

A MUSLIM AND A FEMINIST¹

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Abstract: This article attempts to deconstruct the concept of ‘woman’ in the thought of the Muslim fuqaha (religious male scholars). Along with showing the limits and contradictions of their traditional misogynistic approach, I suggest a new approach which rehabilitates the feminine in Islam and rehabilitates the human person in all its dimensions. By extending religion to the realm of faith, swerving from the literal to the symbolic, and transcending from the legal to the spiritual, the status of woman in Islam appears under a new face.

Keywords: Interpretation, new approach, misogyny, Islam, fuqaha (male jurists), spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

Whenever I mention in my lectures that a person can be both Muslim and feminist, I sense question marks, and even astonishment, on the faces of my audiences. The common widespread representations of Islam vehicle the idea that this religion gives preference to men over women in legislation and legal dealings, but not in the *'Ibādāt* (worship). It may not be ‘preference’ in the prevailing sense of the term, but a fundamental discrimination; don’t men have a *'daraja'* (degree, step) over women?

ولهنّ مثل الذي عليهنّ بالمعروف وللرجال عليهنّ درجة (سورة البقرة، الآية 228).

(And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise (al-Baqarah Surah, Verse 228).²

¹This article was translated from Arabic into English by Fatima Sadiqi.

² Source of translation:

<https://www.alro7.net/ayaq.php?sourid=2&aya=228&langg=english&lang.x=-875&lang.y=-23&lang=english>. Accessed January 12, 2021.

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The issue here is that most people read the relationship between men and women from a modern perspective, that is the perspective of Human Rights, which is based on equality between men and women. Many are ignorant that the concept of 'Woman' as an independent being with rights is a concept that was brought about by modernity. Up to the 1960s of the last century, (and even today in some human groups, communities, and among specific individuals), the 'man' is the prototype of 'human being' in the general collective imagery. This concept of 'prototype' is important in the discipline of Prototype Linguistics, which asserts that a prototype is the most representative of its group. For example, when we talk about a group of birds, the nightingale is closer to the prototype than the penguin, and when we talk about a group of chairs, the traditional four-legged chair is closer to the prototype than a chair designed in a modern style, which may be a chair without legs to start with, and so forth. And when we talk about the concept of *insān* (person), we need to remind ourselves that until recently, this concept referred 'man/male,' considered the model/prototype of the human species. It is not a coincidence that the French language uses the same term, 'homme,' to refer to both 'person' and 'male,' and tries to distinguish between the two terms by the use of the capital letter 'H' for 'person' and the small letter 'h' for 'man.' We can go further than this and assert that historically, the prototype of 'human being' is the free white man, as the Black man, the slave, belonged to a second category, and the child, just like the woman, does not represent an independent category. Rather, the woman and the child are both dependent on the man, and this is not a characteristic of the so-called Islamic world; it is a representation that has filtered the collective human imagery and applies to all people. The concept of 'independent woman,' free from subordination to men, appeared only recently and after many struggles.

Today, when we say that a person can be both feminist and Muslim, it is logical that some people are astonished because the combination of the two qualifications is not possible from the perspective of medieval *fuqaha* (religious jurists/scholars), but the combination of the two is possible within an illuminative reading of Islam. I will try to provide a brief presentation of the *fuqaha's* image of woman, underlying its paradoxes, then I will present an illuminative reading of women in Islam.

WOMAN IN ISLAM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE *FUQAHA* (ISLAMIC JURISTS)

The *fuqaha* built their image of 'woman' on two premises: as a seductive being and as lacking in reason and religion. Both images have negative semantic connotations.

SEDUCTIVE WOMAN

In formulating the seductive woman image, Islamic jurists relied on a Hadith (a saying of Prophet Muhammad, May Peace Be Upon Him - MPBUH):

ما تركت بعدي فتنة أضّر على الرجال من النساء.

(I have not left after me any (chance) of turmoil more injurious to men than the harm done to the men because of women).

The *fuqaha* consider the seductive woman to own a powerful force which can bring down the strongest men. This power is endowed with a strong negative connotation: it distracts men from God Almighty. Al-Ghazali, a prominent Islamic jurist, asserts that when a woman seduces a man, she drives him away from the straight path, and hence becomes misleading, just like Satan. Thus, just as it is necessary to seek protection from Satan by, for example avoiding him or seeking refuge from him, a man should seek protection from the temptation of a woman. This protection may be achieved in two ways: the veil (hijab) and polygamy.

With respect to the veil, it is a form of clothing that, while defined differently according to various historical periods and in various interpretive (*Tafsir*) books, has one goal: protect men from female seduction. The veil hides the woman's seduction from the man's gaze and deprives her of the weapon that she may use to mislead him. As for polygamy, it also protects the man, but in another way: through sexual diversity, polygamy provides the man with a satisfaction that would neutralize the woman's weapon of seduction, or at least make this weapon effective in a less dangerous way. In this context, jurists cite a Hadith attributed to the Messenger of God - PBUH:

إنّ المرأة إذا أقبلت، أقبلت في صورة شيطان، فإذا رأى أحدكم امرأة فأعجبته، فليأت أهله، فإنّ معها مثل الذي معها.

(Indeed, when a woman enters (your space), she enters in the image of Shaitān - Satan. So, when one of you sees a woman that he is fascinated with, then let him go to his wife, for indeed with her (his wife) is the same as that which is with her) [al-Thirmidhi].

Although this Hadith is categorized as 'weak,' the jurists adhere to it. For them, any 'weapon' that could neutralize or reduce the risk of a woman's seduction is 'desirable' and worthy of inclusion in legislation. Such an overall logic of jurists highlights the veil and polygamy as important means that of protecting the man. The veil protects him in the public

space, and polygamy protects him in the private space. This logic shows that if the sole goal of talking about the woman is to protect the male prototype, then it is logical that the majority of the people interested in the veil and polygamy are men. This matter interests them in spite of the fact that it is 'packaged' as a woman's issue.

THE WOMAN AS DEFICIENT IN REASON

In the first section the woman is presented as possessing negative power. In this section, the woman is presented as marked by weakness, also understood as negative. In the *fuqaha's* perspective, the woman does not leave the negative space. Asserting that women are deficient in reason is not only based on the famous Hadith attributed to the Prophet, but also on the *fuqaha's* various arguments, such as their assertion that a woman's testimony is equivalent to half that of a man.

فإن لم يكونا رجلين، فرجل وامرأة مَمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشَّهَادَةِ (البقرة، 282).

(And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those you accept as witnesses (al-Baqarah Surah, Verse 282).³

Also:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ (النِّسَاءِ، 34).

(Men are the protectors and maintainers of women (al-Nisaa Sura, Verse 34).⁴

Another reason jurists use is the fact that the Prophet PBUH is reported to have uttered in clear words that 'a people will never succeed, who give their leadership to a woman.'⁵

If the veil and polygamy are meant to protect the man from the temptation of the woman, then the exclusion of women from positions of responsibility in the public sphere, such as involving them in public affairs

³ Source of translation:

<https://www.alro7.net/ayaq.php?sourid=2&aya=228&langg=english&lang.x=-875&lang.y=-23&lang=english>. Accessed January 12, 2021. of translation: <http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/translations/english/48.html>. Accessed on January 15, 2021.

⁴ Source of translation: <http://search-the-quran.com/search/4%3A34>. Accessed on January 15, 2021.

⁵ Source of translation <http://qaalarasulallah.com/hadithView.php?ID=32368>. Accessed on January 15, 2021.

is seen as a protection of the community from deficiency in reason and atrophy in wisdom.

Before turning to the glaring errors in these two negative images of women, I would like to point out an important matter: these negative judgments are not rulings of men over women, but judgments that many women hold about themselves. We are here in the presence of what Anna Freud calls 'identification with the aggressor' (Serge 1995, 194). This may be explained by two things: Firstly, a woman who views another woman negatively seeks the consent of the patriarchal community in which she lives. In one way or another, she is saying to society: I am submitting to the negative image that you have of me, and with this submission, I want you to accept me, so that I will not be shunned or singled out like a 'discarded' animal.

Secondly, a woman who views another woman negatively seeks to overcome her unconscious feeling of guilt. In one way or another, she is saying to society: I know that I am a female and that this is an unforgivable sin, but I hope that my inclusion in the female collective representation will intercede for me. We should not forget here that within the collective imagination that the woman is born in, she considers herself a disgrace; and Arabs used to 'wash away' disgrace and shame by burying little girls alive (*wa'd* - infanticide), and when physical infanticide was not possible they had recourse to symbolic infanticide.

The problem is that women who view themselves negatively, and men who hold the same attitude are eschewing two paradoxes in the *fiqhi* system (Islamic jurisprudence). The first paradox maybe expressed by a set of questions: If a man possesses a 'perfect' mind, if he is the 'wise one', the 'provider', 'the one whose testimony does not require another man's protection, if the man has this mental and psychological strength, how can a simple woman shake his 'throne' by her seductiveness? Is the man strong or weak? Or is he strong or weak according to the whim of the *fuqaha* in demeaning women?

The second paradox may also be expressed by a set of questions: If the woman has such a deficiency in reason and such atrophy in wisdom, how can we then explain the supreme value that the mother is given in the Muslim culture? Isn't the mother a woman before being a mother? Or is there a strange hormone that transforms the woman from the state of a despised/jaundiced/subordinated femaleness to that of a prestigious/outstanding masculinity that forces obedience to her and assigns her the task of raising the children of the 'Umma' (nation) and even puts paradise under her feet?

WOMAN IN ISLAM FROM A SPIRITUAL
ENLIGHTENING PERSPECTIVE

The reading presented in this section is an alternative symbolic interpretation of Islamic scriptures. The difference between my reading and that of the jurists is that whereas theirs is presented as the only truth in spite of its glaring misogyny, I present my reading as a possible human symbolic reading that starts from the following verse:

وما يعلم تأويله إلا الله (سورة آل عمران، آية 7).

(And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah (al-'Imran Surah, Verse 7)).⁶

According to this verse, interpreters are supposed to adopt a great deal of humility towards the various degrees of reading, explaining, and interpreting the holy texts.

Before I present my reading of the image of woman in Islam from a spiritual perspective, I will unpack the *fuqaha's* (jurists') reading and show its limits and some of its errors. With regard to the first image, that is, the seductive woman, I see that the exaggeration in presenting the danger of the seductive woman is based on the theory of Creation because the jurists assert that Hawwa (Eve, the woman) is the one who fascinated Adam (the man), and, by asking him to eat from the forbidden tree, she caused his expulsion from Paradise. What is strange about this story is the fact that while it is cited in the Gospels, it is completely absent in the Qur'an. It is true that there is a Hadith about a forbidden tree, but nowhere in the Qur'an can one find an indication that the woman was the one who tempted Adam to eat from the fruit of the tree. The Qur'an affirms that both the man and the woman were wrong and misled by Satan:

"فأزلهما الشيطان عنها" (البقرة، 36).

(But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] (al-Baqarah, 36)).⁷

Rather, the act of repentance is assigned to Adam alone:

⁶ Source of translation: <https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-ali-imran-7-qs-3-7-in-arabic-and-english-translation>. Accessed on January 16, 2021.

⁷Source of translation: <https://www.al-quran.cc/quran-translation/english/al-baqara/36.html>. Accessed on January 16, 2021.

"فتلقى آدم من ربه كلمات فتاب عليه" (البقرة، 37).

(Then Adam learnt certain words from his God, who forgave him (al-Baqarah, 37)).

On the other hand, the *fitnah* (dangerous seduction), which the jurists consider a negative feature of the woman, is not specific to her. We should not forget that Yusuf (Joseph) seduced (*fatana*) al-'Aziz' wife, who fell in love with him. While this love is rejected, it is not because seduction in itself is an objectionable thing, but because Yusuf is, at the symbolic level, the son of al-'Aziz' wife:

وقال الذي اشتراه من مصر لامراته أكرمي مثواه عسى أن ينفعنا أو نتخذه ولدا (يوسف، 21).

(And he (the man) from Egypt, who bought him, said to his wife: Allah mentions the favors that He granted Yusuf, peace be on him, by which he made the man from Egypt who bought him, take care of him with a comfortable life. He also ordered his wife to be kind to Yusuf and had good hopes for his future, because of his firm righteous behavior. Make his stay comfortable, maybe he will profit us, or we shall adopt him as a son (Yusuf Surah, 21).⁸

No stronger evidence for this can be given than the fact that many stories indicate that al-'Aziz' wife married Yusuf after the issue of the assumed symbolic affiliation was excluded.

Fitnah is not reprehensible in itself, but only from the perspective of the *fuqaha*. Indeed, the Prophet PBUH said in a famous Hadith:

حَبَّبَ إِلَيَّ مِنَ دُنْيَاكُمْ الطَّيِّبَ وَالنِّسَاءَ، وَجَعَلَتْ قَرَّةَ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ.

(Allah made me love perfume and women, and I made prayer my best).

This Hadith clearly combines the pleasures of the senses and those of the soul, and this is what disturbed many Hadith translators, who substituted the conjunctive element 'و' (and) with the disjunctive element 'لكن' (but) adhering to a correspondence/coincidence between the sensual and the spiritual, while the sensual seduction is meant to be a gift or a blessing. In this conception, the woman does not distract the man from God Almighty; rather, the *fitnah*, whether coming from a man or from a woman, reflects the blessings of God Almighty, and this discards the veil and polygamy as protections of the man from the woman danger. It discards

⁸Source of translation: <https://quranopedia.com/quran/12vs21>. <https://www.al-quran.cc/quran-translation/english/al-baqara/36.html>. Accessed on January 16, 2021.

them ontologically because desire pertains to the desiring being, not to the object of desire that the *fuqaha* see as responsible for misguidance and corruption. I quickly point out here that the two issues of the veil and polygamy, while they are overlooked ontologically at this level, they are also subject to critique at the interpretational level. As I have discussed this in many writings, I will only underline that the veil was mentioned only twice in the Qur'an. The first time when God Almighty says:

"وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُلِمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ..." (الشورى 51/42).

(It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise).⁹

The second time when God Almighty says:

...وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ... (الأحزاب 33/33).

(And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs (al-Ahzab 33/53)).¹⁰

In the first context, 'hijab' has nothing to do with dress. As for the second context, 'hijab' is a specific matter to the wives of the Prophet PBUH. Likewise, dress was invoked twice. The first one when God Almighty says:

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا" (الأحزاب 59/33).

(O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. (al-Ahzab 33/59)).¹¹

⁹ Source of translation:

<https://www.alro7.net/ayaq.php?sourid=42&aya=51&langg=english&lang.x=-875&lang.y=-23&lang=english>. Accessed on January 16, 2021.

¹⁰ Source of translation: <https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-ahzab-59-qs-33-59-in-arabic-and-english-translation>; Accessed on January 16, 2021.

¹¹ Source of translation: <https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-ahzab-59-qs-33-59-in-arabic-and-english-translation>; Accessed on January 16, 2021.

Many authoritative commentators have proved that the command to wear ‘jilbabs’ (long garments) is specific to free women and is a way of distinguishing them from female slaves. The society of that time allowed slave molestation and did not allow the molestation of free women. The ‘lowering’ of the cloth here has only a discriminatory function, a function that lost its value with the abolition of slavery. As for the second context, which dress is invoked, it is mentioned in al-Nour Surah, in which God Almighty says:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَعْضُنَّ مِنْ أَنْبَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَأَبْصُرْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ. (التور 31/24).

(And say to the believing women, that they lower their gaze, cast down their eyes and guard their chastity, and do not reveal their adornment except that which is outward (face and hands); and let them draw their veils over their neck, and not reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands’ fathers, or their sons, or their husbands’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or what their right hands own, or such male attendants having no sexual desire, or children who have not yet attained knowledge of women’s private parts; nor let them stamp their feet, so their hidden ornament is known. And, O believers, turn to Allah all together, in order that you prosper (al-Nour, 31/24)).¹²

This verse only asks to lower down the ‘*khimār*’ (clothing) on a woman’s *juyūb* (pockets); it does not ask that women wear the ‘*khimar*.’ Also, it is relevant to note here that the root {kh, m, r} originally refers to what is completely coverable and not what covers the head only. This is corroborated by a Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad PBUH asks one of his Companions (sahaba) to cover his thigh by saying:

خمر فخذك.

(Cover your thigh).

As for the *jīb* (singular of *juyūb* – pocket), it semantically means ‘opening’ and is apparently a term used in the verse to denote an ‘opening’ or

¹² Source of translation:

<http://parsquran.com/data/show.php?sura=24&ayat=31&user=eng&lang=eng>.
Accessed January 16, 2021.

'cut' in a woman's garment, whether at the level of the arms or any other place in the cloth.

If we assume that 'khimār' in its idiomatic meaning in the verse, refers to the covering of the head, then this meaning must be widespread at that time. In this case, the command in the verse is not about covering the head, but about covering the *ju'yūb* (openings in the garment). And if we recall that one of the customs relating to women in *al-Jāhiliyyah* (pre-Islamic era) was to leave their bosoms uncovered, then the meaning of the verse is that women should cover their bosoms (breasts). Nowhere in the text is hair mentioned, and no reference is at all made to the concept of *fitnah* (seduction).

If we come to the second stigma of a woman, that is, deficiency in reason, we will realize that Qur'an's requirement of two testimonies from two women in court does not necessarily demean women; it may rather be read as a way of including as many women as possible in public affairs and issues. This is what a difference between a traditional reading, like al-Razi,' and a modern reading, like In Ashour's, exemplify. While al-Razi reads the requirement of the testimonies of two women on the basis of a woman's core biological characteristics by stating:

والمعنى أن التسيان غالب طباع النساء لكثرة البرد والرطوبة في أمزجتهن.

(The meaning is that forgetfulness is prevalent in women's temperament because of the great amount of 'moisture' and 'cold' in their moods).

On the other hand, Ibn Ashour indicates that the purpose of stipulating two women is to accustom women to dealing with public affairs as they were excluded from such dealings in the pre-Islamic era. As such, for example, twenty women, instead of ten, would participate in public affairs.

What remains is *Qiwāmah* (men's authority over women), which some consider as proof of men's preference over women. The concept of *Qiwāmah* is linked to *infāq* (provision for):

"الرجال قوامون على النساء بما فضل الله بعضهم على بعض وبما أنفقوا من أموالهم." (النساء، 34).

(Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property (al-Nisaa, 34)).¹³

¹³Source of translation:

<http://www.alfanous.org/en/translation/?query=lang:en%20AND%20gid:527>. Accessed January 17, 2021.

A husband's spending on his wife was a necessity in ancient societies in which most women were not working outside home for money. Have things changed today in many modern societies? Isn't forcing a husband to spend on his wife in case the latter does not have a job, one means of protecting the wife in the event of childbirth and reproduction, for example? More importantly, the verse does not at all assert the preference of a gender over the other on the basis of belonging to that gender; rather, it makes some people, men or women, better than others according to their operability in specific circumstances. Additionally, *Qiwāmah* is conditional on spending money. Thus, in the absence of provision, that is if spending is provided by both spouses, as is the case of many families today, then the concept of *Qiwāmah* loses its legal force.

If we now consider the Hadith attributed to Prophet Muhammad

لن يفلح قوم ولّوا أمرهم امرأة .

(A people who make a woman their ruler will never be successful).¹⁴

In addition to being a suspected Hadith as Fatima Mernissi asserts in her book *le Harem politique* (Mernissi 1987), this Hadith is linked to a historical context in which the Kisra's (Persian ruler) daughter was assuming power in Persia; it is a Hadith that is connected to a specific historical context and does not extend to all women; rather, it refers to a specific context characterized by a woman's hostility to Muslims. Based on this, we can see the *fuqaha's* eagerness to read the image of woman in Islam in a negative way and realize that the negative qualifications they attributed to women were wrong.

Against this reality, I would like to present a different reading characterized by symbolism and spirituality, with the aim of departing from the ideological struggle over the lexical or historical meanings of terms. My goal is to open new horizons for another approach, not to the relationship of woman to man, but to the relationship of the feminine to the masculine. These are two psychological categories that qualify men and women and that are embodied in different cultures, as in the distinction between the Ying and the Yang in oriental cultures.

While the masculine is constructed in positive verbal signifiers in the sense of Lacan's (Lacan 1975, 97) psychological analysis, the feminine is

¹⁴ Source of translation: <https://sunnah.com/bulugh/14/13>. Accessed on January 17, 2021.

constructed in the absence of a signifier. Furthermore, whereas the masculine embodies action, the feminine embodies emotional reaction. Additionally, whereas the masculine falls in the dimension of reason, the feminine falls in the dimension of desire. Indeed, masculine law is based on subtle elements that fill its contents, whereas feminine desire opens up into a void. Lacanian psychological analysis asserts that the masculine is subject to the logic of the group, whereas the feminine emanates from the individual. This is shown in the following table:

Masculine	Feminine
Action	Reaction
Reason	Desire
Speech	Silence
Group	Individual
Religion	Faith

Based on the above table and on the symbolic dimensions of the masculine and the feminine, one can give a different reading of, for example, *Qiwāmah*, so that it is not a preference *Qiwāmah*, as conceived by the *fuqaha*, but a symbolic *Qiwāmah* of the masculine over the feminine, such that the father (or whoever represents him, and this person may be a woman) is the one who puts an end to the relationship of absolute desire between the child and his/her mother. This is the concept of the father, not the name of the father in psychological analysis. We are not here in the domain of preferring the masculine over the feminine, but rather in the domain of including both of them at a level of human psychology.

If we go back to what was mentioned previously about woman being deficient in reason within the meanings in above table of what counts as masculine and what counts as feminine, we will realize that the masculine is closer to reason because it resides in the law space that separates the woman and her child. As for the feminine, it embodies the mother's desire for her child. However, this desire goes beyond its object as it opens up on what cannot be obtained. Indeed, whenever a person attains a goal, another goal opens up in front of them, and there is no goal that satisfies the original humans' lack of something, and that is the place of feminine desire in us. In addition, because of its relation to law and reason, the masculine is at the core of the collective group. We should not forget the role of the concept of the group in designing and framing the masculine. What is referred to as the 'phallic function' is said to be part of the collective symbolic groups. According to Miller (1987, 67):

All organizations and all large groupings, such as political parties, armies, and churches, are primarily male groups.

On the other hand, the feminine belongs to the domain of the individual because it is not accountable to the logic of the group and is determined only by an infinite number of individuals. This initial dichotomy between the masculine and the feminine allows us to approach a second dichotomy that results from it: the dichotomy between religion and faith. We know that religion does not exist without the institutions that symbolize it, and regardless of the number of religions that are related to these institutions, the churches and their clergies, the 'hasba' and its men remain hierarchical systems based on a combination of hierarchical phallic values, such as: teacher/novice, judgment/submission, and so forth, as well as to a set of canons, rituals, and so on. Religion derives from the idea of a group, and all religious rituals and the concept of 'holy jihād' against 'the others,' is but a deepening of the idea of belonging to a particular group or collective gathering. On the other hand, faith is a personal and purely individual belief. As such, faith does not need collective institutional structures, and just as religion is a social affiliation, faith is a 'heart' affiliation. A result of this is a person's ability to choose a specific religion, or to decide to convert from one religion to another; but this is not applicable to faith. Faith does not depend on a decision or any implementation of reason. We do not rationally decide to fully depend on God, just as we do not decide overnight to reach a state of inner peace. And just as religion 'moves/navigates/is used in' the space of action, since it is a voluntary choice, faith moves in the field of emotion because, from the perspective of psychological analysis, it is a gift from 'the other.' When we remember that the theories of psychological analysis, especially Freud's, attribute the nature of 'action' to the masculine and the nature of 'emotion' to the feminine, we find ourselves once again in front of another aspect of bisexuality. This may help us understand the Prophet's Hadith that women are deficient in religion, not as a disparagement of woman from a purely normative point of view, but as an aspect of the solid relationship between woman and faith. Women are deficient in religion, but they have excess in faith.

The masculine and the feminine are embodied in human beings, whether men or women, as they are a dichotomy between the I-subject, the Conscious, and the masculine, and the object-emotional, the Unconscious, and the feminine. The same duality is embodied in the dichotomy between reality, as a perceived external entity, and the real or the truth as a felt internal revelation. In fact, the difference between the worlds of wakefulness and dreams can also be approached according to the male and female dichotomy.

The masculine and the feminine are two elements that design people's lives, and there is no preference of one over the other. When we, for example, say that 'action' is masculine, and that the result of action (which is emotion) is feminine, we cannot separate one from the other, let alone prefer one over the other. When we use this perspective to read the history of Islamic theology, we see that the *fuqaha* never left the realm of religion. They are the guarantors of the religious institutions that they represent, and they adopt collective perceptions of religious affairs in their methods of handling different and controversial issues. They give utmost priority to rituals and rulings, and hence, their pleasure is a social pleasure that celebrates symbols; that is, it is a phallic pleasure. Conversely, Muslim mystics are located within the faith realm, and by revering the personal experience and by refraining from participating in the social rituals, as well as their enjoyment of longing for 'union' solutions and infinity, their pleasure is different from the symbolic or phallic pleasure. Their pleasure is an additional enjoyment (*jouissance*), which is similar to feminine pleasure. This pleasure is impossible to express or bring to the real. It is a pleasure embodied in al-Naffārī's famous expression (Al-Naffārī 1985).

كلما اتسعت الرؤية ضاقت العبارة.

(The wider the vision the narrower the expression).

Feminine pleasure, which is not transmittable, is not limited to Muslim Sufis only, but is felt by Sufis, whether Muslim or not. Lacan introduced the concept of feminine pleasure in his lecture 'Another time again,' and on the basis of his observation of Saint Theresa Davilla's behavior, he said: "Do you see what she was enjoying? It seems clear to me that the core testimony resides precisely in their assertion that they really experienced pleasure, but without knowing anything about it."

It is perhaps the victory of the jurists (*fuqaha*) over the Sufis in the history of Muslims that explains the dominance of the masculine over the feminine. This explains the fact that the flat/literal textual reading of the Qur'an and Islam in general was predominantly common, while the doors of the symbolic, enlightening, and spiritual reading were closed. And while I basically adopted a psychological analysis in my symbolic reading of the feminine and the masculine, the reading of the Qur'an and Islam in general is open to infinite possibilities that can lead to a reconsideration of the image of woman in Islam and the value of the feminine in it. So, can the emergence of Islam from the yoke of an exclusive, and sometimes extremist *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), be attained through a rehabilitation of the feminine and the female?

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