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Walayah as a Response to the Self-Other Dichotomy in European Philosophy

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Abstract

For some time there has been a movement to examine cultures from perspectives that challenge the predominant European discourse, which, since the colonial era, has seen 'the Self' (or 'we') as Europeans, and 'the Other' as people from cultures that are not European. Nevertheless, even the more liberal discourses have designated the voice of 'the Other' as 'speaking from the margins to the centre' – 'the centre' being Europe; 'the margins' being outside Europe. This chapter critiques the post-modern approach, as espoused by Fred Dallmayr in his Beyond Orientalism, which posits 'context specificity' as a way of engaging with 'the Muslim Other' while claiming to eliminate any 'hierarchy of power' from either side.

The irony of Dallmayr's approach is that engaging with 'the Muslim Other' without acknowledging the hierarchical structure of both existence and knowledge within Islam means that this relationship is still determined by the asymmetrically weighted paradigm of a horizontal meeting of horizons determined by the ideology of post-modern relativism. The prohibition of hierarchy remains a hierarchically determined condition for the meeting of horizons (a condition determined by the European Self). This chapter proposes *Walayah* as an alternative model to the Self-Other dichotomy. *Walayah* is the basis of engagement, rather than culture, and is inclusive of all human beings. The objective of engagement is not to promote tolerance of different cultures in the secular liberal sense, but 'to come to know one another', as stated in the Qur'an."

Keywords: Islam, *Walayah*, the Other, Orientalism, Europe

1. Dilemmas of the European 'Self' about 'the Other'

For some time in the universities of Europe, there has been a movement to examine history, politics, society, literature, philosophy and religion from perspectives that challenge the predominant European discourse, which, since the colonial era, has seen "the Self" (or 'we') as Europeans, and "the Other" as people from cultures that are not European. The anxiety about how "the Self" might relate to "the Other" is therefore not purely speculative, but is manifested within these phenomena.

Nevertheless, even the more liberal discourses that seek to listen to the voice of "the Other" have designated that voice as 'speaking from the margins to the centre' – "the centre" being Europe, or European discourse; "the margins" being outside Europe, or discourses which have been marginalised from this European discourse (but which may not necessarily be marginalised in and of themselves). This demonstrates that there is still an assumption that Europe is the Self, the Centre, and that outside of Europe is the Other, the Margin. The perspective therefore remains Europe-centred, and continues to support the paradigm of the European Self and the non-European Other. The movement towards engaging with various discourses still remains trapped in this construct; a construct with which the philosophical communities of the Muslim world have yet to engage to any significant degree.

In his paper "Other/otherness,[1]"1 Jean-Francois Staszak first outlines the definitions of the concept of "the Other" in European philosophical discourse: "Other: member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group.[2]" Not only does European philosophical discourse concern itself with the construct of "the Other", it has, by extension, become preoccupied with "Otherness", an adjective that has been invented to describe anything which is not related to "the Self". Staszak gives the necessary definition: "Otherness: characteristic of the Other[3]", and talks about "the creation of otherness,[4]" although he rightly points out that "Otherness is due less to the difference of the Other than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the Other as such.[5]"

So while "the Other" is "a member of a dominated out-group", "Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ('Us,' the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them,' Other) by stigmatizing difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination.[6]"

The Self/Other dichotomy with regard to 'Europe' and the Middle East can be traced back more than two thousand years. Staszak provides a succinct outline of this history: "This construction of otherness is based on a hierarchy of civilizations [...] Language and political systems fulfilled this role until the advent of Christianity and Islam, then religion replaced them to oppose Us, believers, and Them, non-believers.[7]"

Echoing Edward Said's hypothesis about Orientalism, Staszak notes that this longstanding Self-Other dichotomy acts in the interests of those who have constructed it: "Obviously, thinking of civilizations as

different like Others justifies the supremacy of Ours and legitimizes its propensity to dominate them. The Greeks must go to war with the Persians, believers with non-believers, Europeans with indigenous peoples.[8]" It may be argued that the Islamic world-view, established in the Qur'an, maintains its own Self-Other dichotomy between 'believers' and 'non-believers', but Staszak makes a pertinent point:

All societies, then, create the self and the other with their own set of categories. Western society, however, stands out for two reasons. First, otherness and identity are based on binary logic. Western thought, whose logic has been attached to the principle of identity, the law of noncontradiction and the law of the excluded middle since the time of Aristotle, has produced a number of binaries that oppose a positively-connoted term and a negatively- connoted term and thus lends itself well to the construction of the self and the other[9].

Fred Dallmayr supports this, noting the change in thinking that took place as a certain type of 'rationalism' began to emerge in European philosophy, and by extension, culture. He discusses the development of a thinking that no longer places the thinker or the 'thought about' in any specific social, historical, religious or cultural (and therefore existential) context. Rationality became abstract and allegedly 'universal' and hence 'universally applicable':

The movement toward context freedom was not yet noticeable among the pre-Socratics (*which may be a reason for Heidegger's preoccupation with their thought*)*. Decontextualization began to emerge slowly in classical Greek thought, as can be seen in Plato's equation of being with logos and in Aristotle's formulation of propositional logic. Incipiently or in their implications, these initiatives heralded an epistemic turn predicated on a subject-object bifurcation, although Plato and Aristotle still remained imbued with pre-Socratic leanings* (*hence Plato's alleged penchant for mysticism*)*. Subsequent developments yielded a progressive subjectivization of philosophical premises*[10].

Dallmayr is, nevertheless, speaking from within a philosophical context which posits universalism against 'context specificity' – 'context specificity' being seen as a more honest and truthful approach to the problem of the Self-Other dichotomy, as it holds that there is no single, universal Truth that transcends all social, historical, political and linguistic contexts; rather truth is to be found, or perhaps sought, within the specifics of those particular contexts. The 'truth' of how the Self relates to the Other and vice versa will always be partial and limited, since all contexts are likewise partial and limited. Taking on 'context specificity' is meant to engender tolerance towards the Other, since it acknowledges that every human being, including the Self, is situated within a given context. The problem with 'context specificity', however, is that it can lead to relativism. A new dichotomy is established: either there must be universality or there must be a specific context (although there are alleged boundaries in place to prevent context specificity disintegrating into such relativism)[11].

It could be argued that the phenomenon of *Walayah*, while being universal, at the same time encompasses the specific. The phenomenon of *Walayah* offers a model which negates the apparent necessity of any simple binary opposition in regard to how the human being relates to another human

being. This will be discussed further below.

As well as Dallmayr's seeking to move beyond the Self–Other dichotomy (in his Beyond Orientalism), titles by other scholars include "Dismantling the Other[12]"; "Re–Thinking Globalization over Self/Other Dialectic[13]" and "Uses of the Other[14]," a work by Iver Neumann, which he says "presents the archeology, uses, and limitations of the self/other dichotomy in the study of world politics.[15]"

Through this study, he concludes that: "we consequently need to destabilize and move beyond it.[16]"

In exploring examples of thinkers that have attempted to move beyond the self/other dichotomy, Dallmayr discusses the work of Hans Georg Gadamer (d. 2002) whose "work has served as a beacon for several generations of students preoccupied with the 'end of metaphysics' and the resulting sense of refracted identities and a selfhood infected with otherness.[17]" Dallmayr describes an "interpenetration of self and other." Many Continental philosophers have also developed what has come to be called "intersubjectivity,[18]" which explores the meeting of two 'Selves', rather than a 'Self' and an 'Other'.

In his most famous work, Truth and Method (published 1960), Gadamer posited a situation of "good will in dialogue,[19]" where dialogue is "the connecting link between reader and text, between present and past, and between indigenous and alien culture."[20]

Gadamer emerged from the "Fascist totalitarianism" of Nazi Germany, determined to find a philosophy that would move beyond the disastrous effects of the implementation of a Self–Other paradigm which had resulted in an attempt to annihilate the Other totally, be that Other Jews, Roma Gypsies or disabled people. (Similar effects had resulted with the Italian occupation's persecution and annihilation of Libyans and the French occupation's persecution and annihilation of Algerians). However, in describing Gadamer's new philosophy, Dallmayr interestingly reveals the carefully crafted secular liberal democratic ethical tenets of his own philosophy, which are still borne out of the specific context of the European Self.

While noting that Gadamer "sketched the contours of a dialogically interactive republic–an image heavily indebted to the legacy of Platonic dialogues," Dallmayr is careful to say that this Platonic model was "minus any resort to a 'guardian class' possessed of ultimate wisdom.[21]" This post–modern liberal democratic model is based upon the assumption (believed to be a "realisation") that a "guardian class" of people possessed of wisdom is somehow necessarily unacceptable. Hierarchies of wisdom and knowledge, which patently do exist in all societies, are not allowed in this model which still seeks to be universally applicable (since it seeks to engage with other societies).

Qur'anic verses and prophetic narrations in the Islamic tradition acknowledge that there are different grades of knowledge. Hierarchies of knowledge form an inherent part of the Islamic context and Muslim societies *Walayah* likewise consists of grades, and is also, therefore, hierarchical. Chapters 5:55 and 8:4 of the Qur'an testify to this[22]. The Ahl al–Bayt[23] could be interpreted as 'a guardian class possessed of ultimate wisdom' and indeed do describe themselves as the treasurers of prophetic knowledge – that is,

not only knowledge of the external laws of humanity, but also the inner reality of phenomena – their causes, essential meaning, mode and purpose in existence.

In moving beyond Europe's sense of its own hierarchical superiority, Gadamer worked out a "horizontal field," where everybody engages as potential equals: "Gadamer's writings up to this point continued to reflect or reveal a certain kind of idealism: that is, an outlook where difference was somehow attenuated in favour of a nearly pre-established harmony between self and other and of an eventual 'fusion of horizons'.[24]" According to Dallmayr, certain very specifically European philosophies influenced this "fusion of horizons" theory: including Heidegger's later work and French post-structuralism. Sounding not unlike the 'urafa ('knowers') on the journey of the soul in the Islamic tradition, Gadamer holds that, "hermeneutics involves a decentering [...] of self-hood.[25]" He desires, not a "merging" of horizons, but a "dialogical encounter" involving "the Socratic method of self-enquiry through interrogation and mutual contestation.[26]" Dallmayr talks about "a growing resistance to one-sided Western hegemony" of which Gadamer's works were a part[27]. Gadamer envisioned "a properly chastised and decentred[28]" Europe – although this vision was probably more relevant to Germany than to other European nations.

Ironically, even though Dallmayr acknowledges Gadamer's critique of Euro-centrism, he still overlooks the fact that, even with this attempt at 'de- centering' Europe, the hierarchy of power remains intact. Dallmayr writes:

While pinpointing and commemorating the distinctive features and accomplishments of Europe, [*Gadamer's*] *study at no point endorses a supremacist outlook-and certainly not a stance of "Eurocentrism"* [...] *Instead of accentuating Western advances in science and technology, the study underscores internal heterogeneity and diversity of traditions, which constitute or shape European culture. It is this intrinsic multiplicity, this unity in and through difference, that for Gadamer marks the genuine "legacy of Europe," a legacy that may serve as an exemplar also to non- Western societies.*[29]

Firstly, it may easily be argued that Europe certainly is not "properly chastised." Secondly, it may be asked that if it is "decentered", then to what extent? Its often fraught relationship with Muslim culture would indicate that it is not. Thirdly, in spite of the fact that there are much older cultures that consist of much greater 'multiplicity,' Europe is still being held up as "an exemplar to non-Western societies". This is still, then, not a Europe that chooses to be receptive and to learn from non-Western societies; to step outside of its solipsistic stance and to observe itself from the perspective of non-Western societies. It is, instead, a Europe which rests on the unquestioned assumption that its role is to leave a legacy for the rest of the world to follow.

In response to the anxiety with which Europe finds itself "dislocated" from "centre stage" and "inserted into a global network of interactions", Gadamer still attempts to find something in European culture that can secure its superior position in the global hierarchy of regions and civilisations. The result still relies on assumptions based upon the Self-Other dichotomy: "Gadamer locates the distinctive trademark of Europe in the penchant for a philosophy which from the beginning is drawn less to meditation than to

inquiry.[30]" In other words, from his perspective, the Other is drawn to meditation, while the Self is drawn to asking questions. The Other's approach is rather passive and fuzzy; the Self's approach is active and clear.

Citing Gadamer, Dallmayr says again: "It is this heterogeneity of cultures and historical trajectories in Europe which provides a lesson for the world today"[31], but what does he mean by "the world"? And what kind of lesson is provided by the rise of fascism and the expansion of impoverished banlieues and ghettoes to which people of 'heterogeneous' cultures are relegated, especially to those cultures that have long existed as heterogeneous without considering that "the world" should learn from them?

2. Responding To The Era Of "Post-Metaphysics"

Beginning with Nietszche and continuing through Heidegger, European philosophy has entered the post-metaphysical age. Metaphysics is dead. Man has to get back to the drawing board to figure out who he is in the world; how he relates to it; what it means to him and what he means as a human being. The Islamic tradition, on the other hand, has retained metaphysics. This means that, offering a philosophical response from an Islamic perspective to the questions and dilemmas of contemporary European philosophy is not so simple, since European philosophy has rid itself of the very foundations upon which Islamic philosophy still stands. European philosophy has invalidated the basis on which Islamic philosophy argues its case.

Following on from Heidegger, Gadamer attempted to find 'meaning' in the material world: "In opposition to the 'eternal verities' of traditional metaphysics as well as the universal propositions of modern science, the humanities in Gadamer's view place the accent on historically grown traditions, the rich nuances of vernacular idioms, and the concrete fabric of the human life world.[32]" Perhaps Gadamer could not have foreseen that, far from flourishing and leading the world towards a more expansive way of thinking, in the current economic downturn the humanities are coming to be seen as increasingly irrelevant; universities can no longer afford to sponsor them and are instead turning to management and economics. Philosophy departments are being closed down; thinking is seen as a luxury which only the privileged can afford. According to Dallmayr:

Under the influence of nineteenth-century historicism and twentieth-century phenomenology and existentialism, humanistic enquiry is attentive increasingly to such philosophically charged issues as temporality, historicity, and the finitude of human life. To this extent, although challenging traditional metaphysics, the humanities are heir to Europe's deeper metaphysical concerns.[33]

In many circles, art has come to be seen as the solution to the vacuum left by the end of experience of a transcendent reality. Experience of 'this world' can replace experience of other worlds. Whereas before, the path to apprehending the meaning of existence entailed journeying from a state of multiplicity to oneness, now that meaning can be found in multiplicity itself. A 'subject' that has transcended multiplicity is "decontextualized." In order to find the real meaning of the subject's existence, that subject must

actually be 'recontextualised'. Heidegger was one of those who sought to bring the decontextualised subject back into context with his conceptualisation of "being-in-the-world"[34]: "Heidegger overcomes the separation of subject and object by redefining the context in which these terms [solipsism and transcendence] occur.[35]"

With the assumed emergence of a "global democracy" at the time he was writing Beyond Orientalism, Dallmayr predicts that a new era in the history of philosophy is opening up and that "Western and Eastern thought for the first time can become partners in a genuine global dialogue [...] This dialogue implies a learning process where each partner exposes itself to alienating otherness and thereby gains its own bearings.[36]"

Aside from the fact that it is probably not the first time in history where there has been genuine global dialogue, we can see that, for Dallmayr, there still remains the idea that "otherness" is "alienating" and that "otherness" is the issue which needs to be addressed. There is also the assumption that 'Self' and 'Other' are clearly delineated, but in the increasingly globalised world in which we live, such simple delineations are becoming out- dated. It might be said that there are in fact multiple Selves and multiple Others, which overlap or conflict in countless unique ways; or rather, Selves become manifest in the world in a myriad of ways. This development has given rise to certain horizons "fusing" in a spontaneous and organic manner, the binary view of Self and Other becoming a 'non-issue', but also new anxieties arising from these emerging complexities.

The thinking that forms the basis for Dallmayr's "global dialogue" model, on the other hand, still seems to stop at "the Other", rather than setting aside the whole question of the Self-Other dichotomy and focusing on engaging with any mode of knowledge, regardless of whether it is European or Indian, or anything else. Paradoxically, the exteriority of otherness becomes a barrier to moving beyond otherness. Gadamer asks, "is there a genuine otherness which would not be the other of ourselves?" In fact, who is it that decides what is 'Other'? Self and Other are not universally agreed givens; if Dallmayr talks about "the alienating other," might it not be the Self that is doing the alienating in perceiving the world (and those in it) as other, as suggested by Staszak? Gadamer: "The highest and most elevated aim that we can strive for is to partake in the other, to share the other's alterity.[37]" (Based on that premise, it should be possible to participate in *Walayah*).

Dallmayr talks about there being "room for a sustained reciprocal questioning of premises and objectives leading to deepened self-understanding and to a more ready acceptance of cultural diversity.[38]" But should the acceptance of "cultural diversity" really be an end itself and does it really 'solve' the problems that arise with the Self-Other dichotomy? Indeed, the suggestion of "accepting cultural diversity" begins to sound like a moral imperative which, while occurring with little self-consciousness among today's social media bloggers, activists, writers and commentators, is also being more vociferously rejected by those who sense that they are losing ground as a result. Encouraging dialogue to promote acceptance of cultural diversity does not appear to recognise that certain powers have vested interests in maintaining

the Self–Other dichotomy.

Although Dallmayr's book was published in 1996, in the years which have passed since then, the social, cultural and political landscape has undergone seismic shifts, and the direction in which globalisation seemed to be heading then appears quite different now. The gap between wealthy and poor; educated and uneducated appears greater than ever. The trend towards "an emerging global democracy," where cultures are willing to engage in productive dialogue as equally–weighted participants has been reversed by the collapse of economies, the resurrection of Orientalist stereotypes utilised for instigating war, and an increasing resentment across Europe towards other cultures moving into its boarders and challenging its idea of Self.

If the dilemma of the European concept of Self began with the end of metaphysics, it has continued with the increasing interaction with those very cultures that it sought to subsume at a time when this concept of Self was being rigorously enforced within its borders and abroad. Colonialists went out to Africa, Asia and the Middle East, asserting this concept of Self in those regions and now Europe perceives the migration of people from the ex–colonies as a threat to this concept. The very identity of the European Self is becoming increasingly complex, giving rise to a natural fusion of (rapidly and newly emerging) horizons; but instead of this producing a desire for mutual, horizontal engagement, it is instead leading to a reassertion of old–style binary opposites, as is evident in the rise of the number of Neo–Nazi and fascist organisations. It could be argued that the Self is in transition, but at the same time we see resistance and an increasing resort to calls for racial and cultural purity; the 'defence' of the European Self against the apparently increasing threat of "multiplicity".

3. Self–Other And Post–Modernity

Dallmayr points out how phenomenology, existentialism and hermeneutics helped to challenge the simple certainties of modernity, ushering in the period of "post–modernity." The "simple certainties of modernity" arose from a "developmental model articulated by modernization theorists during the period after World War II.[39]" This was the era of re–building Europe and of moving into a modern, secular age, where technological and scientific expansion was no longer related to any cosmic or metaphysical underpinnings. While this model met with various forms of resistance, these forms still did not address its "narrowly empiricist or positivist outlook." However, "[i]t was chiefly this feature that became the target of a new wave of postempiricist theorizing which under the banners of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and critical theory raised the developmental debate to a quasitranscendental level.[40]"

Citing the theories of Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell's study Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC)) "on the normative–cultural level, social change involved progressive cultural secularization and the adoption of anonymous–universal rule systems"[41]. 'Modern' systems were "further subdivided into liberal– democratic and authoritarian or totalitarian variants.[42]" Societies were meant to become at once more interconnected

and less localised, giving rise to the aforesaid "anonymous-universal" systems. These systems were seen, by definition, as more superior to the more disparate, localized, culturally (and even religiously) particular 'systems'. The theory of modernisation went hand-in- hand with a theory of progressively greater "emancipation" and "individual autonomy, which politically translates into a process of liberalization or liberal democratization."[43] The only aim of the West, therefore, was to "disseminate" this ideology. However, Dallmayr notes that many of these early theorists began to backtrack when they saw the effects of such attempts at dissemination around the world:

The implicit optimism permeating the early modernization model sponsored by SSRC was not borne out by real-life experiences in developing or third world countries. Barely two decades after the war, it became increasingly evident that political development around the globe did not follow the smooth path of a simple Westernization or a "diffusion" of (Western) world culture. The political regimes of developing countries were increasingly rent by turmoil and profound tension between the "revolution of rising expectations" and the inability of modernizing elites to meet them. Under the impact of these experiences, the assumption of steady progress and cultural dissemination gave way to a harsher emphasis on regime stability, output capabilities, and crisis management[44].

In short, the naïve idealism of the modernisation theorists came to an abrupt halt, being replaced with theories based upon realpolitik. Samuel Huntington was one of the leading "revisionists" of the modernisation model. He is, obviously, now known for his famous "clash of civilisations" theory, and alongside him have arisen a plethora of neo-Orientalists, such as Cheryl Benard, Angel Rabasa, Christine Fair (all associated with the neo-Conservative Rand Corporation); Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer and Michael Horowitz. Obsession with Self-Other or sameness-difference has also provided a basis for a neo-Orientalist revival. The Self-Other dichotomy is something that arises from and maintains an obsession with power relations.

From more liberalist scholars the modernisation model was criticised for its "built-in asymmetry and political-economic inequality.[45]" A certain definition of 'rationality', which had largely formed the basis of the modernisation model, came to be seen as 'unworkable' when applied to questions of the meaning of the existence of "the Other," particularly when that 'Other' was moving beyond the colonial period and turning around to question the meaning of the existence of the European 'Self':

With the advent of the Cartesian cogito and Kant's critical philosophy, classical and medieval ontology could no longer be maintained in its taken-for-granted form; likewise, with the onset of phenomenology, Enlightenment views of reason had to undergo further refinement[46].

Post-modern theory has moved European thought from the universal, transcendental and essential, to the particular, contextual and contingent; it has sought to challenge European assumptions of global hegemony by focusing on methods of hermeneutic critique – methods which can (and allegedly should) be applied to anything that appears to be a groundless assumption. Critiquing theories of modernity (and by extension the implications that European cultural peculiarities are universal norms) is fine yet within

those very critiques, which seek to propose a more egalitarian vision, there remain assumptions that support the very asymmetry which they seek redress, such as that the 'Other', posited opposite the European 'Self', consists of 'poor masses in third world countries trying to resist Western global control.[47]' This assumption can be seen in Dallmayr's statement:

...ethnic and other (sub-)national groups in the third world must have the opportunity to articulate their hopes and grievances in their own vocabulary, which implies a valorization of indigenous cultural and linguistic traditions and ways of life.[48]

Here can be seen the idea that there is Europe, and then there are 'third world ethnic minorities'. In addition, the tone remains paternalistic: these people "must have the opportunity" to speak (i.e. 'they must be allowed the opportunity', not 'they will take the opportunity regardless').

Another issue with post-modern critique is the risk of slipping into relativism. This arises from the post-modern interest in always seeing 'the alternative view,' which often progresses into 'seeing the alternative view for the sake of it.' A summarised definition of post-modernisation can be found in the works Jean-Francois Lyotard. Dallmayr cites one particular work, entitled The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge[49], in which Lyotard rejects "all the trajectories of modernization-that is, the teleological accounts of modern history, including the account of human emancipation-as high-flown 'metanarratives' out of touch with the basically circumscribed, historically contingent character of language [and by extension culture, R.M.]." The post- modern perspective, on the other hand, is one of "'incredulity' toward such accounts, its skepsis toward all continuous or progressive teleologies of history."[50]

Dallmayr adds, "In the American context, antiholism [against holistic narratives] surfaces frequently in the guise of a neopragmatic particularism or of a postmodern cultivation of (counter-) cultural diversity.[51]" The post-modern approach radically dismantles the certainties of modernity by means of analysis and engagement through the lens of 'context specificity': "Distinctive features of the new cultural politics of difference are to trash the monolithic and homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity.[52]"

Potentially, it offers space for the voice of "the Other," since it rejects the allegedly exclusive legitimacy of the voice of "the Self" that has constructed the narrative of modernity. It aims "to reject the abstract, general and universal in light of the concrete, specific and particular; and to historicize, contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing.[53]"

Dallmayr seeks out "Indian philosophers and social theorists, to counteract the conceit of a Western monopoly of the development debate.[54]" It is notable that, among certain Continental philosophers, it became acceptable to turn to, explore and integrate elements of Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma); Buddhism and Dao into European philosophical discourse. As Heidegger did before him, Dallmayr engages with 'Asia' in order to 'explore' and 'meet' "the Other." In particular, Dallmayr focuses on 'India';

yet it is still 'India' as a monolithic entity, or a nation, with a chapter entitled 'Western Thought and Indian Thought'. The preoccupation remains with 'nations' and with 'Self' and 'Other'. Except for the new swathe of neo-Orientalists who are engaging with the Muslim world only to reify and reinforce the Self-Other dichotomy, very few scholars have or are giving it much close attention, and one reason for this could be that there remains the perception that Islam in itself is resistant to the post-modern, relativistic, endlessly sceptical, open-ended, pluralistic, multicultural, globalised family project[55].

The only Muslim model that Dallmayr has taken is that of Emperor Akbar, whose own invented religion is largely discredited (and certainly not practiced) by the majority of Muslims. Muslim thought ('thought' meaning theology, philosophy and mysticism, among others) remains an unexplored territory for those post-modern thinkers seeking to embark on a "meeting of horizons." Islamic thought, in and of itself, remains largely untouched when it comes to those attempting to move beyond the Self-Other dichotomy (Henry Corbin remains one of the few examples who engaged with Islamic thought in itself, migrating from Heidegger to Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi). Resistance to metaphysics and to transcendental symbols, principles or entities precludes a post-modern engagement with the 'Islamic Other', in the form of Islamic thought. Islamic thought's retention of metaphysics and transcendental principals such as the oneness of God, prophethood and imamate, along with an unapologetic and orthodox 'hierarchy of knowledge', make it difficult to celebrate the "contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing." That is not to say that Islamic thought is not "diverse and heterogeneous", or that it isn't "contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing." If anything, perhaps the Muslim world is today almost paralysed by the sheer range of permutations in practice and interpretations of its foundational texts; but it openly maintains one, transcendent root out of which all of these emerge and to which they all return.

4. Tackling Islam

Dallmayr uses one example from the Muslim world to demonstrate his point about a "democratic cross-cultural encounter" – an example which conveniently suits the secular, democratic, multiculturalist philosophy that he propounds, but which, in the Muslim world, was an aberration that was largely rejected, and which was considered unworkable from a practical perspective. He takes the example of Moghul Emperor, Akbar the Great (d. 1605 CE):

Although himself a Sunni Muslim, Akbar practiced respect for Hindu religion and culture, as well as for other religions [...] *Akbar established a "house of worship"* (*ibadat-khana*) *at Fatehpur-Sikri where Muslims of different sects, Jesuit fathers from Goa, Zoroastrians, Hindu pandits, and others gathered together to discuss religion* [...] *The outcome of these debates was a modified version of monotheism composed of strands from Sufism, Zoroastrianism, and Hinduism which Akbar himself professed – but without compelling adherence to his beliefs throughout his empire.*[56]

This example does not actually respect the orthodoxy of the said traditions or their 'otherness' or

‘difference’ from each other, and this is where well-meaning contemporary secular democratic philosophy seeks to select elements from other religions to fit its own value-system (which therefore remains the value-system of the Self). In doing so, they fail to acknowledge the remaining elements of those religions (the value-systems of the Other), whose orthodoxies establish clear water between their own theological parameters and those of other religions. Rather than being seen as a charming fusion of horizons, attempts such as those of Akbar to ‘mix and match’ have instead been seen as promoting the disintegration of orthodox parameters, those parameters being considered necessary for maintaining the integrity of the foundations of those religions and by extension the knowledge which is safeguarded by those foundations.[57]

The result can therefore be seen when models of “the Other” are utilised to support the philosophical framework established by ‘the Self’. It may also be added that rather ironically, considering that a critical approach is one of the cardinal pillars of the post-modern project, the example of Emperor Akbar has been used in a distinctly uncritical fashion. Nevertheless, Dallmayr’s rare foray into engaging with Islam goes against the tide of the general discourse in European thought regarding the Islamic tradition, which often remains simplistic, reductionist and ill-informed.

5. Definition Of Walayah, Its Hierarchy And Its Degrees

As can be seen from the example above, when it comes to ‘meeting the horizon of Islam’, an example is taken of an emperor who was both atypical in terms of orthodoxy and brutal in enforcing his will upon his Hindu subjects. No direct reference to Islamic sources, in order to apprehend an Islamic perspective, has been made. Instead of selecting an anomaly from the Muslim world in order to fit in with one’s post-modern model, for any encounter to be genuinely based upon the desire to ‘engage with the Other’, the Self needs to be open to the values that the tradition of the Other itself validates. This paper proposes *Walayah* as an alternative model to the Self-Other dichotomy and an alternative to the post- modern ‘mess’ that has resulted from scholars seeking to escape this dichotomy. *Walayah* is the basis of engagement, rather than culture, and is inclusive of all human beings. The objective of engagement is not to promote tolerance of different cultures in the secular liberal sense espoused by Dallmayr, but ‘to come to know one another’, as stated in the Qur’an[58]; in other words, in order to attain knowledge of the other and to draw closer to one another’s humanity.

Walayah is a noun consisting of the letters w-l-y in Arabic. Etymologically, it implies closeness, intimacy. Other words arising from this root which appear in the Qur’an include wala, meaning ‘protection’ (18:44); awla, meaning ‘closest’ (4:135); mawla, meaning ‘protector’ or ‘master’ (3:150); and waliy, meaning ‘friend’ or ‘guardian’. *Walayah* could be said to be a vehicle of prophethood and imamate; it could be described as a framework of ethics that establishes a relationship between God and humanity. It implies a connection of love, not only between God and the Muslim, but also God, the prophets and imams; the prophets and imams and their followers. It also includes a connection of love among followers themselves; and between followers and the rest of humanity, whatever their religion, culture or race, but

providing that the ethics of respect are upheld. Violation of the ethics of respect means a violation of relationship of *Walayah*. For the thinker that desires to engage with the Muslim 'Other', entering into the realm of *Walayah* can offer a means by which both parties can engage in a dialogue of mutual exchange whereby each is able to realise their collective humanity. This relationship of *Walayah* can also provide a framework where they may seek ways and means by which to deepen their knowledge of their humanity, in terms of thought and practice.

An example of this can be seen with regard to Husayn ibn 'Ali, Prophet Muhammad's grandson, who gave his life at Karbala in 671 in order to establish a clear distinction between the ethics of *Walayah* as established by Prophet Muhammad, and the philosophy of tyrannical dictatorship as asserted by other parties who sought power at the time. His sacrifice is commemorated every year, attracting 20 million visitors to his shrine in Karbala, Iraq, this being the largest peaceful gathering on earth. Eulogies for Husayn are composed by Hindus and Christians, many of whom also travel to Iraq or attend memorial events, and secularist thinkers have also found his example inspiring. As Husayn is meant to have said to the opposition army that had been instructed to kill him: "If you do not have any religion and do not fear the Day of Resurrection, then at least be free in this world,[59]" meaning that a person who follows their desires for worldly gain, to the extent that they are willing to subscribe to tyranny, is in fact enslaved. If a person is free of the tyranny of their own desires for worldly gain then they can enter, without any religion, into a relationship of *Walayah* – mutual respect and ethical practice – with someone who does have a religion.

While the phenomenon of *Walayah* is considered as a pillar of Islamic practice in the world, it is also said to have a transcendent, metaphysical dimension, being held as the principle that governs existence: not just existence 'in-the-world', but also existence 'in-the-cosmos', i.e. cosmic existence. *Walayah* opens up the parameters of the human being's 'world', to include, not just nations and cultures, but all levels of existence from the material to the transcendent. *Walayah* addresses not human beings divided up into nations and cultures, but the human being per se: a being that has both consciousness and responsibility. *Walayah* is a phenomenon that both encompasses and permeates culture. Within it there are shades, degrees, permutations and manifestations in which everybody shares, whether they are Muslim or not. Participation in *Walayah* therefore goes beyond 'culture'.

According to the Qur'an, there is one reality that encompasses existence. Existence is not divided up into separate parts. The cosmos is an expanding landscape of which the human being is a part, and in which everything participates. Whatever is in existence is connected to everything else in existence by the fact and phenomenon of existence. The one reality that transcends all levels of existence has been 'described' succinctly by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib:

He is a Being but not through the phenomenon of coming into being. He exists, but not from non-existence. He is with everything, but not in physical nearness. He is different from everything, but not in physical separation. He acts, but without connotation of movements and instruments. He sees even

when there is none to be looked at from among His creation. He is only One, such that there is none with whom He may keep company or whom He may miss in his absence[60].

"He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He speaks, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with aspiration. He moulds, but not with limbs. He is subtle, but cannot be said to be concealed.[61]"

Walayah is both universal (al-*Walayah* al-tawkiniyya) and specific (al-*Walayah* al-tashri'iyya). As explained by Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "*Walayah* permeates the entire history of mankind and constitutes its spiritual substance.[62]" Idris Samawi Hamid discusses how this universal *Walayah* is also a *Walayah* of mercy. He notes that "the Ultimate Source of *Walayah* has two primary proper names, 'Allah' and 'Al-Rahman'[63]." 'Al-Rahman' may be translated as "Universally Merciful[64]". As Hamid explains: "The root r h m is also closely related to the womb (rahim) of a woman. [...] we see that we are embraced by the Universal *Walayah* of Allah just as a foetus is embraced by the womb of a mother. [...] Al- Rahman, then, is the one who uniformly and evenly projects His Universal *Walayah* over everything [...] The Universal *Walayah* that attaches itself to everything that exists constitutes love in the general sense. This general love constitutes universal mercy.[65]"

If universal *Walayah* is taken as the foundation upon which to engage in an endeavour of mutual understanding, neither participant need forego their epistemological foundations. Even if the post-modern secularist chooses not to engage in the metaphysical dimensions of *Walayah*, s/he can still engage with that *Walayah* as it manifests in the physical world, e.g. through setting aside one's anxieties in regard to cultural differences and simply engaging on the level of the human. Therefore, it may not necessary for there to be an "agonal engagement"; instead, *Walayah* "expresses the concept of 'dynamic loving[66]'". Based upon universal *Walayah*, the focus becomes, not about understanding the Other's culture, but about understanding of the self (or mind, or psyche) in a shared engagement of modes and methods of self-knowing, which may include sharing and mutual participation in traditions of ethical knowledge (or wisdom). The aim of the engagement shifts, from seeking 'non-European cultural perspectives' as a way of trying to counter the predominance of Eurocentric thought, to participating as two human beings in the endeavour towards self-realisation. The hermeneutical interpretation of culture therefore becomes secondary to the hermeneutical interpretation of the self. Ethical practice and self-realisation become the criteria of engagement.

The idea of bringing back the practice of exploring the inner self is not new. In a publication dated 1997, Michael McCarthy calls for a revival of "the dialectical practice of Socrates, who located the source of philosophical error in a failure of individual self-knowledge[67]". Rather than the search for truth in engaging with the Other consisting of opening up the Self to the Other's 'non- Europeanness,' it may be founded upon the Islamic principle of knowledge, which is that "the 'alim [scholar] is the one whose words corroborate his actions,[68]" similar to that which McCarthy suggests: "Socratic criticism brought to light deep inconsistencies between what the participating interlocutor said, what he actually was, and what he did or failed to do.[69]"

The aim may be transmuted from seeking to 'embrace diversity', as set forth by Dallmayr, to seeking ever deeper and more subtle levels of insight into one's self, one's place in humanity and one's place in the universe. It becomes a search for the reality of the self, informed by the wisdom that is transmitted through the dialectic of *Walayah*, since, as McCarthy notes: "In adult life, self-knowledge is the basis of sustained self-transcendence and authenticity; it is an inescapable requirement of the limited wisdom available to us[70]".

In another paper dated 1998, entitled Paideia: Philosophy Educating Humanity through Spirituality, Paul D. Grosch calls for a reintegration of spiritual praxis back into philosophy[71]:

My argument is that through rediscovering those spiritual exercises that were once so clearly available to the philosophical schools of antiquity, we are cultivating and rediscovering our telos. [...] *To live a life is both a science and an art, with phronesis – the art of deploying practical wisdom in each context and on each occasion – as the governing factor*[72].

Referring to "the four great schools of antiquity – Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism and Epicureanism", Grosch provides the following criteria that were seen as spiritual practices in ancient Europe: research (zetesis), thorough investigation (skepsis), reading (anagnosis), listening (akroasis), attention (prosoche), self- mastery (enkrateia), and indifference to indifferent things...meditations (meletai), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things....and the accomplishment of duties[73].

Such criteria may also be found in the Islamic tradition:

Imam al-Sadiq (as) narrated that someone went to see the Holy Prophet (s) and said, 'O Prophet of God, what is knowledge?' The Prophet (s) said, 'Trying to hear.' He asked, 'What else?' The Prophet (s) said, 'Listening.' He asked, 'What else?' The Prophet (s) said, 'Learning.' He asked, 'What else?' The Prophet (s) said, 'Practising what is learned.' He asked, 'What else?' The Prophet (s) said, 'Teaching it to other people.[74]'

This indicates that, for thinkers in the field of European philosophy who are trying to find ways of re-incorporating ethical or spiritual praxis, such ethical and spiritual praxis can be found by engaging with the teachings elaborated in the texts of the Islamic tradition as a human being; rather than either omitting to engage with the texts altogether due to their perceived radical 'Otherness', or else selecting an atypical model that ostensibly seems to fit the secular, democratic vision. It sets aside the often problematic approach that Europe has to the non-European world, being either aggressive and defensive, or patronising and apologetic. It goes back to the heart of the question of humanity, opening up questions with regard to future. What can two human beings do to contribute to promoting the highest human standards of thinking and practice in today's world? Not least within the paradigm of *Walayah* is the concept of an ever- developing and transforming relationship of friendship. At the level of humanity, this friendship could also be called 'brotherhood', where two human beings assist one another to ascend to higher, more refined, levels of thinking and practice.

The question may be asked: where does the paradigm of *Walayah* stand in today's climate of a "politics of difference"? Is it not too monolithic, homogenous, abstract and universal? It may be answered that, while *Walayah* is founded upon certain key principles, such as justice, love and the necessity for attaining knowledge, the particularities of its manifestations at the level of human society are unlimited; and while it may be said to be a framework that tends towards the abstract, putting it into practice at the human level means that it always has to be manifested within a specific context, which may be subject to any number of permutations.

Perhaps a more challenging question may be asked: are European thinkers prepared to forego the Self–Other dichotomy itself and the philosophies that have arisen from it in which they have invested, in order to meet the horizon of the new model proposed? As Dallmayr has noted with regard to Gadamer's thought, mentioned earlier, "hermeneutics involves a decentering […] of self– hood.[75]" Might today's thinker be willing to surrender their ideas of 'the European Self' in order to engage purely as a human being with another human being, based upon the principles of *Walayah*: establishing brotherhood, seeking knowledge and enhancing practice, as elucidated by the Ahl al–Bayt? This remains to be seen.

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11. Suggested strategies include engaging in an 'hermeneutics of difference' (Dallmayr, Beyond Orientalism, 39–62); 'agonal dialogue' (ibid., 168) and 'critical traditionalism' (ibid, 171).

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16. Ibid.

17. Dallmayr, Beyond Orientalism, 40.

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21. Ibid.

22. Chapter 5:55 concerns Walayah, which is mentioned further below. Chapter 8:4 states, regarding those who follow Prophet Muhammad, 'These are the believers in truth; for them are (exalted) grades with their Lord, and forgiveness and a bountiful provision.' This indicates that hierarchies, or 'grades' exist. Other chapters and verses also indicate that among the followers there are different types and grades, depending up on their knowledge, and their apprehension of the inner reality of things.

23. People of the House', comprising Prophet Muhammad, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Fatima al–Zahra, Hasan and Husayn, as stipulated in the Qur'an, 33:33.

24. Dallmayr, Beyond Orientalism, 41.

25. Ibid., 48. 'Urafa' (sing. 'arif: literally 'knower') – the masters on the path of a hierarchy of knowledge that continually unveils ever deeper levels of inner reality, teach that one must move beyond one's 'self'.

26. Dallmayr, Beyond Orientalism, 48.

27. Dallmayr, Beyond Orientalism, 49.

28. Hans–Georg Gadamer, Das Erbe Europas: Beitrage ['The Legacy of Europe'] (Frankfurt–Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), in ibid.

29. Hans–Georg Gadamer, Das Erbe Europas: Beitrage ['The Legacy of Europe'].

30. Hans–Georg Gadamer, Das Erbe Europas: Beitrage ['The Legacy of Europe'], 50.

31. Hans–Georg Gadamer, Das Erbe Europas: Beitrage ['The Legacy of Europe'], 55.

32. Hans–Georg Gadamer, Das Erbe Europas: Beitrage ['The Legacy of Europe'], 53.

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54. Ibid., 150.
55. Ian Almond's The New Orientalists (London: IB Tauris, 2007) examines some scholars who have included Islam in their post-modern worldview, but these mostly do so in a way that 'utilises' it for their own critique of European hegemony, rather than on its own terms.
56. Dallmayr, Beyond Orientalism, 31.
57. Akbar does not make the best liberal democratic example, as he is known to have killed 30,000 unarmed Rajputs after the Siege of Chittor in 1568 CE.
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