

## Humiliated in Language: On Translation and Taqiyya

Anthony Paul Smith

In the name of God, the Afflicter [aḍ-Ḍārr], the Humiliator [al-Hāfiḍ].<sup>1</sup>

“I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still believe in grammar.” - Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*.

“Know first that ‘speech’ is other than ‘book’, and neither is the same as the other, because speech is perceived only through hearing and book is perceived only through eyesight. So, the Real’s Speech is perceived through inward hearing, and His Book is perceived through inward eyesight. As for the soul’s speech and book, they are perceived only through outward hearing and eyesight.” - Mulla Sadra, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*.

Everywhere the self is humiliated and alienated in language. We are fleshy creatures, born stinking into a poorly made world, born into the wrong state of things, where the birthing cries of our mothers give way to the grammar of our fathers. Born covered in the piss, shit, blood, and vaginal fluids of our mothers, we are taken by our fathers and manipulated, literally handled by a man, to make our first ungrammatical expression of meaning. We cry and no one knows or remembers what it is they were trying to say once they learn the grammar of the fathers.

Imagine though we were to try and translate these first ungrammatical sounds, so far from language that even the most daring and most dashing deconstructionist will not write on the cry of the child. He will not write on the sheer lack of belief in grammar present there. Imagine that one spends the rest of one’s life trying to translate just that. To come back to that unalienated immanence where grammar had not yet split us between legibility and illegibility. Is it not the cry of Job? “Job

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<sup>1</sup> It is well known that in Islam there are ninety-nine names or attributes of God. Of course, this “ninety-nine” is purely symbolic and refers to the immeasurableness of the proliferation of such names and attributes. In Navid Kermani’s stunning *The Terror of God: Attar, Job and the Metaphysical Revolt* he informs his readers that “Most of God’s names or attributes have positive connotations for humans; but frequently there are also more confusing names (trans. Wieland Hoban, (London: Polity, 2011) p. xii).” Of these names he lists the two that I have written this epistle in the name of, following, faithfully but inverted, the usual practice of Islamic epistolary treaties found in the Middle Ages where they are written in “the name of God, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful” and other such positive names.

opening his mouth and cursed his day. And Job spoke up and said: Annul the day that I was born and the night that said, ‘A man is conceived.’ That day, let it be darkness (Job 3:1–4).”<sup>2</sup> That cry expressing the desire to have never been born? Or is that assuming too much, lacking as we do a translator? So being like the neophyte stumbling about in a new language, grasping at anything familiar and running with its assumed but mistaken meaning? Perhaps, but undeniably there is such a cry that springs forth from the mouth of human beings, passing hot, stinking air through stretched and inflamed cords of flesh, passing over a membrane sticky with saliva and offending those who have claimed to love us: “My breath became strange to my wife, I repelled my very own children (Job 19:17).” But isn’t this cry not so much a wish, an expression of some desire, but a new vision of what already is happening in our lives? Despite the harsh sterility of the fluorescent bulbs that greet our arrival, is not the day we are born already darkness? It certainly isn’t understandable, legible, it is dark in the sense that it makes no sense, it lacks a grammar and so it lacks an order. This is why it is so offensive to a theologian of the self like St. Augustine who writes in reference to Job and infancy:

Who reminds me of the sin of my infancy? for ‘none is pure from sin before you, not even an infant of one day upon the earth (Job 14: 4–5)’. Who reminds me? Any tiny child now, for I see in that child what I do not remember in myself. What sin did I then have? Was it wrong that in tears I greedily opening my mouth wide to suck the breasts? If I were to do that now, gasping to eat food appropriate to my present age, I would be laughed at and very properly rebuked. At the time of my infancy I must have acted reprehensibly; but since I could not understand the person who admonished me, neither custom nor reason allowed me to be reprehended.<sup>3</sup>

His theology is predicated on the meaning grammar bestows upon not just our universe, that must be easy even for scientists today, but ourselves, for which so many contemporary scientists stand hunched, cooing around screens of brains lighting up as if that dealt with the cry of Job, with the pain of being a creature, as if that constituted gnosis.

Perhaps the answer to this lies in our breath becoming strange to those whom we love and who we are told—with their own breath passing over their own moist and fleshy membranes—love us. Consider the close relationship in Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic (surely three divine languages, if there

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<sup>2</sup> All translations of Job are from Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010).

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 9.)

are such things in this world, and there are, perhaps) between breath and spirit/soul. In each case, of course, there is a distinction between soul and spirit, where spirit often repeats the same word for breath, but also the root in each for soul also is closely related to that of breath. What if we could taste something else, something strange, when we spoke? What if our breath, the very spirit of ourselves, become strange also to our self-love? Not the seeming hot love of a Narcissist staring back at himself, but the familiar love of marriage become the familiarity with oneself in a kind of auto-marriage. We take ourselves for granted, like the old husband takes his old wife for granted. We think we know who we are, as our days have become ordered, our relation to ourselves has its rhythm, its grammar. Clearly, I am surfacing here many different problematics, but the focus will be on three: gnosis or self-knowledge as it is humiliated in the act of translation and the making strange of our thought and selves that accompanies translation as found in the practice of *taqiyya* or dissimulation.

### **Translation: Or the old man with gingivitis tries to seduce the young woman**

In order to be brief, let me write it directly: when one translates one is humiliated by the language. You find yourself failing in your fidelity, waking up next to another who sort of looks like the one you tried to be faithful to, but isn't and you know it. But you humiliate yourself also because you love it. You love this book. And that love is real, it is the drive behind approaching that beloved with your breath stinking and hoping that you will be able to speak without offense despite your infidelity. Translating is one way to find yourself, to know who you are, because of what you can't do. But this assumes something that goes against the contemporary philosophical emphasis on heroism. It assumes that you know yourself not in your seeming immortality, but in your weakness. That, to be human has very little to do with being a hero, and more to do with that cry of Job, or with the convulsions of Muhammad at the speech of the archangel Jibril, another translator of sorts trying to be faithful.

To translate is to move closer to that cry of the infant, and ultimately to move closer to what Laruelle calls Man-in-Man. I have to lament here the fact I always have to follow the text. To translate Homme-en-Homme as if it is unproblematic to me that Laruelle always speaks of the man, even if he doesn't want there to be a gendered notion of the human, he still, perhaps because of his grammar, speaks of man, who is undeniably gendered even if it just seems so minimally for the philosopher looking for the generic definition. Of course, what Laruelle means by Man-in-Man, or the Human-in-Human, is that radical immanence of lived "humanity". What it means to be a Human in that moment of the infant's cry, prior to grammar, prior to transcendental determination, prior to anything but the

purely lived. Prior to being a subject, a hero or a victim, a mother or a father. The moment between reading the French sentence, knowing it, and turning it into English, is a lived moment between words, between grammars. And yet that moment passes; the transformation happens. It is secondary in some sense to that inchoate moment (from the perspective of grammar) of knowing, but it still happens. And it appears that this happening is a creatural moment, it is lived in the act of translation, it is the ability to know a second time, to move between Fathers, to, in some sense, escape from the humiliation and to show the beloved... what? Show the beloved that you see. That you have struggled against finitude and inevitably will lose that struggle, but that the struggle is, as it was in the beginning, still there. It has yet to win.

Let us step into Laruelle for a moment. This is how he talks about translation, though note this is my translation (made with a friend, a co-translator, Nicola Rubczak), and not his words as he wrote them. But nonetheless I will say this is what he wrote,

It is thus in this theoretical usage, in this transcendental theory of private philosophical languages (at once general and total), from this non-linguistic identity of language, that the problem arises of a translation of philosophies “into” one another, which is to say in-One-in-the-last-instance, rather than an inter-philosophical translation under the ultimate authority of philosophy. Non-philosophy is this translation of Kant “into” Descartes, of Descartes “into” Marx, of Marx “into” Husserl, etc. That is to say under the condition of the vision-in-One as un-translatable Real. To put it more rigorously, no more than it is im-possible or un-symbolizable, the Real is not un-translatable, but is rather that which renders the possibility of translation real-in-the-last-instance, the Real itself being foreclosed, without negation, to any translation and not becoming the untranslatable other than as force-(of)-thought or, in this instance, force-(of)-translation that a democracy that is not a simple transcendental appearance can be introduced into philosophy and between philosophies in place of their conflictual and hierarchical multiplicity.<sup>4</sup>

Laruelle is expanding the sense of translation here beyond simply the translation of one language to another, but of one philosophical language-game to another. He is correct to see that the various philosophies that vie for our allegiance are like those everyday languages. They have their own grammars, they have their own rules, their own ways of making the world appear ordered. But too many roads made right pave over corpses. What non-philosophical translation does is provide the theoretical means by which one can purge themselves, a kind of ablution of the mouth, cleansing itself of the remnants of philosophical faith. Allowing one to speak to the beloved, to speak Descartes to Marx and Spinoza to Aquinas. For to translate one finally has to set aside this vision of authority. One

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<sup>4</sup> François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 224.

has to set aside one's faith in the text's legibility. One has to finally speak, even if it is seemingly in the language of another.

### **Taqiyya: Or honesty is a hindrance when you want to be what is Real**

*Taqiyya*, which translates into English as “dissimulation”, is a concept that may help us deepen our understanding of the practice of non-philosophical translation. Now this practice has been maligned in the paranoid American press where it has been misunderstood as “lying” or collapsed into another practice, that of *satr* or “concealment”. Perhaps it is unsurprising, given the usage of Shi'a Islam (including the theology of Mulla Sadra) by Iranian Mullahs and Ayatollahs, that the political leaders of America and Europe would also pretend to be theologians, pontificating on practices they do not understand, in the service of their own achievement and their own apocalyptic visions. So we find that *taqiyya* as a form of lying was discussed at length during the 2012 Republican primaries in the US and more recently with regard to the continuing tensions between Iran (being, of course, the home of the majority of the world's Shi'a Muslims) and the West concerning its nuclear program. Now I'm not going to pretend to know what's true here. As is my habit, I am uninterested in the majoritarian or sedimented form of the religion, even if it is a minority within a wider majoritarian discourse, as Shi'a Islam is. *Taqiyya* or dissimulation is not lying and the development of *taqiyya* within the context of Shi'a Islam has very little to do with contemporary forms of Qutbism (named after Sayyid Qutb, Egyptian Islamist and founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, who argued for a form of political theology not altogether unlike the “anarchist monarchism” of the Christian theologians David Bentley Hart and John Milbank) or whatever comes under the general misnomer “Islamism” that encourages a certain kind of fundamental dishonesty in the service of jihad (consider the perpetrators of 9/11 and their own kind of Islamic rumspringa, visiting strip clubs, playing video games, essentially trying to act as “American” as possible within their Qutbist distortion of what it means to be American). Fundamental to my argument here is that there is a minimal difference (meaning it makes all the difference in the world) between lying and dissimulation (and this applies equally to the Jewish cousin of *taqiyya* you find in the practices of marrano Jews). The historical practice of *taqiyya* was indeed a tactic of survival amongst a persecuted community to the extent that the Sixth Shi'a Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq is often said to have pronounced, “*Taqiyya* is my religion and the religion of my ancestors” referring to the use of the practice to protect the line of Imams and their followers from violence. To understand this minimal difference between dishonesty and dissimulation, let us consider a short history of its development.

The concept of *taqiyya* is developed on the basis of verses in the Qur'an, though which verses depends on which thinker is developing it. But in each case there is some mixture of mortal danger and a separation of the external from the internal. Take sura 3 ("Al 'Imran", from the Median period), verses 28-29 which reads in the interpretation of *The Study Quran* (and not translation, as we are at least saved from the humiliation of having to translate the words of God) as "Let not the believers take the disbelievers as protectors apart from the believers. Whosoever does that has no bond with God, unless you guard against them out of prudence [*tuqab*, which is read as *taqiyya*]. And God warned you of Himself, and unto God is the journey's end. Say, 'If you hide what is in your breasts or disclose it, God knows it, and He knows whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth.' And God is Powerful over all things."<sup>5</sup> We see here the danger, of those unbelievers who may need to be made friends with to protect oneself from them, and the sense of God being able to see the true self. This is even clearer in sura 16 ("Al-Nahl" or "The Bee", from the late Makkan period), verses 106-110, which reads, "Whosoever disbelieves in God after having believes—save one who is coerced, while his heart is at peace in faith—but whosoever opens his breast unto disbelief, upon them shall be the Wrath of God, and theirs shall be a great punishment. That is for their having preferred the life of this world to the Hereafter. And surely God guides not disbelieving people. It is they on who hearts God has placed a seal, won their hearing and their seeing. It is they who are heedless. There is no doubt that in the Hereafter they are the losers. Then indeed thy Lord, for this who emigrated after being oppressed, then strove and were patient, surely thy Lord thereafter is Forgiving, Merciful." This line "save [or unless] one who is coerced, while his heart is at peace in faith" shows a clear differentiation between the external and internal selves, an anthropological split *within the World* without love *for this World*. All the monotheisms, including those gathered under the term gnosticism, have a distrust for the World and the way it forms the self. Islam is no exception and we see it at the heart of the Qur'anic verses that support the development of *taqiyya*.

This continued in the development of *taqiyya* in the Shi'a tradition. While the majority Sunni also have a conception of *taqiyya* it was in the Shi'a tradition, namely with the Twelvers and Ishmaili, that *taqiyya* was raised to the level of a developed theoretical doctrine. The historian of the Ismailis Shafique Virani sums it up this way, "For the Shi'a, *taqiyya* has two aspects: hiding their association with the cause of the Imams when its open declaration would expose them to danger and, equally important, keeping the esoteric teachings of the Imams hidden from those who are unprepared to

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<sup>5</sup> All passages from the Qur'an come from *The Study Quran* published by HarperOne in 2015.

receive them.”<sup>6</sup> He ends this summary with a remarkable quote from al-Sadiq, “The Shi’i Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq is reputed to have said, “Our teaching is the truth, the truth of the truth; it is the exoteric and the esoteric, and the esoteric of the esoteric; it is the secret and the secret of a secret, a protected secret, hidden by a secret.”<sup>7</sup> And it was al-Sadiq who developed this doctrine the furthest after his father, al-Baqir, first developed it as a way to protect the line of Imams from the political troubles raised by threat the non-Imami Caliphate felt towards their power.

With Ja’far al-Sadiq, Farhad Daftary claims, *taqiyya* became a “absolute article of Shi’i faith”.<sup>8</sup> But it wasn’t developed for it’s own sake, it developed in line with a Ja’farian reinterpretation of the Imamate that focused on the idea of *nass* which was the claim that the position of the Imam was given purely graciously by God to the line descending from the Prophet Muhammad. It didn’t need to be proven because the basis of it was in the Imam’s *ilm* or special knowledge (we might translate this by the word gnosis). As Daftary explains, “The principle of the *nass* had two important results. First, it made it no longer necessary for an imam to rebel against the established regimes in order to assert his claim or become the actual leader. In other words, the institutions of the imamate and the caliphate were separated from one another, by allowing for a non-ruling imam who was not required to seize the caliphal authority if circumstances did not permit it. [...] Secondly [...] the *nass* imamate provided an important basis for the communal continuity of Shi’ism, since it made possible a continuing dissident body of people attached to a continuing line of imams regardless of the fate of particular political movements. It also encouraged a systematic development of special religious ideas which could gain acceptance among such dissident bodies without competing for the attention of all Muslims generally.”<sup>9</sup> So, in short, what the Ja’farian construction of *taqiyya* led to was a kind of counter-cultural aiming at a complete cultural overturning of the dominant system, but without attempting to force it. There was a recognition that political power should be taken if it was expedient, but that the transformation of the broader culture could occur with a non-ruling imam, through the cultivation of a culture hidden within the apparent World.

Taqiyya as a doctrine became necessary after the death of al-Sadiq as the Shi’a split into groups that eventually solidified as the aforementioned Twelvers and Ismaili. The second of these two

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<sup>6</sup> Shafique N. Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 82

<sup>9</sup> Daftary, p. 81-2.

especially practiced *taqiyya* both among other Muslims (including amongst Tvelevs) and with the Mongol invaders that nearly destroyed the entire culture. It was *taqiyya* that allowed for the Ismaili to survive up to the present day through their diaspora that led them from Northern Iran to India.

### **Conclusion: In/fidelity and Dissimulation**

The point of self-knowledge is not to find out what fatherly grammar is best. That is just replacing one master for another, a new father to replace the other one, and this one will likely be as shit at the job as the last one anyway. It isn't about an ultimate submission in that sense. But rather it takes the line from Hoseyn al-Hallaj (the famous Christ-like martyr in Islam, still hotly debated today) to Fard ad-Din Attar (a Sufi poet who memorialized Hallaj) on the convertability of fidelity and infidelity, it takes the question of submission as an inner submission, submission not as an outward act, but an inward comportment. Hallaj was crucified by the pious religious authorities and the power-hungry civil authorities for speaking the words, “*ana l'haqq*” or “I am the Real”. This was considered impious because *al-haqq* is one of the names of God. Self-knowledge through such a submission is one that comes, not from divine union with grammar, but ultimately with separation from that grammar. Not complete separation, as if that were possible, but radical separation. Radical in the sense that this separation goes one way. I am separate from the grammar as a Human-in-Human, but grammar is not separate from me. There is always a part of the Human hidden from grammar. So then the ability to move between grammars is what points to that messianic character of the human. Able to redeem words lost forever within their grammatical identity, thinking they have submitted, when all that they have really done is unknowingly say some words, without any sense of gnosis.

After this short historical overview, let us return now to the phrase I used in my introduction - “the wrong state of things”. This phrase, of Adornian lineage, refers to the split between the ideal and the concrete, from a religious perspective it may, drawing on Philip Goodchild's description of the apocalyptic synthesis of time, refer to the split between the fulfillment of history and the continued progression of worldly/historical time.<sup>10</sup> But this split will persist, according to both Goodchild and Adorno, because there will never be a justice adequate to the suffering that came, and I want to point out here the potential debate between such an apocalyptic position and the theodicy of Meillassoux's in-existent divine who will bring justice to the dead. This split is, I think, the metaphysics of *taqiyya* of dissimulation. Dissimulation is the unilateral name for what happens between a duality, a duality of

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<sup>10</sup> See Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Continuum, 2007) and Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Prince of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2002).

the hidden and the apparent, between essence and existence, between concealment and manifestation. Christian Jambet gives the general shape of this seeming negative dialectic (in true non-philosophical fashion, I prefer to think of negative dialectics in general and here in particular as a unilateral duality where there is no resolution of the two terms and wherein we think the identity of the two terms as real and not co-determined as such). Jambet explains this general shape, again of the concealed and the apparent, in this way, with reference primarily to the divine but also in relation to the created:

The divine essence is the absolute real [by which he means something like a thetic identity, a priori, A=A]. [...] The knot of the identity of the identical [i.e. the divine] and the created is the form of the identical within the created, through which the created is revealed, an epiphany of the identical. But this identity, designated by the divine name ‘the Apparent’, also assumes the divine name ‘the Hidden’. The identity is an ontological coincidence of apparition and concealment according to epiphanic unity, or deployed under a mode of the unity of the real. [He goes on to call this a kind of negativity, those familiar with negative theology will recognize it...] The negation intervenes only in the mirror play itself, between the Essence and its realization, in the way of a reversal of perspective rather than as labour of the negative. The Hidden says ‘No’ when the Apparent says ‘I’ and the Apparent says ‘Non’ when the Hidden says ‘I’. The name ‘the Hidden’ designates here the Essence itself, such that we may attain it negatively. The name ‘the Apparent’ designates the set of manifestation, which opens the field of theophanies at the threshold of the divine names. The disjunction that grounds the identity passes between the subject and its other: if the Essence is a subject, its epiphany says ‘No’, within which it hides the Essence reveals itself, and, inversely, when it affirms itself as subject the personal Lord of vision, the Essence withdraws.<sup>11</sup>

This general form reveals the minimal difference between the lie and dissimulation. Both the lie and dissimulation concern identity, but whereas the lie plays out on the field of representation and presentation, dissimulation plays out on the field of theophanies, of identity and diffusion. Perhaps the difference between idolatry in Christianity and Gnostic-influenced Ismaili Islam may bear this out slightly more. For in in Christian idolatry there is always a saying too much, determining the identity too much from the perspective of the created, collapsing the identity of *the* supernatural into the natural. All of which plays out very clearly in the debates concerning Christ’s divinity and humanity. Whereas for the Gnostic there is a docetic Christology at play, meaning that Christ was but a manifestation of the divine, suggesting a clandestine element or dissimulation at work in his body. This has the consequence that idolatry in Gnostic influenced thought, including Ismaili Islam, is the act of restricting essence, of shutting down the multiplicity of manifestations into a single coming together of matter and form, a single manifestation. So, dissimulation is the condition for truth, or knowledge of essence. Or consider it from a more etymological perspective. *Taqiyya* shares the same

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<sup>11</sup> Christian Jambet, *Le Cache et l’Apparent*, (Paris: L’Herne, 2003), pp. 58, 61. All translations from Jambet are my own.

root as *taywa* the Arabic word for self-awareness and is etymologically related to “taking care” and “being wary”. *Taqiyya* as a practice is related to such an *exhausted self-awareness* precisely as the diffusion of identity. Consider again al-Sadiq’s words: “It happens that I confer a teaching to someone; then he leaves me and reports it exactly as he heard it from me. Because of this, I declare that it is lawful to curse him and to dissociate oneself from him.”<sup>12</sup> The teaching cannot simply be repeated. To translate the teaching into a product, a thing that can be exchanged, well that’s what the Christian creeds do, creating a therapeutic for the wrong state of things, furthering the wrong state of things. What dissimulation does here is radically require diffuse manifestations, new creations, new discoveries, on pain of a creatural manifestation of the divine cursing you.

Here we must move away from the Ismaili and Shia Islam to a Sunni Muslim, connecting *taqiyya* to what we could term the anthropology of this negative dialectic as found in the work of Hallaj. Consider again his declaration, “I am the Real” (*ana l’-baqq*). As Attar explains, this is not a declaration of incarnationism (Christianity) or pantheism, but was a witness to the unity between God and Hallaj, which comes through Hallaj’s emptying of his apparent self. This apparent self is not a remark about Hallaj’s material form, Islam is at least as resolutely material as Christianity and Judaism, but about the self as determined by the World, by the system of predicates and signs that overcode the radical immanence of the creatural I or ego. Consider this story about Hallaj’s martyrdom. “When they cut off his hands, he burst out laughing. ‘What’s there to laugh about?’ they asked. ‘It’s easy to cut off the hand of a person who’s chained up. The true believer is one who *cuts off the hand of attributes* [my emphasis], swinging aspiration from the highest throne of heaven. [...] Then they cut out his tongue. When they cut off his head, it was the hour of the evening prayer. As his was being cut off, Hoseyn smiled and died. The people roared. Hoseyn shot the ball of his fate to the final goal of acceptance. From each one of his [severed, organs without a body] limbs came the cry of *I am the Real*. The next day they said, ‘The uproar over this will turn out to be greater than when he was alive.’ So, they burned his body — from his ashes came the cry of *I am the Real*.”<sup>13</sup> In each instance his persecutors mistook his attributes for the man and those things they identified as attributes refused that identity, always declaring themselves to be the radical identity of the Real. The hidden self, a hidden self we see Hallaj wrestling with, he accepts his fate for his sins, but refuses to repent in the way the civil and religious

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<sup>12</sup> Ja’far al-Sadiq quoted in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi’i Islam: Belief and Practices* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p. 219

<sup>13</sup> Farid ad-Din ‘Attar, *Memorial of God’s Friends: Lives and Sayings of the Sufis*, trans. Paul Losensky (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), pp. 405, 406.

authorities want. This is a hidden self, the Real, that has replaced completely the apparent set determined as it is by predicates.

To close, there is an interesting relationship between the figure of Iblis, or Satan, and Hallaj. One that Hallaj himself wrote about. For Iblis is for many, owing to the influence of Sufi teaching, is a tragic figure on at least one reading. He is God's closest companion, the one who knows the proper way to worship God, who is in a deeply intimate relationship with the divine. And then he is commanded to bow before the first man, Adam, and refuses because he won't deny his love for God which demands absolute fidelity. And in that absolute fidelity, that refusal to bow before anyone but God, Iblis is an infidel, is unfaithful. It is only through emptying himself, through practicing a kind of infidelity, that Hallaj, and all those who practice *taqiyya*, can be faithful.

Again, Attar reporting on Hallaj: "It is related that when they put him on the gallows, Satan came and said to him, 'Once you said 'I' and once I did. How is it that mercy is the result of your 'I' and damnation the result of mine?' Hoseyn said, 'Because you carried your 'I' within you and I distanced myself from mine [Hallaj literally talking about dissimulation], mercy came to me and damnation to you. Know that asserting the 'I' is not good, while driving it away is utterly so.'<sup>14</sup> The subject, I or Ego, is in some sense only such through the World. The World is the complex that makes one manifest. You stand out in relation to other things, in relations all together. So the dissimulation of the I we see in Hallaj is not about the death drive or a simple lie, but an I that can't be recognized by that fatherly and Worldly apparatus.

Self-knowledge through such a submission is one that comes, not from divine union with grammar, but ultimately with separation from that grammar. Not complete separation, as if that were possible, but radical separation. Radical in the sense that this separation goes one way. I am separate from the grammar as a Human-in-Human, but grammar is not separate from me. There is always a part of the Human hidden from grammar. So then the ability to move between grammars is what point to that messianic character of the human. Able to redeem words lost forever within their grammatical identity, thinking they have submitted, when all that they have really done is unknowingly say some words, without any sense of gnosis. I will end with a cut-up that has become dear to me in my own attempts to deal with the humiliation of translation. Bridging together Laruelle and messianic Islam, let me end with words other than my own that nonetheless are mine, for they are translated, for they come from another tongue, another grammar, but can be said here and now: "the Real is not

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<sup>14</sup> Attar, p. 407.

un-translatable, but is rather that which renders the possibility of translation real-in-the-last-instance, the Real itself being foreclosed, without negation, to any translation and not becoming the untranslatable. I am the Real.”