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Hegel reading Rumi: The limitations of a System
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During the 1820s Goethe formulated his concept of *Weltliteratur*. It should be a synthesis of all literature that transcended borders and languages. Within the concept of *Weltliteratur* lies both a sincere interest in literatures from other traditions, and a wish to integrate every literary work into one single History and System.[1] The will to Systems was widespread in the milieu were Goethe wrote. One of those who took up Goethe's ideas and developed them further was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel was maybe the greatest system builder in all of philosophy. And he shared Goethe's interest in Persian poetry.

On a few instances in his writings and lectures Hegel mentions the Persian Muslim mystic and poet Mawlana Jelal ed-Din Rumi with appreciation.[2] Nevertheless he never proceed with a more elaborate discussion on Rumi or Persian poetry. In this paper I will try to understand Hegel's ambivalent appreciation of Muslim poetry and his effort to fit it into his System.

The Epoch of the Oriental world in history was long passed, according to Hegel's philosophy of World history. The Greek and the Roman world, which in its turn left room for the Christian-Germanic world, had sublated it. The Judaic might be seen as a remnant of the Oriental world, but the Arabic was undoubtedly something new. How, then, shall we understand the place of the Arabic, Muslim, world in a Hegelian World history?

In the Orient there is no particularity and hence no development. In consequence with this view Hegel concentrates his attention on 'Muhammedanism' on the religious principle. According to Hegel's understanding Islam is something like a Judaism cut lose from its limitation to one single

[1] See for example Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Reflexionen über allgemeine Weltliteratur", in *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens, Münchner Ausgabe,* Carl Hanser Verlag, München, 1996, *Band 18:2, Letzte Jahre 1827-1832*, pp. 178 and *Band 19, Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens/ Johann Peter Eckermann*, p. 207.

[2] Muslim names are often difficult to render in an unambiguous way. In the classical Arabic custom a persons name consists of several parts. The person has an *ism* that is a personal name; a *kunya* saying (s)he is the mother/father of so-and-so, a *nasab* showing the relation to the person's ancestors and a *laqab*, a nickname. Rumi was writing in Persian, with slightly different traditions and transcriptions, there he is often called Molavi. He lived in Turkish-speaking areas and might have spoken Turkish in his everyday life; in Turkey he is called Mevlana. If one wishes to be over meticulous his name can be rendered as Mawlana abu-Walad Muhammad Djelal al-Din inb-Baha al-Din Sultan al-Ulama ibn-Husayn ibn-Ahmad Khatibi al-Bahlki er-Rumi. Hegel calls him Dschelaleddin Rumi or Dschelal ed-Din Rumi. Annemarie Schimmel, one of the foremost experts on Rumi in Europe, usually calls him Mawlana Rumi – so will I. See Schimmel, Annemarie, *Islamic names*, *Islamic surveys*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1995, chapter I.

people.[3] From Hegel's description of Islam it is clear that his disposition of World history and the Oriental Epoch isn't built in relation to Islam.[4] So, it is very important to emphasise that when Hegel speaks about the Orient and the Oriental it does not really include the Arabic and Islamic cultures. The Oriental for Hegel refers to the cultures that precede the Greek world. But when we come to Hegel's *Lectures on Aestethics* it becomes a bit confusing, on the surface it may seem as if the Symbolic form of art presented there is limited to the art of the Orient. But it isn't that simple; Hegel counts also Muslim poetry and Christian mysticism as Symbolic. How does that make sense?

According to Hegel's lectures on fine art we find the Oriental in the symbolic form of art. In the Oriental symbolic art there is no particularity, says Hegel. There the Idea is still indeterminate and therefore unshapable, while the natural objects are thoroughly determinate in their shape. The Idea seems then to be outside of the concrete and since it doesn't have any other possibility it restlessly tries to express itself in all its objects. Still, the Idea remains above this multiplicity of shapes which are unable to express it, and the only way for the Oriental art to express the Idea is thus through the Sublime. To capture this incompatibility in the Symbolic form of art Hegel talks about the artistic pantheism of the East which he means can ascribe absolute meaning to even the most worthless objects. It is only temporarily and partly that the Idea becomes particular in pantheism, and this single object that expresses the Concept is totally without endurance. [5] The Idea jumps from object to object without ever coming to full expression. Therefore, the pantheistic art becomes "bizarre, grotesque, and tasteless", says Hegel.[6]

To be good, Art has to be something concrete, but not just any concretion. If we for example say about God that he is the One, the Supreme Being as such, we have thereby only enunciated a dead abstraction of the sub-rational Understanding, says Hegel. Such a god that has not been understood in his concrete truth cannot give any content to Art. That is why "the Jews and the Turks", cannot represent their god in Art in the positive manner that the Christians can. Only in Christianity has God set himself forth in his truth as concrete: as person and as subject, and more closely defined as spirit. It has been made explicit for the religious apprehension what he is as

[3] Schulin, Ernst, *Die Weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, *Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 2,* Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958, pp. 115. Also Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vorlesungen 4: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, T. 2: Die bestimmte Religion* Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985, pp. 337.
[4] Schulin, *Weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients,* pp. 121.
[5] Hegel concept of the Concept can be understood as "the principle which is realised and objectified in the Idea". But on many instances the terms are used almost interchangeably, as synonyms. But when there is a distinction, the Concept is more abstract than the Idea. The Idea is the unity of Concept and reality. Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on history*, *Routledge philosophy guidebooks*, London, Routledge, 2000, pp. 51.
[6] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Werke 13: Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I,* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 107.

spirit: "a Trinity of Persons, which yet at the same time is self-aware as *one*." Therefore there is universality and particularization in Christianity, but also a soothing unity with itself. And only such a higher unity is concrete, according to Hegel.[7]

The lack in a work of art therefore doesn't have to depend on the shortcomings of an unable artist; it can just as well spring from shortcomings in its form or content. In the pictures of the Orientals the dim spirit always remains formless, or it gets an untrue form. They can never reach true beauty since their thought – their mythological ideas – does not constitute any absolute content. The deeper the truth of its content and thought, the better the work of art can express true beauty, according to Hegel.[8]

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Behind this analysis of the Oriental art presented above lies, of course, the whole Hegelian System that guides his perception of the development of the Spirit. The development of the Spirit goes, as everything else in Hegel, through three steps. Fist is the position – in aesthetics the symbolic form of art, in History the Oriental world – universality. Universality is negated in particularity, which makes it possible for Art to come into being in the Classical form of Art that belongs to the Greek and Roman world. But it is only with the negation of the negation that universality takes its place in the form of particularity, and individuality is born in the Romantic form of art and the Germanic world. The love for All in Oriental pantheism has here according to Hegel been turned into the individual love that we can recognise for example in Dante's love for Beatrice, a love that at the same time isn't just particular but in Dante is transformed into religious love.[9] The true content of the Romantic form of art is an absolute inwardness, its form the spiritual subjectivity that grasps its own independence and freedom.[10] Hegel writes on the romantic form of art:

> In diesem Pantheon sind alle Götter entthront, die Flamme der Subjektivität hat sie zerstört, und statt der plastischen Vielgötterei kennt die Kunst jetzt nur *einen* Gott, *einen* Geist, *eine* absolute Wissen und Wollen ihrer selbst mit sich in freier Einheit bleibt und nicht mehr zu jenen

[7] Ibid., pp. 100. The quote from Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Aesthetics I: lectures on fine art*, trans. T. M. Knox Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 70.
[8] Hegel, *Ästhetik I,* p. 105.
[9] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Werke 14: Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II,* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, p. 185.
[10] Ibid., p. 129.

> besonderen Characteren und Funktionen auseinanderfällt, deren einziger Zusammenhalt der Zwang einer dunklen Notwendigkeit war.[11]
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> (In this Pantheon all the gods are dethroned, the flame of subjectivity has destroyed them, and instead of plastic polytheism art knows now only *one* God, one spirit, one absolute independence which, as the absolute knowing and willing of itself, remains in free unity with itself and no longer falls apart into those particular characters and functions whose one and only cohesion was due to the compulsion of a dark necessity.[12])

In a discussion on the conditions for action where Hegel describes the individual self-reliance of the Heroic age (*Heroenzeit*) that is best embodied in the Homeric heroes, Hegel says that the same self-reliant heroes also can be found in the old Arabic poetry as well as in Firdausi's *Shahnameh*. There we can meet individuals with the power to reshape the world, something that was only possible before social laws became more all embracing. The Romantic poetry contains the same reshaping ability, only more inward, more in the realm of thought than in concrete action. But in both places it is the same shaping power that Hegel sees and appreciates.[13] Further on in the lectures when Hegel discusses the different genres of poetry he also mentions the *Mu'allaqat* of Hammad al-Rawiya – a collection of pre-Islamic poetry compiled in the 8th century. In this discussion Hegel elaborates more on the Heroic virtues that he also finds in this poetry whose content is reminiscent of the Spanish chivalry. Hegel declares that this is the first example of real poetry in the Orient, poetry about solid and independent individuals. But Hegel finds that this original heroism slowly vanishes with the conquests of "the Muhammedan Arabs" and is replaced by instructive fables, cheerful proverbs and the stories we know from the *Thousand and one Nights*.[14]

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In Hegel's lectures on religion of 1824 Islam is presented as the opposite of Christianity. According to Peter Hodgson Islam lack a place in Hegel's system of determinate religions. Islam does not represents an earlier phase in the progress of religious consciousness that has been, or even can be, sublated to a higher level. In Hegel's lectures on religion Islam is presented as a challenge to Christianity in the Modern world.[15] The fact that Islam has no place in Hegel's system of development is also visible in his lectures on the philosophy of World history where

[11] Ibid., p. 130.
[12] Hegel, *Aesthetics I*, p. 519.
[13] Hegel, *Ästhetik I*, pp. 236.
[14] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Werke 15: Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III,* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 398.

the expansion and flourishing of the Muslim world in the centuries after Muhammad is dealt with in total on three of the 520 pages that the lectures cover in Felix Meiner Verlag's edition.[16] Here it is emphasised that the abstract god of Islam leads to fanaticism. Islam is not a part of the Oriental world that Hegel finds so interesting and that has given Christianity to the Romans and that has been an important – but passed – phase in World history.[17]

Islam hates everything that is concrete. Its god is the absolute One in front of which man has neither goal of his or her own nor any particularity. The interests of man therefore remains unreflected and they are given over to fanaticism since no practical goal has any importance. But man is practical and active, states Hegel, and that leads the Muslims to the goal of making all people worship the One, and therefore "the Muhammedan religion" is in all importance fanatic. The Muslim God has no content and is not concrete; therefore the concrete historical content of Jesus life (Jesus as the son of God) is lost in Islam. This is the religion of the Enlightenment, declares Hegel. Man cannot cope with such abstractness, the subjective reflection takes power and fills the abstract with its own arbitrariness and will, in the same way as the Enlightenment that did not believe in the possibility to meet Truth and instead believed in the wishes of a subjective self-consciousness.[18]

The most common statement on Islam from Hegel is that God in Islam is only understood as the abstract category of the One and that the Muslims therefore become fanatic.[19]

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In one of the last paragraphs of the last section of the third part of the third book of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* of 1827 Hegel writes on pantheism, first the Indian tradition, which he doesn't judge as any real monotheism; if you want to reach the Real – consciousness of the One – after having lost yourself in the Indian division, and see the most beautiful purity and sublimity you have to turn to the 'Mohammedans'. When "the excellent Dschelaleddin Rumi" puts special emphasis on the souls unity with the One as love, this spiritual

[15] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Lectures on the philosophy of religion III: The consummate religion*, trans. Peter C. Hodgson Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 242.
[16] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vorlesungen 12: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, Berlin 1822/1823* Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1996, pp. 458.
[17] Ibid., p. x.
[18] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vorlesungen 5: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, T. 3 Die vollendete Religion*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984, pp. 172.
[19] For example, see Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Lectures on the philosophy of religion II: Determinate religion*, trans. Peter C. Hodgson Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987, p. 156, p. 158 and p. 483. Hegel, *Lectures on religion III*, p. 218 and pp. 243.

oneness rises itself over that which is limited and common, states Hegel. From what he says, he "cannot keep from" quoting almost an entire page from Rumi in Friedrich Rückert's translation, as an example of the lyrical representation of the One. In Hegel's interpretation, Rumi gives an explanation of the natural and spiritual where the shallowness and vanity of immediate nature is separated and absorbed into the empiric and worldly spiritual. Hegel continues by comparing Rumi's pantheism with another form of pantheism – supported by the Eleats and Spinozists -, stating that the Absolute never gets any true Reality in Islam. The problem is that the Muslims stay in the abstract, instead of moving on and defining the substance as subject and spirit.[20]

Hegel calls medieval Persia – the World of the Divan – the highest representation of the Oriental Principle and the highest View (*Anschauung*) of the One.[21] Hegel's main sources of knowledge on the orient seems to have been Herder's, Friedrich Schlegel's and Goethe's works together with the English orientalist magazine *Asiatic Researches*, published since 1788. It has also been shown that Hegel owned a copy of Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's translation of the *Dîvân* of Kahjeh Shams-ed-Din Mohamad Hafez, but there is no evidence that he was familiar with Hammer-Purgstall's much acclaimed *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*. It seems as if Goethe's *West-östlischer Divan* is the most important source for Hegel's discussion on Persian poetry.[22] As seen above, Hegel also mentions Friedrich Rückert's "admirable translation" of Mawlana Rumi in the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*.[23]

In the lectures on fine art it is rather Abdul Kasim Mansur Firdausi's *Shaname* that is the most prominent example of Persian poetry. But Firdausi isn't presented as a Muslim poet, in Hegel's reading he is rather like Homer, a poet who has described the active heroes of the pre-Islamic era.[24] The Zoroastrian art also becomes – under the heading of 'unconscious symbolism" – subject of a more thorough discussion than what the Muslim poetry is rendered in the section on the Symbolic form of art.[25] Even in the lectures on the philosophy of religion is it clear that Hegel's interest in the Persian culture is focused on its pre-Islamic history and the Manichean and

[20] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Gesammelte Werke 19: Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1827)*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1989, pp. 409. „dem fortrefflichen Dschelaleddin Rumi", Hegel writes on p. 410. The same section is also found in Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Gesammelte Werke 20: Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992, pp. 562.

[21] "die höchste Verklärung des orientalischen Prinzips, die höchste Anschauung des Einen." Quoted in Stemmrich-Köhler, Barbara, "Die Rezeption von Goethes West-Östlichem Divan im Umkreis Hegels," in *Kunsterfahrung und Kulturpolitik im Berlin Hegels: Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 22*, ed. Otto Pöggeler & Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Bonn, Bouvier, 1983, p. 389.

[22] Gethmann-Seifert, Annemarie & Stemmrich-Köhler, Barbara, "Von Hammer, Goethe und Hegel über Firdausi," in *Welt und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik: Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 27*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert & Otto Pöggeler, Bonn, Bouvier, 1986, pp. 295.

[23] „der bewundernswürdigen Kunst der Übertragung des Herrn Rückert" in Hegel, *Enzyklopädie 1827*, p. 410n.

[24] Hegel, *Ästhetik I*, p. 245, also Hegel, *Ästhetik III*, p. 399.

[25] Hegel, *Ästhetik I*, pp. 420.

Zoroastrian religions.[26] The pre-Islamic Persia fits much better into Hegel's historical schemata since it can be subsumed into the time of the Oriental world and the Symbolic form of art. The historical schemata seems to lead Hegel and decide what he can make room for in his discussions, even though he several times shows his appreciation of the Muslim Persian poetry. But since it doesn't fit in the System in remains an anomaly that cannot be given any place of its own.

The rather meagre words Hegel have to say about Arabic philosophy in his lectures on the history of philosophy are not found under the heading "Oriental philosophy" (where classical Chinese and Indian philosophy is treated rather extensively), but within the realms of "Medieval philosophy". The only philosopher to appear with name and that is being made subject for some discussion in Hegel's presentation of Arabic philosophy is the Jewish Aristotelian Abu Amran Musa, whom Hegel talks about under the Latin name of Moses Maimonides. Some two thirds of the presentation of Arabic philosophy (which in all covers no more than just over three pages) is concerned with a presentation of Maimonides book *Dalalat al-Ha'irin* (*A Guide for the Perplexed*). But Hegel does not mention Aristotle; instead he is mostly concerned with the negative theology of Maimonides. This fits well with Hegel's belief that there is no particularity in the Arabic culture. The fact that he picks out a Jewish philosopher rather than one of the contemporary Muslims entertaining a similar view is another sign for Hegel's tendency not to distinguish between the two Abrahamitic religions.

But Hegel does stress the importance of the Arabs in the mediation of Aristotle to the Christian world, but he doesn't give any room for the developments of Aristotelian themes in Arabic

[26] Hegel, *Die bestimmte Religion*, pp. 504, also Gethmann-Seifert & Stemmrich-Köhler, "Von Hammer, Goethe und Hegel über Firdausi" .

philosophy.[27] Here as well, we are given Hegel's standard interpretation of the Arabic and Muslim tradition:

> Der Pantheismus oder Spinozismus ist der Standpunkt, die allgemeine Ansicht der orientalischen, türkischen, persischen, arabischen Dichter, Gehschichtschreiber oder Philosophen.[28]
>
> This pantheism, or Spinozism, if you like to call its so, is thus the universal view of Oriental [and Turkish, Persian, Arabian] poets, historians and philosophers.[29]

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"The Muhammedan poetry" is, as all other parts of the Muslim and Arabic tradition, pantheist, according to Hegel. In the lectures on fine art he sorts this poetry under the heading of the symbolism of the sublime, which is the transmitting link between unconscious and conscious symbolism. Hegel opens this section with a description of the pantheism I have sketched from other parts of his work. What he especially emphasise in this context is the fact that true pantheism only can be expressed in poetry, since painting would be stuck in the specific objects

[27] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vorlesungen 9: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, T. 4: Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1986, pp. 17. It may be mentioned that Hegel turns Maimonides biography around by saying that he was born in Egypt and later moved to the Moorish Spain, when it really was the other way around. The chapter on Oriental philosophy is found in Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vorlesungen 6: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, T. 1: Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie; Orientalische Philosophie*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994, pp. 365-400. An important problem which I have tried to avoid so far is made urgent here. Hegel gave all of his lectures at more than one time. Most of them are then collected from pieces of Hegel's own manuscripts and notes taken by different students. This means that there is no standard text for the different lectures. The manuscript used in the Suhrkamp edition and for the English translation of the lectures on the history of philosophy differs from the ones used for the critical edition published by Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke for Felix Meiner Verlag, which I have used. The Felix Meiner critical edition is based on the lectures given at the Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin in the winter semester of 1825/26. In the edition compiled by Hegel's student Karl Ludwig Michelet, that can be found in the Suhrkamp Werke 18-20 and that was used for Haldanes English translation, al-Kindi (Alkendi), al-Farabi (Alfarabi), Ibn Sina (Avicenna), al-Ghazzali (Algazel) and Ibn Rushd (Averroës) are mentioned by name as examples of the commentators of Aristotle, all in the space of one single page. (Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Werke 19: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1979, p. 523, also Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Lectures on the history of philosophy 3: Medieval and modern philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane & Frances H. Simson, *Bison Books*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, pp. 34.) Michelet compiled his version from several sources ranging from Hegel's notebooks for lectures in Jena 1805/06, to various student notes from lecture series of the 1820s. Michelet made all these different sources into one single text largely based on the Jena notebooks of 1805/6 with expansions taken from all the later sources. See Beiser, Frederick C., "Introduction to the Bison book edition," in *Lectures on the history of philosophy 1: Greek philosophy to Plato*, ed. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel & E. S. Haldane, *Bison Books*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, pp. xxxi.

[28] Hegel, *Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, p. 18.

[29] Hegel, *Lectures on the history of philosophy 3: Medieval and modern philosophy*, p. 31. The parenthesis is my own translation of the parts missing between the different editions.

which are continuously transcended and left by the One.[30] After this short introduction follows a section on Indian poetry that is found to be monotonous, empty and wearisome by Hegel.[31]

"The Muhammedan poetry" on the contrary has developed pantheism in a higher and more subjectively free manner, foremost the Persian poets. The Muslim poets see Divinity everywhere and they therefore give up their own selves. Since they see God in everything they can experience the immanence of the Divine in their own expanded and emancipated inner self. From this experience "there grows in him that serene inwardness, that free good fortune, that riotous bliss" that Hegel finds characteristic of the Oriental "who, in renouncing his own particularity, immerses himself entirely in the Eternal and the Absolute, and feels and recognizes in everything the picture and presence of the Divine."[32] Hegel holds that a life so saturated by God *borders* on mysticism, and lifts Mawlana Rumi forward as the foremost example of this pantheism-bordering-on-mysticism.

In the centre of attention for Rumi's poetry stands the love of God. In the sublimity that Rumi embody even the most beautiful object serves the sole purpose of celebrating God as the creator of all things. In pantheism on the other hand, Hegel continues, the immanence of God in objects makes the pantheist give an independent glory of its own to mundane, natural and human existence. When the pantheist's heart is filled with honour he will feel the same love for all the earthly objects as he does for the God he sees in all of them. In pantheism, everything is as praiseworthy and lovely as anything else.[33]

The Western Romantic deep feeling of the heart displays a similar absorption in nature's life, Hegel finds. But on the whole, and especially in the North, it is rather unhappy, unfree and longing, or the subjectivity remains shut in upon itself and therefore becomes sentimental. The Orientals, on the other hand, and especially the Muslim Persians, are characterised by free and happy warmth and cheerfully sacrifices their entire selves to God and everything praiseworthy. But in this very sacrifice they obtain a free substantiality that they can preserve even in relation to

[30] Hegel, *Ästhetik I*, pp. 470.
[31] Ibid., p. 473.
[32] "jene hitere Innigkeit, jenes freie Glück, jene schwelgerische Seligkeit, welche dem Orientalen eigen ist, der sich bei der Lossagung von der eigenen Partikularität durchweg in das Ewige and Absolute versenkt und in allem das Bild und die Gegenwart des Göttlichen erkennt und empfindet." Ibid., p. 474.
[33] Ibid , pp. 474. In a chapter on the different genres of poetry Hegel also mentions the 12th century poets Nizami Ganjavi (Nisami) and Shayk Muslih ud-Din Sa'di Shirazi (Saadi) as forerunners of Rumi. Hegel, *Ästhetik III*, p. 400.

the surrounding world. "If the Oriental suffers and is unhappy, he accepts this as the unalterable verdict of fate and therefore remains secure in himself", Hegel believes.[34]

If we turn to the actual poetry, Hegel says that the Persians writes a lot about flowers and jewels, but even more often they write about the rose and the nightingale. It is very common that the nightingale is described as the bridegroom of the rose, Hegel says and quotes Hafez. Hegel holds that there is a difference in the way "we" and the Persians talk about roses, nightingales or wine. When "we" talk about these things we do it in a more prosaic fashion, the rose serves as an adornment and we allude to the nightingales beautiful singing just as beautiful singing. With the Persians the rose is no image or mere adornment, on the contrary, it appears to the poet as ensouled and the poets spirit is absorbed in the soul of the rose, Hegel states.[35]

So, Rumi is explicitly called a pantheist by Hegel, in the same fashion as he is presented in the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*. At the same time Rumi and Hafez are said to border on mysticism, and in the explication of their poetry they are presented in opposition to pantheism. The very short space of the lectures on fine art devoted to "Muhammedan poetry" ends with a discussion of Goethe's *West-östlischer Divan* which comes forth as the syllogistical conclusion of that section.[36]

Maybe one can claim that Hegel sees Goethe as the one who, within the romantic form of art, reinterprets the Persian symbolic art with an individual voice and thereby makes it conscious in-and-for-itself?[37] Is Goethe, then, an individualised Rumi? To me it is a way to understand the appreciation Hegel shows for the Persian poets. They aren't as pantheistic as they ought to be to fit in the System, they transgress their historical space, and in many ways it seems as if Hegel in them recognises much of what will return in a higher form in the Romantic form of art. And to be fruit for the negation of the negation, they have to be a part of the position.

I find Hegel to be a very sensitive and open reader with great curiosity and appreciation for many things in that which he calls Oriental art. But Islam is no Oriental religion according to Hegel's

[34] Hegel, *Aesthetics I*, p. 369. "Wenn der Morgenländer leidet und unglücklich ist, so nimmt er es als unabänderlichen Spruch des Schicksals hin und bleibt dabei sicher in sich" Hegel, *Ästhetik I*, p. 475.
[35] Hegel, *Ästhetik I*, p. 476
[36] Ibid., p. 477.
[37] A thing-in-it-self has no specific character according to Hegel, only potentiality. A thing can have a specific nature only through its relation with other things.. To be for-itself means to have self consciousness. A child can be rational in-itself, as a potential, but not for-itself, as consciousness. Only that which is present in-and-for-itself is whole and complete. Michael Inwood, *A Hegel dictionary*, London, Blackwell, 1992, pp. 133.

System. It is most of all a rival to Christianity and as such it represents fatalism and fanaticism. When Rumi and his colleagues are presented as Persian poets they can be seen as an integral part of the pre-Islamic Persian culture that Hegel gives wide attention as an instance of the Oriental world. By making the Muslim poets Persian and pantheistic they can be made part of a harmless category in which Hegel is very interested. But he can only express his appreciation for Rumi by denying that he is a Muslim thinker. We have seen above the positive, yet ambivalent, image Hegel has of Rumi. How is he usually seen, then? Let me start by way of the mystical tradition in Islam that Rumi is an important part of.

The Encyclopaedia of Islam presents Islamic mysticism under the Arabic name *tasawwuf*. The guiding principles of the theory and practice of the Sufis are according to them *the Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (the example of the Prophet). The Sufis value "inner knowledge" higher than the "visible knowledge" of the *Hadiths* (traditions) or in *fiqh* (jurisprudence). But visible knowledge was regarded as indispensable for a life with God. From the third century of Islam (the 10th century A. D.) the Sufis were socially accepted in most parts of the Muslim world. Respect for *sharia* (the religious law) saturates most Sufi orders, according to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*.[38]

Hegel wants to turn the Sufis into pantheists, in contrast to the fanatic Muslims. This is an interpretation that has been – and still is – popular in the West. Sufism is presented as anti-authoritarian and in opposition to qu'ranic Islam. From the way in which Hegel speaks about pantheism and fanaticism it almost seems as if the Persian poets have a religion of their own. Islam creates political problems, Sufism create music and poetry. In emphasising the emancipative and alternative role of the Persian (Sufi) poets we indirectly strengthen an image of Islam as suppressive and dictatorial. The cultural expressions within Islam that are seen as valuable are separated and presented as being apart form the true spirit of the religion.

Some commentators would of course agree with Hegel that there are traits of pantheism in Sufism, but the more openly pantheistic poets and thinkers have never been accepted as a part of the wide tradition in the way Rumi and Hafez has been. From Hegel's presentation it is impossible to understand how Abdul Rahman Jami in the 15th century could call Rumi's magnum opus the *Mathnavi* for "the Qur'an in the Persian tongue".[39] In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* a man like Mansur al-Hallaj (who was sentenced to death for expressing the pantheistic "*Ana ul Haqq*" (I am the Truth)) is described as an eccentric within Sufism.[40] It might be more appropriate to describe

[38] "Tasawwuf" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam: new edition*, Leiden, Brill, 1998, vol X, pp. 313-334.
[39] Schimmel, Annemarie, "Mawlana Rumi: yesterday, today, and tomorrow," in *Poetry and mysticism in Islam: the heritage of Rumi: Giorgio Levi Della Vida conferences, 11*, ed. Georges Sabagh, Amin Banani & Richard Hovannsian, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 5.
[40] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 313.

Rumi and Hafez – and Hegel! – as panentheists, a position asserting that God includes the universe as *a part* of his being.[41]

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The purpose of this paper has not been to show that Hegel does not understand Rumi. It is rather the opposite I want show. As we have seen, Hegel appreciates Rumi and his Persian colleagues and reads them with great interest. In his short analysis of their poetry Hegel lets himself into he arrives at a position where he puts them in contrast to the pantheism he otherwise ascribes to them. But in the Hegelian System mysticism is reserved for Christianity and only a poet with individuality is able to say what Rumi and his colleagues comes so close to in Hegel's reading. I wonder if they only come close, or if it is the system of religions that makes them unable to tell him what he almost hears? As have been pointed out above, Islam is not an Oriental religion in Hegelian terms, in the same manner as Christianity it comes after the Classical period and sometimes is presented as a rival of Christianity.

If Hegel's historical System wasn't so focused on the unilinear development of the Spirit, then the Persian poets could be read as another form of individualised love for the Absolute. Maybe then Rumi could be read as a brother of Dante, and Hegel would be able to see that Persian poetry is more symbolic than what he thinks. The nightingale is in fact an image showing the affection of the lover to his beloved, and the rose is not an object for the pantheistic love of Hafez; the Rose represents, among other things, God, the most fragrant of all. Picturing the nightingale as the bridegroom of the rose is not an example of arbitrary pantheism, it is a well-established individualised image for the poet's love of God.[42] As such it seems to me to fit better under Hegel's description of the romantic form of art. Hegel's aesthetic experience doesn't always seem to fit in his own System. The foreign poetry is thereby subsumed and miniaturized as it is transformed into a piece of *Weltliteratur*.

[41] In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on panentheism it is said "The fact that Hegel wished to give something like equal emphasis, however, both to absoluteness and to relativity in the divine being or process suggests that his goal is identical with that of the panentheists, even though he is perhaps more fairly regarded as a Pantheist of an ambiguous type." in "Pantheism: German Idealism" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (31/10 2002); available from http://search.eb.com.

[42] Ghomi, Haideh, *The fragrance of the rose: the transmission of religion, culture, and tradition through the translation of Persian poetry*, Göteborg, Department of Religious Studies, 1993, pp. 211. And Schimmel, Annemarie, *A two-colored brocade: the imagery of Persian poetry*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1992, pp. 178.

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