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Jamsheed Choksy & Su Chen, Sumanta Sarathi Sharma,
Mesfer Alhayyani, Moreno Paulon, Diganta Deka, Riccardo Campa

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The new History of ideas research Centre was founded on the conviction that the history of ideas is of great importance not only for all academic fields, but first and foremost for culture and society. The history of ideas enables a better understanding of our present, whose culture and manners of thinking result from certain traditions and therefore are not self-explanatory. We are not Europeans neither because of the territory we inhabit nor in virtue of recently concluded European treaties, but because European culture has been shaped by particular basic ideas and attitudes. They can only be clearly comprehended and commented on via an examination of their history, which can only be explicitly appropriated and evaluated against their historical background. The history of ideas explains our mental and cultural presuppositions and thereby may lead to justified affirmation and critique—not only a critique of traditional ideas, but also a critique of our present situation that often reveals its deficiencies only in the light of prior convictions and keynotes. The increasing specialization of historical studies needs to be counterbalanced by other types of research that focus on common presuppositions and thoughts, and thereby promote interdisciplinary work. This is precisely the scope of the studies of the history of ideas, where many academic fields overlap. In order to foster fruitful research discussion in the domain of the history of ideas, the research centre decided to launch the online magazine *Orbis Idearum. European Journal of the History of Ideas*, and the book series *Vestigia Idearum Historica. Beiträge zur Ideengeschichte Europas* by mentis Verlag in Münster. The concept of the history of ideas has admittedly lost its semantic outlines. Since historical research has disproved rather than confirmed Lovejoy's research program that was based on the supposition of constant unit-ideas, the concept of the history of ideas can be applied to any inquiry in the field of the *Geistesgeschichte*.

By contrast, the new History of Ideas Research Centre attempts to restore the distinctive profile of the history of ideas. For the Centre, ideas are thoughts, representations and fantasy images that may be expressed in various forms. Ideas manifest themselves first and foremost in language, but also in nonlinguistic media, and even in activities, rites and practices. In the latter case, they do not always manifest themselves directly, but are sometimes at the basis of certain cultural phenomena before eventually receiving linguistic expression. For this reason, the history of ideas coincides neither with the history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*) nor with intellectual history (*allgemeine Geistesgeschichte*). While the former is oriented towards thoughts that are expressed linguistically, and, therefore, elaborates only a part of the history of ideas, the latter is devoted to the whole mental life of humankind, which may involve even religious systems and fundamental convictions of a whole epoch. By contrast, the history of ideas always focuses on particular elements that are recognizable in thought or in culture, and whose transformation or constancy can be explored over a certain period of time by describing, analyzing, and interpreting their appearance, function, and effect. Taken in this sense, the history of ideas occupies an intermediate position: it covers a broader field than the history of concepts that could be understood as one of its subareas, but it has a more specific task than intellectual history (*allgemeine Geistesgeschichte*). Even more than in the case of the history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*), one must resist the temptation to mistake the historian's interpretations for historical ideas.

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First Section

CONTRIBUTIONS IN ENGLISH

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EXPERIENCING HAPPINESS: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF A JOYFUL ZOROASTRIAN ETHOS

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ABSTRACT[1]

How, why, and when the notion of happiness or joy arose, spread, changed, and became fundamental to the worldview, writings, arts, and religious and social practices of Mazda-worshipers or Zoroastrians are elucidated and analyzed. Influences into this concept from the classical world and impacts of this concept on neighboring societies are discussed in ancient and medieval contexts. Continuations and changes of this ethos from antiquity into modern times are documented and understood within the dualistic cosmology of Zoroastrian beliefs and the lives and aspirations of elites, clerics, and commoners, from the Iranian plateau eastward across Central Asia into China and southeastward to India.

KEYWORDS: Avesta, Bactrians, Central Asia, China, Cosmology, Dualism, Ethos, Gujarati, Happiness, India, Iran, Iranians, Joy, Manichaeism, Pahlavi Texts, Parsis, Persian, Sakas, Sogdians, Zoroastrians, Zoroastrianism

WHY HAILED BY MONARCHS?[2]

"Ahura Mazda is the great God, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created humans, who created happiness for humankind (*shiyātim adā*

[1] A preliminary version, less than one-third of the length of this article and geared toward a general readership, was published in Persian (Fārsi) as Choksy, "Shādi az ān-e besharyat (Happiness for Humanity)."

[2] Transcriptions, transliterations, and translations of quotations are by the authors unless noted otherwise and are based on the standard manuscripts and editions which have been supplemented and informed by transliterations and translations of other scholars who are cited. We have simplified the transliteration of δ to dh, š and its variants to sh, θ to th, and x to kh

martiyahyā)," proclaimed Darius I (ruled 522–486 BCE) in several of his Old Persian inscriptions.[3] Those words were duplicated by Xerxes I (ruled 486–465 BCE), Artaxerxes I (ruled 465–424 BCE), and Artaxerxes III (ruled 359–338 BCE).[4] Far more than merely the lead-in for a claim to legitimate rule—although Darius and his successors did link their authority as sacrally-bestowed by that ancient Iranian god through added phrases like "who made Darius king, one king over many"—those cosmogonical words at Naqsh-e Rostam, Persepolis, and other locations reflect a fundamentally religious concept of the divinity as bestower of *shiyāti*, "happiness, joy."[5]

Unhappiness (*a-shiyāti*) came to be regarded as an undesirable experience caused by the Lie (Old Persian *drauga*, Avestan *drug*, Middle Persian *druj*, *druz*, New Persian *dorugh*) brought into the material world by Angra Mainyu (Middle Persian Ahreman) the Angry or Evil Spirit.[6] Hence, the concept of *shiyāti* included security for the people. Indeed, Darius I correctly realized that "if the Persian people are protected, happiness will be uninterrupted for the longest time" (Persepolis inscription e 22–23).[7] So, protection was sought from Ahura Mazda especially against "the enemy army, famine, and the Lie" (i.e., the personification of "confusion," which results in "falsehood") (Persepolis inscription d 19–20).[8] Even previously, sociopolitical applications of happiness for people seem to have begun under Cyrus II (ruled 550–530 BCE) who claimed, using the first person, in the Cylinder inscription that he sought to ensure "peace," "eradication of fear," "safety," "freedom," and "happiness" for the residents of Babylon when he conquered that city in 539 BCE (Cyrus Cylinder 22–28).[9] In western thought, Cyrus would come to be regarded as the first emperor who showed great political innovation

in Avestan, Old Persian (Pārsika, Ariya), Middle Persian (Pahlavi, Pārsīg), New Persian (Fārsi), and Gujarati technical terms; Avestan y is represented as written ii and Avestan v is represented as written uu.

[3] Quoted from Darius I, Naqsh-e Rostam inscription a 1–4. See also this Persian king's Naqsh-e Rostam inscription b 1–3 (variation in text), Susa inscriptions e 1–5, f 1–3, s 1–5, t 1–5, Elvand/Alvand (Ganj Name, Hamadan) inscription 1–6, Suez inscription c 1–2. These Old Persian texts are cited from Kent, *Old Persian*, 137–138, 141–142, 146–147.

[4] Xerxes I, Persepolis inscriptions a 1–3, b 1–5, c 1–3, d 1–5, f 1–5, h 1–4, Elvand/Alvand inscription 1–7, Van inscription 1–5 (variation in text); Artaxerxes I, Persepolis inscription a 1–5; and Artaxerxes III, Persepolis inscription a 1–5, in Kent, *Old Persian*, 148–150, 152–153, 156.

[5] The political role is overemphasized in Lincoln, *'Happiness for Mankind'*, 10–11.

[6] Compare Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, 156, 277.

[7] Kent, *Old Persian*, 136.

[8] Kent, *Old Persian*, 136. See further Herrenschmidt, "Vieux-perse *šiyāti*," 13–21; Lincoln, *'Happiness for Mankind,'* 12–13.

[9] Finkel, "Cyrus Cylinder," 42–43.

though campaigns that replaced "disorder" with consolidation and thereby "diffused happiness" throughout West Asia.[10]

The Old Persian inscriptions indicate that in Zoroastrian belief all persons, not only rulers, had to fulfill obligations to god and cosmic order or righteousness to merit happiness. Darius' son and successor Xerxes I (ruled 486–465 BCE), advised: "If you should think, 'Happy (*shiyāta*) may I be while alive and righteous/blessed (*artāvā*) when dead,' then have respect for the law that Ahura Mazda has established. Worship Ahura Mazda and follow righteousness. The person who has respect for the law that Ahura Mazda established, worships Ahura Mazda, and follows righteousness, that individual becomes both happy while alive and blessed when dead" (Persepolis inscription h 46–56).[11] Many centuries later, using the Middle Persian and Parthian languages, the Sasanian king of kings Narseh (ruled 293–302 CE) claimed that the notables of Iran urged him to ascend the throne and govern with adherence to socioreligious codes on the grounds that so doing would result in "happiness to the kingdom (*shahr shādīh bawēd*)" (Paikuli inscription l. 89).[12] Shortly thereafter, a prince named Shāpūr, son of the Sasanian king of kings Hormīzd II, who was lord of the Sakas and other eastern peoples, recounted in a Middle Persian inscription at Persepolis in the year 311 CE that through wise actions "he produced much happiness and worshipped the divine beings" (Persepolis inscription 1, 9).[13]

Yet the pursuit of happiness cannot be separated from personal and political goals. Ancient Persian kings sought to consolidate and extend their authority and dominion. While claiming to instill *arta* (Old Persian)/*ardā* (Middle Persian), "order," and ensure *rām* (Old and Middle Persian), "peace," their conquest of neighboring countries and forceful suppression of self-governance produced unhappiness for others. Rulers rationalized those actions in religious terms too, as unavoidable and indeed necessary to ensure the common good. Darius I even justified inflicting torture upon political foes by attributing their sufferings to their own evil deeds and his responses as ensuring righteous punishment, claiming: "The man who makes works constructively, I reward according to his action. He who does harm, I punish according to his offense" (Naqsh-e Rostam inscription b 16–19; compare Behistun inscription 4:61–67).[14] Later, the second Sasanian king of kings Shāpūr I (ruled 240–270 CE)

[10] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 188.
[11] Kent, *Old Persian*, 151. Kellens, "L'âme entre le cadavre et le paradis," 34–38, extends interpreting the Zoroastrian notion of happiness to include sleep and sexual intercourse.
[12] Frye, "The Middle Persian and Parthian Inscriptions of Narseh," 377; Humbach and Skjaervø, *Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli*, 69.
[13] Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, 494.
[14] Kent, *Old Persian*, 138, 129, respectively. On Darius' actions see broadly the analysis in Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Torture.* On the dualism of ancient Iranian and specifically Zoro-

had inscribed, in a trilingual Middle Persian, Parthian, and Greek inscription, that his justification for attacking the Roman Empire was: "Caesar (i.e., Marcus Julius Philippus aka Philip the Arab) lied again and did wrong" (Naqsh-e Rostam inscription 4/9).[15]

Joy and happiness were highly valued and expected, from the perspective of Iranian monarchs, as ceremonial norms of the Sasanian court reflected. For example, the preface of Kalile va Demne, a collection of apologues of Sanskrit origin compiled into Middle Persian during the sixth century CE, translated into Arabic during the early eight century CE by Ibn al-Muqaffa', and subsequently rendered into New Persian describes the circumstances of its commissioning by the Sasanian monarch Khusrō I (ruled 531–579 CE). In that decree scene, officials including the *bizeshk*, "physician," Borzūya and the famous *wazīr*, "vizier, prime minister," Bozorgmehr followed rules of imperial salutations required within the royal court such as prayers that the emperor be blessed by the divine with long-lasting joy and happiness.[16]

From the Revelations of a Messenger and His Early Followers

Earlier than the time of the Achaemenian kings, happiness had been recorded in the Avestan language as a religious concept using the term *shāiti-* (also *shāiia*, "to be in the state of happiness") from *shiiāta-* and *shā-*, "happy."[17] Ahura Mazda (Middle Persian Ohrmazd) was regarded as the good spirit because he chose correctly, thereby becoming the *ahura*, "lord," who is *mazda*, "wise," and therefore the creator of all which exists in harmony with *arta* (Old Persian)/*asha* (Avestan), "righteousness, truth, order" according to revelation attributed to the messenger (Middle Persian *paygāmbar*) Zarathushtra (lived sometime between 1800–1200 BCE, later called Zoroaster by the ancient Greeks). Zarathushtra's words including those relating to happiness and joy would be recorded in Gāthās, "Devotional Poems, Religious Songs," attributed to him, which are preserved in the Yasna, "Sacrifice, Worship," section of the Avesta, "Praise," or Zoroastrian scriptures.[18]

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astrian theology that produced such reasoning and justifications see Choksy, "Doctrinal Variation within Zoroastrianism," 96–110.

[15] Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, 294–295; Huyse, *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an der Ka'ba-i Zardust (ŠKZ)*, 28. Our translation follows the preserved Parthian version.

[16] Fishbein and Montgomery, *Kalīlah and Dimnah*, 14–15, 18–19.

[17] Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, column 1716. For transliteration of Avestan terms see footnote 1.

[18] Translations of passages from the Gāthās are influenced by Humbach and Ichaporia, *Heritage of Zarathushtra*. For the Gathic texts see Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, which despite its shortcomings

Not surprisingly, because Ahura Mazda is regarded as the Wise (or Good) Lord or God, he (the deity is presented in Zoroastrian speech and texts as masculine by gender) was portrayed as the source of *shiyāti* for inhabitants of the material world which he created. In the Gāthās, Zarathushtra is said to have exclaimed: "Happy (*shiiātō*) is the holy word reciter who communicates with the All-Knowing One" (51:8).[19] The revelator went on to implore of his deity, Ahura Mazda, "Let evildoers be thwarted … let tranquility be established for those who (seek to) dwell in happiness (*shiieitibiiō vīzhibiiō*)" (53:8).[20] Subsequently, in the Yasna, his followers acknowledged they "will abide in this worship, O Ahura Mazda, with happiness" (58:3).[21] Likewise, Xerxes I's recommendation of how to live a happy life followed by a blessed afterlife appears to have been influenced by Zarathushtra's earlier declaration in the Gāthās that "whoever, man or woman, follows that which is best for existence … (he or she) will cross over the Bridge of the Requitor or Recompensator (Avestan *Cinuuatō Peretūm*, Pahlavi *Chinwad Puhl*)" (46:10) to the place "where right-mindedness is in agreement with righteousness, where (right) power is in command of good thought, and where Ahura Mazda dwells in happiness (*shaēitī*)" (46:16).[22]

Other terms for happiness or joy are attested as well in the Avesta. The Gāthās contains a word *rāniiō* (from *rāniiah-*) in reference to cattle which by providing nutrition for humans are "joy-bringing" (44:6, 47:3, 50:2).[23] Composers of the Yasna, who followed the teachings and rituals of Zarathushtra, utilized the Avestan term *uruuāsman*, "joyful," when describing the experience of imbibing haoma (Indic soma), the supposed elixir of immortality, after its pounding and preparation in the Sacrifice or Worship ritual performed by the magi during the hāwan gāh or morning watch of each day: "intoxication from haoma is accompanied by joyful righteousness" (10:8).[24] The Standard Avestan Vidēvdāt (Middle Persian Widēwdād, Wendīdād, New Persian and Gujarati Vendidād), "Code Abjuring Demonic Spirits," dating to approximately the fourth century BCE, lists five religious and social conditions that make the earth *shāishtem*, "most happy" (3:1–6) and five others that make the earth *a-shāishtem*, "most unhappy" (3:7–11).[25] Those usages, however,

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as a comprehensive edition of available manuscripts remains the authoritative edition.

[19] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 181.

[20] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 190–191.

[21] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 205.

[22] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 162, 164, respectively. Therefore, Avestan *mareta*, Old Persian *martiyahyā*, Middle Persian and New Persian *mardōm* should be translated as "humankind" rather than "mankind," contra Lincoln, *'Happiness for Mankind,'* 10–11, 446–451 (with Clarisse Herrenschmidt), and many others.

[23] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 149, 166, 176, respectively.

[24] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 50. On the Yasna ritual see Boyce, "Haoma ii: The Rituals."

[25] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 3, 15–16. The Pahlavi translation, however, glosses the term as *āsāntom*,

were specific in the Gathic and Standard Avestan texts although subsequently used more broadly in Middle Persian ones.

In Words and Visions of Medieval Magi and Laity

Medieval authors rendered Old Persian *shiyāta* and *shiyāti* into Middle Persian or Pahlavi as *shād*, "happy," and *shādīh*, "happiness," respectively, and also rendered Avestan *uruuāsman* into Middle Persian or Pahlavi as *urwāhmān*, "joyful," and *urwāhmānīh*, *urwākhmēh*, "joy."[26] The meaning of those terms was elaborated upon by medieval magi or Zoroastrian priests. The Dēnkard, "Acts of the Religion," an encyclopedic textual summary by Ādurfarrōbay ī Farrokhzādān (lived early ninth century CE) and Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān (lived early tenth century CE) who were two Zoroastrian *hudēnān pēshōbāyān*, "leaders of the members of the good religion," preserves *handarz* (New Persian *andarz*) "wise sayings" relating to the pursuit of happiness. One passage characterized the Zoroastrian faith as possessing "holiness, knowledge, happiness (*shādīh*), prosperity, and abundance" (6:185).[27] Hence, according to those two high clerics, everyone needed to realize that "happiness (*shādānīgīh*) and cheerfulness are (results of) goodness" (6:B14.18) and, consequently, they must engage in actions that generate and facilitate experiencing of joyful emotions.[28] Yet happiness was expected not merely from experiences that benefited only oneself but also others, for each person was expected to "be happy that good things come to other people too" (6:E35b).[29] Persons who followed injunctions to generate and sustain joy were promised that "in the Best Place (i.e., heaven) there will be every happiness (*hamāg-shādīh*)" for their souls (5:8.11).[30]

Numerous late medieval and early modern miniature paintings of human souls happily traversing the cosmic bridge into heaven are attested, especially in manuscripts of the Ardā Wirāz Nāmag (Ardā Virāz Nāme), "Book of the Righteous Wirāz," produced by Zoroastrians in Iran and India. Addi-

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"most comfortable, most peaceful," on which see Sanjana, *Pahlavi Text of the Vendîdâd*, 29–31; Anklesaria, *Pahlavi Vendidâd*, 38–41; and Moazami, *Wrestling with the Demons of the Pahlavi Widēwdād*, 68–73.

[26] Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi*, 185, 198; MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, 78, 85.

[27] Madan, *Dinkard*, 512; Dresden, *Dēnkart*, 401; and Shaked, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, 72–73.

[28] Madan, *Dinkard*, 550; Dresden, *Dēnkart*, 434; and Shaked, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, 138–139.

[29] Madan, *Dinkard*, 584; Dresden, *Dēnkart*, 463; and Shaked, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, 204–205.

[30] Madan, *Dinkard*, 442; Dresden, *Dēnkart*, 345; and Amouzgar and Tafazzoli, *Cinquième Livre du Dēnkard*, 40–41.

tionally because the faith enjoined that nonhuman animals too have souls, for example through words previously ascribed to Zarathushtra about revering "the soul of the cow … the souls of domestic animals … (and) the souls of (those) wild animals which are harmless" (Gāthās 39:1–2), it seems that such creatures too were thought to be able to reach a paradisical afterlife.[31] Indeed, over two millennia later, a unique carving on the east side of the stone sarcophagus of a Zoroastrian (known as Huoxian in China) Sogdian community leader named Wirkak (Shi Jun) and his wife Wiyusi, found at Xi'an and dating from 579–580 CE, appears to depict a bustling procession of humans and animals crossing the Chinwad Puhl into the Zoroastrian heaven—an undertaking regarded as a happy event.[32]

The theme of happiness as recompense in the spiritual world was central to the Middle Persian writings of Manushchīhr ī Juwānjamān, another ninth century CE high magus. "Righteous souls are happy (*shād*) for having been saved from Angra Mainyu and brought to the realm of Ahura Mazda" (18:6), Manushchīhr wrote in his Dādestān ī Dēnīg, "(Book of) Religious Judgments," compiled in Pahlavi.[33] He suggested that in heaven, the realm of Ahura Mazda, "souls will receive praise, joy (*urwāhm*), peace, and comfort from god" (4:4).[34] Indeed, according to that catechism, "in proportion to an individual's good deeds (done while alive) … the reward to a righteous soul (for showing) good judgment and (for performing) more good deeds is a better place and station (in heaven) with more tranquility and happiness (*shādīh*)" (30:16, 31:12–13).[35] Wahisht (New Persian Behesht), "the Best Place," or heaven was believed to be filled with "every comfort, pleasure, joy (*urwāhm*), bliss, and goodness, exceeding even the greatest and highest goodness and pleasure of the material world" according to chief magus Manushchīhr (25:3).[36]

The spiritual voyager Ardā Wirāz, described as a pious man rather than specifically a mobed or magus, whose purported journey through the realms of the afterlife within the Sasanian period was recorded in Middle Persian before being rendered into New Persian and Gujarati, received angelic instruction that "happiness (*shādīh*)" is "the reward of the righteous ones (*pādāshn*

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[31] Choksy, "Nature in Zoroastrianism;" Foltz, "Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals."

[32] For details of the excavation with a comprehensive set of images including the image under discussion see Yang, *Shi Jun Tomb*, especially 136–149. For analysis of the image consult Rong, *The Silk Road and Cultural Exchanges between East and West*, 388–411; Gulácsi and BeDuhn, "The Religion of Wirkak and Wiyusi," 11–14, 19–23, 24; and Grenet, "More Zoroastrian Scenes on the Wirkak (Shi Jun) Sarcophagus," 5–7.

[33] Anklesaria, *Dâtistân-i Dînîk*, pt. 1, 42; Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, 74–75.

[34] Anklesaria, *Dâtistân-i Dînîk*, pt. 1, 19; Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, 50–51.

[35] Anklesaria, *Dâtistân-i Dînîk*, pt. 1, 62, 68; Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, 96–97, 102–103.

[36] Anklesaria, *Dâtistân-i Dînîk*, pt. 1, 53; Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, 84–85.

ī ahlawān)" in Wahisht (Ardā Wirāz Nāmag/Ardā Virāz Nāme 10:17–18), echoing the sentiments of king Xerxes from approximately fifteen centuries previously.[37] During his soul's journey, Ardā Wirāz is said to have received visual confirmation that Wahisht is indeed a "brilliant place of the greatest happiness (*bāmīg gāh ī wuzurg-tom shādīh*)" (19:14) full of worldly-like pleasures such as music, gardens, and fountains, just as the heavenly paradise is believed to be represented by earthly *para-daydā*/*pari-daidā* (Old Persian), *paradis* (New Persian), "garden(s)," that began with the Medes and Persians and continue to the present in Iran, Persianate Central Asia, and the Indian Subcontinent (Figures 1a and 1b).[38] In a tangential variation of this theme, the garden mausoleum—intended to shape elites' final resting places into corporeal paradises—emerged as an architectural and landscape paradigm, producing splendid examples such as the Taj Mahal commissioned in 1631 CE at Agra by the fifth Mughal emperor Shāh Jahān (ruled 1628–1658 CE) to house the tomb of his wife Mumtaz Mahal and, eventually, himself.

Figures 1a and 1b. Happy in Heaven. Illustrations from an Ardā Wirāz Nāmag Indian Manuscript, middle seventeenth century CE. Private collection

Happiness at the beginning and the end of corporeal time and the material world would emerge as vignettes too. The golden age of mythical king Jamshēd, postulated as having been near the beginning of human existence, was envisioned as "perfect … happy times" (substituting *farrox*, "fortunate, blessed, happy," for *shād*) even in the Parthian-era (247 BCE –224 CE) poem

[37] Vahman, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 94–95, 196.
[38] Vahman, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 112–113, 200.

Drakht ī Āsūrīg, "The Assyrian Tree" (22).[39] Apocalyptic and eschatological traditions ascribed to Jāmāspa, seer to the legendary Kavi Vishtāspa who was said to have been Zarathushtra's patron, have survived in Middle Persian, Pazand (Middle Persian written in Avestan script), and New Persian versions of the Jāmāsp-nāmag (Jāmāspi), "Book of Jāmāsp." Anonymously reworked between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries CE, passages in those texts deplore people who during the final years of humankind's existence make unethical choices and engage in bad deeds because such decisions "will not produce happiness and therefore will not endure" (1:4, 1:6–8).[40] Likewise, compilers of the Dēnkard connected eschatology to joy through theological assertions of a happy everafter: "This world was created by Ahura Mazda … and so at the end (of time) he will become happy (*shād*) through it" (*Dēnkard* 6:311).[41] Paralleling the hoped-for experience of happiness at the end of time, medieval Zoroastrian authors would conclude their pious labor on religiously-themed compositions with phrases such as: "Completed with propitiation, happiness, and pleasure (*frazaft pad shnūm ud shādīh ud rāmishn*)."[42]

Augmentations from Greece through Iran to Central Asia and China

Greek influences on the development of Iranian and Zoroastrian ideas of happiness cannot be discounted due to extensive contact from antiquity onward. Aristotle (lived ca. 384–322 BCE), wrote extensively on happiness as "perfect and self-sufficient, being the end to which our actions are directed" (Nicomachean Ethics 1:vii).[43] He reasoned that "by human goodness is meant goodness not of the body but of the soul, and happiness also we define as an activity of the soul" (Nicomachean Ethics 1:xiii).[44] Such ideas mesh fully with those of Zarathushtra and probably were known to Persian kings and medieval magi just as were other Greek concepts, such as the mean or moderation as a mechanism toward joy, which also were incorporated into Zoroastrian ethics.[45]

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[39] Abadani, "Daraxt-ī Āsūrīk," 3, 10, 17.
[40] Modi, *Jâmâspi*, 2, 3; Messina, *Libro apocalitto persiano Ayātkār i Žāmāspīk*, 31, 32, 83; and Agostini, *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg*, 39–41.
[41] Madan, *Dinkard*, 542; Dresden, *Dēnkart*, 427; and Shaked, *Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, 122–123.
[42] For example see the conclusion to Gizistag Abālish, "The Accursed Abalish," 00:6, which describes an early ninth century CE theological debate at Baghdad between a Zoroastrian convert to Islam and the high magus Ādurfarrōbay ī Farrokhzādān; Chacha, *Gajastak Abâlish*, 26, 46.
[43] Thomson and Tredennick, *Ethics of Aristotle*, 74.
[44] Thomson and Tredennick, *Ethics of Aristotle*, 87–88.
[45] See further Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi*, 83, 91–92.

Happiness was mentioned in a third century CE Middle Persian graffito (DE 52.1) at the trading city of Dura Europos on the southwestern bank of the mid-reaches of the Euphrates River.[46] Bactrian documents attest to use of *þαδο* (*shadho*) both in the sense of "happy" and "satisfied," the latter usage particularly in mundane contractual phrases such as "happy/satisfied and content"—such as in a deed of manumission dating to 470 CE (F l. 6), purchase of an agrarian/grain field in 518 CE (J l. 17) and of a village in 730 CE (V l. 11), and "happy/satisfied and not suffering loss" (aa l. 22, ab l. 5).[47] In a more socioreligious disposition, the opening section of letters written between Zoroastrian name-bearing Bactrians during the fourth century CE formulaically expressed personal happiness about their superiors' good health: "I have heard that your lordship is healthy therefore I am happy; but I would be more happy when I myself see your lordship is healthy" (ba l. 3, bf l. 3, bg l. 3, cc ll. 4–5, cq l. 3, xa ll. 4–5, xi ll. 4–5, xn ll. 3–4, xp ll. 3–4).[48]

Manichaeans assimilated religious applications of *shād*, *shādīh*, *shādgar* (Parthian), "giving happiness," and *shadīft* (Parthian), "happiness," from Iranian tradition.[49] The elect or clergy used these terms in their letters (M 5815 II. l. 4, 6), parables (M 221, in the negative sense of "those false ones … are not happy"), requiems (M 6 l. 4), and even to describe the apostle Mani's own demise and apotheosis under Sasanian captivity between 274 CE and 277 CE as "in great happiness (*wuzurg shadīft*) he flew with the divinities of light" (M 5569 l. 1).[50] Sogdians who were Zoroastrians likely transmitted the concept to others in their midst as well during late antique and medieval times, for the related words are present within Manichaean, Buddhist, and Christian Sogdian texts in the forms *shāt*, *shātukh*, and *shātukhu*, "happy, joy," and *shātukhyā*, "happiness, joyfulness."[51] Wealth as a source of happiness, a concept that fits well into the Zoroastrian ethos, came to be reflected in medieval Khotanese Saka speakers use of *tsāta-*, "rich," while the more traditional meaning was preserved too and reflected in *tsāṣṭa-*, "in a good state, i.e., happy."[52] Understandably, therefore, in the poetry and proverbs of China's Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), Persians were stereotypically re-

[46] Frye, *Parthian and Middle Persian Inscriptions of Dura-Europos*, pl. 11.
[47] Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 1, 44–45, 56–57, 114–117, 148–151, with the term's definition at 234, 250.
[48] Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 2, 52–53, 62–63, 64–65, 72–73, 96–97, 140–141, 152–153, 158–159, 162–163.
[49] Boyce, *A Word-List of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 84; Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 313–314.
[50] Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 49, 140, 47. For the parable see Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 35.
[51] Gharib, *Sogdian Dictionary*, 370; Durkin-Meisterernst and Sims-Williams, *Dictionary of Manichaean Sogdian and Bactrian*, 216.
[52] Bailey, *Dictionary of Khotan Saka*, 146.

garded as wealthy, for example in a proverb credited to the poet and politician Li Shangyin (813–858 CE): "A poor Persian is just as (ridiculous as) a healing disease (穷波斯 病医人)."[53]

Classical Persian poets too would draw upon their Zoroastrian cultural heritage to discuss the virtues and limits of happiness. Jalāl al-Din Rumi (1207–1273 CE), an east-Iranian expatriate into Anatolian, would proclaim that "from the conjunction of happiness with our souls is born our goodness and beneficence" (1095).[54] Hāfez (1325–1390 CE) of Shiraz would exclaim that "the world has drunk from the cup of happiness" and "the bounty of the cup of happiness is your (i.e., one's own) radiance" (152, 313).[55] Sa'di (1213–1291 CE), also of Shiraz, who absorbed much of the Zoroastrian didactic legacy attributed to Sasanian king Khusrō I Anushirwān, suggested in his own advice to kings that just and benevolent governance which brings happiness to the subjects would reward the ruler with happiness in the afterlife. At the same time, he suggested it was acceptable for each king to pursue earthly joys as long as so doing did not contravene religious principles or undermine the people's welfare.[56] On an even more cautionary note, Kay Kāvus b. Iskandar of the Ziyarid dynasty in the Tabaristan region of northern Iran, suggested in his Qābus Nāme during the year 1082 CE: "Do not permit yourself to be completely overwhelmed by happiness" (chap. 6).[57] Such lines echo not only the larger religious and social corpuses of Iranian writings about joy but also *handarz* literature like a Pahlavi poem dating to before 956 CE which discussed "happiness which is in the heart (*shādīh ī pad dil*) (3:2).[58]

Over time, happiness also came to be linked to individual's names. In feminine form, Shādi became a personal name for women. Previously, however, Shād, Shādi, and variants were utilized in Iranian and Iranian-influenced societies as adjectival epithets before personal names, for example, possibly as Wispshād *Frayōsh, "Completely-Happy Frayōsh," the individual who commissioned a small fire altar (inscription ll. 10–11) at Barm-e Delak, southeast of Shiraz in Fars province of Iran, during the third year (242–243 CE) of the reign of Sasanian king of kings Shāpūr I.[59] It was present, similarly,

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[53] The extant textual evidence comes from a scattered document, Yishan Zazuan (义山杂纂), "Miscellaneous Notes of Yishan," the content of which is quite coarse and vernacular, said to be by Li Shangyin (李商隐); cited by Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, 22, 223, 331.
[54] Nicholson, *Mathnawí*, 608.
[55] Saberi, *Poems of Hafez*, 116, 238.
[56] Shomali and Boroujerdi, "On Sa'di's Treatise on Advice to the Kings," 45, 50, 64.
[57] Levy, *A Mirror for Princes*, 27.
[58] Henning, "A Pahlavi Poem," 647–648.
[59] An alternate reading of the Middle Persian phrase *ēdar pad wisp-shādīh *Frayōsh bawēm* would be "I, Frayōsh, was here in complete-happiness." For the standard reading see Tavoosi and Frye, "An Inscribed Capital Dating from the Time of Shapur I," 25–38; MacKenzie,

in compound personal names such as Shād-Shāpūr and Shād-Ādur-Shāpūr on Sasanian-era stamp seals.[60]

Influences on Parsis and Their Iranian Coreligionists

The eponymous landing of Zoroastrian immigrants from Iran at Sanjan in Gujarat, India, attributed to the year 716 CE or to the year 936 CE depending on interpretation of the date's numerals, is recorded in a New Persian epic poem titled the Qesse-ye Sanjān, "Story of Sanjan." Based upon older oral traditions, the Qesse itself was composed in the late sixteenth century CE by Bahman Kaykobad Sanjana, a Zoroastrian priest at Navsari just inland from Gujarat's coast. It formed the basis, idealized and augmented though the poem undoubtedly was, for much of the Parsis' early record. In recounting the creation of humans, the author wrote: "You (God) put the soul in each person, happy and joyful (*shādān o khorram*)" (l. 11).[61] More importantly, Ahura Mazda was written about as the bringer of happiness to those who are sad (1. 20) and as having led the Parsis to Sanjana where they could resettle "with happiness and calm (*bā shādi o ārām*)" (l. 193).[62]

Like their ancestors who arrived in Gujarat, and their counterparts who remained in Iran, later Zoroastrians of India continued believing that "good and meritorious deeds, which will be possessions and wealth in the spiritual world, give happiness forever" according to a catechism complied in Gujarati by dastur Erachji Sohrabji Meherjirana during the year 1869 CE (chap. 14).[63] Even now, during the twenty-first century CE, Parsi children are taught to sing a *monājāt*, "fervent prayer, devotional song," asking their creator to "Give us happiness always (*Dejo amne sadā sukh*)."[64] Until recently, Parsi authors, copyists, and translators followed their ancestral custom of ending writings, not just religious but also secular themed ones, "with prosperity, happiness, joy and authority of all the good righteous ones (*pa drūt u shādi u hurvākhm u pādishāhi i hamā vēhān i frārūnān*)" with *shādi* even being rendered into Sanskrit as *samādhanena* when that Indic language was utilized.[65] Indeed

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"The Fire Altar of Happy *Frayosh," 106.

[60] For names compounded with "happy, happily, happiness," refer to Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, 270–271; Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique*, 162; Gignoux, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique*, supplément, 61. An earlier attestation is the Greek rendering as Παρύ-σατις of the Achaemenian princesses' name *Parushyātish/Parushātish, for which see Kent, *Old Persian*, 210.

[61] Williams, *Zoroastrian Myth of Migration*, 56–57.

[62] Williams, *Zoroastrian Myth of Migration*, 58–59, 92–93, respectively.

[63] Kotwal and Boyd, *A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion*, 113.

[64] Russell, "Parsi Zoroastrian Garbās and Monājāts," 58.

[65] Chīm ī Kustīg, "Meaning of the (Holy) Cord," conclusion II, in Pazand and Sanskrit; Junker,

that tradition is evident much earlier, however, for example in a semifictional biography, the Kār-Nāmag ī Ardakhshīr ī Pāpakān, "Book of Feats of Ardashīr of the Lineage of Papak," of the Sasanian empire's founder Ardashīr I (ruled 224–240 CE), where scribes ended copies of manuscripts and their colophons with invocations like: "Completed in prosperity, happiness, and pleasure (*frazaft pad drōd [ud] shādīh [ud] rāmishn*)."[66]

While *shādi* as happiness and joy continued in its basic meanings into the premodern Classical Persian and New Persian (Farsi) and Gujarati languages and literatures within Zoroastrian, and even Muslim, societies of India, it also took on specialized extensions in daily use. One aspect of happiness that developed a specific meaning, which has persisted into contemporary times, is *shādi* as "marriage." An attestation that dates to late antiquity, and would have been part of the specific development of happiness from an emotion and ethos into a communal arrangement and social contract, is found in a Parthian-era romantic epic named after its protagonists Vis o Rāmin, translated into Classical New Persian during the eleventh century CE, captured the joyful emotion that was expected to be associated with marriage: "Be his partner and make your family glorious, and make my days happy by this union" (14).[67] Subsequently, medieval magi had enjoined that each person's second duty as an adult was to enter into matrimony, as recorded in the ninth century CE catechism known as Chīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēshān, "Select Counsels of the Ancient Sages" (5).[68] Sasanian rock reliefs and metal art and Classical Persian book and ceramic arts came to represent the happiness produced by such companionship through depictions of familial scenes of couples—some historical, others legendary—seated, dining, hunting, and sleeping together.[69] The influence of this type of depiction spread eastward along the Silk Road to China where it was reproduced by Zoroastrians who had settled there and their descendants. So, visually, the representation of happiness between spouses is found in a banquet scene (perhaps even that of a marriage banquet) on the funerary couch of the Sogdian leader (*sabao*) An Jia (An Qie) who died during the year 579 CE and was entombed at Xi'an.[70]

Der wissbegierige Sohn, 40.

[66] Antia, *Kârnâmak-i Artakhshîr Pâpakân*, 45, 62; Grenet, *La Geste D'Ardashir fils de Pâbag*, 118–119. See also the colophons in Jamasp-Asana, *Pahlavi Texts*, 24, 38, 40, 50, 54, 57, 77, 82, 120, 127, 131, 140, 153, 159, 161, 167.

[67] Morrison, *Vis and Ramin*, 30.

[68] Kanga, *Čīdak Handarž i Pōryōtkēšān*, 3, 14, 21. See also Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi*, 22.

[69] For example see Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, 49–50 with pl. 12 and fig. 12a, 74–75 with pl. 25; Daems, "The Iconography of Pre-Islamic Women in Iran," 55; Frye, "The Sasanian Bas-Relief at Tang-i Qandil," 190; Vandaee, "The Tang-e Qandil Bas-Relief: A Reconsideration," 3–7; and Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, 72 with fig. 35, 105 with fig. 54.

[70] For details of the excavation with a comprehensive set of images including the image under discussion see Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology, *The Anjia Tomb*, especially 42. For an analy-

Not unexpectedly, as a result, even centuries subsequently, happiness associated with marriage and family came to designate the activity and ceremony as *shādi* and later *sadā* in Gujarati including Parsi Gujarati, and also in Hindi and Urdu, on the Indian subcontinent—although the current Parsis term for a marriage ceremony is *ashīrvād* and this rite of passage also is commonly referred to as *lagan*.[71] A *monājāt* known as Lagan Mubārak Bādī ne Gīt, "Song for the Blessing of the Wedding," enjoins Parsi couples to "live forever in happiness (*sukhī raho sadā*)."[72]

Interviews of contemporary mobeds or Zoroastrian priests in Iran have recorded their convictions that "when someone does a good deed, that person is happy and it will bring satisfaction in society and for the person; but if someone has done something bad and wrong, that person will not feel happy at all."[73] Similar ideas persist as well among behdin or lay Zoroastrian Iranians, such as a farmer who commented that "when the soul separates from the body upon death, if the person has done good deeds then the soul leaves the body happily and comfortably; but if the person has done bad or unpleasant things, or hurt someone, then it leaves the body unhappy and remains always sad and sorrowful."[74] Even contemporary Zoroastrian travel guides in Iran proudly tell their patrons that "joy is essential in the practice of our religion."[75] Not surprisingly, the Ardā Wirāz Nāme continues to be popular reading and its presentations of joy in heaven and sorrow in hell still shape Zoroastrians' desire to achieve happiness during their lives.[76] Additionally, happiness has come to be closely associated with the Amesha Spenta, "Holy Immortal," Haurvatāt (Avestan Hauruuatāt, Middle Persian Hordād, New Persian Khordād) who symbolizes wholeness and perfection, especially through the water and blood of mortal existence.[77] Even at present, during the *gavāhgiri* (Zoroastrian Dari *gvu-giri*) "marriage ceremony," the officiating magus reminds each couple that: "The path of Khordad calls for … perfection. (So,) maintain a happy heart … Spread happiness."[78]

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sis of the scene consult Rong, "The Illustrative Sequence on An Jia's Screen," 33–34.

[71] For Parsi Gujarati specifically consult Gajendragadkar, *Parsi-Gujarati*, 204. For Gujarati more generally see Gala and Rathod, *Gala's Advanced Dictionary*, 511.

[72] Russell, "Parsi Zoroastrian Garbās and Monājāts," 60.

[73] Stewart and Moavenat, *Voices from Zoroastrian Iran*, vol. 2, 163.

[74] Stewart and Moavenat, *Voices from Zoroastrian Iran*, vol. 2, 40–41.

[75] Parhizi and Rivet, "Iran's Zoroastrians keep Ancient, Sacred Flame Burning."

[76] Stewart and Moavenat, *Voices from Zoroastrian Iran, Oral Texts and Testimony*, vol. 1, 276.

[77] Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 10–12, 120–121, 126; and Choksy, *Evil, Good, and Gender*, 63–64.

[78] Stewart and Moavenat, *Voices from Zoroastrian Iran,* vol. 1, 47.

WHY CENTRAL TO THE FAITH AND ITS ADHERENTS?

Why did such strong emphasis on happiness arise in Zoroastrianism? Medieval magi focused on the dualistic worldview of their faith: "One is the path of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds … the other is the path of bad thoughts, bad words, and bad deeds … There are two primary entities—one is the Creator and the other the Destroyer" (Chīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēshān 10–12).[79] Therefore, they reasoned, "the two (types) of existence," i.e., creation and destruction, which arose from those two principals—*asha* and *drug*—and the two primeval spirits—Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu—who embodied the principles, had god's "order as the source of all happiness" and the devil's "confusion as the source of all unhappiness," and that "happiness is both material and spiritual" (Dēnkard 3:177, 3:311, compare 3:323).[80] Consequently, the fundamentality of experiencing joy became, doctrinally, the inevitable result of belief in a beneficent creator and a good creation within which humans are intended to dwell.

The central link between existence, piety, salvation, and happiness was presented by the magus Zādspram ī Juwānjamān, brother of the high magus Manushchīhr and uncle of the theologian Farrōbay, during the ninth century CE in his Wizīdagīhā, "Selections," which sought to summarize Zoroastrian mythical, legendary, and factual history from creation to the end of time. Upon reaching heaven, termed "the astral land which is the eternal home," each righteous soul experiences the "greatest joy" (*wuzurg-urwāhm-tom*) according to tradition codified in Pahlavi by Zādspram (30:54).[81] Again, ascription of happiness or joy to righteous corporeal and spiritual existences can be traced back to the Avesta. In the Gāthās, Zarathushtra is said to have proclaimed, "I shall now invoke praise for the Ahura (i.e., Ahura Mazda) … and for righteousness (*asha*) (which is) the joy (*uruuāzā*) visible through illumination" (30:1).[82] Together with family, followers, community, and other righteous members of his society, Zarathushtra sought "Ahura Mazda's joy (*uruuāzemā*)" (32:1) for he believed the divinity's beneficence for humanity arose from a "most joyous (*uruuāzishtam*) union with righteousness (*asha*)" (49:8).[83] Not surprisingly the Pahlavi *zand*, "commentary, exegesis,"

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[79] Kanga, *Čītak Handarž i Pōryōtkēšān*, 3–4, 14, 22. See also Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi*, 22.
[80] Madan, *Dinkard*, 190, 313, 320; Dresden, *Dēnkart*, 147, 239, 240; and Menasce, *Troisième livre du Dēnkart*, 186–187, 298, 304.
[81] Anklesaria, *Vichitakiha-i Zatsparam*, pt. 1, cxii, 127; and Gignoux and Tafazzoli, *Anthologie de Zādspram*, 110–111.
[82] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 105.
[83] Geldner, *Avesta*, pt. 1, 115, 174, respectively. See also Kuiper, "The Bliss of Aša," 102, 105, 126–127, 129.

on the Gāthās mentions "unhappiness of spirit" (*a-shād menishnīh*) as an undesirable state (29:9).[84]

During the late ninth century CE, a Zoroastrian theologian named Farrōbay, also known as Dādagīh (Jādagīh) ī Ashawahishtān, produced the final major redaction of the Bundahishn, "(Book of) Primal Creation." He did so drawing upon religious and mythological lore transmitted via oral tradition for centuries until codified in Middle Persian (Pahlavi). Within the Bundahishn's cosmogonical chapter is preserved a tale that happiness was the original experience and emotion bestowed by God: "He (Ahura Mazda) first created the sky—bright, visible, very distant … He created all of creation within the sky. He created joy (*urwāhmānīh*) to aid the sky. He fashioned joy inside it (i.e., the sky) so that even now, during the Age of Mixture (of good and evil), creation exists in joy" (1A:6).[85] Thus, Ahura Mazda's first intangible gift to the entire corporeal universe was believed to have been happiness. Therefore, for Zoroastrians, the idea of happiness or joy became a basic experience, fundamental virtue, and goal of existence which connected religious cosmology to daily ethos.[86] The Bundahishn noted further: "The opposition of the two (eternal spirits) … Ahreman (Angra Mainyu) against Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) … (includes) unhappiness versus happiness" (5:1).[87] Therefore, this ethos in turn came to shape choices in everyday actions as well, through a religious reciprocal expectation that: "When a righteous person dies, the soul will experience as much happiness as all that which was experienced while alive" (Hadhokht Nask 2:2, an Avestan text which focuses on the soul's experiences).[88] Essentially, within the Zoroastrian religious worldview, cosmogony and soteriology were interconnected through human existence whose quest for righteousness is believed to produce corporeal, spiritual, and eternal happiness.

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[84] Dhabhar, *Pahlavi Yasna and Visperad*, 133; Malandra and Ichaporia, *The Pahlavi Yasna*, 23, 106.

[85] Anklesaria, *Bûndahishn*, 18–19; Anklesaria, *Zand Ākāsīh*, 23; Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, 12–13; and Malandra, *Bundahišn*, 41–42.

[86] Compare Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, 299. By focusing on the enumeration of material creations, Lincoln, '*Happiness for Mankind*,' 16–17, missed this fundamental link of happiness to the Zoroastrian creation story which explains Darius I's cosmogonical formula.

[87] The terms used for unhappiness and happiness are *a-husandīh* and *husandīh*, respectively. See Anklesaria, *Bûndahishn*, 48; Anklesaria, *Zand Ākāsīh*, 56–57; Agostini and Thrope, *Bundahišn*, 35–36; and Malandra, *Bundahišn*, 63.

[88] Kanga, "Hadhokht Nask," 13. See also Pavry, *Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, 9–20.

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ECTHESIS IN ARISTOTLE'S LOGIC: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the method of *ecthesis* (or *ekthesis*) in the logical works of Aristotle, focusing on its function in the *Prior Analytics* and its development in the subsequent history of logic. While modern interpretations have largely emphasized formal procedures such as *reduction* and *per impossible*, *ecthesis* has often been treated as marginal or dispensable. This study revisits that assumption through a combined textual and historical analysis. The first part offers a close reading of Aristotle's demonstrations, showing that *ecthesis* operates through the introduction of a representative instance that makes the relation between premises more explicit. Rather than serving as a merely illustrative device, it appears as part of the reasoning itself in certain contexts. The second part traces the reception of *ecthesis* in later traditions, from its limited treatment in ancient and medieval commentaries to its marginalization in modern reconstructions, especially in the work of Łukasiewicz and subsequent formal approaches. Recent scholarship has begun to reconsider this marginal status, suggesting that *ecthesis* may contribute to the intelligibility of syllogistic reasoning. By situating *ecthesis* within both Aristotle's texts and its historical development, the paper aims to clarify its role without overstating its significance, and to show how its interpretation has changed over time.

KEYWORDS: Aristotle, Ecthesis, Demonstration, Prior Analytics, Syllogistic

1. INTRODUCTION

The logical works of Aristotle, especially the *Prior Analytics*, have long been regarded as foundational for the study of deductive reasoning. Within this framework, Aristotle develops a systematic account of syllogism, defined as "*a discourse in which, certain things being stated, some other thing than that*

which is stated follows [out] of necessity from their being so" (McKeon, 1941). Over time, this system has been interpreted and reconstructed in different ways, often with a focus on its formal structure and validity. In such interpretations, particular attention has been given to methods like *reduction* and *per impossible*, which can be more easily expressed in general and formal terms (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962; Patzig 1968).

However, alongside these more familiar procedures, Aristotle also employs another method, commonly referred to as *ecthesis* (or *ekthesis*). This method appears in several demonstrations in the *Prior Analytics*, yet it has not received equal attention in the history of logic. In many modern accounts, *ecthesis* is either briefly mentioned or treated as a secondary technique that can be replaced by more systematic forms of reasoning (Smith 1982; Smith 1983). This relative neglect raises an important question: *what role does ecthesis actually play in Aristotle's logic, and why has it been so often marginalized in later interpretations?* Some early and modern studies have touched upon this issue in different ways. For instance, discussions of perfect syllogisms and their justification already suggest that Aristotle's methods are not limited to formal derivation alone (Flannery 1987; Patterson 1993). Similarly, analyses of proof-theoretic processes in the *Prior Analytics* indicate that Aristotle employs a variety of strategies, including completion, reduction, and other forms of reasoning that do not always fit neatly into later formal frameworks (Boger 2007). Within this broader context, *ecthesis* can be seen as one among several procedures that contribute to the structure of demonstration.

More specifically, *ecthesis* has been examined in a number of focused studies. Robin Smith raises the basic question "what is Aristotle's *ecthesis*?" and attempts to clarify its nature within syllogistic reasoning (Smith 1982). Further work has explored its formal properties and possible systematization (Smith 1983; Joray 2017). Other scholars have considered related aspects, such as modal *ecthesis* (Johnson 1993) and apodeictic *ecthesis* (Thom 1993), suggesting that the method may have a wider range of application than is usually assumed. At the same time, earlier discussions, including brief but important treatments, have also pointed to its distinctive character within Aristotelian logic (Thom 1976; Żarnecka-Biały 1993). In addition, the relation between *ecthesis* and broader logical principles has been explored in connection with the *Dictum de Omni* and dialectical reasoning. In this regard, the work of Crubellier et al. (2019) shows that *ecthesis* can be situated within a wider conceptual framework that connects logical inference with dialectical practice. Similarly, questions about the individuation of syllogisms (Corkum 2025) and the interpretation of Aristotelian logical theory more generally (Lear 1980) indicate that the structure of syllogistic reasoning is more complex than it may appear in purely formal reconstructions.

Despite these contributions, there is still no general agreement on how *ecthesis* should be understood within Aristotle's logic. In many standard accounts, it remains peripheral, especially when compared to methods that can be more easily formalized. This tendency is also reflected in the broader history of logic, where the emphasis on formal systems has often led to the neglect of procedures that depend on the introduction of particular instances (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962). The aim of this paper is to examine *ecthesis* through a combined textual analysis and historical approach. First, it considers the role of *ecthesis* in Aristotle's own demonstrations, focusing on how it operates within the structure of syllogistic reasoning. Then, it traces the historical development of its interpretation, from ancient and medieval traditions to modern and contemporary scholarship. By doing so, the paper seeks to clarify the logical function of *ecthesis* and to explain how its status has changed over time.

In this way, the study does not attempt to assign to *ecthesis* a central or foundational role in Aristotle's system. Rather, it aims to show that this method, although limited in its use, provides insight into the way Aristotle presents and develops his arguments. The analysis therefore contributes to a more detailed understanding of Aristotelian logic, not only as a formal system, but also as a historical body of thought whose interpretation has evolved across different contexts.

2. ECTHESIS IN ARISTOTLE'S TEXTS

The method of *ecthesis* appears in several demonstrations in the logical works of Aristotle, especially in the *Prior Analytics*. However, Aristotle does not provide a formal definition of this method, nor does he treat it as a separate topic in a systematic way. For this reason, its identification and interpretation depend largely on careful reading of the text and on later scholarly reconstruction (Smith 1982; Smith 1983). The passages where *ecthesis* occurs usually involve cases in which the conclusion does not seem to follow immediately from the premises, and an additional step is introduced to make the inference clearer. In such cases, Aristotle proceeds by taking a term that falls under one of the universal premises and then examining its relation to another term. This step is often described as the "setting out" of a particular instance. Through this procedure, the relation between the premises becomes more explicit, and the conclusion can be seen to follow. As noted in earlier discussions, this is not simply an illustrative move, but part of the reasoning itself (Żarnecka-Biały 1993). The instance that is introduced is not empirical in nature, but functions within the logical structure of the argument.

This feature has led to different interpretations of the exact role of *ecthesis*. One line of interpretation treats it as a way of completing an argument that is otherwise incomplete. In this sense, *ecthesis* may be related to broader proof-theoretic processes such as completion and reduction, which Aristotle employs in different contexts (Boger 2007). However, unlike *reduction*, which transforms a syllogism into a known valid form (i.e. a first figure syllogism), *ecthesis* does not change the structure of the premises. Instead, it makes the existing relations more visible by focusing on a representative case. Another important aspect concerns the relation between *ecthesis* and perfect syllogisms. In Aristotle's theory, perfect syllogisms are those in which the conclusion follows directly from the premises without the need for additional steps. By contrast, imperfect syllogisms require some form of transformation or clarification. It is in this context that *ecthesis* is often used, as a way of bridging the gap between premises and conclusion (Flannery 1987; Patterson 1993). The method helps to show how an imperfect syllogism can be understood in terms of more basic relations.

At the same time, the connection between *ecthesis* and fundamental logical principles, such as the *Dictum de Omni*, has also been discussed. Some scholars argue that the introduction of a particular instance allows the universal premise to be applied in a more concrete way, thereby making explicit what is already contained in the general statement (Crubellier et al. 2019). In this sense, *ecthesis* can be seen as a procedure that links universal and particular levels within the syllogistic framework. The question of how exactly this procedure should be formalized has also been raised. For example, the possibility of developing a systematic account of ecthetic reasoning has been explored in later studies (Smith 1983; Joray 2017). These attempts show that, although *ecthesis* is not presented by Aristotle as a formal system, it may still possess a certain internal structure that can be analyzed in logical terms. Similarly, the extension of *ecthesis* to modal contexts has been discussed, suggesting that the method is not limited to simple categorical propositions (Johnson 1993).

Other studies have drawn attention to the variety of forms that *ecthesis* can take. For instance, the notion of apodeictic *ecthesis* has been proposed in order to account for its role in demonstrations that aim at necessary knowledge (Thom 1993). Earlier treatments also indicate that the method was recognized, even if briefly, as a distinct feature of Aristotelian logic (Thom 1976). These discussions suggest that *ecthesis* cannot be reduced to a single, uniform procedure, but may involve different applications depending on the context. Despite these different interpretations, there is general agreement that *ecthesis* operates through the introduction of a representative instance that makes the inference more explicit. As Smith emphasizes, the key issue is not simply that a particular term is introduced, but how this term functions within

the argument (Smith 1982). The reasoning proceeds by showing that what holds universally also holds for the instance, and then using this to establish the conclusion.

It is also important to note that this procedure does not introduce new information into the argument. The conclusion remains grounded in the original premises, and the role of the instance is to reveal their implications more clearly. In this respect, *ecthesis* differs from empirical reasoning, since it does not depend on observation, but on the logical relations already present in the premises. For this reason, *ecthesis* can be understood as a method that operates within the structure of syllogistic reasoning, even if it is not formalized in the same way as other procedures. Its use in the *Prior Analytics* indicates that Aristotle's approach to logic includes not only techniques for establishing validity, but also methods for clarifying the relation between terms. In the next section, we will examine how this aspect of Aristotle's method was received and transformed in later traditions.

3. The Historical Development of Ecthesis

The method of *ecthesis*, as it appears in the logical works of Aristotle, did not remain unchanged in its interpretation. Its place within logical theory has shifted over time, and these shifts reflect broader changes in the understanding of logic itself. In this sense, *ecthesis* can be approached not only as a technical device, but as an idea whose meaning has developed across different historical contexts. In the immediate aftermath of Aristotle's work, logical theory was shaped by commentators who sought to clarify and systematize his doctrines. Although *ecthesis* is not treated as a central topic, it is also not entirely absent from this tradition. Works that engage with Aristotelian logic, especially those concerned with the structure of syllogism, often emphasize formal completeness and demonstrative clarity. In this process, procedures such as *reduction* and *conversion* received more systematic treatment, while *ecthesis* remained less explicitly formulated (Flannery 1995). This relative relegation suggests that even at an early stage, the method was not considered essential to the formal structure of syllogistic reasoning.

During the medieval period, the transmission of Aristotelian logic led to further transformations. Logical theory became increasingly concerned with classification, terminology, and the formal properties of inference. The scholastic tradition developed elaborate systems for analyzing syllogisms, often focusing on validity and consistency. Within this framework, procedures that could be generalized and formalized were given priority. As a result, methods like *ecthesis*, which depend on the introduction of particular instances, did not occupy a prominent place. Although the underlying idea of applying univer-

sals to particulars remained important, it was usually treated within broader logical principles rather than as a distinct method. The situation changed again in the modern period, when Aristotelian logic began to be reinterpreted in the light of new developments in formal logic. In this context, scholars attempted to reconstruct syllogistic reasoning using symbolic and formal tools. Influential studies presented Aristotle's system as a precursor to modern logical theory, emphasizing its formal structure and deductive character (Łukasiewicz 1957; Patzig 1968). Within such reconstructions, *ecthesis* was often regarded as unnecessary, since its function could be replaced by more general rules. This led to a tendency to treat it as an auxiliary or even dispensable feature of Aristotle's logic (Kneale and Kneale 1962).

However, this interpretation did not remain unchallenged. Later scholarship began to question whether a purely formal reconstruction could fully capture the methods employed in the *Prior Analytics*. Studies focusing more closely on Aristotle's text argued that procedures like *ecthesis* should be understood in relation to the way arguments are actually presented. In this perspective, the introduction of a particular instance is not a redundant step, but part of the reasoning itself (Smith 1982; Smith 1983). This shift marks an important moment in the history of interpretation, where attention moves from formal reconstruction to textual and methodological analysis. More recent research has continued this line of inquiry, while also expanding it in new directions. Some studies have explored the relation between *ecthesis* and fundamental logical principles, suggesting that it plays a role in the application of universal statements within syllogistic reasoning (Crubellier et al. 2019; Joray 2014). Others have attempted to reconstruct ecthetic reasoning in a more systematic way, showing that it can be integrated into a broader logical framework without losing its distinctive features (Joray 2017). At the same time, work on the individuation of syllogisms and the structure of arguments has provided new perspectives on how particular instances function within logical systems (Corkum 2025).

This development in recent scholarship reflects a broader tendency in the study of Aristotle's logic. Rather than reducing his methods to a single formal system, scholars increasingly recognize the diversity of procedures employed in the texts. *Ecthesis*, in this context, is no longer seen as merely marginal or dispensable, but as one element within a more complex logical practice. From a historical point of view, these shifts in interpretation illustrate how the understanding of *ecthesis* has been shaped by changing conceptions of logic. In periods where formalization and systematization were emphasized, the method tended to be neglected. In contexts where textual analysis and methodological diversity are given more importance, it receives renewed attention. This pattern suggests that the significance of *ecthesis* cannot be determined independently of the broader intellectual frameworks within which

Aristotle's logic has been studied. Thus, the history of *ecthesis* is not simply the history of a single logical procedure, but part of a larger development in the interpretation of Aristotelian thought. By tracing this development, we gain a clearer understanding not only of *ecthesis* itself, but also of the ways in which logical ideas are preserved, transformed, and reinterpreted over time.

4. Modern Marginalization of Ecthesis

In the modern period, the interpretation of Aristotle's logic underwent a significant shift, particularly with the rise of symbolic and mathematical approaches to reasoning. Researchers increasingly sought to reconstruct Aristotelian syllogistic as a formal system, emphasizing clarity, generality, and deductive rigor. Within this framework, those elements of Aristotle's method that could be expressed in systematic and rule-governed terms were given priority, while others received comparatively less attention (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962). A central role in this transformation is played by Łukasiewicz, whose influential reconstruction of Aristotle's syllogistic aimed to present it as a complete and consistent formal system. In this approach, the focus is on identifying a minimal set of axioms and inference rules from which all valid syllogisms can be derived. Procedures such as *reduction* and *conversion* can be incorporated into such a system without difficulty. *Ecthesis*, however, does not fit easily into this formal framework, since it relies on the introduction of a particular instance rather than on general rules. For this reason, it is often treated as an unnecessary or eliminable step (Łukasiewicz 1957).

A similar orientation can be observed in the broader historiography of logic. In their account of the development of logical theory, Kneale and Kneale emphasize the structural aspects of Aristotle's system, focusing on the classification of syllogisms and the relations between different forms of inference (Kneale and Kneale 1962). Within this perspective, the primary concern is with validity and formal organization, and less attention is given to procedures that do not contribute directly to these aims. The same tendency can be found in more detailed studies of Aristotelian syllogistic. For example, the analysis of the *Prior Analytics* offered by Patzig seeks to provide a precise and systematic reconstruction of Aristotle's theory, often using tools drawn from modern logic (Patzig 1968). While this approach yields important insights into the structure of syllogistic reasoning, it also tends to privilege those elements that can be formalized. As a result, *ecthesis* is not given a central role in such reconstructions.

This development can also be understood in relation to broader proof-theoretic interpretations of Aristotle's logic. Some studies have emphasized processes such as completion, reduction, and analysis as key components of Aris-

totelian reasoning (Boger 2007). Within this framework, *ecthesis* appears less significant, since it does not contribute directly to the formal derivation of conclusions. Instead, it may be regarded as a supplementary procedure that can be replaced by more systematic methods. At the same time, discussions of perfect and imperfect syllogisms further reinforce this perspective. Since perfect syllogisms are defined by the immediate derivation of the conclusion, the focus naturally shifts toward those methods that allow imperfect syllogisms to be reduced to perfect ones (Flannery 1987; Patterson 1993). In this context, *ecthesis* is not always seen as essential, because the same results can be achieved through reduction or other formal transformations.

The cumulative effect of these approaches is a gradual sidelining of *ecthesis* in the modern interpretation of Aristotle's logic. This relegation does not necessarily involve explicit criticism; rather, it results from a shift in the criteria used to evaluate logical methods. When the emphasis is placed on formal completeness and general applicability, procedures that depend on particular instances appear less important. It is also worth noting that this shift reflects a broader change in the aims of logic as a discipline. Modern logic seeks to provide systems that are not only valid, but also formally precise and universally applicable. In this context, the historical and textual features of Aristotle's work may be subordinated to the goal of systematic reconstruction. As a result, elements like *ecthesis*, which are closely tied to the presentation of arguments in the original text, may be overlooked.

Nevertheless, this interpretation is not the only possible way of understanding Aristotle's logic. As some scholars have suggested, a purely formal reconstruction may not capture all aspects of his method (Lear 1980). In particular, it may overlook the ways in which Aristotle presents and clarifies reasoning within his demonstrations. From this perspective, the marginalization of *ecthesis* can be seen as a consequence of adopting a specific interpretative framework, rather than as a definitive judgment on its significance. Next, we will consider how more recent scholarship has begun to reconsider this issue, and how *ecthesis* has been re-evaluated in light of renewed attention to Aristotle's texts and methods.

5. Reinterpretations in Contemporary Scholarship

In more recent scholarship, the interpretation of Aristotle's logic has begun to move beyond the strictly formal perspective that dominated earlier analyses. While modern reconstructions provided clarity and rigor, they also led to the relative neglect of certain procedures that do not easily fit into formal systems. As a result, there has been a renewed interest in returning to the textual and conceptual details of the *Prior Analytics*, and in reconsidering meth-

ods such as *ecthesis* within their original context. A significant contribution to this discussion has been made by Smith, who examines *ecthesis* not as a marginal or dispensable device, but as a procedure that plays a definite role in certain demonstrations (Smith 1982; Smith 1983). According to this interpretation, *ecthesis* is employed in cases where the relation between premises is not immediately transparent. By introducing a representative instance, the reasoning becomes easier to follow, and the conclusion can be seen to emerge from the structure of the argument itself.

This line of interpretation has been further developed in subsequent studies. For example, attempts have been made to reconstruct an ecthetic syllogistic as a more systematic component of Aristotle's logic (Joray 2017). Although such reconstructions go beyond what is explicitly stated in the text, they suggest that *ecthesis* may have a more coherent structure than is often assumed. At the same time, these efforts also raise questions about the limits of formalization, and whether all aspects of Aristotle's reasoning can or should be expressed in a fully systematic way. Other scholars have approached the issue from different angles. The relation between *ecthesis* and broader logical principles, such as the *Dictum de Omni*, has been explored in recent work, where it is argued that the introduction of a particular instance helps to make explicit the application of universal premises (Crubellier et al. 2019). This perspective situates *ecthesis* within a wider framework that connects logical inference with dialectical reasoning, rather than treating it as an isolated procedure.

Further discussions have also addressed the structure of syllogistic reasoning more generally. For instance, questions concerning the individuation of syllogisms have been raised, suggesting that the identity of a syllogism may depend not only on its formal structure, but also on how its terms are instantiated (Corkum 2025). From this point of view, procedures like *ecthesis* can contribute to understanding how general relations are realized in particular cases. In addition, the role of examples in Aristotle's logic has received renewed attention. As has been shown, examples are not always external illustrations, but can function as integral parts of reasoning (Ierodiakonou 2002). This observation provides a useful framework for understanding *ecthesis*, since it likewise involves the introduction of a particular instance that clarifies the relation between terms.

There have also been studies focusing on specific forms of *ecthesis*. For instance, the notion of modal *ecthesis* has been examined in order to understand how the method operates in contexts involving necessity and possibility (Johnson 1993). Similarly, the idea of apodeictic *ecthesis* has been proposed to account for its role in demonstrations that aim at necessary knowledge (Thom 1993). These discussions indicate that *ecthesis* is not limited to a single type of reasoning, but may have different applications depend-

ing on the context. Earlier contributions, although sometimes brief, have also been reconsidered in light of these developments. Short studies and notes that once appeared marginal now gain importance when placed within a broader interpretative framework (Thom 1976; Żarnecka-Biały 1993). Together, they suggest that the role of *ecthesis* has been more complex than previously assumed. Despite these developments, there is still no complete agreement on how *ecthesis* should be evaluated. Some scholars continue to regard it as a secondary device that can be eliminated without loss, especially within formal reconstructions (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962). Others, however, argue that such reconstructions do not fully capture the way Aristotle presents his arguments, and that methods like *ecthesis* contribute to the intelligibility of reasoning (Lear 1980).

In this situation, the study of *ecthesis* becomes part of a broader question concerning the interpretation of Aristotle's logic. It raises the issue of whether logical analysis should focus exclusively on formal validity, or whether it should also take into account the ways in which reasoning is presented and understood. Contemporary scholars do not offer a single answer to this question, but it does open the possibility of a more balanced approach. In the coming section, we will examine more closely the logical function of *ecthesis* itself, in order to clarify how it operates within the structure of syllogistic reasoning and how it relates to other methods used by Aristotle.

6. The Logical Function of Ecthesis

After considering both the historical trajectory and the recent reinterpretations, it becomes necessary to examine more directly the logical function of *ecthesis* within the system of Aristotle. Such an examination helps to clarify what kind of role this method plays in demonstration, without reducing it either to a purely formal rule or to a merely illustrative device. A useful starting point is to compare *ecthesis* with other procedures employed in Aristotelian syllogistic, especially *reduction* and *per impossible*. These methods operate through transformations that can be generalized across different cases. *Reduction* brings an imperfect syllogism into a perfect form, while *per impossible* establishes a conclusion by deriving a contradiction from its negation. Because of their general and rule-governed character, such procedures have been more easily incorporated into later formal reconstructions of logic (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962; Patzig 1968).

Ecthesis, however, does not proceed in this way. Instead of transforming the structure of the argument, it introduces a particular instance that falls under a universal premise and examines its relation to another term. Through this step, the connection between premises becomes more explicit, and the conclu-

sion can be seen to follow. As emphasized in earlier studies, the distinctive feature of *ecthesis* lies not merely in the introduction of an instance, but in the role that this instance plays within the reasoning (Smith 1982; Smith 1983). This raises the question of how such a procedure should be understood from a logical point of view. One possible interpretation is that *ecthesis* functions as a kind of intermediate step that makes implicit relations explicit. It does not establish validity independently of the premises, but reveals the way in which the conclusion is already contained in them. In this sense, *ecthesis* may be seen as contributing to what has been described as completion or analysis in Aristotelian reasoning (Boger 2007).

At the same time, it is important to note that the instance introduced in *ecthesis* is not empirical. It does not refer to a concrete object in the world, but rather to a representative element within the logical framework. This point has been stressed in discussions of Aristotle's use of examples, where the example functions as part of the reasoning rather than as an external illustration (Ierodiakonou 2002). *Ecthesis* can be understood in a similar way: the instance serves to display the universal relation in a more accessible form. This feature also connects *ecthesis* with more general logical principles. For example, the application of a universal premise to a particular case can be related to the *Dictum de Omni*, which states that what is affirmed of a whole is affirmed of each of its parts. Some recent studies suggest that *ecthesis* provides a way of making this principle operative within specific demonstrations (Patterson 1993; Crubellier et al. 2019). Under this interpretation, the method does not introduce new content, but clarifies the application of existing premises.

Further complexity arises when we consider the deeper logical connections of *ecthesis*. In particular, its relation to fundamental principles such as contradiction has been explored in recent scholarship, where it is suggested that *ecthesis* operates within a broader logical framework governing inference (Joray 2014). This indicates that the method is not merely a procedural device, but can also be connected to the underlying structure of syllogistic reasoning. In addition, some insights from more recent discussions of reasoning help to illuminate the function of *ecthesis*. Studies on the use of singular premises in syllogistic reasoning suggest that particular instances can play an important role in making inferences cognitively accessible (Politzer and Mercier 2008). Similarly, broader analyses of validity indicate that reasoning may be evaluated not only in strictly deductive terms, but also in relation to how conclusions are derived and understood (Thompson 2016). From this point of view, *ecthesis* may be seen as contributing to the intelligibility of inference, even if it does not alter its formal validity.

A related point concerns the clarity of logical formulation. Work on syllogistic systems with semantically transparent structures shows that the way terms are presented can affect how reasoning is understood (Wojciechowski

2014). *Ecthesis*, by introducing a representative instance, may be seen as serving a similar function within Aristotle's logic, making the relation between terms more explicit. Despite these observations, it would be misleading to assign to *ecthesis* a central or foundational role in Aristotelian logic. The method is used in specific cases, and Aristotle does not present it as a general principle of inference. Moreover, syllogistic reasoning can be reconstructed without relying on *ecthesis*, using only formal transformations (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962). This suggests that its role is not essential for establishing validity.

Nevertheless, the presence of *ecthesis* reveals an important aspect of Aristotle's logical practice. It shows that demonstration is not only concerned with deriving correct conclusions, but also with presenting the reasoning in a way that can be followed. In this sense, *ecthesis* contributes to the intelligibility of inference, even if it does not provide an independent criterion of validity. This interpretation allows us to see *ecthesis* as complementing, rather than competing with, more formal methods. While procedures like *reduction* establish the structure of valid inference, *ecthesis* helps to make that structure visible. Both aspects are part of Aristotle's approach to logic, and their relation becomes clearer when we consider not only the formal properties of arguments, but also the way in which they are presented in the text.

7. Ecthesis, Knowledge, and Understanding

The analysis of *ecthesis* so far has focused on its role within syllogistic reasoning and its treatment in the history of interpretation. To complete the discussion, it is useful to consider how this method relates to the broader conception of knowledge in the philosophy of Aristotle. This requires moving from the *Prior Analytics* to the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle develops his account of demonstration as a source of scientific knowledge. In the *Posterior Analytics*, demonstration is not understood merely as a valid inference, but as a form of reasoning that explains why something is the case. Knowledge, in this sense, involves grasping the necessity of the conclusion on the basis of its causes. A demonstration must proceed from premises that are true, primary, and explanatory, so that the conclusion is not only established, but also understood (Ross 1949; Barnes 2000). This distinction between knowing that something is the case and understanding why it is the case is central to Aristotle's epistemology.

Within this framework, the role of *ecthesis* can be reconsidered. As seen in the previous section, *ecthesis* does not provide a causal explanation in the strict sense required for scientific knowledge. It does not introduce new premises or identify underlying causes. Instead, it operates within the given

premises by introducing a representative instance that clarifies their relation. In this way, it contributes not to the discovery of causes, but to the intelligibility of the inference itself (Smith 1983). This contribution becomes clearer when we consider the relation between universal and particular in Aristotelian reasoning. Demonstration proceeds from universal premises, yet understanding often requires seeing how these universals apply to particular cases. *Ecthesis* provides a way of making this application explicit. By taking a term that falls under a universal and tracing its relation to another term, the reasoning becomes easier to follow. This aligns with broader observations concerning Aristotle's use of examples, where particular instances function as part of the reasoning rather than as external illustrations (Ierodiakonou 2002). At this point, it is also useful to relate this feature to wider discussions on the nature of demonstration and method. As has been argued in studies on the mathematical method, reasoning is not only a matter of formal validity, but also of how the structure of the argument is presented and grasped by the knower (Hintikka 1967). Although these discussions arise in a different context, they help to clarify that the intelligibility of reasoning is an important aspect of demonstration. From this perspective, *ecthesis* can be understood as contributing to the way in which an argument is made understandable, even if it does not alter its formal validity.

This feature also has a pedagogical dimension. Aristotle's logical works were not only theoretical investigations, but also part of a practice of teaching and learning reasoning. In such a context, methods that help to clarify the relation between premises can play an important role. The introduction of a representative instance allows the structure of the argument to be seen more directly, which can support the process of understanding. However, it is important to maintain a careful balance in evaluating this role. *Ecthesis* does not transform a non-demonstrative argument into a demonstrative one, nor does it replace the need for explanatory premises. The criteria for scientific knowledge remain those set out in the *Posterior Analytics*, and *ecthesis* does not alter them. Its function is more limited: it helps to make the reasoning more transparent, without changing its epistemological status.

This limitation is consistent with the way *ecthesis* has been treated in the history of logic. As noted earlier, it has often been regarded as a secondary procedure, especially in comparison with methods that establish validity through formal transformations (Łukasiewicz 1957; Kneale and Kneale 1962). From the point of view of strict demonstration, this assessment is understandable. Yet it may overlook the contribution that *ecthesis* makes to the presentation and comprehension of arguments. In this respect, the study of *ecthesis* highlights an important aspect of Aristotle's thought. Logical reasoning is not only a matter of deriving conclusions, but also of presenting them in a way that can be followed and understood. While modern interpretations

have often emphasized the former aspect, a closer reading of the texts suggests that the latter also plays a role in Aristotle's method (Lear 1980).

Thus, the significance of *ecthesis* lies not in its ability to establish new forms of inference, but in its contribution to the intelligibility of reasoning. It shows how the relation between premises can be made explicit, and how conclusions can be seen to follow from them. In this way, it connects the logical and epistemological dimensions of Aristotle's philosophy, even if its use remains limited. The consideration of *ecthesis* from this perspective completes the analysis of its role within Aristotle's logic and its development in the history of interpretation.

8. Conclusion

The present study has examined the method of *ecthesis* in the logical works of Aristotle, with particular attention to its role in the *Prior Analytics* and its interpretation in the history of logic. By combining textual analysis with a historical perspective, it has sought to clarify how this method functions within Aristotle's demonstrations and how its status has changed over time.

The analysis of Aristotle's texts shows that *ecthesis* is employed in specific cases where the relation between premises is not immediately evident. Through the introduction of a representative instance, the reasoning becomes more explicit, and the conclusion can be seen to follow from the given premises. This procedure does not alter the structure of the argument or introduce new information, but rather makes visible what is already contained in the premises (Smith 1982; Smith 1983; Żarnecka-Biały 1993). At the same time, the historical examination indicates that *ecthesis* did not receive sustained attention in the transmission of Aristotelian logic. In ancient and medieval traditions, the emphasis was placed on systematizing syllogistic reasoning, often privileging those elements that could be expressed in general and formal terms (Flannery 1995; Kneale and Kneale 1962). As a result, *ecthesis* remained a relatively minor feature, without being developed into a central topic of discussion.

This tendency was further reinforced in modern interpretations, where the focus on formalization and deductive systems led to a more explicit marginalization of methods that depend on particular instances. In reconstructions of Aristotle's logic, especially those influenced by modern formal logic, *ecthesis* was often regarded as dispensable or reducible to other procedures (Łukasiewicz 1957; Patzig 1968; Boger 2007). Such approaches, while providing important insights into the structure of syllogistic reasoning, did not fully account for all aspects of Aristotle's method. More recent scholarship, however, has begun to reconsider this perspective. By returning to the textual de-

tails of the *Prior Analytics* and by examining the variety of procedures employed by Aristotle, scholars have drawn attention to the role of *ecthesis* in clarifying the relation between premises (Crubellier et al. 2019; Joray 2017; Corkum 2025). These studies do not necessarily assign a central place to *ecthesis*, but they suggest that its function cannot be reduced to a merely auxiliary role. The examination of the logical function of *ecthesis* further supports this view. *Ecthesis* does not serve as an independent method of establishing validity, nor does it replace formal procedures such as reduction or proof by impossibility. Its role is more limited, but still significant: it contributes to the intelligibility of reasoning by making explicit the relations that underlie the inference (Johnson 1993; Thom 1993). In this respect, it complements rather than competes with more formal methods.

Finally, the connection between *ecthesis* and Aristotle's conception of knowledge highlights its broader philosophical relevance. Although it does not provide causal explanations in the sense required for scientific demonstration, it supports the process through which reasoning becomes understandable. By linking universal premises to particular instances, it allows the structure of the argument to be followed more clearly (Ierodiakonou 2002; Lear 1980). In conclusion, *ecthesis* should not be regarded as a central or foundational component of Aristotle's logic. However, neither should it be dismissed as merely incidental. Its presence in the *Prior Analytics* indicates that Aristotle's approach to reasoning includes not only formal techniques for establishing validity, but also methods for clarifying the relation between terms. The historical development of its interpretation reflects changing priorities in the study of logic, from the organization of syllogistic forms to the formalization of inference. By situating *ecthesis* within both its textual context and its historical development, this paper has aimed to provide a more balanced account of its role. In doing so, it contributes to a more refined understanding of Aristotelian logic as a body of thought that has been interpreted in different ways across different periods, and whose complexity cannot be fully captured by any single approach.

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BEYOND BARBOUR: AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICAL-HIERARCHICAL MODEL OF THE SCIENCE AND RELIGION RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically engages with Ian Barbour's influential fourfold typology of conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration, widely used to describe the relationship between science and religion. While Barbour's framework has shaped decades of discourse, it remains largely grounded in modern Western, predominantly Christian contexts and often fails to capture more ethically structured approaches found in other intellectual traditions. In response, the paper turns to the thought of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, offering a close analytical reconstruction of his epistemology and its implications for the relationship between scientific and religious knowledge. The study shows that al-Ghazali does not reject scientific inquiry as such, but rather situates it within a broader normative framework governed by ethical and spiritual ends. His position recognizes the legitimacy of empirical and rational disciplines, particularly in fields such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, while subjecting metaphysical extrapolations and epistemic overreach to theological and philosophical scrutiny. On this basis, the paper suggests that al-Ghazali's thought may be interpreted as articulating what can be described as an Ethical-Hierarchical Model (EHM) of knowledge, in which different forms of inquiry are ordered according to their epistemic scope and moral purpose. Rather than proposing a new theoretical framework independently of the historical analysis, this model is presented as a conceptual reconstruction derived from al-Ghazali's own writings. By foregrounding the ethical orientation of knowledge and the hierarchical organization of epistemic domains, the study aims to contribute to a broader re-evaluation of science–religion relations beyond the limits of existing typologies.

KEYWORDS: Ian Barbour, Al-Ghazali, Science and Religion, Ethical-Hierarchical Model, Epistemic Pluralism

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between science and religion has long been a subject of philosophical debate, often framed through the influential models proposed by Ian Barbour (1966; 1990; 1997), including conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Barbour was trained both as a physicist and as a theologian, and his work played a foundational role in establishing the modern academic field of science and religion. These models have provided a conceptual map for understanding how scientific inquiry and religious belief interact, but they remain deeply rooted in modern Western intellectual contexts. As a result, they risk oversimplifying or even misrepresenting the more nuanced approaches developed in non-Western traditions.

This paper seeks to address this gap by turning to the classical Islamic philosopher and theologian al-Ghazali (d. 1111), whose thought offers an approach that may be interpreted as an Ethical-Hierarchical Model (EHM). By re-examining al-Ghazali's works, this study aims to broaden the conceptual vocabulary of science–religion studies and contribute to a more globally inclusive discourse.

Barbour's typology has shaped discussions of science and religion across a wide range of intellectual contexts, including Christian theology and, more recently, Muslim philosophical debates. At the same time, it has been criticized for functioning as a static taxonomy that risks flattening historical complexity and masking hybrid positions. A central example is Geoffrey Cantor and Chris Kenny's critique, which questions whether Barbour's fourfold scheme can adequately capture the shifting and context-dependent ways in which science and religion have actually interacted (Cantor & Kenny 2001). Barbour's own response clarifies that typologies may still serve a useful pedagogical purpose, even when they cannot substitute for detailed historical analysis (Barbour 2002).

In addition to academic critiques, Barbour's scheme has also been widely received and reworked within Christian theology, where scholars and communities sought to move beyond the traditional conflict narrative and articulate more constructive relationships between science and faith. This reception matters for the present paper because it shows that Barbour's typology has long been treated as revisable rather than final. Recognizing these debates helps motivate the present analysis of whether existing typologies adequately capture non-Western intellectual traditions.

The significance of focusing on al-Ghazali lies in his complex intellectual stance toward science. On the one hand, he recognized the legitimacy and necessity of empirical and rational inquiry, particularly in fields such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. On the other hand, he placed such forms of knowledge within a broader hierarchy of epistemic and ethical priorities,

subordinating them to metaphysical truths and spiritual ends. This tension resists simple classification within Barbour's fourfold typology. In this sense, al-Ghazali neither rejected science as inherently antagonistic to religion nor uncritically integrated it into theology. Instead, he filtered scientific claims through ethical and theological commitments, thereby presenting a position that affirms scientific value while setting boundaries against epistemic absolutism. This makes al-Ghazali's thought a valuable case study for rethinking science–religion relations.

At first glance, comparing al-Ghazali and Barbour may appear historically distant, given the different intellectual contexts in which they worked. Al-Ghazali wrote in the eleventh century within the framework of Islamic theology and philosophy, whereas Barbour addressed modern scientific developments within a twentieth-century Western context. The aim of the present comparison, however, is not to suggest historical continuity or direct influence. The comparison is philosophical and conceptual. Both thinkers grapple with a similar normative question concerning how scientific knowledge should be situated within a broader religious worldview and how the authority of empirical inquiry relates to theological and ethical commitments. By placing their approaches in dialogue, the analysis highlights different strategies for negotiating the relationship between science and religion and clarifies distinctive features of al-Ghazali's epistemological position.

The academic discourse on science and religion has often been dominated by Western categories and examples. Barbour's typology, while influential, has been criticized for its limited applicability outside the Christian context and for its lack of attention to ethical and cultural dimensions. Scholars such as John Hedley Brooke (1991), Peter Harrison (2015), and Mikael Stenmark (2004) have highlighted the historical complexity of the science–religion interface, moving away from the simplistic "conflict thesis." Within Islamic studies, however, the conversation has often been polarized. On one side, apologetic narratives emphasize Islam's "golden age" of science as evidence of harmony, while on the other, Orientalist perspectives reduce Islamic thought to a derivative tradition hostile to rational inquiry. More recent scholarship, including the works of Frank Griffel (2009), George Saliba (2007), and Peter Adamson (2016), has begun to complicate this picture by showing the diversity of approaches within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Yet, despite this progress, relatively little has been done to position classical Islamic thinkers as contributors to contemporary debates on science and religion. This paper builds on this emerging scholarship by arguing that al-Ghazali, far from being a mere critic of philosophy, provides conceptual resources for a more nuanced understanding of the science–religion relationship, one that foregrounds ethical responsibility and epistemic hierarchy. In this respect, his thought may be interpreted as articulating an Ethical-Hierarchical

Model, understood as a reconstruction grounded in his epistemology rather than as an independently proposed framework. In this way, the study not only re-examines al-Ghazali's thought but also seeks to enrich the broader discourse on science and religion by clarifying conceptual structures already present within the tradition.

2. Barbour's Four Models

The contemporary study of science and religion has been shaped decisively by Ian Barbour's typology of four models (1997). This framework has provided a conceptual vocabulary for scholars across philosophy, theology, and religious studies, becoming a standard point of reference in the field. Yet, as many critics have noted, it was developed primarily with modern Western, especially Christian, contexts in mind, and thus requires critical scrutiny when applied to other intellectual traditions (Bigliardi 2012). Before turning to al-Ghazali's position, it is necessary to outline Barbour's four models in order to assess their adequacy and identify where they fall short. Doing so will not only clarify the strengths and limitations of Barbour's schema but also prepare the ground for a comparative assessment of these models in light of alternative approaches found in classical Islamic thought.

2.1. The Conflict Model

The first and perhaps most popularized of Barbour's models is the conflict model, which portrays science and religion as inherently opposed, locked in a zero-sum struggle for authority over truth. On this view, the claims of science and the claims of religion are mutually exclusive. To accept one is necessarily to reject the other. Historically, this model is often illustrated by the so-called "conflict thesis," according to which the history of science is largely a story of its emancipation from the shackles of religion. Narratives of Galileo's clash with the Catholic Church or the 19th-century debates between Darwinian evolution and biblical creationism are regularly invoked as paradigmatic examples. As Barbour (1997, 77) observes, "the image of warfare is common today, partly because conflict between extreme views lends itself to dramatic media coverage, while more subtle and complex intermediate positions tend to be neglected". Moreover, figures such as Richard Dawkins (2006) have popularized the idea that scientific rationality inevitably undermines religious belief.

Despite its cultural appeal, the conflict model has been heavily criticized in the scholarly literature. John Hedley Brooke (1991) and Peter Harrison (2015), among others, have shown that the conflict thesis rests on selective

readings of history and ignores the many cases in which scientific inquiry was pursued within religious institutions or motivated by theological assumptions. For example, medieval natural philosophy in both Christian and Islamic contexts often operated in close continuity with theological concerns rather than in opposition to them. Thus, while the conflict model captures a strand of modern polemics, it oversimplifies historical reality and risks perpetuating a false dichotomy.

Even Barbour, whose typology brought the conflict model into prominence, explicitly distances himself from it. He argues that both extremes, scientific materialism and biblical literalism, distort the proper domains of science and religion. As he states, "scientific materialism and biblical literalism both represent a misuse of science" (Barbour 1997, 78). For Barbour, the apparent warfare between the two arises not from any inherent opposition but from methodological or interpretive excesses on both sides. In this sense, his own position moves beyond the simplistic antagonism of the conflict model, emphasizing instead that the tension between science and religion results from human misapplication rather than from structural incompatibility.

Al-Ghazali's position in the Islamic intellectual tradition similarly resists the assumptions of the conflict model. Far from seeing science as a threat to faith, he distinguished between the legitimate domains of empirical and mathematical inquiry and the speculative overreach of metaphysics. As he writes:

> And whoever thinks that disputing the validity of these sciences [mathematics and geometry] is part of religion has committed an offense against religion and weakened its cause. For these matters are established by mathematical and geometrical proofs that leave no room for doubt ... As it has been said: an intelligent enemy is better than an ignorant friend" (Al-Ghazali 2021, 46–47).[1]

This statement reveals that al-Ghazali did not regard the demonstrative sciences as contrary to revelation; rather, he condemned those who, out of misplaced zeal, rejected them in the name of religion. Such rejection, in his view, only undermines the credibility of faith among rational minds. Thus, like Barbour, al-Ghazali locates the source of apparent conflict not in the essence of science or religion but in human misunderstanding and misapplication. Both thinkers, though emerging from distinct traditions, converge in rejecting the notion of an intrinsic warfare between scientific and religious knowledge. The conflict model, therefore, fails to capture this more nuanced reality and must give way to frameworks that account for ethical, epistemic,

[1] The translation is the author's own.

and cultural complexity, a task to which al-Ghazali's thought uniquely contributes.

2.2. The Independence Model

The independence model represents a markedly different approach from the conflict view. Rather than depicting science and religion as rivals, this model separates their domains, holding that each addresses distinct questions and employs different methods. Science, according to this view, investigates the empirical world through observation, experimentation, and rational analysis, while religion deals with meaning, purpose, and moral value. The two are therefore seen as autonomous but complementary forms of inquiry that need not overlap or contradict one another. This model gained considerable influence among twentieth-century scholars who sought to avoid the perceived extremes of both scientific reductionism and religious dogmatism.

Stephen Jay Gould's (1999) proposal of "non-overlapping magisteria" exemplifies the independence model. He argues that science concerns itself with factual questions about the natural world, whereas religion is concerned with questions of moral value and spiritual significance. Each discipline, in his view, operates within its own magisterium, or sphere of authority, and neither should encroach upon the other. The model has an intuitive appeal, particularly for those seeking to maintain peace between science and religion in pluralistic societies. It acknowledges the legitimacy of both domains without forcing an artificial synthesis.

Yet, despite its conciliatory intent, the independence model has drawn significant criticism. Barbour (1997, 89) himself regarded it as an incomplete solution, where he states that "if science and religion were totally independent, the possibility of conflict would be avoided, but the possibility of constructive dialogue and mutual enrichment would also be ruled out". According to Barbour, the independence model risks oversimplifying the intricate ways in which scientific and religious thought often intersect. The notion that science is purely empirical and value-free, while religion is solely concerned with ethics and meaning, is difficult to sustain in practice. Scientific theories frequently rest on philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, causality, and truth, while religious traditions often engage empirical claims about the world. To treat them as entirely separate spheres may preserve harmony, but it does so at the cost of genuine dialogue and intellectual integration.

From the perspective of classical Islamic thought, the independence model captures only part of the picture. Thinkers such as al-Ghazali recognized the autonomy of different branches of knowledge but did not regard them as completely independent or self-sufficient. For him, the empirical sci-

ences possessed their own methods and legitimacy, yet they could not be detached from the moral and spiritual aims that give meaning to all forms of knowledge. In his view, science and religion are not two isolated domains but interrelated paths within a single hierarchy of understanding. As al-Ghazali (2021, 289) cautions, "He is mistaken who believes that knowledge without action will lead to salvation," and further reminds that "knowledge without action is madness, and action without knowledge is impossible" (Al-Ghazali (2021, 291). These statements from *Ayyuha al-Walad al-Muhib* (Dear Beloved Son) reveal that knowledge, to be complete, must guide human conduct and purify the soul. Al-Ghazali thus anticipates Barbour's concern that a strict separation between science and religion prevents "constructive dialogue and mutual enrichment." His epistemology integrates empirical inquiry within an ethical and spiritual framework, showing that truth cannot be grasped by reason or experience alone but must be directed toward moral and religious transformation.

The independence model, therefore, offers a valuable corrective to the polemical spirit of the conflict thesis by recognizing the distinctiveness of scientific and religious reasoning. However, its tendency to draw rigid boundaries between them limits its explanatory power. The challenge is not merely to avoid conflict but to understand how the two domains interact, inform, and constrain one another. This realization points toward more integrated frameworks that can account for both empirical validity and moral significance, a direction that Barbour explores further in his dialogue and integration models, and one that al-Ghazali develops in a more ethically nuanced way. This call for a more interactive relationship between science and religion sets the stage for Barbour's third model, dialogue, where the two domains begin to engage in constructive exchange.

2.3. The Dialogue Model

The dialogue model occupies a middle ground between conflict and independence. It recognizes that science and religion are distinct in their methods and concerns, yet it affirms that they can engage in meaningful conversation about common questions. Dialogue, in this sense, is not a contest for authority but a collaborative effort to deepen human understanding of reality. Barbour (1997, 93) observes that "since the 1950s, these sharp contrasts have been increasingly called into question. Science, it appeared, is not as objective, nor religion as subjective, as had been claimed. There may be differences of emphasis between the fields, but the distinctions are not as absolute as had been asserted". This shift in perspective made it possible to see science and religion

not as competing systems but as parallel interpretive enterprises concerned with coherence, meaning, and truth.

Barbour develops the dialogue model by showing that both science and religion involve interpretation rather than mere observation. He argues that the so-called "objectivity" of science and the "subjectivity" of religion are overstated, since both rely on interpretive frameworks and shared assumptions that shape how data are understood (Barbour 1997, 93). In this sense, scientific inquiry is never completely neutral but guided by paradigms, values, and communal judgments, just as religious understanding is mediated by symbols, traditions, and conceptual interpretation. The scientific criteria of coherence, comprehensiveness, and fruitfulness, Barbour explains, have their counterparts in religious thought, where ideas are also assessed for internal consistency, scope, and transformative power. This parallel is further illustrated in Barbour's discussion of Thomas Kuhn's (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which maintains that both theories and data in science are dependent on the prevailing paradigms of the scientific community.

The dialogue model therefore provides an intellectually fertile framework that encourages mutual learning. Scientific inquiry can challenge religious traditions to refine their metaphysical assumptions, while theology can help science to reflect on its ethical and existential implications. Yet, Barbour is careful to avoid reducing dialogue to uncritical synthesis. He writes, "I am sympathetic with the hunger for spirituality in a materialistic culture … In both science and religion I believe that alternatives outside the mainstream should be carefully evaluated and neither dismissed out of hand nor uncritically accepted" (Barbour 1997, 98). For Barbour, dialogue requires openness to revision and an inclusive outlook that evaluates new ideas with both critical and spiritual sensitivity.

While promising, the dialogue model is not without its weaknesses. For example, Stenmark (2010) points out that dialogue often remains limited to abstract analogies or surface-level comparisons, without engaging the deeper epistemological questions that connect science and religion. Barbour himself acknowledges this risk by emphasizing the need for dialogue that is both intellectually rigorous and spiritually receptive. The challenge lies in transforming conversation into genuine exchange, where both domains expand their horizons through mutual critique and enrichment.

From the standpoint of classical Islamic philosophy, the spirit of dialogue resonates deeply with al-Ghazali's intellectual project, though his understanding is broader and more ethically grounded. For al-Ghazali, reason and revelation are not opposing forces but complementary modes of knowing. Rational inquiry, when guided by moral discipline and spiritual awareness, reveals the harmony and purpose embedded in creation, while revelation provides the metaphysical and ethical orientation that directs reason toward truth. As he

writes, "How can right guidance ever be attained by one who is content merely to imitation (*taqlid*) and transmitted reports, and rejects the paths of rational inquiry and reflection? Does he not know that there is no foundation for the religion except the word of the Prophet, and that it is the proof of reason which establishes the truthfulness of what he has conveyed?" (Al-Ghazali 2019, 96).[2] This passage underscores that for al-Ghazali, faith must be intellectually grounded and supported by rational inquiry, for reason is not the enemy of revelation but its necessary companion.[3]

In this sense, al-Ghazali's view of dialogue extends beyond intellectual interaction to the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human understanding. He further illustrates this interdependence through a metaphor: "The one who turns away from reason, relying only on the light of the Qur'an, is like a person who exposes himself to the sunlight while keeping his eyes closed. Such a one differs little from the blind. Reason together with revelation is light upon light, and whoever looks with only one eye at either of them alone is clinging to a rope of delusion" (Al-Ghazali 2019, 97).[4] Here, al-Ghazali rejects both rationalism divorced from faith and faith devoid of reason, presenting instead a vision in which knowledge serves as a bridge between intellectual insight and moral transformation. This broader conception of dialogue anticipates the movement from dialogue to integration, where both science and religion seek a unified and coherent understanding of truth.

2.4. The Integration Model

The integration model represents the most ambitious of Barbour's four frameworks. While the dialogue model calls for constructive exchange between science and religion, the integration model seeks a more comprehensive synthesis in which both domains contribute to a unified worldview. For Barbour (1997), integration does not imply the collapse of theology into science or the reduction of science to theology. Rather, it aims at a mutual reinterpretation of concepts, where each discipline enriches and corrects the other within a coherent metaphysical structure. As he explains, "both science and religion are concerned with the fundamental nature of reality and with the place of human beings within it," and therefore "an integrated worldview is a legitimate and necessary aspiration for reflective thought" (Barbour 1997, 99).

Barbour himself favors the integration model as the most promising of his four, yet he conceives of it as a dynamic and critical process rather than a final

[2] The translation is the author's own.

[3] For more discussion on al-Ghazali's view of *taqlid*, see Alhayyani (2024).

[4] The translation is the author's own.

synthesis. He emphasizes that integration must proceed "without distorting either field" (Barbour 1997, 101), ensuring that science retains its empirical rigor and religion its moral and metaphysical depth. In this spirit, he outlines three possible forms of integration. First, natural theology, which seeks evidence of God in nature. Second, theology of nature, which reinterprets theological doctrines in light of scientific discovery. Third, systematic synthesis, which is a comprehensive metaphysical framework that accommodates both scientific and theological insights. "The goal," Barbour writes, "is not to append religion to science, but to develop a worldview in which the two are mutually illuminating and mutually corrective" (Barbour 1997, 101).

In this model, science contributes an empirical account of natural processes, while religion provides an interpretive and teleological understanding of their ultimate significance. Integration thus aspires to coherence not only in knowledge but also in meaning. Barbour often draws on process philosophy, particularly the thought of Alfred North Whitehead, whose concept of an evolving, interrelated cosmos allows for divine immanence without negating natural causation. "God is not external to the world but immanent within its continuous creativity," Barbour observes, suggesting that divine and natural agency operate in complementary rather than competing modes (Barbour 1997, 104).

Despite its appeal, the integration model has been met with several important critiques. John Hedley Brooke (1991) argues that it tends to impose a false historical unity on what has always been a diverse and context-dependent relationship between science and religion. Peter Harrison (2015) similarly cautions that the integration model presupposes the existence of "science" and "religion" as stable, universal categories, whereas in earlier centuries these distinctions were fluid and often overlapping. From a philosophical standpoint, Philip Clayton (2000) questions whether the two domains share sufficient epistemic foundations to sustain genuine synthesis, noting that scientific and theological claims operate under different norms of justification. These objections suggest that while Barbour's integration model offers a compelling ideal of intellectual harmony, it risks oversimplifying the complex plurality of relations that have historically existed between scientific and religious thought.

From the perspective of classical Islamic philosophy, the aspiration toward integration resonates deeply with al-Ghazali's intellectual vision, though his approach is grounded more firmly in ethical hierarchy than in metaphysical system-building. Like Barbour, al-Ghazali sought a unified understanding that harmonizes empirical investigation with moral and spiritual insight. Yet, whereas Barbour's integration rests on the search for conceptual coherence, al-Ghazali's synthesis is rooted in the ethical purification and spiritual orientation of the knower. Knowledge, for him, achieves its highest form when it

leads the intellect from the multiplicity of phenomena to the unity of divine truth.

This integrative impulse in al-Ghazali's epistemology prepares the ground for what may be interpreted as an Ethical-Hierarchical Model (EHM), understood as a reconstruction of al-Ghazali's epistemology rather than as an additional framework within Barbour's typology. On this interpretation, science and religion are not merely reconciled through philosophical synthesis but ordered within a moral and metaphysical hierarchy that defines the proper purpose of knowledge itself.

3. AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICAL-HIERARCHICAL MODEL (EHM)

Recent scholarship has increasingly explored al-Ghazali's engagement with philosophy, science, and scriptural interpretation. Studies by Marmura (1965), Whittingham (2007), and Guessoum (2011) have examined the philosophical and theological dimensions of al-Ghazali's thought and the ways in which he evaluated scientific knowledge within a broader religious framework. More recent work by Daneshgar (2023) has further highlighted the importance of Qur'anic interpretation and epistemology in understanding al-Ghazali's intellectual project. These studies show that al-Ghazali did not simply reject philosophical or scientific inquiry but sought to situate it within a wider ethical and theological vision. The present analysis builds on this scholarship while focusing more specifically on how this vision can be reconstructed as al-Ghazali's account of the relation between scientific inquiry and religious commitments.

The aspiration for unity between science and religion, as seen in Barbour's integration model, finds a deeper and more ethically grounded expression in al-Ghazali's philosophy. Yet, while Barbour's integration seeks harmony through conceptual coherence, al-Ghazali grounds unity in moral and spiritual hierarchy. The purpose of knowledge, in his view, is not exhausted by explanation or synthesis but culminates in the transformation of the knower. This transformation marks the fundamental difference between the modern scientific ideal of intellectual mastery and the classical Islamic vision of knowledge as a path to ethical and metaphysical realization.

The following passages illustrate a broader epistemological orientation that has been widely discussed in contemporary scholarship on al-Ghazali, where his reflections on knowledge, authority, and intellectual responsibility are understood as part of a structured vision of the relationship between rational inquiry and religious commitment. In this light, al-Ghazali's position can be interpreted as articulating an ethical-hierarchical structure that both preserves the autonomy of scientific inquiry and situates it within a broader

moral and teleological order. On this interpretation, al-Ghazali does not merge the languages of science and religion into a single discourse, nor does he isolate them into separate domains. Rather, his thought appears to order them hierarchically according to their epistemic depth and ethical purpose.

To illustrate his position, let us consider the following quote from al-Ghazali's famous work *The Revival of Religious Sciences*: "As for praiseworthy knowledge, it is the knowledge of God the Exalted, His attributes, His acts, His way in creation, and His wisdom in ordering the Hereafter upon this world. This form of knowledge is sought for its own sake, for through it one attains the happiness of the Hereafter" (2005, 49).[5] This reveals that al-Ghazali viewed knowledge as intrinsically tied to moral and spiritual development rather than as a purely intellectual pursuit. By defining praiseworthy knowledge as that which unveils God's wisdom in creation and connects the temporal to the eternal, he establishes a hierarchy where every form of inquiry derives its meaning from its contribution to the soul's perfection.

The natural and rational sciences therefore hold an honorable yet intermediate position, for they illuminate the order of the created world and train the intellect, but they reach their fullest significance only when they direct the human mind toward divine reality. Al-Ghazali makes this hierarchical vision explicit when he writes that "the sciences, in all their degrees, either lead a person toward God or assist him in that journey in one way or another, and each occupies its own rank in terms of nearness to or distance from this ultimate purpose" (2005, 63).[6] Within this reconstruction of al-Ghazali's position, this conception shifts the relationship between science and religion from theoretical reconciliation to moral orientation, where knowledge is judged by the ethical and spiritual ends it serves.

This hierarchical conception avoids the extremes of both reductionism and fideism. It neither elevates scientific knowledge to the status of ultimate truth nor dismisses it as spiritually irrelevant. Rather, it locates science within a moral cosmology in which all forms of knowledge derive their value from their orientation toward the Good. In this sense, al-Ghazali's position differs from Barbour's integration model by grounding the unity of truth not primarily in conceptual correspondence but in ethical teleology. The relationship between science and religion thus becomes not a matter of epistemic negotiation but of moral alignment. It can therefore be understood as a process through which human inquiry reflects, however imperfectly, the order and wisdom of the divine.

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[5] The translation is the author's own.

[6] The translation is the author's own.

3.1. Core Principles of the Ethical-Hierarchical Model (EHM)

This reconstruction rests on three interrelated principles that reflect al-Ghazali's broader epistemology and moral psychology. These principles together form a coherent structure that helps explain why al-Ghazali's position does not fit neatly within Barbour's four models, especially in its insistence that knowledge is never value neutral but always oriented toward an ethical and spiritual end.

The first principle concerns the idea that knowledge unfolds in an ascending order of illumination. Al-Ghazali often describes the movement of the intellect as a progression that begins with the senses, advances through rational reflection, and culminates in the certainty granted by spiritual insight. Consider the following passage from *The deliverance from Error*:

> A human being is created devoid of any experience of the world, and his awareness of it begins through sensory perception. He then rises to another stage, which is the stage of reason, through which he grasps what is necessary, possible, and impossible, as well as matters that cannot be perceived by the previous stage. Beyond reason there lies yet another stage, in which a further eye is opened, by which one perceives realities that remain hidden from the level of reason (Al-Ghazali 2019, 73–74).[7]

According to al-Ghazali, each level possesses its own methods and degrees of certainty, yet revelation serves as the ultimate standard that confirms and guides the lower levels. He illustrates this difference through the example of a man who is born blind and learns the names of colors. Such a person may understand, in purely conceptual terms, that white is different from black and that red is distinct from both, yet his knowledge remains confined to definitions and verbal distinctions. If his sight is later restored, he does not acquire new propositions about colors, but the quality of his knowledge is transformed. What he previously grasped through description alone becomes something he now experiences directly, and the taste of that experience is of an entirely different order.

This example clarifies the reasoning behind the first principle of this reconstruction. Sensory perception and rational reflection can provide accurate and even sophisticated accounts of the world, yet they remain at the level of mediated concepts. Spiritual insight, which al-Ghazali presents as a higher stage of illumination, does not simply add more information. It changes the mode of knowing itself, much as the transition from blindness to sight transforms the awareness of color. In this perspective, empirical and rational

[7] The translation is the author's own.

sciences occupy legitimate and necessary positions within the hierarchy of knowledge, but they reach completion only when they are taken up into a higher form of insight that discloses the reality to which they point. Spiritual experience does not negate the lower levels. However, it fulfills them by granting a more immediate grasp of truth that confirms, deepens, and reorients what the senses and intellect have already attained.

In this hierarchical vision, empirical investigation retains full legitimacy within its proper domain. Al-Ghazali warns against those who dismiss the demonstrative sciences in the name of religion, insisting that such rejection weakens rather than protects faith. He identifies this tendency as the work of "an ignorant friend of religion who believes that religion ought to be defended by denying the demonstrative sciences,"[8] a stance that, in his view, harms both faith and intellect (2019, 46). At the same time, he maintains that these sciences reach completion only when they are situated within a metaphysical order that discloses their ultimate purpose. The hierarchy of knowledge therefore restores the idea that truth is not uniform but graded, for each stage of understanding draws the mind nearer to divine reality. Within al-Ghazali's epistemological hierarchy, this graded ascent becomes central to understanding the relation between scientific and religious knowledge, where higher insight fulfills rather than negates the achievements of the senses and the intellect.

The second principle concerns the idea that the value of knowledge is determined by its ethical orientation. For al-Ghazali, knowledge is never an end in itself but acquires worth only through the moral transformation it produces. Knowledge that fails to purify the soul or guide action remains incomplete. He repeatedly insists that knowledge must lead to virtuous conduct, for intellectual mastery without ethical purpose becomes spiritually barren.

The second principle of this ethical-hierarchical reading is evident in *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, where al-Ghazali offers counsel to the seeker of knowledge. He advises first that one should "purify the soul from blameworthy traits and reprehensible dispositions" (2005, 60).[9] According to al-Ghazali, knowledge is a journey that begins with the purification of the self before the acquisition of any understanding of the world. This process involves removing vices such as arrogance, pride, prejudice, and partisanship, all of which can obstruct the pursuit of knowledge. Elsewhere, al-Ghazali affirms that the purpose of knowledge is "the attainment of inner moral virtues" such as humility and patience (2005, 65).[10] In this sense, know-

[8] The translation is the author's own.

[9] The translation is the author's own.

[10] The translation is the author's own.

ledge acquires an essential moral function, and its value is determined by the degree to which it brings about ethical transformation within the learner.

Within this reading of al-Ghazali, this principle shifts the focus from theoretical reconciliation to ethical direction. Scientific inquiry becomes meaningful when it participates in this larger moral trajectory. This stands in contrast to Barbour's metaphysical integration, for al-Ghazali grounds the unity of knowledge not in conceptual coherence but in teleological alignment with moral purpose.

The third principle of this reconstruction concerns the idea that sensory experience, reason, and revelation form a unified yet differentiated structure of understanding. Al-Ghazali affirms the autonomy of empirical and rational methods while placing them within a broader order that points toward transcendence. The sciences clarify how natural processes unfold, philosophical reasoning explores the intelligibility of creation, and revelation discloses the ultimate purpose that binds these levels together. To illustrate the third principle, let us consider the following passage from *The Revival of Religious Sciences*:

> This is the true certainty according to the firmly grounded scholars, which they attained through inward witnessing. This form of insight is stronger and clearer than sensory sight. They rose above the level of mere imitation based on hearing alone, and their state resembles that of someone who is told and believes, then sees for himself and thereby confirms the truth. Others are like those who accept belief through good trust and faith, yet have not enjoyed the experience of witnessing with their own eyes. Happiness lies beyond the knowledge of unveiling, and the knowledge of unveiling lies beyond the knowledge of practical religion, and practical religion comes after the knowledge that preserves bodily health and its causes, and bodily health depends on cooperation and communal life (Al-Ghazali 2005, 66).[11]

This passage clarifies the logic of the third principle. Al-Ghazali does not dismiss sensory or rational knowledge but situates them as preparatory stages that lead toward deeper forms of certainty. Sensation provides the first encounter with the world, reason organizes this encounter into structured understanding, and revelation or inward unveiling grants a level of certainty that transforms the knower's relationship to truth. His analogy of one who first hears and believes, then later sees and confirms, captures the shift from mediated to immediate knowledge.

To illustrate this dynamic, consider a person who has heard detailed explanations of the taste of honey yet has never tasted it. Such a person may know the definitions, properties, and descriptions, but the moment he actually

[11] The translation is the author's own.

tastes honey, the quality of his knowledge changes. He does not gain new propositions but acquires a direct experience that validates and deepens everything he previously understood. In the same way, al-Ghazali views spiritual insight as a mode of knowing that completes what sensation and reason begin. It does not negate the lower levels but fulfills them by transforming conceptual understanding into lived certainty.[12] On this interpretation, this hierarchy establishes an epistemic pluralism grounded in unity. Science retains legitimacy within its domain, philosophical reasoning refines interpretation, and revelatory insight completes the ascent by disclosing the divine purpose that integrates all levels of understanding.

This pluralism is not a relativistic coexistence of unrelated perspectives but a functional unity in which each domain contributes within the limits of its own method and scope. Sensory experience initiates perception, reason refines and interprets it, and revelation crowns the process by granting access to realities that transcend conceptual knowledge. In this structure, reason remains noble yet finite, for its proper fulfillment requires the illumination provided by revelation once it reaches the boundaries of what it can grasp on its own. Al-Ghazali's hierarchy, therefore, preserves the integrity of each mode of knowing while integrating them within a single trajectory that leads the mind from empirical observation to metaphysical comprehension, and ultimately to spiritual certainty.

These three principles suggest that al-Ghazali offers a vision of the science and religion relationship that is not easily captured by Barbour's fourfold typology. On the ethical-hierarchical reading developed here, al-Ghazali affirms the autonomy of scientific inquiry while situating it within a graded hierarchy of understanding that culminates in spiritual truth. His position emphasizes the ethical orientation of all knowledge and upholds a unified yet differentiated epistemic order in which sensory experience, reason, and revelation cooperate in the pursuit of truth. In this reconstructed account, integration is not achieved by merging scientific and theological categories but by aligning every form of knowing with the moral and spiritual ends that define human flourishing. This reconstruction, therefore, clarifies how al-Ghazali's thought can expand the conceptual landscape of the science and religion debate by presenting knowledge as something evaluated not only by its explanatory power but also by its contribution to the ethical and spiritual perfection of the human person.

[12] The same reasoning appears also in Ibn Tufayl's philosophical fable *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*. For more discussion, see Alhayyani (2023).

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to broaden the discourse on science and religion by placing al-Ghazali in conversation with Ian Barbour's four influential models. While Barbour's typology has provided an indispensable framework for understanding the interaction between scientific inquiry and religious belief, it remains shaped by assumptions and contexts that do not fully reflect the diversity of global intellectual traditions. Al-Ghazali's thought demonstrates that the relationship between science and religion can be understood in ways that extend beyond the categories of conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. His work reveals a more ethically structured and spiritually oriented vision of knowledge that challenges the adequacy of Barbour's schema.

The Ethical-Hierarchical Model (EHM), as reconstructed in this paper, offers a conceptual lens through which al-Ghazali's epistemology can be integrated into contemporary discussions. On this reconstruction, al-Ghazali's position affirms the legitimacy of empirical and rational inquiry while situating these forms of knowledge within a graded hierarchy that culminates in spiritual insight. This reconstruction also underscores the ethical orientation of all knowledge and presents a unified yet differentiated structure in which sensory perception, reason, and revelation cooperate in the pursuit of truth. In this vision, science and religion are not understood as competing for authority but participate together in a wider moral and metaphysical landscape that defines the proper purpose of knowing.

By recovering al-Ghazali's contribution, the paper invites a more inclusive and philosophically robust approach to the study of science and religion. It shows that classical Islamic thought contains resources capable of enriching contemporary debates, not through historical curiosity alone but through substantive conceptual insight. This ethical-hierarchical reading provides one such insight. It suggests that the unity of truth is not achieved by collapsing disciplinary boundaries but by aligning the aims of inquiry with the ethical and spiritual ends that guide human flourishing. Recognizing this broader horizon may encourage a reconsideration of the assumptions that shape the modern discourse and opens the possibility for further dialogue between traditions that have often been treated in isolation.

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METAPHORS IN THE CLINICAL GAZE: TRAUMA, MEMORY, AND UNCONSCIOUS

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ABSTRACT

Building upon writings of William James, Pierre Janet, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, and others, we here examine the history of three metaphors and their relation with the evolution of key ideas in psychological theory, aiming to illustrate to what extent epistemic heterogeneity characterizes scientific inquiry more broadly. Such heterogeneity, often unawarely taken on board, may include not only metaphysical assumptions and social constructions, but also the extensive adoption of metaphors as means to validate theories, guide inquiries and help imagine new possible worlds. The concepts of trauma, memory and unconscious are taken into account as bridging empiricism and the theory of meaning. We hereby outline their role in validating scientific statements around hysteria, on the liminal field between philosophy and science. Following the general orientation outlined by Lakoff & Johnson, Danziger and Reynolds, we investigate how the validity conditions of numerous scientific statements are deeply embedded with the truth of the metaphors and analogies historically adopted to formulate their model-based reasoning.

KEYWORDS: Epistemology, Metaphors, Philosophy of Medicine, Psychology, Psychiatry, History of Ideas

In a culture where the myth of objectivism is very
much alive and truth is always absolute truth,
the people who get to impose their metaphors
on the culture get to define what we consider to be true
— absolutely and objectively true.

George Lakoff & Mark Johnson (1980, 161)

THE CANON AND THE KING

In 1533, in a letter addressed to the Clergy of York, King Henry VIII wrote this much fascinating passage:

> He that [should] say he rode beyond the sea, were not conveniently interrupted in his tale by him that would object sayling upon the sea, where he could not ride at all; and rather then men would note a lye, when they know what is meant, they would sooner by allegory or metaphor draw the word to the truth, then by cavillation of the word note a lye. [...] The truth cannot be changed by words. (Haddan 1869, 385)

Henry VIII, King of England and Ireland, here prettily describes metaphor and allegory as forces able to "draw the word to the truth", and truth itself as something that "cannot be changed by words".

A century and a half later, in 1691, John Hartcliffe, Canon of Windsor, redacted an ambitious *Compleat Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*, aiming to describe their nature and attest their value. There, metaphors and allegories are said to have quite a different relation with knowledge and truth:

> let not Men think they can be Holy without Moral Vertue; [...] Devout and Pious, without all sober and sincere use of their Understandings in spiritual Matters, for this Mischief will certainly ensue upon it, that Men will embrace Metaphors and Allegories, Fancies and Forms of Speech, instead of the Substance of true and real Righteousness. (Hartcliffe 1722, 284)

Suspicion against trust, the Canon and the King looked at metaphors with very dissimilar eyes. One of those writings depicts metaphors and allegories as advisers of the truth; the other, as harmful impediments, or derails against its achievement.

Metaphor itself, on its part, could rather be considered as somewhat of a neutral ambassador, an impartial carrier. The Greek verb μεταφέρω derives from *meta*, meaning "over", and *pherein*, "to carry". Metaphoric thought carries over, it allows to establish connections, among others, between concepts and experiences, words and ideas. The debate around the relations between analogies and truth, which may today be considered as a segment of the wider discussion around words and things, as developed by Michel Foucault in *Les Mots et les Choses* (1966), has soon pervaded scientific reasoning and the philosophy of science, under the awareness that nature does not come with its own language and human beings can not be sure whether or not their thoughts, symbols, and languages actually represent or correspond to what they call the natural world. As for human understanding, chances are that metaphors might be inextricably connected with the very way we think:

> Though the use of metaphorical language in science has been historically criticized by some philosophers of science and scientists on the grounds that metaphors are figurative, ambiguous, and imprecise, their generative potential cannot be ignored. It is, in fact, metaphor that makes theory possible, and a great number of scientific revolutions have been initiated through novel comparisons between natural phenomena and everyday experiences. (Taylor & Dewsbury 2018, 2)

Besides that, Cynthia Taylor & Brian Dewsbury remind that the choice of a specific metaphor, or a set of them, may have an impact that goes well beyond the design of a scientific theory itself. It might influence perception, policies and behaviours:

> A growing body of literature also suggests that metaphors shape the mind, structure our experiences, and influence behavior. Experimental studies reveal that changes in the framing of policy-relevant issues (such as crime, natural disasters, and climate change) through metaphors can subtly, and covertly, influence the perception of risk, the sense of urgency, and the level of support for proposed "solutions" by acting on pre-existing cognitive schemas and prompting affective responses. (Taylor & Dewsbury 2018, 1)

On the sway of such a rich epistemological subject, we would here like to briefly consider the history of some particular metaphors and analogies, that have been placed at the heart of the medical approach to the psyche, or mind, as well as to further discuss their validity in terms of truth attributions and their general function within scientific knowledge as producers of discursivity. To do so, we will refer to the very beginnings of psychoanalysis and dynamic psychology, along the XIX and XX centuries, when concepts like dissociation, subconscious, conversion, unconscious, somatization, and more, have been created to account for the clinical phenomena that ended up constituting a necessary scientific myth: the nosological category of hysteria. Curiously, although hysteria has been dismissed as a scientific kind, virtually all the concepts and metaphors created to support it came to stay, and survived till today.

TRAUMA, MEMORY, UNCONSCIOUS

Kurt Danziger (1997, 11) wrote in *Naming the Mind* that: "ignoring the fact that scientific categories have a history makes it possible to avoid fundamental questions", thus allowing to operate in a scape where "history is replaced by essentialism". Inspired by such concerns, we would like to illustrate how the category of hysteria, and the dilemma of its symptoms, progressively brought physicians, philosophers and psychologists to reshape traditional concepts, develop novel ideas and give life to entire subject areas. We will focus

on the analogical, more than logical, forms of thinking as they evolved within the history of those ideas, showing how scientific reasoning progressed by means of metaphorical shifts and analogical association.

In order to play a functional role under the clinical gaze on hysteria, as well as to help validate the reality of such category, the most diverse entities of memory, trauma, unconscious and behaviour have historically been subject to metaphorical readjustments, particularly along the XIX and XX centuries. More precisely, the metaphorical and analogical relations between those entities under the scientific outlook came to significantly alter their status, their respective place within a model of understanding and their very meanings for the time to come.

As a start, let us consider the very peculiar journey of the word "trauma", which has been responsible for transposing sets of meanings and properties, originally belonging to medicine, from materialist reductionism to the arena of metaphysics, that is to describe the mind, psyche, or soul. A crucial idea in psychology, according to which dysfunctional behaviours can be brought back to an original psychological experience (*psychogenesis*), has precisely been dependent on the legitimacy of a metaphor: the metaphor of *psychological trauma*. The idea that psychological traumas, or mental injuries, are real entities is today taken for granted, both in the scientific and in the popular domains, mainly because of the riddle of hysteria. Etymology suggests that the word "traumatic" is derived from the Latin "traumaticus" and the Greek "τραυματικός", meaning "pertaining to a wound", where the word "τραῦμα" designated precisely the "wound, or external bodily injury in general; also the condition caused by this; traumatism" (OED). In fact, "in medical terminology, trauma refers to physical injuries caused by external forces, including mechanical, thermal, or chemical factors" (Tekiner et al. 2025, 168).

Originally meant to describe an external, physical injury of the body hitting against an object, or being damaged by the contact with a harmful substance, for centuries trauma remained strictly a medical term for bodily harm, up until the late XIX century. Then, the meaning of the word trauma has expanded its semantic spectrum to include an internal, abstract, emotional kind of experience, conceived as a "harm", precisely when authors like William James, Sigmund Freud, Josef Breuer and Pierre Janet began to use it metaphorically to describe "psychic wounds" or emotional shock.

The general metaphor underlying this extension could be phrased as: "some experiences are wounds", or "some thoughts are injuries", with an extremely significant shift of domain from physical matter to human feelings and personal experience. If we consider the symbolic system of meanings surrounding such conception, we can further observe how such metaphors work together with another metaphorical pair, this time spatial in nature: namely the assumptions "body is exterior", "mind is internal", which allows for the

attribution of physical, dimensional, orientational properties to ideas, memories or feelings. From the rhetorical device of a simile (*some experiences act on memory as wounds act on the body*), a shortcut produced the metaphoric statement "some experiences are wounds". Through such metaphors, which might appear to be more conventional than true, psychological distress has gradually been equated to physical pain, emotional experiences to body collisions, and bad memories have been equated to physical wounds, metaphorically enabling the formulation of true statements in clinical research, at the very beginning of psychoanalysis and dynamic psychology.

This pivotal figure, that of psychological trauma, was first introduced by Breuer and Freud in 1893, and soon after echoed by philosopher William James — the first teacher to offer a psychology course in the US — in the volumes of the American journal «Psychological Review», as we shall see.

Following the pages of *On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena* (a title that itself includes a metaphor from physics) Freud and Breuer collected some theoretical premises, where they observe:

> The experiences which released the original affect, the excitation of which was then converted into a somatic phenomenon, are described by us as *psychical traumas*, and the pathological manifestation arising in this way, as *hysterical symptoms of traumatic origin*. (1981, Vol. 2, 209 [1893])

Still aware of the embryonic, metaphorical status of that expression, in the following year William James published a brief review dedicated to the colleagues' work. He there traced the figure of speech back to the original research on memory by Pierre Janet, often neglected by Freud, who nonetheless was reading him very closely. Janet was in fact the first psychologist to systematically study psychological trauma and to describe dissociation as the primary mechanism through which overwhelming experiences lead to psychopathology. James resumed the theory as follows:

> Hysteria for them [Breuer & Freud] starts always from a shock, and is a 'disease of the memory'. Certain reminiscences of the shock fall into the subliminal consciousness, where they can only be discovered in 'hypnoid' states. If left there, they act as permanent 'psychic *traumata*', thorns in the spirit, so to speak. (1894, 199)

The adoption of italics in both quotes pertains to the originals, and is relevant. In fact, as by now, in contemporary society, one hardly ever employs the word "trauma" to describe a physical injury out of a hospital, it is only recently that this expression has gradually undertaken a process of resemantization, coming to exclusively designate a psychological kind of event. In other words, trauma has become a dead metaphor, losing its original meaning while

being progressively detoured towards a new referent: unintegrated memories (see Janet 1889).

In that new outfit, the idea kept on evolving significantly through key historical moments. In the late 1800s the term was adopted in psychology to describe mental distress. In *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, Janet argued that vehement emotions interfere with proper appraisal, causing traumatic memories to dissociate from general consciousness rather than being integrated. Later, during World War I, "shell shock" was the term popularized to describe the trauma suffered by soldiers affected by explosive-induced psychological responses, although symptoms were often dismissed as moral weakness. In the mid XX century, the term "traumatic neurosis" was used for survivors of industrial accidents and war, recognizing that mental symptoms could occur without visible physical injury. Then, in the 1980s, the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was added to the American DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), solidifying trauma as a recognized psychiatric condition rather than just a character flaw or physical ailment (see Loughran 2012; Crocq & Crocq 2000). Today, the concept has expanded even beyond individual psychological harm, to include collective, historical, and intergenerational trauma, reflecting a broader understanding of how overwhelming events may impact societies and cultures (see Keaney et al. 2024).

Considered under the conventions of objectivity and scientific realism, such journey of meanings, conducted via analogies and predication, begs the questions: doesn't the metaphorical status of such statements and theories foreclose their possibility of conveying a scientific truth? How exactly are metaphors and analogies different from the logics of scientific reasoning? And how are they related to invention, or discovery? Before we discuss such questions, let us consider some further instances.

In the history of psychology, trauma has not been the only concept to be metaphorically assigned to the transference of systems of meanings from one domain to another. Memory as well has been variously associated to a series of analogical relations, inaugurating alternative sets of conventions and various outlooks on reality. It is not our ambition here to draw, or even outline, a comprehensive history of the metaphors of memory, as such a task would require a dedicated research on its own, possibly exceeding our abilities. For the reader who may be interested in such journey, we refer to the fascinating work of Douwe Draaisma: *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas about the Mind* (1995). What we take on us here, before we pass on to the unconscious, is simply the brief appreciation of the cognitive, knowledge potential that metaphorical and analogical thought comes with when it intertwines with the idea of memory. In the XIX and XX centuries, when dynamic psy-

chology and psychoanalysis were brewing, several conceptions of memory had already been proposed to help think about its nature.

In ancient times, Plato famously compared human memory to a "wax block" in his dialogue *Theaetetus*, describing it as a gift of Mnemosyne (the mother of the Muses) located within the soul. He proposed that when we perceive or think about something, we imprint experiences onto this internal wax block, using the impressions of seal rings. Whatever is imprinted is remembered, while what cannot be imprinted, or is rubbed out, is forgotten. This metaphor suggested that the quality of one's memory depends on the nature of the wax. Likewise, Aristotle utilized his master's wax block (or wax tablet) as a primary metaphor to explain memory and perception, describing it in his works *De Anima* and *On Memory and Reminiscence*. He there argued that sense perception acts like a signet ring, pressing into soft wax, leaving a permanent impression or memory trace (an engram) in the soul's bodily seat, which persists until it is overwritten, or until it fades. This model served as a physiological explanation for how external objects imprint forms onto the mind without transferring matter, distinguishing his view from Plato's more complex theories involving immortal souls and pre-existing knowledge. While Plato regarded memory as an imprint in the immortal soul, Aristoteles considered memory as a modification in the mortal soul, imprinted like a cast at birth time (see Engelhardt & Levy 2023). But even more figures had been advanced by Plato:

> The 'aviary metaphor' was proposed (also in *Theaetetus*) as an alternative to the former. There, birds are captured and gathered in an 'aviary' (birdcage), each representing different kinds of knowledge [memories]. The aviary is empty [blank] in the newborn, and any bird that is captured and encaged corresponds to a learned topic [knowledge] [memory] (Engelhardt & Levy 2023, 2)

In the *Philebus*, Plato's Socrates describes memory not as a physical inscription but as the preservation of perceptual awareness (*sōtēria* of *aisthēsis*) within the soul (see Harte 2014). Socrates there compares the soul, in which memories are recorded, to a book that contains true and false reports, recorded by a writer and illustrated by a painter. Those recordings would trigger hopes and fears, pleasant and unpleasant feelings in the soul that views them. That internal "book" allows the soul to compare current perceptions with stored memories, forming the basis for opinions and judgments. Socrates further argues that because these internal recordings can be erroneous (as the writer can draft something false), they can generate false pleasures and illusions, distinguishing the soul's intellectual capacity from mere bodily sensation.

Much later, Descartes brought the body more heavily into the equation, and provided a new idea defining memory as a trace, or pattern, left in the brain by past sensations. He distinguished between bodily memories (stored in the brain's physical traces) and intellectual memory, which depended solely on the soul. Finally, Richard Semon postulated concepts and terms centralized by the "engram" concept, accompanied by "engraphy" (encoding) and "ecphory" (recall) (see Schacter et al. 1978). Each new proposal, each new analogy, emphasized different features that could be adopted to think about memory, reshaping its look and reconsidering its functions.

In the XX century, under the medical surveys on the hypnotic state, memory has been associated with the idea of a set of perceptual data, well stored from childhood and available for recollection, based on a metaphor that could be phrased as "memory is an archive". In those same years, the development of psychotherapy as a talking cure enabled Pierre Janet as much as Sigmund Freud to operate in the delicate realm of memory editing, providing evidence that the metaphor "memory is a storytelling" could also deliver relevant clues, and indicate otherwise unimagined research outlines to be developed (see Hacking 1995).

We were mentioning that, according to Janet, "unintegrated memories" manifest as fragmentary reliving experiences, including somatic sensations, visual images, and behavioral reenactments, summarized under psychological traumas. Janet acutely identified fixed ideas as complexes resulting from failed adaptation, which disrupt effective action and lead to conditions he categorized as hysteria or, as he actually called it, *psychasthenia*. Interesting detail: the treatment, there, was only possible because memory was considered as an entity that could be "cured", an idea first introduced by Philippe Pinel at the end of the 1700. The idea that lost reason could be restored, instead of being lost once and for all, was back then an absolute innovation, which inaugurated the use of medical knowledge and treatment in respect of the "madmen", who gradually became patients. In Janet, as well as in Freud, memory became the very object of such therapy, considered as an entity that could get sick, and therefore could be cured.

There is more. Philosophers like Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty seemed to further justify another early Greek intuition, that can be metaphorically stated as "memory is imagination", or "memory is fantasy". In the clinic, Freud himself (1981, vol. 16, 386) pointed out that traumatic memories were often nothing more than pure fantasies, acting nonetheless as experienced events in the patient's life and body.

What we wish to highlight, with this brief historical overview on the ideas of memory, is that by connecting apparently unrelated domains, each of those metaphors and analogies revealed a particular net of meanings and relations, a new possible morphology for the entity described, and several opportunities

for further interactions with other entities and disciplines. An archive is typically an available register of information, ready for consultation. It may contain images, sounds, words, bodily feelings, emotions, affections; but it is also a "read only" kind of device. A wax block, on the contrary, is not something stable, but it can progressively be carved, it can be moulded, melted down and remarked again from scratch. In a similar way, a text allows for modification, being subject to writings and rewritings, not so much a printed book. Even more interestingly, a statement in the form of text can be false, negative, illogical, paradoxical, or just wrong, as suggested by Socrates in the *Philebus*. Its underlying logical structure allows for contradictions or forbids them in a way iconic images can not. By further considering memory as a mode of fantasy (see Husserl 2005), the connection between inner life and external experience in the social or material world is loosened up to the point that it does not deserve much attention anymore, providing the psychic subject with full sovereign power over her or his rememberings, in the open domain of pure imagination. Such panic autonomy is however somehow challenged by the metaphor according to which memory is a storytelling. As reported by Janet (1914; 1889), psychotherapy and talking cure give raise to a co-working relation between therapist and patient around traumatic memories, creating peculiar narrations where both the therapist and the patient are equally assuming the role of authors of the memorial storytelling, fostering new, shared interpretations of experiences. Together, they are changing their meanings.

The pairs memory-archive, memory-text, memory-wax block, memory-image, memory-story, and memory-fantasy, inaugurate as many opportunities for the creation of theoretical models about the entity of memory. Our digression aims to elucidate the much stimulating idea that every metaphor employed in the understanding of an entity may inaugurate a new set of affairs, novel meanings to be explored and new possibilities for research around a certain subject, in this case memory.

Next to the metaphorical shifts of trauma and memory, and in some way together with them, the concept of the unconscious represents no exception in the history of psychology. In fact, all three ideas have been deeply and reciprocally reframed under the medical theorization of hysteria, right at the turn of the XX century.

The first known use of the word "unconscious", initially used as an adjective, appears in Thomas Hobbes' *De Mirabilibus Pecci*, in 1678 ("*unconscious of its fault which tortur'd cryes"*), where it meant "unaware" or "not marked by conscious thought" (OED). English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge later adopted it in his 1817 *Biographia Literaria*, where he wrote: "conscious or unconscious, the freewill, our only absolute self, is co-extensive and co-present" (2014, 82).

In 1800, Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, whom Coleridge read passionately, for the first time mentioned *das Unbewusste* [the unconscious] as a substantive, "which indicates that the concept 'the unconscious' was established in Germany in the last quarter of the 18th century" (Otabe 2019, 96). Later, in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), also Charles Darwin used it as an adjective, to refer to the "unconscious selection" processes in nature (see Bargh & Morsella 2008). From the 1860s, the writings of Wilhelm Wundt and Charles S. Peirce present the concept of "unconscious inference", which came to incorporate the latter's broader theory of knowledge. Wundt even described as a fact the continuity of consciousness and the unconscious, suggesting that "it is never possible to establish a clear-cut boundary between consciousness and unconscious" (in Cristalli 2020, 437).

While the term was employed in general English for over a century, its current psychological sense, and its proper thematization, was developed later, precisely through the theories of Janet and Freud, although recent studies "agree that it was in *Philosophical Aphorisms* (1776) by Ernst Platner, German anthropologist and physician, that the concept of 'the unconscious' first appeared" (Otabe 2019, 95).

Prior to Freud, philosopher Eduard von Hartmann popularized the concept with his 1869 work *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, while Janet initially used "subconscious" to describe a mental state inaccessible to introspection. In *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, he defined the subconscious not as a separate entity, but as an act which kept an inferior form amidst others of a higher level, resulting from a narrowing of the "field of consciousness". An action there, not an entity.

In his seminal 1890 work *The Principles of Psychology*, William James examined how psychologists and other experts had used the term unconscious, drawing precisely on XIX century writings by figures like Arthur Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and Janet. The early, uncertain physiognomy of such concept, still under debate and definition, can be fully appreciated through the analysis of the metaphors and analogies that Freud himself put in place to help outline and establish his theory.

In his 1915 *Papers on Metapsychology*, Freud allowed himself to play with a general metaphor that can be phrased as "the unconscious is a place", or "the unconscious is a space", giving rise to a theory of the topography of what Freud called the mental acts (another metaphor). That figure would involve the possibility to describe ideas, feelings and memories as entities subject to the coordinates of a dimensional space (up-down, in-out, depth-surface, front-back, etc.), as well as to imagine thoughts and memories as units that can be moved, located, extracted or displaced. Freud soon realized that such metaphoric treatment would have required the ability to even design a map of the unconscious:

> If we are to take the topography of mental acts seriously we must direct our interest to a doubt which arises at this point. When a psychical act [...] is transposed from the system Ucs.[1] into the system Cs. (or Pcs.), are we to suppose that this transposition involves a fresh record — as it were, a second registration — of the idea in question, which may thus be situated as well in a fresh psychical locality, and alongside of which the original unconscious registration continues to exist? Or are we rather to believe that the transposition consists in a change in the state of the idea, a change involving the same material and occurring in the same locality? This question may appear abstruse, but it must be raised if we wish to form a more definite conception of psychical topography, of the dimension of depth in the mind. (1981, Vol 14, 173-4 [1915])

Next to this topographical model, from 1923 on Freud introduced a different framework, a structural model, a tripartite account of the mind dividing the psyche into three interacting systems. His focus had changed. While the topographical model concentrated on the accessibility of mental content, the structural model centered on the functional conflict between these three agencies, with unconscious processes attributed primarily to what he called "the id" and "the superego". We can clearly see here how a shift in the intentions of an author may shape different theories, representations and ideas, and how those can intertwine with the adoption of various metaphors and analogies. Or the other way around.

Despite its tremendous success, the model of Freud was not the only one defining wide horizons to conceive the unconscious in the XX century. Moving towards a quite different ontological register, and proposing a separate, radically distinct set of hybrids and opportunities, French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan later proposed a powerful alternative idea. Lacan's model of the unconscious fundamentally redefined the concept by changing its reference metaphor, asserting that the unconscious was structured like a language, rather than being a chaotic reservoir of repressed biological instincts. His theory posits that the unconscious is not an individual, intra-psychic entity, but a trans-individual symbolic order, operating as the "discourse of the Other". The Lacanian, Saussurian-based analogy of the unconscious as a language (*the unconscious is structured like a language*), was first outlined in his 1953 work *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*. His vision originated a whole different ecosystem of reasoning. Under such analogy, human thoughts and feelings become something alike representations of an acoustic image, symbolically associated with a concept and further subject to the rules of natural languages. Such a representation of the unconscious allowed, inter alia, for the consideration of human behaviours as forms

[1] [Ucs: unconscious / Cs: conscious / Pcs: preconscious].

of communication. A few years before Thomas Szasz, and some thirty years after the intuition of André Breton, who wrote that "hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon but may be considered a form of expression" (1928, 20), Lacan suggested the fertility of considering the close correspondence between behaviours and language. Thus, he wrote in *The Formations of the Unconscious* (Seminar V, 1957-1958), again dealing specifically with hysteria:

> Obsessional or hysterical behaviour is overall structured like a language. What does that mean? It isn't enough to say that beyond articulated language, beyond discourse, all of a subject's acts would have this sort of equivalence to language that is there in what is called 'un geste', gesture, inasmuch as a gesture is not simply a well-defined movement, but is also actually a signifier. The expression that fits perfectly is 'une geste', a gest in the sense of a 'chanson de geste', a gest such as *The Song of Roland* — that is, the sum of one's history. It's ultimately speech, if you will. The sum of the neurotic's behaviour presents itself like speech, and even like full speech, in the sense in which we saw its original mode in the engagement in the form of a discourse. It's full, but entirely cryptographic speech, unknown to the subject as to its sense, even though he pronounces it with all his being, in everything he manifests, everything he evokes and has ineluctably realized down a certain path of completion and incompletion, if nothing in this order of oscillation called analysis intervenes. It's speech pronounced by the barred subject, barred to himself, which we call the unconscious. (2017, 450)

Further widening the extent of such line of reasoning, contemporary researches brought the hermeneutics of that analogy further into social sciences and anthropological models. In particular, psychiatrist and anthropologist Arthur Kleinman argued that physical symptoms are to be considered as metaphors through which individual and collective distress can be voiced (Kleinman 1977). He emphasized that the plot lines, core metaphors, and rhetorical devices deployed in illness narratives are drawn from cultural and personal models that help patients arrange their experiences in meaningful ways. These metaphors are critical for sense-making, allowing individuals and their social networks to communicate the distinctive events and long-term course of suffering. Kleinman further illustrated the power of metaphors through the concept of the "wounded healer", describing ideal physicians who use their own pain to empathize with patients. He also criticised the use of some metaphors in public health and media, arguing that images of suffering are there often appropriated and commodified, ultimately distorting the authentic experience of those in affliction (see Gaines 2016).

In those same years, Deleuze and Guattari conceptualized the unconscious not as a theatre of representation or a linguistic structure, but as a "machinic factory" driven by the desiring-production. The metaphor is there strictly me-

chanical. They describes the machinic unconscious as a signifying and subjective aggregate of flows and breaks, functioning like a machine that connects with other machines rather than interpreting hidden meanings. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), they argued that human desire is a positive, productive force that constructs reality through assemblages, rejecting the psychoanalytic focus on lack, castration, and the old-fashioned, dismissed Viennese Oedipal family drama.

Recently, in *Mastery of Non-Mastery in the Age of Meltdown*, anthropologist Michael Taussig conceptualized the "bodily unconscious" as a visceral, non-semiotic faculty that responds to affective contagion and mimetic fluxes, operating beneath conscious awareness to shape perception and social reality (Taussig 2020). He claimed that the unconscious is fundamentally mimetic, meaning it functions through imitation where copies generate creative refigurations of their originals, a process he terms the "metamorphic sublime". In his view, metaphors are not merely linguistic devices, but literalized strategies for understanding the world, akin to delusions or conspiracy theories that make complex realities available for representation. Taussig contends that the bodily unconscious processes these metaphors through sensory and rhythmic engagement, such as dance or spirit possession, where the boundary between observer and observed dissolves, allowing ideas to resonate through atmosphere and tone rather than abstract logic.

Metaphors And The Scientific Gaze

We followed above the journey of some sets of metaphors and concepts as they integrated the medical gaze around the understanding of hysteria, in order to show how such interaction contributed to the evolution of some key ideas in the history of psychological theory. Below, we would like to illustrate to what extent epistemic heterogeneity characterizes scientific inquiry more broadly, with a further evaluation of metaphors, analogies and representations as producers of discursivity within scientific knowledge. We will move from an epistemological assessment of the apparent conflict between material reductionism and abstract or metaphysical figures in psychiatry, to investigate how the validity conditions of scientific statements are deeply embedded with the truth of the metaphors and analogies historically adopted to formulate their model-based reasoning.

We have seen that, on the sway of the "linguistic turn", psychiatrist Thomas Szasz claimed that hysterical behaviours were to be considered not as symptoms of a disease, but rather as a form of communication, just like physician and poet André Breton had argued back in 1928, with Louis Aragon. By denying scientific citizenship to the entity of mental illness, Szasz was

simply honouring the tradition of medical material reductionism. Crucially, he formulated that distinction in terms of a demarcation between "real" illnesses and "metaphoric" illnesses, as follows:

> My claim [...] rests on the materialist-scientific definition of illness as a pathological alteration of cells, tissues, and organs. If we accept this scientific definition of disease, then it follows that mental illness is a metaphor, and that asserting that view is stating an analytic truth, not subject to empirical falsification. (Szasz 2011, 179)

Szasz (1974, 455) further argued that the fact of dealing with the diagnosis and treatment of metaphors would be enough to place psychiatry within the class of the pseudosciences, together with alchemy and astrology, echoing a demarcation criterion first outlined by philosopher Karl Popper, an enthusiast admirer of Szasz's work (see Buchanan-Barker & Barker 2009). Although the absence of a widely accepted clearcut demarcation criteria makes it hard to support that captivating claim (see Laudan 1983), or to formulate the philosophical debate around the reality of mental illnesses in terms of a science/pseudoscience distinction, it is true nonetheless that the one of "mental illness" is a metaphor, and that such metaphor has long been adopted as a guideline principle for scientific inquiry. The critique of Thomas Szasz was meant to dismantle the social ontology of mental illness by means of denying empirical truth value to metaphors. An analysis of such critique, directed to a system of metaphors, or a mythology of assumptions, would go as follows. According to that distinction, there would be a key difference between accepting, or proving, the truth of these two medical sentences, or diagnosis:

(1) "the patient has conversion disorder";

(2) "the patient has an HIV infection".

Such difference would rest upon an ontological distinction in the status of the entities taken into consideration, namely: the fact that the latter diagnosis (2) is likely to be based on the scientific evidence that there is, out there in the world, a material, objective, observable entity at play (the HIV virus) that has been found in the patient's organism by means of a blood test, detecting the presence of a microorganism in accordance with the germ theory of disease. In contrast, in the first statement (1) the psychiatrist is assuming the existence of an unproven entity which is an immaterial, unobservable, theoretical construct and is held to be responsible for someone's observable behaviours and declarations, in accordance to a latent theory of disease, to be confirmed when and if scientific research will ever be able to identify a biomarker. Furthermore, the first statement is related to another series of infer-

ences, none of which goes according to materialist scientific reductionism. Such system of assumptions would proceed as follows:

(3) "There are normal and abnormal behaviours";

(4) "Some abnormal behaviours are to be considered as symptoms of a disease";

(5) "There are out there in the world several supposed, latent, unobserved entities responsible for those observable abnormal behaviours";

(6) "Such unobservable, undetectable entities are to be considered as diseases, and reliably correspond to the behavioural descriptions listed in the DSM and ICD catalogues";

(7) "The theoretical construct psychology calls 'the mind' can get sick";

(8) "Physicians are able and entitled to identify and treat the sickness of the mind";

(9) "Social scientists like psychologists as well are entitled to treat — and cure — the sicknesses of the mind, but not to identify them" (in fact, they can not produce diagnoses recognized by State authorities; their ontological statements can not be true).

Etc.

According to Szasz, this system of unproven beliefs would be nonsensical enough to classify psychiatry as a pseudoscience. However, this is also where the argument against the metaphor of mental illness ceases to be endorsable. The most obvious objection, at this point, shall be: if the expression "mental illness" is a metaphor, so is the sentence "hysterical behaviours are a language", or a protolanguage, which is the premise of both his model and the model of Lacan, Breton and others. The only difference rests on the premises and consequences of the metaphorical proposal under consideration: one set of analogies invites to explain a class of elements in terms of diseases, the other suggests to translate them in terms of communication acts. Therefore, if the former statement is to be considered pseudoscientific on the base of a "metaphorical bias", so should be the latter. If the latter is legitimate despite the use of a metaphor, so should be the former. The claim gets even more interesting as metaphors are there considered in terms of "analytic truths not subject to falsification". In fact, it is not tenable that the presence of metaphors alone prevents a scientific statement from being true. Or better, neither the presence nor the absence of metaphors can guarantee around the truth or false-

hood of a scientific statement, or theory. Numerous fascinating researches have been conducted on the matter.

As known, in the 1980s George Lakoff and Mark Johnson rejected the "objectivist myth" that has long dominated Western philosophy, arguing that it falsely claims the mind can access absolute, objective truths independent of human experience. The authors contended that objectivism is a myth, for it ignores the fundamental role of the body and metaphors in shaping human thought, treating concepts as inherent properties of the world rather than products of an interaction. Instead of objectivism, Lakoff & Johnson proposed an "experiential realism", which holds that the mind is inherently embodied, meaning reason is tied to our physical bodies and sensorimotor systems rather than being a disembodied, transcendental faculty. In *Metaphors we Live by*, thus they summarized the relation between metaphors and understanding:

> an understanding of truth in terms of metaphorical projection is not essentially different from an understanding of truth in terms of nonmetaphorical projection. The only difference is that metaphorical projection involves understanding one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing. That is, metaphorical projection involves two different kinds of things, while nonmetaphorical projection involves only one kind. (1980, 171)

If any scientificity hallmark required one to drop metaphors entirely, then also the theory that "dysfunctional behaviours are protolanguages" would have to be abandoned, or labeled as pseudoscientific. Caution: with this remark we are not advocating for psychiatry and its dramatic epistemological inaccuracy; we are rather taking up for the relevance of metaphors within scientific inquiry more broadly. In doing so, we are aware that there are indeed some risks involved in the adoption of metaphors like that of "mental illness". For instance, a confirmation bias may well be at work under the surface, creating a loop effect precisely by validating inaccurate observations supported by the application of metaphors:

> Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 157)

Nonetheless, metaphors are fundamental to scientific inquiry, serving as essential tools for heuristic discovery, cognitive understanding, and public communication. Scientists rely on metaphorical language to bridge the gap between abstract, unfamiliar phenomena and concrete, everyday experiences, effectively mapping known concepts onto unknown ones. Metaphors guide

model-building and hypothesis generation by highlighting structural similarities between different domains, as seen with psychological theory. Research revealed quite a nuanced scenery, where metaphors are not merely literary devices, but conceptual mechanisms that facilitate theory formation and innovation. Economic "growth", black "holes", inflation "rising", magnetic "carpet", genealogical "trees", "dark" matter: all such expressions are dependent on metaphoric thought. Scientific methods and descriptions in biology, the life sciences, medicine, are inextricably infused with metaphors, at many levels. As recently noted by Andrew Reynolds (2022), mechanic metaphors of the human body in medicine are used to promote the manipulation of its components; engineering metaphors portray organisms and cells as machines that can be disassembled and rearranged. Quantum entities associated with the particle kind are expected to behave in a certain way; associated with the wave kind they are expected to behave in a different way (and surprisingly they go both ways). Metaphors deeply operate in classification, or taxonomy, as well as in observation, demonstration and scientific reasoning in general. On this matter, some much interesting cases of marine biology classification types based on resemblance metaphors have meticulously been collected by Ureña & Tercedor (2011), who have extracted and classified several terms from a bilingual corpus of marine biology academic journals. Metaphors may be considered at play even in the simple act of naming reality, before even entering theorization. Consider the cases of the species named *bailarina española*, *manta*, *ochavo* or *pufferfish*:

> the Spanish metaphorical common name *bailarina española*, which designates a species of nudibrach (scientific name *Hexabranchus sanguineus*). [...] This metaphor combines physical appearance and behavioural patterns. [...]
>
> The Spanish term ochavo refers to a fish that is compared to an *ochavo*, a coin (source-domain concept) that was exclusively used in Spain during a specific time span. [...]
>
> The word '*manta*' literally refers to a rough-textured cotton fabric or blanket made and used in Spanish America and the southwest United States. The metaphorical motivation is shape because of the extensive flattened body of the fish designated [the *mobula*]. [...]
>
> *Pufferfish* receive their name because they inflate with air or water to scare their predators away. (2011, 233, 223, 226, 229)

But metaphors in science do not intervene only at the level of resemblance, and do not just serve the basic purpose of classification. The very understanding of the relations among entities is intertwined and guided by meta-

phoric thinking. As claimed by Reynolds (2022, 2): "metaphor involves talking about, describing, or thinking about one thing in terms typically ascribed to another quite different sort of thing". Moreover, thinking and knowing happen within a cultural context, driving observation and understanding. Metaphors participate both as a cultural product and as a general tool for framing further inquiry. Analogical or metaphorical thought is both a determined and determining force, shaping the very objects of scientific study. This may also come with some risks of misconception, when analogies and metaphors happen to convey ideological biases or political agendas:

> Our choice of words not only reflects deep cultural cosmologies and historical influences but also reinforces cultural norms, ideologies, and beliefs. Though metaphors are indispensable tools for communicating science, they are sometimes misleading to the general public and can be easily exploited in attempts to further social and political agendas. [...] Remnants of colonialism also echo within scientific discourses through the use of metaphors that equate the practice of science itself with penetrating the unknown, conquering nature, and pioneering new frontiers. Many science-related metaphors harbor traditionally masculine values and may activate implicit associations between science, gender, and/or race, thus reinforcing dominant stereotypes about who does science. (Taylor & Dewsbury 2018, 3)

A crucial illustration of such relation in objectivation has been provided by two feminist researchers in the field of the biological sciences. So far, in this writing, we have been largely advocating for the King, by exploring the way metaphors integrate knowledge and discovery; let us also consider now the Canon's disclaimer, and observe how certain images, models, and representations may actually invalidate, interfere with, or impair clear thinking and scientific observation.

In the 1990s, philosopher Kathleen Okruhlik and anthropologist Emily Martin paid close attention to the role that the "Sleeping Beauty waiting on Prince Charming" metaphor has been playing in the scientific understanding of fertilization:

> Just as women are seen to be passive and men active, so traditionally have egg and sperm been assigned the traditional feminine and masculine roles. The egg waits passively while the sperm heroically battles upstream, struggles against the hostile uterus, courts the egg, and (if victorious) penetrates by burrowing through, thereby excluding all rival suitors. The egg's only role in this saga is to select which rival will be successful. [...] using electron microscopy it can be shown that the sperm doesn't just burrow through the egg, as previously thought. Instead, the egg directs the growth of small, finger-like projections of the cell surface to clasp the sperm and slowly draw it in. This mound of microvilli extending to the sperm was discovered in 1895

> when the first photographs of sea urchin fertilization were published; but it has largely been ignored until recently. (Okruhlik 1994, 21)

According to Martin (1991), societal stereotypes have been applied also to the gamete cells of even non-human animals. And since we are mentioning cells, it may be not irrelevant to highlight that even the very term "cell" is a metaphor:

> In 1665 the English naturalist Robert Hooke, in one of the first written accounts of observations made with the newly developed compound microscope, described the tiny little boxes he saw in the tissue of dead cork plant as "cells," because they reminded him of the hexagonal cells of a bee's honeycomb. [...] What caught his attention was the appearance of a series of little spaces distinctly separated from one another by rigid walls. (Reynolds 2022, 68–69)

The situated approach suggests that the kind of metaphors and the modes of understanding adopted in the scientific community may be determined, or at least strongly influenced, by the cultural background of the scientists. In this sense, if some sets of behaviours are presented to a Western doctor, it is likely that a system of metaphors involving symptoms, dysfunctions and disease is proposed as an explanation. The same set of behaviours presented to a religious hierophant in rural Malaysia will be likely to be semanticized, for instance, in the terms of spirit possession (see Ong 1988).

Going back then to the relations between psychiatry and the mental illness metaphor, it is clear how properties of a source domain have been attributed to the target domain by means of metaphoric relations. It is by means of analogy, more than logic, that under the medical gaze human behaviours received a symptomatic character, allowing for the description of syndromes, for diagnosis as well as therapy and pharmacologic prescriptions. It is also true that the metaphor of mental illness can be a dangerous one, as long as the prescriptive function of metaphors invites doctors to keep on thinking in accordance with the metaphor, with the risk to end up caught under the influence of a self-fulfilling prophecy, having the release provided by psychodrugs. One should not overlook that better metaphors may be out there to be considered, tested, and invented. And again, it has been well documented that the deployment of the "mental illness" metaphor was responsible for the unforgivable violation of basic human rights, brutal surgical procedures, sexual abuses and social stigmatization on the part of the scientific community (see Arbex 2013, Basaglia & Ongaro Basaglia 1975). However, while we welcome the proposal to consider behaviours as symbolic forms of expression, the simple idea that being based on metaphors would be enough to qualify psychiatry as a pseudoscience seems philosophically too challenging to uphold. In fact, besides

the ontological and epistemological problems discussed above, studies on the life of metaphors within scientific understanding provide that:

> metaphors play at least two important roles in science: (1) a heuristic role, suggesting analogical models or hypotheses to be explored in order to discover important unifying similarities or patterns in nature [...] and a cognitive role in the development of explanations that increase our understanding of nature and its mechanisms. (Reynolds 2022, 7)

CONCLUSIONS

> The sign requires nothing more than the possibility of being apprehended, even in the absence of a sender. Consequently, the symptoms of diseases are also considered signs, and to a certain extent medical semiology borders with semiotics, the science of signs. (Jakobson 1979, 9)

As nature does not come to scientists with its own language (albeit a door should be kept open towards mathematics), the understanding of the world requires that human beings adopt symbolic thinking and communicative tools to interact both with nature and between themselves while studying the world. Therefore, one has to acknowledge that the properties given to the objects found in the external world "are not properties of objects in themselves but are, rather, interactional properties, based on the human perceptual apparatus, human conceptions of function, etc.". Further following Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 165), consider that "true statements made in terms of human categories typically do not predicate properties of objects in themselves but rather interactional properties that make sense only relative to human functioning". Those dynamics involve logic, analogic, symbolic as well as metaphoric thought at various stages, also within science, to the point that no demarcation can be easily sketched under a simplistic empirical/metaphoric distinction model.

We have to further acknowledge that a change of metaphor changes the way one thinks about reality, by altering the relation between the two domains put in relation by that metaphor. Metaphors are one with knowledge and scientific knowledge, with imagination and scientific imagination; therefore, their presence alone can not, anyhow, qualify good or bad science, let alone a science/pseudoscience demarcation:

> So here is an important lesson: The distinction between metaphor and literal terminology is not a hard and fast one; one can transition to the other, even in science. [...] Rather than changing how we think about the metaphor, in some cases the metaphor actually ends up quite literally changing the thing

> to which it is applied. This is what happened with the metaphor that "cells are chemical factories." (Reynolds 2022, 70-71)

A better distinction may be considered, especially within psychiatry, somehow shadowing Imre Lakatos' separation between progressive and degenerative research programmes. Thinking about medicine and psychology, one would probably expect physicians to be committed to the understanding of what system of metaphors may represent the best conventional option for the sake of their patient. All things considered, we suspect that the linguistic metaphor, as provided by brilliant doctors like Breton, Bernheim, Lacan and Szasz, among others, still represents a good try in addressing psychopathology. Besides, one should never forget that the emergence of novel scientific paradigms may well also depend on the ability to invent new, unconventional, revolutionary metaphors.

> What is most often missed in medical treatises, and certainly in psychiatry — the most conjectural and risky of these fledgling sciences — is precisely the true scientific spirit, which is not satisfied with a *magister dixit* or conventional formulas. (Borges 1999, 172–173)

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THE HOUSE AS COUNTER-ARCHIVE: MATERIAL TRACES AND PALESTINIAN POSTMEMORY IN SUAD AMIRY'S *GOLDA SLEPT HERE*

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I have made an attempt to examine Suad Amiry's *Golda Slept Here* (2014) through the intersecting lenses of memory studies, postcolonial theory and material culture scholarship. The central argument holds that the Palestinian house functions as a "counter-archive" to settler-colonial erasure. Moving beyond official state archives and nationalist historiography, the narrative foregrounds walls, rooms, domestic objects and architectural remnants as repositories of lived history. Drawing upon Marianne Hirsch's framework of postmemory, Pierre Nora's concept of lieux de mémoire and recent interventions in new materialism and thing theory, I contend that the text reactivates inherited trauma through the spatial/material traces embedded within domestic structures, thereby positioning the home as a site of enduring political and historical witness.

KEYWORDS: Counter-archive, Palestinian literature, Postmemory, Materiality, Trauma, Identity

In every object there is a being in pain — a memory of fingers, of a smell, an image... Plates, spoons, toys, records, taps, pipes, door handles, fridges, washing machines, flower vases, jars of olives and pickles, tinned food all break just like their owners... All these things are a memory of the people who no longer have them and of the objects that no longer have the people — destroyed in a minute. Our things die like us, but they aren't buried with us.

Mahmoud Darwish

1. Introduction

The 1948 Palestinian Nakba cannot be relegated to a static historical phenomenon because it constitutes an "ongoing structural condition" that continuously shapes Palestinian realities of displacement, memory production and material dispossession at the same time (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Masalha 2012; Khalidi 2020; Deka 2025). The expulsion of approximately 750,000 Palestinians from their homes during the founding of the State of Israel did not end with the ceasefire of 1949 (Pappe 2006). It persists in the bodies of survivors, in the memories of their descendants and in the objects that were left behind, carried away, recreated from memory or stubbornly refused to move even when the people who used them were forced to go. It is within this enduring condition of dispossession that Suad Amiry's memoir *Golda Slept Here* (2014) situates itself, organizing its narrative around a series of returns to former Palestinian homes in West Jerusalem and saturating that narrative with material artifacts that exceed a merely descriptive function. A rusted cast-iron stopper immovably fixed in a windowsill, a ring of keys preserved for decades after the house they once opened was expropriated, a silver make-up case mourned across half a century, a gilded icon reclaimed from a stranger's possession — each of these objects emerges as a dense locus of memory. They do not simply symbolize dispossession (Amiry, 2014). Rather, they actively sustain and enact it while resisting the logic of erasure that settler-colonial authority has sought to impose over time. The Palestinian house, in this context, is never simply a building. It is a contested archive of lived experience, a repository of intergenerational memory and a site of ongoing political struggle. In *Golda Slept Here*, the houses of West Jerusalem do not serve as background settings for a narrative of displacement. They act as active participants in the transmission of Palestinian memory across generations. Amiry, an architect and writer long attuned to the spatial politics of the Israel-Palestine conflict, structures her memoir around a series of visits to former Palestinian homes that have been occupied by Israeli settlers, converted into museums or left in states of deliberate neglect. Each visit becomes an occasion for excavating what official history has buried and for asserting what colonial authority has persistently sought to erase. This paper proposes to read the objects that populate *Golda Slept Here* not as symbols or metaphors but as material agents in their own right, as things possessed of a form of agency that exceeds the intentions of the human actors who encounter them.

Amiry is obviously not the first Palestinian writer to invest objects with political meaning, and it would be a serious misreading of her memoir to treat it as an isolated or anomalous text. Palestinian writing has long registered the political force of things. Ghassan Kanafani's fiction turns on objects that outlast the people who owned them. Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*

(1997) tracks return through an encounter with doors, walls and the specific quality of light in rooms not entered since childhood. Mahmoud Darwish's poetry insists on the olive tree, the threshold and the key as materially specific presences whose rootedness in particular soil constitutes the very substance of what dispossession destroys. However, what distinguishes Amiry's text within this tradition is not the politicization of objects (which is by now a defining feature of Palestinian literary culture) but the formal disposition through which that politicization is achieved. Where Kanafani and Darwish tend to direct the objects they invoke by assigning them symbolic weight and narratorial meaning, Amiry's text follows the object, allowing its resistance or persistence to generate meaning without interpretive mediation. When the cast-iron stopper refuses to be pulled free, no narrator explains what this signifies. The object's refusal simply is the significance. It is this quality — the granting of genuine agency to material things — that makes *Golda Slept Here* available to an "object-oriented" reading in a way that most of its predecessors in the Palestinian literary tradition are not, and it is this formal and theoretical dimension that the present paper takes up to analyze. I argue that *Golda Slept Here* constructs the Palestinian house as a "counter-archive". The term counter-archive, as it is used here, refers to a body of material evidence and narrative practice that works against and alongside the official archive to preserve records that dominant power has sought to suppress or destroy. Palestinian houses serve as such archives because they bear within their walls, their architectural details, their domestic objects and their very absence from official Israeli records, the traces of a history that has been actively denied. My analysis proceeds through several interconnected lines of inquiry. It first examines the theoretical frameworks that make such a reading possible, drawing on Marianne Hirsch's (2012) concept of "postmemory", Pierre Nora's (1989) lieux de memoire and scholarship in "new materialism" and "thing theory" associated with scholars such as Bill Brown (2001) and Jane Bennett (2010). It then turns to close readings of the primary text, tracing how the house functions as an archive of Palestinian memory in the cases of Andoni Baramki, his son Gabi, Nahil, Elie Sanbar and Umm Salim, before examining how postmemory operates in the cases of Amiry herself and Huda al-Imam. The paper concludes by reflecting on the implications of reading domestic space as archival resistance within the broader field of memory studies and Palestinian literary discourse.

2. Theoretical framework: Memory, postmemory and materiality

Any serious engagement with *Golda Slept Here* requires a robust theoretical framework that can account for the intersections of memory, materiality

and political dispossession. Three bodies of theory are particularly relevant. The first is Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory. The second is Pierre Nora's theory of lieux de memoire or sites of memory. The third is the interdisciplinary field known variously as new materialism, thing theory or material culture studies. Together, these frameworks provide a conceptual vocabulary adequate to the complexity of what Amiry's text performs.

Hirsch (2012) develops the concept of "postmemory" to describe the relationship that the generation following survivors of traumatic historical events maintains to the experiences of those survivors. As Hirsch explains, postmemory is "a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience" (Hirsch 2012, 6). It is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Those who experience postmemory did not live through the events themselves but grow up so saturated by the stories, images and behaviors of those who did that these become constitutive of their own identity. Hirsch is careful to note that postmemory is "not a movement, method, or idea" (ibid., 6) but rather a structure of feeling and inheritance that shapes how subsequent generations relate to a traumatic past they did not personally experience.

Postmemory is particularly relevant to the Palestinian context because the nakba of 1948, the catastrophic expulsion of Palestinians from their homes during the founding of the State of Israel, is a wound that continues to define Palestinian identity across generations. As Edward Said observed, Palestinian experience is structured around the fact of dispossession and "the Palestinian experience of the loss of Palestine" operates as an organizing principle of collective and individual identity (Said 1979, 4). Scholars of Palestinian history have extensively documented the scale and deliberateness of this displacement, establishing it as a foundational act of settler-colonial violence rather than a consequence of war (Pappe 2006; Khalidi 1992). For Palestinians born after 1948, such as Amiry herself, the past is not merely past. It is an ongoing present that shapes how one moves through the world, how one understands the spaces one inhabits, and how one responds to the houses that once sheltered one's parents and grandparents.

Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of lieux de memoire, developed in his influential essay "Between Memory and History", provides another essential conceptual tool. Nora argues that modern societies, having lost their relationship to living memory, create sites of memory to compensate for this loss. These sites can be physical locations, archives, monuments, rituals or symbols. They function as "places where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora 1989, 7). For Nora, "memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present" (ibid., 8), whereas history is a reconstruction of the past that is always incomplete and always shaped by present concerns. Memory sites are therefore not neutral repositories of the past but active sites of nego-

tiation between what is remembered and what is forgotten, between presence and absence.

The Palestinian house, as it appears in Amiry's memoir, functions as precisely such a site of memory. It crystallizes and secretes the memory of a Palestinian past that official Israeli historiography has sought to erase. But the Palestinian house is a site of memory with a particular political charge. Unlike the French memory sites that Nora primarily describes, which are officially sanctioned and publicly accessible, Palestinian memory sites exist under conditions of occupation and dispossession. They are sites that Palestinians have been forcibly removed from and that they can return to only through acts of transgression, subterfuge or painful negotiation with Israeli authorities.

The third theoretical framework is that of new materialism and thing theory. Bill Brown's (2001) influential formulation of "thing theory" argues that objects become visible as things rather than objects when they stop working as expected, when the flow of practical life is interrupted and the materiality of the world makes itself felt. Jane Bennett (2010) extends this into a broader political ecology of materiality, arguing that things possess a form of agency, what she calls "thing-power" or "vibrant matter", that exceeds their instrumental function. These theoretical moves are significant for reading *Golda Slept Here* because Amiry's text is saturated with objects that have lost their ordinary function, keys that no longer open doors, photo albums that document lives that no longer exist, coffee tables recreated by carpenters who have themselves been displaced and cast-iron stoppers that refuse to leave even when the people who used them have been forced to go.

Marianne Hirsch's chapter "Objects of Return" from The Generation of Postmemory is also centrally important to this analysis. Hirsch observes that objects, including photographs, domestic interiors, household items and items of clothing, play a crucial role in return narratives, serving as "testimonial objects, lost and again found" that "structure plots of return" and "embody memory and thus trigger affect shared across generations" (Hirsch 2012, 206). Ordinary objects, Hirsch argues, "mediate the memory of returnees through the particular embodied practices that they elicit" and "can also revive the affect of the past, overlaid with the shadows of loss and dispossession" (ibid., 207). This insight is fully borne out in Amiry's text, where domestic objects serve as mnemonic triggers that bridge the gap between a living past and a displaced present.

Finally, the concept of the counter-archive requires some elaboration. Jacques Derrida's foundational analysis of the archive in Archive Fever (1995) establishes that the archive is never merely a neutral repository but always a product of power. The archive institutionalizes what is to be preserved and what is to be allowed to perish. Postcolonial and settler-colonial theorists have extended this insight to argue that colonial archives are structures of epi-

stemic violence that erase indigenous and colonized peoples' histories (Stoler 2002). The struggle to construct alternative records from within conditions of dispossession is one that indigenous and postcolonial peoples across many contexts have engaged in as a fundamental act of political self-determination (Coulthard 2014; Mignolo 2000). The counter-archive is a practice of recovery and resistance that works against this erasure by assembling and preserving what the colonial archive has discarded. In the Palestinian context, as scholars such as Nur Masalha (2012) have argued that erasing Palestine and appropriating its material and cultural heritage has been fundamental to Zionist colonial practices. The Palestinian house, with its architectural details, its domestic objects and its stories, constitutes what I call a "counter-archive" to this erasure throughout my paper.

3. Architecture as archive: The house beyond shelter

Amiry's narrative methodology is fundamentally informed by her praxis as an architect. This professional training engenders a granular attentiveness to built environments, distinguishing her work from more conventional Palestinian return narratives. She does not simply describe houses in general terms. Rather, she records the specific materials, proportions and architectural details that make each house a unique historical document. Consequently, this architectural gaze subtly transforms mere descriptions into a form of literal/cultural preservation and makes the text itself function as an archival record of a built environment that is under an active threat of historical distortion.

The houses of West Jerusalem that Amiry visits are not just generic domestic spaces. They are specific products of a particular historical moment, built during the British Mandate period (1918 to 1948) by Palestinian architects and craftsmen using local materials and following local aesthetic traditions. Nahil's family house, for instance, is described in careful architectural terms. It follows the liwan-house layout, a traditional Arabic domestic form:

> The elevated one-floor houses have pitched roofs with red Marseilles tiles, also typical of the British Mandate. The most beautiful architectural details are the five huge arches of the front façades. Their bright white stones contrast beautifully with the pink, even eighty years after they were built. While the middle entrance arch is wide and flat, the two arches on either side are of the same height, but narrow and pointed. (Amiry 2014, 60)

This description is not merely decorative. It places the house within a tradition of Arab architecture that has been systematically dismantled and replaced by Israeli settlement patterns. To record such a house in such detail is to resist its erasure.

Andoni Baramki's house is the most elaborately described in the memoir, partly because Andoni himself is an architect and partly because the house he built has been transformed into a museum of Israeli history. Andoni designed and built several landmark buildings in Jerusalem during the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. His own house, which he always referred to as nour hayati, meaning the light of his life, was not merely his home but a masterpiece of his craft (Amiry 2014, 25). The loss of this house was therefore a double loss. It was the loss of a home and the loss of a work of art. When Andoni gazes at his house from the roof of the adjacent YMCA building every Saturday for nineteen years, he is doing something more than expressing nostalgia (Amiry 2014, 26). He is bearing witness to his own creation and asserting, through the very act of looking, that the house is his.

The conversion of Andoni's house into the Tourjeman Museum, an Israeli museum of historical significance, is an act of profound spatial politics. It takes a Palestinian architectural achievement, strips it of its Palestinian identity and reinscribes it within a narrative of Israeli national history. This is precisely the kind of spatial stratification that scholars of settler colonialism have analyzed in terms of the layering of one history over another. Patrick Wolfe's (2006) foundational argument that settler colonialism is characterized by the "logic of elimination" of the native applies here not only to the physical displacement of Palestinian families but also to the symbolic displacement of Palestinian architectural heritage. Studies of Palestinian villages demolished and repurposed after 1948 have shown how this process of spatial overwriting operates at a systematic, nationwide scale (Slyomovics 1998). The museum does not simply occupy a former Palestinian house. It actively works to make that house into an Israeli space, layering Israeli history over Palestinian memory.

Amiry's attention to architectural detail is therefore a form of counter-archival practice. By recording what the houses looked like, how they were built, who designed them and what memories they hold, she creates a textual archive that resists the spatial politics of erasure. Her observation as an architect that "Architectural details lose their historic significance once removed from their cultural context" is immediately followed by the reflection that this is "similar to the Palestinians who lost their significance once they were removed from their natural habitat, their homeland" (Amiry 2014, 72). This analogy between architectural heritage and human identity is not merely rhetorical as it seems to reflect a deep understanding of how built space and human identity are mutually constitutive, and how the destruction of one is always also the destruction of the other.

The Palestinian house as historical document also operates through what might be called a temporal layering. The houses Amiry visits are not frozen in their pre-nakba state. They have been altered, adapted and repurposed

by successive occupants. Elie Sanbar's family house in Haifa, for instance, has had its interior staircase collapse, leading the Arab tenants to build a bridge directly to the second floor from the upper road:

> As a result of the Israeli policy, the tenants could not repair the staircase leading to the house and so the stairs collapsed. This meant that the tenants could no longer get to the second floor from the garden. They now reach it from the upper road. (Amiry 2014, 115)

This makeshift architectural solution is itself a document of the absurdity of Israeli property law which prohibits both Arab landlords and Arab tenants from maintaining houses designated as absentee property. The house thus becomes a physical record of the legal and political contradictions of the occupation. Each architectural alteration or act of neglect is a layer of historical sedimentation that tells a story the official archive would prefer to suppress.

4. Material traces and inherited trauma

If the architecture of the Palestinian house constitutes one layer of the counter-archive, the domestic objects within those houses constitute another. *Golda Slept Here* is populated by objects that have outlasted the lives of those who used them, keys carried in pockets for twenty years, photo albums lost and mourned, silver make-up sets left behind in the haste of departure, Persian carpets sold as stolen goods, cast-iron stoppers fixed into stone windowsills and gilded icons retrieved from Russian nuns. These objects are not props or symbols. They are active participants in the transmission of memory or, in a way, agents of what Hirsch calls the "affect of the past, overlaid with the shadows of loss and dispossession" (Hirsch 2012, 207).

The case of Gabi Baramki is particularly instructive in this regard. When Gabi was away studying in Beirut at the time of the nakba, his parents were forced to leave their house in West Jerusalem without being able to take the family photo albums with them. The loss of these albums, Gabi came to realize upon reuniting with his displaced family in 1949, meant that "he had lost his past, his childhood and teenage memories" (Amiry 2014, 41). For him, "A photo album meant existence" and its absence meant there was no proof "that he had ever had a life in Jerusalem" (Amiry 2014, 41). This formulation is striking in its implications. The material object of the photo album is not merely a record of the past. It is constitutive of the self. Without the album, Gabi's identity is literally undocumentable. The loss of the object is the loss of the archive and the loss of the archive is the loss of the self.

Hirsch's observation that "testimonial objects, lost and again found, structure plots of return" and can "embody memory and thus trigger affect shared

across generations" (Hirsch 2012, 206) is subtly confirmed by the episode of the cast-iron stopper in Nahil's former bedroom. When Nahil visits her family house after sixty-three years of absence, a rusted cast-iron stopper in the shape of a woman's bust fixed into a stone windowsill catches her eye. She immediately recognizes it as belonging to her former bedroom. When both Nahil and Huda separately try to pull the stopper out and find that it will not move, the narrative attributes to it a quality of intentionality. It seems to refuse "to leave home" (Amiry 2014, 64), thereby reinforcing the permanence of the objects of daily use in their houses while Palestinian people were torn away forcibly. This is a moment of what Bennett (2010) would call "thing-power" i.e. the vitality of matter asserting itself against the violence of dispossession.

The material objects in Umm Salim's story are equally resonant. Having been forced to leave their home in the al-Ajami neighborhood of Jaffa in 1948, Umm Salim regrets most bitterly not being able to take with her the silver make-up set given to her as a wedding present. Fifty-seven years later, she retains a vivid recollection of its aesthetic value:

> At the time we didn't realize that this would be it. If I had known, I would have carried a wedding present: a silver make-up set given to me by my women friends. It was truly beautiful.' There was a long pause before Umm Salim continued. 'Actually all the furniture in our house was brand new and beautiful. (Amiry 2014, 126)

She and her husband Edmon later learned that their new furniture, carefully selected and imported from Russia, was sold on the open market. So persistent was her attachment to these objects that she had a replica of the coffee table made by the same carpenter who had also fled Jaffa for Beirut. The one object she does still possess from her Jaffa home, a gilded icon of Christ brought to her later by a Russian nun, is described as "the one thing" she still has from among all their possessions (Amiry 2014, 130). This singular object takes on an almost talismanic quality. It is the survivor of a material world that was otherwise entirely dispersed.

The transmission of memory through objects and spaces is not limited to those who experienced the nakba firsthand. It also operates across generational lines, shaping the postmemory of those who were born after 1948. Amiry's own encounter with the railway line near Nahil's former house is one example. Seeing the tracks, Nahil recollects spending "the best days of their childhood" on those tracks, and Amiry records that "the power of the passing train, as well as its whistle and steam, constituted one vivid image that they carried with them into Diaspora" (Amiry 2014, 64). Research on Palestinian communities living in displacement has confirmed that such spatial and sensory memories are among the most durably transmitted elements of inherited

identity, shaping how subsequent generations imagine and relate to a homeland they have not personally inhabited (Feldman 2006; Farah 2009). In this context, the railway line is not merely a piece of infrastructure. It is a mnemonic object that carries a whole world of Palestinian childhood experience. For those who experienced that childhood, it triggers direct memory. For those who come after, it becomes an object of postmemory, a material trace of a world they did not inhabit but have inherited.

The concept of mnemonic triggers is also relevant to understanding how trauma operates in Amiry's text. Cathy Caruth's (1996) influential account of trauma emphasizes its quality of belatedness or latency, arguing that the traumatic event is not fully experienced at the moment of its occurrence but returns later, often in the form of repetitive symptoms or intrusive memories. Caruth describes trauma as "the wound of the mind" that is characterized by "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self [...] and imposes itself again" through repetition (Caruth 1996, 4). This temporal structure is evident in the stories Amiry collects. The trauma of the nakba does not simply belong to 1948. It returns, again and again, in the form of the weekly gaze from the YMCA rooftop, the painful visit to the converted museum and the reluctant storytelling of an aged woman well into her nineties.

The pluralistic model of trauma that Roger Luckhurst (2008) and others have advocated is also relevant here. Luckhurst argues against the tendency to universalize trauma as an abstract and unspeakable experience, insisting instead on its specificity and its representability in particular cultural and historical contexts. The traumatic responses recorded in *Golda Slept Here* are strikingly individual and specific. Andoni expresses his trauma through obsessive architectural observation and courtroom confrontation. Gabi expresses his through painful laughter. Nahil expresses hers through a combination of recognition and estrangement. Umm Salim represses hers through deliberate silence until the moment of narration. Each of these responses is shaped by the particular circumstances of the individual's displacement and the particular objects and spaces that serve as mnemonic triggers.

5. THE HOUSE AS COUNTER-ARCHIVE

The concept of the counter-archive brings together the spatial, material and mnemonic dimensions of *Golda Slept Here* into a single analytical frame. If the official Israeli archive constructs Palestinian houses as "absentee property", the counter-archive that Amiry constructs through her memoir asserts the opposite. It insists that these houses are Palestinian, that they carry within their walls and their objects the living memory of Palestinian families, and that

no legal category of "absentee" can erase the presence of those who built and inhabited them.

The most explicit confrontation between the official archive and the counter-archive occurs in Andoni's courtroom scene. Andoni brings to the Israeli court a land deed, house tax receipts, his architectural drawings of the house and the bunch of keys he has carried in his pocket for twenty years of separation from his home (Amiry 2014, 35). These objects constitute his counter-archive which is of course, a collection of material evidence that asserts his ownership against the legal category of the absentee. When the judge declares that Andoni is an absentee and that his house is absentee property, he is deploying the power of the official archive to override the evidence of the counter-archive. Andoni's response is to challenge the ontological basis of the legal category itself: "An absentee, how can I be an absentee when I am standing right in front of Your Honour?" he demands (Amiry 2014, 36). And when the judge attempts to place him in the category of present absentee, Andoni's answer cuts to the heart of the colonial logic at work: "Sir, the Palestinians are 'absentees' only because you do not allow them to be present. And those of us who are present are considered absent" (Amiry 2014, 36).

This scene is a microcosm of the broader contest between the official archive and the counter-archive that structures the entire memoir. The Israeli legal system, with its categories of absentee and present absentee, is a product of what Ann Laura Stoler (2002) calls "archival governance". In simple, this means using records and classifications as tools to control and manage colonized people. By classifying Palestinians as absent regardless of their physical presence, the Israeli state produces a legal reality that overrides material and lived reality. Andoni's counter-archive, with its land deeds, tax receipts, drawings and keys, challenges this legal reality by insisting on the evidence of a material world that existed before and beyond the categories of Israeli law. In this apparatus, Rashid Khalidi's observation about the Palestinian predicament presents an oppositional point. Khalidi describes what he calls "a gradual but so far inexorable century-old process" through which "the Palestinians have been removed from more and more of their ancestral homeland, their property and their patrimony seized, and their very identity and existence as a people placed into question" (Khalidi 2010, xxvi). However, one must note that this process is not just physical. It is also archival at the same time. The erasure of Palestinian presence requires the production and maintenance of an official record that represents Palestinian absence as natural, legal and permanent. As such, the counter-archive that *Golda Slept Here* constructs works against this representation by assembling a record of Palestinian presence that is personal, embodied and material.

The political uses of memory as a technology of national consolidation, and the ways in which competing memory cultures contest the same territorial

and historical ground, have been extensively theorized in scholarship on memorialization and collective identity (Young 1993). This political dimension of Amiry's archival practice is also evident in her single-line dictums that captures the opposing mnemonic politics of Palestinians and Israelis:

> The Palestinians try hard to forget when they should remember
> The Israelis try hard to remember when they should forget
> The Palestinians refuse to be victims.
> The Israelis make sure that they remain the only victims. (Amiry 2014, 10)

This formulation is asymmetric in a revealing way. Palestinian forgetting is presented as something enforced by the trauma of dispossession and the weight of exile, a defensive strategy against unbearable pain. Israeli remembering, by contrast, is presented as a project of legitimation, a way of grounding Israeli national identity in a land that belongs to others. The counter-archive that Amiry constructs is therefore not only a challenge to Israeli spatial politics. It is also an intervention in Palestinian collective memory, an exhortation to remember what has been painfully forgotten. Huda's obsessional practice of house visits is another dimension of this counter-archival project. As Amiry describes her, Huda is someone who has made it "a point to conduct frequent visits to former Arab houses" and for whom "hardly a week passes without Huda venturing on such a visit" (Amiry 2014, 54). These visits are not simply acts of nostalgia or political protest, though they are both of these things. They are acts of counter-archival inscription. By repeatedly returning to these spaces, mapping their architectural details, identifying their Palestinian owners, and bringing journalists and television reporters who serve as "alternative tourists" (Amiry 2014, 54), Huda produces a counter-archive of Palestinian domestic space that sets itself against the Israeli archive of settlement and national memory.

The house visits that Huda conducts carry a real risk of arrest and confrontation with Israeli settler families. They are therefore not merely symbolic acts. They are political interventions in a contested spatial order. Lisa Taraki (1990) has argued that Palestinian cultural practices, including literature, art and architecture, function as what she calls sumud, a concept of steadfastness and resistance that involves refusing to be displaced or erased. The house visits in *Golda Slept Here* exemplify this sumud. They are practices of insisting on presence in the face of legal and physical forces that construct that presence as impossible or illegitimate.

The counter-archival function of the narrative is also evident in the way Amiry handles the politics of naming. The conversion of Palestinian place names into Hebrew names has been a systematic project of the Israeli state since 1948. As Meron Benvenisti has (2000) documented, the Negev bedouin

place-name map, the Hebrew naming of Arab villages and the replacement of Arabic geographical terms with Hebrew ones constitute a comprehensive spatial renaming that works to erase Palestinian geography from the landscape. In *Golda Slept Here*, Amiry consistently uses Arabic place names and Palestinian family names, insisting on a geographical and genealogical record that stands against this renaming. The Musrara neighborhood, the al-Ajami neighborhood of Jaffa, the Aweidah compound and the names of the families who lived in these places are all carefully preserved in the text as elements of the counter-archive.

6. Postmemory and its discontents

The most intimate dimension of *Golda Slept Here* is the examination of postmemory as it is experienced by Amiry herself and by her friend Huda. Both women belong to what Hirsch calls the post-generation, those who grew up after the traumatic events that shaped their parents and grandparents, and who carry those events as "a profound personal connection" that "approximates memory in its affective force" (Hirsch 2012, 5). For both Amiry and Huda, the Palestinian houses of West Jerusalem are not simply historical sites. They are the material repositories of a personal past that is simultaneously their own and not their own, inherited but not directly experienced.

Amiry was born in Damascus in 1951, three years after her parents were forced to leave their home in Jerusalem during the nakba. She therefore belongs, as she is fully aware, to the "postgeneration". Her memoir opens with her sleepless arrival at a friend's house in Jerusalem, just down the road from her parents' former home. The proximity of that house, and her awareness that she was herself conceived in Jerusalem even though she was born in Damascus, produces a paradoxical feeling of intimate estrangement. She longs to see the terrace on which her sisters spent their childhood, to conjure the reddish-brown puppies that went missing after her family's departure, and to enter spaces that she has constructed entirely from "tales" and imagination (Amiry 2014, 10). This constructive process, whereby postmemory is built up from heard stories and transmitted affects rather than direct experience, is one of the defining features of what Hirsch identifies as familial postmemory. Amiry's confession that she had to construct her father's lost house in Jaffa "from tales and imagine it from far, far away" (Amiry 2014, 10) is a precise account of how familial postmemory works. The house is present in her imagination not because she has been there but because she has inhabited it through narrative. When she finally stands on the terrace of her parents' Jerusalem home, she reports that she "remembered" words spoken there by her sister Anan as a three-year-old child, at a time before Amiry herself was born.

This is the paradox of postmemory rendered in its most acute form: a memory of an event that the rememberer could not possibly have witnessed.

Amiry is also honest about the limits of her postmemory and the ways in which it coexists with other forms of trauma. She acknowledges that she has buried the heavy burden of her family's story in Jaffa and that she was "not prepared to dig up" that story while accompanying her protagonists on their house visits (Amiry 2014, 57). This reluctance is itself a form of traumatic response. Cathy Caruth's (1995) account of trauma as characterized by the paradox of an experience that is both demanded and refused, both compulsively repeated and actively avoided, is relevant here. Amiry's inability to visit her father's house without him, combined with her compulsive need to record other Palestinians' experiences of returning to lost homes, enacts precisely this paradox.

Huda's postmemory presents a different but equally illuminating case. If Amiry's postmemory is marked by ambivalence and reluctance, Huda's is marked by an obsessive insistence. Where Amiry "plunged into silent gloom", Huda was "actively incensed" (Amiry 2014, 57). Huda's frequent house visits have been instigated by her grandmother's tales about the rich Palestinian life before the nakba, and her first visit to the family house as a child right after the 1967 war triggered an addiction that she has maintained ever since. Amiry observes that "her facial expressions, neurotic energy, and the frequency of her nervous laughter indicate to the keen observer the deep exhaustion resulting from an addiction bordering on obsession" (Amiry 2014, 55). The language of addiction is significant. It suggests that Huda's postmemory is not simply a form of political commitment but a compulsive psychic structure that has taken over her relationship to the past.

What is most interesting about Huda's postmemory, however, is the way it manifests as a sense of entitlement and belonging in spaces that she has never inhabited. When she accompanies her older cousin Nahil to visit the latter's childhood home, Huda feels very much at home while "everything about Nahil conveyed a strong sense of estrangement" (Amiry 2014, 59). This inversion is counterintuitive. Nahil lived in the house. Huda did not. Yet it is Huda who feels at home and Nahil who feels like an intruder. The explanation lies in the different relationship each woman has to the house. Nahil's memory of the house is direct and therefore subject to the shock of return, the painful contrast between how the house was and how it is now. Huda's relationship to the house is entirely mediated through postmemory, through her grandmother's stories and her own repeated visits. She has never known the house as it was before 1948, so she cannot experience the shock of its transformation. Instead, she has built up an imaginary relationship to the house as it is, imbued with the affect of her grandmother's memories, that gives her a sense of belonging that Nahil's direct memory cannot sustain.

This paradox of postmemory illuminates a broader dynamic in *Golda Slept Here*. The book suggests that postmemory, though indirect compared to the immediacy of actual traumatic confrontation, can sometimes be more sustaining and more politically effective than direct traumatic memory. The postgeneration, shaped by inherited stories and transmitted affects but not burdened by the shock of direct experience, may be better placed to engage in sustained political action. Huda's tireless house visits are the evidence of this. She can do what Nahil, Andoni and Gabi cannot, return again and again to these spaces without being overwhelmed by the gap between memory and present reality, because her relationship to these spaces is already mediated by narrative and imagination.

7. Memory against history

One of the most sustained arguments that *Golda Slept Here* advances is that memory is not merely a private psychological phenomenon but a counter-historical force capable of challenging the authority of official historiography. This argument is made not through abstract declaration but through the concrete practices of Palestinian individuals who refuse to allow the dominant historical narrative to swallow their personal pasts. The house visits that structure so much of the memoir are the most visible expression of this counter-historical impulse. These visits are acts of what the secondary literature on the text calls "active remembrance", practices of returning to and marking former lived spaces that transform the passive act of recollection into a visible, socially meaningful and politically charged form of commemoration (Masalha 2012).

The visiting Palestinians who slip in and out of settler-occupied West Jerusalem are, as the text makes clear, not issuing threats or demanding immediate restitution. They enter like what Huda herself terms "ghosts", to visit their fathers' gardens and orchards, to reinforce their identities, and to reactivate the sense memories of objects and places they once enjoyed (Amiry 2014, 219). Despite the stereotypical image of Palestinian men and women as troublemakers or security threats, these individuals enter prohibited areas only to rescue the remaining shreds of their memory from the pull of an all-encompassing and dominant history. The act of visiting is therefore simultaneously an act of remembering and an act of defiance, a refusal to accept that the Israeli state's legal erasure of Palestinian presence constitutes an actual ontological erasure.

The relationship between memory and history in *Golda Slept Here* is explicitly oppositional. Nora's foundational distinction is instructive here: "memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; his-

tory binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and relations between things" (Nora 1989, 9). Amiry's text exploits precisely this distinction. By focusing on the concrete, the specific house, the particular stopper, the individual family album, the named street, the memoir builds a counter-historical record rooted in the material and the personal rather than in the abstract and the institutional. As Masalha argues, the disciplines of history and memory ought to function as "a site of hope, liberation and decolonization" (Masalha 2012). In *Golda Slept Here*, memory performs exactly this liberatory and decolonizing function by challenging the claims of a history that has been shaped entirely by the requirements of Israeli power. Gabi Baramki's museum visit is the most concentrated illustration of memory's counter-historical power. When he stands in the queue to enter the Tourjeman Museum on 12 June 1983, aged fifty-three, Gabi is surrounded by young Israeli visitors who are there to validate the historical significance of what the museum commemorates. For them, the building is a national monument. For Gabi, it is his home, the house his father designed and built, from which his family was expelled thirty-five years earlier. The brochure he reads in the queue becomes, in his hands, an instrument of alternative reading. Where the official text of the brochure describes the museum as "a meeting point, a place to clarify and discuss questions concerning war, peace, conflict and reconciliation" (Amiry 2014, 45), Gabi reads it through the lens of his own memories of Palestinian family reunions at the divide between the West and East quarters of Jerusalem. His personal memory does not simply supplement the official history. It actively contradicts and destabilizes it, revealing the historical contortions that have turned a Palestinian family home into an Israeli monument.

The acts of personal remembering in *Golda Slept Here* are never purely private. They are fundamentally social and collective, connecting individual experience to the broader landscape of Palestinian dispossession. Even in the opening pages of the memoir, Amiry's sleepless mind moves outward from her own circumstances to encompass her father's memories of the Palestine Broadcasting Service where he worked, and her mother's life moving between Jerusalem, Ramallah, Salt, and Damascus. In depicting her father as someone who "shied away from talking about his personal pain and immersed himself in starting a new life" in the diaspora, Amiry places him within the larger generational pattern of the nakba generation, those who chose survival over testimony (Amiry 2014, 9). This movement between the personal and the collective is characteristic of the memoir's approach throughout.

The reconstruction of Palestinian national identity is another dimension of *Golda Slept Here* that emerges clearly from the counter-historical current running through the text. The book does not subordinate individual stories to a collective national narrative. Rather, it allows individual cases to accumulate into a picture of collective dispossession that speaks to the Palestinian

cause of national self-determination without reducing any individual life to a mere example. The complex relationship between nationalist cultural practice and individual lived experience has been a central concern of post-colonial scholarship, which has shown how literary texts can negotiate the tension between personal testimony and collective political claims without resolving it into simple allegory (Lazarus 1999). The satirical song in the first chapter frames the loss of individual houses within the larger picture of Palestine as a stolen homeland, depicting the land as a bride "never consulted" in the successive decisions that stripped her of her identity (Amiry 2014, 13). The elegy-like song ends with the observation that:

> As Diaspora ended for one people
> Diaspora started for another
> A new nation remembered, an old one forgotten. (Amiry 2014, 13)

This formulation tacitly captures the zero-sum logic of settler colonialism with bitter precision. The political dimension of the book's engagement with national identity is also evident in its attention to what the Palestinian historian Masalha has termed "toponymicide" i.e. the systematic replacement of Arabic place names with Hebrew ones as a strategy of spatial erasure (Masalha 2012). Gabi's understanding of the name substitutions executed by Israel in the case of historical landmarks such as the Tourjeman Post and the Mandelbaum Gate, and Amiry's bitter recognition of an Israeli resident's reference to the nakba as the "War of Independence", are examples of this toponymicidal logic being resisted through the counter-archival practice of naming (Amiry 2014, 68). To insist on the Arabic name, to remember what a place was called before the renaming, is itself a political act of memory against history.

8. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Suad Amiry's *Golda Slept Here* constructs the Palestinian house as a "counter-archive" to settler-colonial erasure. Through close attention to architectural detail, domestic objects, personal narratives and the practices of house visits, Amiry assembles a record of Palestinian presence that sets itself against the official Israeli archive of absentee property, Jewish settlement and national memory. The house functions in this record not merely as a backdrop or a symbol but as an active agent of memory transmission, a site where the past materializes in the present and where the post-generation encounters the inherited trauma of its predecessors.

The theoretical frameworks brought to bear in this analysis, Hirsch's theory of postmemory, Nora's lieux de memoire, Bennett and Brown's accounts of material agency, Derrida and Stoler's theorizations of the archive,

and Caruth and Luckhurst's pluralistic trauma theory, have proved complementary rather than competing in their application to Amiry's text. Together, they illuminate how the Palestinian house functions simultaneously as a material repository of lived history, as a mnemonic trigger for both direct memory and postmemory, as a site of legal and political contestation and as an embodied archive of resistance to dispossession.

The implications of this reading extend beyond the specific case of Palestinian literature. In settler-colonial contexts around the world, from Australia to Canada to South Africa, indigenous peoples have similarly had to construct counter-archives out of domestic space, oral tradition and material culture in the face of official archives that either erase or distort their histories. The Palestinian case, as analyzed through Amiry's memoir, offers a particularly rich and articulate example of this counter-archival practice because it is conducted by a writer who is also an architect, and who therefore brings to her narrative a dual sensitivity to the political stakes of built space and the mnemonic power of architectural detail.

The question that *Golda Slept Here* ultimately poses is not simply a question about Palestinian houses. It is a question about what counts as an archive, who has the authority to constitute one, and what happens when the official archive is itself a structure of violence. By insisting that a rusted cast-iron stopper, a bunch of keys carried for twenty years, a photo album lost in the chaos of exile and a gilded icon retrieved from a Russian nun are all elements of a legitimate historical record, Amiry challenges the epistemological assumptions that underlie colonial archival practice. She insists that living memory, embodied experience, and material traces are as authoritative as legal documents and state records, and that the archive of the dispossessed is as real and as valid as any other.

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Second Section

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TRANSUMANESIMO E RELIGIONE: UN'ANALISI SOCIOLOGICA RETROSPETTIVA

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ENGLISH TITLE: TRANSHUMANISM AND RELIGION: A RETROSPECTIVE SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

Transhumanism is often portrayed as an inherently secular or even anti-religious movement. Drawing on the founding documents of the World Transhumanist Association (WTA), four membership surveys conducted between 2003 and 2012, and participant observation, this article re-examines that assumption by reconstructing the religious composition of the organized transhumanist movement during its formative years. As a retrospective sociological investigation, the study lies at the intersection of the sociology of culture and the history of ideas. While secular members constituted the majority, the findings reveal a significant presence of Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Pagans, Pantheists, Hindus, Muslims, and other religious groups. The article argues that these traditions interpreted human enhancement technologies through distinct theological and philosophical frameworks rather than rejecting them outright. Early organized transhumanism thus emerges as a pluralistic intellectual milieu in which diverse religious traditions engaged with the promises and challenges of emerging technologies, challenging the widespread view that transhumanism and religion are necessarily incompatible.

KEYWORDS: Transhumanism, Religion, World Transhumanist Association, Participant Observation, Membership Surveys

INTRODUZIONE

Il transumanesimo è un movimento culturale che promuove l'impiego della scienza e della tecnologia per superare alcune limitazioni biologiche dell'essere umano, quali l'invecchiamento, la malattia e le ridotte capacità fisiche

e cognitive. L'idea di fondo è che, una volta riconosciuto che l'essere umano sia il prodotto di un processo evolutivo, non vi sia alcuna ragione per ritenere che tale processo sia giunto definitivamente a compimento. Come tutte le specie che lo hanno preceduto, anche l'uomo rappresenterebbe una fase transitoria dell'evoluzione e non il suo esito finale (Campa 2025a, 2025b).

Uno dei primi pensatori ad avventurarsi sistematicamente in questa direzione fu il paleontologo francese e prete gesuita Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Nelle sue opere, egli introdusse i concetti di "ultraumano" e "transumano" per indicare gli stadi successivi dell'evoluzione umana, sostenendo che, una volta divenuta consapevole di se stessa, l'evoluzione avrebbe potuto assumere una forma sempre più riflessiva e autodiretta anche grazie alle tecnologie sviluppate dalla specie umana. La prospettiva teilhardiana manteneva tuttavia una forte impronta teologica: l'evoluzione era interpretata come un processo orientato verso il Punto Omega, ovvero verso una progressiva convergenza spirituale dell'umanità (Campa 2019).

A introdurre il termine "transumanesimo" nella sua accezione contemporanea fu invece il biologo inglese Julian Huxley, sebbene il termine ricorra già nella letteratura precedente[1]. Nel volume *New Bottles for New Wine* (1957) egli propose esplicitamente l'idea di un movimento orientato all'evoluzione autodiretta dell'umanità (Bostrom 2005). Il legame tra le due prospettive era tutt'altro che casuale. Due anni più tardi, nel 1959, Huxley scrisse infatti la prefazione all'edizione inglese de *Il fenomeno umano* di Teilhard de Chardin, un'opera che circolava in forma manoscritta già dagli anni Trenta e che venne pubblicata soltanto dopo la morte dell'autore, riconoscendo il valore innovativo della sua visione evoluzionistica, pur reinterpretandola in chiave più secolarizzata. Mentre il paleontologo francese cercava di riformulare il cristianesimo alla luce delle nuove conoscenze scientifiche, il biologo inglese proponeva una filosofia dell'evoluzione capace di emanciparsi progressivamente dai suoi presupposti teologici. Le due prospettive differivano dunque per il quadro metafisico di riferimento, ma condividevano l'idea fondamentale secondo cui l'essere umano non rappresenta il punto terminale dell'evoluzione (Campa 2019).

Nella seconda metà del XX secolo queste intuizioni furono ulteriormente sviluppate da autori quali FM-2030, pseudonimo del futurista iraniano Fereidoun Esfandiary, e Max More. Il primo è autore di *Up-Wingers: A Futurist Manifesto* (1973) e *Are You a Transhuman?* (1989), mentre il secondo è autore del saggio *Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy* (1990) e fondatore dell'Extropy Institute, una delle prime organizzazioni transumaniste (Thomas 2024). Gruppi analoghi sorsero progressivamente in diversi paesi fino a quan-

[1] Un uso anteriore del termine sarà discusso nella sottosezione dedicata al transumanesimo buddista.

do, nel 1998, Nick Bostrom e David Pearce promossero la fondazione della World Transhumanist Association (WTA), concepita come un'organizzazione ombrello di respiro globale capace di coordinare le numerose realtà nazionali e regionali. Alcuni anni più tardi la WTA avrebbe assunto la denominazione Humanity+, con la quale continua ancora oggi le proprie attività (WTA 2012).

Grazie a tale processo di istituzionalizzazione, il transumanesimo acquisì una visibilità internazionale senza precedenti. Le sue idee — la transitorietà della condizione umana, il potenziamento tecnologico delle capacità biologiche e cognitive e la possibilità di orientare consapevolmente l'evoluzione futura della specie — suscitarono reazioni fortemente polarizzate. Da un lato, numerosi individui accolsero con entusiasmo queste prospettive e aderirono alle organizzazioni transumaniste. Dall'altro, non mancarono critiche severe che descrivevano tali progetti come moralmente problematici, filosoficamente illusori o addirittura blasfemi. Emblematica, in questo senso, è la celebre definizione proposta da Francis Fukuyama, consigliere del presidente George W. Bush per la bioetica, che nel 2004 descrisse il transumanesimo come «l'idea più pericolosa del mondo» sulle colonne della rivista *Foreign Policy*.

In particolare, furono gli ambienti religiosi — e soprattutto quelli appartenenti alle tradizioni giudaico-cristiane — a manifestare alcune delle reazioni pubbliche più intense nei confronti del transumanesimo, arrivando talvolta a gridare all'abominio[2]. La maggiore visibilità delle posizioni critiche contribuì a consolidare l'impressione che il rapporto fra transumanesimo e religione fosse necessariamente conflittuale. Molto meno visibile risultò invece la presenza, all'interno dello stesso movimento transumanista, di individui che continuavano a identificarsi con tradizioni religiose consolidate.

Nel corso del tempo, tanto i transumanisti quanto i loro oppositori hanno progressivamente elaborato immagini stereotipate reciproche. Da un lato, il transumanista è stato descritto come un tecnocrate ateo e prometeico, disposto a sacrificare la natura umana sull'altare del progresso e dell'efficienza. Dall'altro, l'antitransumanista è stato rappresentato come un reazionario oscurantista, incapace di comprendere i meccanismi dell'evoluzione biologica e animato da paure irrazionali nei confronti dell'innovazione tecnologica. L'accusa rivolta ai transumanisti di «giocare a fare Dio» è divenuta uno dei motivi ricorrenti del dibattito pubblico. Simmetricamente, i critici del transumanesimo sono stati spesso liquidati come "tecnofobi", "neoluddisti" o "bioconservatori".

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[2] L'ostilità di una parte del mondo cattolico – e, più in generale, di alcuni ambienti cristiani – nei confronti del transumanesimo, emersa nel primo decennio del XXI secolo, è documentata in *Mutare o perire: La sfida del transumanesimo* (Campa 2025a). L'opera fu pubblicata per la prima volta da Sestante Edizioni nel 2011 e riproposta in una seconda edizione, riveduta, ampliata e aggiornata, da Orbis Idearum Press nel 2025. Si veda in particolare il capitolo 9, «L'anatema della Chiesa cattolica» (Campa 2025a, 205–235).

Questa polarizzazione ha finito però per oscurare la complessità reale del fenomeno. Fin dalle sue origini organizzative, il movimento transumanista ha incluso non soltanto atei e agnostici, ma anche credenti appartenenti a religioni tradizionali, insieme a correnti spirituali, mistiche e tecnoreligiose che interpretavano il potenziamento umano e lo sviluppo tecnologico in chiave escatologica, salvifica o evolutiva. Parallelamente, anche le rappresentazioni stereotipate dei critici del transumanesimo si rivelano talvolta infondate, poiché alcune forme di opposizione al transumanesimo derivano da concezioni laiche della natura, dell'umano e del limite, mentre numerosi credenti e pensatori religiosi – pur rigettando le versioni più radicali del progetto transumanista – guardano alla scienza e alla tecnologia non come a minacce per la fede, ma come a strumenti di progresso materiale e culturale.

Il presente studio si propone di verificare empiricamente una delle questioni centrali emerse da questo dibattito: quale fosse effettivamente la composizione religiosa del transumanesimo organizzato nella sua fase fondativa. Attraverso l'analisi dei documenti programmatici della World Transhumanist Association e di alcune rilevazioni campionarie realizzate all'inizio del XXI secolo, la ricerca intende ricostruire le forme di autoidentificazione religiosa presenti nel movimento e valutare in quale misura esse confermino o smentiscano la rappresentazione del transumanesimo come fenomeno intrinsecamente ateo o antireligioso.

La questione non possiede soltanto un interesse storico. Le interpretazioni del transumanesimo elaborate durante la fase di formazione del movimento continuano infatti a influenzare il dibattito contemporaneo sul rapporto tra tecnologia, religione e futuro dell'umanità. Esse trovano eco, tra l'altro, in due importanti documenti pubblicati nel 2026: *Quo vadis humanitas?*, redatto dalla Commissione Teologica Internazionale della Chiesa cattolica, e l'enciclica *Magnifica Humanitas* di papa Leone XIV. Una ricostruzione empiricamente fondata delle origini del movimento può pertanto contribuire a distinguere le rappresentazioni caricaturali dalla realtà storica, offrendo una base più solida per il dibattito contemporaneo.

Nota metodologica

Il transumanesimo ha dato origine a una vasta letteratura interdisciplinare che comprende contributi filosofici, bioetici, teologici, politologici e sociologici. Sul versante sociologico, e in particolare della sociologia della religione, meritano attenzione gli studi di William Sims Bainbridge (2005), che ha analizzato empiricamente il rapporto tra atteggiamenti religiosi e orientamenti transumanisti; di James J. Hughes (2004; 2014), che ha interpretato il transumanesimo come movimento politico e culturale emergente ed esplorato le possibili

convergenze fra transumanesimo e buddismo; di Steve Fuller e Veronika Lipińska (2014), che hanno ricostruito le radici storiche, filosofiche e religiose del progetto transumanista, mettendone in evidenza la continuità con più ampie tradizioni dell'umanesimo occidentale; e di Riccardo Campa (2013; 2018; 2019), che ha esaminato il transumanesimo nella prospettiva della storia delle idee e della sociologia della religione, ricostruendone la genealogia intellettuale e le relazioni con le tradizioni filosofiche e religiose del passato.

Accanto a questi studi, numerosi altri autori hanno affrontato il rapporto fra transumanesimo e religione. Nella maggior parte dei casi, tuttavia, tale rapporto è stato esaminato soprattutto in chiave normativa, allo scopo di stabilire se il transumanesimo fosse moralmente, filosoficamente o teologicamente accettabile. Minore attenzione è stata invece dedicata alla concreta autoidentificazione religiosa dei primi aderenti al movimento transumanista organizzato e alla sua composizione confessionale.

Il presente contributo si colloca precisamente in questo spazio di ricerca. Esso propone un'analisi sociologica retrospettiva della fase genetica del movimento transumanista organizzato, adottando un disegno di ricerca a metodo misto (*mixed methods*), che integra strumenti quantitativi e qualitativi provenienti da diverse tradizioni disciplinari. L'indagine combina infatti l'analisi qualitativa dei documenti programmatici, dei testi pubblicati dalle prime organizzazioni transumaniste e dei discorsi elaborati dai loro esponenti; l'analisi quantitativa di sondaggi d'opinione realizzati nei primi anni Duemila dalla World Transhumanist Association (WTA) e da Terasem; l'osservazione partecipante, resa possibile dal coinvolgimento diretto dell'autore nelle reti associative transumaniste nazionali e internazionali; e, infine, le tradizionali tecniche investigative proprie della storia delle idee, utilizzate per ricostruire la genealogia concettuale del movimento e le sue relazioni con precedenti tradizioni filosofiche e religiose.

I dati quantitativi qui discussi non possono essere automaticamente assunti come pienamente rappresentativi del transumanesimo contemporaneo, movimento che nel frattempo ha conosciuto profonde trasformazioni culturali, geografiche e ideologiche. L'osservazione partecipante, condotta con continuità secondo un disegno longitudinale fino al momento della stesura del presente contributo, costituisce uno strumento complementare utile a contestualizzare i risultati delle indagini campionarie. In assenza di rilevazioni recenti comparabili per ampiezza e struttura metodologica, risulta tuttavia difficile stabilire con precisione il grado di continuità fra la fase fondativa del movimento e la situazione attuale.

I materiali qui analizzati costituiscono una documentazione storica di particolare interesse per lo studio della genesi del transumanesimo organizzato. In questa prospettiva, il presente lavoro si colloca all'intersezione fra sociologia della cultura, sociologia della religione, storia delle idee e storia intellet-

tuale del transumanesimo. Le indagini campionarie non vengono qui utilizzate come semplici strumenti di descrizione sincronica del presente, bensì come fonti storiche utili a ricostruire le modalità attraverso cui i primi transumanisti interpretavano il rapporto fra evoluzione tecnologica, trascendenza, spiritualità e religione.

Per quanto riguarda l'osservazione partecipante, la posizione di *insider* dell'autore offre un accesso privilegiato a dinamiche culturali e simboliche difficilmente osservabili dall'esterno, ma comporta, come è noto, il rischio di bias interpretativi legati al coinvolgimento personale. D'altro canto, anche la posizione di *outsider* presenta limiti specifici, poiché la distanza dal contesto studiato può tradursi in incomprensioni, semplificazioni o pregiudizi di segno opposto, soprattutto quando l'analisi è influenzata da atteggiamenti di preventiva ostilità nei confronti del fenomeno osservato. Come rilevato da Robert K. Merton (1972), riprendendo una riflessione già presente nella sociologia classica, né la posizione dell'*insider* né quella dell'*outsider* garantiscono di per sé maggiore obiettività. A risultare decisivi sono piuttosto il rigore metodologico, l'onestà intellettuale e la disponibilità a sottoporre criticamente a verifica le proprie interpretazioni. *Iudicium lectori relinquimus*.

La posizione statutaria della WTA sulle religioni

Prima di esaminare le convinzioni religiose dei membri della WTA, è opportuno considerare la posizione ufficiale dell'organizzazione nei confronti della religione. Da un punto di vista sociologico, questa ricostruzione preliminare appare particolarmente rilevante. Nei movimenti di recente formazione, infatti, i documenti programmatici svolgono spesso una funzione orientativa assai più importante di quanto accada nelle religioni storiche e nelle tradizioni consolidate.

Chi nasce all'interno di una comunità religiosa raramente aderisce dopo avere studiato i testi fondativi della propria fede. Nella maggior parte dei casi, l'appartenenza precede la conoscenza sistematica della dottrina. Molti cristiani, per esempio, non hanno mai letto integralmente l'Antico Testamento, il Nuovo Testamento, gli scritti dei Padri della Chiesa o le encicliche pontificie. L'identità religiosa viene generalmente acquisita attraverso processi di socializzazione familiare e comunitaria che precedono qualsiasi approfondimento teologico, sempre che il fedele scelga di andare oltre una pratica prevalentemente rituale e consuetudinaria.

Nei movimenti emergenti il processo tende invece a svilupparsi in direzione opposta. Chi entra per la prima volta in contatto con una proposta culturale nuova cerca normalmente di comprenderne i principi, gli obiettivi e i valori prima di decidere se aderirvi o meno. Nel caso del transumanesimo,

questa funzione introduttiva è stata svolta soprattutto dalle *Transhumanist FAQ*, un documento elaborato dai fondatori della WTA tra la fine degli anni Novanta e i primi anni Duemila e successivamente aggiornato in più versioni[3]. Per molti potenziali aderenti, le FAQ hanno rappresentato il primo contatto sistematico con le idee del movimento e una delle principali fonti per comprenderne l'identità culturale e filosofica. Qui prenderemo in esame la versione 2.1 del 2003, curata e pubblicata sul proprio sito personale da Nick Bostrom.

L'analisi di questo documento risulta particolarmente importante anche perché – come vedremo in dettaglio – la WTA non si è mai definita come un'organizzazione atea o antireligiosa. Al contrario, i suoi documenti fondativi hanno esplicitamente riconosciuto la legittimità di una pluralità di posizioni metafisiche e religiose.

Per cominciare, nelle *Transhumanist FAQ* si legge:

> È opportuno sottolineare che il transumanesimo non costituisce un sistema dogmatico rigido. Si tratta piuttosto di una visione del mondo in continua evoluzione, o, più precisamente, di una famiglia di visioni del mondo in evoluzione, dal momento che i transumanisti divergono tra loro su numerose questioni teoriche, etiche e politiche. La filosofia transumanista, ancora in una fase di elaborazione e consolidamento, è concepita come un sistema aperto, destinato a evolvere alla luce di nuove esperienze e nuove sfide. I transumanisti sono impegnati a individuare eventuali errori nelle proprie analisi e ad adeguare di conseguenza le proprie concezioni teoriche. (WTA 2003)

Questo passaggio è particolarmente rilevante perché mostra come i documenti fondativi della WTA presentino il transumanesimo non come una dottrina compiuta e definitiva, ma come una prospettiva aperta alla revisione critica e all'autocorrezione. Tale impostazione appare difficilmente conciliabile con l'immagine di un movimento cui la critica talvolta attribuisce pretese di infallibilità teorica e atteggiamenti di supponenza[4]. Ancora più importante, ai fini della presente analisi, è il fatto che il transumanesimo venga qui definito come una famiglia di visioni del mondo non necessariamente conciliabili, piuttosto che come un sistema dogmatico unitario contrapposto ad altri sistemi dogmatici. I transumanisti divergono dunque su questioni teoriche, etiche

[3] Per una breve ricostruzione della storia editoriale delle *Transhumanist FAQ*, si veda Campa (2025, 39, nota 26). Un confronto fra le diverse versioni del documento è sviluppato in vari punti del capitolo 3, "I principi etici del transumanesimo". A titolo esemplificativo, a p. 72 si osserva che «la versione del 1999 delle *Transhumanist FAQ* è più scoppiettante rispetto a quella del 2003. Ha meno freni e il tono è a tratti quasi trionfalistico».

[4] Per esempio, tale critica è presente nel testo della Commissione Teologica Internazionale, *Quo vadis humanitas?* (2026).

e politiche fondamentali, circostanza che rende problematica qualsiasi rappresentazione del movimento come realtà ideologicamente omogenea[5].

La posizione transumanista nei confronti dei credi religiosi è esplicitata in modo cristallino nella seguente dichiarazione, che pone l'accento non tanto sul contenuto delle credenze religiose quanto sulle modalità attraverso cui esse vengono vissute e praticate:

> Il transumanesimo non considera accettabili il fanatismo religioso, la superstizione e l'intolleranza. [...] Ciò non significa, tuttavia, che ogni forma di religiosità sia incompatibile con il transumanesimo. Al contrario, alcune espressioni dell'esperienza religiosa possono risultare pienamente conciliabili con la prospettiva transumanista. (WTA 2003)

Questo passaggio smentisce l'idea che il transumanesimo sia stato concepito dai suoi fondatori come un movimento riservato ai "senza Dio". Sul piano statutario, la WTA riconosce esplicitamente che l'aderenza al transumanesimo non presuppone l'abbandono della fede religiosa, purché essa non assuma forme fanatiche, superstiziose o intolleranti.

Infine, va evidenziato che l'obiettivo statutario del movimento transumanista non è l'immortalità immanente, bensì la radicale estensione della vita[6]. Nelle *Transhumanist FAQ*, la possibilità di una sopravvivenza indefinita viene discussa in termini fortemente ipotetici e accompagnata da esplicite conside-

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[5] È interessante osservare che la struttura non monolitica del movimento transumanista è riconosciuta anche nell'enciclica *Magnifica Humanitas* di papa Leone XIV (2026). Pur nel quadro di una valutazione complessivamente critica del transumanesimo, il documento afferma infatti che esso va metaforicamente compreso come «un arcipelago di isole concettuali differenti, collegate però dal medesimo mare di presupposti». Una simile cautela analitica non sembra invece caratterizzare il documento della Commissione Teologica Internazionale *Quo vadis humanitas?* (2026).

[6] L'equivoco tra "radicale estensione della vita" e "immortalità immanente" ricorre anche in alcuni recenti documenti del Magistero cattolico, quali *Quo vadis humanitas?* (Commissione Teologica Internazionale 2026) e l'enciclica *Magnifica Humanitas* di papa Leone XIV (2026), nei quali il transumanesimo viene frequentemente identificato con l'aspirazione all'immortalità terrena ottenibile mediante la tecnologia. Non si tratta, naturalmente, di una rappresentazione priva di riscontri empirici. Esistono infatti autori e movimenti riconducibili al transumanesimo, così come figure pubbliche talvolta impropriamente presentate dai media come transumaniste, che hanno effettivamente prospettato la possibilità di un'esistenza indefinitamente prolungata. Inoltre, il tema dell'immortalità tecnologica si presta particolarmente al sensazionalismo mediatico e divulgativo e, in alcuni casi, gli stessi esponenti del movimento hanno contribuito ad alimentare questa rappresentazione. Ciò nondimeno, sul piano metodologico occorre distinguere fra l'iperbole retorica e la tesi argomentata, nonché tra le posizioni sostenute da singoli autori e i principi statutari del movimento. Le generalizzazioni dovrebbero essere costruite a partire da questi ultimi e successivamente sottoposte a verifica empirica. Come mostrano i documenti della WTA e i dati discussi nel presente contributo, l'immortalità immanente non costituisce né un obiettivo statutario del transumanesimo né una convinzione unanimemente condivisa dai suoi aderenti.

razioni sui limiti cosmologici, epistemologici e tecnologici dell'impresa. Vi si legge infatti:

> Potrebbe rivelarsi impossibile vivere per sempre in senso stretto, persino per coloro che saranno abbastanza fortunati da sopravvivere fino a un'epoca in cui la tecnologia sarà stata perfezionata, e anche in condizioni ideali. (WTA 2003)

Dopo un passaggio in cui si evidenzia che qualunque tecnologia dovrà comunque fare i conti con i limiti fisici e cosmologici dell'universo materiale, il documento aggiunge:

> Dobbiamo convivere con questa incertezza, insieme a quella, ben più grande, relativa alla possibilità che ciascuno di noi riesca a evitare una morte prematura prima che la tecnologia abbia raggiunto un adeguato grado di maturità. (WTA 2003)

Nel loro insieme, i documenti programmatici della WTA delineano dunque un movimento che si presenta come internamente pluralistico sia sul piano filosofico sia su quello religioso. Resta tuttavia da verificare in quale misura tale apertura statutaria trovi effettivamente riscontro nella composizione culturale e religiosa dei suoi aderenti. In altre parole, pur avendo un'impostazione tendenzialmente laica o secolarizzata che mette la scienza e la tecnica al centro del discorso, il movimento offre un'opportunità di adesione anche a transumanisti religiosi. Per verificare se questa opportunità è stata colta, e in che misura, è, però, necessario passare dall'analisi dei documenti programmatici a quella dei dati empirici.

Le indagini campionarie della fase fondativa del movimento

Per ricostruire le forme di autoidentificazione religiosa presenti nella prima fase del transumanesimo organizzato, risultano particolarmente utili alcuni sondaggi d'opinione realizzati negli anni immediatamente successivi alla fondazione delle principali reti associative del movimento.

Nel presente contributo verranno presi in esame quattro sondaggi. Tre di essi furono realizzati dalla World Transhumanist Association rispettivamente nel 2003, 2005 e 2007. I risultati confluirono nel rapporto compilato nel gennaio 2008 dal sociologo James Hughes, allora direttore esecutivo dell'associazione, intitolato *Report on the 2007 Interests and Beliefs Survey of the Members of the World Transhumanist Association*. Un quarto rilevamento venne invece commissionato dall'organizzazione Terasem Movement Foundation nel 2012.

Come precisa il rapporto della WTA, il terzo rilevamento è stato condotto nell'arco di dieci giorni nel dicembre 2007. Il questionario è stato inviato a tutti i membri dell'associazione (N=4642) e recapitato a tutti coloro i cui indirizzi e-mail erano ancora funzionanti (N=3737). Hughes (2008) sottolinea che, pur essendo aumentata la frequenza assoluta delle risposte, è diminuita quella relativa: «760 persone hanno risposto, rispetto alle 606 del 2003 e alle 586 del 2005. Si è trattato di un tasso di risposta inferiore (20%) rispetto ai sondaggi del 2003 e del 2005 (rispettivamente il 26% e il 36%)». È degno di nota anche il fatto che «la percentuale di intervistati non statunitensi è aumentata in questo campione del 57%, riflettendo la loro effettiva proporzione nella nostra base associativa. Come nel 2003, circa il 90% del campione era di sesso maschile. L'età media degli intervistati sia nel 2003 che nel 2005 è più o meno la stessa, circa 30-33 anni» (Hughes 2008).

Alla domanda sull'orientamento religioso, i transumanisti hanno risposto così:

Tabella 1. Quale di queste denominazioni descrive meglio il tuo orientamento religioso o spirituale?

	2003	2005	2007
Secolarizzato, ateo	**64%**	**62%**	**64%**
Ateo	30%	30%	35%
Agnostico	14%	16%	14%
Umanista secolarizzato	10%	9%	9%
Altra filosofia non teista	10%	7%	6%
Religioso o spirituale	**26%**	**24%**	**31%**
Spirituale	4%	6%	5%
Protestante/Ortodosso	1%	4%	4%
Buddista	3%	2%	4%
Umanista religioso	3%	2%	2%
Pagano o animista	2%	2%	2%
Cattolico	2%	2%	4%
Unitariano-Universalista	2%	2%	2%
Induista	2%	1%	1%
Ebreo	1%	1%	1%
Musulmano	1%	1%	1%
Panteista	--	--	1%
Mormone	--	--	1%
Transumanista	--	--	1%
Raeliano	<0.5%	1%	<0.5%
Altra religione	2%	1%	3%
Altro/Non so	**10%**	**14%**	**5%**
Nessuna di quelle sopra	7%	11%	5%
Non so	3%	4%	1%

In un articolo a commento dei risultati del 2005, Hughes notava che, «empiricamente, molti transumanisti non ritengono che il transumanesimo escluda la spiritualità. Il sondaggio sui membri della WTA ha rilevato che un quarto degli intervistati è religioso in un certo senso, identificandosi con tutte le principali tradizioni religiose mondiali, dal buddismo e dall'induismo al cristianesimo, all'ebraismo e all'islam, nonché con termini come "spirituale" e "umanista religioso"» (Hughes 2007). A commento dei dati del 2007, il direttore esecutivo scriveva che, «per quanto riguarda le opinioni religiose, il secolarismo dominante tra i membri della WTA rimane invariato, con circa due terzi dei membri (atei, agnostici, umanisti laici o seguaci di qualche altra filosofia laica)».

Questo è vero, ma si noterà che il dato significativo è l'aumento dei transumanisti religiosi, da un quarto a circa un terzo degli iscritti. L'ascesa è compensata dal calo di coloro che non sanno (dal 4 all'1%) o non hanno trovato la denominazione confacente (dall'11 al 5%). Evidentemente ha giovato aggiungere altre opzioni, come panteista, mormone e transumanista, per fare emergere altre forme di spiritualità.

Il sondaggio realizzato da Hans Pellissier e Teresa Dal Santo per Terasem è meno dettagliato in relazione alla questione religiosa, ma più recente e comunque informativo.

Tabella 2. Qual è il tuo sistema di credenze religiose?

	2012
Non religioso	81,4%
Cristiano	9,5%
Ebreo	1,8%
Buddista	1,8%
Altra religione	5,0%

Dal Santo aggiunge le seguenti informazioni: «I commenti a questa domanda includevano: "Teresemiano", "Thelema", "collettivista", "Panendeismo", "Quarta Via", "Taoista", "un mix di Scientology e discordianesimo", "Magia del Caos" e "Okay, seriamente? Gente")».

La descrizione quantitativa del fenomeno costituisce il punto di partenza dell'analisi. Per comprenderne il significato sociologico è ora necessario passare dal piano descrittivo a quello interpretativo.

INTERPRETAZIONE SOCIOLOGICA DELLE CATEGORIE RELIGIOSE

Le categorie rilevate dalle indagini campionarie non esauriscono, da sole, il significato sociologico delle diverse forme di autoidentificazione religiosa pre-

senti nel movimento transumanista organizzato durante la sua fase fondativa. La loro interpretazione richiede di integrare i dati quantitativi con l'analisi dei documenti prodotti dalle organizzazioni transumaniste, degli scritti dei loro principali esponenti e delle informazioni ricavate dall'osservazione partecipante dell'autore.

L'obiettivo non è attribuire a ciascun gruppo convinzioni uniformi, bensì ricostruire gli orientamenti prevalenti che emergevano dall'interazione fra autoidentificazione religiosa, produzione discorsiva e pratiche culturali. L'esposizione seguirà l'ordine decrescente della consistenza numerica dei diversi gruppi.

Transumanisti secolarizzati e non religiosi

La componente numericamente più consistente del movimento transumanista organizzato è costituita da coloro che le *survey* della World Transhumanist Association collocano nella metacategoria "secolarizzato, ateo". Essa comprende però orientamenti filosofici ed epistemologici differenti, che non possono essere assimilati senza ulteriori distinzioni. Il sondaggio della Terasem Movement Foundation adotta una classificazione diversa, ricorrendo invece alla categoria più ampia di "non religioso". Entrambe le classificazioni risultano utili sul piano descrittivo, ma richiedono alcune precisazioni concettuali.

Innanzitutto, qualcuno potrebbe osservare che, se davvero l'81,4% dei transumanisti si dichiara "non religioso", come emerge dal rilevamento Terasem, la rappresentazione del movimento come fenomeno prevalentemente ateo e materialista non sarebbe del tutto infondata. Tuttavia, una lettura più approfondita dei dati richiede di distinguere fra categorie che, nel dibattito pubblico, tendono spesso a essere sovrapposte impropriamente.

Nel sondaggio Terasem, infatti, non compare la distinzione fra atei, agnostici, umanisti secolarizzati e aderenti ad altre filosofie non teiste, presente invece nelle inchieste della World Transhumanist Association. Tali distinzioni sono teoricamente rilevanti, poiché rinviano a concezioni epistemologiche e filosofiche differenti.

Ateismo e agnosticismo, anzitutto, non sono sinonimi. In senso stretto, l'ateismo implica il rigetto dell'esistenza di Dio o di entità trascendenti, mentre l'agnosticismo consiste nella sospensione del giudizio riguardo a questioni considerate non verificabili empiricamente o razionalmente dimostrabili.

La distinzione rimanda, più in profondità, al diverso significato dei concetti di *sapere* e *credere*. Chi ritiene di possedere una conoscenza certa non parla normalmente in termini di fede o credenza; queste ultime intervengono precisamente laddove la conoscenza empirica o razionale non consente di raggiungere dimostrazioni definitive.

In questa prospettiva, l'agnosticismo costituisce, sul piano epistemologico, una posizione secondo cui questioni come l'esistenza o l'inesistenza di Dio non possono essere conosciute con certezza. Sul piano della credenza, invece, esso non rappresenta un orientamento unitario. È infatti possibile distinguere almeno tre orientamenti: un agnosticismo sospensivo, caratterizzato dalla rinuncia a prendere posizione sulla questione del divino («non so e sospendo il giudizio»); un agnosticismo non credente, orientato pragmaticamente verso il secolarismo pur senza formulare negazioni metafisiche assolute («non so e non credo»); e, infine, un agnosticismo credente, nel quale l'incertezza epistemologica coesiste con una forma di fede religiosa o spirituale («non so, ma credo»). La categoria dei transumanisti "agnostici" risulta pertanto internamente eterogenea e non coincide necessariamente con l'assenza di un sentimento religioso.

I rilevamenti della WTA mostrano che gli atei propriamente detti oscillano fra il 30% e il 35% degli iscritti, configurandosi come la componente singola più numerosa, ma non come la maggioranza assoluta del movimento. I transumanisti agnostici rappresentano invece il secondo gruppo per consistenza numerica, attestandosi fra il 14% e il 16% del campione. Le indagini campionarie non consentono tuttavia di stabilire quanti di essi aderissero, sul piano della credenza, a concezioni religiose, spirituali o metafisiche.

Un breve cenno meritano anche le categorie "umanista secolarizzato" e "altra filosofia non teista", che rappresentano rispettivamente il 9-10% e il 6-10% dei rispondenti nelle tre indagini della WTA. Nel primo rilevamento, quest'ultima costituisce addirittura il terzo gruppo più consistente dell'intero campione, dopo atei e agnostici. Si tratta dunque di categorie quantitativamente troppo rilevanti per essere considerate residuali.

La loro interpretazione richiede tuttavia una certa cautela. L'espressione "umanista secolarizzato" designa infatti un orientamento culturale piuttosto che una precisa posizione metafisica, mentre la categoria "altra filosofia non teista" raccoglie concezioni del mondo accomunate soprattutto dal fatto di non identificarsi con le religioni storiche e con il teismo classico, inteso come credenza in un Dio personale. Nessuna delle due etichette consente pertanto di inferire automaticamente il rigetto di ogni forma di trascendenza o di realtà divina. La storia della filosofia offre infatti numerosi esempi di sistemi metafisici che, pur non aderendo al teismo in senso stretto e pur collocandosi al di fuori delle religioni rivelate, affermano l'esistenza di un principio trascendente o di una realtà divina accessibile mediante la sola ragione. Si pensi, nell'antichità, all'Essere di Parmenide, al *Nous* di Anassagora, all'Idea del Bene di Platone, al *θεός* di Aristotele o all'Uno di Plotino; in età moderna, al deismo illuminista e, successivamente, alle diverse concezioni dell'Assoluto elaborate dall'idealismo tedesco, da Fichte a Schelling e Hegel. In epoca contemporanea, Mortimer J. Adler, nel volume *How to Think About God: A Guide*

for the 20th-Century Pagan (1980), ha proposto una dimostrazione filosofica dell'esistenza di Dio rivolta proprio a un pubblico privo di appartenenza religiosa.

Non si può pertanto escludere che almeno una parte dei rispondenti confluiti nella categoria "altra filosofia non teista" aderisse a forme di deismo o credesse nel cosiddetto "Dio dei filosofi", distinto dal Dio personale delle religioni rivelate[7]. Si tratta di una categoria che riflette verosimilmente una classificazione operativa adottata dagli estensori del questionario, la cui corrispondenza con le tradizionali categorie della filosofia della religione non appare del tutto soddisfacente.

Tutte queste considerazioni suggeriscono che anche all'interno della più ampia categoria dei transumanisti "secolarizzati" o "non religiosi" possa essere presente un numero non trascurabile di persone che, pur non aderendo ad alcuna religione organizzata, credono in una realtà divina, in un principio trascendente o in una qualche forma di sopravvivenza *post mortem*.

L'osservazione partecipante suggerisce inoltre che il rapporto con la morte dei transumanisti propriamente atei tenda ad assumere due forme distinte. Vi è chi ripone le proprie speranze nella reversione del processo di invecchiamento e nella conseguente radicale estensione della vita, pur accettando, più o meno serenamente, l'eventualità di una morte per malattia o incidente. Vi è invece chi ritiene che questo intervento sul corpo biologico, eventualmente seguito dalla sospensione crionica, rappresenti soltanto un "primo ponte", destinato a consentire il raggiungimento di un'epoca nella quale la Singolarità tecnologica renderà possibili forme di esistenza completamente nuove attraverso la fusione dell'essere umano con le macchine: un "secondo ponte" verso l'immortalità immanente o, più propriamente, una quasi-immortalità soggetta ai limiti fisico-cosmologici dell'universo. Per distinguere queste due prospettive si parla talvolta di transumanesimo *wet* (bagnato, legato agli sviluppi della biomedicina) e transumanesimo *dry* (asciutto, legato all'evoluzione dell'intelligenza artificiale). Non è tuttavia possibile stimare la consistenza numerica dei due sottogruppi.

In ogni caso, il significato dell'estensione radicale della vita per il primo sottogruppo è relativamente lineare. In questa prospettiva, la morte non costituisce il passaggio verso un'altra forma di esistenza, bensì la definitiva cessazione dell'esperienza cosciente. La vita biologica rappresenta l'unica forma di esistenza riconosciuta e, di conseguenza, ogni progresso scientifico e tec-

[7] Si noti che chi, all'epoca del sondaggio, si riconosceva nella concezione della divinità propria dei filosofi greci avrebbe potuto anche identificarsi come "pagano". È questa, infatti, la definizione che Mortimer Adler adotta già nel titolo del suo libro per designare chi sceglie la via della ragione, anziché quella delle Scritture, per giungere a Dio.

nologico capace di prolungarla costituisce un bene in sé, almeno finché essa continua a essere percepita come gratificante e degna di essere vissuta.

Questa valutazione è condivisa anche dal secondo gruppo. Nel suo orizzonte culturale acquistano tuttavia rilievo anche progetti quali l'immortalismo digitale o il *mind uploading*, vale a dire l'ipotesi di trasferire la mente umana su un supporto artificiale nel quadro della Singolarità tecnologica. Si tratta delle ipotesi futuribili che hanno ricevuto la maggiore attenzione mediatica, anche per il loro carattere fortemente sensazionale. È bene ricordare, tuttavia, che tali concezioni non sono condivise nemmeno dalla generalità dei transumanisti atei o materialisti. L'osservazione partecipante conferma infatti quanto già suggerito dalle indagini quantitative: pur esercitando una certa influenza in alcuni ambienti transumanisti, esse hanno sempre convissuto con posizioni più caute o apertamente scettiche e la loro fattibilità, nonché la loro desiderabilità, sono state oggetto di discussione fin dalle prime fasi del transumanesimo organizzato.

Il caso del *mind uploading* è particolarmente istruttivo. Non pochi transumanisti dichiaratamente atei considerano tale ipotesi altamente speculativa o filosoficamente problematica. Anche tra coloro che ne ritengono possibile la realizzazione tecnica permane infatti una controversia tutt'altro che risolta riguardo al problema dell'identità personale. Una delle obiezioni più frequenti sostiene che una copia digitale della mente, per quanto perfetta, non coinciderebbe necessariamente con il soggetto originario. Nei dibattiti informali fra transumanisti questa obiezione viene spesso riassunta con una formula efficace: «Quello non saresti tu».

Inoltre, anche qualora fosse possibile preservare l'identità personale nel trasferimento della coscienza, il passaggio da un supporto biologico a uno artificiale non garantirebbe di per sé l'immortalità. Anche tali supporti, pur potenzialmente più resistenti di quelli biologici, sono infatti soggetti a deterioramento, guasti e distruzione. Il *mind uploading* potrebbe dunque prolungare notevolmente la durata dell'esistenza individuale, ma non eliminarne la finitezza.

Transumanisti cristiani

Passiamo ora ad analizzare le idee dei "transumanisti cristiani" che, grazie al 9% (tra protestanti, ortodossi, cattolici e mormoni) del sondaggio WTA 2007 e al 9,5% di quello Terasem, si collocano al secondo posto della nostra speciale classifica dopo i transumanisti secolarizzati e non religiosi[8].

[8] La posizione dipende dal criterio di aggregazione adottato. Se atei, agnostici e umanisti secolarizzati sono considerati separatamente, i transumanisti cristiani costituiscono il quarto gruppo per consistenza numerica. Se invece tali categorie sono aggregate sotto l'etichetta "transuma-

La World Transhumanist Association nacque come organizzazione ombrello delle diverse associazioni transumaniste. Tra queste figurano anche organizzazioni esplicitamente cristiane, le più note delle quali sono la Mormon Transhumanist Association (MTA), costituita e affiliata alla WTA nel 2006, e la Christian Transhumanist Association (CTA), nata intorno alla metà degli anni Dieci e destinata a raccogliere aderenti provenienti da diverse denominazioni cristiane.

È dunque plausibile che una parte dei transumanisti che nei sondaggi della WTA si dichiararono cristiani appartenesse a quell'ambiente culturale e religioso che avrebbe successivamente trovato espressione organizzativa nella MTA e, più tardi, nella CTA.

Nel 2006, Lincoln Cannon contribuì a fondare la MTA, che oggi conta più di mille aderenti. Successivamente aderì anche alla CTA. Cannon (2015) pubblicò inoltre sulla rivista *Theology and Science* un articolo che espone in dettaglio la dottrina del transumanesimo mormone. Sul sito della MTA si legge che «gli insegnamenti mormoni sul progresso umano individuale e sociale verso la pietà si collegano alle idee transumaniste sull'uso della tecnologia per migliorare e potenziare la condizione umana» e che «il transumanesimo mormone abbraccia scienza, tecnologia e religione per lavorare verso questi obiettivi» (MTA n.d.).

La MTA mette anche l'accento sulle rappresentazioni distorte alle quali sono spesso sottoposti tanto il mormonismo quanto il transumanesimo. Nota infatti che «l'aspirazione dei mormoni alla teosi e quella dei transumanisti alla condizione sovrumana sono abitualmente descritte, nel migliore dei casi, come ingenue, presuntuose e temerarie e, nel peggiore, come tracotanti, grandiose, egomaniache e pericolose per l'esistenza stessa dell'umanità» (MTA n.d.).

I membri dell'associazione non si ritengono immuni da errori di comprensione o di comunicazione, ma respingono con decisione quelle interpretazioni che riducono il transumanesimo a una forma di ribellione sacrilega contro Dio. Scrivono infatti:

> Sebbene alcune critiche rivolte ad aspetti del mormonismo o del transumanesimo possano essere giustificate, molte di esse si riducono a caricature. Il transumanesimo viene talvolta rappresentato dai critici religiosi come un'empia *Torre di Babele* eretta in sfida a Dio e dai critici laici come una corruzione dell'ordine naturale. Con l'ingresso del pensiero transumanista nella cultura dominante, anche alcune espressioni immature o radicali provenienti

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nisti secolarizzati e non religiosi", essi salgono al secondo posto. In ogni caso, i cristiani rappresentano il gruppo apertamente religioso più numeroso.

> dagli stessi transumanisti hanno talvolta contribuito ad alimentare tali fraintendimenti. (MTA n.d.)[9]

Sul sito dei transumanisti mormoni sono inoltre disponibili altri documenti ufficiali che contribuiscono a chiarirne la missione, i principi ispiratori e l'assetto organizzativo. Tra questi figurano una *FAQ*, una *Affirmation*, una *Constitution* e la *Transhumanist Declaration* della World Transhumanist Association, a conferma del fatto che la MTA nacque sin dall'inizio come chapter della WTA e si riconobbe esplicitamente nei suoi principi fondamentali.

Anche la Christian Transhumanist Association si presenta con una dichiarazione in cinque punti, piuttosto istruttiva, detta "Affirmation". La riportiamo qui di seguito.

> 1. Crediamo che la missione di Dio implichi la trasformazione e il rinnovamento della creazione, inclusa l'umanità, e che siamo chiamati da Cristo a partecipare a tale missione: lavorando contro la malattia, la fame, l'oppressione, l'ingiustizia e la morte.
>
> 2. Cerchiamo crescita e progresso in ogni dimensione della nostra umanità: spirituale, fisica, emotiva, mentale e a tutti i livelli: individuale, comunitario, sociale, mondiale.
>
> 3. Riconosciamo la scienza e la tecnologia come espressioni tangibili del nostro impulso dato da Dio a esplorare e scoprire e come una naturale conseguenza dell'essere creati a immagine di Dio.
>
> 4. Siamo guidati dai più grandi comandamenti di Gesù: «Ama il Signore Dio tuo con tutto il tuo cuore, anima, mente e forza... e ama il tuo prossimo come te stesso».
>
> 5. Crediamo che l'uso intenzionale della tecnologia, unito al seguire Cristo, possa darci il potere di crescere nella nostra identità di esseri umani creati a immagine di Dio.
>
> È in questo modo che siamo transumanisti cristiani. (CTA n.d.)

Seguono inoltre articolate esposizioni della missione del movimento, dei suoi presupposti teologici e del ruolo che specifiche tecnologie possono assumere nella trasformazione dell'essere umano e del mondo. In particolare,

[9] È interessante osservare che la metafora della Torre di Babele è stata ripresa anche da papa Leone XIV nell'enciclica *Magnifica Humanitas*. In quel documento, la costruzione della Torre è contrapposta esplicitamente alla ricostruzione di Gerusalemme guidata da Neemia, assunte rispettivamente come simboli di un progetto tecnologico fondato sull'autosufficienza dell'uomo e di uno sviluppo tecnico orientato alla collaborazione con Dio e al bene comune.

la CTA sottolinea che «in un mondo in cui i cristiani spesso vedono la scienza e la tecnologia come nemiche della fede, noi crediamo che la scienza e la tecnologia siano parte della missione di Cristo e di Dio. Noi come comunità dobbiamo essere in grado di condividere questa comprensione della storia cristiana» (CTA n.d).

La CTA non si limita a formulare una dichiarazione di principi. Sul proprio sito propone anche una *Christian History of Transhumanism*, nella quale sostiene che le radici culturali del transumanesimo affondano nella tradizione cristiana. Secondo questa ricostruzione, l'idea di collaborare con Dio nel perfezionamento della creazione e nel superamento della sofferenza attraverserebbe l'intera storia del cristianesimo, trovando espressione, in epoche diverse, nell'opera di teologi, filosofi, scienziati e riformatori. Il transumanesimo verrebbe così presentato non come una rottura con il cristianesimo, bensì come uno sviluppo coerente di alcune sue aspirazioni fondamentali.

La ricostruzione prende avvio dalla concezione biblica dell'essere umano creato a immagine di Dio e chiamato a coltivare e trasformare il creato, per poi richiamare la riflessione dei Padri della Chiesa, in particolare Ireneo di Lione, Atanasio di Alessandria e Gregorio di Nissa, sul tema della *theosis* o deificazione dell'uomo. La narrazione valorizza quindi il contributo storico del cristianesimo allo sviluppo della scienza e della medicina e approda infine alle moderne tecnologie del potenziamento umano, interpretate come nuovi strumenti attraverso i quali l'uomo può collaborare all'opera divina di rinnovamento della creazione.

Oggi, tra i leader dell'associazione figurano Micah Redding (presidente), Johnatan Gunnel (vicepresidente), Lorenzo Barberis Canonico (segretario), Emily Hogan Redding (tesoriere), e ancora i membri del board Omar Reyes, Lincoln Cannon, Mark Russell, Caleb Strom e Ryan Hogan. I dirigenti e i membri appartengono a diverse confessioni cristiane: sono anglicani, evangelici, cattolici, mormoni, battisti, pentecostali e altro ancora.

Dal punto di vista dottrinale, entrambe le associazioni cristiane fanno riferimento a una pluralità di elaborazioni teologiche. Per esempio, i transumanisti mormoni, oltre al fondatore Joseph Smith, citano il loro quinto presidente Lorenzo Snow, per evidenziare il carattere evolutivo del rapporto che intercorre tra Dio e l'umanità («Come l'umanità oggi è, Dio un tempo era; Come Dio oggi è, l'umanità può diventare»), e il padre del cosmismo russo Nikolai Fyodorov, per sottolineare il ruolo di co-creatore assegnato da Dio all'uomo («Dio fa tutto non solo per l'umanità, ma anche attraverso l'umanità. Il Creatore attraverso di noi ricrea il mondo; Egli resuscita tutti coloro che sono periti»).

Dal canto suo, la CTA cita ripetutamente il vescovo anglicano Nicholas Thomas Wright, il teologo protestante tedesco Paul Tillich, che fu anche teo-

rico del socialismo religioso in Germania, e lo scrittore e teologo nordirlandese Clive Stapples Lewis, amico intimo di J. R. R. Tolkien.

Nessuna delle due organizzazioni manca, inoltre, di fare riferimento alle idee del prete gesuita Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, considerato evidentemente uno dei maggiori ispiratori del transumanesimo cristiano. La MTA cita una frase che procurò al gesuita non pochi problemi con le gerarchie ecclesiastiche cattoliche, per via dell'esplicito riferimento al panteismo, seppur virgolettato e legittimato alla luce della Tradizione:

> Un autentico "panteismo", se vogliamo (nel significato etimologico del termine), ma un panteismo assolutamente legittimo. Se infatti, in ultima analisi, i centri riflessivi del mondo sono realmente "uno con Dio", questo stato non si ottiene mediante l'identificazione (Dio che diventa tutto), bensì attraverso l'azione differenziante e comunicativa dell'amore (Dio tutto in tutti). (Teilhard de Chardin 1959, 310; cit. in MTA n.d.)

La CTA riporta ben due citazioni di Teilhard, entrambe tratte dall'opera *L'avvenire dell'uomo*. La prima riguarda l'essenza della libertà:

> Libertà: vale a dire, la possibilità offerta a ogni uomo (rimuovendo gli ostacoli e mettendo a sua disposizione i mezzi appropriati) di "transumanizzarsi" mediante il pieno sviluppo delle proprie potenzialità. (Teilhard de Chardin 1964, 239; cit. CTA n.d.)

La seconda rimarca invece la convergenza del pensiero scientifico e religioso nell'indicare come destino dell'uomo l'evoluzione in direzione della trans-umanità:

> Di conseguenza, si è meno inclini a respingere come antiscientifica l'idea che il punto critico della Riflessione planetaria, frutto della socializzazione, lungi dall'essere una semplice scintilla nell'oscurità, rappresenti il nostro passaggio, per traslazione o smaterializzazione, a un'altra sfera dell'universo: non la conclusione dell'Ultra-Umano, ma il suo accesso a una qualche forma di Trans-Umano nel cuore ultimo delle cose. (Teilhard de Chardin 1964, 298; cit. CTA n.d.)

Questa citazione mostra chiaramente che, nel pensiero di Teilhard, l'«Ultra-Umano» e il «Trans-Umano» sono concepiti come due fasi successive dello stesso processo evolutivo. Essa induce pertanto a una certa cautela nei confronti di quelle interpretazioni che tendono a separare nettamente i due concetti, privilegiando il primo e marginalizzando il secondo.

I frequenti riferimenti dei transumanisti cristiani a Teilhard non stupiscono, se si considera che – come abbiamo rilevato nell'introduzione e come dimostrano le citazioni appena riportate – egli contribuì a coniare parte della

terminologia oggi impiegata dal transumanesimo. Il gesuita può così essere considerato uno dei principali ispiratori del transumanesimo cristiano e, grazie anche all'influenza esercitata su Julian Huxley, una delle figure che contribuirono alla genealogia intellettuale del transumanesimo contemporaneo (Steinhart 2008).

Il ruolo di Teilhard va sottolineato anche perché, al di là del fatto che vi sono cristiani che aderiscono ad associazioni nominalmente transumaniste, la sua opera ha contribuito alla formazione di una corrente di cattolicesimo postconciliare aperta all'idea di un'evoluzione tecnologicamente mediata dell'umanità (Campa 2019). Le organizzazioni formalmente cristiano-transumaniste non esauriscono dunque la presenza cristiana all'interno del movimento. L'osservazione partecipante suggerisce infatti che, accanto ai mormoni e ai cristiani aderenti alla CTA, fossero presenti anche cattolici che, pur non riconoscendosi in organizzazioni confessionali specifiche, si richiamavano esplicitamente al pensiero di Teilhard de Chardin.

Si è infatti sviluppato un filone del cattolicesimo contemporaneo che considera il pensiero del paleontologo francese una delle pietre angolari di una rinnovata riflessione teologica e antropologica e che si è confrontato direttamente con i temi del transumanesimo[10].

Un esempio significativo è offerto da Ilia Delio, che ha utilizzato ripetutamente il termine "transumanesimo" in accezione positiva per indicare il processo di autoevoluzione tecnologica della specie umana. In un articolo del 2014 scrive:

> La tecnologia transumanista indica che la realtà è un processo costituito da una tensione verso la trascendenza. La natura, in un certo senso, non è mai soddisfatta di se stessa; preme sempre per essere di più e per la novità. Quando partecipiamo a questa spinta verso nuove possibilità, partecipiamo anche a Dio. Questa è la dimensione della santità nella tecnologia. […] Le tecnologie transumaniste, simboleggiate dal cyborg, forniscono speranza per un mondo più unificato in futuro, se sviluppiamo e creiamo tecnologie con questo obiettivo in mente. (Ilio 2014)

[10] Tra gli autori più rappresentativi di questo orientamento si possono ricordare Ilia Delio, che ha dedicato numerosi studi al rapporto tra Teilhard de Chardin e il transumanesimo (Delio 2012, 2014), e Gianfilippo Giustozzi, autore di una serie di studi dedicati al pensiero di Pierre Teilhard de Chardin pubblicati in *Orbis Idearum* (Giustozzi 2019, 2020, 2023a, 2023b, 2024) e successivamente raccolti nel volume *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: «Un Dio per un mondo che sta iniziando»* (Giustozzi 2025). Più recentemente, rispondendo alle critiche rivolte al transumanesimo e al postumanesimo dal documento *Quo vadis humanitas?* della Commissione Teologica Internazionale, Paolo Gamberini (2026) ha sottolineato la significativa assenza di Teilhard de Chardin da un dibattito nel quale, a suo giudizio, il gesuita francese avrebbe dovuto occupare un ruolo centrale.

Nello stesso articolo aggiunge che la Chiesa non può ignorare tale processo, poiché «la tecnologia sta cambiando la forma di ciò che siamo e, in un certo senso, di chi siamo, e con il tempo cambierà anche la forma della Chiesa» (Delio 2014). Nel 2023 Delio ribadisce «l'uso della tecnologia per trascendere i limiti biologici, noto come transumanesimo, ha le sue radici nella tradizione cristiana» (Delio 2023).

Questi esempi mostrano come, accanto alle organizzazioni cristiano-transumaniste sorte in ambito protestante e mormone, il dialogo tra cattolicesimo e transumanesimo abbia trovato espressione anche in un filone teologico ispirato al pensiero di Teilhard de Chardin. È pertanto plausibile che tra coloro che nei sondaggi d'opinione della WTA hanno selezionato la categoria "cattolico" (4% nel 2007), e tra almeno una parte di coloro che nell'inchiesta della Terasem si sono autoidentificati come "cristiani", figurassero aderenti a questa tradizione intellettuale.

L'osservazione partecipante offre ulteriori elementi a sostegno di questa interpretazione. Essa suggerisce che, fra i transumanisti cristiani, il prolungamento della vita tenda a essere inserito entro un'ampia cornice teologica. Il corpo non è visto semplicemente come un supporto biologico, ma come un dono di Dio e il tempio dello Spirito, da custodire e mantenere in efficienza per quanto possibile. Allungare la vita può inoltre significare disporre di più tempo per maturare spiritualmente, acquisire conoscenze, mettere i propri talenti al servizio della comunità e continuare a prendersi cura dei più deboli. In una società caratterizzata da crescente complessità scientifica e tecnologica, la perdita di persone esperte a causa dell'invecchiamento, della malattia o della morte può essere percepita non soltanto come una tragedia individuale, ma anche come un impoverimento della collettività. Nei dibattiti informali fra transumanisti ricorre talvolta un'osservazione tanto semplice quanto efficace: «Non si fa in tempo a imparare a vivere che è già tempo di morire». L'idea sottostante è che la crescente complessità della civiltà contemporanea renda sempre più difficile acquisire, nell'arco di una vita umana ordinaria, le conoscenze e le competenze necessarie per comprendere e governare il mondo in cui viviamo. In questa prospettiva, il prolungamento della vita appare come una risposta non convenzionale a una condizione storica altrettanto non convenzionale.

Nelle correnti cristiane maggiormente influenzate dal pensiero di Teilhard de Chardin, il potenziamento delle capacità cognitive dell'uomo è inoltre interpretato come una forma di collaborazione al processo evolutivo della creazione. L'espansione della conoscenza, della coscienza e dell'intelligenza non rappresenta una ribellione contro Dio, bensì una modalità attraverso cui l'umanità partecipa consapevolmente al compimento del disegno divino. Da questa prospettiva, il progresso tecnologico non costituisce un'alternativa alla fede, ma può essere concepito come uno degli strumenti mediante i quali

la creazione continua la propria evoluzione verso livelli superiori di complessità e consapevolezza.

Transumanisti spirituali

Il terzo posto della classifica è occupato dai "transumanisti spirituali", che oscillano tra il 4 e il 6% dei rispondenti. Si tratta dunque di una componente quantitativamente rilevante, alla quale è opportuno dedicare una specifica sezione, pur nella consapevolezza che la genericità della categoria ne limita le possibilità di analisi.

La loro denominazione, infatti, non rimanda a un'identità precisa. "Spiritual but not religious" è un'espressione nata e diffusasi soprattutto nel mondo anglosassone. Chi risponde in questo modo è in genere una persona educata in una religione tradizionale, ancora credente, ma non più praticante perché ha preso le distanze dalle istituzioni religiose pur continuando a coltivare una dimensione spirituale. Poiché i rispondenti sono in gran parte americani, possiamo presumere che il loro background religioso sia per lo più il cristianesimo. Negli Stati Uniti il termine "religione" è spesso inteso in un'accezione diversa rispetto all'Europa. Nel contesto statunitense tende infatti a essere attribuita maggiore importanza alla partecipazione comunitaria e alla pratica religiosa, tanto che talvolta si dichiara religioso anche chi nutre dubbi sul piano della fede, purché partecipi attivamente alla vita di una congregazione. In Europa, invece, l'identità religiosa è più frequentemente ricondotta all'appartenenza confessionale e alle convinzioni personali, tanto che non è raro sentirsi dichiarare cattolico anche da chi frequenta raramente la Chiesa, purché si riconosca ancora nella fede cristiana. È probabilmente anche per questa diversa concezione della religione che la formula "spiritual but not religious", così diffusa nel mondo anglosassone, non ha trovato un equivalente altrettanto radicato nell'Europa continentale.

Chi si dichiara "spirituale" può anche essere una persona che ha elaborato una propria visione del sacro, non di rado a carattere sincretistico, che coltiva però intimamente e non in comunione con altri. Proprio per la natura individualistica e intimistica di questo credo, non disponiamo di dati sufficienti per entrare nel merito di questo tipo di transumanesimo.

Transumanisti buddisti

Il quarto gruppo più numeroso è quello dei "transumanisti buddisti" (4% per WTA 2007 e 1,8% per Terasem). Il gruppo è interessante anche perché ben rappresentato nella leadership del movimento.

James J. Hughes, all'epoca direttore esecutivo della World Transhumanist Association e oggi del *think tank* transumanista Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies (IEET) è buddista. Non è un caso isolato. Proprio perché il buddismo gode di una certa popolarità tra i leader del movimento, nel marzo del 2007, l'IEET ha lanciato il progetto "Cyborg Buddha". Riportiamo la notizia dal sito del *think tank*:

> Il direttore esecutivo dell'IEET James Hughes, ex monaco buddista e Buddho-Unitariano attenuato, sta scrivendo un libro intitolato provvisoriamente *Cyborg Buddha: Using Neurotechnology to Become Better People*. Il membro del consiglio dell'IEET Mike LaTorra, prete Zen e autore di *A Warrior Blends with Life: A Modern Tao*, gestisce la lista Trans-Spirit che promuove la discussione di neuroteologia, neuroetica, tecno-spiritualità e stati alterati di coscienza. Il membro del consiglio dell'IEET George Dvorsky, buddista praticante, scrive e fa frequentemente podcast da un punto di vista razionalista, transumanista e buddista, e ha vinto un premio quest'anno come curatore di uno dei migliori blog buddisti.

I tre hanno deciso di lanciare il progetto per promuovere la discussione sull'impatto che la neuroscienza e le neurotecnologie emergenti avranno sulla felicità, la spiritualità, la libertà cognitiva, il comportamento morale e l'esplorazione degli stati mentali meditativi ed estatici.

Per conoscere più in dettaglio il punto di vista del transumanesimo buddista, faremo riferimento a un articolo intitolato *What is Buddhist transhumanism?* A firma di Mike LaTorra, apparso sulla prestigiosa rivista *Theology and Science*. LaTorra (2015) comincia col dire che «ridurre la sofferenza e aumentare la felicità sono obiettivi comuni al buddismo e al transumanesimo», chiarendo però che molto dipende da come definiamo i termini chiave inclusi in questa frase.

L'autore rimarca, innanzitutto, che sia il buddismo sia il transumanesimo si differenziano dalla filosofia intesa come disciplina intellettuale, poiché entrambi puntano a sviluppare e applicare soluzioni pratiche per ridurre la sofferenza e aumentare la felicità. Tanto il buddismo quanto certe versioni della filosofia transumanista aspirano non solo a una diminuzione relativa della sofferenza, ma persino alla sua eliminazione in senso assoluto. Naturalmente, c'è una differenza sostanziale tra buddismo e transumanesimo non buddista. Il primo insegna che la sofferenza può essere completamente eliminata attraverso una corretta pratica spirituale, culminando nel Nirvana, uno stato di completa liberazione, mentre il secondo presume che attraverso la tecnologia sia possibile raggiungere uno stato perfetto, inteso come una forma di esistenza fisica o virtuale molto prolungata e piacevole. LaTorra (2015) chiarisce che «i transumanisti buddisti non rifiutano categoricamente quest'ultima prospettiva, ma la considerano un conseguimento inferiore, non quello definitivo.

Tale conseguimento sarebbe, nella migliore delle ipotesi, una forma di miglioria, caratterizzata da condizioni che per loro stessa natura possono portare solo soddisfazioni temporanee (anche se relativamente durature)». Insomma, una terapia non esclude l'altra, ma quella spirituale conserva uno status superiore rispetto a quella tecnologica.

L'autore procede poi con l'esposizione per sommi capi della dottrina buddista. Considerando che esistono molte varianti di questa religione, cerca di coglierne gli elementi essenziali. Per cominciare, ricorda il primissimo insegnamento di Siddhārtha Gautama, meglio conosciuto come Buddha ("lo svegliato" o "l'illuminato"). L'insegnamento, trasmesso dal fondatore in forma orale e codificato in forma scritta soltanto due secoli più tardi dai suoi discepoli, consiste innanzitutto nelle cosiddette Quattro Nobili Verità: (1) Esiste la sofferenza; (2) C'è una causa della sofferenza; (3) La sofferenza può avere fine; (4) Gli insegnamenti del Buddha (il Nobile Ottuplice Sentiero) conducono alla fine della sofferenza. Non entriamo nel dettaglio degli approfondimenti successivi di questi quattro postulati, da parte dello stesso Siddhārtha Gautama e dai suoi seguaci.

Il Nobile Ottuplice Sentiero, che riguarda le discipline della mente, è stato così riassunto da Damien Keown (2003):

> (1) Retta visione: accettazione dei principali insegnamenti buddhisti, come le Quattro Nobili Verità.
>
> (2) Retta intenzione: avere una visione positiva e una mente libera da desiderio, malanimo e crudeltà.
>
> (3) Retta parola: utilizzare il linguaggio in modi positivi e produttivi.
>
> (4) Retta azione: seguire i Precetti (regole morali che variano a seconda delle scuole buddhiste, ma includono sempre almeno i seguenti cinque: [1] non uccidere o fare del male agli esseri viventi; [2] non prendere ciò che non è stato dato; [3] evitare cattiva condotta sessuale; [4] non dire falsità; [5] non assumere intossicanti).
>
> (5) Retto sostentamento: evitare professioni che causano danno agli altri, come la produzione di armi.
>
> (6) Retto sforzo: dirigere la mente verso obiettivi religiosi e stati mentali salutari.
>
> (7) Retta consapevolezza: essere sempre consapevoli di ciò che si sta facendo, pensando e provando.

> (8) Retta concentrazione: sviluppare l'attenzione focalizzata necessaria per entrare nei vari stati di meditazione.

La meditazione è fondamentale nel processo di illuminazione e ne esistono almeno quaranta tipi diversi elaborati dallo stesso Buddha. I precetti dell'Ottuplice Sentiero sono in parte morali, vale a dire diretti a produrre anche il benessere degli altri (1-5), e in parte prudenziali, cioè rivolti principalmente a generare il proprio benessere (6-8). In realtà, la distinzione non è così netta, per via della struttura cosmica cui fanno riferimento i buddisti. L'autore la riassume con queste parole:

> Il buddismo, come altre religioni dell'India, afferma le dottrine del karma e della rinascita. Le tue azioni attuali influenzeranno la tua vita presente e la tua successiva vita dopo la morte, così come le tue azioni precedenti a questa nascita hanno influenzato le circostanze e gli eventi della tua vita attuale. Condurre una vita morale (i primi cinque aspetti del Nobile Ottuplice Sentiero) porta a una vita migliore adesso e a una rinascita migliore. Tuttavia, il Buddha non ha limitato il suo insegnamento a quest'obiettivo. Una rinascita migliore è un miglioramento relativo, una forma di migliorismo, ma non la fine permanente della sofferenza. Per raggiungere quest'ultima, bisogna porre fine alla rinascita del tutto. Gli ultimi tre aspetti del Nobile Ottuplice Sentiero sono il modo per raggiungere questo fine. (LaTorra 2015)

In sintesi, c'è una differenza fondamentale tra il semplice miglioramento e la trascendenza perfetta, tra una rinascita migliore e la completa liberazione dal peso dell'incarnazione. A questo punto, sapendo di rivolgersi prevalentemente a un pubblico occidentale, LaTorra sente la necessità di chiarire che il Nirvana non coincide con l'annichilimento o annientamento personale. Gli occidentali, che siano atei o cristiani, sono molto attaccati al proprio corpo e lo considerano un elemento essenziale della propria identità. Non dimentichiamo che i cristiani non credono soltanto all'immortalità dell'anima, già presente nel paganesimo indo-europeo, ma anche alla resurrezione della carne, in continuità con certe forme di giudaismo. Proprio questo è il motivo per cui si registra una simpatia spontanea fra i buddisti e i transumanisti che sperano nel *mind uploading*. Entrambi giudicano il corpo meno importante della mente. E, di converso, c'è una spontanea repulsione da parte di molti cristiani – perlomeno di quelli che hanno un'idea molto carnale dell'Aldilà – all'ipotesi che si possa vivere come avatar disincarnati in un computer.

I fraintendimenti riguardo al Nirvana sono nati perché Siddhārtha Gautama ha affrontato la questione attraverso il metodo apofatico, ossia ha detto che cosa la condizione perfetta dell'essere non è, piuttosto di dire in positivo che cos'è. Ma, come sottolinea ancora LaTorra (2015), «il Buddha comprese questo errore di interpretazione e dichiarò ripetutamente (nei Sutra del Canone

Pali, come l'Alagaddupama Sutta e il Yamaka Sutta) che non insegnava l'annientamento».

Veniamo ora ai rapporti con il transumanesimo. L'aspetto più originale dell'articolo di LaTorra è che trova il punto di contatto tra le due dottrine nell'opera del matematico americano Franklin Merrell-Wolff (1887–1985), il quale vanterebbe una primogenitura anche nella coniazione del termine "transumanesimo". L'avrebbe inventato nel 1939, anche se lo scritto che lo contiene è rimasto inedito per trentaquattro anni e ha visto la luce soltanto nel 1973, sedici anni dopo il più noto conio di Julian Huxley.

Dopo la Prima guerra mondiale, Merrell-Wolff frequentò gruppi di sufi e praticò lo yoga, ma si trattò soltanto di tappe di un percorso spirituale durato complessivamente vent'anni e culminato, nel 1936, in quella che egli stesso definì «la transizione ineffabile». LaTorra (2015) ricorda che, a partire da quel giorno e nel corso del mese successivo, Merrell-Wolff visse una trasformazione spirituale sempre più profonda, identificata nelle tradizioni orientali con il *Bodhi* (risveglio o illuminazione). Secondo il suo stesso resoconto, l'esperienza del Nirvana, o della coscienza trascendentale, modificò radicalmente la sua visione del mondo e la sua vita.

Sul piano teorico, Merrell-Wolff rifiutò l'idea che tutta la coscienza fosse necessariamente condizionata dal tempo, come sostengono altre correnti filosofiche. Egli osservò che tale affermazione non è suscettibile di dimostrazione e costituisce pertanto un postulato metafisico. Muovendo da un postulato di segno opposto, sostenne quindi l'esistenza di una Coscienza Radice non condizionata dal tempo. Il matematico non negava che la coscienza umana, in quanto tale, fosse temporalmente condizionata; per evitare fraintendimenti precisò piuttosto che la coscienza sottratta al tempo appartiene al "transumano" o al "non umano". Ne concludeva che trascendere i limiti della coscienza umana e giungere a una comprensione più o meno completa dei fattori che la limitano rientra nelle possibilità dell'essere umano.

Secondo LaTorra, l'essenza del transumanesimo buddista sarebbe racchiusa in una metafora proposta da Merrell-Wolff. L'autore paragona infatti la coscienza a uno spettro continuo, analogo a quello delle onde elettromagnetiche, all'interno del quale la condizione umana rappresenterebbe soltanto una particolare banda o "ottava". Ne consegue che la coscienza e l'identità personale potrebbero, almeno in linea di principio, spostarsi da un livello all'altro. Da questa premessa deriva la sua definizione di transumanesimo:

> [S]ono più che disposto a considerare l'umano come semplicemente una fase nella coscienza, a patto che non venga affermato dogmaticamente che sia impossibile per la coscienza e l'auto-identità fluire da una fase all'altra. Sulla base di tale definizione, questa filosofia non sarebbe un contributo all'Umanesimo, ma al Transumanesimo. (Merrell-Wolff 1973, 122)

Dopo aver concluso che Merrell-Wolff è il vero progenitore intellettuale e spirituale del transumanesimo buddista, LaTorra arricchisce la sua ricostruzione con una serie di brevi profili biografici, presentando vita e opere di nove transumanisti buddisti (che diventano dieci se si include lo stesso autore). Oltre ai già menzionati James Hughes e George Dvorsky, protagonisti insieme a lui del progetto Cyborg Buddha, il primo esempio è David Pearce, cofondatore della WTA insieme a Nick Bostrom. Pearce non si autodefinisce buddista, ma l'abolizione della sofferenza mediante le biotecnologie costituisce il principio cardine della sua filosofia. Sarebbe, pertanto, un buddista implicito, in virtù del suo programma abolizionista, esposto in The Hedonistic Imperative. Seguono il filosofo Mark Walker, il *mind hacker* e fondatore del sito Buddhist Geeks Vincent Horn, il maestro di meditazione Kenneth Folk, il fisico Daniel Ingram, lo iamatologo croato Hokai Sobol e il maestro di yoga e Zen Gary Weber.

L'osservazione partecipante converge con questa ricostruzione e restituisce anche uno spaccato del modo in cui tali idee circolavano nei dibattiti informali del movimento. Ricorreva infatti frequentemente, negli ambienti transumanisti, l'affermazione: «Non c'è bisogno di promuovere il transumanesimo in Oriente, perché gli asiatici sono transumanisti naturali». Pur nella sua evidente iperbolicità, questa battuta coglie probabilmente un elemento reale. Le grandi tradizioni religiose e filosofiche dell'Asia – buddismo, induismo, giainismo, taoismo e altre ancora – tendono infatti a identificare la persona con la coscienza, l'anima o il principio spirituale piuttosto che con il corpo fisico, concepito come una realtà transitoria o uno strumento temporaneamente abitato dal sé.

In questa prospettiva, il corpo può risultare più facilmente modificabile mediante interventi tecnologici, protesi, impianti cibernetici o altre forme di potenziamento, senza che ciò venga necessariamente percepito come una violazione dell'identità personale. La questione decisiva non è tanto la modificazione del corpo in sé, quanto il suo possibile contributo al progresso spirituale dell'individuo.

Diversa è, almeno in parte, la situazione nelle tradizioni cristiane. Da un lato, il cristianesimo condivide con il platonismo l'idea che la persona non si esaurisca nella corporeità; dall'altro, attribuisce al corpo una dignità particolare, poiché esso è creato da Dio e destinato alla resurrezione. Per questa ragione, il potenziamento tecnologico può essere percepito come una forma di amministrazione responsabile del dono ricevuto oppure, al contrario, come un'indebita appropriazione di prerogative che appartengono al Creatore. La diversa valutazione dipende dall'antropologia teologica di riferimento.

Per il buddista, invece, il problema assume contorni differenti. Non esiste un Dio creatore al quale rendere conto delle modificazioni apportate al corpo, mentre l'obiettivo ultimo consiste nel liberarsi dal ciclo delle rinascite. In tale

prospettiva, il prolungamento della vita può essere interpretato come un'opportunità per approfondire la pratica spirituale, sviluppare la compassione, acquisire maggiore consapevolezza o completare un percorso interiore che altrimenti rimarrebbe incompiuto. Non è neppure da escludere che una vita molto più lunga favorisca una più intensa esperienza dell'impermanenza e dell'insoddisfazione (*dukkha*), rafforzando così l'aspirazione al *nirvāṇa*. In altre parole, una vita molto più lunga potrebbe favorire quella condizione esistenziale di chi giunge alla morte "sazio della vita" o "stanco della vita", rendendo così più agevole sottrarsi al ciclo delle rinascite[11]. Tecnologie di potenziamento cognitivo, interventi biomedici o persino impianti cibernetici potrebbero, in questa prospettiva, essere considerati strumenti utili al perfezionamento spirituale piuttosto che ostacoli ad esso.

Transumanisti pagani e panteisti

Il quinto gruppo più numeroso è quello che fa riferimento al paganesimo. Ai partecipanti che si sono esplicitamente identificati come "transumanisti pagani" (2%) possono essere ragionevolmente accostati anche i panteisti (1%), anche se nel questionario costituiscono una categoria distinta. Sebbene panteismo e paganesimo non siano concetti equivalenti, il panteismo rappresenta una componente rilevante di numerose tradizioni religiose precristiane e neopagane. Basti pensare che già nell'antichità autori come Plinio il Vecchio identificavano esplicitamente l'universo con la divinità («Mundum et hoc quodcumque nomine alio caelum appellare libuit, cuius circumflexu teguntur cuncta, numen esse credi par est», *Naturalis Historia*, II, 1), una concezione che sarebbe risultata difficilmente conciliabile con la netta distinzione tra Creatore e creazione propria delle religioni monoteistiche abramitiche.

Tuttavia, partendo dal solo sondaggio non possiamo dire nulla di preciso sugli elementi dottrinali a fondamento di questo connubio, perché esistono molti tipi di paganesimo e rispondenti non specificano a quale orientamento facciano riferimento. In questo insieme rientrano, infatti, le religioni tradizionali indoeuropee (greca, romana, celtica, norrena, slava, ecc.), che sono poli-

[11] Max Weber (1976, 621–622) osserva che nelle società preindustriali era relativamente più facile morire «sazi della vita», poiché gli orizzonti dell'esistenza erano più circoscritti e una persona poteva realisticamente sperimentarne gran parte. La modernità industriale, al contrario, moltiplica incessantemente le possibilità di esperienza, conoscenza e realizzazione, rendendo pressoché impossibile esaurirle nell'arco di una normale vita umana. Da questo punto di vista, il prolungamento della vita potrebbe essere interpretato come una risposta alla crescente sproporzione tra la durata dell'esistenza e l'espansione delle opportunità offerte dalla civiltà moderna. Weber aggiunge tuttavia che si può ancora morire «stanchi della vita», soprattutto quando essa si svolge entro la «gabbia d'acciaio» della razionalizzazione, della competizione economica e della burocrazia.

teistiche e fedeli alla terra, quanto i culti misterici ed ermetici, lo gnosticismo, il platonismo e il neoplatonismo che aprono la strada a una visione trascendente e a un "monoteismo pagano", o ancora i culti animistici africani e americani.

Accanto a queste tradizioni storiche si sono sviluppati anche movimenti pagani moderni. Uno dei più importanti è la Wicca, una religione incentrata sulla natura, che pone l'accento sull'armonia con il mondo naturale, sulla venerazione congiunta di una Dea e di un Dio Cornuto e sulla pratica della magia. Nata in Inghilterra nella prima metà del XX secolo e diffusasi a partire dagli anni Cinquanta, è oggi presente soprattutto nei paesi occidentali.

Tuttavia, qualcosa di più sul transumanesimo pagano si può desumere dall'osservazione partecipante. Negli ultimi decenni i culti tradizionali europei hanno conosciuto una certa rinascita e, fra i transumanisti, non mancavano persone che si autoidentificavano come odinisti, seguaci del *Cultus Deorum Romanorum*, oppure "ellenisti", secondo la definizione della religione greco-romana elaborata da Giuliano l'Apostata[12].

Nell'orizzonte culturale del paganesimo classico, del resto, il rapporto con la tecnica e con il potenziamento umano appare generalmente meno conflittuale che nella tradizione biblica. I miti di Prometeo e di Dedalo non presentano infatti la tecnica come un male in sé né come una sfida sacrilega al Creatore, bensì come una forza ambivalente, capace di produrre tanto progresso quanto distruzione, a seconda dell'uso che ne fa l'uomo. La vicenda di Icaro costituisce soprattutto un ammonimento contro l'imprudenza e l'eccesso, non una condanna dell'invenzione tecnica in quanto tale. Dedalo trae, infatti, profitto dalla costruzione delle ali artificiali. Analogamente, il mito di Prometeo ricorda il prezzo che può accompagnare la conquista del sapere, il furto del fuoco divino, ma presenta al tempo stesso il titano come benefattore e creatore dell'umanità. In questa prospettiva, il perfezionamento delle capacità umane tende a essere percepito come uno sviluppo delle potenzialità proprie dell'uomo più che come una trasgressione dell'ordine divino (Campa 2013).

Per coloro che hanno selezionato la categoria "pagano o animista" in quanto aderenti a concezioni neopitagoriche o neoplatoniche riconducibili all'ellenismo giulianeo valgono, almeno in parte, considerazioni analoghe a quelle formulate a proposito del buddismo. Per i platonici, infatti, la filosofia

[12] Il termine greco *Hellenismos* (Ἑλληνισμός), che in precedenza indicava soprattutto la grecità o il modo di vivere dei Greci, è utilizzato da Giuliano nella *Lettera al sacerdote Arsacio* (*Epistola* 84 Bidez = *Letter* 89 Wright, 362 d.C.) per designare la religione tradizionale greco-romana nel suo complesso. L'imperatore non si riferisce ai soli culti tradizionali, ma a un sistema religioso unitario che integra culto degli dèi, filosofia neoplatonica, etica, sacerdozio, filantropia ed educazione. Per questo motivo molti studiosi ritengono che Giuliano sia stato il primo autore a impiegare *Hellenismos* come denominazione della religione pagana (Smith 1995; Boin 2020).

consiste nel prepararsi alla morte, ossia nell'acquisire quella capacità di pensiero astratto che sola può garantire la permanenza nell'Iperuranio dopo la morte ed eventualmente consentire una scelta ponderata del corpo nel quale reincarnarsi. Incapaci di sostenere un'esistenza puramente spirituale, le anime appetitive e irascibili si gettano nel primo corpo disponibile, anche quello di una pianta o di un animale. In questa prospettiva, il prolungamento della vita può essere interpretato come un'opportunità per disporre del tempo necessario a sviluppare un'adeguata maturità filosofica.

Se si considera inoltre l'importanza attribuita dagli antichi Greci alla cura e al perfezionamento del corpo, testimoniata dagli insegnamenti di figure quali Pitagora, Socrate e Platone, l'accostamento al transumanesimo appare, sotto questo profilo, persino più convincente che nel caso del buddismo. Il dualismo fra anima e corpo, infatti, non impediva di attribuire al corpo un rilevante valore etico ed educativo: esso costituiva lo strumento attraverso il quale l'anima si formava e si preparava al proprio destino ultraterreno.

Un discorso parzialmente diverso riguarda invece i panteisti. Se la natura coincide con il divino, anche le capacità tecnologiche dell'uomo appartengono pienamente all'ordine naturale e non si contrappongono ad esso. Da questa prospettiva, l'ingegneria genetica, la robotica e le altre tecnologie di potenziamento possono essere interpretate come espressioni delle medesime dinamiche evolutive che hanno condotto alla comparsa dell'Homo sapiens. L'istinto di conservazione e di sopravvivenza accomuna infatti la quasi totalità delle specie viventi. Così come il castoro costruisce dighe, gli uccelli intrecciano i propri nidi e numerosi animali modificano attivamente l'ambiente circostante per aumentare le proprie probabilità di sopravvivenza e di riproduzione, l'uomo sviluppa strumenti sempre più sofisticati, fino ad arrivare alle biotecnologie, alla nanotecnologia e all'intelligenza artificiale. Anche tali realizzazioni possono dunque essere interpretate come manifestazioni della natura stessa e, in una prospettiva panteista, del principio divino che in essa si esprime. In questa prospettiva, il potenziamento tecnologico dell'uomo non rappresenta una ribellione contro la natura, ma una delle modalità attraverso cui la natura continua la propria evoluzione.

Non si può naturalmente escludere che alcuni rispondenti abbiano selezionato questa categoria richiamandosi non già a tradizioni religiose pagane o neopagane, bensì al panteismo filosofico di Baruch Spinoza o ad altre concezioni monistiche della divinità. Il sondaggio, infatti, non consente di ricostruire il significato soggettivo attribuito dai rispondenti alle categorie utilizzate. È istruttivo notare che Elon Musk – frequentemente indicato come esponente, o quantomeno simpatizzante, del transumanesimo, pur senza essersi mai pubblicamente identificato con tale movimento – in un podcast ha dichiarato: «Credo nel Dio di Spinoza», riecheggiando la celebre professione di fede di Albert Einstein: «Credo nel Dio di Spinoza, che si rivela nell'armonia

di tutto ciò che esiste, non in un Dio che si preoccupa del destino e delle azioni degli uomini» (Fridman 2023, 52:55).

La presenza, tutt'altro che trascurabile, di orientamenti pagani e panteisti conferma ulteriormente come il transumanesimo organizzato abbia costituito sin dalle origini uno spazio di convergenza tra tradizioni religiose e filosofiche estremamente eterogenee.

Transumanisti ebrei

Le persone che si autoidentificano come ebree rappresentano una componente quantitativamente modesta ma sorprendentemente stabile del movimento transumanista organizzato. Pur trattandosi di una minoranza numerica, il gruppo merita una trattazione separata per almeno tre ragioni: la sua significativa presenza nel movimento, se rapportata alla consistenza della popolazione ebraica mondiale; il carattere apparentemente paradossale di tale presenza, alla luce della diffusa ostilità che il transumanesimo incontra in ampi settori del giudaismo contemporaneo; e il contributo particolarmente rilevante offerto da numerosi intellettuali di origine ebraica allo sviluppo del pensiero transumanista.

Nei tre sondaggi della WTA, gli ebrei oscillano infatti intorno all'1% del campione, mentre nell'indagine campionaria di Terasem raggiungono l'1,8%. Considerati isolatamente, questi valori potrebbero apparire modesti. Tuttavia, acquistano un significato diverso se rapportati alla distribuzione religiosa della popolazione mondiale. I cristiani costituiscono circa un terzo dell'umanità (oltre 2,6 miliardi di persone) ma rappresentano circa il 10% degli aderenti al movimento transumanista. Gli ebrei, pur rappresentando soltanto lo 0,2% della popolazione mondiale (circa 15-16 milioni di persone), costituiscono invece tra l'1 e il 2% del campione. In termini relativi, la loro presenza nel movimento risulta dunque significativamente superiore a quella attesa.

Il dato appare ancora più indicativo se si considera il bacino di reclutamento del movimento. La maggior parte dei rispondenti proveniva infatti dagli Stati Uniti e dall'Europa, aree caratterizzate da una netta prevalenza storica del cristianesimo e da una presenza ebraica quantitativamente molto ridotta. Questa presenza relativamente elevata non può pertanto essere spiegata semplicemente sulla base della composizione religiosa delle popolazioni da cui provenivano gli aderenti.

Tale presenza appare, almeno a prima vista, paradossale. Una parte consistente della letteratura rabbinica contemporanea considera infatti il transumanesimo incompatibile con i principi fondamentali del giudaismo. Danni Schiff, in un articolo tratto dal volume *Judaism in a Digital Age: An Ancient Tradition Confronts a Transformative Era*, afferma senza troppi giri di parole che, proprio in virtù della concezione ebraica dell'uomo, il giudaismo deve

rifiutare il transumanesimo. A sostegno della propria tesi richiama, fra l'altro, il racconto biblico della Torre di Babele, interpretandolo come la riaffermazione del limite invalicabile che separa la condizione umana da quella divina: «Il rifiuto da parte di Dio della Torre di Babele può essere inteso come una netta linea di demarcazione tra la sfera divina, eterna e imperitura, e quella umana: la sfera della vulnerabilità, nella quale nessun nome è permanente e nessuna costruzione dura per sempre» (Shiff 2023a, 2023b).

Sulla stessa lunghezza d'onda, Elliot N. Dorff (2014, 101) chiarisce che «il corpo appartiene a Dio. Fonti ebraiche sostengono che Dio possiede tutto, compresi i nostri corpi. Dio ci presta i nostri corpi per tutta la durata della nostra vita, e noi li restituiamo a Dio quando moriamo. Di conseguenza, né gli uomini né le donne hanno il diritto di governare i loro corpi come vogliono; poiché Dio ha creato i nostri corpi e ne è il proprietario, Dio può e afferma il diritto di limitare il modo in cui usiamo i nostri corpi secondo le regole articolate nella legge ebraica».

La storica delle religioni Hava Tirosh-Samuelson ha dedicato diversi contributi al rapporto fra giudaismo e transumanesimo. Già nel 2012, anno in cui veniva realizzata la rilevazione della Terasem Movement Foundation, interpretava il transumanesimo come una forma di fede secolarizzata (*Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith*). Negli anni successivi la sua analisi si è progressivamente radicalizzata, dapprima mettendo in luce i paradossi della spiritualità tecnologica nell'articolo *The Paradoxes of Transhumanism: Technological Spirituality or Techno-Idolatry?* (2021a), quindi arrivando a sostenere esplicitamente che «il transumanesimo è un caso contemporaneo di ciò che la Bibbia intendeva come "idolatria", vale a dire la venerazione di artefatti creati dall'uomo come se fossero divini. Invece di renderci "umani migliori" e "perfezionare" il nostro mondo, l'idolatria transumanista ha reso noi e il nostro mondo meno giusti, meno equi e meno premurosi. Il danno inflitto dalla massiccia tecnologizzazione della vita richiede un esame critico del transumanesimo» (Tirosh-Samuelson 2021b).

Gabe Greenberg (2019), ricostruendo il dibattito rabbinico sulle implicazioni teologiche dell'alterazione della creazione mediante le biotecnologie, osserva che numerosi commentatori tradizionali convergono su un medesimo principio: «tutti questi *m'forshim* concordano su una tesi centrale: Dio ha creato il mondo con una struttura organizzativa particolare e regolata, e intendeva che quella struttura persistesse indefinitamente. In particolare, i tipi e i generi di specie, di piante e animali, di batteri e alghe, che Dio ha creato sono destinati a esistere, nella loro forma attuale, per sempre».

Lo stesso Greenberg precisa tuttavia che questa non è l'unica posizione presente nella tradizione ebraica. Accanto a tale orientamento, egli richiama infatti una diversa linea interpretativa, riconducibile ad autori come Rabbi Akiva e Rabbi Yosi, che attribuisce un valore positivo alla creatività umana

e alla partecipazione dell'uomo al perfezionamento della creazione. Il suo contributo non conclude pertanto che il giudaismo sia necessariamente incompatibile con l'ingegneria genetica, ma mostra piuttosto come una parte significativa della tradizione rabbinica abbia sviluppato argomenti suscettibili di essere impiegati in senso critico nei confronti del progetto transumanista.

Pur riconoscendo l'esistenza di autorevoli eccezioni, la letteratura rabbinica appare nel suo complesso orientata a considerare problematico già l'organismo geneticamente modificato. A maggior ragione, essa esprime forti riserve nei confronti dell'idea di un essere umano geneticamente modificato. Come nota Elimelekh Y. Perl (2022), «la capacità potenziata di questi "post-umani" è essenzialmente l'obiettivo finale di tale ricerca. Questa è forse la forma più eclatante di tentativo di alterare la Creazione Divina, poiché gli esseri umani sono le uniche creazioni di Dio create "a Sua immagine". La ricerca intensamente secolarista di trasformare gli uomini in dèi è diametralmente opposta all'imperativo dell'Ebraismo di migliorare l'uomo per servire al meglio Dio».

Il confronto fra cristianesimo e giudaismo suggerisce che le differenti reazioni al transumanesimo possano dipendere anche dalla diversa storia intellettuale delle due tradizioni. Pur condividendo fondamentali presupposti biblici e una comune concezione dell'uomo come creatura di Dio, cristianesimo e giudaismo hanno sviluppato modalità differenti di dialogo con la filosofia greca. A partire dai Padri della Chiesa, il cristianesimo ha progressivamente assimilato categorie platoniche, aristoteliche e neoplatoniche, aprendo la strada a elaborazioni teologiche nelle quali l'evoluzione dell'uomo e della creazione poteva essere interpretata in termini dinamici. Come abbiamo visto, in epoca contemporanea, questa linea di sviluppo trova una delle sue espressioni più note nel pensiero di Pierre Teilhard de Chardin e dei suoi continuatori. Nel giudaismo contemporaneo, almeno nella letteratura esaminata in questo studio, un analogo tentativo di interpretare il potenziamento umano entro una cornice teologica favorevole risulta invece assai meno sviluppato.

Tuttavia, qualcuno che ha selezionato la categoria "Jewish"[13] nel questionario c'è e, come abbiamo visto, in termini relativi la percentuale è tutt'altro che irrilevante. Il paradosso è soltanto apparente. A differenza delle altre categorie religiose presenti nel questionario, "Jewish" può designare non soltanto un'appartenenza religiosa, ma anche un'identità etnica, culturale o familiare. Di conseguenza, una persona può definirsi ebrea pur dichiarandosi atea,

[13] Va osservato che, a differenza della maggior parte delle altre opzioni presenti nel questionario ("Christian", "Muslim", "Buddhist", "Hindu"), impiegabili in inglese sia come sostantivi sia come aggettivi, "Jewish" è prevalentemente un aggettivo. Nel presente contributo l'aggettivo "Jewish" è stato tradotto con il sostantivo "ebreo", poiché in italiano, quando ci si riferisce a una persona, questa è la forma d'uso corrente. Gli aggettivi corrispondenti sono invece "ebraico" e "giudaico".

agnostica o aderendo a un'altra tradizione religiosa. Nulla impedisce pertanto che alcuni partecipanti al sondaggio abbiano selezionato questa categoria pur non condividendo gli orientamenti del giudaismo religioso o aderendo a concezioni sostanzialmente secolari della vita.

Questa interpretazione trova indirettamente conferma anche nel fatto che numerosi intellettuali di origine ebraica hanno svolto un ruolo di primo piano nello sviluppo del pensiero transumanista o sono stati frequentemente associati a tale corrente, pur senza rappresentare il giudaismo religioso. Tra questi si possono ricordare Ray Kurzweil, Hans Moravec, Marvin Minsky, Gregory Stock e Martine Rothblatt, fondatrice del movimento Terasem. Le loro traiettorie intellettuali suggeriscono che l'identità ebraica, intesa in senso etnico e culturale, possa coesistere con orientamenti filosofici anche molto distanti dalle posizioni prevalenti nel giudaismo rabbinico contemporaneo. Tra gli intellettuali di origine ebraica che hanno contribuito alla fase fondativa del movimento figura anche Eliezer Yudkowsky, tra gli estensori delle prime *Transhumanist FAQ*. Tuttavia, negli anni successivi, la sua attività si è progressivamente concentrata sul problema dell'allineamento dell'intelligenza artificiale e sui rischi esistenziali connessi allo sviluppo di una superintelligenza artificiale. Anche alcuni intellettuali ebrei che non si identificano con il movimento transumanista, come Yuval Noah Harari, hanno contribuito in modo significativo alla riflessione sul possibile superamento dell'Homo sapiens, confermando come il dibattito sull'evoluzione tecnologica dell'uomo sia particolarmente vivace anche in ambienti culturali ebraici secolarizzati.

Restando sul piano strettamente religioso, va rilevato che il giudaismo, come ogni altra grande tradizione religiosa, è tutt'altro che monolitico e comprende correnti teologiche e giuridiche profondamente diverse – ortodosse, ultraortodosse, conservative, riformate e ricostruzioniste – che non sempre condividono le medesime valutazioni etiche nei confronti delle nuove tecnologie.

Non a caso, esistono anche tentativi esplicitamente religiosi di conciliare giudaismo e transumanesimo. A titolo di esempio, si può prendere in esame la tesi di laurea di Elisha Shalom Breton (2023) che critica l'accusa di tecnoidolatria mossa da Tirosh-Samuelson, indaga «sulle radici ebraiche del transumanesimo rinvenibili nei discorsi normativi ebraici» e, infine, guarda al futuro, «dando accesso ad alcune delle nuove ricerche accademiche che usciranno dall'Human Augmentation Research Network (HARN) nei mesi e negli anni a venire».

La sovrarappresentazione degli ebrei nelle indagini della WTA e di Terasem non appare dunque incompatibile con la prevalente ostilità del giudaismo religioso nei confronti del transumanesimo, una volta riconosciuto che l'autoidentificazione ebraica può rinviare non soltanto a un'appartenenza confessionale, ma anche a un'identità etnica o culturale.

Altri transumanisti religiosi

Siamo giunti al termine del nostro percorso. Umanisti religiosi, unitariani universalisti, induisti, musulmani e altri gruppi religiosi minori rappresentano complessivamente una quota quantitativamente limitata del movimento transumanista organizzato. Nella *survey* della WTA del 2007, gli umanisti religiosi e gli unitariani universalisti si attestano intorno al 2% ciascuno, mentre induisti e musulmani oscillano tra l'1 e il 2%. Con una percentuale inferiore allo 0,5%, i raeliani corrispondono, in termini assoluti, a due o tre rispondenti. Non appare pertanto opportuno soffermarsi analiticamente su ciascuno di questi gruppi, sia per la loro esiguità numerica, sia perché alcuni di essi pongono questioni classificatorie che meritano piuttosto una breve riflessione metodologica.

La categoria degli "umanisti religiosi" (2%) costituisce un esempio significativo di tali difficoltà. Essa richiama infatti un dibattito classico della sociologia della religione relativo alla definizione stessa di religione. Secondo le cosiddette definizioni sostantive, una religione presuppone la credenza in una realtà trascendente o comunque sovrumana, quale un Dio personale, una pluralità di divinità o una dimensione ultraterrena dell'esistenza. È questa, con alcune differenze, l'impostazione adottata da studiosi quali Edward B. Tylor (1871), Rudolf Otto (1923) e Mircea Eliade (1959). Le definizioni funzionali, sviluppate soprattutto a partire da Émile Durkheim (1995) e successivamente da Thomas Luckmann (1967) e Clifford Geertz (1993), pongono invece l'accento sulle funzioni sociali, simboliche e identitarie svolte dalla religione, indipendentemente dall'esistenza di un riferimento esplicito al soprannaturale.

Da questa seconda prospettiva possono essere considerate religiose anche forme di umanesimo secolare dotate di rituali, simboli e comunità di appartenenza, come il Culto della Ragione promosso durante la Rivoluzione francese da Jacques Hébert e Pierre-Gaspard Chaumette o la Religione dell'Umanità elaborata da Auguste Comte. Dal punto di vista delle definizioni sostantive, tali movimenti risultano invece difficilmente classificabili come religioni, poiché tendono a sostituire la trascendenza con l'umanità stessa o con ideali esclusivamente immanenti. La semplice autoidentificazione come "umanista religioso" non consente dunque di stabilire quale concezione della religione fosse effettivamente sottesa alle risposte raccolte dalla rilevazione campionaria.

Considerazioni analoghe valgono per gli unitariani universalisti (2%). L'Unitarian Universalist Association si definisce infatti come una comunità pluralista priva di un credo obbligatorio. Sul proprio sito ufficiale afferma esplicitamente che i suoi membri possono identificarsi come atei, agnostici, buddisti, cristiani, induisti, umanisti, ebrei, musulmani, pagani o appartenenti ad altre tradizioni religiose e filosofiche. L'elemento unificante non è dunque

una specifica dottrina religiosa, bensì un insieme di valori condivisi e una comune appartenenza comunitaria. Anche in questo caso, la semplice autoidentificazione non permette di ricostruire il retroterra religioso o filosofico dei singoli aderenti.

Un'ultima categoria merita di essere segnalata. Nel questionario della WTA del 2007 circa l'1% dei rispondenti (all'incirca otto persone su un campione di 760 intervistati) indicò infatti "Transhumanist" come propria identità religiosa. Proiettata sull'intera base associativa della WTA (4.642 membri), tale percentuale corrisponderebbe a qualche decina di aderenti. Il dato è significativo perché i documenti ufficiali della World Transhumanist Association hanno sempre definito il transumanesimo come una filosofia e un movimento culturale, non come una religione. Ciò non ha tuttavia impedito ad alcuni esponenti del movimento di svilupparne una lettura esplicitamente religiosa. Fra i principali sostenitori di questa interpretazione figura il fisico Giulio Prisco, già direttore esecutivo della WTA, il quale ha sostenuto che il transumanesimo possa non solo conciliarsi con le religioni tradizionali, ma anche costituire esso stesso una forma di religione. L'esposizione più organica di questa tesi si trova nel volume *Tales of the Turing Church: Hacking Religion, Enlightening Science, Awakening Technology* (Prisco 2020).

Nel complesso, queste categorie residuali confermano che il panorama religioso del transumanesimo organizzato era già, nella sua fase genetica, notevolmente più articolato di quanto suggeriscano le classificazioni più diffuse. Esse mostrano inoltre come le modalità di autoidentificazione degli aderenti non coincidessero necessariamente con le appartenenze religiose tradizionali, rendendo necessario un approccio interpretativo attento ai diversi significati attribuiti ai concetti di religione, spiritualità e trascendenza.

Conclusioni

La presente ricerca consente di formulare alcune conclusioni di carattere sociologico sulla composizione religiosa del movimento transumanista organizzato nella sua fase fondativa.

La prima conclusione riguarda il significato attribuito dai primi aderenti al progetto transumanista. I documenti fondativi del movimento pongono infatti l'accento soprattutto sulla radicale estensione della vita (*radical life extension*), più che sul conseguimento di una vera e propria immortalità tecnologica. La presenza, tutt'altro che marginale, di persone che continuavano a identificarsi con tradizioni religiose nelle quali la speranza di una vita ultraterrena occupa una posizione centrale conferma che una quota significativa dei primi transumanisti interpretava tale obiettivo in senso letterale, come prolungamento della vita biologica, senza ritenere che esso dovesse necessaria-

mente sostituire le tradizionali concezioni religiose dell'aldilà. L'osservazione partecipante suggerisce inoltre che anche una parte dei transumanisti atei e agnostici condividesse una lettura analoga, guardando con maggiore prudenza alle ipotesi più speculative della Singolarità tecnologica e del *mind uploading*. L'aspirazione maggiormente condivisa nel primo transumanesimo appare dunque quella del conseguimento di una radicale estensione della vita umana, mentre l'immortalità tecnologica immanente costituiva soprattutto il programma di una corrente minoritaria del movimento, spesso identificata con il singolaritarianismo.

La seconda conclusione riguarda la composizione religiosa del movimento. Le indagini campionarie mostrano che il transumanesimo organizzato delle origini era caratterizzato da un pluralismo filosofico e religioso ben più ampio di quanto suggeriscano molte rappresentazioni correnti. L'apertura verso una pluralità di visioni del mondo, esplicitamente affermata nei documenti programmatici della World Transhumanist Association, trovava infatti riscontro nella concreta composizione del movimento, nel quale convivevano atei, agnostici, cristiani, buddisti, ebrei, musulmani, induisti, pagani e aderenti ad altre tradizioni religiose e filosofiche. Le rappresentazioni del transumanesimo come fenomeno intrinsecamente ateo, rigidamente tecnocratico o unanimemente orientato alla conquista dell'immortalità risultano pertanto sociologicamente riduttive.

La terza conclusione riguarda il rapporto fra transumanesimo e religione. L'analisi svolta suggerisce che il significato attribuito al potenziamento umano dipenda in misura rilevante dall'orizzonte antropologico ed escatologico entro cui esso viene interpretato. Le medesime tecnologie possono infatti essere concepite come strumenti di cooperazione con il disegno divino, come mezzi per favorire il cammino verso l'illuminazione, come occasioni di perfezionamento filosofico oppure come espressioni dell'evoluzione della natura stessa. Il rapporto tra transumanesimo e religione non può quindi essere ridotto a un semplice conflitto fra fede e tecnica, ma richiede un'analisi delle differenti concezioni della persona, del corpo e del destino ultimo dell'uomo.

Più in generale, i risultati ottenuti suggeriscono che le nuove tecnologie non determinano di per sé una particolare visione del mondo, ma vengono continuamente reinterpretate all'interno di tradizioni filosofiche e religiose preesistenti. Comprendere questi processi di rielaborazione culturale costituisce una delle principali sfide della sociologia della religione e della storia delle idee nell'epoca dell'intelligenza artificiale e del potenziamento umano.

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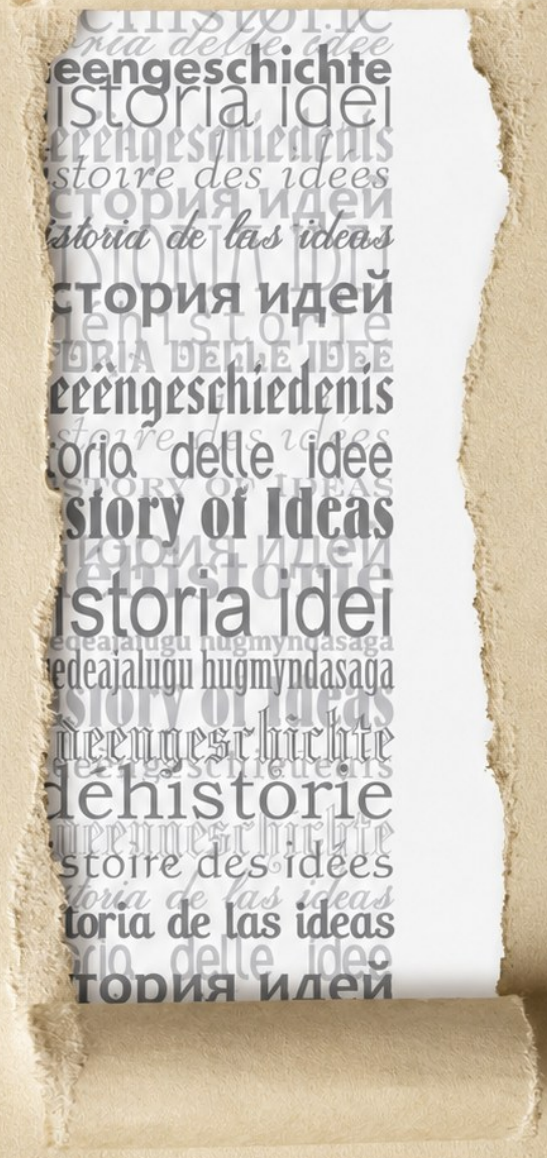

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