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Sufism, sodomy and Satan

By Spengler

Sigmund Freud thought that everything was about sex, and he was half right. Rarely is love so spiritual that it does not also stir the loins, for human beings are creatures not only of soul but of body. Although it is thought rude to say so nowadays, different kinds of love belong to different kinds of sex. Not even Hell can resist divine love, J W Goethe showed in the funniest vignette in all literature: his devil, Mephistopheles, is disabled by an obsessive lust for the cherubs sent to claim the soul of Faust in the drama's penultimate scene. Heavenly beauty, that is, reduces the crafty demon to a pathetic old pervert, in a tableau not fit for a family newspaper.[1]

Goethe's creepily convincing portrait of a pederastic devil in Faust (1832) drew on the poet's earlier study of Persian love poetry of

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the High Middle Ages,[2] where "as a rule, the beloved is not a woman, but a young man", according to the leading Persian historian Ehsan Yar-Shater. Islamic mysticism (Sufism) of the High Middle Ages is the only case in which a mainstream current of a major world religion preached pederasty as a path to spiritual enlightenment. A vast literature documents this, and a great deal of it is available online.

Sufi adoration of pre-pubescent boys "persisted in many Islamic countries until very recent times," according to the Orientalist Helmut Ritter.[3] The Afghan penchant for dancing boys in female costume, shown in the 2007 film *The Kite Runner*, is the last vestige of a Sufi practice that has been long suppressed by both the Sunni and Shi'ite branches of Islam. Sufism has a reputation in Western pop culture as a kinder and gentler branch of Islam. It is not a different kind of Islam, but rather Islam's mystical practice, to which the adage applies, "by their fruits shall ye know them."

Controversy persists over what is "authentic Sufism". The Turkish organization of Fethallah Gulen claims millions of members and doubtless is the largest self-styled Sufi organization in the world. The American Sufi convert Stephen Schwartz has dismissed it as a "cult",[4] while Michael Rubin of

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SNAP KEYLINKS

the American Enterprise Institute warns that Gulen may become the Turkish Khomeini. Given Turkey's turn towards political Islam ([Turkey in the throes of Islamic revolution?](#), Jul 22, 2008), the world is likely to find out a great deal more about Sufism in the near future, and well may be dismayed by what it learns.

In contrast to the Judeo-Christian West, where marriage has been a metaphor for God's love since the Biblical Song of Songs, homosexual pederasty was normative for the Sufi philosopher-poets of Islam's golden age in Central Asia. For Christians, the earthly adumbration of God's love was nuptial, but pederastic in Muslim Persia. The classic Persian poets, including Hafez[5] and Rumi,[6] pined for beardless boys while their European contemporaries wrote sonnets to women. Some apologists claim that the Sufi practice of "contemplation of the beardless" was a chaste spiritual exercise, but an Egyptian proverb warns: "In his father's home a boy's chastity is safe, but let him become a dervish [Sufi adept] and the buggers will queue up behind him." [7]

Sufi pedophilia cannot be dismissed as a remnant of the old tribal practices that Islam often incorporated, for example, female genital mutilation. Genital mutilation is a pre-Islamic practice unknown in the ancient and modern West. Even though some Muslim authorities defend it on the basis of Hadith, no one has ever claimed that it offered a path to enlightenment. Sadly, pedophiles are found almost everywhere. In its ascendancy, Sufism made a definitive spiritual experience out of a practice considered criminally aberrant in the West. But pederasty as a spiritual exercise is not essentially different in character from the furtive practices of Western perverts. As the psychiatrists explain, pederasty is an expression of narcissism, the love of an idealized youthful self-image.

Sufism seeks one-ness with the universe through spiritual exercises that lead individual consciousness to dissolve into the cosmos. But nothing is more narcissistic than the contemplation of the cosmos, for if we become one with the cosmos, what we love in the cosmos is simply an idealized image of ourselves. An idealized self-image is also what attracts the aging lecher to the adolescent boy. That is the secret of Sufi as well as other pederasty, for pederasty is an extreme expression of self-love. That is the conventional psychiatric view; Freud for example wrote of the "basic narcissism of the vast majority of pederasts ... proceeding as from narcissism, they seek their own image in young people."

Sufism enjoys a faddish ripple of interest in America, where self-admiration is the national pastime. As opposed to the Biblical God, the cosmos is an unthreatening thing to worship. The universe, after all, is no one in particular, and those who seek to merge their consciousness with no one in particular at the end are left alone with themselves. Worship the cosmos, and you worship yours truly; worship yourself, and it is not unusual to adore your own idealized image.

I do not mean to suggest that Sufis today are more likely to be pederasts than members of any other religious denomination. Sadly, there is brisk competition in that field. Karen Armstrong, the popular writer on religion, claims to be a Sufi, and I have it on good authority that she is not a pederast. Non-Muslims who embrace Sufism view it as a generic form of "spirituality", like Madonna's dabbling in what she thinks is Kabbalah. That recalls the joke about the Chinese waiter in a kosher restaurant who speaks perfect Yiddish, of whom the owner says, "He thinks he's learning English." No one should blame Hafez or Rumi for the casual interest of American spiritual tourists.

Nonetheless, it is not entirely by accident that Sufism holds a fascination for self-absorbed young Americans who dislike the demands placed upon them by revealed faith. Mysticism of this genre provides a pretext to worship one's self in the masquerade of the universe. As Rumi (1207-1273), the most revered of the Sufi philosopher-poets, said of his own spiritual master,

Why should I seek? I am the same as
He. His essence speaks through me.
I have been looking for myself!

I do not speak Persian and cannot comment on the aesthetic quality of Rumi's verse, which connoisseurs hold to be elegant. Its content, though, reduces to the same God-is-everywhere-

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and-all-I-have-to-do-is-look-inside-myself sort of platitudes of pop spirituality, for example,

I searched for God among the Christians and on the Cross and therein I found Him not. I went into the ancient temples of idolatry; no trace of Him was there.

...

Then I directed my search to the Kaaba, the resort of old and young; God was not there even. Turning to philosophy I inquired about him from ibn Sina but found Him not within his range. I fared then to the scene of the Prophet's experience of a great divine manifestation only a 'two bow-lengths' distance from him' but God was not there even in that exalted court. Finally, I looked into my own heart and there I saw Him; He was nowhere else.

If the point of love is to dissolve one's self into the All, then there is no difference between the self and the All; the self and the All are the same, and one loves one's self. There is no Other in Sufism, only your own ego grinning back from the universe. To embrace the cosmos implies the destruction of individuality. In Goethe's drama, Faust conjures up the personification of the cosmos, the Earth Spirit, and cannot bear to look upon it; the Earth Spirit dismisses him with the epigram, "You are like the spirit whom you comprehend - not me!" Woe betide the adept who succeeds in merging his mind with the universe: he would become a monster, like Mephistopheles, the consummate nihilist.

Love of the cosmos reduces to idolatrous love of self. It is a radically different sort of love than the love of YHWH or Jesus, who are distinct beings with a personality, even if incomprehensible in their totality. The Judeo-Christian God is known to humankind by revelation, and specifically self-revelation through love. The revealed God seeks the love of humankind as an Other. Revelation does not reassure us that the Divine was in our hearts all along. It is not always a pleasant experience. It burns our lips like the kiss of a seraph, and casts our heart into the refiner's fire. It shatters, burns, overwhelms and transforms us - but it does not dissolve us into a cosmic soup. On the contrary: it enhances our individual personality. Precisely because it reinforces our individuality, love in the Judeo-Christian world can be a very painful experience.

To Christians and Jews, God reveals himself as a personality, and through acts of love - the Exodus and the Resurrection. There is no such event in Islam. Allah does not reveals himself, that is, descend to earth; instead, he sends down from heaven his instruction manual, namely the Koran. Allah remains unknown, and ultimately indistinguishable from the nature in which he is embedded. Confronted by this absolutely transcendental entity the individual human personality shrivels into insignificance.

Mystical communion with an unrevealed and unknowable God demands the sort of star- and navel-gazing that brings the communicant right back to good old number one. Just as Rumi said, it's all inside you, like the self-help books say. And that brings us back to the matter of pederasty.

Men and women are so different that the experience of heterosexual love is analogous to the spiritual encounter with the divine Other. Love is as strong as death, says the Song of Songs:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

It is not only the passion of love that challenges death, but the

[Continued 1](#) [2](#)

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