s heart is capable and has the capacity, not a disbeliever because understanding God is met by His introduction and not by self-speculation. Only a believer accepts the definition proposed by God for Himself.

Two points are concluded from the fact that heart acquires the capacity for Truth by faith:

A. The way to acquire knowledge passes in faith and a disbeliever will never recognize God as well as universe and creatures. Accordingly, one can say from Ibn Arabi’s idea that I will have a faith to achieve a true knowledge.

B. With its particular condition, heart can lead us to knowledge through faith; it is capable to aggregate reason and religion. Success between reason and religion is one of the most

important issues. Many divine philosophers have tried much to achieve it; each person has passed his own way in this regard. There are some problems in solutions. No one has been able to present a convincing solution in this regard. Ibn Arabi answers the philosophers that they will never reach the destiny as long as we are going to remove the contradiction between reason and religion from the position of philosopher and we decide to integrate them because reason is of the parties to this dispute and judging by reason will end by victory of reason in solving the problem. As a result, the correct path is to send the dispute to a fair judge. The only judge who is able to solve the problem is heart (Hekmat, 2010 (a): 150-151).

In his book “Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity”, William C. Chittick focuses on Ibn Arabi's ideas; in addition to regarding faith inclusive of religious practices, he considers faith even higher inclusive of prophecy and unity if one regards prophecy as religious orders.

With religious measures, people will become far from virtue and excellence and fall to the lowest levels (“سفل سافلين”) (Tin: 5). Hence, they are engaged in material characteristics such as darkness and ignorance; they also may oscillate and wandering in a transverse plurality.

Coordination, comprehensiveness and integrity depends on both tawhid (attesting to the Oneness of God) and faith (according to the definition accepted by Ibn Arabi, it includes practices (observing religion). The perfect souls are individuals having attested the Oneness of God and they have faith. Faith and tawhid save them from torment and punishment (Chittick, 2006: 210).

The deserving dignity of reason or its mirror status will be manifested when we unravel the peak of reason and open new ways for it to the hidden world that is boundless. This connection and communication will be met only through faith. The subjective dimension of reason and its production, which is rational evidence and correct though, does not lead us to truths; but opening doors of reason toward the hidden world breaks the limitations and prepares it for acceptance. He affirms the speech of one who is coming from God and had some notions; in this way, the horizons of knowledge as well as knowledge of horizons will be open for him. The notion by the holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the fact that knowledge of God has no way except knowing self because he said “مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ” and “اعرفكم بنفسه اعرفكم بربه” meaning “whoever knows himself, knows his Lord” (Hekmat, 2010: 50-51).

2. Faith from the Perspective of Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard regards faith as a divine blessing and gift rather than something acquired; if one tells the idea of Kierkegaard in the system of Ibn Arabi, faith is a seeker's passion,

enthusiasm, and belief to an impossible paradox and a paradoxical irrational affair as well as existential and absolute relation to Absolute.

Faith is divine and eternal grace that an existential person feels himself in an existential relationship by his own will and freedom through suspending the cognitive goal of a moral issue; he selects his self and love to infinity encourages him to risk and his self from himself in a spiritual journey. The existential person submits himself to the desirable and impossible by negating his self, any sort of moral, scientific, historical, philosophical, and rational objectivity; then, he sacrifices all for it.

The existential person is uneasy but he has no doubt and hesitation because he delights in uncertainty. He is always ready to hear news from infinity and the impossibility; he leaves infinity towards infinity in an infinite relationship. This person optimizes the existential reason and seeks for his faith in endlessness and eternity. He is subjective and introversive and he suspends and objective rule by rejecting it. He is in permanent connection himself, with himself, and for himself.

The existential man is like a hero who makes his self in a repetition; he expresses himself by himself; in this type of faith for an existential person, he is ready to sacrifice all high being for God.

The person does not deal, he goes, moves, leaps, and leaves himself beyond reason and higher than religion. This existential relationship to existence is the creation of self in self due to love and sacrificing himself for the sake of God. After faith, there are attraction, and eternal enthusiasm to infinity that finds his repetition. Separation, suffering, and guilt are components of movement to infinity. The more is a seekers fear, the more will be his rejection.

In Kierkegaardian thinking about faith, achieving truth is possible through knowledge by presence; it needs intimacy and closeness. The intermediate connection with Truth is possible but it will be destroyed very fast; it is not recordable and its id beyond language and logics. Nevertheless, it has a certain presence and it will be found by heart. Kierkegaardian faith is negation and elimination as well as a dialectical assertion; faith is the impossibility of an impossible.

Faith is uncertainty, infinite certainty, and boundless risk; it is the belief in impossibility, the belief in the necessity of possibility, and the belief in infinity in finite and the paradox of manifestation of incarnation of God in Christ.

Faith is a personal relationship between a person and his self but the relationship is not equal to self. Man is a combination of finite and infinite; thus, the relationship to self should not be misunderstood with self. The relationship between a person and his self becomes possible

only through eternity. Man becomes personalized only in relation to God and in the eternity. Faith is to fall in love, to fall in the love of an everlasting beloved. Faith is the existence and a cause that eliminates skepticism. It is in contradiction to the absolute You. Faith is life with love and a lovely risk.

In order to make a conclusion and compare faith from the perspectives of Ibn Arabi and Kierkegaard, possible similarities and inconsistencies will be explained.

3. Differences and Similarities from Perspectives of Ibn Arabi and Kierkegaard

Kierkegaardian mysticism is practical but Muhyiddin's mysticism is theoretical. Kierkegaard considers faith as boundless and infinite enthusiasm, a kind of uncertainty, rejection of objectivity, and rejection of subjectivity. He disagrees the concept of religion as believed by Ibn Arabi, he suspends moralities, and criticizes reason; but he does not reject it. He sees man from the aesthetic stage that is the first stage of existence in his evolution; then, he sees evolution mutation in faith phase. On the contrary, in Ibn Arabi's mysticism, man begins by repentance, steps in the path of religion, and begins to give up sins as well as doing good deeds.

Both reject reason but Kierkegaard rejects general and philosophical reason; he is moral and believes in argumentation. Although Ibn Arabi does not reject both reasons, he regards reason in the position of understanding, not as a tool for understanding because human reason, in the position of understanding, is a tool for understanding the essence of God along with sense, intuition and thinking; it is also used for objective and deduction and reasoning of scientific principles.

Rejecting reason, moralities, and scientific principles as well as criticizing history, Kierkegaard criticizes objective history of Christianity that considers the Jesus Christ as a scientific and historical object, which has been occurred once in history. Since timing the history of Christianity is a problem in true Christianity, and (in the ideas of Kierkegaard) God has manifested Himself through advent and incarnation of Christ and he uses Jesus to practice His sin and punishment through Jesus, it is in fact sin of Adam. In this manner, Jesus is God, he manifested himself in the appearance of Jesus, and he went to permanent secrecy after the ascension of Christ. Thus, the objective and historical criticism undermines Christianity because a true Christian is the person who chooses freely and fairly. The selection is against absolute You and choice in an eternal infinity. Repentant of sin is manifested objectively in all individuals. Absolute You is in an opposite position that reflects sin and guilty as well as sense of responsibility and remorse. Thus, it is the absolute selection of absolute through an existed person and human existence.

Kierkegaard regards morality not due to itself, which is a stage of having existence, but due to understanding morality and moral life as the fact that deprives man from having existence. It has deprived man from having true existence. In this regard, he has no happy life. A universal determines an individual through a duty, in accordance with the prescribed and predetermined rules; hence, it is regarded religious and legitimized due to observing duty and acting according to law while a person is realized in the existence of his self and in moving away from moral principles.

For Kierkegaard, objective and scientific principles are rational and macrocosmic; they are examined in the field of science and material subjects and they cannot be measured through the standards of faith. Science claims that it can understand everything by reducing everything to Aristotelian and rational doctrines. Rejecting Hegelian rationality as well as philosophical reason, Kierkegaard paves the way for the status of meta-religion or paradoxical faith.

By rejecting reason (subjective reason), Muhyiddin regards instrumental reason to understand divine and religious orders and finally introduces to accept epiphany manifestation, and acceptance capability for manifestation of attributes and divine names. In fact, Muhyiddin regards heart as the base rather than reason. Then, he introduces the model for praying God; they are set in the heart of the Prophet due to the prophet, religious orders, and names of Allah. Using fancy, he observes Truth not in appearances but in the existence of world and selves; appearance if the manifestation of God in them; accordingly, heart employs the affirmation of Truth and affirmative knowledge on the one hand and observes the inner orders and divine secrets in himself by fancy.

Conclusion

Ibn Arabi regards faith as an affirmative doctrine that is both external and eternal. It is an affirmative passage; in its absence, knowledge (in presence or acquired) is not possible. It is a difficult path. Therefore, a believer in Allah should have internal and external readiness.

Soren Kierkegaard regards faith as an objective infinite enthusiasm against God by selecting possible and paradoxical issues for eternity.

The spiritual aspect of an existential person selects and is selected. Both mystics insist on spiritual journey as the source of movement. Both return to worldly affairs. Both see man in the heaven, one by existence and selective choices. However, man remains by his internal knowledge; it determines to be present in horizons, habits, or dark solitude of his own cave. We are seeker to accept that we are human beings and we are responsible for our selections.

In Kierkegaardian mysticism, he believes that God appears in the realm of faith; it has the capability to be Kierkegaard. In mystical ideas of Ibn Arabi, direct and immediate presence of God is indeed understood God by His attributes and names.

Ultimately, Kierkegaard disagrees the hierarchy of existence but Ibn Arabi agrees the manifestations of names and attributes in the form of forms and multiple worlds.

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