Mystic Mythopoiesis of Pre-Islamic Arabic Odes

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Qaṣīdas, the Pre-Islamic Arabic odes, were for years regarded as a model of ideal excellence in Arabic poetry, rhetoric and a way of innermost expression of pure Arabic mind. Poems, made up from several rigorously defined elements, although the definition of poem came up retrospectively, i.e. the clarified form the times of ʻAbbāsid dynasty (750–1258 AD) was imposed on earlier spoken poetry when writing it down, were constructed to specific purposes connected with cyclic tribe-life in desert. Such poetical constructs with repeated motifs from a closed catalogue, which start with a description of an abandoned camp and regret of the parted beloved and end with complaints of the poet's fate, self-appraisal, shedding tears for fallen tribe members or satire on the enemy tribe, should be read as a cosmological or cosmogonical text. The mythical basement of the Pre-Islamic Arabic odes could be traced when using mythopoiesis, a linguistic expression which interprets the reality according to a mythical basis which is not subdued to the rules of logic analysis and description. While the Western philosophical tradition defines cognition as a line from objective, scientific discourse/logos to immanent, allegoric mythos, the set of motifs in Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and images is pluralistic, incoherent, not reducible to objective-scientific terms – hence, possible to be described only by means of mythopoiesis, the form of language that corresponds to the imaginary structure of this poetry.

Reading Pre-Islamic Arabic odes, as traditionally the un-written poetry from 500 to 622 AD is named (i.e. from the times to which the first oral Arabic traditions are traced till Muḥammad's flight from Mecca to Medina, signing the beginning of the Islamic era – the end of the barbarian *ǧāhiliyya*, the epoch of *ignorance*), we cannot escape amazement. Each *bayt* (a line consisting of two almost equal parts) of this poetry seems to build a separate unit. Such "units" merge into a poem rather according to their grammatical structures than content. But even grammatical structures do not develop into a unified text: in a sentence, the performers are not directly named; during the anthrophomorphisation the genera are changed; despite the ignorance to the time

categories, in the description there are used perfectum as well as imperfectum forms of verbs and verbal expressions.

Such poetry should be analyzed with specific means, focusing not only on grammatical and logic structures. *Mythopoiesis* is a language which interprets and forms reality according to a hidden, mythical basement dealing with the "rest" from logical analysis. In the case of Pre-Islamic Arabic odes, their grammatical structure and the limited catalogue of motifs are conditions for their mythopoetical expression.

Mythopoiesis is possible because of the *mimesis* – the basis which overgrows it. Poetical creation always includes both the mentioned elements. If on the line, one end of which is pure imitation (*mimesis*) and the other a pure action of creative imagination (*mythopoiesis*), places of European and Arabic poetries had to be marked, the European would be inevitably placed near *mimesis* and the Arabic next to *mythopoiesis*. The self-intentional mimetical aspect of an artwork, when work is free from "slavery" to myths, is a unique achievement of the Greek thought.

Motifs of Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry – Arabic poetics and poetical practice

Arabic poetics could be in the easiest way characterized as absolutely detached from poetical practice, as it forgets or neglects really created texts. Is there any historic reason for such a proceeding? Arabic poetic theory is focused only on questions of formal expression, including analysis of poetical language into rhetoric chapters of general grammars of Arabic. On the other hand, Arabic poetics is created retrospectively – i.e. when texts of the past are shaped according to the needs of the present codification, which took place during the rule of the ʻAbbāsid dynasty residing in Baghdad (749–1258 AD); this was the time of Islamization, when the non-Muslim cultures were included into the Islamic culture field. That is why the Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry was censored, and the retrospective poetical norms (created as if basing on old texts, idealizing some of their characteristics) were established once and forever.[1]

Poetry is considered to be a rhymed and metrical text; in this formal way it is separated from all other possible ways of speech or text. Metrum separates poetry from

[1] See, R. A. Nicholson, *The Literary History of the Arabs*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995, 71–79; R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1952, 128–55, 357–87; Ch. Pellat, *Langue et littérature arabes*, Paris: Libriarie Armand Colin, 1952, 33–35, 66–85; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Vol. 1, Weimar: Verlag von Emil Felber, 1898, 15–16; G. W. Freytag, *Darstellung der arabischen Verskunst*, Bonn: C. F. Baaden, 1830; T. Kowalski, *Na szlakach islamu*, Kraków: Druk W. L. Anczyna i spółki, 1935, 20–26. И. Ю. Крачковский, "Поэзия по определению арабских критиков", in *Избранные сочинения*, т. 2, Москва, Ленинград: Изд. Акад. Наук СССР, 1956, 52–62, names the following critics and theorists of Arabic poetics: Al-Ḫalīl Ibn Aḥmad, As-Suyūṭi, Ibn Rašīq, Al-ʻAskarī, Ibn al-Aṯīr, Ibn Qutayba, Ibn Ḫaldūn, Qudāma Ibn Ǧaʻfar, Al-Ǧāḥiẓ, Al-Āmidī, As-Sakkākī.

prose, which (like the Koranic) could be rhymed,[2] rhymes separate poetry from the unrhymed one, "white". But the poetic language structure is standardized according to established norms more restrictively than it could seem from formal regulations. Ibn Qutayba (died 889), the author of the *Book of Poetry and Poets*, describes qaṣīda, the most common form of the Pre-Islamic Arabic ode (from the Arabic *qaṣd – aim*; such a poetry is made for a specific purpose: to praise oneself, reject claims or fight with enemies using poetic weapons, etc.):

> I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of Odes began by mentioning the desert dwelling-places and the relics and traces of habitation. Then he wept and complained and addressed the desolate encampment, and begged his companion to make a halt, in order that he might have occasion to speak of those who had once lived there and afterwards departed; for the dwellers in tents were different from townsmen or villagers in respect of coming and going, because they moved from one water-spring to another, seeking pasture and searching out the places where rain had fallen. Then to this he linked the erotic prelude (nasīb), and bewailed the violence of his love and the anguish of separation from his mistress and the extremity of his passion and desire, so as to win the hearts of his hearers and divert the eyes towards him and invite their ears to listen to him, since the song of love touches men' souls and takes hold of their hearts… Now, when the poet had assured himself of an attentive hearing, he followed up his advantage and set forth his claim: thus he went on complain of fatigue and want of sleep and traveling by night and the noonday heat, and how his camel had been reduced to leanness. And when … he knew that he had fully justified his hope and expectation of receiving his due meet from the person to whom the poem was addressed, he entered upon the panegyric (madīḥ), and incited him to reward […].[3]

Motifs, from which as in advanced prepared parts the qaṣīda could be made, are: poet finds on his way rests of a camp where once his beloved or his tribe stayed and remembers past events; his journey after the parted beloved; meeting with her; descriptions of the journey, desert or landscape; the poet complains because of his own fate and talks to the crow of departure; self-appraisal; bacchanal poetry of wine; a cry for fallen family members or heroes; satire on tribe of enemies or revenge.[4] Qaṣīda is a poem constructed on some specific purpose, to which formal stages from a limited catalogue of motifs lead. Such poetical construction could not be incidental; it has nothing in common with the mnemotechnical repetition of epithets in Homer's epos. Repeated motifs root every possible "purpose' of the qaṣīda in a context constituted from the cosmological horizon of the Pre-Islamic Arabic thought.

The formally linguistic turn in Arabic poetics is to be connected with the name of Arabic "sociologist" Ibn Ḫaldūn (1332–1406) who states that poetry is defined basing on three fields of linguistics – grammar (which is concerned with the meaning of

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[2] Nicholson, 1995, 74: Thus it may be taken for certain that the oldest form of poetical speech in Arabia was rhyme without meter (saǧ'), or, as we should say, 'rhymed prose […].'

[3] Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb aš-ši'r wa-ăš-šu'arā'*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1888, 1.10, 14; see, Nicholson, 1995, 77–78.

[4] Б. Я. Шидфар, *Образная система арабской классической литературы (VI–XII вв.)*, Москва: Главная редакция восточной литературы, 1974, 11.

utterance), rhetoric (way of expression) and metric (inner form). In this definition, he deepens the strictly formal definition of poetry and states that it is not a mere form of expression, but precisely the beginning of literature and the very first form of any literary text.[5] Ibn Ḫaldūn strictly differentiates between the poetical and prosaic ways of expression:

> One of them is rhymed poetry. It is speech with metre and rhyme, which means that every line of it ends upon a definite letter, which is called the 'rhyme.' The other branch is prose, that is, nonmetrical speech.[6]

In the following explanation he adds:

> Poetry in Arabic language is remarkable in its matter and powerful in its way. It is speech that is divided into cola having the same metre and held together by the last letter of each colon. […] Each verse, with its combination of words, is by itself a meaningful unit. In a way, it is a statement by itself, and independent of what precedes and what follows.[7]

This formally linguistic definition of poetry, as if springing off from pure poetic praxis, is opposed by philosopher Ibn Sīnā (980–1037), known in Europe as Avicenna, who tries to bring into poetics a psychological element similar to the Greek *catharsis*: "Poetry is a speech directly affecting senses, made from rhymed and systematically repeated feet of equal size with a repeated accent".[8] Explaining the term *directly affecting senses*, he continues: "It is such a speech to which the human soul surrenders and feels pleasure or pain, but without consciousness, thinking or experience; and it surrenders to these influences despite the factual truth or untruth of the uttered".[9]

Shamanic cosmology of Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry

The Arabic word *poet* (*šā'ir*) has to be related with the verb *ša'ara* (which means *to feel, understand through intuition, have intuitional knowledge*). The social function of the Pre-Islamic Arabic poet was to speak out a poem, a result of the whole year (*ḥawliyya*), at the yearly market in 'Ukāẓ near Mecca. The functions of Pre-Islamic Arabic poets and their sources of inspiration are clearly marked with a shamanic sign, whereas a limited number of poetic motifs builds a specific treasure of the Arabic mythopoetical lexis.

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[5] "The Arabs originally had only poetry which they appreciated very high. It was distinguished in their speech by a certain nobility, because it alone possessed harmony. They made poetry the archive of their history, their wisdom, and their nobility, and the touchstone of their natural gift for expressing themselves correctly, choosing the best mode (of expression)." (Ibn Khâldun, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, 5:31, 330).

[6] Ibid., 6:52, 443.

[7] Ibn Khâldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 6:54, 444.

[8] Крачковский, 1956, 61.

[9] Ibid., 61.

Poet is only one of the true shaman's (*kāhin*) duties, but when to the poetic talent the faculties of prophesy are added the poet becomes a shaman in the real sense of this word, hence also a concurrent to the Prophet, a slave of heretics and demons. It is not astonishing that such practices are strictly forbidden in Koran (sūra's XXXVI.69, XXI.5, XXVI.224–226), while the Prophet himself constantly repeats that he is not a poet.[10]

In Pre-Islamic Arabic odes, descriptions of shamanic initiations such as ritual death and re-birth, shamanic dream vision are very frequent (in the mu'allaqa of Ṭarafa Ibn al-'Abd, bayt 12, a she-camel, the guide of the "mystical" journey of poet, is compared to boards of a coffin;[11] this confusing comparison becomes clear in the context of shamanic sacrifice and re-birth). Incubational rites, associated with dreams, generally take place near graves. Often a female ghost-patron of the poet could be related to the motif of *ḥayāl* (or *ṭayf*) in Arabic poetry: during the time when the poet spends a night near the remnants of an abandoned camp, in his dream vision the parted beloved appears. From Pre-Islamic to Umayyad poetry (dynasty that ruled in the years 660–749 AD) the meaning of this motif changes (from apparition to nightmare, pleasant dream vision, etc.), but the situation presented in the lyric introduction of the ode (*nasīb*) is always connected with an unclear dream. As Ibn Ḫaldūn states: "Evident dream visions are from God. Allegorical dream visions, which require interpretation, are from angels. But "confused dreams" come from Satan, because they are useless, and Satan is the spring of uselessness".[12]

Arab poets do not only spend nights and dream near rests of camps or graves, but also try to ask them questions, to which birds answer.[13] Such motifs appear in the selection of poetry of already mentioned Ṭarafa,[14] as well as in qaṣīdas of other

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[10] Ibn Ḫaldūn marks: "(The mind) by its nature is not able to apprehend (supersensual things). When this weakness hinders to it (to apprehend supersensual things), it naturally inclines towards sensual or supersensual fragments, such as transparent (glass) things, bones of animals, rhymed prose speech or apparition of any bird or animal, because from their help and support the aimed supersensual cognition is determined." (Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Muqaddima*, Bayrūt: Al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1957, 1:361).

[11] The ode of Ṭarafa is one of *mu'allaqāt* (seven or ten best Pre-Islamic Arabic odes, chosen in special selections, two the most complete of which – prepared by At-Tibrīzī and Az-Zawzanī – are used as a standard for analysis of Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry); see, At-Tibrīzī, *Kitābu šarḥi ăl-qaṣā'idi ăl-'ašri* [Book of Commentary on the Ten Qasidas], Calcutta: the Asiatic Society at the Baptist Mission Press, 1894, 33; Az-Zawzanī, *Šarḥu ăl-mu'allaqāt as-sab'* [Commentary of the Seven Mu'allaqas], Beirut, Dār al-Qamūs al-Hadīṯ, s.a., 66; *Dīwān Ṭarafa Ibn al-'Abd* [Selection of Ṭarafa], Beirut, without date of publishing, 22.

[12] Ibn Ḫaldūn, 1957, 369.

[13] M. Dziekan, "Opis opuszczonego obozowiska a kult przodków w poezji staroarabskiej", *Studia arabistyczne i islamistyczne* 1 (1993): 29–30.

[14] *Tará ġuṭwatayni min turābin 'alayhimā ṣafā'iḥu ṣummun min ṣafīḥin munaḍḍadi*
Could you see these two hills moulded of soil,
Over them placed [deaf] monolith stones?
(*Dīwān Ṭarafa Ibn al-'Abd*, 33).

Pre-Islamic poets – Labīd, An-Nābiġa ăḏ-Ḏubyānī, Ḥāriṯ Ibn Ḥilliza;[15] shamanic abilities to become an animal are described in the *nasīb* of ʻAbīd Ibn al-Abraṣ.[16]

Arabic jinns, ġūls and other ghosts, staying in abandoned places, could be defined as patrons of Arabian (later-Muslim) poets; this definition is asserted by an ironical statement of the blind poet Abū ăl-ʻAlā' al-Maʻarrī (973–1058 AD) in his *Tractate on Forgiveness* (*Risalāt al-ġufrān*) that poetry is the field of jinns, where people can achieve only moderate results.[17]

Important roles are given to the horse or other riding animals in the shamanic cults of Central Asia. A second conventional element of qaṣīda (which follows after *nasīb*, the lyric introduction of the poem) is the description of a camel, horse or a journey on such an animal through a desert. Imrū' ăl-Qays describes in his qaṣīda the she-camel, which he himself sacrificed to frozen girls.[18] The motif of animal hunting and killing is frequent in other Pre-Islamic odes (An-Nābiġa ăḏ-rubyānī, Labīd, ʻAbīd Ibn al-Abraṣ).[19] Muḥammad himself had traveled from Medina to Jerusalem, and from there to the seventh heaven on a horse named *al-Burāq* (*the Shining*), which in popular tradition is imagined as having a female head and a peacock tail.

Constancy of poetry motifs in the literary consciousness of Arabs

Nasīb, the most "frozen" and constant through ages part of the ode, could also be read as a cosmological or cosmogonical text, what a detailed analysis of Ṭarafa's qasida proves. It starts:

(1) There are traces yet of Khaula in the stony tract of Thahmad
Apparent like the tattoo-marks seen on the back of a hand;
(2) there are my companions halted their beasts awhile over me
saying, 'Don't perish of sorrow; bear it with fortitude!'[20]

Crossing a desert, the poet halts at the Tahmad hill, where once his beloved Hawla camped, and sheds tears as if offering them to the spirits of ancients. Journey in the qasida's structure is the motif which indicates parallels between macro- and

[15] At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 69, 152, 126.
[16] Ibid., 159.
[17] Abū ăl-ʻAlā' al-Maʻarrī, *Risalāt al-ġufrān*, Beirut: Dār wa Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1988, 174–175.
[18] According the commentary of At-Tibrīzī, the poet saw a group of bathing girls, took their clothes and did not give them back until late evening. Girls, who did not want to get out from water nude, became tired and felt cold; therefore the poet killed his she-camel and fed the girls. Those, in their turn, carried his saddle to the nearby camp, throwing at each other pieces of meat and fat, which looked like a material of particular kind (At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 8–9).
[19] Ibid., 69, 152, 126, 159.
[20] A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957, 83. Arabic, see, At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 30, Az-Zawzanī, s.a., 61–62.

micro-worlds. Journey as a line of events defines the time of a story. Seafaring and ship metaphors from Koran have to be related with the two following contexts: Koranic history of flood and Noah's ark (indicated by the Arabic word *fulk* – the ark) and a direct intervention of God, His mercy on the road of necessary adventures to forgiveness (this motif became of extreme importance in Muslim mystic literature).[21] In Ṭarafa's qaṣīda, the journey is made up from a comparison chain:

> (3) The litters of the Máliki camels that morning in the broad
> watercourse of Wadi Dad were like great scooner
> (4) from Adauli, or the vessels of Ibn-i Yámin
> their mariners steer now tack by tack, now straight forward;
> (5) their prows cleave the streaks of the rippling water
> just as a boy playing will scoop the sand into parcels.[22]

Here the world is created during a mythical seafaring – mercy of God (mentioned in Koran and texts of mystics), when sea waves are subdued to man, and dangers of journey, such as evolving a hazardous *fiyāl* game (in English translation – to *scoop the sand in parcels*), when players are looking for the hidden object in sand, dividing it into parcels – all these life pains indicate problems in the time mechanism, as if the structure of the world puts the hero to a trial. Metaphors of water and seafaring are very often used in Pre-Islamic odes: the night is described as a huge sea wave that does not give rest from pains until dawn (Imrū' ăl-Qays), a description of journey includes flood of the Euphrates river (An-Nābiġa ăḏ-Ḏubyānī), tears shed at the rest of a camp turn into two springs, streams, waterfalls, rivers ('Abīd Ibn al-Abraṣ).[23] In the shorter variant of Ṭarafa's mu'allaqa, the anonymous commenter relates the water motif with the Biblical story of Noah's pigeon; according to the Arabic version, the pigeon from the ark did not come back to it, and his mother incessantly calls him to return.[24] This motif could also be connected with the shamanic function of the poet, *kāhin*, who, when spending night near an abandoned camp, talks to mute graves. In the text of Koran, which according to the tradition is only at a distance of one generation from re-tellers of Ṭarafa's poems, the motif of water is associated with rain – Allah's generosity, flood after long rain and a direct proof of the Almighty when the storming see is calmed (echoes of Biblical stories).[25] A text of the 19th century Egyptian mystic Niffari proves the constancy of ship and a dangerous seafaring symbolism. The passenger, aiming to a safe harbor, has to surrender to the Almighty, because Allah now drives the ship, which in Ṭarafa's qaṣīda is guided by a man, forward:

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[21] В. В. Бартольд, "Коран и море", in *Сочинения*, том 6: Работы по истории ислама и арабского халифата, Москва: Наука, 1966, 544–548.

[22] At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 30–31; Az-Zawzanī, s.a., 62–63.

[23] At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 153, 157, 160.

[24] "He does not recognize me, when I ask for help, / As incessantly calling the un-replying pigeon" (*Diwān Ṭarafa*, bayt 14, 75).

[25] *Al-Qur'ān*, Medina, 1993, X.24, 211, XVI.14, 268, XVII.68, 279, XXI.63, 339, XXIV.40, 355, XXXI.31, 414, XXXVI.41–44, 443.

> God told me to look to the sea, and I saw drowning ships and emerging boards; later boards also drowned. He told me: "Who travels, will not escape." He told me: "Those, who instead of journey have thrown themselves into sea, are risking." He told me: "Those, who travel and do not risk, will be dead". He told me: "Risk is a part of escape". There came a wave, lifting those, who already were under it, and throwing them on the shore. He told me: "The surface of sea is unreachable reflection, its depth – obscure darkness. Between the two there are frightening fishes. Do not travel through sea, when you force me to secure you on ship, and do not dive into sea, when you force me to secure your dive".[26]

The metaphor of a journey, grown out into a huge dialogue, relates the Koranic motifs of divine mercy and a direct intervention into everyday human affairs with an illogical motif of sea understood as a fatum, good or bad fate, which is chosen by the human being of his own free will. This mystic story of Niffari could also be associated with the already mentioned Ṭarafa's bayt about ships which "now tack by tack, now straight forward" lead the hero after his departed beloved. The fatalism of Ṭarafa's journey becomes in the mystic text a play of fortune.

The dynamic of the macro-cosmos in Ṭarafa's mu'allaqa is spoken out as a strict ordering of four elements:

> (6) A young gazelle is in the tribe, dark-lipped, fruit-shaking,
> flaunting a double necklace of pearls and topazes,
> (7) holding aloof, with the herd grazing in the lush thicket,
> nibbling the tips of the arak-fruit, wrapped in her cloak.[27]

The description of the beloved melts under adjectives of a gazelle; the main elements of the world are ordered as follows: (not mentioned) beloved – gazelle – eating fruits of arak which resemble to two necklaces from precious stones: white fruits – to pearls, green leaves – to chrizolites (topazes in English translation).

Azīz ad-Dīn Nasafī, a Persian mystic from the 13th c., trying to distinguish characteristics of a perfect man, sorts out four elements of the created world – here the Zoroastrian myth of Gayomarth, who together with his Mother and five main elements (water, fire, earth, air and ether) is told to be the first, which means perfect, being, is melted with the Jewish mystic history of Adam Kadmos, where seduced by imperfect beings, Adam lost his immortality and "wife" Lilith. According to Nasafī, the world was created from the simplest up to the most complex and perfect elements – from minerals to plants, animals and human beings. Similar elements build the human spirit – the plant soul rest in the liver, animal – in the heart, human (the rational one) – in the brain. Man, the most perfect of divine creations, is at the same time a kind of microcosmos, in which all parts of the outside world participate. Avicenna in *The Book of Healing* similarly, in an Aristotelian way, relates the world and the human structures:

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[26] R. A. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966, 74–76.
[27] At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 31; Az-Zawzanī, s.a., 63–64.

> ("The state of plant spirit") At the beginning all elements were mixed in unmovable bodies. This mixture developed and reached a state of balance; in such a way bodies start to grow from nutrition. […] Later the mixture has developed so that there was a possibility for plants. This characteristic is named the plant spirit.[28]

The hierarchy of beings starts from the simplest, formless matter and extends to heavenly bodies, the nature of which is movement or active intellect, directly reflecting the Absolute (one, undividable and perfect being – the first reason of the world and its mover). Man is built up from all the elements of the created world; life, however, starts because of the influence of heavenly bodies. Soul, the basis of life, has emanated from the active intellect which in the sublunary world together with *the giver of forms* (*wāhib aṣ-ṣuwar*) becomes the source of life. As already mentioned in the analysis of ship and seafaring motifs, the naming and understanding of the world in Arabic literature continue from the Pre-Islamic to the Islamic thought: the created world is imagined as built from stable, undividable elements as separate kingdoms of nature (similarly the science of biology divides its objects): kingdoms of minerals, plants, animals and human beings.

Such hierarchy of beings, characteristic of hellenizing Arabic philosophy, has also to be associated with emanation theories of Muslim mystics (the world has emanated in a specific order corresponding to the order of elements); the Persian mystic from the 12th c. Farīd ad-Dīn Aṭṭār (ca. 1119–1190/1230?) in his poem *The Book of Nightingale* (*Bulbul-nāme*) describes the beginning of the world:

> In the sea, where he [Mahomet] rear pearl,
> Thousands of ships shake on waves.
> From the sea of His light pearl lifts,
> Overthrowing with pearls every place and every thing.
> From heaven and stars appear
> Plants, elements, animals and men.[29]

According to theory from the 9th c., which mixes Gnostic, Manicheist and Neoplatonic elements (and the influence of which is evident in the above quoted verses), the first emanation of the Absolute was the *light of Mahomet* (*nūr Muḥammadī*). Variants of this theory tell that either the whole world was concentrated in a luminous body which emanated elements of the temporary world (from ears Jews and Christians were brought into being, from legs – minerals, plants and animals, etc.),[30] or *light of Mahomet* is considered to be an active cosmic power which creates the spirit of the world (*Mother of Life*) which, in its turn, initiates four elements, seven heavenly spheres, animals and human beings. This concept forces to look after the first

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[28] Avicenna, *Kitāb aš-šifā'*, Prague: Éditions de l'Académie Tchéchoslovaque des Sciences, II: 1, 53.

[29] Е. Э. Бертельс, *Избранные труды*, т. 3: Суфизм и суфийская литература, Москва: Наука, 1965, 364.

[30] *Asrār al-insān fı ma'rifat ar-Rūḥ wa ăr-Raḥmān*, Djacarta: Diedit oleh Tujiman, 1961, 66–67.

substance, relating in the form of a ladder the transcendental Absolute (which is in Islam abstracted from the sphere of creation) to the sensual world.

The last bayts of Ṭarafa's *nasīb* recapitulate cosmogony, repeating the paired elements of the world:

(8) Her dark lips part in a smile, teeth like a camomile
on a moist hillock shining amid the virgin sands,
(9) whitened as it were by the sun's rays, all but her gums
that are smeared with collyrium – she gnaws not against them;
(10) a face as though the sun had loosed his mantle upon it,
fure of hue, with not a wrinkle to mar it.[31]

Muslim mystics try to sense the Absolute in a personal way – but at the same time religion as an institution could not rely on such contingencies. Mystic experience is identified with trials, risk and defeated fate. The same water motif from qaṣīdas of Ṭarafa or Imrū' ăl-Qays who start their poems with tears and complaints, goes along with images of mystic experiences. The hierarchy of beings, including the abstract hypostasis of God and the individual experience of a particular mystic, becomes within the realm of Islam the only legitimate way to conquer sorrows, which should be felt by Muslims because of the transcendental Creator. The constancy of literary motifs from Pre-Islamic poetry through Koran to Muslim mystic texts contends that shamanic elements of Pre-Islamic Arabic culture became constant structures of the Arabic language, which influence Arabic consciousness despite the context of their use.

Mythopoetical power of the Arabic language versus the European transcendence

The Western philosophical tradition describes cognition as a line bent between two bordering points: a clear, objective and absolute scientific or philosophical discourse (*logos*) and allegorical, subjective and immanent myth. At its birth, Greek philosophy creates myths and tends to scientific cognition of the world. This duality of thought could not be reduced: new ideas frequent appear as myths, later disguised as logic discourse. Such procedure is frequent not only in philosophy, but even in contemporary quantum physics, which inductively creates such impossible objects as the *Schwarzschield sphere* (it is a hypothetical sphere which could not be defined if it existed – the border of a supermassive collapsing star – through which, like through the *event horizon*, no information could penetrate, even the information about the existence of the sphere). Plato, illustrating philosophical theses the existence of which he could not (or was not able to) prove, created the myths of *cavern* and *Atlantida.* As regards their formal and logic construction, they do not differ from the *sphere of Schwarzschield*.

[31] At-Tibrīzī, 1894, 31–32; Az-Zawzanī, s.a., 64–65.

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates argues with sophists and their leader Gorgius, who claim the subjective character of every truth. At the end of the dialogue Socrates explains his own point of view, defining cognition as epistemological realism, when the world of things does not depend upon human senses: "When I perceive I must be percipient of something – there can be no such thing as perceiving and perceiving nothing; the object, whether it becomes sweet, bitter, or of any other quality, must have relation to a percipient; nothing can becomes sweet which is sweet to no one".[32] Later Plato is speaking through lips of Theaetetus about opinions made in judgment: "He said that the true opinion, combined with reason, was knowledge, but that the opinion which had no reason was out of the sphere of knowledge; and that things of which there is no rational account are not knowable […]".[33] At the end Socrates generalizes about the basis of cognition theory: "But he, who having a right opinion about anything can find out the difference which distinguishes it from other things will know that of which before he had only opinion".[34]

Cognition in Western philosophy simplifies things to terms; during this process the subjective field of changes is reduced and the objective absolutism is enlarged. But the reduction of things never proceeds without "rest," such unsimplifiable accidences (or accidental characteristics) build the main epistemological problem to the whole history of Western thought. Such dualism directly influences the language: its functions are scattered between the worlds of *res extensis* and *res inteligibiles*, between science and nature. Poetry and myth, although in the process of cognition connected with logos, could not be absolutely separated from it – as logos is not absolutely independent of myth. Because linguistic experiments could not replace the heuristic method, then, if language is not subdued to cognition, it does not influence it. At the same, poetry becomes autonomous and autotelic activity, which does not open the world of truth, speaks nothing about things or rules them. The functions of language deviate from its shamanic nature, which, besides all other qualities, (intentionally) allows ruling the world of things.

The world of motifs, metaphors and images of Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry is:

1. Pluralistic, multitudinous, consisting of many sensory elements put next to each other (from minerals through plants and animals to man, who at the same time is also a microcosmos, including hierarchically lower elements).
2. Incoherent and incomplete. Separate images put next to each other do not emerge one from another, are not related by the principle of causality; placed in a seemingly timeless environment, they are associated through the sympatical magic and harmony of parallel elements.

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[32] Plato, "Theaetetus", 160 a–b, in *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. 6: Plato, ed. M. J. Adler, Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 1996, 522.
[33] Ibid., 201 c–d, 544.
[34] Ibid., 208 e, 548–549.

3. Not reducable to terms. Elements of the sensed world, which are necessary in the structure of cognition , are not made up into abstractions, but only change their meanings depending on the context.
4. Not free from terms, which form the material world and reflect it (it is a necessary condition of magic).
5. Possible to describe only by *mythopoiesis*, because only this way of expression corresponds to its imaginary structure.

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