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THE DEFENCE OF EBLIS
BY 'EYNO-L-QOZĀT-E HAMADĀNI (1096/98-1131)

In Sufism the case of Eblis can be considered from two perspectives, namely his attitude to people and his attitude to God.

Regarding his attitude to people, Eblis is generally called Satan (*al-šeytān*) and his role as a tempter is vividly depicted in the Koran. His doctrinal story conveys a chiefly moral message; namely, he was an angel who disobeyed God's command to prostrate himself in front of Adam. His insubordination was due to the fact that as a creature made from fire, he felt superior to a creature made from clay. Consequently the conceited rebel was accursed and banished from Heaven. Henceforth, until the Day of Resurrection, Eblis as Satan will "sit in wait against them (human beings) on (God's) Straight Path"¹, "befool people with (his) voice"², and "adorn the path of error for them (mankind) in the earth"³.

The fact of Eblis' anathema and his further deceitful mission on earth is recognized by both orthodox Muslims and Sufis. Thus, referring to the relations between Eblis and man, Satan deserves nothing but unanimous contempt. However, Eblis' conduct as a Divine Disciple, though apparently insubordinate, has challenged some Muslim mystics to defend the Celestial Rebel and develop a mythical narrative of celestial events called *hadis-e eblis*. *Hadis-e eblis* circulated among Sufis and was gradually enriched with new plots and allegorical interpretations. One of its first transmitters and defenders of Eblis was Hoseyn Mansur Hallāj. His followers were mainly sheikhs from Eastern Iran, such as

¹ Koran 7:16. See: *The Noble Qur'an. English Translation of the meanings and commentary*, ed. and transl. M. Taqī-ad-Dīn Al-Hilālī, M. Muhsin Khān, Madinah, 202.

² Koran 17:64. See: *ibid.*, 377.

³ Koran 15:39. See: *ibid.*, 341.

Abu-l-Qāsem Gorgāni, Abul-Hasan Bosti, Abu 'Ali Farmādi, Ahmad Qazāli, Sanā'i, and 'Attār.

Still, the positive re-evaluation of Eblis reaches its apotheosis in Jebāl with 'Eyno-l-Qozāt from Hamadān, a pupil of Ahmad Qazāli and a Sufi martyr who lived at the beginning of the twelfth century and whom Reynold Nicholson calls "the biggest defender of Eblis in Islam."⁴

'Eyno-l-Qozāt, the author of *Nāmeḥā* (*The Letters*) and *Tamhidāt* (*The Assumptions*), educated in Islamic law to the superior degree which made his *laqab* of "The Pearl of Qazis", ventures his judicial reputation to plead the case of Eblis and glorify his devotion to God as his Master.

In his *Letters*, the mystic from Hamadan emphasizes that *Hadis-e Eblis* is a highly esoteric story reserved for the most special ones (*xavās-e xavās*):

"Only one of my friends can hear a part of his story, then who dares to tell it? And how common people can understand the *hadis* of someone that even the most special people have not smelled the scent of the dust under his feet?"⁵

Yet, Hallāj, Hasan from Basra, Abu-l-Hasan from Bost, Abu-l-Qāsem from Gorgān, Barekat and Ahmad Qazāli are among those daredevils quoted by 'Eyno-l-Qozāt, who at least made an effort to "smell the scent of the dust under Eblis' feet."⁶

To defend the case of Eblis, his advocate uses various, sometimes incoherent stratagems.

First of all, he recounts an intimacy between God and Azazeel before the creation of Adam:

"You must have heard that he was the teacher of Angels (*mo'allem-e fereštegān*). For several thousand years his cell (*zāviye*) has been at the foot of the Divine Throne (*bar sāq-e 'arš*) and now (...), as a verse (*mesrā*) says: *he is a toy in the hands of children from your street!* (*bāziče-ye kudakān –e ku-ye to šode ast*)"⁷

Sufi connotations of a term *zāviye*, by which the dwelling of Eblis is described, may imply his incorporation into Sufi hermetic tradition. *Mo'allem-e*

⁴ R. Nicholson, *The idea of Personality in Sufism*, transl. Š. Kadkani, *Tasavvof-e eslāmi va rābete-ye ensān va Xodā*, Entešārāt-e Tus, Tehrān 1979, 188-189.

⁵ *Nāmeḥā-ye 'Eyno-l-Qozāt-e Hamadāni*, vol. II, ed. 'A. Monzavi, 'A. Oseyrān, Entešārāt-e Asātir, Tehrān 1998-9, 417.

⁶ Quite unexpectedly, contemporary to 'Eyno-l-Qozāt, Sanā'i does not appear on that list, which would support the thesis of Šafi'i-Kadkani that the famous *Lament of Eblis* ascribed to the poet of Qazvin is of a later origin.

⁷ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. II, 417.

fereštegān, as the transmitter of God's knowledge was then a *moršed* and *šeyx* of angels, and as such he should be placed at the top of *selsele*, the spiritual chain of the transmitters of Gnosis. As a *moršed* he is a paragon of a perfect lover and Sufis who adhere to *maktab-e 'ešq* should cast their lot with him.

On the plea of intimacy between God and Eblis, the Pearl of Qazis, questions Eblis' willingness to rebel against his old Friend and (using allegorical interpretation *ta'avil*) offers several hidden meanings to his disobedience.

By using a rhetoric figure of *talmih*, 'Eyno-l-Qozāt resorts to "the most beautiful of all stories", the Koranic story of Joseph, and suggests a parallel between God and Eblis and Joseph and his brother Benjamin.

On the basis of analogy the author of the *Letters* sets a scene which could anticipate the moment of Eblis' rebellion and challenges his readers with a question:

„How can you know what God said secretly to Eblis when they were together behind the veil with no Adam, neither Gabriel and Michael as their witnesses?"⁸

And he continues:

„Yusuf behind the veil told Benjamin what he told, and outside the veil Benjamin was seized on the charge of robbery and though apparently defamed in two worlds, he enjoyed the accusation."⁹

Thus, according to the Qazi's exegesis, the rebellion of Eblis is parallel to the theft of Benjamin in the story of Joseph, which implies a sort of a secret deal between two old friends, the Master and His devoted disciple.

Another argument raised by 'Eyno-l-Qozāt to justify Eblis' disobedience is one of predestination. As other advocates of the Fallen Angel, Hamadāni emphasizes that it was not only Eblis but also Adam who disobeyed his Lord. Nonetheless, the "Lord chose him (Adam) and turned to him with forgiveness, and gave him guidance."¹⁰

Hence, the fate of Eblis refers to a higher wisdom, inconceivable to human minds, according to which God "sends astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills"¹¹. In this context Eblis can be regarded as the victim of God's trick, since God "is the best of those who plot."¹²

⁸ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. II, 188.

⁹ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. II, 189.

¹⁰ Koran 20:122. See: *The Noble Qur'an*, 426.

¹¹ Koran 16:93. See: *The Noble Qur'an*, 361.

¹² Koran 8:30. See: *The Noble Qur'an*, 235. See also a *qazal* ascribed to Sanā'iyi:

Dar rāh-e man nehād nehān dām-e mokr-e xiš
Ādam miyān-e halqe-ye ān dām dāne bud

The next paradox indicated also by the author of *Nāmeḥā* refers to the fact that both rebellions of Eblis and of Adam, happened in the celestial world where there is no will but God's. The insubordination of Eblis was, therefore, according to God's will and his fate had been defined earlier. As an adherent of fatalist conception (*jabr*), Hamadāni compares the verdicts of destiny to the weaver's shop in which black rugs (*gelim-e siyāh*) and golden carpets of our fate had been woven long before the creation of the world.

Further, 'Eyno-l-Qozāt reveals to his disciples a hidden meaning of God's command, namely, the command of God was in contradiction with His will and, in fact, it was a trial to which He exposed His Lover. Hamadāni writes:

"Another thing is to lose oneself for the sake of a command and another thing is to lose oneself for the sake of the will of the Beloved. There is a difference between knowing the command of the Beloved and knowing His Will. (...) The command is outward (*zāher*) and the will is inward (*bāten*). If, for example, a father tells his son: "Don't show me too much affection because I will be ashamed of you", and still, the son increases his affection towards his father, it is not in contradiction with his father's will. Though it is in an apparent contradiction with his command. If sultan Mahmud had told Ayyāz to go and serve somebody else, and he would have gone, then it would have been a sin (*xatā*). A person who in such a position (*maqām*) fulfills the command, is immature."¹³

Describing the trial of Eblis in Sufi terms of *maqām* suggests that a similar ordeal is faced by a mystic on one of the stages of his Spiritual Path. Thus, at a certain *maqām* he is supposed to ignore a demand of *ṣar'iat* in order to enact God's will. The mystic expresses it more openly in another comment:

"Sometimes the command is a touchstone of a lover's value. If he fulfills the command it means that he is not mature, and when he disobeys, it means that he is perfect. (...) One who knows the will of the Beloved should not fulfill his command. (...) Eblis knew God's will and knew that God did not want him to prostrate before Adam, when He said: "Prostrate before Adam!" It was a trial by which He wanted to see who would prostrate before someone other than Him. And all did prostrate but the Teacher of Angels. Undoubtedly, the teacher should be more mature than his pupils."¹⁴

Eblis' disobedience is justified, or even praised, because it was due to his *bāten* knowledge. 'Eyno-l-Qozāt, thus juxtaposes *zāher* and *bāten* knowledge in terms of the ability to distinguish between a command and a will. Further, the Master from Hamadan instructs his novices by claiming:

¹³ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 75.

¹⁴ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 95-96.

"Who wants to be a good *morid* should possess the attributes of Eblis" (*morid-e eblis sefat bāyad tā az u čizi bi-yā-yad*).¹⁵

Thus, according to an esoteric interpretation which is in glaring contradiction to the traditional version of events, Eblis did withstand the test and, therefore, deserved a title of the Lord of Monotheists (*sayyedo-l-movahhedin*).¹⁶ Though the Lord of Monotheists obeyed the will of the Beloved, he rebelled against the command and as a consequence, he was banished from Heaven and till the end of Time he is tainted with anathema. He should be cursed since it is the fate bestowed upon him by his Beloved. Therefore, he boasts of being cursed and prefers it to the joy of being praised. The fate of the Damned Lover is compared by 'Eyno-l-Qozāt to possessing a black rug (*gelim-e siyāh*) given by the beloved. The Master of Hamadan asks the readers of his *Letters*:

"What would you say if the beloved gave you a black rug as a present? Would you exchange it for a precious brocade carpet? Never and ever! The Lovers (*āšeqān*) know what the meaning of the present of the Beloved is. It is an earthly love which says that a brocade carpet is better than a black rug. For the Lovers, however, His curse (*la'nat*) and His mercy (*rahmat*) mean the same (*'āšeqān-rā la'nat o rahmat-e u barābar ast*)."¹⁷

One of the mystics quoted by Hamadāni, Abo-l-Qāsem Gorgāni would call the Possessor of a Black Kilim: *sarvar-e mahjurān*, i.e. „The Leader of the Forlorn”.¹⁸ 'Eyno-l-Qozāt says that only those who have gone behind the veil and then found themselves among "those who reject Faith", *kāferin*¹⁹, can experience the state of *sarvar-e mahjurān*, or rather smell the air of "the majesty of Eblis' happiness" (*jalālat-e dowlāt-e eblis*). The sympathies of Sufis towards Eblis are soundly justified then, bearing in mind that the fate of *sarvar-e mahjurān* is shared by all those who, while in an ecstatic state experienced *towhid* and then find themselves in exile in the realm of outward (*zāher*) commands.

Eblis' mission on Earth is another subject of esoteric re-evaluation.

¹⁵ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 75.

¹⁶ It was Hoseyn ebn-e Mansur Hallāj who praised Eblis' highest degree of monotheism in *Al-Tawāsin*, and then Ahmad Qazālī who coined the *laqab*. It was also Hallāj who first described God's command in terms of a trial in the story about meeting between Moses and Eblis. See: Hoseyn-e Mansur-e Hallāj, *Kitāb al-tawāsin*, ed. by Louis Massignon, Paris 1913, 45-46; Ahmad Qazālī, *Majāles*, ed. and transl. by A. Mojāhed, Tehrān 1997, 11-12.

¹⁷ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 97-98.

¹⁸ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 97.

¹⁹ Koran 2:34. See: *The Noble Qur'an*, 9.

Following his Master, the Forlorn Lover puts to the test all those who dare to declare love for God and does not let immature Sufis in front of the Lord. In the context of his earthly mission, Eblis is called by the author of *Tamhidāt* with a series of names which could form a sort of litany.

According to 'Eyno-l-Qozāt the Path of God is marked by two complementary stages: infidelity (*kofr*) and faith (*imān*). The denial of God's existence is therefore a pre-condition of faith in God. Doubt must anticipate faith as it happens in the *kalame-ye towhid* (*lā elāh-a ella-llāh*) in which affirmation follows negation. Thus, the dialectic strain between the two parts of Muslim credo serves as a paradigm of the mystical *tariqat*. Every Sufi should pass the Circle of Negation (*dāyere-ye lā*) in order to enter the Circle of Affirmation and Faith (*dāyere-ye ella-llāh*) and, ultimately, enter the Circle of Allāh (*dāyere-ye allāh*). However, at the end of this mystical path, in the threshold of the Circle of God stands Eblis. He has got a stature of *alef* (*qadd-e alef*)²⁰ and grasps a sword of anger driving away from the palace all those who have not achieved spiritual perfection. In this position Eblis is called by Hamadāni: a "Guardian of His Majesty" (*pāsbān-e hazrat*), a "Jealously Zealous of the Kingdom" (*qayur-e mamlekat*), a "Doorkeeper of [the Palace] of Monotheism" (*hājeb-e ella-llāh*), a "Slave of the attribute of Wrath" (*qolām-e sefat-e qahr*) and "One who Distinguishes the Hypocrites [from the Real Lovers]" (*momayyez-e modda'iyān*).²¹ 'Eyn-l-Qozāt reports the words which God told Eblis on this occasion:

"You are my Lover, a jealous guardian of my palace, watch out not to let the strangers in front of my Majesty."²²

Standing in the threshold of *towhid*, the Doorkeeper of Monotheism can manifest himself to a mystic as a "Black Light" (*nur-e siyāh*). Hamadāni maintains that the "Black light" is sometimes perceived by a Sufi in the shape of a white leviathan (*nahang-e sefid*)²³ He also describes *nur-e siyāh* metaphorically as "moonlight", "curls and eyebrows" of the Beloved, a "shadow of the Muhammad's Sun" and "the last veil".²⁴

²⁰ Possessing a *qadd-e alef* means that he has a vertical orientation since he sees and praises only God. Sari as-Saqati, a sufi from Baghdad contemporary to Ebn-e Hanbal, maintained that *alef* is the only letter which did not prostrate to Adam and therefore it is a letter of Eblis; see: A. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, New York – London, 1984, 94.

²¹ 'Eyno-l-Qozāt-e Hamadāni, *Tamhidāt*, Tehrān 1994-5, 342.

²² *Ibid.*, 228. See also: 30, 119.

²³ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. II, 255.

²⁴ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 91. The term "Black Light" was taken by Hamadāni after Abu-l-Hasan Bosti and Ahmad Qazālī. While Hasan Bosti and Ahmad Qazālī make slight hints

In *Tamhidāt*, *nur-e siyāh* is also called as a "source of infidelity" (*sarčešme-ye kofr*), "the residence of Satan" (*maskan-e šeytān*) and a "light which emerges from the depths of wrath" (*az kān-e qahr o xašm*).²⁵ Nevertheless, it is not an absolute obscurity or pure darkness. It is named "black light" in comparison with God's Light. Nevertheless, it is a light. In this context Hamadāni quotes Hasan from Basra who said:

"If Eblis showed to people his light, they would praise him as God."²⁶

Ultimately, Eblis and the Black Light are described by Kadi in reference to the Prophet and his Light:

"The Sun is the light of Muhammad, which rises from the eternal East (*mašreq-e azālī*) whereas moonlight is the light of Eblis, which shines from the eternal West (*maqreb-e abadī*). Those two lights are at such a distance from each other as East from West and as Earth from Heaven. However, in another world where neither mornings nor evenings exist, they are just two aspects of Beauty and Majesty of One Light."²⁷

Hamadāni's discourse may imply Zurvanic associations, namely Eblis and Muhammad emerge from the Divine Entity – God's Essence (*zāt*) – as two manifestations of His attributes (*sefāt*), such as Ahriman and Ahuramazda from Zurvan.²⁸ According to Hamadāni, God who is perfect must be beyond good and evil. Such a concept leads inevitably to the relativity of good and evil. The author of the *Letters* maintains that everything which appears to us as bad is good in its essence; however one should pass all the Mystical Path to come to such a conclusion. All that we perceive as evil is only an illusive bad, such as blood-letting, which hurts but serves our health.²⁹

In another passage of *Tamhidāt* God is compared to the Sun from which emanates the Light of Eblis and the Light of the Prophet.

at the black light (Ahmad Qazālī compares it ambiguously using highly esoteric language to "becoming a single hair in the curls of the Beloved": *muy šodan dar zolf-e ma'šūq* or "hiding oneself in the essence of 'not'" (*extefā' dar konh-e ellā*), Kadi tries to develop the concept. H. Corbin describes *nur-e siyāh* as "a light without matter". See: H. Corbin, *L'homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*, Éditions Présence, Paris 1971, 148–178.

²⁵ *Tamhidāt*, 270.

²⁶ *Tamhidāt*, 211.

²⁷ *Tamhidāt*, 126, 213, 214.

²⁸ Zurvanic tradition places God above good and evil while for Muslim theologians the matter of identity of God's *seffāt* with his *zāt* is a matter of controversy. Mu'tazilis claimed their identity whereas the Aš'ari school's standpoint was more ambiguous, i.e. the attributes were supposed to be eternal in the *zāt* of God but not identical with it.

²⁹ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. II, 295.

"Faith originates from the Light of Muhammad and infidelity from the Light of Eblis. However, the essence (*gowhar*) of Eblis and Muhammad have their source in the Sun of God's Light (*āftāb-e nur-e allāh*)."³⁰

"The same Sun makes the face of a washerwoman black and her clothes white and if in respect to this the Sun is called "the whitening Sun" and "the blackening Sun", the stupid will think that the whitening one is different from the blackening one. And it is a mistake which gave way to the diversity of God's names. God's wrath (*qazab*) and God's approval are one and the distinction between them originated from the contradictory consequences they cause."³¹

Eblis and Muhammad are, thus, presented by Hamadāni as a pair of complementary contradictions, two sides of the Truth, hypostases of apparently contradictory attributes of God: mercy and anger (*rahmat* and *qazab*) or beauty and majesty (*mazhar-e jamāl* and *mazhar-e jalāl*).³²

"Don't you know that God has two names? One is the Merciful and Compassionate (*ar-rahmano-r-rahim*) while the other one is the Omnipotent and Haughty (*al-jabbāro-l-motakkabber*). He created Eblis from the attribute of Power, whereas Muhammad was created from the attribute of Mercy. Hence, Ahmad's sustenance is Mercy and Eblis' sustenance is wrath (*qahr o qazab*)."³³

As darkness is necessary for light to shine so the temptation of Eblis is necessary to prove one's faith. 'Eyno-l-Qozāt claims:

"Muhammad could not exist without Eblis, like obedience cannot exist without disobedience, or faith without infidelity. Hence, the faith (*imān*) of Muhammad could not exist without the infidelity (*kofr*) of Eblis."³⁴

Last, but not least, in his defence of Eblis 'Eyno-l-Qozāt-e Hamadāni appeals to the aesthetic sensibilities of his Persian readers:

"The light of Ahmad is a mole on the cheek of the Divine Beloved whereas the light of Eblis is his curls and eyebrows. Could you imagine a perfect beauty without curls and eyebrows?"³⁵

It is questionable whether the verdict of a non-Persian jury would be similar.

³⁰ *Tamhidāt*, 186.

³¹ *Nāmeḥā*, vol. I, 180.

³² *Tamhidāt*, 73. *Jamāl* as a beauty attracts, whereas *jalāl* by commanding respect creates a distance.

³³ *Tamhidāt*, 227.

³⁴ *Tamhidāt*, 187.

³⁵ *Tamhidāt*, 121.

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MEHMET RAUF AND HIS MEMOIRS *

Mehmet Rauf (1875-1931) is one of the greatest writers grouped round the magazine *Servet-i Fünun*.¹ He happened to be born and grow up in the period of the profound transformation of the Ottoman Empire. It was this period that the reformatory tendencies initiated by the reformers of Tanzimat found their entire expression. Wide changes could be observed in such domains as the secular education system, bureaucracy, the army, press, literature and culture. Destined by his father for a military career, he studied at the military secondary schools in Istanbul (*Eyüp* and *Soğukçeşme Rüşdî-i Askerî*, 1884-1888) and then in the naval school on Prince Islands (*Mekteb-i Bahriye*, 1888-1894). With the rank of Lieutenant (*teğmen*) he started his naval service which lasted until 1910, when he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and removed from the army for having written a pornographic novel.² He found himself in difficulties and led a modest life, earning his keep from writing. After having gained great popularity with his novel *Eylül* (1901), which is considered to be the first Turkish psychological novel, he tried for long years to make a hit again but his efforts were not successful. As his biographer M.Törenek writes, "Through all his life he was burning with a longing to be a great writer and this yearning became his strongest dynamism."³

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¹ *Servet-i Fünun* – 1. the title of the periodical edited from 1891 by Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz; 2. the name of the company of young, progressive writers who gave rise to the phenomenon of *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* in Turkish literature.

² *Bir Zambak'ın Hikâyesi* (1910).

³ Mehmet Rauf: *Edebî Hatıralar* (ed. by Mehmet Törenek), İstanbul 1997, 13.