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Abstract of Ph.D. Thesis on:

"Mikhail Naimy: Some Aspects of his Thought  
as revealed in his Writings" by H. M. A.  
Dabbagh. (School of Oriental Studies).  
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In more than one respect, Mikhail Naimy is a unique Arab writer: through his education in Russian schools in the Lebanon and Palestine and later in Tzarist Russia, he became so familiar with Russian language and literature that he came to write poetry in that language. Later on he emigrated to the United States where he graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in Arts and another in Law. Naimy lived in the United States for over twenty years. There he became very familiar with Anglo-Saxon literature. His poems in English were published in several American periodicals and newspapers including The New York Times.

Mikhail Naimy is a man of innate religious feeling: born as Orthodox Christian in 1889 in the Lebanon, his wide interest in Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Muslim Sufis widened his outlook on matters concerning religion that he almost came to preach a "faith" of his own, which although broadly based on Christian teachings, came to embrace elements from almost every faith that humanity has known. It is no exaggeration to say that Naimy is one of the most influential thinkers in the Arab World, whose ideas on the question of what attitude the East should take towards Western civilization are of great importance. Naimy propagates the idea that Western civilization is corrupting to the human soul, that its materialistic attitude towards life is to be denounced and that the East should avoid adopting such a civilization. This coming from a thinker who is equally familiar with Western and Eastern cultures adds to the importance of his views, as they seem to influence a large number of younger people in the Arab World.

In addition to his views regarding religion, Naimy is one of the earliest pioneers who introduced new concepts regarding literature. His views on the meaning and aims of literature constituted a revolution in literary thinking in the Arab World, a fact which is recognized by scholars interested in the development of Modern Arabic literature.

MIKHAIL NAIMY

Some Aspects of his Thought as Revealed in his Writings.

By

Hussein Muhammad Ali Dabbagh

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts in the University  
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## Introduction

In more than one respect, Mikhail Naimy is a unique Arab writer through his education in Russian schools both in the Lebanon and Palestine and later in Tzarist Russia, he came to be familiar with Russian Literature. Very few contemporary Arab writers have had such a distinguishing feature. Living in the United States for over twenty years, he became familiar with Anglo-Saxon literature. Moreover, it was during that long stay in the States that Naimy formulated his views on Western civilization, and not just by reading about it or living for a short period in a Western society as a young student. Born an Orthodox Christian, Mikhail Naimy's beliefs came to be unorthodox; for his interest in Buddhism, Hinduism, metempsychosis and Sufism resulted in widening the horizons of his outlook that he almost came to have a "faith" of his own which embraces elements from all the great Faiths that humanity has known. Naimy's preoccupation with Man his beginnings and ends, his aims and relation with the world around him, together with his denunciation of Western civilization in a part of the world which is still dazzled by the achievements of that civilization, are other features which distinguish Naimy from other Arab writers.

Needless to say, Naimy was one of the most influential pioneers who were able to revolutionize the literary concepts of

the Arabs at the beginning of this century. Important as this aspect of Naimy's career is, it should be pointed out that it is touched upon in this study only as far as it reveals the trend of his thought which is the main subject of this work.

I would like here to express my thanks to Dr. Ralph Austin of the School of Oriental Studies of this University for his help which he extended as supervisor of this work. I am also indebted to Mr. A. Basu, Lecturer in Indian Civilization at the same School, and to Mr. Louis Allen, Senior Lecturer in French at this University for their help. Last but not least, I would like to thank Mr. Mikhail Naimy for kindly answering in writing a number of questions which I put to him in connection with his ideas, and for providing copies of some of his poems in English.

H.M.A. DABBAGH

## Chapter 1

His Life and Character.

Biskinta and Nazareth.

"I know what is happening today, and what  
passed before that yesterday,  
but as for knowing what tomorrow will bring,  
there I'm utterly blind."

Zuhair b. Abī Salmā. (1)

Mikhail Naimy was born in 1889 in Biskinta, a small village situated on Sannīn, one of the highest mountains of the Lebanon. His father, a poor and hard working farmer, emigrated to the United States in the hope of providing a better life for his family, only to return after a few years just as poor as he had been. The family, consisting then of two elder brothers besides Mikhail, was looked after by a devoted mother, who prayed for the success of her husband in words which she asked

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(1) One of the poets of al-Mu‘allaqāt, whose poetry is characterised by its moral earnestness and wisdom. The line reads in Arabic

”وَأَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْيَوْمِ وَالْأَمْسِ قَبْلَهُ وَكَتَنِي عَنْ عِلْمِ مَا فِي عَدِي عَمِّ”



the little boy to repeat before going to bed.

"Say with me my boy May God grant success to my father in America! May his touch turn sand in his hands into gold' May he return safe and sound to us ....."(1)

The boy, seeing sand all around him, wondered why his father should travel all the way to America to turn its sand into gold. "Or is it that the sand of America is different from our own? Yes, it must be!"(2)

The hardships of life in Biskinta must have added fervour to the mother's supplications. Its rugged land, stony tracks and hard winters made life a challenge for its inhabitants, who took refuge in it only to flee the tyranny of their rulers They built their simple houses of small stones dipped in clay, and made their ceilings of tree trunks covered with timber and leaves Water had to be carried in jars from a distant spring and a flickering gas lamp was their only source of light

But if the land was unyielding and the winters hard, Biskinta

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(1) Sabun, I, p 15.

(2) Ibid, p. 16.

had still a good deal to offer a healthy climate, forests of pine trees and deep valleys interspersed with patches of arable land, where wheat and corn were grown, trees and birds, rocks and mountains, all breeding a deep love for the village in the heart of the little Mikhail Naïmy "The sound of the swaying corn moved me in such a way as even the greatest orchestras could hardly hope to do to the soul of a great lover of music."<sup>(1)</sup>

This great attachment to nature strikes one as a major factor in the moulding of the character and personality of Mikhail Naïmy. But this attachment seems to have been of a highly individualistic nature which is difficult to express in words. In his autobiography, he gives a detailed description of Biskinta and al-Shakhrūb

"For of what avail is it to tell you that al-Shakhrūb is a small spot of land in the slope of Sannīn which abounds with rocks, trees, thorns and birds, when you have not lived so closely as I did to those rocks, trees and birds? Nor did you know, as I

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(1) Sab'un, I, p. 35.

did, that it throbs with life both day and night? Nor did you see it, as I did, at the break of dawn, and the flaming heat of noon and just before sunset, and in the light of the stars and the moon?"<sup>(1)</sup>

Ṣannīn, Biskinta, al-Shakhrūb, nature and its adoration, thus came to be an integral part of Mikhail Naimy's personality and thoughts. After this detailed description of his surroundings, he addresses the reader in an apologetic tone "My only aim in giving a full description (of his environment) is to make it easier for you to accompany me on this journey, which is the journey of my life. For al-Shakhrūb is one of its most important milestones."<sup>(2)</sup>

This attachment to nature was coupled with an attachment to his father, who, after returning from America "with a negligible amount of dollars",<sup>(3)</sup> returned his hand to the plough. He was a man "of pure heart and good intention, innocent in soul and tongue,"<sup>(4)</sup> who seems to have found life in America too much of

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(1) Sabʿun, I, p. 49.

(2) *Ibid*, p. 51.

(3) *Ibid*, p. 61.

(4) *Ibid*, p. 64.

a burden for him to bear. Back in his village, he took up again tilling the land, and whenever he scattered the seeds, he would cross himself and murmur, "I sow, and you provide, O Lord!"<sup>(1)</sup> Watching his father, the little Mikhail is filled with fascination, for his father's face was then "the face of a worshipper whispering the most sacred and intimate of his prayers."<sup>(2)</sup>

However, it was none other than a Giant Neighbour which was destined to change the course of the little boy's life in Biskinta for the Russians, who patronized the Orthodox Christians of the Middle East, decided to open a school in this little village up the mountains in the Lebanon, and in 1899, the school was founded. Instead of the traditional "Kuttāb", the village now had a school staffed by five male and three women teachers, and headed by a graduate of the Russian Teachers' Institute at Nazareth. The school taught Arabic and the rudiments of the Russian language, and the villagers took great pride in the new school and the great nation which had founded it. In the main hall the portraits of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife were displayed, and even the Maronites of the village were not ashamed of sending their children

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(1) Sabʿūn, I, p. 64.

(2) Ibid, p. 64.

to the Russian school. When a Russian inspector came to the village, there was great jubilation. An old shoe-maker ran after the mounted inspector shouting

"Are you the Muscovite? Long may you live!"

Little Mikhail Naimy began at the school with enthusiasm "For lessons and home-work, however excessive and complicated, had never frightened me as they had the majority of my school mates. What helped me in learning was my natural inclination to learn."<sup>(1)</sup> But he was also a quiet boy, inclined to keep to himself and shun the company of others

"In fact I used to dislike noise, shouting and quarrelling. If I ever played, I would be completely absorbed, but only for a short time, after which I would leave the playground and make my way to an isolated spot near a stream or in the shade of a pine tree, where I would be preoccupied with watching a beetle rolling a ball of dung, or an ant dragging along a grain of wheat, or a bird looking for an insect, or a small cloud sailing in the spacious blue sky above. I would draw lines or vague diagrams in the sand before me. Very often in these moments of isolation, I

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(1) Sabun, I, p. 81.

would think that I was more than one person. Often I used to address those whom I imagined to be in my company, but without raising my voice."<sup>(1)</sup>

Arabic was Mikhail Naimy's favourite subject. In an uncle's library, he avidly copied and learnt by heart expressions and phrases that appealed to him from Majma' al-Baḥrayn,<sup>(2)</sup> which he made use of at the age of eleven in a speech he gave in memory of a deceased relative.

After doing well in the elementary Russian school of Biskinta, Mikhail was to go to the Russian Teachers' Institute in Nazareth in 1902, where the best of students in the Russian schools all over the Lebanon, Syria and Palestine were sent. Accompanied by his uncle, Mikhail bids farewell to his family and makes his way to Beirut. There, for the first time, he finds himself in a city with its narrow and dirty streets swarming with people, camels, donkeys, mules, dogs and carts pulled by horses flogged by their drivers. The little boy would turn to see the turbaned heads and the veiled faces, and would say to himself: "Those must be the Muslims. Did we not hear when we were young

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(1) Sabḥūn, I, pp. 80-81

(2) A collection of Maqāmāt written by al-Shaykh Nāṣif al-Yazījī (d. 1871)

about the hatred of the Muslims for the Christians, and that they would enjoy nothing better than to spill the blood of a Christian? But here they are not molesting us and we are Christians. We would also hear that the Jews would always kill a Christian boy at every Easter to redeem their sins with his blood. But where are the Jews in Beirut? And are there Jews and Muslims in Nazareth? Surely I am in a strange world! Where are you Biskinta, and where are you Shakhrub?"(1)

The young boy boards a little steamer which takes him to Haifa, where he knows nobody. In the hustle and bustle of the port, the bewildered boy does not know what to do until a kind man approaches him, asking where he wants to go. Having told him that he wants to go to Nazareth to join the Russian Teachers' Institute, he is taken by the man to his house where he is given a meal and gets some rest, after which he is sent with a servant to the station where coaches leave for Nazareth. But these and similar events in his life were looked upon later as more than merely fortuitous.

"This teacher who picked me to study in Nazareth, and those people

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(1) Sab'un, I, p 109.

who worked for the opening of the Russian school at Biskinta, this man from Haifa and others whom I will mention later - who employed them to serve me? An who employs me to serve others? Is not there an unseen hand of which I am not aware and of which they are also ignorant? Do I not have a share, for myself and for them, in what that hand performs? And what is that share, and from whence?"<sup>(1)</sup>

In Nazareth, Mikhail Naimy was taught Russian by a Russian teacher; but Arabic was not neglected. It was there that he came to learn the Alfiyyah of Ibn Mālik,<sup>(2)</sup> and the history of Arabic literature. Half a century later, we find him expressing his regret that the new generations of Arabs are not familiar with the Alfiyyah. It is of significance that a young Christian Arab should learn by heart the line in the Alfiyyah which states:

“بُشِّرَ عَلَى الرَّسُولِ الْمُصْطَفَى وَآلِهِ الْمُسَكِّمِينَ الشَّرَفَا” (3)

which perhaps indicates that the Islamic element is essential in moulding the personality of an Arab, whether he be a Muslim or not. But if the Alfiyyah was one of the first links between a

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(1) Sab'un, I, p.114

(2) Ibn Mālik of Jaen (1273 A.D.) wrote a versified grammar. He was a well-known lexicographer and philologist

(3) "Blessing the Messenger, The Chosen One, and his household, the perfect, the honourable"



Muslim scholar and the young Mikhail Naimy, Nazareth, on the other hand, only served to enhance his Christian feeling:

"For you are here - and everywhere else in Palestine - in a world of enchantment and blessing. Wherever you walk, wherever you look, there will spring for you out of the ancient past, the phantoms of innumerable faces and events. All of these go deep into you, and the most loved among these is the face of the Master and the events of his life. What a short life that was! But how incapable Time is of folding it away and covering it with oblivion! Never forget, Oh Mikhail, that you are here in the presence of Christ!"<sup>(1)</sup>

With these words young Mikhail used to address himself, and the deep religious feeling which he carried with him from Ṣannīn grew in depth in Nazareth.

"How often I found myself, while on some picnic, withdrawing from myself and from my companions, imagining Christ and His disciples walking along the road we were walking along. Or I would imagine Him sitting alone in a state of spiritual ecstasy under that tree or by that rock".<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Ṣabḥun, I, p. 125.

(2) Ibid, p. 125.

It was in Nazareth that he believed the way the Church and the school wanted him to believe about how God created the world, Adam and Eve, and how Eve tempted Adam to eat of the forbidden tree and how thus Original Sin and death came to be. How God sent from Heaven his only begotten Son, born of a virgin, so that he would redeem the people with His precious blood. Whoever believed in Him would attain to everlasting life after death. Whoever disbelieved would have the Fire for his abode in Eternity.<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus young Mikhail Naimy believed in Christ as the Guide and the Redeemer. Finding himself in the land where Christ was born, lived, taught and suffered, he took it upon himself to visit every place that had anything to do with the life of Christ as related in the Bible. Although he had his doubts about what was said regarding this place or that, he states:

"I have never doubted the truth concerning the miracles ascribed to Christ."<sup>(2)</sup>

On a picnic to Jabal al-Ṭur (The Mount of Ascension), where Christ is said to have appeared in a halo of light, the boy spends

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(1) Sabʿun, I, pp. 126-127.

(2) *Ibid*, p 127

a night with the vision of Christ shrouded in light never departing from his heart or eyes. More than once he would leave his friends behind, walking along that mountain, imagining that the gulf of time separating him from Christ had been filled "For he was not far from me, nor was I a stranger to Him It is a feeling that admits of no definition or analysis."<sup>(1)</sup> To him the Sermon on the Mount was, and still is, "one of the noblest homilies ever uttered "<sup>(2)</sup>

To the student of Mikhail Naimy, his life in Nazareth would appear to be of immense importance as it confirmed the Christian element in his personality, which, although he came to be influenced by other philosophies and attitudes to life, remained the corner-stone<sup>ne</sup> of his character and philosophy. Moreover, it was in Nazareth that he came to be familiar with Russian literature Although he admits that he did not understand half of what he read of Crime and Punishment at the time, it was enough to kindle in him the yearning to master the Russian language and its literature It was also in Nazareth that his ideas

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(1) Sabūn, I, p. 128

(2) Ibid, p. 129

about poetry started to take shape. Abū al-‘Alā’,<sup>(1)</sup> with his philosophical poetry, seemed to have been his favourite Arab poet. He was immensely impressed with his Qasīda which begins:

“غَيْرُ مُجِدٍّ يِ مِلَّتِي وَأَعْتَقَارِي      نَوْحُ بَالٍ وَلَدَ تَرَنَّمُ شَارِي” (2)

It was this kind of poetry which attempted to fathom the meaning of life, that moved him most and perhaps remained the foundation of every qasīda he himself wrote later. He never cared for the

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- (1) Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī, the famous Arab poet, philosopher and man of letters, who lived in the tenth-eleventh centuries, is known for his pessimistic outlook on life. He believed that Fate governed all things in life, and that none was able to fathom the mysteries of life. His pessimism is well illustrated in his famous lines in which he laments his three-fold prison (his blindness, his seclusion and his soul being in a wicked body).

“أُرَاقِبُ فِي السُّدُوتِ مِنْ سُجُونِي      فَلَا تَأْتِي عَنْ الْخَيْرِ النَّبِيْتُ”  
 لِمَقْدِي نَاطِرِي وَلِزُومِ تَبِيَّتِي      وَكُؤُوبِ النَّفْسِ فِي الْجِسْمِ الْخَبِيْثِ”  
 Abu al-‘Alā’ regarded procreation as a sin, and that

destruction was the best hope for humanity. He asked that the following line should be inscribed on his grave, which shows that he lived up to his beliefs.

“هَذَا خَبَأَهُ أَبِي عَنِّي      وَمَا خَبَيْتُ عَلَى أَحَدٍ”

"This wrong was by my father done

To me, but ne'er by me to one".

- (2) "Of no avail, in my faith and belief, is the wailing of the crier, nor the chanting of the singer".

poetry or Eulogy or that which abounded in pomposity and exaggeration. This is not surprising for so sensitive a young man whose Christian beliefs rebelled against poems that described "the sword that cured the heads of those who complained of headaches."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) **Abū al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad b. Ḥussayn** (915-965 A.D.) known to fame as **al-Mutanabbī**, is considered by most Arab critics as the greatest Arab poet ever known. He sang the praises of **Sayf al-Dawla**, the prince whose capital was Aleppo. Following an estrangement between him and his patron, he went to Egypt to sing the praises of **Kāfur al-Ikhshīdī**, its ruler with whom he also fell out of favour. On the whole, European scholars do not share the Arabs' point of view on **al-Mutanabbī's** poetry as this sounds pompous and full of exaggeration to their ears. The line referred to here reads

, in Arabic  
"وَسَيْفِي كَانَتْ فِيهِ اطِّبَابٌ يُدَاوِي رُؤُسَ مَنْ يَشْكُو الصَّدَامَا"

which when translated would sound unbelievably pompous and vain.

"For my sword in the battle was a physician which cured the head of whoever complained of pain."

It is this sort of poetry, one imagines, that **Mikhail Naimy** shrank from while studying classical Arabic literature, as the pomposity and glorification of war implied in it, were both incompatible with **Naimy's** nature.

Mikhail Naimy's inclination towards solitude is also noticeable during his stay in the Nazareth school; a friend censured him for something which he had never said, which led him to decide to keep silent for ten days, after which he felt as if he had returned from a very distant journey

"For, in this period in which I abstained from talking, my imagination was enriched and my mind acquired a vision other than the vision of the eyes. After that I began to feel that although I was outwardly in harmony with my environment, there existed in me that which will always make me a stranger to it. This feeling of strangeness increased with the years until I came to live in two worlds; a world which I created of myself, and a world which other men have created for themselves. The two worlds lived side by side within me but they never became united "(1)

His feeling of being a Christian was also emphasized while in Nazareth Russian pilgrims used to come to the city for their pilgrimage, and he and his colleagues felt the strong link between themselves and the Orthodox Russians

"We were proud that they belonged to the same church as we did,

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(1) Sab'un, I, pp. 147-148.

and that there were millions of them in their country. So we were not a minority in the world, we thought to ourselves. We carried our own weight in this world and the Hereafter."<sup>(1)</sup>

But his consciousness of being a Christian did not seem to arouse in him the feeling that Christianity alone was right and that other beliefs were wrong. Talking of Paradise, of which the clergy preached, he even at that age thought that it was not a monopoly for the following of one faith, for it could embrace those who were good, whatever faith they belonged to, and that Hell, with which they threatened the bad, would also take the bad who belonged to any faith

"So why all this quarrelling? Why precipitate Doomsday to throw people into Hell before they have spent their lives in this world, and before the Trump has blown?"<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Sabun, I, pp. 150-151

(2) Ibid, p. 152.

In Russia

In 1906, the Russian Teachers' Institute of Nazareth decided that Mikhail Naimy should be given the chance to go to Russia for higher education. It was in Poltava in the Ukraine that he found himself that year, joining its Theological Seminary which was, in reality, no more ~~than a~~ secondary school with a six-year programme; the first four of which were devoted to lay studies and some theology, with the last two devoted entirely to ecclesiastical studies.

From the very beginning, the young Arab student from Biskinta decided to conform with the Russians in every respect. He intended to speak their language the way they spoke it, and to adopt their manners and traditions, sing their songs and dance their dances, but always yearning to return to Biskinta and Şannin one day. Poltava, however, was his window on a new world; his friends knew by heart poems by the great Russian poets and he felt the urge to learn more than they did. He even aspired to write poetry, short stories, plays, and to learn how to act, especially after he had been to the theatre for the first time in his life. It was there, too, that he had his first opportunity of hearing operas, watching ballet, and seeing the freedom which both sexes enjoyed. In that Ukrainian town, the young Mikhail Naimy began to compare the life that people lived



in the outside world with that which people lived in his own country.

"Being impressed with the wealth of the life of the mind, the heart and the body, I came to realise the ugliness of the plight which lay upon my country."<sup>(1)</sup>

Mikhail Naimy's diaries in Poltava are revealing as they reflect the early impact which his life in Russia had upon him. The very idea of writing his diaries came to his mind after reading the diaries of Nikitin, a Russian poet who himself was a Seminarian, and who wrote a book entitled The Diaries of a Seminarist. From these diaries we learn that he read Lermontov, a Russian poet who excelled in describing the beauties of the Caucasian mountains. But his thoughts, when reading such poems, would turn to the Lebanon

"If I were a poet, I would have chanted your beauties, Oh Lebanon, you the cradle of my youth and the focus of my thoughts

"Yes, I would have sung to your hoary peaks and  
enchanting depths  
Where I have home and kinsmen

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(1) Sabun, I, p. 176.

and where the cedar trees tell the story of the past,  
Where streams of silver flow  
and life in its simplicity is a blessing  
Where Man's hand has not mutilated beauty."<sup>(1)</sup>

He was overwhelmed with the desire to write poetry after  
reading Lermontov

"I will go along the path which my soul calls me to take. I will  
tread the path which has always tempted me since my early youth.  
It is the path of literature, and I am dedicated to it"<sup>(2)</sup> It  
was not long before he had written a poem in Russian entitled  
"The Burial of Love", which received the admiration of his friends.  
"It was not a bad poem"<sup>(3)</sup> he thought to himself. Not quite  
satisfied with the poem, he was bent on looking for a wider,  
deeper and a more worthy theme in which he would fully express  
his thoughts.

Mikhail Naimy's views on being a Christian took a new turn  
while in Poltava. The Nazareth boy who accepted literally what  
the school and the church wanted him to believe, began to think

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(1) Sab'un, I, pp. 179-180. (These lines were written in verse, and  
were Mikhail Naimy's first attempt in writing poetry in  
Russian.)

(2) Sab'un, I, p. 181.

(3) Ibid, p. 183.

for himself. Attending the church services came to be a matter of no importance to him

"True Christianity is not fulfilled by standing in the church for two or three hours on Sundays, Saturdays and holidays, but by applying the teachings of the Bible and its injunctions." (1)

You could not help, he thought, but compare the church with the theatre. For, in the church like the theatre, you have no more than actors who have learnt their parts and played them well.

The only difference perhaps is that the actors on the stage address their words to the spectators, while the clergy turn their faces to the Higher Being to utter words with their lips and not with their hearts. Their minds are not in communion with Him. These thoughts led him to prefer saying his prayers alone and in isolation, and to say them in his own tongue and not in company with the clergy. (2)

This intellectual independence which led him to think out for himself what he had been taught about Christianity, is reflected again in his tendency to reconsider for himself the ideas and the thoughts of the great Russian writers: after reading Tolstoy's War and Peace, he finds himself in agreement with the writer's views

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(1) Sabun, I, p. 185.

(2) Ibid, p. 185

on Napoleon, who, according to the writer, was the product of historical events. If this was the case, Mikhail Naimy thought the same thing should be said about Kotozov, Napoleon's Russian opponent. That Tolstoy should ascribe Kotozov's victory against Napoleon to his wisdom, experience and will, and not to historical events, seemed contradictory to Mikhail Naimy, the young student. If it sounds pompous on the part of the young Mikhail Naimy to criticize such a towering literary figure as Tolstoy, he himself admits as much

"It is ludicrous that I should dare to criticize such a great thinker as Tolstoy .... Do forgive me Leon Nikolaievich, for I am indebted to you for so many thoughts which filled with light the darkness of my spirit. Your recent works which I read last year were a great source of inspiration which illumined my life. Yes, for you have come to be my teacher and guide, a fact of which you are unaware." (1)

The more Mikhail Naimy is immersed in reading Russian literature, the more he thinks of modern Arabic literature. He could not help comparing the vitality and liveliness of the former

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(1) Sab'un, I, p. 187. (From his diaries while in Poltava).

with the stagnation of the latter. When he receives a few issues of al-Hilāl, (الهلال) to which he subscribes to keep in contact with the Arab world, he writes in his diaries

"We still have no literature worthy of the name. There is nothing in our literary production which could be described as genuine literature." (1)

One should bear in mind that this was the period when Jurjī Zaidān and Manfalūtī were the most prominent writers in the Arab world. No words give a more succinct description of the literary merits of these two writers than those of Sir H.A.R. Gibb.

"Zaidān's writing was too colourless and didactic, and Manfalūtī was too superficial in thought and too strongly inclined to the classical tradition in style, to attract readers who sought in Arabic literature something comparable to the books with which they were familiar in the languages of the West." (2)

The student of Naimy feels that the seeds of rebellion in him against the stagnant Arabic literature of the day were being sown; a rebellion which took shape later in his writings.

Much as Mikhail Naimy was interested in Russian literature,

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(1) Sabʿūn, I, p.190.

(2) Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature, by Sir H.A.R. Gibb p. 446 (B.S.O.S. Vol. V, Pt.II).

he was equally keen to live with the Russians and to become familiar with their family and social life. A friend of his, by the name of Alyosha, invited him to spend the summer of 1908 with his family in a small Ukraine village. There, he came to know several young girls, but he "never surrendered to the temptations of any of them. If I had wanted to play the part of Don Juan, I would have been able to do so quite easily. But there is something in my nature which rebels against the likes of Don Juan, and those who play frivolously with womens' emotions for the sake of satisfying a passing desire."<sup>(1)</sup> This earnestness in his character is also revealed in his inclination to avoid noisy gatherings and parties. Alyosha persuaded him one evening to accompany him to a party, after which they returned home at dawn, meeting on their way groups of farmers heading for work. "There we are" Mikhail Naimy thinks to himself, "spending our night in shameless buffoonery while they walk steadily to their work with the hope of the new day glittering in their eyes, and in their hands lie the keys to the blessings of life. What irritates you is that they greet you as if you are the one who deserves the

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(1) Sab<sup>u</sup>n, I, p 207.

blessings, while they are the sycophants.... "(1)

Fariya, Alyosha's sister, who was married to a dull-witted man, found herself in love with young Mikhail Naimy who was at a loss as to how to find a way out of this problem. He decided to leave the village, and so he made his way to Poltava. Back in the Seminary, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of abstemiousness; he shaved once or twice a week and hardly went to the theatre. He no longer frequented the nearby convent's forest, nor did he attend dancing parties. Even the casual chattering with friends was shunned. Once again he took refuge in silence and isolation. "For in isolation, you have the opportunity of coming closer to your inner soul, searching for the good and the bad seeds that lie in it. It is in such a state that you have the opportunity to examine your conscience, and to decide what course you want it to take." (2)

The party night with Alyosha and the love affair with Fariya seem to have intensified the innate disposition for meditation in young Mikhail Naimy

"I am now searching for something important, distant and vague.

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(1) Sab'un, I, p.211.

(2) Ibid, p. 218.

Everything else other than that seems to me to be trivial."<sup>(1)</sup>

Reading and writing came to be his only consolations, but these preoccupations served merely to provide an outlet for his feelings without providing answers for the questions that harassed the young man's mind. Even a simple matter like strolling down a street brought with it a host of questions

"For why should this army officer walk so proudly down the street as if God himself owes him a debt? Is it the sword on his side or the resonance of his spurs that fill him with his vain pride? What service does he, I wonder, render to this world? Surely his task is nothing more than learning and teaching the art of killing people and destroying their dwellings and farms. He certainly offers this world no good. So, what right has he to be proud and arrogant? And that lady, draped in silk and crowned with a hat laden with peacock feathers, sitting majestically in a coach pulled by three fine horses - where do her silk, her feathers and her horses come from? And how is it that she is not filled with shame by displaying all this to those whose bodies are wrapped in rags and whose faces never know what soap is? And these grand

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(1) Sab<sup>u</sup>n, I, p. 218



stores, with all the jewels shining in their windows - what use are they for the hungry, the humiliated, the vanquished, and all those who are unable to enjoy a single item of their contents? Surely, one necklace or a bracelet, an earring or a ring from among them, might be enough to feed a thousand of those who suffer hunger, or a thousand who need to be clothed, or provide medicine for a thousand patients. How is it then that the neck of a single woman, her wrist, her ear or her finger, should be singled out to enjoy all that wealth, or that she should be of more importance than thousands of other human beings?

Surely, this is a world turned upside-down A world whose heart is in its pocket, its mind in its belly and its conscience in the dirt The ugliest thing about it is that it claims to believe in a God who is all light, justice, beauty and love. If only its belief inspired its actions, it would not have suffered pain and misfortune, nor would it have tolerated a system that divided it into classes one above the other, with nobility for one and humiliation for the other, abundance for one and poverty for the other, power for one and subjugation for the other. If its actions had sprung from its belief, it would have been on the right path.

But it is a world which staggers both left and right without knowing why it staggers or where it is heading. In spite of its spaciousness, it is still a narrow and limited world - a world which is choking with the dust and smoke of its sins. Its dust hurts me, and its smoke blinds my sight. In it, I am a stranger."<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus Mikhail Naimy created for himself a world of his own; a world in which he tried to protect himself from this "dust and smoke" of the outside world. Later he comes to find his world much more spacious than the outside world. In this spacious world of his own, he would roam and wander freely, always to return puzzled by the new horizons that these meditations transported him to. These journeys in the wilderness of the inner self never led him to despair. On the contrary, the more he was steeped in the world of meditation, the more was his yearning to unravel the mysteries of the human soul.

Living in two worlds - the world of his inner self, and the world of others, thus came to be a basic trait in Mikhail Naimy's

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(1) Sab'un, I, pp. 219-220.

character and thinking. One often notices that the world of others is, to him, another term for modern civilisation. Thus, when he rebels against this world of the others, he is, in fact, expressing his denunciation of this civilisation. As a young student, we see him attacking modern civilisation vehemently, pointing out the elements of deception, falsehood and corruption in it, especially when he compares life in cities with that in the country where people lead a natural life close to the earth. Was he unconsciously defending the views of Rousseau and Tolstoy which seem to have found in him a supporter? Possibly. But one thing seems to be clear; the more he came to know the world of the others, the more he was seized with hatred for it "There will come a day when I will sever my relations with the world and retreat to my own,"<sup>(1)</sup> he wrote in his diaries, a decision which seems to have been more or less implemented half a century later.

In the summer of 1909, Mikhail Naimy decided to spend the holiday in Biskinta. There we see him again in the place which he loved most, and which he seemed to feel to be the only place

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(1) Sab'un, I, p. 236.

where he really belonged. The student of his life is even driven to believe that nature itself around Ṣannīn had the same feeling towards him as he had towards it. Here you have, the reader of his works feels, an ideal situation where harmony between Man and Nature is at its best. One incident in that summer seems to illustrate this fine relationship which stirred in him his innermost thoughts. The young Mikhail Naimy is sitting, one afternoon, in the shade of the huge rocks of al-Shakhrūb, where birds of all kinds have their nests and where the water of Ṣannīn Spring flows gently down. Fields lie ahead, with harvesters and cattle doing their work in complete serenity. The young man's thoughts roam freely with the lights and shadows, with the music of the water flowing from the Spring, and with the cattle, the shepherds and the harvesters in the fields before him. Everything seems to become blurred in a matter of a few minutes. The young man sees himself walking in a dark tunnel under the surface of the earth. Voices emanating from the depth of his soul rise to ask him incessantly Where does all this come from? Where to? From God to God? And who, or what, is God and why is there all this astounding variety in things, so that one never finds two identical blades of grass, or two flowers, or two fruits, or two men? What wisdom is there in that all this should come from God,

only to return to Him? What wisdom is there in that it should, in the span of time between its coming and return, go through amazing phases of growth and decay, with all the pleasure and pain which accompanies this transformation? If there is no wisdom in all this, and no aim, then does existence mean anything? And ~~why~~ should we cling to it?

"The darkness grows and the tunnel becomes narrower, and no answer comes from anywhere. I feel that even the breath is fading in my breast, and I almost shout for help.

Suddenly, a very faint and distant ray of light appears. At that very moment I feel my chest relieved of the pressure, the tunnel widens and the darkness is less dark. The feeling of relief becomes greater and it almost turns into a state of ecstasy. Then I feel as if many a gate within me begins to open, and as if God, Whom I am looking for, will appear to me through them all, and that the walls of the tunnel I am walking through and its ceiling are slowly vanishing, and that in a trice, I will see God, know Him and talk to Him. But that moment was too dear to attain and it just never came. Back I come to where I was before; to the rocks above me, to the flocks of birds hovering

around their nests, to the harvesters and the cattle in the fields, to the water of the Spring churning down the stream for the grass around it. I feel I have come back from a journey that went on endlessly, after which I returned to the earth, as if from towering heights. But, at the same time, I feel I have come to be richer and vaster than I was. Things around me have come to be a part of myself, and myself a part of them. They are no longer strangers to me, nor I a stranger to them. They and I have come to be of one body and one soul, expanding to eternity.

That was a moment which later on filled my path with light."<sup>(1)</sup>

That Mikhail Naïmy went through this experience should not lead us to call him a mystic, as one Arab writer did.<sup>(2)</sup> For one thing, Mikhail Naïmy never made the claim that he received a pure and direct vision of the truth following this experience. Nor has he ever preached the idea of casting away the pleasures of life. Moreover, a mystical experience is "quite a definite

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(1) Sabʿūn, I, pp. 249-250.

(2) Mikhail Naïmy al-Adīb al-Şufī, by Thuraya Malḥas.

and recognizable form of experience"<sup>(1)</sup> which is not to be confused with visions and states of ecstasy. There is no reason for us to doubt the authenticity of the experience, but one could only describe it as a "state of feeling" as distinct from a "mystical experience", although a "mystical" element forms part of it. However, what interests us at this stage of our study is that this experience had a tremendous impact upon his character and his way of thinking, which took a turn towards what might be termed Nature Mysticism.

Back in Russia we find Mikhail Naimy more and more involved in the life of that country, at a time when it was agitating to rid itself of the tyranny of its rulers and the class system which oppressed a large section of its people. In his fourth year in the Seminary in 1910, we find him taking part in a strike declared by the students who clamoured for their freedom. "It is true" he says, "that I am a guest and a stranger in Russia, but as my life has come to be a part of the life of the country to a great extent, I have come to feel that I am one of its sons, feeling the great pressure to which its people is exposed by the Emperor and his entourage, and the higher classes which cling

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(1) Mysticism A Study and an Anthology, by F.C.Happold, p.38.

desperately to their rights, disregarding their duties towards the people."<sup>(1)</sup> This atmosphere of oppression led to a wave of pessimism, wantonness and recklessness among the younger generation which Mikhail Naimy strove to keep away from. He kept to his idealism, but at the same time felt very strongly with the oppressed Russians, as he was disturbed by the poverty of the masses suffering under the yoke of their oppressors.

Back to Fariya, he "succumbed to the animal"<sup>(2)</sup> in him, and soon after, he found himself yearning for retreat and work. One feels that this desire for solitude was enhanced whenever Mikhail Naimy felt that something wrong was happening. This happened when he first abstained from talking while in the Nazareth school, when a friend censured him for something he had never said. Now, after the love affair with Fariya, he accompanied Alyosha to stay with him in isolation in a country house, hoping that he would be able to "regain, in that solitude, what was lost of my tranquility, delve into the treasures of my inner self through poetry and meditation, thinking of my own life and life in general."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Sabʿūn, I, p. 254.

(2) Ibid., p. 257.

(3) Ibid., p. 257.



Out of this solitude, he emerged with "The Frozen River", a poem in Russian in which he addressed the river Sula, on the frozen surface of which he had walked with his friend Alyosha. His heart, like the river, was in chains. While the river would some day break the chain, his heart would never be able to do so. Is this because these chains prevented him from understanding why things happened the way they did? One is left to wonder. The poem deals with the subject of Man and Nature, for while Nature never imprisons the river for ever, Man is the prisoner of his world. The theme of Man and Nature comes later to take a prominent place in Mikhail Naimy's writings.

In 1911, Mikhail Naimy's life in Russia came to an end. The five years he spent in that country left an indelible mark on his way of thinking and personality. Tolstoy was his master, whose philosophy on the meaning of life impressed him most. — To Tolstoy " the arbiter of what is good and evil is not what people say and do, nor is it progress, but it is my heart and I"<sup>(1)</sup> One cannot fail to see in Mikhail Naimy's writings, that he too adopted this maxim, whether consciously or unconsciously, to form

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(1) Tolstoy, Childhood, Boyhood, Youth, trans by Rosemary Edmonds, p.9.

a basic tenet of his philosophy. That great master of Russian literature took the Bible for his guide, and so did Mikhail Naimy. For he too was irritated to see "a Christianity where no Christ existed, which differed little from paganism except in name."<sup>(1)</sup>

It seems possible that Tolstoy was the thinker who made clear to Mikhail Naimy the hypocrisy of the Church, which veiled the light of Christ from the believers with thick clouds of ritual. The spiritual conflict in Tolstoy's life, and his attempts to lead a life based on the teachings of the Bible, was a source of inspiration for Mikhail Naimy, for he wrote saying "I knew something of that conflict, and I hoped most sincerely, that Tolstoy would attain victory in it. For me, that a single person should be able to come triumphant out of such a conflict, there was some confirmation that if I tried, I would be able to win."<sup>(2)</sup> The tragic death of his master led Mikhail Naimy to think of his own conflict with himself and with the world and where it would end.

All the time, while living in Russia, Mikhail Naimy would turn his thoughts towards the Arab world. How shallow and

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(1) Sab'un, I, p. 269.

(2) Ibid, p. 271.

insignificant is thought, art and literature amongst the Arabs, he would think to himself. It was in Russia that the seed of rebellion against the concepts of literature in the Arab world was sown in Naimy's mind.

By the end of his stay in Russia, Mikhail Naimy acquired all the qualities of a rebel. His rebellion was not confined to the Arabs' concept of literature, for he also came to be a rebel against the "Establishment" in the world of faith. He became sceptical about what he had been taught by the Church

"After my return from Russia, I began to feel that the garment which the Church had wanted me to wear was too small, and that parts of it were being torn all the time."<sup>(1)</sup> All that remained of what the Church had taught him, was a deep reverence for the divine brilliance of Christ's personality and his sublime teachings. But even some aspects of Christ's teachings were subjected to questioning.

"For Christ did not solve for me the problem of evil and where it came from. Nor the question of death and what followed it; for His preaching about a Day of Judgement, the time of which nobody

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(1) Sab'un, I, p 275.

knew except God, and an eternal life for the righteous and eternal fire for the wicked, was incongruous to my mind with the sublime concept He gave me about His Father's love and justice."<sup>(1)</sup>

Returning to Biskinta after spending these five years in Russia, Mikhail Naimy found himself living in a spiritual and intellectual vacuum

"For to whom could I talk at that time about the literary and artistic horizons which that short stay in Russia had opened for me? Where could I find in the Lebanon, or in its neighbours, people who would feel that the great masters in the world of literature, theatre, painting, sculpture or music in the West, had come to be part of their lives?"<sup>(2)</sup>

This spiritual loneliness led Mikhail to think of going to France to study law. Thus he concentrated on the study of French in preparation for the journey. But fate held a different course in store for him. His brother Adib, who had emigrated to the United States eleven years earlier, was in Biskinta at the time on a visit, and he was able to persuade Mikhail to accompany

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(1) Sab'un, I, p. 278.

(2) Ibid, p. 279.

him back to the United States. Thus a new chapter in Mikhail Naimy's life began.

### In the United States

The years spent in Russia, with all the new horizons it opened up for him, filled Mikhail Naimy with resentment for modern civilisation "which turned Man away from his right path, pushing him towards an abyss encompassed by covetousness, devoid of mercy, justice and love."<sup>(1)</sup> For a sensitive young man whose mind develops such an attitude towards modern civilisation as a result of living in a small Ukraine town, it seems natural that New York should confirm his beliefs. His first impressions of the city were far from favourable

"I felt that that city, with its gigantic buildings, its feverish hustle and bustle, were like a heavy load pressing against my chest. Suddenly I remembered Ṣannīn and al-Shakhrūb with all the peace they were endowed with, the beauty that surrounded them, and the memory was painful."<sup>(2)</sup>

With a sense of relief, Mikhail Naimy left New York making

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(1) Sabṣūn, II, p. 8.

(2) Ibid, p. 8.

his way to Walla Walla, a small town in Washington State, where his two elder brothers lived. In the plains around this small American town, he saw for the first time in his life, the machine doing its work in the fields. Which, he thought to himself, was better; a grain sown, harvested, threshed, sieved, milled and baked with the hand of Man, or one that touched no hand except that of the machine, whose limbs were of steel and its spirit of oil; and where was this machine going to lead us?<sup>(1)</sup>

"The credit in increasing production and consumption goes to the machine. But this mechanical age does not pay any attention to the fact that the machine has not added a jot to our happiness, nor has it decreased our misery by an iota."<sup>(2)</sup>

With great enthusiasm, Mikhail Naimy concentrated on learning English, with nothing to help him ~~except~~ an English-Arabic dictionary and a small book written by a Syrian to help emigrant Arabs to learn the language. As there were no evening classes in Walla Walla for studying the language, Mikhail decided to join an elementary school as a listener. There he sat with the young boys, learning from them and from their teachers, then he

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(1) Sab<sup>h</sup>un, II, p. 12.

(2) Ibid, p. 13.

moved to a secondary school where he was treated like any other student. Within eight months of his stay in the country, his English was good enough to enable him to join the University of Washington, where he graduated with a degree in Law and another in Arts.

As a university student, Mikhail Naimy found that the sort of life that his colleagues led did not interest him; baseball and football never attracted him. "Youth is the time when one should try to fathom the meaning of existence,"<sup>(1)</sup> he tells us in his autobiography, reminiscing about that period of his life. This earnestness made him feel an outsider in his new environment. He felt more in harmony with foreign students, who seemed to him to take life more seriously than American students, and so he joined the Cosmopolitan Club in which he was the only Arab student and with whose members he made friends.

With the same enthusiasm with which he devoured the masterpieces of Russian literature, Mikhail Naimy delved into the treasures of Anglo-Saxon literature. At the same time he started to write in Arabic. Unlike Russia, he found himself in a country

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(1) Sab'un, II p. 24.

where fellow Arabs formed a large community. On receiving a periodical called Al-Funūn, (الفنون) published in New York by his friend Nasīb 'Arīda, he was thrilled, for al-Funūn seemed to be a new phenomenon in the field of modern Arabic literature. Here, for the first time, he read articles by Gibrān, 'Arīda and al-Riḥānī, and these were writers who shared with him the same conception of literature; no place here for the ornamental usage of words and linguistic jugglery which meant nothing.

"This is the good tidings of revival which you hoped would some day see the light amongst your countrymen since you first came to be familiar with Russian and world literature, and since you realised the numinous nature of the word, the strength of the pen when it did not degrade the word with lies, hypocrisy and charlatanism, and worshipped the letter rather than the spirit. Yes, Mikhail, these are the first drops which will be followed by a torrent. These few drops are a challenge for you, Mikhail. Have you anything to add to them? If you want to have your share in the coming torrent, this is your hour and this is your day."<sup>(1)</sup>

With these words Mikhail Naimy addressed himself, and with all the zeal he had, he set off to write an article with the title,

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(1) Sab'un, II, pp. 29-30.



"The Dawn of Hope after the Darkness of Despair",<sup>(1)</sup> in which he poured out his resentment and hatred for the decadent literature - the literature of ornamentation, traditionalism, hypocrisy and triviality - which had no food for the heart or the soul, and which had no bearing on our life. Here, in this article, we see the tangible outcome of the rebellion that had fermented in Mikhail Naimy's thought since he first came into contact with Russian literature. Al-Funūn published Mikhail Naimy's article and so his battle against traditionalism in literature was launched. This article was followed by other similar articles in the same vein. Nasīb 'Arīda, the editor/<sup>of</sup>al-Funūn, wrote to him saying that his articles were being well received among the emigrants in the States, and predicted that they would cause a good deal of tumult in the Arab world. Unfortunately, al-Funūn, which came to be the platform that propagated these new ideas about the meaning of literature, had to cease for financial reasons.

In 1914, the First World War broke out and the Lebanon suffered the affliction of drought. Mikhail Naimy, who had

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(1) The title in Arabic is: "فجر الأمل بعد ليل اليأس"

The same article was incorporated later in another with the title of "al-Hubāhib" "الحُبَّاءِيب". See al-Ghirbal, p. 37.

decided to return to his country in 1916 was destined to stay in the States until 1932. During the war, a secret society called 'Free Syria' was formed by the Arabs in the United States, which worked towards the liberation of Syria from the Turkish tyranny. Mikhail Naimy joined, but the society soon disintegrated.<sup>(1)</sup>

A young Scotsman with whom Mikhail Naimy shared a room in his third year at the university, and who was a member of a theosophical society, interested his friend in the idea of metempsychosis and the transmigration of souls. The idea appealed to him, which he adopted as a substitute for the idea of the Original Sin and the Day of Judgement. Mikhail Naimy later admitted that "the idea of metempsychosis which leads to complete knowledge and complete freedom, came to be the fundamental basis on which

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(1) Mikhail Naimy has never had any strong "nationalistic" feelings in the narrow sense of the word. Although he certainly disliked intensely the subjugation of the Arabs by the Turks and later by the French (in his own country) neither his philosophy nor his personal nature ever led him to take strong "nationalistic" stands against the adversaries of the Arab world, as he believes that no nation is actually capable of ruling another, as long as Man, ruler and ruled, is still the slave of his human ambitions and greed. See Al-Nūr wa al-Dayjur, p. 97.

the whole philosophy of my life was to be founded, after that "accidental" meeting with my Scottish friend."<sup>(1)</sup>

Living in New York after graduating from Washington University, Mikhail Naimy set for himself one aim. "the reappraisal of literary standards among those who speak my language and among my fellow countrymen",<sup>(2)</sup> with thousands of miles separating him from them, while living in the whirlpool that is called New York. "What self-deception..." he would think to himself, "but let Fate laugh the way it likes, for as long as I can write, and as long as al-Funun is there, I am in no trouble."<sup>(3)</sup>

Finding that the lofty task of reappraising literary standards among the Arabs while living in New York hardly earned him his daily bread, he found himself a job with the Russian Commercial Navy office and later as a secretary to the Russian officer who worked with the Bethlehem Steel Company, which exported armaments to the Russians. It was a relief to leave New York for Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 47. It is important to remember here, that Naimy — believes that nothing ever happens accidentally. Thus his meeting with his Scottish friend was accordingly predestined. The appeal which Metempsychosis had to Mikhail Naimy is perhaps due to the fact that it is strongly linked with most spiritual teachings known in the world whether in the east or the west. Later, it came to be an important factor in moulding his philosophic doctrine which is based on the belief that our life is governed by a Cosmic Order, and that death is no more than a "pause" in a continuous movement which will ultimately lead Man to become one with the Absolute.

(2) Ibid, p. 65.

(3) Ibid, pp. 65-66.

but the thought that he earned his living out of the machinery of the war, was a source of remorse for Mikhail Naimy which he found difficult to allay.

In 1917 the United States declared war on Germany, and a law was passed by which all young men between the age of twenty-one and thirty-one should register for military service. Mikhail Naimy did so "because it is my nature to abide by the law."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is surprising that a man like him, who hated bloodshed and preached love, and who believed that Man's life was the most exalted of all beings, should willingly take part in the butchery of war simply because he wanted to abide by the law, especially since he could have avoided conscription as he was not an American citizen<sup>(2)</sup>. However, that may be, Mikhail Naimy found himself a soldier in the Army of the United States. Whatever course one's life takes, he thinks to himself, it is certainly traced by the "Unseen Hand" which plans one's life and that of the universe. Our plans play a small role in shaping our lives. There is a power, other than our own, that shapes our destiny.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 73.

(2) Mikhail Naimy wrote in a letter addressed to H. Dabbagh saying:

"On page 86 of Sab'un (II) you will find some of the moral reasons which made it possible for me to swallow the bitter pill of military service. I may add to them my great shame of claiming exemption on the ground that I was then the subject of a country -

Turkey - whose domination over my own country and the rest of the Arab world we all abhorred and fought".

(3) Sab'un, II. p. 80.

meditations on war seem to confirm his belief that Man's life is predestined

"For what have I got against a German peasant in Stuttgart, or an Austrian carpenter in Vienna, or a Hungarian goldsmith in Budapest, or a Turkish shepherd in Adana? Why should I be dragged away from my family, my home and my work to be humiliated and despised and to be driven, against my will, to bear down against people whom I do not know and against whom I have no grudge?"<sup>(1)</sup>

He often wondered about the logic of events that led him to where he found himself, but never found an answer, except the consolation that "there must exist in my life that which calls for such an experience. Had I not needed that experience, it would not have found its way into my life. The only course I could take is to acquiesce in it. When I extract out of it the moral necessary for my life, it will depart never to come back. Then after going through it, I will be the richer for it."<sup>(2)</sup>

Being on guard at a military hospital crowded with wounded soldiers, he happened to hear the screams of a young mutilated German soldier who kept shouting "Mother....Mother....", Mikhail Naïmy stopped at the door where the screaming came from "feeling ashamed of myself and of the rifle slung on my shoulder. What

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 90.

(2) Ibid., p. 94-95.

value have I, and what value has my rifle in the face of such a scream..."Mother.....Mother"? Are these screams other than a condemnation against me, against my rifle, and against anyone who carries one? It is, in fact, a condemnation against those who stand behind me, and those who stand behind that wounded young soldier and his rifle."<sup>(1)</sup> Mikhail Naimy found himself deep in thought, trying to think of that "mother". To him she was more than one single mother, but every mother, everywhere and at any time. "She is in fact life itself, out of which every life emanates. That poor young man is beseeching its help against those who abuse its sanctity, deny its bounties and mutilate its beauty, just because they covet a mine of gold, coal or steel, a well of oil, a forest of rubber trees or a market to sell their worthless commodities."<sup>(2)</sup>

The war came to an end and Mikhail Naimy was sent by the Army for a course at Rennes University in France. There he studied the history of France, the history of French literature and art, and the history of law and constitution. He mastered the French language and came to know a good deal about France.

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(1) Sab'un, II. p. 103

(2) Ibid, p. 104

At the university, Madeline, a French girl, seemed to take a liking for him. He was not in love with the girl, but tried to remain friendly with her. The girl seemed to think of marriage, but he, not being in love with her, seemed to think of marriage as a burden which would be an obstacle in the way of achieving his aims in life. It is interesting to notice that whenever we see him involved in an emotional relationship, we find him inclined to retreat to his inner world, trying to delve into its depths and to define its relation with the "outside" world. The war and his share in it seems to have enhanced this inclination in him to ponder. What had this mad world reaped out of four years of killing, destruction and misery? The "Big Four" were holding meetings in Versailles to deceive the world by pretending that they alone were endowed by God with the wisdom to found a new world out of the rubble of the old. Woodrow Wilson was the only one amongst them for whom he had some respect, but Wilson was an idealist, who was no match for the pragmatists, Clemenceau and Lloyd George. And what had the Arabs got out of it all? The Balfour Declaration "which permits a stranger to enter a house full of people, by sheer force, and by the might of His Britannic Majesty, to say to its inhabitants, 'you need not worry, the house will remain yours, but it will become my 'national' home, nothing more.'"(1)

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(1) Sab'ūn, II, p. 133.

But at least, he would think to himself, the war resulted in putting an end to the Turkish tyranny over the Arab world.

But now where to? The Lebanon? What would he do there? Where would he get the fare from? To New York? What would he do there either, especially since al-Funūn had ceased publication? Suddenly, he received a letter from his friend Nasīb 'Arīda, in which he lamented the demise of al-Funūn. Should that torch be left to its final end? No, Mikhail Naimy thought to himself, that was a spark which should not be put out. So he decided to return to the States. Back in New York, he received a letter from Gibrān which urged him to work towards the revival of al-Funūn. But as the efforts to revive al-Funūn failed, Naimy, Gibrān and 'Arīda found themselves turning towards al-Sā'ih, (رأس الحمار), a periodical of limited circulation in the Arab community, to use it as a new platform to spread their literary ideas and thoughts. However, Mikhail Naimy was faced again with the problem of earning his living, and of all things, he found himself in the world of commerce, selling nightdresses for ladies in a company that was run by three wealthy Syrian emigrants. It did not take him long to master his new job and to earn enough money to survive.

The world of commerce, like that of war, provided Mikhail



Naimy with food for thought In the battle field he had seen how Man was capable of killing his fellow men. In the world of commerce, he came to witness how the Dollar was capable of destroying Man's soul. Out of his experience in this new field, he writes

"The Dollar is a magician - cunning and shameless. How often it assails Man's conscience only to leave it paralysed, or his insight only to blind it, or his ideals only to destroy them." (1)

In a huge building in Manhattan, occupied mainly by commercial agencies, he found himself a dark little room with a small window which overlooked the backyard of the building. In that little room, which called his aerie, in a city where such rooms abound, he used to spend his evenings struggling, not in the field of war or commerce, but in that of the mind and the word.

"As for my heart, I never paid any attention to it, unaware that when I came to live in that humble room, I was to be involved in an emotional battle". (2)

Bella, a woman of thirty and the wife of a drunkard who was the landlord of the house, fell in love with Mikhail Naimy. In

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 143.

(2) Ibid, p. 144.

the absence of the husband, he spends the Christmas vacation with her "in a feast of pleasure and happiness."<sup>(1)</sup> No religious or social scruples were able to stop him from having his love affair with her. "But if that was sinful, it was the sin of nature, which influenced my blood through a spark coming from the blood of a person which had in it the same warmth and the same willingness to be inflamed."<sup>(2)</sup> This love affair with Bella, like the one he had with Fariya eight years earlier, seems again to arouse a conflict between his mind and his heart. Before his love affair with Bella, he was wholly immersed in the activities of the new literary movement and in his own meditations about life. Then we see him philosophizing for himself the meaning of his existence by describing his soul as "an emanation of a god,"<sup>(3)</sup> but now, with the emotions overpowering the mind, prohibitions are left to the fuqahā'.

"يَا رَفِيقِي - رَفِيقَ حَسَمِي وَرَوْحِي -  
وَشَرِيقِي فِي بَعْثِي وَشَقَاتِي  
قَدْ رَأَيْتُ طَهْرَةً وَصَالَةً

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 155.

(2) Ibid, p. 155.

(3) Ibid, p. 156.

لَدَفَاراً فِي صُنْعِ رَبِّ السَّمَاءِ  
فَأَجْنَحاً لِلنَّفْسِ طُحْنُهَا  
وَتَرَكْنَا الْحَرَامَ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ (I)

This relationship with Bella and the conflict it created in him, since he felt guilty for having had an emotional relationship with a married woman, inspired him to write several poems in which this inner conflict was expressed. Al-‘Irāk "العِرَاك" (2) (The Conflict) is perhaps the best among these, which expresses his thoughts at this phase of his life; for in this short poem, he describes how Satan enters into his heart to find an angel in it. The two fight against each other, each claiming "the house" to be his. The poet watches the struggle Unmoved, he turns towards God, wondering how his hands made his heart the way it was made, to allow Satan and an angel to fight for its possession. He never gets an answer and he finds himself, long after asking his questions, in doubt and confusion. Is it evil or good that dwells in his heart? Whatever the answer was, Mikhail Naimy became more and more attached to Bella at a time when he was involved in

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(1) Hams al-Jufūn, p. 80.

(2) Diwan Hams al-Jufūn, p. 96. In fact "‘Irāk" (or the Conflict) is a good example of Naimy's poetry in that it reflects the conflict of his inner soul which suffers the agony of the struggle between his sublime and idealistic aspirations against the animal which pulls him down and imprisons him in the flesh. The same undertone is also detectable in "The Frozen River".

establishing al-Rābiṭah al-Qalamīyyah,<sup>(1)</sup> (الرَّابِطَةُ الْقَلَمِيَّةُ), of which he was the secretary, and which was destined to play an important role in the history of Modern Arabic literature. However, he seemed to be in love, with Bella, for the first time in his life. "I came to have no better hope than to fill her life with dreams, to strew her path with roses, and to pervade her days with happiness, peace and tranquillity."<sup>(2)</sup> These are certainly the words of a man deeply in love. But his love is that of a poet, extremely romantic, idyllic and other-worldly. It is not the kind of love which urges the

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(1) The members of al-Rābiṭah were A.Haddad, N Haddad, Elias Atallah, W. Catzefflis, N. Arida, R. Ayoub, G.Gibran and M. Naïmy. In April 1920, this group of friends met and decided to form al-Rābiṭah. The most important points they agreed upon in their meeting were

(1) Al-Rābiṭah is to publish the works of its own members and other Arab writers it may consider worthy, as well as to encourage the translation of world literature masterpieces.

(2) Al-Rābiṭah is to foster new talent by offering prizes for the best in poetry and prose.

See Gibran K. Gibran, by M Naïmy p. 155.

(2) Sab'un, II, p 181.

lover to "live" with the beloved; "For I did not want my heart and hers to follow the course followed by lovers everywhere and all through time; the course of joy ending in loneliness, hope leading to disillusion and pleasure breeding pain "(1)

One wonders whether that was an attempt to rationalize a sense of guilt which Mikhail Naimy felt towards that love affair. In a brief sentence in his autobiography, one tends to detect this sense of guilt, when he says "Whenever my mind brought me back to face the social circumstances which surrounded my love, making it look sinful, I felt as if I had stolen it the way Prometheus stole fire from the hearth of the Gods". (2) Moreover, in his heart of hearts, he seemed to feel that love should rise above the desire of the flesh. He felt too that Bella was a stranger to the world of imagination in which he lived, "far away from the yearnings that grip my soul, which urge me to seek a meaning for existence." (3)

Occasionally, he even doubted that that relationship with Bella was a relationship of true love. Maybe it was evil for both of us, he would think to himself. This led him to ponder over

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, II, p. 181

(2) Ibid, p. 183.

(3) Ibid, p. 184.

what evil and good meant. Again we notice that this love affair with Bella draws him back to his inner self, to wonder about the nature and meaning of things. Here again he turns to poetry to express his inner feelings in a poem addressed "To The Sea",<sup>(1)</sup> he implores the waves to tell him whether evil and good are embedded in them as they are embedded in Man. Like the ebb and flow of the sea, the Qaṣīda ends, evil and good exist side by side in Man

” وَقَفْتُ وَالْبَيْتُ دَائِعٌ      وَالْحُرُكَ كَرٌّ وَدَرْعٌ  
 وَلَمْ يُجِبْنِي بَحْرٌ      وَلَمْ يُجِبْنِي بَرْ  
 وَعِنْدَمَا سَأَلْتُ لَيْلِي      وَكَلَّ الْأُفُقُ فَجْرٌ  
 سَمِعْتُ نَهْرًا يُعَيِّ      ” الْكَلْبُ طَلِيٌّ وَنَشْرٌ  
 فِي الْمَاسِ خَيْرٌ وَشَرٌّ      فِي الْحَرِّ مَدٌّ وَعَرٌّ ”

In this period of his life, Mikhail Naimy was deeply involved in the battle of reviving modern Arabic literature which was active in the States. At the same time, he was equally involved in the battle of love with Bella. She and her husband bought a house in the countryside near New York, and Mikhail Naimy moved to live with them. What a great relief he found in leaving New York to live in the country. Here he found himself living in the

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(1) The Qaṣīda is entitled " يَا بَحْرٌ ". Diwān Hams al-Jufūn p. 97.

open country which he loved, away from the hustle and bustle of New York. His love for nature filled him with a feeling of satisfaction and contentment. There he walked by the streams, sang with the birds and remembered his younger days in Ṣannīn. That short stay in the countryside seemed to confirm his feeling that he was born to live with nature, unspoilt by the hand of Man. But how long could he maintain that relationship with Bella, when he felt that it was a source of suffering for a third person? Suddenly, he was able to persuade her and her husband that it would be better if he kept away from them. His feeling of guilt seems to have motivated this decision. "This is what love rules if it aims at purifying itself of its sorrows."<sup>(1)</sup>

Back in New York, Mikhaïl Naïmy was faced with other problems; the three Syrian brothers for whom he worked were on the verge of bankruptcy. His brother Najīb wrote to him from the Lebanon expressing his wish to emigrate to the New World. He felt that his brother would face the same disillusionment in the New World which he was facing.

"Why should he exchange the purity of his land, the purity of Ṣannīn and all its beauty, for all the wealth in Mexico? Has he

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(1) Sabʿun, II, p 232

not heard of the proverb "a contented peasant is a sultan in disguise"? He is, in Biskinta, a sultan with nobody to give him orders or to upbraid him. There, nobody demands a penny from him. He works, but health and contentment is his reward."<sup>(1)</sup>

These thoughts about the emigration of the Lebanese to the New World inspired him to write a short story which he called The Cuckoo-Clock."<sup>(2)</sup> This clock is a symbol for complex modern civilisation, and the elusive happiness which people seek in it.

In 1925, Mikhail Naimy no longer worked for the Syrian brothers, who went bankrupt. In the following three years, he dabbled in various fields of business, at the end of which he was unemployed for a while, until he found himself a job as a salesman for the Encyclopedia Britannica. As he came to be a well known name amongst the Syrian emigrants, he managed to sell the business men among them a large number of copies, who, for reasons of snobbery, were keen to have it in their libraries. But despite this "success" in this new field of business, he felt rebellious

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(1) Sab'un, II, pp. 235-236.

(2) The Cuckoo-Clock "ساعة الكوكو" is perhaps one of the most revealing short stories about the attitude and feelings of Mikhail Naimy towards Western civilisation and way of life. See Chapter V of this study where a summary of the story is given.



against it. "I came to be overwhelmed by a feeling of rebellion against this froth of life I found myself fumbling in."<sup>(1)</sup> This froth of life he rebelled against was nothing other than the trivialities with which human beings preoccupied themselves: their "knowledge", "faith" and "wealth". These he thought, formed the essence of their life, when they were no more than its banalities and superficialities. This urge to rid himself of these superficialities of life was expressed in a poem which he called "Now", "الآن":

”عَدَا أُرِدُّ هَبَاتِ النَّاسِ لِلنَّاسِ  
وَعَنْ غَاهِمُ اسْتَفْنِي أَقْدَاسِي  
وَأَسْتَرِدُّ رُهُونًا لِبِدِّ مَتَرَاهِمُ  
فَقَدْ رَهَنْتُ لَهُمْ نَفْسِي وَإِحْسَانِي  
وَرُحْمَتِي أُنَجِّرُ فِي أَسْوَاقِ كَسَاهِمُ  
فَمَا كَسَبْتُ سِوَى قَهْمٍ وَوَسْوَاسِ  
وَلَمْ تَحْتِ لَهُمْ قَلْبِي فَمَا لَسُوا  
أَنْ نَصَّبُوا بَعْلَهُمْ فِي قُدْسِ أَقْدَاسِي “ (2)

(1) Sab'un, II, p 244.

(2) Diwan Hams al-Jufun, p 108.

In this Qaṣīda, he yearned for the day when he would become "a pure soul, free of the grip of death, and the exterior appearances of life, through which Man is deluded to believe that he is fettered by the chains of Time and Space, when it is he, if he only knew it, who fills Time and Space "(1)

غداً أُمِيدُ لِقَايَا الطِّينِ لِلطِّينِ  
وَأُطْلِقُ الرُّوحَ مِنْ سَجَبِ التَّخَامِيهِ  
وَأَتَرَكَ الْمَوْتَ لِلْمَوْتِ وَمَنْ وُلِدَا  
وَالْحَيَاةَ وَالشَّيْءَ لِلدُّنْيَا وَلِلدِّينِ  
وَأَبْسُ الْعُرَى رِيعاً لَا تُحْطَى  
أَيْدِي الْمَدْرِئِ أَوْ أَيْدِي الشَّيَاطِينِ  
فَلَا تُرَدِّفْنِي نَارُ الْجَحِيمِ وَلَا  
مَجَالِسُ الْخُورِ فِي الْفِرْدَوْسِ لَعِينِي  
غداً أَكْهَبُ هَدَرَ السَّمْعِ وَالْبَصَرِ  
فَأُدْرِكُ الْمَسَدَا الْمَكْنُونِ فِي خَبْرِي "

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(1) Sab'un, II, pp. 245-246.

(2) Diwan Hams al-Jufun, p. 108.

It is not surprising that a man, whose poetry roams in the world of the Infinite, hoping that Man will unfetter the chains that bind him to his selfish and immediate needs, should rebel against the "job" of selling, even the Britanica, to survive. Suddenly, Mikhail Naimy decided to desert New York, which he always referred to as the "frightful whirlpool",<sup>(1)</sup> making his way to Walla Walla, where his two brothers lived. Before leaving New York, he expressed the yearnings of his soul in a poem which he called "Hunger" In this short poem we can detect the "spaciousness" of his own world which he created for himself, as opposed to the "narrowness" of life in that city

"Into my heart a seed was cast.

And it took root and sprouted fast.

It spread so wide, and reached so high

Until it filled the earth and sky.

And now its boughs are weighted low

With fairer fruit than angels know

Yet I, whose heart-sap feeds the root,

Though famished, dare not touch the fruit."<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) "الدَّردَر الرَّهيب"

(2) Published in The New York Times, 30th August, 1930.

Away from the turmoil of New York and the maddening rush to sell the Britanica to its Syrian merchants, Mikhail Naimy isolated himself in a little hut which belonged to his brother Adīb, situated in a green valley by the bank of a river. There, he was in his element.

"Here I feel as if I am a different person - not the same person who was in New York. This little hut seems to me like a palace in the paradise which the lost, the tortured and the displaced dream of."<sup>(1)</sup> As if intently withdrawn to see his life in perspective, his whole past life lay clearly before him to see.

"New York, Biskinta, Poltava, Seattle, al-Shakhrūb, battle fields in France, Fariya, Madeleine, Bella, pre-Islamic poets, members of al-Rābiṭah, and a thousand mental visions, a thousand memories, all meet in this little hut. They are all intermingled in complete harmony. Here, none weighs me in his scales. For my inner world/around me are but one, where beginnings and ends meet, distances vanish, measures and scales cease to do their work. My value is far beyond what my mind and my imagination could ever grasp. A few days ago, whenever I took the subway in New York, my value was no more than a few cents for the company which ran it. Whenever I entered

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(1) Sabʿun, II, p. 250

a restaurant, a store, or a theatre, my value in the eyes of the proprietors never exceeded the value of the dollars I spent in their buildings. How often I endeavoured to raise that value - even for myself - by going to museums, exhibitions, libraries, lectures, concert-halls, but never did I leave with a feeling that my world was wider, happier, or more beautiful than it had been."<sup>(1)</sup>

Mikhail Naimy's stay in that isolated spot in the country side arouses in his mind thoughts about the relationship between Man and Nature. one day he went to the nearby river to fish. Every time he dipped his fishing rod into the water, a clever fish ate the bait without being hooked. Mikhail Naimy was seized with anger. What an impertinent little fish, he thought to himself, to mock and ridicule me... But after a second thought, he imagined what that fish was saying to herself about him. "A fisherman. .eh? And what kind of a fisherman? Here he is, a man who had his head stuffed with all kinds of "knowledge" and "philosophies" and who claims at the same time that he loves all creatures! That is the sort of man he is, with nothing dearer to his heart than tampering with

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, II, pp. 250-251

the life of a little fish in a little stream." But the fish was caught at last and Mikhail Naimy was seized again with violent anger at himself.

"At that moment, I felt myself to be the subject of condemnation and curses pouring on me, all of a sudden, from all around me - from Heaven, the air, the earth, the river, from every pebble, grass and tree, from every drop of blood in my veins the cry went up a criminal, a thief and a mean creature you are! What heroism motivates you, with all the strength of body and mind you have, to fight against a little fish seeking her livelihood in such a little stream, only to inflict unmercifully on her abominable torture such as this? It is not hunger that spurs you to torture her.... it is nothing but your greed and what you call sport and amusement! Woe for such a sport that you derive out of torturing creatures, and woe for an amusement that turns your mind away from your worries, only by depriving other creatures of life, when they have no worries like yours If you know the value of life for yourself, how is it that you deny others that value? If you hate to suffer pain yourself, how do you inflict it on others? You are no more than a criminal, a thief and a wretch."<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, he extricates the fish from the

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(1) Sab'un, II, p 253.

hook and throws it back into the stream, determined never again to cause any creature to suffer any pain, neither by his hands, his tongue, his thoughts, nor with his conscience

In that isolated spot, Mikhail Naimy wrote several poems in English. In one of these poems which he entitled "Sparks",<sup>(1)</sup> he was inspired by the sparks of a fire which he lit outside the hut, and which he sat by and watched

"My camp fire crackles; and the spark,  
Imprisoned long in limb and bark,  
Leaps for an instant into sight  
And is embosomed by the night  
And I, a prisoner of time,  
A spark embedded in the slime  
Of flesh and blood, as in a trance  
Behold their weird and mystic dance.

O glowing hearts of forests deep,  
Do you but pass from sleep to sleep?  
Do you remember as you glow  
Where you slept but a while ago?

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(1) Published in Springfield Republican, 28th October, 1928.

And in your brief awakenings  
Are there no patterns of the things  
The hands of Mother Life had spread  
So lovingly about your bed -  
Of darkness-bound and age-gnarled roots  
Nursing their young and tender shoots?  
Of upflung boughs and budding leaves  
Swaddled in moonlight's silver sheaves?  
Of golden threads too subtly spun  
From magic spindles by the sun?  
Of lovelorn winds and love-drunk breeze  
Aswoon at noontide 'mong the trees?  
Of tearful skies and laughing streams  
And birds that filled with song your dreams?

- O tiny stars of firmaments - - - - -  
Unknown to song, are these laments  
You chant as you ascend the scales  
Of fire to other hills and dales  
Am I a monster in your eyes  
Who shattered love-cemented ties,  
Or are you singing praise to me  
For having helped to set you free?



My camp fire sways and gasps and dips,  
And ashes slowly seal its lips;  
And what it is hid behind the seal  
The jealous night would not reveal."

The isolation and the summer drew to an end, and Mikhail Naimy had to go back to that "frightful whirlpool" to face again the problem of earning his living. There, he was offered a job as a salesman of embroideries in a store owned by a Syrian emigrant. Here he made friends with two Syrians Iskandar Yāzījī and Emille Domaṭ, who have been, up to the present day, two of his closest friends. For a man of Mikhail Naimy's character and nature, making friends is not an easy matter. "A friend is a person who understands you without you uttering a word, and whom you understand when he makes no more than a gesture. Your soul and his are like two flowers, or two fruits on the same bough."<sup>(1)</sup> He describes his friendship with these two men as "two roses in my life and theirs. I have pity for those whose lives are barren of such roses, for their paths are

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(1) Sabʿun, II, p. 258.

onerous, dry and hard, even if they have them paved with gold and jewels."<sup>(1)</sup>

Through this friendship and through his correspondence with his younger brother Nasib who was studying agriculture in the university of Montpellier in France, we come to know more about Mikhail Naïmy's views on life. In a letter which he sent to Nasib in 1929, he mentioned something about his feeling towards returning to the Lebanon, in which he said "As for the other reason for delaying my return (to the Lebanon), it is that I hope to stay there permanently if I decided to do so, and to start there a kind of life closer to my heart and mind than the one I am leading now. But this step requires a kind of renunciation which I am unable now to undertake The renunciation I have in mind (and I imagine that you understand what I mean by that) could never be achieved except when an inner war in me is waged, which results in the intellect winning the day against desire, the soul conquering the body, and the inner being triumphant against the outer being. Before I am sure of myself, and before I am sure that such a renunciation does not hurt my parents, or cause

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(1) Sabun, II, p. 260

harm to a relative or a non-relative, I will never take the step."<sup>(1)</sup>

Mikhail Naimy explained later in his autobiography that the renunciation he had in mind was modelled on the renunciation of Buddha and Christ to the world and its glories and the "limited self". The idea of severing his relations with the outside world to live in his own world, seems to have been in the back of Mikhail Naimy's mind since he first went to Russia. On the other hand, he never seemed to aim at living entirely on his own, ignoring the world around him, it looks as if he has always aimed at living with others without letting himself and his ideals be submerged by what he calls/<sup>the</sup>superficialities of life that seem to preoccupy them. He wants his attitude towards life to be based on his own inner feelings and his own philosophy. What he seems to be striving to achieve, is freedom from being subservient to the conventional concepts of others towards life, which, on the whole, seem to him to be wrong. Moreover, the ultimate goal of this aspiration, if achieved, is not freedom from the pressure of the outside world for its own sake, but a kind of freedom which would enable him to reveal to those who live outside the realm of his world, the true nature as he saw it of Man, what shape his

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 274.

relationship with the whole world should take, and on what foundations his life should be based. In short, the aim is to provide people with a "philosophy". Mikhail Naimy does not admit as much in so many words, nor does he seem to be prone to preach his ideals to people. He, in fact, is the first to admit the weakness of human nature. What he refuses to accept is that this weakness is inherent in Man's character.

Between 1929 and 1932, Mikhail Naimy was involved again in a love affair with a girl whom he called Niunia in his autobiography. This relationship came to an end, as he found that none of the problems that occupied his thoughts, interested the girl.

"Nothing in life interested her other than satisfying her sexual desires and her artistic tendencies. Matters that preoccupied my thoughts incessantly - life and death, where we come from and where we end, good and evil, the aim of my existence in a world such as I live in - all these questions and their like were far from her mind. In vain I tried to arouse her interest in such matters."<sup>(1)</sup> Here again it looks as if he thought that the relationship with Niunia was wrong, that the girl would soon become a stranger to him, at which time he would retire to his

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(1) Sab<sup>un</sup>, II, pp. 289-290.

own shell - to his loneliness which accompanied him and would always accompany him "in the same way that it accompanied all those who were not satisfied with the foam of life and its superficialities, and those who wanted to fathom the depths of the great powers that lay hidden in them. Those who, when they came to know these powers, used them for their own good and for the good of others; and through their knowledge came to know the Universe and the powers that guided it, for these were the same powers that lay dormant in them."<sup>(1)</sup> Here, Mikhail Naimy returns again to poetry to express these thoughts. He wrote several poems on the subject in English. One of these was entitled, "My Solitude":

My Solitude, she'll never roam  
Your sunless, moonless skies.  
She'll never tread your trackless wastes,  
Nor sail your shoreless seas.  
She'll never plumb your yawning chasms,  
Nor scale your rugged peaks.  
Her winged feet will never dance  
Upon your slipp'ry moss.

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 290.

Her honeyed lips will never touch  
Your cup of virgin gall.  
Her mother-heart will never hear  
The cries of your waif dreams  
And never will her love-strung soul  
Vibrate with your mute songs.

Alone we were, my Solitude,  
Alone we'll ever be.  
And yet, how vast, my Solitude,  
We have become, how free!  
In her, with her, through her we stretch  
Unto infinity.

1932, and the return of Mikhail Naimy to the Lebanon. The hope of all these years in foreign lands, at last comes true. But even this was a matter which was predestined. Shortly before leaving the States, he asked a girl, jokingly, to open the Bible and to point out any line in the page she opened. The line read "Go back home, he said, and make known all God's dealings with thee."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) St. Luke, Chapter 8, v. 39.

The thoughts which crossed Mikhail Naimy's mind before his return to the Lebanon are revealing

"Is it not that I am tired of this civilisation which is submerged by the dust it stirs in running after things that seem to me to be no more than a mirage? What I am looking for I will never find here in this dust or in that mirage. I will find it in isolation with myself in the bosom of Şannin. It is there that I can stand naked before Heaven, the rocks, the breeze, the trees, the birds, and before my conscience. There, I will rid myself of all the contamination and dirt. Only then I can open my heart to the light which will never fail me. There, I will gather the fragments of myself, and thus would be able to know myself. My estrangement from myself has lasted for too long, and he who is a stranger to himself is a stranger to everything

What relation do I have with the millions here, whose backs are whipped by the Dollar? They bleed, but they lick their wounds, only to continue their race, achieving nothing except death. What concern of mine is the pleasure that the Dollar creates for them, to make them forget the misery of their life?"<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 306.

It is significant that after spending twenty years in the United States, Mikhail Naimy was confirmed in his belief that he was unable to associate himself with the "civilisation" and "way of life" of that country, a civilisation which he denounced as corrupting to the human soul. This was at a time when millions of emigrants from all over the world, including the Lebanon, strove hard to associate themselves with their adopted country and its way of life. He also felt that the role of Al-Rabīṭah in the States had come to an end, and that its revolutionary ideas were to be carried on in the Arab world itself Al-Rabīṭah by that time had supporters all over that part of the world, and he would be able to resume the struggle in the field of Arabic literature in its natural milieu.

No one gives a better description of the impact of New York on Mikhail Naimy than Nadeem Naimy in his work, Mikhail Naimy, an Introduction, when he says

"Discontented with the world without, Naimy was driven under the impact of New York to seek shelter in the world within. As he went deeper and deeper into the recesses of his soul all those types of teachings in the world which emphasised the human self as the alpha and omega of life and as containing the key to Man's emancipations from the temporary, the transient and the corrupt to the eternal, the permanent and the absolute, struck him with increasing vividness. Christ, Tolstoy, Platonism and the Eastern theosophies with which Naimy's youth had



been saturated, re-emerged in his mind and heart with stronger force, and he felt himself more than ever before ruthlessly divided between two worlds: the world symbolised by New York, which he despised but in which he was forced to live, and the ideal world he conceived in thought and imagination but was unable to realise. Between the two he felt himself a vagrant soul, a strange wanderer at home with neither the world he conceived nor the one he inhabited. When earlier in his formative years he was confronted either in Nazareth or in Poltava with a similar state of spiritual torment, he used to withdraw from the outside world and resort to periods of utter silence, confining only to his pen and diary. In his present situation, committed to his everyday work and to public life, though actual silence was no more possible, the pen and the diary were still available. Why not then, Naimy must have thought, attempt to write the diary of an imaginary man who can be supposed to be facing the same spiritual crisis, and, consequently, to have committed himself to silence. The only difference this time would be that the diary so written, unlike the one written in Poltava, should be intended for publication ."(1)

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(1) See: Mikhail Naimy - an Introduction by Nadeem Naimy, pp. 162-163.

Back to Biskinta.

Biskinta, al-Shakhrūb and Ṣannīn - there Mikhail Naimy found himself after twenty years of wandering, filled with a feeling of enchantment. Here, he seems to have felt, was the part of the world to which he belonged. A world where men and women lived in peace, tilling the land with their own hands, with their souls safe from the crushing paws of the machine. "Do excuse my rough hands" a woman said to him, shaking hands with him on his return. "I am the one to apologise - my hands are far too smooth!" he answers. "What a world this is, in which the giving hand apologises to the one that receives. I say to you that the hand made rough by toil, is a hand that shakes that of the Lord and works with it in giving birth to the good of the earth."<sup>(1)</sup>

Away from the life in the "frightful whirlpool", and surrounded by the peace and calm of Biskinta, the civilisation of the West, seen in perspective, seemed to him a "civilisation of machines and crises".<sup>(2)</sup> The Depression in the States was not the singular plight of that country, but "the plight of a civilisation whose head is in its pocket, and whose heart is in its factory. If you press hard the pocket, then it will choke. If you close the gates of its factories, you will be closing the gates of its heart."<sup>(3)</sup> That Western

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(1) Sabʿūn, III, p. 43 (From a speech given on his return to the villagers)

(2) This is the title of an article by Naimy in Zād al-Maʿād, pp. 36-43.

(3), Zād al-Maʿād, p. 39.

civilisation has enabled men to cover thousands of miles in a matter of hours is of no importance in his view, as long as the "distance" between Man and what he knows about his inner self is still the same. (1)

After Mikhail Naimy's return to the Lebanon, one of the main themes of his talks, writings and general outlook revolved round the bankruptcy of modern Western civilisation, its inherently inhumane nature and harshness. Instead of the little rooms which he lived in in New York, overlooking the backyards of huge buildings occupied by commercial agencies, he built himself a little tent made of tree branches in al-Shakhrūb, where he came to spend his summers in isolation. There, he hardly read the daily newspapers "lest they should interrupt the serenity of my isolation or spoil my meditations". (2) He came to be known in the Arab World as "The Hermit of al-Shakhrūb". (3) In his little hermitage,

(1) Zad al-Ma'ad, p. 39.

(2) Sab'un, III, p. 48.

(3) Mikhail Naimy was first called "The Hermit of al-Shakhrūb" "نابك الشروب" by Tawfiq 'Awād, a friend of his who stayed with him for a short time in al-Shakhrūb. 'Awād, a prominent short story writer, wrote a series of articles about Mikhail Naimy following his visit. It is since the publication of these articles that Naimy came to be known as "نابك الشروب". See: Sawt al-'Alam, p. 152.

Mikhail Naïmy devotes his time to reading and writing and occasionally looks after cattle or works on the land. The villagers would see him carrying his sickle or leading the cows to the Spring. The life he leads seems to stem from a genuine love for the land, for nature, and for those who are closest to it. He wants to be close to those who spend their lives in the company of the earth and cattle, to be one of them, a partner who is no better than they are. Lying on his bed in that tent, he would often go back in his mind to the gloomy little rooms in which he had lived in New York, comparing them with his tent.

"I felt often overwhelmed by the feeling that He who provided me with all these blessings, has been too generous to me. For purity and the light of the sun filled my days, and my nights were seas of calm and peace. Tides of feelings, devoid of desires, suspicion, rancour, hatred or covetousness for the wealth of others, shrouded my whole being. - All this for nothing, and for the love of God the Generous, and for a period of six months without fear of rain, heat or cold."<sup>(1)</sup>

Mikhail Naïmy's philosophy of acceptance of the "will of life", which verges on fatalism or quietism, had to stand a test. His brother Nasīb, to whom he was attached, died after a long illness. Running to Sannīn to bring his dying brother a handful

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, III, p. 52.

of snow which he had asked for, Mikhail Naimy prayed for his brother's life, though he knew he was dying, "but if he does not die today, he will after a few days or years So will I. So will every creature on the face of this earth. Or do I want, for the sake of my brother and myself, to banish death from the earth? No, for life is the food of death, and death is the provision of life. They both complement each other, and as such there is no point in talking of "life" and "death" What we should think of is the power beyond and further than both, the power that no mind or imagination could grasp now, the power which no pen or tongue could describe." (1)

Although this attitude towards the tragic death of his brother was congruous with Mikhail Naimy's philosophy, one can not fail to see that it enhanced his disposition to live in his own world; for it was after the death of Nasīb that Mikhail Naimy took a huge hollow rock in al-Shakhrūb (which he called "The Ark" as he imagined it to resemble Noah's Ark) for his hermitage. In that hollow rock he would spend most of his day meditating, writing or talking to people who came to see him from all parts of the Arab World. He now seems to be confirmed in his renunciation of the glories and desires of this world. "Some time ago" he writes, "I buried five of my fifty-five desires the desire for power, the

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(1) Sabʿūn, III, pp. 87-88.

desire for wealth, the desire for women, the desire for fame, and the desire to be immortal. But yesterday, I thought of visiting the graves of my buried desires. Over the first grave, I found a crown on the top of which there was a worn out shoe. Over the second, I found a heap of gold which ants took for a dwelling place. Over the third, I found a white lily to which butterflies swarmed to smell and caress. Over the fourth, I found the skeleton of an old woman mangled by worms, crows and snakes. As to the fifth grave, I found it open with nothing buried in it".<sup>(1)</sup> This yearning for immortality seems now to be the only desire which he is unable to overcome. In this he is not thinking of himself as an individual, but as the symbol of Man in his wish to overcome death. It is not the desire of Man to be immortal by his work, but the desire for the immortality of his soul. It is not only that he himself "buried the desire for power", but he feels repulsed by other people's craving for it. How far they are, he thinks to himself, from the sublime teaching of Christ when he says: "he of you who wants to be a master, let him be a servant to all."<sup>(2)</sup> A well-known politician asks him to accept nomination for parliament in his group, assuring him that this would be followed by a seat in the cabinet. The well-known politician

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(1) Karmāla Darb, p. 76.

(2) St. Matthew, Ch. 23, V. II.

hints that a Foreign Power is behind that suggestion. Mikhail Naimy's answer is a definite refusal "for if I won the membership of parliament and the ministry, I would lose myself and all that I have built in years. What I have built for myself is too dear for me to sacrifice for the sake of a seat in parliament or in the cabinet."<sup>(1)</sup> When offered a large sum of money to take part in a propaganda campaign for a "certain country" at a time when he was in need, Mikhail Naimy rejected the offer with contempt. For the student of Mikhail Naimy, there is no reason to doubt that his integrity is exemplary. He is not only a famous writer in the Arab world, but a man who enjoys the greatest respect and admiration. What one finds difficult to understand is his attitude to women. He admits that the sexual desire is one of the most difficult desires to repress, but "even this desire surrendered to me after I was able to turn my mind and heart away from it to what was much more sublime. I no longer look upon women the way the male looks upon the female. Mine is the outlook of a man who believes that his nature and that of the woman are complementary, not through the close union of their bodies, but through the union of their souls, and that the physical union hampers the union of

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, III, p. 97.

their souls      This is the reason why I discarded the idea of marriage altogether."<sup>(1)</sup>

In the "Ark" Mikhail Naimy wrote a large portion of his works and articles after his return to the Lebanon. The first work he wrote in his hermitage was the biography of Gibrān Khalil Gibrān which aroused a great deal of controversy in the Arab World ,owing to the novel method in which he chose to write his book. Another book which he wrote in his isolation was The Book of Mirdād, which he considers to represent the climax in his thought. The book was written originally in English and later he translated it into Arabic. Later he translated Gibrān's biography into English as well as Mudhakkarāt al-Arqash, which he called Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul and Liqā', which he called Till We Meet. Through his writings in English, Mikhail Naimy came to be known outside the Arab world.

At the age of seventy-seven Mikhail Naimy still leads a simple life in Biskinta up on the mountain in the Lebanon. The change in the world around him, from the flickering gas lamp in the old house in which he was born, to the world of rockets and the dazzling inventions of Man, seem only to confirm his belief that what matters is Man and his soul, and not what he is surrounded with, or what his hands make.

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(1) Sab'un, III, p. 99.



## Chapter II

### The Influences on his Thought.

"What, have they not journeyed in  
the land  
So that they have hearts to under-  
stand with or ears to hear with."

The Holy Qu'rān, XXII (al-Hajj), 46.<sup>(1)</sup>

The key note in Mikhail Naimy's personality and thought is his deep religious sense. Although born as an Orthodox Christian, his Christianity has never been orthodox in the early stages of his life and before going to Russia, he accepted without question the teachings of the Church. But after returning from Russia, he started to ask questions "How is it that Christ should be the "only" Son of God, and that I should not be so, when Christ calls me his brother, and teaches me to call His Father my Father?"<sup>(2)</sup> This, and many other similar questions, preoccupied Mikhail Naimy's inquisitive mind, and he seems ultimately to reject the established teachings of the Church, while clinging to the example of Christ and his sublime teachings. However, his questioning of

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(1) The Arabic text of this Quranic verse reads:

”أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَلَوْنَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ مِنْ أَدْعَائِهِمْ أَنْ لَا تَسْمَعُونَ لَهَا“  
”سورة الحج“

(2) Sab<sup>un</sup>, I, p. 274.

the teachings of the Church does not lead him to reject the divinity of Christ. In his memoirs while in Russia, he writes, "I have read "Vie de J̄esus" by Renan. It seems to me that the writer who tried to deprive Christ of the quality of divinity, ended by making him Divine, when he placed him in such a position of perfection as no human being could ever attain to. His silence with respect to Christ's miracles is evidence that he does not understand them, or that he is unable to explain them. The Bible was - and still is - my only consolation. It will always be so."<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, he thinks that Christians have deserted the teachings of the Christ who says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and insult you."<sup>(2)</sup> to Mikhail Naïmy, love is the only way that leads to true understanding, "for understanding is the way to freedom - or to Salvation."<sup>(3)</sup> He often emphasises that if we turn our minds whole-heartedly to the good which we seek, we are bound to attain to it, and thus would be fulfilling Christ's command, "Ask and the gift will come; seek, and you shall find; knock and the door shall

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, I, p. 273.

(2) St. Matthew, Ch. 5, V. 44.

(3) Ab<sup>c</sup>ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 47.

be opened to you. Everyone that asks, will receive; that seeks will find; that knocks, will have the door opened for him."<sup>(1)</sup>

In "The Face of Jesus",<sup>(2)</sup> an article in which Mikhail Naimy imagines himself a witness to the crucifixion, one feels the deep love that he has for Christ here he presents to us a picture of the crowds, swayed by the sight of blood and pain, spitting on the face of Jesus, and pouring bitterness into the heart of the One Who had nothing but love for their weakness. Human beings are presented to us with all the conflicting desires by which they are overwhelmed. On the other hand, Naimy draws

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(1) St. Matthew, Ch. 6, V. 6-9. This idea is implied in Mikhail Naimy's short story entitled "New Birth" (سيرة جديدة) (Abū Baṭṭāh, pp. 174-181). A paralysed young boy is told by his mother to pray to Christ whole-heartedly on Christmas Eve to cure him, which he does. A thief gets into the boy's room, whom he takes to be Christ coming to cure him. The boy prays to the thief to cure him. Feeling pity for the boy, the thief takes the boy by the hand and asks him to walk. The miracle happens as the bells of Bethlehem ring. This story and several others, reflect the extent to which Mikhail Naimy's mind is influenced by the teachings of Christ. It is clear here that he is influenced by Christ's teaching that if we have true faith, then we would be able to do wonders. The Holy Bible states "The Apostles said to the Lord, Give us more faith. And the Lord said, if you had faith, though it were as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, Uproot thyself and plant thyself in the sea, and it would obey you." St. Luke, Ch.17, V.5-6.

(2) Al-Marāḥil, p. 28.

an impressive picture of the tortured Jesus, bearing with patience and forgiveness all the pain and humiliation inflicted on Him. Mikhail Naimy with his great artistic ability, coupled with his deep love and reverence for Christ, makes the words of Christ, "Oh Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" reflect impressively the sharp contrast between the human and the Divine. "That is the face in which I take refuge from the faces of human beings."<sup>(1)</sup>

In al-Marāḥil, Mikhail Naimy expounds his own interpretation of some of Christ's teachings to him "The Kingdom of God" is a spiritual state attained by those whose souls are freed from the bonds of matter. This, according to him, is what Christ meant when he said to his disciples "The Kingdom of God is here within you."<sup>(2)</sup> The immense influence which the teachings of Christ

(1) Al-Marāḥil, p. 36.

(2) Ibid., pp. 41-42. It seems that Mikhail Naimy's interpretation of the phrase "The Kingdom of God" as being a spiritual state, is based on the verse in the Holy Bible which states, "You should not be asking, then, what you are to eat or drink, and living in suspense of mind;

it is for the heathen world to busy itself over such things; your Father knows well that you need them. No, make it your first care to find the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be yours without the asking". St. Luke, Ch. 12, V. 29-31. And on the verse which states, "Upon being asked by the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God was to come, he answered, The Kingdom of God comes unwatched by men's eyes; there will be no saying, See, it is here, or See, it is there; the Kingdom of God is here, within you." St. Luke, Ch. 17, V. 20-22. Mikhail Naimy's preoccupation with Man's spiritual needs and his ardent belief that these should be given priority over any other needs is basically the result of the influence of the Holy Bible on his trend of thinking.

have on Mikhail Naimy is clearly reflected in Christ's repeatedly quoted sayings "If a man strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn the other cheek towards him", "Love your enemies", "Do not resist evil". Thus the element of love, which forms an essential part of the teachings of Christ in whom Mikhail Naimy ardently believed, despite the questions which his analytical mind raised, came to mould the essence of his thought and philosophy. Here love, that over-worked and often abused word, seems to have taken a mystical connotation in Naimy's contemplations, a trend which is not alien to Orthodox Christianity.<sup>(1)</sup> Hence, the student of Naimy's works is constantly aware of the tremendous impact which this Christian element of love, which almost takes a mystical form, had in formulating his thought which attempted to fathom the eternal problems of being and meaning of life.

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(1) In his book Mysticism in World Religion, Sidney Spencer writes (p. 226) "..... but again and again Eastern saints have felt themselves to be transfigured by the divine light which shone through Jesus. As Berdyaev has said "The idea of the divinization of man is the fundamental concept of Orthodox Christianity".

It may be of interest here to compare the mystical experience which Mikhail Naumy relates in his autobiography<sup>(1)</sup> with that of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887). Jefferies, the son of a Wiltshire farmer won a reputation as a writer who combined a remarkable power of observing nature with a deep poetical and philosophical insight. He is of particular interest, as he was, like Mikhail Naumy, a man "in whom mystical consciousness was very highly developed, but who could not find within the religious thought patterns with which he was familiar satisfactory answers to the questions which his mystical consciousness posed for him. Such answers as he was able to find he found solely through the contemplations of nature and of his own soul. There is in him a combination of nature-mysticism and soul-mysticism of a unique kind, springing out of a purely personal vision, which, since the material was not available to him, he had no means of interpreting and expressing, excepts in concepts which he had to invent for himself." (2)

In the following extract from Richard Jefferies book The Story of My Heart, he describes an experience which he went through, which strikes the reader as very similar to the experience described

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(1) Sabun, I, pp. 249-250 (Mikhail Naumy's experience is summarised in Ch. 1. of this study, pp. 29-31.)

(2) Mysticism - a Study and an Anthology, by F.C. Happold, p. 353.

by Mikhail Naumy in his autobiography. Jefferies wrote in Chapter 1 of this book

"With all the intensity of feeling which exalted me, all the intense communion I held with the earth, the sun and sky, the stars hidden by light, with the ocean - in no manner can the thrilling depth of these feelings be written - with these I prayed, as if they were the keys of an instrument, of an organ, with which I swelled forth the notes of my soul, redoubling my own voice by their power. The great sun burning with light; the strong earth, dear earth; the warm sky; the pure air; the thought of ocean; the inexpressible beauty of all filled me with a rapture, an ecstasy, an inflatus. With this inflatus, too, I prayed Next to myself I came and recalled myself, my bodily existence. I held out my hand, the sunlight gleamed on the skin and the iridescent nails; I recalled the mystery and the beauty of the flesh. I thought of the mind with which I could see the ocean sixty miles distant, and gather to myself its glory. I thought of my inner existence, that consciousness which is called the soul. These, that is, myself - I threw into the balance to weigh the prayer the heavier. My strength of body, mind and soul, I flung into it; I put forth my strength; I wrestled and laboured, and toiled in might of prayer. The prayer, this soul-emotion was in itself - not for an object - it was a passion. I hid my face in the grass, I was wholly prostrated, I lost myself in the wrestle, and I was rapt and carried away.

Becoming calmer, I returned to myself and thought, reclining in rapt thought, full of aspiration, steeped to the lips of my soul in desire. I did not then define, or analyse, or understand this. I see now that what I laboured for was soul-life, more soul-nature, to be exalted, to be full of soul-learning. Finally I rose, walked half a mile or so along the summit of the hill eastwards, to sooth myself and come to the common ways of life again. Had any shepherd accidentally seen me lying on the turf, he would only have thought that I was resting a few minutes; I made no outward show. Who could have imagined the whirlwind of passion that was going on within me as I reclined there! I was greatly exhausted when I reached home. Occasionally I went upon the hill deliberately, deeming it good to do so; then, again, this craving carried me away up there of itself. Though the principal feeling was the same, there were variations in the mode in which it affected me."<sup>(1)</sup> Here we have the experience of a man living in a different environment from that of Naimy's, and at a different time, expressing in a strikingly similar manner, the yearnings of Man's soul and feelings. That this description of Jefferies of his experience, like that of Naimy's is vague, is indisputable. Nevertheless, they strike the

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(1) The Story of My Heart, pp. 26-28, by Richard Jefferies.



reader as genuine attempts to convey certain intimations of "something more than existence" which both Jefferies and Naimy seem to have gone through. If only they succeed in making us realise that Man has not yet brought into play anything like the power of which he is capable, and which forms the core of his spiritual life, then both descriptions will have achieved their purpose. Has not Wordsworth, that great lover of nature, expressed certain intimations, or "shadowy recollections" which

"Be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
Are yet the master-light of all our seeing".

Apart from the Christian element which forms the basis of Mikhail Naimy's trend of thought and which takes a mystical-humanitarian form, we find that his wide knowledge of Buddhism constitutes another factor which moulds his ideas. However, Mikhail Naimy's great interest in Buddhism is firmly linked with his basic idealistic Christian outlook on life in Christianity the idea of Original Sin tends to drive the ardent believer to struggle in order to achieve salvation. Likewise, Buddha taught that life on this earth is a series of desires, ambitions and greeds that lead Man from birth to death, and from death to birth. It is only by attaining to Nirvana that Man is able to rid himself of the fetters of matter which bind him to this earth. The core of Buddha's preaching, is

that there is a way, a path, whereby desire, which is the root of suffering, could be overcome. This fundamental Buddhist belief - which meets with the Christian outlook - seems to lie behind the admiration which Mikhail Naimy

has for Buddhism.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus in al-Marāḥīl, Mikhail Naimy takes the "Face of Buddha"<sup>(2)</sup> as one of the three faces that in his

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- (1) If the idea of salvation in Christianity is taken to mean the deliverance of Man's soul from evil, one could see that it would not be difficult for a Christian who believes in the necessity of seeking salvation to accept the Buddhist ideas concerning Nirvana, which is essentially a state in which Man rids himself of his worldly desires and cleans himself of sin. In the Early Scriptures of Buddhism, we read, "But he who has cleansed himself from sin, is well grounded in all virtues." (See The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, edited with commentary by E.A.Burt, Ch 1., The Twin Verses, p. 52). Likewise Christ's teachings concerning meeting violence with tolerance have their counterparts in the teachings of Buddha "For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love - this is an eternal law." From The Twin Verses, Ch.1, The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, p. 52.
- (2) This is the sub-title of three articles in al-Marāḥīl entitled "Three Faces" which include "The Face of Buddha", "The Face of Laotse", and "The Face of Christ" See al-Marāḥīl pp. 7-53.

view "dwarf the faces of all other human beings".<sup>(1)</sup> Together with the face of Buddha, and that of Christ, the face of Laotse is the third to which Mikhail Naimy turns his mind to take refuge in. To him, Laotse is "the angel of peace, the messenger of gentle-heartedness, the paragon of virtue and contentment".<sup>(2)</sup> The idea of the Tao which Laotse propagates, is concerned with emancipating Man from his earthly bonds, which probably explains its appeal to Mikhail Naimy's mind.<sup>(3)</sup> Thus, the ideas of Salvation, Nirvana, the Tao, which all lead, in different ways, to the freeing of the human soul from its bonds, played their part in moulding Mikhail Naimy's general trend of thought which is basically Christian. It is perhaps true to say that the life and

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(1) Al-Marāḥil, p. 8.

(2) Ibid, p. 16.

(3) It is not within the scope of this study to go into the details of the complex idea of the Tao. It is sufficient to mention here that a poem in The Book of Tao by Laotse (see The Wisdom of China edited and annotated by Lin Yutang, p. 41) seems to define the Tao as "the spirit out of which all spirits emanate". The idea, however, is shrouded with mystery. The poem referred to includes this line which states "The thing that is called Tao is elusive, evasive. Evasive, elusive."

teachings of Christ, Buddha,<sup>(1)</sup> and Laotse, though they vary in detail, have one thing in common, which seems to have the greatest impact on Mikhail Naimy's thought; this is that desire is the worst sin, that discontent is the worst misery, and that possessiveness is the worst human trait. Consequently, the climax of happiness will only be found in contentment.

Together with Buddhism, Hinduism seems also to have influenced Mikhail Naimy's thought since certain aspects of it seem to have appealed to his innate religious sense. His views on Man and his place in the Universe, life and death, good and evil,

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- (1) The teachings of Buddha concerning forgiveness, seem to be very similar to the teachings of Christ in this respect. Mikhail Naimy's great admiration for the teachings of Buddha seems accordingly to stem from their appeal, in certain respects, to his fundamental belief in the teachings of Christ. In The Sermon of Abuse (see The Wisdom of India edited and annotated by Lin Yutang, p. 473) Buddha says: "If a man foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love", which sounds strikingly similar to Christ's commandment "If a man strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn the other cheek towards him".

all seem to be influenced by his readings in the Bhagavad Gita<sup>(2)</sup> and Raja Yoga, a work by Vivekananda, the Indian mystic. In the Gita, the idea of the emancipation of the human soul from the bondage of the matter is prominent, so is the idea of contentment and rejection of worldly pleasures.

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- (1) In The Blessed Lord's Song (see The Wisdom of India edited by Lin Yutang, p. 115) the following lines contain the essence of one of Mikhail Naimy's ideas which he ardently believes in "He who is alike in pleasure and pain; self-possessed; regarding alike a lump of earth, a stone and gold, who is the same in what is pleasant and unpleasant, in praise and blame, and steady;

He who is alike in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, giving up all (selfish) undertakings, he is said to have crossed beyond the Gunas.

And he who, crossing over these Gunas, serves me with unwavering devotion, becomes fit to attain oneness with Brahman."

Mikhail Naimy's tendency to "select" from other faiths what appeals to his profound belief in the teachings of Christ is evident here also. For despite the fact that the Bhagavad Gita propagates the idea of emancipating Man's soul from selfishness, and despite its rich idealistic teachings, we should bear in mind that it is nevertheless based on the conversations between the warrior Arjuna and his charioteer "The Blessed Lord" the god Krishna. Arjuna, who refuses to kill his kinsmen in war, is led to believe by god Krishna that no one could be killed, since men's souls live for ever.

To Mikhail Naimy, the fundamentals in the teachings of Christ and those of Hinduism are the same; for both exhort Man to restrain his selfishness in order to attain to Union with God in Christianity, and Oneness with Brahman in Hinduism. Both faiths enjoin overcoming evil with forgiveness, and abstaining from inflicting pain, a creed which is called Ahimsha by the Hindus.

While a student at the University of Washington, a friend of Mikhail Naimy interested him in the idea of the transmigration of souls or Metempsychosis. This led him to read about the subject, and he soon came to believe in it. It replaced in his mind the idea of Original Sin and the Day of Judgement. Having adopted this idea he has since believed that Man attains to his own redemption by his own efforts, through experience which leads him to knowledge. Since knowledge is unattainable in one life, the doctrine of Metempsychosis makes of life a continuous movement, interrupted only by transmigration of the soul from one body to another. These interruptions are, according to this doctrine, what we call death. In his biography of Gibrān, we observe that the idea of the transmigration of souls is there; for on the night of Gibrān's birth in the Lebanon, Mary Haskell in America, who was then ten years old, is made to dream of Gibrān's birth.

In the history of Ancient Egypt, Mikhail Naimy believes that the ancient Egyptians believed in the immortality of the human

soul<sup>(1)</sup> and that they considered death as an immigration from one coast of life to another. Ancient Egyptian beliefs in this respect and the myth of the Phoenix which used to live for centuries in the Arabian desert, then burnt itself, only to rise from the ashes with renewed vigour to live through another cycle, seem to captivate Naimy's imagination.<sup>(2)</sup> He mentions that the Arabs invented the myth of al-'anqā' ( العنقاء ), the Persians that of the Simorg, the Indians Gharūda, the Japanese the Hu Oo. However, these different myths seem to enhance Naimy's belief in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. In al-Yawm al-Akhīr, Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān, and Liqā' his belief in this doctrine forms the essence of these works. That Science does not approve of this doctrine, does not concern Mikhail Naimy; for he maintains that Science has not yet unravelled the mysteries of human life. What also appeals to Naimy in this doctrine is that it puts an end to the fear of death, making it subservient to life. Moreover, it restores to "justice" "right" and "life" their true meanings; for in believing in this doctrine one has to accept the idea that

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- (1) The Book of the Dead is an ancient Egyptian work, which goes back forty centuries before the birth of Christ and which contains articles on the inner self, philosophy and poetry. These articles indicate that the ancient Egyptians believed in the immortality of the human soul.
- (2) Anecdota Syriaca is a latin work which tells about the myth of the Phoenix.

whatever pleasure or pain one feels, is the outcome of one's own work whether in this life or in previous lives.<sup>(1)</sup>

A Christian Arab thinker or writer, is bound by racial and linguistic considerations to have a close understanding of Islam, and Mikhail Naimy is no exception. Is not the language which he loves, and of which he is a master, that of the Qu'ṣān? However, Mikhail Naimy seems here to be faced with a dilemma unable to condone the use of force which Islam justifies in certain cases, out of a genuine aversion to bloodshed whatever the cause may be, he seems to belittle "the glories brought about by the swords of Khālīd b. al-Walīd, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀs, and Ṭarīq b. Zayād,<sup>(2)</sup> and to think of Arab conquests as no more than "the froth that the Arabs aroused in their outburst from the Arab Peninsula".<sup>(3)</sup> In his view, the great miracle of the Arabs is the Qu'ṣān, for that was the miracle which established for the Arabs and non-Arabs an

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(1) See al-Yawm al-Akhīr, pp. 156-159.

(2) Fī Mahabb al-Rīḥ, p. 22. Mikhail Naimy tends to think here of these great figures in the history of the Arabs merely as military leaders. Is it possible, one wonders, to draw a line between their military achievements and their idealistic belief in Islam? Surely, the idealistic element in their characters must have played an important role in bringing about their military success.

(3) *Ibid*, p. 22.



aim in life. Moreover, it proved to them, through the life of the Prophet and his Companions, that it was possible to attain to that aim, for the life of the Prophet and early Caliphs is full of precepts to be followed.<sup>(1)</sup> Mikhail Naimy expresses his admiration for the nobility in the Prophet's character, but remains silent about the Prophet as a statesman and as a leader, The Prophet is not one of the "Three Faces" (that of Buddha, Laotse and Christ) to which he turns his mind, and which he considers "dwarf the faces of all other human beings". But if the Prophet, not unnaturally, is not one of his champions in the history of Man, we find him expressing his admiration for the great mystics and thinkers of Islam. Ibn al-Fārīd,<sup>(2)</sup> al-Hallāj<sup>(3)</sup>, Ibn al-ʿArabī<sup>(4)</sup> and Abū al-ʿAlā<sup>(5)</sup>. It is the free thinker rather than the

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(1) Fī Mahabb al-Riḥ, p. 22.

(2) Sharaf al-Dīn Umar Ibn al-Fārīd, the famous Arab mystic was born — and died in Cairo (1181-1235 A.D.) — His mystical poetry is — characterised by the glow and exquisite beauty of its diction. The longest piece in his Dīwān is a Hymn of Divine Love entitled Nazm al-Sulūk "نظم السُّلُوك" (Poem on the Mystic's Progress). Ibn al-Fārīd was accused of favouring the doctrine of hulūl "هُلُول", i.e. the incarnation of God in human beings. Thus Mikhail Naimy, with his belief in pantheism, holds Ibn al-Fārīd in great esteem. Ibn al-Fārīd's Khamriyyah, or Hymn of Wine, is perhaps one of the most celebrated poems ever written in Arabic.

The opening line in this ode reads  
 "سَرَبْنَا عَلَى ذِكْرِ الْحَبِيبِ مُدَامَةً سَكَّرْنَا بِهَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُخْلَقَ الْخَمْرُ"

- (3) Ḥusayn b. Mansūr al-Ḥallāj, the great Arab mystic was executed in the Caliphate of Muqtadir (922 A.D.) The well-known British Orientalist, Alfred Guillaume, has this to say about him in his book Islam (p. 145) "He taught that Man was God incarnate, and he looked to Jesus rather than to Muhammad as the supreme example of glorified humanity. God is Love, and in his love he created man after his own image so that man might find that image within himself and attain to union with the divine nature. He used the term ḥulūl, meaning in-dwelling, a word which is associated in Muslim literature with the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. His most heinous offence in the eyes of the orthodox was his claim "anā al-Ḥaqq" " أَنَا الْحَقُّ " i.e. "I am the truth". He was well aware of the risk he was taking. He was condemned to death, and as he was led forth to be crucified and saw the cross and the nails he prayed for the bystanders in words that inevitably recall one of the sayings of Jesus on the cross "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"."
- (4) Muḥyī al-Dīn Muhammad b. Alī Ibn al-ʿArabī was born at Murcia in Spain in 1165 A.D. He travelled to the East where he stayed for a long time in al-Ḥijāz, then settled in Damascus where he died in the year 1240 A.D. His two most celebrated works are al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah " الفتوحات المكية " i.e. "Meccan Revelations" and "Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikām" or "Bezels of Wisdom". Ibn al-ʿArabī's Futūḥāt is a voluminous work which contains his system of mystical science. Reynold Nicholson the famous British Orientalist says about Ibn al-ʿArabī in his work A Literary History of the Arabs (p. 401). "Many theologians were scandalised by the apparently blasphemous expressions which occur in his writings, and taxed him with holding heretical doctrines, e.g. the incarnation of God in man ḥulūl ( حُلُول ) and the identification of man with God ittiḥād ( إِتِّحَاد )".

Mikhail Naimy, whose thought is basically influenced by the Christian idea of love embracing all humanity, is bound to admire Ibn al-ʿArabī who says

"My heart is capable of every form,  
A cloister for the monk, a fane for idols,  
A pasture for gazelles, the pilgrim's Kaʿba,  
The tables of the Torah, the Koran.  
Love is the faith I hold wherever turn  
His camels, still the one true faith is mine"

(The Arabic text of these verses are to be found in Tarjuman al-Ashwāq, which is a collection of Ibn al-ʿArabī's mystical odes. The translation of these verses is by R. Nicholson. See A Literary History of the Arabs, p. 403.)

- (5) On Abū al-ʿAlāʾ see foot-note p. 13 Ch. 1. of this study.

dogmatist in Islam who leaves his mark on Mikhail Naimy's mind. Much as he admires the great thinkers, writers and philosophers of Medieval Islam,<sup>(1)</sup> he is a modernist and a revolutionary who wages war against traditionalism in the literature of his time. This revolution against the stagnation of Modern Arabic Literature is the result of his wide reading in Western Literature, especially Russian and Anglo-Saxon. Western methods of criticism and concepts of the meaning of literature left a deep impression on his thinking, a matter which can be clearly seen in al-Ghīrbāl, his main work on literary criticism. It is important here to remember that although Mikhail Naimy is one of the pioneers in Modern Arabic Literature who introduced Western concepts and methods of criticism, he never aimed at severing our relations with the past. In the constitution of al-Rabīṭah, of which he was the author, he stated, "Yet do we not aim to break away completely from the ancients. For there be some among them who will remain to us and to those who follow a source of inspiration for many ages to come. To reverence them is a great honour. To imitate them is a deadly shame. For our life, our needs, our circumstances

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(1) Despite this admiration, Mikhail Naimy states in al-Ghīrbāl that "It would be unfair if you put any of them on the same footing with Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Hugo, Zola, Goethe and Tolstoy".  
See al-Ghīrbāl, p. 48.

are different from theirs. We must be true to ourselves if we would be true to our ancestors....."(1)

Mikhail Naimy's life both in Russia and the United States had a tremendous impact on his thought. In Russia, he came to know the country and its people so well that he felt almost a native of that land. Before long, Mikhail Naimy mastered the Russian language and came to speak it and write it with ease. The history of the country, the traditions of its people, all came to be familiar to him. He read extensively the great masters of Russian Literature. Through the stories of Gogol, he came to know about the naïve and simple life of the Russian peasant, his patience, good-heartedness, and love for his land, just as he came to know about the greed and cruelty of the landlords who exploited him. The poetry of Pushkin, Lermontov, and others made him feel the deep melancholy and sadness in the character of the Russian. The hopes and aspirations of the Russians for a better life, free from injustice and tyranny as expressed by Dostoyevsky impressed him immensely. Much as he enjoyed reading the various writers and poets of Russian Literature, Tolstoy came to be the one whom he admired most. For in him he saw the writer and philosopher who delved deeply into the meaning of life and death, a subject which had always preoccupied Mikhail

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(1) Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān, English edition, p. 156.

Naimy's thoughts. Critics like Belinsky moulded his ideas about the value of a literary work and the role of the writer in society. All those, not to mention Gorky and Chekhov whom he admired, opened up a new world for him as regards the meaning of literature. Moreover, he came to be aware of the stagnation and insignificance of contemporary Arabic literature, where writers and poets vied with each other in playing with words, flowery phrases and rhymed prose. In Russia, the seeds of rebellion against the outmoded concepts in contemporary Arabic Literature were sown in him. His admiration for Russian Literature and the affection which he felt towards the Russians came to be one of the most salient features affecting his thought and personality.<sup>(1)</sup>

If Russia, the Russians and Russian Literature revealed up a new world to Mikhail Naimy, his life in the United States defined what course his thought was to take later on; for here he found

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(1) It seems that the idealism of Russian writers appealed to the idealistic trait in Mikhail Naimy's personality. In al-Nūr wa al-Dayjūr p. 66, he states, "In Russian Literature the number of idealistic writers is unparalleled, although their idealism was often shattered on the rocks of hard reality". In this respect, the idealism of Mikhail Naimy in the Arab World is, in a sense, similar to the idealism of the Russian writers of the last century, in that it often sounds a cry in the wilderness which nobody heeds.

himself face to face with modern Western civilization, and it is through coming into close contact with that civilization that he was compelled to define his attitude towards it. From the outset, one notices that Mikhail Naimy found it difficult to become a member of the new society he came to live in. In Russia the old, established, traditional, Orthodox Christian society made the process of adapting himself to that society easy for him while the new adventurous, experimental, multiracial society in America, which on the whole, looked upon the problems of life as practical problems, created a critical attitude in him towards it. This was not unnatural in a young university student whose own mind was entirely absorbed by the baffling questions of what life meant, while most of his colleagues' interests revolved around baseball, football, or some other sport. The contrast between his feeling at the Seminary in Poltava and his feeling as a university student in America is very sharp. ~~in Russia he felt he was very close to other~~ students, while in America, he never felt any attachment to the university.<sup>(1)</sup> This feeling \_\_\_\_\_→

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(1) In his autobiography - Sab'un, II, p. 27 - Mikhail Naimy describes how he was repelled by the atmosphere of joviality which prevailed at the University of Washington where he studied. "That great interest in baseball, football and other sports was extremely repulsive to me; for it was incompatible with my earnest attitude towards everything. Boyhood, I felt, was the time for merriment, while youth was the time when we should try to fathom the meaning of existence. It may be that I felt older than I was, and perhaps my American companions were right in extending the days of boyhood to embrace their university life."

of detachment from his environment seems to have accompanied him throughout his stay in the United States. For there, he felt that Science, which formed the basis of the civilization which he came into contact with, is not a sufficient guide for Man in his struggle to understand the meaning and aims of life. Science relies entirely on the mind, and Mikhail Naimy's innate and religious sense rebelled against the idea that our lives can be governed entirely by our minds. Moreover, he rebelled against the tendency of Western civilization to engross Man in his immediate and material needs, when he deeply felt that there must be more to Man's life than the satisfaction of his desires. However, this does not mean that he adopted a passive attitude towards Western civilization and culture; for, as he devoured Russian literature when he was in Poltava, he read everything he could lay his hands upon in the United States, until he came to be as familiar with Anglo-Saxon literature, as he was with Russian literature. If, however, Mikhail Naimy objected to the interference of the machine in Man's life in Western society, he was aware of the vitality of Anglo-Saxon literature, which led him to compare it with the stagnant Modern Arabic literature, as had also been the case when he read Russian literature. The seed of rebellion which was sown in him in Russia against the literary life of the Arabs, came to grow during his stay in America, the more so, as there was a large and active Arab community



in that country. His closeness to Arab writers and poets in America, who shared with him the same concepts in literature, and with whom he founded al-Rabīṭah, gave him the chance to play a leading role in the war against the stagnant Arabic Literature of the time. The more Mikhail Naimy was immersed in English literature, the more rebellious he became against the concept of literature in the Arab world and the need to revolutionize it.

Chapter III.

Fundamental Themes.

"God is the Light of the heavens and the Earth;  
the likeness of His Light is as a niche  
Wherein is a lamp  
(the Lamp in a glass,  
the glass as it were a glittering star)  
Kindled from a Blessed Tree,  
an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West;  
Whose oil well nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it;  
Light upon Light,  
God guides to His Light whom He will."

The Holy Qu'ran, XXIV. (Light), 35.

"My son! There is nothing in this world, that is not God  
He is action, purity, everlasting spirit.  
Find him in the Cavern; gnaw the knot of ignorance.  
Shining, yet hidden, Spirit lives in the cavern.  
Everything that sways, breathes, opens, closes, lives in  
Spirit; beyond learning, better than anything; living,  
unliving.

It is the undying blazing spirit, that seed of all seeds,  
wherein lay hidden the world and all its creatures. It is  
life, speech, mind, reality, immortality."

From the Mundaka-Unpanishad.

"There is a spirit in the soul, untouched by time and flesh,  
flowing from the Spirit, remaining in the Spirit, itself  
wholly spiritual. In this principle is God, ever verdant,  
ever flowering in all the joy and glory of His actual Self.  
Sometimes I have called this principle the Tabernacle of the  
Soul, sometimes a spiritual Light, anon I say it is a spark.  
But now I say that it is more exalted over this and that than  
the heavens are exalted above the earth. So now I name it in  
a nobler fashion..... It is free of all names and void of all  
forms. It is one and simple, as God is one and simple, and  
no man in any wise behold it."

Eckhart.

"The Power which controls the Universe" - is one of the main themes which Mikhail Naimy deals with in his writings. For an Orthodox Christian thinker with fervent religious feelings who rebels against the established teachings of the Church, either as a result of his own rethinking of what he had been taught, or as a result of his own readings and personal experience, it is not unnatural that he should try to seek a philosophy which would satisfy his innate religious nature. When he writes about this Power, he seems deliberately to avoid using any conventional terms which might lead the reader to think that he is "talking to him about a God whose primary purpose is to watch over every movement, thought or desire of human beings, in order that he may reward the good amongst them with the joy of Paradise, and punish the bad with the fire of Hell".<sup>(1)</sup> But, since he finds it necessary to use a specific term which indicates this Power, he calls it the "Cosmic Order" "النظام الكوني". Mikhail Naimy's concept of this Order is based on a deductive method of reasoning and observation "To know with certainty that a young boy will some day grow to be a man, or that the sun will rise tomorrow as it did today, or that a seed sown in the autumn will grow to be a grain in the spring, all this must lead one to realise that one lives in a world controlled by

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscu wa min Washinton, p. 51.

an Order".<sup>(1)</sup> Accordingly, he believes that whatever we do, think or desire, is the outcome of our obedience to this Order which we, and the things around us, form a part. Thus, it is our duty to seek to know this Order, so that we may obey it out of understanding and contentment, a course which will save us from misery and be a source of strength and tranquility to us. All our faiths, philosophies, sciences, and arts are no more than our attempts to fathom the mysteries of this Order, to unveil its secrets, so that we may be able to avoid committing the mistakes which are made as a result of our ignorance of this Order, or as a result of our intransigence. These faults or mistakes which we commit are labeled as our "sins" in holy books, but we are not to blame if we commit them, for we are bound to do so, just as a child is bound to fall before he learns to walk properly. The mistake we should never make, is to repudiate the existence of the Cosmic Order, or to imagine that we have full control over our lives and destinies, and that we are capable of moulding them according

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(1) Ab<sup>e</sup>ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 52.

to our own wishes.<sup>(1)</sup>

Man's aim in life, according to Mikhail Naimy, should be to seek a better knowledge of the Cosmic Order. For it is only through our knowledge of the Order that we will become perfect. The Order itself has provided us with the means through which we will be able to come to know it. These are our analytical mind (العقل), our inner feelings (الوجدان) which are able to set the standards for our moral and aesthetic values, and our insight (الخيال) which is able to carry us beyond the boundaries within which the mind is confined. Although the Order endowed Man with these forces, very few individuals<sup>(2)</sup> were able to use them to unveil the mysteries of the Order of which life is a part. These same forces are abused by the majority of human beings, who often use them to their own destruction.

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(1) This tendency towards fatalism in Mikhail Naimy is unique among modern Arab writers and thinkers, especially those who lived in the West during the same period as he did. Salāma Mūsā is a good example of Arab thinkers in modern times, who, after living in the West, became an ardent socialist, and attributed the backwardness of the Arab World mainly to its peoples' fatalistic attitude towards life. See "Tarbiyat Salāma Mūsā". (The Education of Salāma Mūsā) translated by L.O.Schuman, in which he states (p. 181) "Materialistic thought implies evolutionary freedom, whereas occult thought petrifies and stagnates. In the first, we realize our freedom, but in the other we are imprisoned."

(2) Mikhail Naimy is probably referring here to Prophets or to the Mystics.

Mikhail Naïmy's ideas about what he calls the Cosmic Order are founded not only on his deductive reasoning but also on his meditations "For I have a deep feeling that my inner world, and the world around me, are organized in a most astounding manner, and that there is nothing in this universe but succumbs to its organization, whether in respect of its creation, movement, growth or decay".<sup>(1)</sup> In one of his meditations on the subject, he is led to believe that this Order is nothing other than the Eternal Mind; the Whole, the Perfect, the Comprehensive, out of which his own mind, and the mind of every human being emanates. The instinct of every plant, insect or animal, the particles of all bodies, all emanate from this Eternal Mind. As his own mind (or that of Man), emanates from the Eternal Mind, it follows that it does not differ from it "except in as far as the seed differs from the tree from which it comes, or as a child differs from his parents, or the stream from the sea. The seed, if planted in a congenial environment, will develop into a tree, the child will develop into a man or a woman, and the stream into a lake or a sea. Likewise, my mind, given the congenial environment, which is Time, will develop until it becomes whole, comprehensive, and perfect like

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, III, p. 15.

the Eternal Mind from which it emanated."<sup>(1)</sup> In his work Mikhail Naïmy, an Introduction, Nadeem Naïmy summarises Mikhail Naïmy's doctrine of the Cosmic Law by saying "... . The gist of this theory, a combination of Taoism, Buddhism, Platonism and Christianity, all moulded within an overall theosophic framework, is that all the world of contingent existence is a manifestation of an all-pervading World Soul of transcendental reality, or God, conceivable only through inner vision; that the human soul is an eternal spark of God entrapped by the lower world of spatiotemporal phenomena; and that the meaning of life is to realise one's divine origin and, through spiritual sublimation and self-negation, which may continue over several life-times, to break loose from one's earthly bondage and finally reunite with the absolute."<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Sab<sup>u</sup>n, III, pp. 16-17.

It is possible that this idea is based on the idea that Man is the image of God. Man, after the Fall, detached himself from God (The Scriptures "سَمَّاكَدِين"), but as there remained in him the seed of divinity, Naïmy seems to maintain that he is bound to grow to become, ultimately, one with God. Here again one feels that Mikhail Naïmy's philosophy is based on fundamental Christian beliefs, although he invariably endeavours to extend it beyond the beliefs of one particular faith.

(2) See Mikhail Naïmy, an Introduction pp. 222-223. by Nadeem Naïmy.

As a result of his belief in the Cosmic Order, Mikhail Naimy came to believe that nothing ever happens accidentally or by chance within the realm of the Order, which encompasses everything. For, as it is an "Order" that controls the universe, things that happen to us never do so haphazardly, but their happening always has a purpose and a motive. Man's happiness or misery depends on the extent to which he is able to adapt his thinking so as to be congruous and in full harmony with what Mikhail Naimy calls "the Oneness of life which is all-comprehensive".<sup>(1)</sup> Man should make the will of life his own will, but if he is unable to understand the wisdom behind some aspects of life within the Order - birth and death, joy and pain, the phenomena of growth and decay - this will not remain beyond his comprehension forever. For the Cosmic Order provides Man with the experiences which are bound to widen the horizon of his comprehension. Even these very aspects of life which he is unable to understand now, will come to be understood by the experience of going through them. The very fact that Man has a tremendous yearning to unravel the mysteries of the Order, is in itself an indication that the Order exists. For this yearning is similar to the feeling of hunger - its mere existence is an indication that food must exist.

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(1) Sab'un, III, p. 61.



This belief in the existence of the Cosmic Order, leads Mikhail Naimy to another belief that Man's illusory ego, or Man's shadow, will ultimately merge with the Universal Spirit where all egos will melt in the One, the Absolute. It is then that Man's shadow or his ego will attain the tranquility of being united with the universe around him of which he in fact, forms an integral part. In fact, Naimy uses the very word "الطمأنينه" - Tranquility - as the title of a poem to express this belief in the close attachment between Man's shadow or his illusory ego with the Universal Spirit. This will achieve for Man the serenity which he has been struggling for since time immortal

My house is wrought of steel,  
My house is built on stone.  
Blow, winds, if so ye will,  
And O ye trees, make moan,  
Swim in the skies, O cloud,  
And let your torrents fall,  
Crash, thunders, long and loud;  
No terrors me appal -  
My roof is wrought of steel,  
My house is built on stone.

My candle's little light  
Is all I need, to see  
However long the night  
And wide the shadows be,  
What though the dawn may die  
And day be plain too soon,  
Stars, vanish from the sky,  
Put out thy flame, O moon -  
My candle's little light  
Is all I need, to see.

Whatever may befall,  
My heart is fortified  
Assail me, troubles all,  
At dawn and eventide,  
Misfortunes, march you on  
With misery and pain,  
Bring your battalion  
Ye plagues of mortal men -  
Whatever may befall,  
My heart is fortified.

Fortune has ta'en my part  
And Fate is mine ally  
Ye evils, round my heart  
Now let your lightnings fly!  
Death dig your trenches here  
And let your traps be laid,  
No injury I fear,  
No punishment I dread -  
Fortune has ta'en my part  
And Fate is my ally. (1)

The student of Naimy feels that when using the word "nafs"  
"نَفْسٌ", he does not mean by it the phenomenal, transient self of  
Man, but the greater self, the changeless, the immortal. It may  
be that he is influenced here again by the Hindu conception of  
"Self". (2) For in "Tranquility" the poet seems to assure us that  
the misery and unhappiness of Man lies in his mistaken belief that  
there exists two worlds the world of good, and the world of evil,

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(1) Modern Arabic Poetry - An Anthology with English Verse.

Translations by A.J.Arberry, p. 65.

(2) The Atman in Hinduism is a Universal as well as a personal self.

In its essence it is one with Everlasting Spirit. It may be that  
Naimy's idea of "اتصال النفس بالكون" is derived from his readings  
of the Upanishads and Hinduism in general.

and that there exists more than one "ذات" "Essential Self" in these two worlds, when in fact there is only one world with one "Self". Elaborating on this point Naimy writes

"This sensory world in which we live is a space-time conditioned world and, therefore, a dual world in which everything is in a constant flux of change. Yet behind this change and through it is a Constancy which never changes. It is the Power that makes for change. That Constancy or that Power is the Ultimate Reality which is beyond time and space, beyond good and evil, and beyond all dualities; the world of appearance being nothing more than a crude shadow thereof. Yet this shadow seems to be governed by a rigid Law in its shiftings and transformations. This Law is designed to lead intelligent beings like Man to the Higher Law which is the Law of Absolute Being which is unconditioned by any restrictions, like the peak of a capstone of a pyramid which is no longer bound by the bulk of the pyramid. Man's growth, therefore, is not one of bulk, of accumulation, of accretion; but one of self-denuding, self-unburdening and self-effacing in the Greater Self or the Only Self. This, of course, is not meant for the huge masses of mankind who are still very low in the scale of spiritual evolution. It is meant for those who have come to feel the need for self-emancipation or self-realization."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) from a letter by M.Naimy addressed to H.Dabbagh dated 21 Sept. 1967.

The idea that Man is in fact an integral part of the universe, forming with it one unit is expressed in an article which he entitles "The Raven's Sermon"<sup>(1)</sup>. The raven here gives a sermon while standing on the dead body of the author, the theme of which is the folly of Man since he made himself his own enemy by detaching himself from the world around him. "Thus he came to say 'I' - and 'the World'". By doing this, Man started to see things with two different eyes with the one he saw "I", while with the other he saw "the not-I", and thus he came to be divided against himself. The raven ends his sermon by saying that it is only when Man comes to mean one thing by the "World" and "I" that he will become united in himself again.

The idea that Man should strive to see himself as part of the universe permeates throughout the writings of Mikhail Naimy. Man's will, he maintains, should come to be harmonious with that of The

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(1) "‘Izāt al-Ghurāb" (The Raven's Sermon), al-Marāḥil, p. 126. The Arabs have a common superstition about the raven. The origin of this perhaps is connected with his black colour, which is the colour of mourning. His croaking is taken to predict separation. They also believe that the raven was treacherous to Noah, who sent him from the Ark to bring news of the Flood, but never returned. The writer took the raven as a symbol of Man's enemy, when Man, according to the writer, should take no enemies for himself, as he forms a "unit" ( وحدة ) with the universe, which includes the raven as well as everything else.

Omniwill. He elucidates this point by saying that "Behind what I call "The Cosmic Order or Law" is the "Cosmic Will" which in my Book of Mirdād is called "The Omniwill". It is the will of the Omniwill, or the Cosmic Will, that Man should know it in order to realise his being in full. To know it Man must have his own will. By opposing his will to the Omniwill Man comes to realise the impotence of his will against the omnipotence of the Omniwill; then he knowingly surrenders his will and accepts the Omniwill as his own will. That is the ultimate purpose of the life of Man"<sup>(1)</sup>

Any study of Mikhail Naïmy's thought is bound to give prominence to his work entitled The Book of Mirdād, as he himself considers it to be the climax of his philosophy.<sup>(2)</sup> Not surprisingly, the reader of this work is immediately struck by its Biblical atmosphere. Indeed it is the story of Noah's Ark and the Flood that forms the main source of inspiration behind it. Here we have Man, as represented by Noah's family, wavering

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(1) From a letter by M.Naïmy addressed to H.Dabbagh, dated 21 Sept. 1967.

(2) Sab'un, III, p. 213.

between pious belief and utter godlessness, uncontrolled desires and pure chastity. Mikhail Naimy's innate religious nature, basically Christian but devoid of any traces of dogmatism, seems at last to express itself in the words of Mirdād, who seems to be the embodiment of Naimy's concept of a prophet. The almost Biblical tone is strikingly noticeable in every word uttered by Mirdād.

"Remember that the Key to life is the Creative Word. The key to the Creative Word is Love. The key to Love is Understanding. Fill up your hearts with these and spare your tongues the pain of many words, and save your minds the weight of many prayers, and free your hearts of bondage to all gods who would enslave you with a gift, who would caress you with one hand only to smite you with the other; who are content and kindly when you praise them, but wrathful and revengeful when reproached; who would not hear you save you call, and would not give you save you beg; and having given you, too oft regret the giving; whose incense is your tear; whose glory is your shame. Aye, free your hearts of all these gods that you may find in them the only God, who, having filled you with himself, would have you ever full." (1)

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(1) The Book of Mirdād, English version, pp. 82-83.

The tone in this quotation, as in so many others in The Book of Mirdād, is unquestionably Christian, yet unequivocally unorthodox. It is in such quotations that we come face to face with Naimy whose spirit is fundamentally and fervently Christian, but who evolved for himself a brand of Christianity which rejects the idea of punishment and reward. This unorthodox Christianity dispenses even with prayers, for "You need no lip or tongue for praying. But rather do you need a silent, wakeful heart, a Master- Wish, a Master- Thought, and above all, a Master- Will that neither doubts nor hesitates. For words are of no avail except the heart be present and awake in every syllable. And when the heart is present and awake, the tongue had better go to sleep, or hide behind sealed lips."<sup>(1)</sup>

In the same work, we can also detect Mikhail Naimy's belief that Man and the universe are inseparable, and that he and Nature around him form a close unit, for "In Life and in death; on Earth as beyond the Earth, you never are alone, but in constant company of things and beings which have their share in your life and death, as you have yours in their life and death. As you partake of them, so they partake of you; and as you seek them, so they seek you."<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) The Book of Mirdād, English version, p. 82.

(2) Ibid, p. 109.

But if Man and Nature are inseparable, God and Man are equally inseparable, for "Man is a god in swaddling-bands".<sup>(1)</sup> These bands are Time, Space, and Flesh, which he is striving to rid himself of. Once Man casts away from his "I" these swaddling-bands and barriers, he will see it "eternally at peace with itself and all the worlds that issue out of it."<sup>(2)</sup> Mirdād, or Mikhail Naimy, assures us that Man "shall go into the forge a man but shall emerge a god."<sup>(3)</sup> The idea is repeated in Zād al-Ma'ād, when Naimy says "For as long as you are separated from anything or anybody, you will remain separated from God as He exists in that thing or that person. Love is your bridge which carries you to those whom you love and to things you love. Thus the more bridges you extend from your hearts to people, the closer you come to your true selves, and so to God who dwells within you. But the wider and <sup>the</sup> more the gaps that separate you from others the longer is your estrangement from yourselves and thus from God, away from whom no self can be yours."<sup>(4)</sup>

The god which Mikhail Naimy believes in is above inflicting

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(1) The Book of Mirdād, English Version, p. 46.

(2) Ibid., p. 53.

(3) Ibid., p. 57.

(4) Zād al-Ma'ād, pp. 131-132.



punishment or giving reward. He is in no need of praise, and not affected by blasphemy

”لَهُمْ خَالِقٌ يُزَادُ الشُّكْرَ رِيعَةً  
وَالذِّمَّ يَهْوِي مِنْ عُنْدِهِ وَيَقْصُ

فَرَبٌ أَرَادَ مَحْدَتَهُ اعْتَزَّ وَأَرَضَى  
لَرَبِّ إِذَا زَمَرْتَ لَدُنْكَ رِيقُصُ

(I)

In an attempt to explain to us his image of God, Mikhaïl Naïmy maintains that his belief in Him is interdependent with his belief in Man "I say to you, there is not God and Man. But there is God-Man or Man-God. There is the One. However multiplied, however divided, it is forever One." (2) He very often stresses the point that his belief in God and his belief in Man are but one and the same thing. He writes, "Had it not been for my belief in God, I would not have believed in Man. Likewise, had it not been for my belief in Man I would not have believed in God. For both beliefs stem from one source. In fact they are one." (3)

(1) Karm 'alā Darb, p. 68.

(2) The Book of Mirdād, English version, p. 64.

(3) Al-Bayādir, pp. 68-69.

For Mikhail Naimy, this belief in God-Man is an act of faith, which is enhanced by his observations, meditations, and deductive reasoning. He tells us that what led him to God was God himself, not what he read about Him in Sacred or secular books, and that what led him to believe in Man was Man himself, not what he came to know of his history, sciences, and arts. Moreover, he maintains that it is futile to claim that we believe in God before he is revealed to us in Man, as it is futile to try to understand Man before we can see him in God. He goes on to explain that it is of no use seeking either aim, before our vision is freed from every chain which would enable it to see the Creator in the created, and the created in the Creator.<sup>(1)</sup> The idea of the unity of Man and God is the theme of Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul, a book in which the writer expounds his ideas about the majestic qualities of this unity and how people are unattentive to it, while preoccupied with the trivialities of life. In fact, The Vagrant Soul (al-Arqash- the Pitted Face) reflects in his diaries the fierce conflict which was raging in Naimy's inner soul while in New York between his genuine and deep desire to lift himself to a state of mystical perfection akin to that of Christ and Buddha, and the flesh in him which kept binding him to the worldly needs of this earth.

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(1) Al-Bayadīr, pp. 68-69.

Often in his attempts to present to the reader his own conception of God, Mikhail Naimy seems to negate the orthodox and conventional ideas about Him. He tells us that he used to glorify with others the God who gave life and took it, who punished and rewarded, but that he no longer believed in that God, for the God he now believes in is above life and death, and loftier than punishment and reward.<sup>(1)</sup> "For I have found that the power which we call God is all in all. In it there are no states, it has no descriptions, there is no truth except it, nothing exists in it".<sup>(2)</sup> In one of his meditations he states that, "For the first time I felt that God is a power in my inner being, and not an entity with which I have the relation of the created with the creator, the worshipper with the worshipped, or the judged with the judge. Thus I was overwhelmed by a sense of tranquility, which came to be like an embryo in a womb, his days matured, anxious to go out to the world."<sup>(3)</sup> Often Mikhail Naimy resorts to similitudes in his attempts to explain to us his idea of God; "The mirror

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(1) "Punishment and reward are words that have place in the human dictionary. The Cosmic Law cannot be said to be kind or unkind. It is a Law. Man punishes or rewards himself as he deviates from the Law or complies with it". from a letter by M.Naimy addressed to H. Dabbagh dated 21 Sept. 1967.

(2) Zād al-Ma'ād, p. 21.

(3) Sab'ūn, II, p. 74.

reflects the shape, but it is not itself the shape so are things when they reflect life, are not in themselves life. Life exists in the tree, but the tree itself is not life. It follows that if I substitute the word "God" for "life", then I would say that God exists in everything, but no one thing is God".<sup>(1)</sup>

But how is it possible for Man to reach God? The path, Mikhail Naumy tells us, is hard. going through it is like going to the sea to swim - there we have to take off our clothes one by one, but the clothes we have on our bodies are infinitely lighter than the clothes which burden our souls in their journey to God. The former are easy to discard, the latter are hard to dispose of these are the garments of hatred which separate us from other men or things - and as long as that separation exists we are separated from God who exists in other men and things. Love, he says, is the way that joins us with those whom we love, or the things we love. Other garments that we have to discard in our journey towards knowing God are those of envy, greed, debauchery and arrogance. These are the chains that fetter the spirit. The path towards God lies in stripping it of them all. Thus by purifying our souls we can attain to spiritual ecstasy, which is the ultimate aim of faith.<sup>(2)</sup> If a scientist asks him what "proof" he has that

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(1) Sabʿun, III, p. 48.

(2) Zād al-Maʿād, pp. 131-132.

this path will lead us to God, Mikhaïl Naïmy tells us that he would say none! What he would do is to ask the scientist what proof he has that the path would not lead us to God, when he has not gone through it, or what right he has to repudiate something when he has not tested it.<sup>(1)</sup> Everything in Heaven and on Earth will face its end, but the power without which there would have been no Heaven or Earth is immortal,<sup>(2)</sup> so it is worthy of Man, who seeks everlasting tranquillity, and who endeavours to rid himself of the chains of Time and Space, to build his world on the belief in that power, and not on what his limited senses reveal to him of the tangible aspects of this world.<sup>(3)</sup> The necessity to found our life on belief in this power can be seen in the life of men around us. for, whatever inventions and discoveries we achieve, however we indulge in worldly pleasures or arrogant we come to be as a result of our intellectual and artistic abilities, we always have the feeling, at one time or another, that all our achievements have not brought us any closer to the happiness and knowledge which we seek. It is then that we turn in prayer towards the power beyond pleasure and pain.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Zād al-Ma'ād, pp. 133-134.

(2) The Qu'ran states "سورة الرحمن" *وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ*

"All that dwells upon earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid"

The Holy Qur'an, LV. (The All-Merciful), 26.

One wonders whether Naïmy is influenced here by his knowledge of the Qu'ran.

(3) Al-Bayādir, pp. 49-50.

(4) Ibid., p. 25.

In yet another attempt to elucidate his concept of God, Naimy resorts again to similitudes. Figures, he tells us, are the best example for that "Unknown"; for the one, of which all figures are formed, is infinitely divisible, infinitely multiple, yet still **remains** one. If you use it to refer to a mountain, then it is a mountain, if to an insect, then it is an insect, an angel, then it is an angel, a satan, it is a satan. But in fact, it is none of these, for it is nothing but absolute mental vision " **خيال مطلق** " which takes various tangible forms, so that it may become conceivable for those who have not yet attained the power to conceive the absolute. This idea of the "Unknown" being the "Absolute Vision" is put by Mikhail Naimy in the mouth of Dr. Mūsā al-ʿAskarī in Al-Yawm al-Akhir.<sup>(1)</sup> Al-ʿAskarī concludes his meditation on the subject by saying "I am one of those people who have not yet attained the power to conceive the Absolute I feel Him, but I do not comprehend Him."<sup>(2)</sup>

Al-Yawm al-Akhir is revealing with respect to Mikhail Naimy's ideas about God, the transmigration of souls, free will and predestination. In another passage in this work, al-ʿAskarī is made to say that "That 'Unknown' is the One, the only One whom the people of ancient times called 'God'. Man is the most perfect image of Him

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(1) Like Mirdād in The Book of Mirdād, Mūsā al-ʿAskarī in al-Yawm al-Akhir speaks for Mikhail Naimy himself.

(2) Al-Yawm al-Akhir, p. 99.

on earth. But this image is still in the process of development, a matter which does not proceed haphazardly, but follows an extremely strict order. This order rewards those who go along with it, and punishes those whose intransigence leads them to oppose it. Because the majority of people are still ignorant of this order, they tend to obey it at times and oppose it at others, either consciously or unconsciously. That is why their lives waver between joy and sorrow, tranquility and worry, growth and decay, and all kinds of contradictions varying between good and evil. As for those who came to comprehend the order and went along with it out of understanding, they are the blessed minority. They are those in whose inner selves the image of the One, the Only One, came to be revealed to them clear, serene, and impressive. Their lives do not waver between ebb and tide, nor do evil and good clash in them. They live in the Absolute, and by the Absolute, who is everlasting."<sup>(1)</sup>

Faith, according to Mikhail Naimy's definition, consists of a goal and a path. As for the goal, it is the emancipation of Man from the bondage of the animal in Him, which would set him free to achieve the divinity which also lies dormant in him. By achieving this, he would achieve knowledge that would unveil to him the

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(1) Al-Yawm al-Akhīr, p. 99.

secrets of the universe, and a life that is beyond the reach of death. As to the path, it is the unflinching taming of the mind and the heart, so that they would practice virtue and avoid evil. As to what virtue and evil are, it is left to Man's conscience to discriminate between them. However, this does not imply, according to Mikhail Naïmy, shunning the innocent pleasures of life and their enjoyment.<sup>(1)</sup> Any faith that paralyzes Man's mind through threats, is not a faith that is worthy of Man to adopt.<sup>(2)</sup> If Man is incapable of unifying all faiths which humanity has known, it should not be impossible for him, in his endeavour to achieve creative freedom, to discard of these faiths all that separates him from his fellow men and the universe around him, or constitutes an impediment in his way towards achieving his noble aim. Any faith, he goes on to say, which does not assist Man in his war against his animal instinct is unworthy of him.<sup>(3)</sup> He who would take creative freedom for his aim in life, would find it difficult to believe in a god who inflames in the hearts of his worshippers the feelings of hatred for those who take a different course in worshipping Him.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Fī Mahabb al-Rīḥ, p. 25.

(2) Al-Nūr wa al-Dayjūr, p. 195.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 175.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 175.



Mikhail Naimy believes that the three Faiths Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a common denominator they all fundamentally agree on the origin of Man and his ultimate end, although the details of the three Faiths are different they all state that Man is the creation of God and that his end lies with Him, and that belief, truthfulness, kindness, purity, love, self-renunciation, and resistance to desires are the means to attain to salvation.<sup>(1)</sup> To say that any of these Faiths have failed because Man has not yet been able to achieve the goals that the world Faiths have set for him is a fallacy for these Faiths have not set a time limit for achieving these aims. Faith, Mikhail Naimy maintains, is the feeling of Man that God is in him. He whose feeling of God is pure and clear, then his faith is pure and clear, while he whose feeling of God is like smoke, then his faith is like smoke.<sup>(2)</sup> But those who expect Man to be able to attain the ultimate aim of faith within a limited time are impatient. For if it takes nature thousands of years to transform a tree to a piece of wood which it buries in earth until it becomes a black piece of coal, then into a precious pearl, we should not then expect God, who is Perfection, to make Man perfect in a short time. If it takes a piece of wood a long time to become a ~~pearl~~<sup>diamond,</sup> it is more appropriate that Man should take all Time to emerge as a perfect God.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Ṣawt al-ʿĀlam, p. 138.

(2) Al-Bayādir, pp. 115-116.

(3) Ibid., p. 116-117.

From the point of view of faith, Mikhail Naimy divides people into three categories those who stand at the threshold of faith, whom he calls the "massive crowds", those who are scattered between the threshold and Holy of Holies, and those he calls "the crowds", the third category are those in the Holy of Holies, whose name is "the blessed few".<sup>(1)</sup> No human being, Mikhail Naimy tells us, is without a faith even those who disbelieve in every religion have their own faith, which is their disbelief. Very few, he points out, are those who have been able to reach the "spacious, infinitely generous heart of faith, whose tenderness knows no limit. For the path that leads to the heart of faith is accessible only to those who took for themselves a better guide than that of the exterior senses".<sup>(2)</sup> He warns those who tend to think that they have reached the Holy of Holies of faith just because they belong to any particular faith, not to make such a mistake, for the mere repetition of the name of God does not mean that you have found God "For if you repeat 'Our Father in Heaven' a thousand times everyday, you will not come to know the essence of faith unless you come to know your Father in Heaven, the same way as Christ did, who came to lead you to Him. Likewise, if you ask for the blessing of the Prophet

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(1) Zād al-Ma'ād, pp. 125-126.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 126.

incessantly, you would still not know faith unless you came to know God the same way as the Messenger knew Him. Again, if you offer the God of Moses every sacrifice, you still would not know the God of Moses unless you came to know Him the way Moses did".<sup>(1)</sup>

In the article entitled "The Imagination" Naimy elaborates on this theme, maintaining that sense perception enables us to see things only from the point of view of their physical construction, hiding from us their underlying universal truth which we can perceive only through our insight, or our imagination. Thus imagination, he maintains, should be our means through which we can roam the unlimited horizons of our being, and unless we try to explore the truth about ourselves through this insight, the universe will be no more to us than scattered fragments, distorted and mutilated.<sup>(2)</sup>

True faith and true knowledge, Mikhail Naimy says, are one and the same thing. For you are unable to know a thing unless you achieve this knowledge through experience and understanding. It is only after going through the experience and thus attaining understanding that you come to believe. Drawing a similitude, as he very often does, Mikhail Naimy tells us that believing in something before we experience it through our inner selves and understand it through our souls, is a kind of belief which is similar

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(1) Zad al-Ma'ad, pp. 127.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 7-19.

to a blind eye that cannot deny the existence of the sun, or a deaf ear which accepts the existence of sounds. This kind of belief, he maintains, is blind and deaf, but still better than disbelief.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus in his endeavour to arrive at the objective truth about himself and about the world around him, it is incumbent upon Man, Naimy says, that he should see beyond the illusory outward appearances of things. To rely on sense perception to achieve this aim will only mislead Man, Naimy claims. Consequently, Naimy ardently believes that Man has no alternative but to resort to his inner eye (البصيرة), or what he calls his imagination, which will enable him to break through the limitations of space-time of his world.<sup>(2)</sup> Proceeding from this premise, Mikhail Naimy says that the Prophets would not have known God had it not been that God was in them. For it is impossible for a human being to comprehend what is beyond the realm of his own existence. Moreover, if the Prophets were not absolutely certain of the existence of God in every man, they would not have preached the existence of God to a people devoid of Him.<sup>(3)</sup>

Faith, according to Mikhail Naimy, is fundamentally a "feeling and reasoning".<sup>(4)</sup> As such it can dispose of clergymen and

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(1) Zād al-Ma'ād, p. 129.

(2) See article entitled "The Imagination", Zād al-Ma'ād pp. 7-19.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 130

(4) Ab'ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 118.

temples, a condition which is capable of making of it an indissoluble link between Man and God.<sup>(1)</sup> He seems to think that the problem with regard to faith lies in that a large number of people deviated from its noble aims, and while clinging only to the outward appearances of it, rejected its essence. This led to faith becoming a collection of empty rituals and prayers said with the tongue, without emanating from the heart. Moreover, very many people seem to indulge in theological controversies, and to use faith for the purpose of separating Man from his fellowmen, and Man from God.<sup>(2)</sup> However, the fact that ignorance has been able to veil the light of faith, does not mean that it will be able to extinguish it.<sup>(3)</sup> "For if the ignoramus and the pretenders were able to contaminate the waters of faith, they will only affect those streams of it that lie far away from its main spring."<sup>(4)</sup> For Mikhail Naimy, rituals do not seem to be an integral part of his concept of faith; for more than once, he seems to stress that faith is not necessarily fulfilled by performing certain rituals that are "imposed upon you".<sup>(5)</sup> In another definition of faith

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscu wa min Washinton, p. 118.

(2) Durub, pp. 33-34.

(3) Ibid., p. 34.

(4) Ibid., p. 34.

(5) Ab'ad min Moscu wa min Washinton, p. 32.

he describes it as "the certainty which springs from your inner self, and which assures you that life, which does its work in you is the very same life which pervades all through other beings around you."<sup>(1)</sup> On the basis of this definition, he goes on to say that we cling to life through our love for it, so we should love all other beings around us in which life does its work as it does it in us. "And so when you love life in other beings the same way you love it in your self, you would not need a temple to glorify it in except your heart, nor would you need a monk, a clergyman, a rabbi, a shaykh, or any other human being to act as intermediary between you and life. For life is closer to you than your skin, and knows your needs better than you or anybody else who claims to be closer to it than you."<sup>(2)</sup>

That there are many faiths and beliefs, Mikhail Naimy says, should never lead to a clash between one against any other. For all faiths, he maintains, are no more than the "march of the created mind towards the Creative Mind, the lower vision towards the Highest Vision. They are great courses in this universe which all lead to the peak, or a multitude of rays that come together in one focusing point which is God. So if your aim in adopting your faith is to reach God, and so is mine, why then should you object as to

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, pp. 33-34.

(2) Ibid., pp. 32-33.

which course I should follow to attain to the goal? Or why should I object to your following a course that is different from mine?"<sup>(1)</sup>

Man's aim in life is yet another recurring theme in Mikhail Naimy's writings. For a writer and thinker whose main characteristic is his religious nature and deep belief in Man being the image of God<sup>(2)</sup>, it seems natural that he should believe that nothing less than the attaining to divinity is the only worthy goal for Man, especially as Naimy's belief in Man and God seem to be so closely linked, that his student might take his belief in one to be the same as his belief in the other. Nevertheless, he tends to remind his reader that Man's life is still shrouded with darkness despite the faint light which Science sheds on it. As long as Man is still ignorant about himself, he will never be able to understand other beings around him. Thus it is incumbent on him, in his struggle to know and to define his aim in life, to start by trying to understand himself. One of the first things that he will realize in this respect is that Man is guided by his instincts it is through his instincts that he is driven to feed himself, multiply, resist diseases and enemies and avoid danger. Thus it is the instinct that guides the animal in Man. But Man is endowed with more worthy qualities than instincts his intellect " **الفكر** ", his vision " **الخيال** ", and his conscience " **الوجدان** ". However, these

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(1) Al-Bayādīr, p. 21.

(2) Ibid., p. 49.

guiding "lights" in Man's life are new compared to his inborn instincts; consequently his ability in using these guiding lights in his life is very limited, a matter which drives him to resort to his instincts, which he finds easier to follow than the more recently acquired instruments of intellect, vision and conscience. But these newly acquired powers have been awakened in him and they will never lie dormant again. Thus they have united in him to work incessantly towards his emancipation from the bondage of his animal instincts and to raise him up so as to be worthy of the great heritage which he was destined to inherit since time immemorial - that of becoming divine. This is because Man is the image of God.

Man, according to Naimy, is torn between the animal in him which pulls him down, and the divine which tries to raise him up - he is divided against himself, and his world is made up of two worlds - each one fighting against the other. But what evidence do we have that Man is called upon to be more than an animal and more than a Man? Naimy's answer to this question is that as life has equipped Man with the instincts which he uses to feed himself and multiply, it also engrained in the human heart yearnings which have nothing to do with the animal or the instincts in him. One of these yearnings is the desire to attain to complete freedom, the yearning to know everything, the yearning to conquer pain and death, and the yearning to be creative. All these yearnings, with which the heart of humanity throbs, is the decisive evidence that Man's aim in life is



much greater than mere survival, procreation, the acquisition of wealth, liquidating enemies and building civilizations, only to end in the grave from whence he is not raised except to settle the balance of his deeds by either being thrown into a Fire whose flames are never extinguished, or a Paradise whose luxurious beauty is boundless.<sup>(1)</sup> To Mikhail Naimy's mind, it is unacceptable that life should enkindle the heart of humanity with such hopes and yearnings only out of mockery. Life, he believes, has never tempted us to seek an aim without equipping us with the means of attaining to it. "No lock is without a key",<sup>(2)</sup> he says, thus our yearnings are destined ultimately to be realized.

As Man's world is divided between his instincts and his yearnings to attain to his lofty aims, it is his duty to wage war against the animal instincts in himself. This should be the only war that is worthy of Man to wage, using in his battle his intellect, conscience and vision.<sup>(3)</sup> If we see that Man's wars are still the wars of one tribe against another, or one nation against another, or one race against another, or one country against another, it is because he has not yet been able to unify his forces against his only enemy which is the animal in him.<sup>(4)</sup> Nevertheless, Naimy

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(1) Al-Nūr wa al-Dayjūr, pp. 15-16.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 16.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

(4) Ṣawt al-ʿĀlam, pp. 66-67.

believes that these wars are bound to lead Man, without his being conscious of this, to a World State, one language, one currency, and ultimately to one faith;<sup>(1)</sup> for these wars are no more than the preparatory stages for his great struggle in which he will win victory against himself. This struggle began, Naimy believes, when Man began to wonder where he originated from, and what his ultimate end would be, and what purpose his life had.<sup>(2)</sup> However, this wondering has not yet led Man to an answer, for he is still like "a log in its struggle against the waves he still has not yet attained control over his mind so as to direct it the way he wants, nor over his heart to steer it the way he likes, nor is he the master of his body to control it according to his own will. On the contrary, we still see that Man is the plaything of his thoughts, and the slave of his prejudices and appetites".<sup>(3)</sup> But despite his weakness and the might of life with which he is faced, Man has never given up the struggle against the unknown, against nature, and to know his aim in life. This persistence, Naimy thinks, is in itself a proof that Man is equipped with a power that is indestructible. This power is that of his soul which is immortal.<sup>(4)</sup>

Man is the most valuable being in the universe for he is the creature whose being knows no limits, who never ceases, through his

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(1) Ṣawt al-ʿĀlam, pp. 66-67.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 65.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 63.

(4) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 24.

vision, to attempt to unveil the world of the unknown, and to receive inspiration, through his receptivity, from all other beings that surround him. His yearnings for absolute perfection is unquenchable. Nature fulfills the purpose of its existence for his sake. As to the purpose of his own existence, it is his knowledge of himself. This means his knowledge of God. The knowledge of God means his knowledge of everything, and his knowledge of everything means acquiring power over everything and the freedom from every bondage. If that is the position of Man in the universe, Naimy asks, how could you ever weigh him or define his value? Thus, he says, Man is beyond every measure and value.<sup>(1)</sup>

To achieve his aim, Man should come to be in full control of his body, thought, and heart. For he would not be able to control nature unless he is able to control himself. If he is unable to control nature, he will be its slave. What meaning has life for Man if he does not become a god, Naimy asks?<sup>(2)</sup> For Man will never rest until he achieves complete control over life; then there would be no growth followed by decay, or birth followed by death, but life breeding life. Why should not Man be able to achieve that? Is he not a sacred seed emanating from the core of the all embracing sacred Life?<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Sawt al-‘Ālam, pp. 143-144.

(2) Al-Yawm al-Akhīr, p. 182.

(3) Al-Awthān, pp. 59-60.

The first step that Man should take to fulfill the aim of his life is to seek knowledge of himself nothing that Man does is of any value except to the extent that it brings him nearer to knowing himself. For it is through this knowledge that Man will be able to comprehend and understand the power that drives him. Whether Man is conscious of this or not, it is in fact the criterion with which he measures his achievements thus he discards those achievements which do not increase his knowledge of himself, while he reserves those which reveal to him some aspect of his nature. The history of civilization is no more than this process of continuous sieving of Man's actions; preserving what has valuable spiritual value, and discarding that which is of no significance.<sup>(1)</sup> Thinking of the meaning of one's life and its aim, one is driven to think of the secret of growth and decay, If growth is an astounding secret, decay is still more astonishing for despite the magnificence of our physical structure, it is in fact no more than the froth which conceals behind it what is more important; that is the self which we call "I", and which grows not on extraneous resources, but on nurture that springs from it and within it; this is something other than bread and water, and the goad that spurs it to look for nurture is not hunger or thirst, but the yearning to know - what you are, who you are, from whence you come, whither and why.

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(1) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 26.

This knowledge is the only means of setting you free from all that is unknown, and enables you to conquer death.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus the problem of knowing himself is the only problem that is worthy of Man's thought. For Man is unable to solve his social, political or economic problems the longer time passes, the more he is faced with these problems. In Mudhakkarāt al-Arqash,<sup>(2)</sup> he puts these words in the mouth of al-Arqash "Although I am one of those (ordinary) people, I find that there is no trace of their problems in my life. If I am faced with any problems, it is my yearning to know myself and nothing else. What I am sure of, is that he who enkindled this yearning in my soul will ultimately lead me to an answer that will quench my thirst for knowledge. It is this yearning to know that saved me from the problems of the world, as it is also the guide that leads me to my aim. Just as it saved me, it will save others, and it will lead them where it is leading me. For Man is destined for life and not for death, for knowledge and not for ignorance, for freedom and not for slavery."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Sab'un, III. p. 232.

(2) Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul or Mudhakkarāt al-Arqash. The "Arqash", like "Mirdād" in The Book of Mirdād and "al-ʿAskarī" in al-Yawm al-Akhīr, expresses the ideas of Mikhail Naimy himself.

(3) Mudhakkarāt al-Arqash, p. 75.

On another occasion the Arqash writes in his diary, "I must be two men one who has isolated himself from the world of men and took refuge in silence that he may lift himself to a world of a higher order with which he aspires to move, and the other is cut off from humanity by a veil which he is trying to tear away to rejoin the herd. Thus the second belongs to the lower world but constantly aspires to reach the Higher World, hence is the war which rages inside me."<sup>(1)</sup> In these words we can detect the inner struggle of Mikhail Naimy himself, who never ceases to preach the idea that Man should follow the path of self-renunciation, thus setting himself free from the chains which bind him to this world in order that he may rise to attain to a higher and more sublime goal. Without this struggle, Naimy seems to believe, Man's life would have no meaning.

The process of defining one's aim in life and seeking its meaning, Mikhail Naimy tells us, is an enormously difficult task. In The Book of Mirdād he describes the great difficulties he faces in climbing the steep and craggy Flint Slope in which he symbolises the forbidding impediments that face Man in his endeavour to know the truth about himself and about life. "These difficulties could be overcome only by stripping yourself of your worldly prejudices until your soul is freed of their grip - then it will be able to expand and broaden until it becomes one with

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(1) Mudhakkarāt al-Arqash, p. 67.

the eternal, everlasting, perfect, all embracing Self."<sup>(1)</sup>

Naimy never tires of telling us that this universe has an aim, and that even if we are ignorant of it, the universe itself knows it, that humanity has an aim, the evidence of which is the existence of its yearnings and hopes. "Is it possible that we should long for something that does not exist? The longing in itself is a decisive evidence that that which we long for exists. For we would never feel hunger if there were nothing to be eaten, and had it not been that we have the power to eat it. Nor would we have felt thirst had there not been that which quenches our thirst. Nor would we have loved had there not been that which is to be loved. Nor would we have felt the eagerness to know had there not been that which is to be known. Our unyielding desire to know everything in the universe would not have been there if we did not have an innate power to attain to that knowledge."<sup>(2)</sup> If the aim of humanity in its existence is knowledge of everything and controlling everything, where does humanity stand today with respect to that goal? Naimy answers the question by saying that we do not know the length of time it took humanity to march to where it stands now, but we do know that it has suffered a great deal during this march,

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(1) Sab'ūn, III, p. 217.

(2) Sawt al-'Alam, pp. 40-41.

and thought a good deal. It has been able to discover and invent many things, and it holds these discoveries and inventions in great esteem, and calls them civilization. But as far as its ultimate and noble goal, humanity is still at the beginning of the road for what it has known up till now is no more than a drop compared to the ocean of things unknown to it. What it has under its control is no more than a handful compared to the towering powers that still master it in short, humanity is still far from coming of age. As long as it is in this stage, it will remain unaware of its noble aim.<sup>(1)</sup> As for the "aims" that Man has set for himself throughout history, they have been no more than the result of his ignorance; for when the Jews opposed Christ, and ended by crucifying Him, they were not able to put an end to his teachings. Nor was Rome, with all its might, able to crush the ideas of Christ. The same could be said about the Christian world when it attempted, through the crusades, to annihilate Islam. This "shortsightedness" of Man at this stage of his history is what makes him imagine that the wiping out of his fellow men who happen to adopt faiths or views different from his own would bring him victory. Man today, in his immaturity, still follows the same path Communists imagine that fighting Capitalists will end in victory for them, and vice versa.

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(1) Sawt al-<sup>c</sup>Ālam, pp. 40-43.



This is the result of Man's ignorance of the Cosmic Order and his place in it. "Would it not have been wiser, as long as we all are ignorant about this Order, as a result of which we suffer, that the one of us should have said to the other you are ignorant, fellow-man, and so am I, and we both are the sufferers for it. Let us then wage a united war against ignorance, our ignorance, so that we might find a way to crush our enemy. When we are able to crush ignorance, then we will be able to conquer poverty, injustice, disease and even death. For only ignorance permits the existence of wealth and poverty, tyranny and oppression, disease and death." (1)

Meditating on the question of the immaturity of Man while on board the plane on his way to Russia in 1956, he writes, "Whenever I saw under me a peak of a mountain, a valley, a stream, a field, or a house, I used to ask it Are you a Communist or a Capitalist? I was only deriding myself and my fellowmen who are immersed in such questions which distract them from their main and most important task in life, and that is to unravel the mysteries of all that is unknown, and to unfetter every chain and control every power. This

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 199.

The ignorance of which Naimy is talking about here is not "The inability to read or write, or to know about this or that science", but the ignorance of Man of the secret of life, and the powers that control it.

they would not achieve except through co-operation, which could never be founded on quarrelling and enmity, but on understanding and friendliness".<sup>(1)</sup> To Naimy, neither Communism, nor Capitalism lie at the root of the unrest, turmoil, poverty and oppression with which this world is possessed. For both systems, he seems to believe, are the outcome of the present structure of human society. If evil exists in either ideology, the cure lies not in obliterating the one or the other, but in uprooting the evil which exists in the human heart, and as long as Man is heedless of the Cosmic Law, which governs and dominates all ideologies, he will find himself more and more entangled in the web of petty struggles and wars that will lead him only to more suffering and pain.

It seems that Mikhail Naimy in his belief that Man is bound to attain to divinity since he is the image of God, is led to adopt the idea of transmigration of souls for he seems to think that the span of life that Man lives is too short a period to attain to that aim. Besides, he believes that death puts an end to the physical desires of Man, but not to his unfulfilled yearnings. his yearnings for justice, mercy, peace, love and a multitude of other yearnings which aim at a kind of life free from sadness,

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscu wa min Washinton, p. 150.

pain or even death. The yearning for something, according to him, presupposes the existence of that thing. As you will not have fulfilled the yearnings of your life in the short period before your death, so there must be a continuation of your life. "For how can you, or anybody else be sure that the earth is the only place where you fulfill your yearnings, or that your life is the only share you have of time, when in fact the age we live compared to it is no more than a fleeting moment?"<sup>(1)</sup>

This belief in the transmigration of souls came to be a substitute for his belief in the idea of Original Sin and the Day of Judgement,<sup>(2)</sup> for it meant to him that Man can attain to his salvation through his own actions. Our actions, he argues, are our experiences that will lead us to knowledge. As it is impossible to attain to knowledge in one "age" however long it might be, the idea of the transmigration of souls makes one's life a continuous movement, interrupted by pauses which we call "death".<sup>(3)</sup>

The idea of the transmigration of souls pervades several of Naimy's works, particularly Liqā', al-Yawm al-Akhīr and his biography

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(1) Sabʿūn, III, pp. 234-235.

(2) Sabʿūn, II. pp. 44-46.

(3) Ibid., pp. 44-46.

of Gibrān. It is also reflected in some of his poems. The following two lines are a good example, which also demonstrates his tendency to use poetry as a vehicle for his philosophical ideas

”وعندما الموتُ يدنو      واللحدُ يفترُّ فاه  
أغمضُ جفونك تبصرُ      في اللحدِ مرثدُ الحياه“  
(1)

What, Naimy argues, if Science does not condone the idea of the transmigration of souls? There are many spheres in Man's soul which Science avoids stepping into, as it is incapable of doing so, since it lacks the means of "dissecting" them in its laboratories. If the scientist has his laboratory, he says, then my inner self is my laboratory which accompanies me day and night, and in which I perform my experiments every minute of my life. In fact, Naimy is so much attracted by the idea of the transmigration of souls that it comes to be one of the main cornerstones on which his philosophy is built.<sup>(2)</sup> The idea confirms in him his belief that life is more than a comedy which starts in the cradle and ends in the grave, only to be renewed in eternal joy or eternal torture, or to be wiped out by death as if it had never been. Man could not be a

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(1) Diwān Hams al Jufūn, p. 9.

(2) Sabʿun, II, pp. 47-48.

mere toy in the hands of Fate, or even in the hands of God. He is the divine spark swaddled with bands. The spark glows incessantly until the swaddles are burnt with time, when Man will emerge as the Light that will fill Time and Space. Our "progress" is measured by the extent of zeal that our yearning for beauty, knowledge and freedom enkindles in us.<sup>(1)</sup>

Mikhail Naimy deduces from certain words of Christ that He believed in the idea of transmigration of souls he mentions the story in which it is said that some of the disciples asked Christ about the man who was born blind and whether it was that the Man or his parents had sinned that he was born so. Christ answers by saying that neither the man nor his parents committed a sin, and that he was born blind so that God's work might be manifested in him. Naimy argues that the disciples knew that it was not because of any sin that the man had committed that he was born blind, and that when they asked Christ they must have known that the man had sinned before he was an embryo in his mother's womb, which means that he had lived, died and was born again, and that during his past life he must have transgressed against the Order for which he was punished by being born again blind. Christ's answer

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(1) Sab<sup>5</sup>un, II, pp. 47-48.

ruled out that the man's parents had sinned or that he himself had sinned but it did not rule out that blindness was a punishment through which "God's works" were manifested, and that this punishment was inflicted on the man as he must have committed sins in a former life.<sup>(1)</sup>

Mikhail Naimy admits in al-Yawm al-Akhīr, through the words of Mūsā al-ʿAskarī, that he has no proof for his belief in the idea of the transmigration of souls, "All I can say is that I felt that I was living in a fearful vacuum. Suddenly this idea arose in my mind to fill this vacuum."<sup>(2)</sup> The idea appeals to him as it seems to be just that Man should have, in his own hands, the power to reward or punish himself, and not to blame God, life, or nature for any pain that he suffers. The idea also seems to him to put an end to Man's fear of death, as it makes of Man an honest servant of life and not an opponent to it.<sup>(3)</sup> He also feels that it is fair that Man should be given the chance to live more than once to enable him to know the Order, as one life is not a long enough time to know it.<sup>(4)</sup> Which is more

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(1) Al-Yawm al-Akhīr, pp. 152-154.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 156.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

logical, Naimy asks, that God should say to Man that He had created him, would put an end to his life, then bring him back to life on the Day of Judgement to reward or punish him for his deeds, or that He should address him by saying "You are my image, but you do not know yourself nor do you know me. As for me, I know myself and know you. That is why I created for you the Heavens and the Earth, and all that there is in them so that these may be your means in helping yourself to achieve knowledge of yourself and me. I have spread for you all Time to enable you to achieve that knowledge. To make your task easier, I made your life to go through stages so that work is followed by rest, hunger followed by satisfaction, childhood followed by youth, youth followed by middle age, middle age followed by old age, and old age followed by death. I put an end to your life, then bring you back to life. This is repeated until you achieve knowledge of yourself and me. Then you will come to be beyond the limits of Time and Space, beyond the reach of growth and decay, and above the power of good and evil."<sup>(1)</sup> Naimy criticizes Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī’s

famous line in which he says

”تَعَبْتُ طَرَفَ الْحَيَاةِ فَدَا أُنْجَبُ إِلَّا مِنْ رَاغِبٍ فِي ارْتِدَادٍ“

by saying that Abū al-‘Alā’ and his fellow-pessimists thought of life as having a beginning and an end, an assumption which lies

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(1) Al-Yawm al-Akhīr, pp. 158-159.

at the root of their pessimism. Thus they came to wonder what value this life had, when it starts with hunger and ends with hunger. The answer for such a trend of thinking, Naimy says, is that vision should be detached from the chains of beginnings and ends. By doing so it can see in life and death only two stages out of many that extend along Time itself, and that thought should be freed from the bonds of flesh and blood, so as to comprehend life's intention of making hunger a goad that spurs humanity to find an answer for the mysteries of life and to cling to it, rather than despair of it.<sup>(1)</sup>

Who, Naimy asks, can decisively say that the grave is the line drawn between being and non-being, and that death is the end of life? Or who can claim that the Power which brought us into being had imposed hunger and thirst on us, so as to make us their submissive slaves? Who of us has not once said, openly or secretly, "I wish we could conquer death and that we should be able to lead a life that is all peace, justice, beauty and tranquility. I wish we knew all that we do not know". The mere fact that we do express such hopes to achieve immortality, peace, justice,

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(1) Although Abū al-ʿAlā's line does indicate his pessimistic outlook on life, it should not be taken to indicate his views on what happens after death. In the same Qaṣīdā, Abū al-ʿAlā' says.

”هَلْ بَيْنَ الْإِنْسَانِ لِلْبَقَاءِ فَضْلٌ أَمْ بِمَوْتِهِمْ لَشَادٌ“

It would be similarly far-fetched to take this line to mean that he believed in the transmigration of souls.



tranquillity and complete knowledge, is an evidence of our great need for these aims. Our duty is to strive with all our might to achieve them. That we cannot do this in one life is an indication that the years we live are not "all" life, but only one stage of it, and that our struggle will end in knowledge - the knowledge of God, which will be our food that will satisfy every hunger and thirst. That is the soil where the seeds of sadness or pain never take root. (1)

Mikhail Naimy's philosophy revolves, as we have seen, around the idea of the "Cosmic Order" in which he sees the truth of divinity to lie in love, in the broadest sense of the word, beauty, and harmony with life and Man's surroundings. Nothing in life, according to this doctrine, but obeys this Order. As this Order seems to be synonymous with another expression which Naimy uses - "the Power which controls the universe" - the student of Naimy is prompted to examine the extent to which this conception of the Order, or Power, differs from the conception of God in the principal faiths that the world has known. The attributes of God as being the Merciful, the Forgiving, the Compassionate, as well as being the Mighty, the Conqueror, the One who inflicts punishment and bestows rewards on the Day of Judgement, are fundamental in Judaism,

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(1) Sawt al-<sup>6</sup>Ālam, pp. 32-33.

Christianity, and Islam. Mikhail Naimy, born a Christian and taught these fundamental attributes of God, seems later to reject as a result of his readings and meditations, certain attributes of God, while affirming others. For a man lacking deep religious sense and an immense desire to believe, the confusion of acceptance on the one hand and rejection on the other, might have led either to agnosticism or to atheism. But Mikhail Naimy is a man who was born with a deep and innate religious nature. Since his early youth the questions relating to the universe, the Creator, Man, his origin and fate, the meaning of life, all preoccupied his thoughts. His brilliant inquisitive mind, sharpened through readings in various cultures, led him to a kind of scepticism, and ultimately to reject certain teachings of the Church, while clinging stubbornly at the same time to certain other teachings to which his deep religious nature responded. Here, it seems to the student of Naimy, lies the root of the conflict that was sown in his inner self. The dilemma which he had to face since his early youth was how to strike a satisfactory and harmonious balance between his heart which "believed", and his mind which "rejected". It also seems that the orthodox images which the word "God" evoked, came to be unacceptable to him. "For what use is it to invent names for the one, or the thing, that controls people, and all that exists in this infinite universe? Soon the name would become a lock that fastens our comprehension, a cage that imprisons

our yearnings, a slippery path for our vision, a chain for our will, and a spear with which we stab each other openly and in secret."<sup>(1)</sup> But a believer must, by necessity, give a name, a term, to denote the thing which he believes in. Thus, Naimy coins the phrase "Cosmic Order", which in fact comes to be the basis of his new "faith". This "faith" is founded in the first place on Naimy's meditations on Nature and Man around us the miracle of our bodies and how they function, the eternal aspects of nature the sun, its rising and setting, the seed sown to become a grain, and so on.<sup>(2)</sup> But instead of urging us to think

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscū wa min Wāshinton, pp. 51-52.

(2) Needless to say, in this respect, the Qu'ran abounds with verses which urge Man to look around him and think of the Creator who created everything and made it follow a system of unparralled organization. One of these verses reads:

"Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day  
and the ship that runs in the sea with profit to men, and the water God sends down from heaven therewith reviving the earth after it is dead  
and his scattering abroad in it all manner of crawling things, and the turning about of the winds and the clouds compelled between heaven and earth - surely there are signs for a people having understanding".

The Holy Qu'ran, Ch.II, V. 159.

The Arabic of this verse reads

"إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَآخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلِ الَّتِي تَمْشِي فِي الْبَحْرِ جَاءَ يُنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَخْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا دَبَّحَ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْدِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّابِغِ الْمَكْتَرِبِينَ أَسْمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ" سورة البقرة

of the "marvel-Maker", God, the Creator, Mikhail Naimy seems to urge us to think of the "marvel" itself - what is behind the marvel and the marvel itself seem to be one to him. Consequently, God (the Creator) in Naimy's philosophy, is brought to be part of the created, whether it is the universe or Man. This outlook seems to verge on pantheism, as Man, God and life seem to form part of each other.<sup>(1)</sup> The Man-Order relationship is a subject that preoccupies Naimy in expounding his philosophy which is based on his faith in the Cosmic Order. Man, he maintains, is happy or unhappy to the extent his intellect adjusts itself to be in harmony with the Order and life around him.<sup>(2)</sup> But as he also maintains that nothing in the universe happens accidentally or by chance,<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) It seems that it matters little to Mikhail Naimy what name you give to his philosophical concept of God, as is clear from the following sentence which occurs in a letter by him addressed to the writer of this study.

"When you view this boundless universe and the infinite variety of marvellously shaped and ordered things and beings, you can not escape the thought that the Power that brought it into existence and continues to sustain it everlastingly is one and the same. It matters little what you call it. What's in a name? As in the Gospel of St. John, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." If you call that pantheism let it be pantheism".

(2) Sab'un, III, p. 61.

(3) Ibid., p. 61.

and that everything happens or takes shape in obedience to the Order, one is bound to ask are not our intellect, vision, and conscience all dependent on the Order and that the extent to which they are likely to help us in understanding it is consequently predetermined by it? If we accept Naimy's assumption that everything happens in obedience to the Order, then we may assume that it is part of the Order itself that we should be able to go against it. It must be a part of its will that we should have the power to deviate from it. He gives us an answer to this argument by maintaining that the aim of the deviation from the Order is to lead us to it,<sup>(1)</sup> "Just as opposites are implicit in each other",<sup>(2)</sup> but never goes into much detail on how this happens.

The doctrine that everything in the universe succumbs to the will of the Order, raises the question whether Mikhail Naimy believes in predestination or Free Will. In Zād al Ma'ād, he writes, "Fate is the will of the universe which does its work in everything and for everything. He who opposes it works for his

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 202.

(2) Ibid., p. 202.

own torture, and he who obeys it acts for his own good."<sup>(1)</sup>

Again, in al-Bayādir, he says, "It is not for Man, who is ignorant of his beginnings to define his ends. For how could the one who does not know the reason for his existence, indicate this or that aim for this existence?" and "He who can say "I know", is entitled to say "I want". As for Man, who is still confined to the world of limitations, he is far from this knowledge. His own will is bound to be his misfortune whenever it runs contrary to the Omnwill. He has no alternative, therefore, if he wants to rid himself of misfortune, but to say "I will so and so, if God will so and so."<sup>(2)</sup> On the other hand, he maintains that the Order has endowed Man with the forces of mind, conscience, and insight to enable him to unveil its mysteries, but that very few individuals are able to use these forces, and that the majority of human beings abuse them to their own destruction. One might deduce from this that Naimy believes that Man's own will,

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(1) Zād al Ma'ād, p. 114.

(2) Al-Bayādir, p. 31. It is noteworthy to mention here the verse in the Qu'ran which states: "And do not say, regarding anything, 'I am going to do that tomorrow,' but only 'If God will'."

The Holy Qu'ran, XVIII, (The Cave), 24.

“وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لشيءٍ إني فاعلٌ ذلك غداً إلا أن يشاء الله  
”سورة الكهف“

vis-à-vis the Omniwill, is of no weight. What he seems to believe is that this will of Man should be directed by him so as to be harmonious with the will of the Order.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) It is not within the scope of this study of Mikhail Naimy's thought to go into the complex details of Free Will and Predestination. However, Professor Motgomery Watt maintains that to believe in one does not necessarily mean to repudiate the other. In "Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam" (p.2) he writes, "In my opinion, then, this question of Free Will and Predestination, or of the relationship of human and Divine power, is one where there are two opposing yet complementary truths, which at the present stage of Man's intellectual development can not be wholly reconciled with one another, but which must nevertheless be held together. Various syntheses have been attempted, but they have always been only partial, and have not proved stable. Islam - or perhaps one should say, the East - has tended to over-emphasize Divine sovereignty, whereas in the West too much influence has been attributed to man's will, especially in recent times. Both have strayed from the true path, though in different directions. The West has probably something to learn of that aspect of the truth which has been so clearly apprehended in the East."

If the God in which Mikhail Naimy believes is "above life and death, and more sublime than punishment and reward",<sup>(1)</sup> one wonders how it is possible to reconcile this transcendental image of God, with another image which Naimy presents when he says, "As a result of my meditations I felt for the first time that God is a power inside my inner being, and not an entity with which I have the relation of the created with the creator".<sup>(2)</sup> Or when he repeats that Man himself "is a god in swaddling-bands".<sup>(3)</sup> If "the universe, with all there is in it of the tangible and abstract is the "body" of God, and that you and I form part of Him"<sup>(4)</sup> it is again difficult to see how this image of God is reconciled with the God who is above punishment and reward. Another aspect of Naimy's image of God which is difficult to understand is his saying that what led him to God was God Himself, not what he read about Him in sacred or secular books.<sup>(5)</sup> Are we to deduce from this that his knowledge of God came to him through a kind of revelation, or is it merely an intuition and an inner feeling? and how can we dispose of all that Naimy read about God in the various philosophies and faiths which discussed the subject

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(1) Zād al Ma'ād, p. 21.

(2) Sab'un, II, p. 74.

(3) The Book of Mirdād, English Version, p. 46.

(4) Al-Bayādır, p. 55.

(5) Ibid., pp. 68-69.



of God? The same could be said of Naimy's belief in Man, when he states that what led him to believe in Man was Man himself, not what he came to know of his history, science, and arts. Are not these in themselves part of Man? It is of no use, Naimy states, that we should claim belief in God before God is revealed to us in Man, as it is of no use to try to understand Man before he is revealed to us in God. Either aim could not be achieved before our vision is freed from every chain, which would enable us to see the Creator in the created, and the created in the Creator.<sup>(1)</sup> Here we are bound to ask, who achieved this other than the Prophets or the Mystics? Mikhail Naimy in fact assumes that his reader asks him this very question, when he says in Zād al-Ma'ād, "You ask me, 'How can we, when we are not prophets, know God? Have we all to become prophets?' Have you not heard of the inspiration of prophets or their ecstasy? It is a spiritual condition in which the confused senses are silenced, their desires are dumbed, and their flames extinguished. Man then feels as if he is no longer of flesh and blood. It is then that he sees - with his eyes open or closed - what no eye sees. He hears then - with his ears open or closed - what no ear hears. It is then that he is unbound from the chains of Time, seeing himself in all Time. The barriers of place around him fall down, seeing himself in every

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(1) Al-Bayādīr, pp. 68-71.

place. He, in fact, feels as if no Time or Space exists, nor death nor life - the only thing he feels is a state of Being, boundless and immeasurable, beyond the description of pen or tongue. Every sound is contained in this state, but it has itself no sound. Every colour it contains, but no colour it has. Every movement emanates from it, when it is everlastingly serene. Every being is in it, while it is above every being. Everything is in it when it is nothing."<sup>(1)</sup> How is it, the student of Naimy is compelled to ask, that he describes to us a state which he himself has not been through, unless by giving this description he is referring to the experience which he went through at an earlier stage of his life after his return one summer from Russia.<sup>(2)</sup> However, it is a difficult task, if not impossible, for a believer to express in words the essence of his belief. None better than Mikhail Naimy describes this difficulty when he says in Karm<sup>ā</sup>alā darb, "I broke my pen twice once when I tried to analyse my belief in God, and the other when I tried to analyse my belief in myself. Today I have collected the splinters of my pen and joined them together. It is now stronger than it ever was - for it set aside

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(1) Zād al-Ma<sup>ā</sup>ad, pp. 68-71.

(2) See the chapter on His Life, in this study, p. 29

analysis, and busied itself with recording."<sup>(1)</sup>

The main theme in Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul is the unity between God and Man. Al-Arqash in this book (is one to take him for Naimy himself?) seems to devote his whole life to the attainment of this unity. In the course of his meditations, he ponders over the question of people's preoccupation with the trivialities of life and their misfortunes. But where do these trivialities and misfortunes come from? If everything is decreed by the Order (God?) then they must be the outcome of the Order's will. If the Order is synonymous with God - which must be the case if we take Mikhail Naimy's views to be very close to pantheism - then God does punish, does inflict misfortunes, and does make people turn their minds to trivialities. How can we reconcile this with Mikhail Naimy's belief that God is above inflicting punishment and giving reward? The problem

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(1) Karm<sup>ā</sup>alā darb is a collection of parables and paradigms compiled in a book. True to an Arab's love for proverbs and sayings, coupled with his exquisite mastery of the Arabic tongue, Mikhail Naimy makes these proverbial sayings sound most impressive in the original. No translation is able to do them justice.

here is not only Naimy's it is the problem of pantheism since  
Man thought it out.<sup>(1)</sup>

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- (1) Spinoza, the philosopher, was one of the leading exponents of pantheism, whose whole philosophy was dominated by the idea of God. Mikhail Naimy does not mention Spinoza at all in his writings, although he mentions many of the writers and thinkers whom he admires. However, Naimy's conception of God bears similarity to that expounded by Spinoza, except that Naimy does not reject Free Will altogether, while Spinoza does. In History of Western Philosophy, p. 594, Bertrand Russell states: "Everything, according to Spinoza, is ruled by an absolute logical necessity. There is no such thing as free will in the mental sphere or chance in the physical world. Everything that happens is a manifestation of God's inscrutable nature, and it is logically impossible that events should be other than they are. This leads to difficulties in regard to sin, which critics were not slow to point out. One of them, observing that, according to Spinoza, everything is decreed by God and is therefore good, asks indignantly Was it good that Nero should kill his mother? Was it good that Adam ate the apple? Spinoza answers that what was positive in these acts was good, and only what was negative was bad, but negation exists only from the point of view of finite creatures. In God, who alone is completely real, there is no negation, and therefore the evil in what to us seem sins does not exist when they are viewed as parts of the whole. This doctrine, though, in one form or another, it has been held by most mystics, cannot, obviously, be reconciled with the orthodox doctrine of sin and damnation". Naimy often asserts his belief that "sins" of the sacred books are no more than our "mistakes" through which we are bound to go in our search for God. God, according to him, is above condemning us for committing them. Misfortunes happen to us, according to Naimy, as there must be

Mikhail Naimy's faith excludes, besides punishment, reward and the idea of resorting to threats. In Fī Mahabb al-Rīh he says that any faith that paralyses Man's mind through threats is not a faith that is worthy of Man to adopt.<sup>(1)</sup> But if Man is still far from achieving perfection, as he himself seems to believe, does it not stand to reason that faiths, being the paths to God, should guide Man, by promises and threats, to the right path? How far can a father (to use an analogy as Naimy often does) bring up a son to follow righteousness, and dispense at the same time with all kinds of threats? Is not Man, at the present stage of his development in his knowledge of God, any more than a child? Is not fear, the complement of hope, both united in God?

The image of God that Mikhail Naimy presents to us is devoid of any trace of might, threats or punishment. At the same time, God is presented to us as both part of Nature and of Man. How is it then that He should be devoid of these attributes, when they form part of Man and Nature? God is all love, gentleness and kindness, Naimy seems to believe. But is Man or Nature, of which He forms a part according to Naimy, all love, gentleness and kindness? How

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(Contd. from previous page) a need in our life which calls for their occurrence.

(1) Fī Mahabb al-Rīh, p. 25.

can we then interpret the violence of both Nature and Man?

Are we not to take this belief on Naimy's part as the manifestation of his idealism based mainly on the example of the life of Christ and Naimy's genuine goodness and kindly nature which refuses to see anything contradictory to his conception of goodness in God, Man or the universe? The course which Naimy's own life took seems unconsciously to confirm in him this belief in this one-sided picture of God, Man and the universe it must be the "Unseen Hand"<sup>(1)</sup> of this goodness that must have led the far away Russians to build a school in a little village called Biskinta that lies up on the Lebanese mountains. That man who looked after him in Haifa when he arrived there as a young boy on his way to Nazareth, must have also been led by the "Unseen Hand" of this goodness. In Nazareth, his idealistic nature drove him so close to the person of Christ, that He almost came to be a living example whose steps were to be followed, and whose teachings to be lived up to. In Russia, his admiration for Tolstoy, who fundamentally took the Bible and the life of Christ as his guiding light in life, enhanced in Naimy the idealistic trait in his character. This idealism leads Mikhail Naimy to set an extremely high standard for ordinary people with respect to faith and belief. A man will never come to know God,

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(1) Naimy often refers to accidents in his life as being predestined by " **اليدُ الحَقِيَّةُ** " or the "Unseen Hand".

even if he repeats "Our Father in Heaven" a thousand times a day, or asks for the blessings of the Prophet incessantly, unless he comes to know God just as Christ or the Prophet came to know him.<sup>(1)</sup>

Is not Naimy here asking too much of the ordinary human being?

Is it possible for us, when we are so far from perfection, to attain to this degree in our conception of God, who is alone the Perfect?<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, Naimy believes that faith is fundamentally

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(1) Zād al-Ma'ād, p. 127.

(2) In Islam Perfection is the attribute of God alone "الكمال لله وحده".

"Perfection belongs to God alone". Through his writings, Mikha'il Naimy seems to share this belief. If he accepts this premise, one expects that he should accept the ordinary man's limitations and his inability to rise to the same degree in his conception of God which the Prophets and Mystics achieved.

It may be of interest here to mention the view of Ibn-ʿArabī, the famous Arab Mystic on the question of the perfection of the Universe. In his al-Futuhāt al Makkīyah, Vol. II, p. 309 he states:

”إِعلم انه من كمال الوجود وجود النقص فيه ، اذ لو لم يكن كمال الوجود ناقصاً لعدم النقص

a translation of which would read "know that it is a part of the perfection of the universe that imperfection exists in it.

For if this was not the case, then the perfection of the universe would have been incomplete for lack of imperfection in it".

a matter of "feeling and reasoning"<sup>(1)</sup> which is difficult to accept, as faith is more connected with our trust in the real existence of something. This trust is not based fundamentally on feeling and reasoning, although reason may be able to confirm and strengthen it. Rituals, he also seems to think, are not an essential part of faith. But if we interpret the word " rituals " very broadly, we may be able to conceive of it as embracing "meditations", which do seem to be an integral part of Naomy's faith. Why should his meditations,<sup>(2)</sup> (his rituals) seem to be necessary in his faith, and unnecessary in the faiths of others? We may also ask is not discipline an essential part of spiritual progress? and what are rituals, in their essence, other than discipline? If people perform them with their tongues without emanating from their hearts, this should be taken to be the fault of men rather than the fault of the rituals.

Mikhail Naomy seems often to glorify "Life" to the extent that the word sounds as if he equates it with God. He urges us to "love Life in other beings just as we love it in ourselves".<sup>(3)</sup> Here we

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(1) Abʿad min Moscū wa min Wāshinton, p. 118.

(2) In his article "Why I isolated myself from people" in Sawt al-ʿĀlam, p. 150, Naomy seems to give the impression that his meditations are a necessity for him practised almost like a worshipper performing his rituals.

(3) Abʿad min Moscū wa min Wāshinton, pp. 32-33.



are reminded of Albert Schweitzer's doctrine of "Reverence For Life" which has a religious character and which is essentially related to Christianity.<sup>(1)</sup> Life is so glorified, that it almost comes to be divine, and our love for it is conceived as a kind of prayer in which we recognize its divinity.

Man is divided, Mikhail Naimy tells us, between the animal in him, and his yearnings to attain his lofty and noble aims. Thus to be able to achieve these aims, he should wage war against the animal instincts in him. But if these animal instincts in Man were preordained by the Cosmic Order (as nothing happens or takes shape, according to Naimy, except in obedience to it), then it follows that Naimy here is urging Man to oppose the will of the Cosmic Order by trying to suppress every sign of the animal instinct in him, which entirely contradicts the general trend of his philosophy which urges us to adapt our thinking and behaviour so that they come to be harmonious with the will of the Order. One here is inclined to think

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(1) Naimy's idea about loving life in ourselves just as we love it in other beings is of some resemblance to Schweitzer's statement in which he maintains that, "If our will to live begins to think about itself and the world, we come to experience the life of the world, so far as it comes within our reach, in our own life, and to devote our will-to-live to the infinite will-to-live through the deeds we do". See This is my Philosophy, Albert Schweitzer, p. 64.

that Naimy's continuous insistence that Man's "animal" instinct should be eradicated to attain to his sublime aims, is the remnant of an unconscious inclination to look upon sex and the animal instinct in Man as being sinful and unworthy of him.<sup>(1)</sup> If not, why is it, one wonders, that Naimy does not urge Man to suppress his instinct to satisfy his hunger, or his instinct to protect himself against dangers?

It may be true that ignorance, as Naimy says, leads Man to wage war against his fellowman, but unfortunately men are not united, neither in admitting their ignorance, nor in defining what knowledge is. If the selected few, like Mikhail Naimy, are ready to admit their "ignorance" and set it up as their enemy which should

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(1) On this point, M. Naimy states the following in a letter addressed to H. Dabbagh, dated 21 Sept. 1967

"To be sure Instinct is part of the Cosmic Law. But it is the lowest grade of self-consciousness. The highest grade is Cosmic Consciousness. Man, an evolving being, is endowed with all the potentialities of becoming cosmically conscious. To become cosmically conscious he must rid himself of all the bars and restrictions that stand between him and that consciousness. Such a bar are his animal instincts and his sense of a self separate and independent of the Cosmic or Universal Self. Therefore Man must subdue his animal instincts and his sense of a separate self which is only a shadow, - an illusion".

be crushed, the majority of men, though immersed in their ignorance of what life means or what its aims are, are convinced beyond any doubt that they "know" what their aim in life is, and that even sacrificing their own lives to achieve that aim is a duty which is praiseworthy and noble. Naimy's assumption therefore, that "we all are ignorant about this Order"<sup>(1)</sup> is perhaps difficult to take for granted the "all" he seems to think of, are no more than the idealistic élite and humble few "All" others do not seem to belong to this category of human beings. Indeed, very few seem to venerate knowledge so as to make it the goal of Man's life. That every single human being will one day set this lofty goal as his aim in life, presupposes that men, all men, will be endowed with an equally extraordinary intelligence, an assumption which the history of Man, past and present, tends to make one sceptical as to the possibility of its happening in the future, however distant that future may be. Moreover, one wonders how we can be so sure that "ignorance only" permits the existence of wealth and poverty, tyranny and oppression, disease and death? Could it not be that God has a hand in these things?

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(1) Ab'ad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 199.

As we have seen, Mikhail Naimy profoundly believes in a Cosmic Law or Order, and that everything, and every being is governed by this Order. This comprehensive outlook on life is closely linked with a deep religious feeling, the essence of which is that love, goodness, the brotherhood of Man and beauty, are the true foundations of life. Nothing in this universe perishes, everything exists from the beginnings of Time to Eternity. This philosophy, in which Naimy profoundly believes, is the source of serenity, tranquillity, and clarity which is reflected in a most impressive manner in his writings, and which brings his reader to imagine that these same attributes are the most striking features of Naimy the Man. He himself writes that he takes life as "a <sup>theme</sup> melody which variates, <sup>a melody rising and falling</sup> ~~a crescendo now rising then descending~~"<sup>(1)</sup> but is always, in all its different variations, coloured by positivity and never drawn into negativity. This positive and optimistic outlook, makes Mikhail Naimy "utterly free from that psychological disease of which the writers of our time suffer the feeling of being lost and engrossed in complexes, together with the tendency to run away from the burdens of life's responsibilities."<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Hawāmīsh, p. 12.

(2) "Dirāsāt Naqdiyyah fī Daw'ī al-Manhaj al-Wāqī'ī", p. 48 by Hussein Murrowwa. (The chapter on Mikhail Naimy).

The author who is a well known critic, is presumably referring to writers in the Arab-World.

Nothing is more true of the "spirit" of Naimy's writings. His words infiltrate into his reader's heart, filling it with tranquility and peace. However, this tendency to look upon life with contentment, is faced with the problem of trying to understand the phenomenon of death which it refuses to accept, as it puts a definite end to the doctrine of the immortality of life, its goodness, beauty and the belief that it is more than a comedy which starts with the cradle and ends with the grave. The grimness of such a "life" is made to look even worse to Mikhail Naimy, by the orthodox teachings of the three faiths on Judgement, punishment and reward. It is from here, one feels, that Naimy's optimistic outlook, which rebels against this "conclusion" of life, turns towards the idea of the transmigration of souls. If death, which is a fact that cannot be denied, is to be given an interpretation harmonious with the outlook of optimism, then it is logical that Naimy should accept the doctrine of transmigration which makes of death a "pause" in the flow of life, and not an end to it. He himself admits in al-Yawm al-Akhīr that the idea "dispels the fear of death in him."<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, it "relieves" God of the task of inflicting punishment, for the doctrine teaches that our happiness or misery are the outcome of our own actions.

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(1) Al-Yawm al-Akhīr, p. 274.

Mikhail Naimy's philosophy is based on a passionate belief in the goodness of life, and that Man will one day be able to eradicate of himself what Naimy deems to be unworthy of him. This belief is expounded with warmth that springs from the writer's heart. His brilliant mind rationalises the deep faith, while his pen, served by a vivid imagination, so sways the reader with the beauty of his style, that the words tend to influence the reader's feelings, even when his mind tends to question the logic of the idea presented. This, in a language noted for its captivating beauty, makes the task of the analyst a difficult one.

Chapter IV.

East and West

"To understand the East-West conflict is vitally important. More than that, it is becoming daily more urgent. We must substitute knowledge for emotion, and it is in the light of this knowledge that our decisions should be made."

C.Northcote Parkinson in East and West.

The mystical element in Mikhail Naimy's thinking, and the years which he spent both in Russia and the United States played an important role in forming his attitude towards the civilizations of the East and the West. Here we have a man who, from the early years of his youth, pondered on the meaning of life, its aims, Man, his beginnings and ends. Since his early years when he was in Russia, he came to live in two worlds - a world which he created of himself for himself, and a world which other men created for themselves. The two worlds lived side by side with him, but they never became united. To him, the outside world "choked with the dust and smoke of its sins. Its dust hurts me, and its smoke blinds my sight. In it I am a stranger."<sup>(1)</sup> The personal experience which he went through in the summer of 1909 on his return to Biskinta,<sup>(2)</sup> seems to have confirmed in Naimy the element

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(1) Sab'un, I, pp. 219-20.

(2) See the chapter on his life, pp. 29-31.

of Nature-Mysticism which drives him to search for "something that is important, distant and vague."<sup>(1)</sup> Later, through his meditations and readings Mikhail Naimy came to believe in the doctrine of the Cosmic Order which he himself arrived at. This is a doctrine which is not far from Nature-Mysticism, which is characterized by a feeling of the immanence of God or soul in Nature. Zaehner, in his Mysticism, Sacred and Profane describes this aspect of Mysticism as the "experience of the All in the One and of the One in the All."<sup>(2)</sup> Naimy, who sees God, Nature and Man (who seem to be contained in One for him) the Epitome of all that is good in life, is not far in his concept of the Almighty from William Blake's concept of Him, when he says

"For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is God, our father dear,  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is Man, his child and care." (3)

Nor is the love for Nature which pervades Naimy's writings, different from the love of Nature which Wordsworth expresses in his words

"And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,

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(1) Sab'un, I, p. 218.

(2) Mysticism, by F.C. Happold, p. 43.

(3) "The Divine Image", by William Blake. The Penguin Book of English Verse, p. 240.



Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things." (1)

Naimy's Nature-Mysticism is similar also to that expressed by Shelley when he says.

"That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,  
That Beauty in which all things work and move,  
That Benediction which the eclipsing curse  
Of birth can quench not, that Sustaining Love  
Which through the web of being blindly wove  
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of  
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,  
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality." (2)

Mikhail Naimy, himself one of the leading contemporary poets of the Arab world, expresses the same ideas of love for Nature, through which he sees the Almighty in everything that exists, in a poem which he calls "استغاثات" (Supplications)

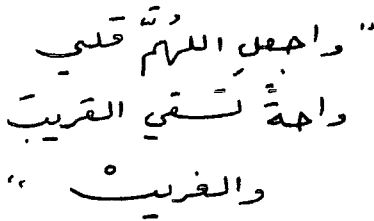
كَلِّهِ اللَّهُمَّ عَيْنِي  
بِشُعَاعِ مِثْ صِيَالُ  
كَيْ تَرَانُ  
فِي جَمِيعِ الْخَلْقِ : فِي دُورِ الْقُبُورِ ،  
فِي نُورِ الْجُودِ ، فِي مَوْجِ الْبَحَارِ  
فِي صَهَارِ بَحْرِ الْبَرَارِ ، فِي الزَّهْرِ ،  
فِي الْكَلَا ، فِي الْبَرِّ ، فِي رَمْلِ الْقَعَارِ ... "

(1) "A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey", by Wordsworth. The Penguin Book of English Verse, p. 262.

(2) "From Adonais", by Shelley. The Penguin Book of English Verse, p. 289.

"Oh God! have my eyes endowed  
with rays of Your Light,  
So that they see You  
in all creatures.  
in the worms of the graves,  
in the eagles of the skies  
in the waves of the seas,  
in the lakes of the land,  
in flowers, in grass,  
in gold,  
And in the sands of the wild land."

This "supplication", in which the poet asks God to enable him to see Him in all aspects of Nature, reaches its climax when he asks Him to make his heart "An Oasis that quenches the thirst of the far and the near"

(1) 

This mystical element in Mikhail Naimy's thinking came to face a crisis when he went to live in the United States. As a young Christian idealist who was influenced by Rousseau's and Tolstoy's ideas in which they glorify the simplicity of life in Nature, as opposed to the artificiality of urban life, it was not unnatural that he should feel "down at heart"<sup>(2)</sup> on his first visit to New York, which looked to him no more than "the Tower of Babel carried from the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates to the banks of the Hudson."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) "Ibtihālāt", a poem Diwān Hams al-Jufun, pp. 37-38.

(2) Abʿad min Moscū wa min Washinton, p. 98.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 98.

A civilization which permits the machine to interfere in Man's life to the extent of using it to control even his own conscience, is to Naimy a civilization that is doomed to bankruptcy, "For I know that there are those who think seriously of inventing a machine which would be able to unveil the inner thoughts of Man's heart and mind, so that a witness in a court would be unable to say what he does not know, or to contradict what he actually knows. What hope would you thus have in a civilization that surrendered its mind and conscience, its justice and honour, to the Dollar, which in its turn surrendered her to the machine - yes what hope is there in such a civilization<sup>except</sup> that it should end in ruins?"<sup>(1)</sup> This abhorrence of the machine dominating modern Man's life reminds one of Spengler's views on the subject, **when** he says

"Never save here has a microcosm felt itself superior to its macrocosm, but here the little life-units have by the sheer force of their intellect made the unliving dependent upon themselves. It is a triumph, so far as we can see, unparalleled. Only this our Culture has achieved it, and perhaps only for a few centuries.

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(1) Sab<sup>c</sup>un, II, pp. 26-27.

But for that very reason Faustian man has become the slave of his creation. His number, and the arrangement of life as he lives it, have been driven by the machine on to a path where there is no standing still and no turning back. The peasant, the hand-worker, even the merchant, appear suddenly as inessential in comparison with the three great figures that the machine has bred and trained up in the cause of its development the entrepreneur, the engineer, and the factory-worker. Out of a quite small branch of manual work - namely, the preparation economy - there has grown up (in this one Culture alone) a mighty tree that casts its shadow over all the other vocations - namely, the economy of the machine-industry. It forces the entrepreneur not less than the workman to obedience. Both become slaves, and not masters, of the machine, that now for the first time develops its devilish and occult power."<sup>(1)</sup>

To Mikhail Naïmy, Western civilization's main fault lies in its tendency to give priority to the intellect, which led to its dazzling success in the field of Science and inventions. On the other hand, it neglected altogether what he terms the "heart", "where all the sinister and lofty desires struggle violently against each other".<sup>(2)</sup> This lack of balance in Western civilization between the "mind" and the "heart" resulted, according to Naïmy, in the overwhelming tide

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(1) The Decline of the West, by Oswald Spengler, Vol.II. p. 504.

(2) Durūb, p. 60.

of selfishness, rancour, hatred, greed, and deceitfulness. These desires, he explains, if allowed to run free, are bound to destroy the product of the mind, turning it into the means of destruction, a source of misery, and a set-back rather than a starting point.

These are the factors which are doing their work in dealing the death blow to Western Civilization, as they also destroyed the civilizations that preceded it.<sup>(1)</sup> In an article entitled "A World That Has Gone Insane"<sup>(2)</sup> Naimy seems to come to the conclusion that one of the main faults of the present Western civilization lies in the fact that there exists in it a wide gap between the power it put at the disposal of modern Man against nature, and its failure to provide him with a corresponding spiritual power which would enable him to have a goal or a purpose for his life. Thus the power of Man in his modern world is leading him towards an unending craving for more material expansion which came to be the aim of his life and its ultimate goal.

Wondering where Science has reached in its search for the secret of matter, Naimy says that Science realized a long time ago that matter is made up of atoms in which its secret lies. Thus Science strove to find the means to divide the atom which it ultimately achieved. But what has Science achieved by this? It came to know

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(1) Durub, p. 60.

(2) See al-Nur wa al-Dayjur pp. 31-49.

the Electrons, Protons and Neutrons which are united together by an energy that is capable of destroying and creating things. But as to what the Proton, Electron or Neutron are, or why are they united together in a certain manner, or why is it that one atom is united with others to form all these astonishing elements in the universe, among which is Man, giving him eyes to see, eyelids to protect the eyes, and strange senses of hearing, touch, taste, breath, all these and other questions, are not answered by Science, nor is it capable of giving an answer to them. Moreover, Science is unable to tell us about the secret of life and death, or to inform us as to the nature of that energy which brings atoms together to form tangible matter. How is it that we can see the effects of this energy, when we are unable to see the energy itself? Is this energy working towards an aim, or is it doing its work aimlessly? Is it possible that this energy is giving to all that it makes an aim, when it itself is void of any aim? Is it not possible that this energy which pervades everything that exists in this universe, organizing everything in it, moving everything in it, has reason, sight and an aim? And who are we, with our limited mind, to pass judgement on its mind, or to measure, with our short sight, its sight? or, with our limited aims, to define its aim? Is it not possible that this energy, with its sense, sight, and aim is an aspect of that Eternal and Immortal Soul, which controls everything, existing in everything, capable of everything,

the Creator of everything? Is it not possible that it is my soul and yours, and the soul of every seen and unseen object in heaven and earth? and that power is derived from it, and not from wealth, weapons or authority? that glory emanates from it and not from nations and homelands? that Light comes from it and not from Science and its laboratories? that Life and liberty are derived from it, and not from constitutions and agreements? Mikhail Naimy concludes this meditation by proclaiming that that Spirit is the One which is worthy of being worshipped and glorified.<sup>(1)</sup>

Science, Naimy says, has limited itself by relying exclusively on empirical results. Scientific "facts", he maintains, are proportionately factual, since tangible matters in the universe with which Science concerns itself are constantly in a state of flux. The same applies to Man who is constantly changing and developing. If neither the object of the experiment nor Man who is performing it are stable, how can we accept the results of the experiment to be final and stable? A person's feelings, he goes on to say, his imagination, dreams, and illusions are "facts" to him. But the Eternal Fact, the Absolute Fact which encompasses

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(1) Al-Awthan, pp. 53-57.

Time and is not encompassed by time, which encompasses Space and is not contained by space, is not within the reach of Science, and is too complex for it to comprehend or grasp. Naimy maintains that although our modern civilization does not provide us with the final answers as to the aim of our life, it is an inevitable step in the process towards achieving this goal. "All civilizations may be necessary steps in the long march of Man towards final emancipation which means the shedding off of Man's shadow, or illusory ego, and his total merging with the Universal Spirit where all egos melt in One, Absolute, Ineffable and rationally incomprehensible. For those who are working for such an emancipation the present civilization is but a series of traps and snares. Especially when one considers the absolutely irresponsible mentality behind its rush for wealth and power, let alone the fiendish weapons it has created for whole-sale destruction. One shudders to think of the day of the final settlement of accounts."<sup>(1)</sup>

Science, Naimy says, has spared no effort in recent times to unveil the truth of what is generally called "matter". As to what is called "spirit", Science has held back, for the "spirit" does not lend itself to experiments. Scientists who are not swayed by the successes of Science do not hesitate to admit their inability to deny the existence of the Spirit. As to those for whom the

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(1) From a letter by Mikhail Naimy addressed to H. Dabbagh dated 21 Sept. 1967.



success of Science has gone to their heads, they have no hesitation in denying the existence of the Spirit and all the unseen power that is related to it. It is from here, Naimy concludes, that the conflict between Science and Religion started.<sup>(1)</sup> Science, Naimy, goes on to say, believes only in what it can see. Intuition, inner contemplation, or inspiration are disregarded by it. This is the case, when in fact all these means of knowledge played an important part in the development of modern science. More than one discovery, invention or a new trend in Science was the result of an intuition, a dream, or an inspiration.... But Science refuses to admit anything of this nature, lest it should be interpreted as a deviation from what is called the Scientific Method which is based first and foremost upon experiment.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Al-Awthan, p. 52-53.

(2) Ibid., pp. 50-51. This view is supported by the views of Sir Edward Appleton, the astronomer, who says: "So I want to make the assumption which the astronomer - and indeed any scientist - makes about the universe he investigates. It is this that the same physical causes give rise to the same physical results anywhere in the universe, and at any time, past, present and future. The fuller examination of this basic assumption, and much else besides, belongs to philosophy. The scientist, for his part, makes the assumption I have mentioned as an act of faith; and he feels confirmed in that faith by his increasing ability to build up a consistent and satisfying picture of the universe and its behaviour." Mysticism, by F.C. Happold, pp. 26-27.

Mikhail Naimy maintains that the principle difference between the East and the West lies in one fundamental point. This is that the East surrenders to a power which it accepts to be greater than itself, and so does not fight it, while the West is proud of its own power, with which it tries to fight all other powers. He also seems to think that the East looks upon the world as perfect, as being created by God who is Perfect, while the West sees defects in the world, which it intends to put right. He goes on to say that the East says with Muhammad "Say nothing will befall us except what God has destined for us" "قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ إِلَيْنَا", and with Christ, "Thy Will be done!" "لَتَكُنْ مَعِيَّتُكَ". It blesses Buddha's victory against Man's desires, and Laotse's sublimation which raises him above the vanities of the world to unite in spirit with the Tao, while the West says "My will be done"; and whenever it fails in fulfilling its will, it never ceases to try again, and to cherish the hope of winning in the end. The East says, "There is no Conqueror but God," "وَلَا غَالِبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ", while the West says, "I am the sole Conqueror." This presumption and arrogance of the West concerning its own power, and the surrender of the East to a power that is greater than itself, is the dividing line between the two worlds. Naimy states that there lies in the East's acknowledgement of its impotence in the face of the power of death and life its own triumph, while the West's arrogance

towards these powers is a manifestation of its eventual defeat and failure. "The West's attempts to 'reform' humanity and to understand its secrets, is like the attempt of a fish in an ocean which tries to 'improve' its conditions and to know its contents."<sup>(1)</sup> Naimy maintains that the West is trying now, by means of its microscopes and telescopes, to comprehend what the East had comprehended through its belief and spiritual experiments. It is significant, he says, that the more the West delves into its methods of knowledge, the more it tends to fall back on the East, "wiping off the dust of generations that accumulated on its teachings, bringing them back to life, and introducing them to its people as if they were new facts. For now we see the West trying to explore the great philosophies of China, India, the Jews, the Arabs, and the Persians, in an attempt to find therein the keys that would unlock for it the secrets of this universe, those secrets which have not yielded to his logical proofs and teachings."<sup>(2)</sup> Naimy cites Sir William Crookes, Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle, the scientists who believed that Man has a spirit, and that although his body perishes, his spirit is immortal. "If the West has come to know this truth "by proof",

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(1) Al-Marāḥil, pp. 59-60.

(2) Ibid., pp. 59-60.

the East, has known it since time immemorial. It has built on it and on other revealed facts the foundations of its life."<sup>(1)</sup> He goes on to say that he believes these to be "revealed facts" for, in his view, no other facts exist. Man, alone, is unable, he says, to comprehend the secret of existence. These facts are the heritage of the East, and what is called now "scientific facts" according to which we now adapt our lives, are no more than conjectures. For facts or truths do not change with time and place, and the best we can say of the "scientific facts" of the West, is that they are "reasonable suppositions" applicable for a limited time, and that they hold their own until we come to know better facts which are more acceptable to our comprehension.<sup>(2)</sup> It should be pointed out here that the East of which Naimy thinks is not the communist East, nor the East of rising nationalisms which mould themselves on Western lines. To him the East is represented by the various Eastern seers whose vision and imagination grasped the universal truth. It is the East which produced Buddha, Laotse, Christ, Muhammad, al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ʿArabī. This, Mikhail Naimy believes, is the East which will be able to rescue the world from disaster. The East of our own day should liberate itself from the fetters and chains of dogma, a step which will enable it to learn and to derive strength from its great teachers.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Al-Marāḥil, pp. 59-60.

(2) Ibid., pp. 59-60.

(3) See Durūb, p. 63.

In discussing the subject of Western and Eastern civilizations, it seems to the student of Naimy that the conclusion he arrives at in this respect is that the fundamental difference between the two lies in that the Western Civilization relies mainly on Man's mind or intellect, or what he sometimes calls " **التفكر** ", while the Eastern civilizations rely mainly on Man's insight " **البصيرة** " or belief. While the East surrenders to a greater power than its own, the West refuses to adopt such an attitude, and tries to impose its own will on life. There seems to be no doubt in his mind that in this clear distinction which he draws between the East with its "belief" and the West with its "intellect", that the East is the wiser, and that the West is shortsighted besides being arrogant. Moreover, he seems to maintain that if the West has anything at all of value, then it is something which it had borrowed from the East "For if you strip Western Civilization of what it had borrowed from the East, you would have no more than a grave painted with gold on the outside, and filled with bones and worms on the inside. If ever you say to the West "I will now burn all your works except one which you have to choose", what will the West choose? It will undoubtedly choose the Holy Bible. If you do the same with the Muslim World, it will choose the Holy Qu'ran. If the most valuable and most precious work in the eyes of the West is a gift which the East has bestowed on it, how is it then that the East should ever stretch out its hand begging the West? And what

would it ever beg, except planes, machines, wires, gunboats, parliaments, museums, nightclubs, opium, diseases and many other miseries that would/bring it closer to the meaning of life, nor would it ever grant it any spiritual tranquility, which it could have through its belief."<sup>(1)</sup> In another statement he declares that "the East can dispense with adopting one single thing from the Western civilization, for adoption is no more than imitation. He who imitates others is unfaithful to himself; for by imitation one tends to hide one's own truth, and to assume the truth of others. In every nation, as is the case with every individual, there lies a truth the value of which depends on its originality. That is why I can not see how we can imitate the West in any aspect of life without being treacherous to ourselves or without mutilating the truth that lies within us."<sup>(2)</sup> And, "Let him who wishes to say, 'He is a reactionary who wants to draw us back to the ignorance of faith and its superstitions' do so, for such words will not change my belief that the East is nearer to the truth, through its belief, than the West with all its intellect, sciences and proofs, and that the arrogant West is not happier than the East nor nobler or more honourable. Surely, he who says wholeheartedly "There is none who is victorious other than God"

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(1) Al-Marāḥil, pp. 59-60.

(2) Ibid., pp. 60-61.

"**وَلَدَ غَالِبٌ إِلَهُ الْإِلَهِ**", is wiser, in my view, and more tranquil spiritually, than the one who says "There is none who is victorious except I" "**وَلَدَ غَالِبٌ إِلَهُ أَنَا**". If there is any need for the one to learn from the other, it is the West who needs to learn from the East rather than the reverse."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is untrue, Naimy says, that the faiths of the East, as some people claim, are its greatest handicaps. Nor is it true that the East is preoccupied with the Hereafter and unattentive to this life, or that its belief in fate has tied up its hands, paralysed its thoughts, and spread a thick veil on its eyes. Is it true, he asks, that the East is dead because it believes in the Living God who is Immortal? Definitely not, Naimy says - what the East has done is to set for itself and for the whole world, certain aims. These aims aspire to lead Man to perfection, to rid him of the bonds of the flesh, to overcome his bewilderment when he faces pain and death, to enable him to unravel the secrets of the universe, which would set him free to live a life which knows no boundaries or restrictions, enwrapped with the peace of knowledge and enlightened by the splendour of the Divine. The opposites in such a life are united, and Time and Space vanish in it. This aim, the East has envisaged through the most pure and clear visions of its prophets.

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(1) Al-Marāḥil, pp. 60-61.

That the East has not attained to this aim is indisputable; for to maintain that it did, is like claiming that every man in the East is a prophet, or that every man in the West is an inventor, a claim which is both naïve and stupid. What the East has done, is that it burnt with zeal through certain phases of its history to attain to that aim, but it fell short of attaining it, exhausted and worn out. For it is not sufficient for those who choose to go along this path to believe in their aim, or to bless the names of those who set it. Nor is it sufficient that they should give alms to a beggar, to abstain from food for a number of days, or to perform certain rituals in temples. To say this, Naimy says, is not to hold the East in disdain for not being able to attain to the aim in a limited time. The disdainful thing is that the East should give up the hope in despair, turning its face away from the goal, thinking that it is an unattainable illusion, or to seek in the ways of the West a goal or a path. Nothing, in Naimy's view, is greater or loftier than the aim which the East has set for humanity. If it is difficult to achieve, he says, it is because perfection is difficult to achieve. If our veiled sight is unable to see the aim, it is because it is visualised through the insight which is pure and penetrating. The West, Naimy maintains, is unable to give humanity such an aim, or any other aim which could stand against the changes and vicissitudes of time. This is because the West is guided



by its sight and not by insight. Naimy concludes this argument by **saying** that the West should use its "sight" " **بَصَر** " to achieve the aims of the East which it envisaged through its "insight" " **بَصِيرَة** ".

If you ask, Naimy says, how would it be possible for the West, which does not see or believe in the aim of the East, to pave for it the way to achieve its aim, my answer is that the West is doing this unconsciously and unintentionally. This is because the West confined itself to the study of the perceptible aspects of this universe and the laws that govern it, which led to its inventions and discoveries. These inventions will reach their limit one day, a matter which will divert the West from the field of things that are perceptible to things that are beyond perception - in other words from following the path of the "sight" to that of the "insight", from the "limited" to the "unlimited", from the "finite" to the "infinite" - this is the very aim of the East. Do you not see, Naimy asks, how Science, which forms the basis of Western Civilization, and which claims to confine itself to perceptible matters, starts with things that are imperceptible, moving to things perceptible? Thus, the point, which is nothing, comes to be the measure for all dimensions and the foundation of practical engineering. So is the case with the figure one, which is pure illusion, comes to be the basis of mathematics on the basis of which skyscrapers,

bridges, planes, and dynamos are constructed. It is undeniable then, that modern science as propagated by the West served both the East and the West, for it continues unintentionally to transfer things from the domain of the imperceptible to the realm of the perceptible. As the majority of people do not believe in things like electricity, except when they see it in the form of light in their houses, Science (and the West) came to have a great hold on their minds and lives. It is for this very reason that the East holds the West now in great esteem. Naimy goes on to say that <sup>although</sup> ~~if~~ the West ~~has not been able up till now to~~ produced systems that deprive some people and surfeit others, it will not fail ultimately to found a world where people do not spend most of their time in running after satisfying their hunger and protecting themselves against nature. When men are free from the nightmares of providing their food, clothes, and lodging, they will be able to pursue aims other than the satisfaction of physical hunger, clothing other than the nakedness of their bodies, and looking for an abode that will protect them from the rancour of their selves this will be no less than the abode of God.

We all know, Naimy says, that the inventions of the West have made the world smaller, and that even its wars have worked to that end. Thus, the West is working unconsciously towards bringing humanity closer together. This end is implied in what the East had

said, "love your neighbour as you love yourself", and, "All people are the children of God." When the science of the West reaches its limit, it will find itself face to face with the thing that makes matter, when it itself is not made of matter - with the Power which the East long ago called God. In other words, the West will move from the tangible to the abstract, and it is then that the role of the West will come to its end in this phase of the history of humanity, and it is then that the East will be called upon to take the lead. The task of the East then will be, after the West will have paved the way for it, is to make its aim clear to humanity, so that it could appear with all its splendour, purified of all the stupidities and inane oddities with which ignorance has veiled it. The East will then be able to bring together humanity which is lost between its sight and insight, leading it towards its aim with steps that know no limitation, and a will that never fails.<sup>(1)</sup> In the tone of a spiritual leader whose words are saturated with intense and deep feeling that the East will ultimately lead this world to salvation after its modern civilization has led it astray in seeking the materialistic luxuries of life, Naimy concludes an article entitled "The Civilization of the Mind and the Civilization of the Vision" by saying

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(1) Al-Bayadīr, pp. 144-152.

"I can see the vision of this East reappearing anew in this world. He who will carry its torch is a prophet whose legs will have the strength of the world, whose arms will have the might of heaven, whose eyes will glow with the truth, whose tongue will bear the tranquillity of knowledge, and whose heart will be the abode of love. And he shall walk among men in the East and in the West, with his heart held on his palm as food for all those who are hungry. They will eat of it in the West and get poisoned. They will eat of it in the East and they will live. And he shall not be crucified."<sup>(1)</sup> Mikhail Naimy seems to think that the course which Western civilization is taking now is similar to that which Eastern civilizations took in the past. He explains by saying that Eastern civilizations, based mainly on faith, spread to a large part of the world. But as the faith of the Prophets was inherited by the demagogues, with its light overshadowed by the darkness of superstitions and ignorance, so is the case with the science of the scientists of the West, which is being thrown into the hands of exploiters who use it to satisfy every desire.<sup>(2)</sup> After reviewing the scientific achievements of the West, he imagines a conversation between the

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(1) Sawt al-'Ālam p. 60.

(2) Al-Bayādīr, p. 161.

"heart" of humanity and its "mind", where the "heart" says to the "mind" "Yes, you have done all this for Man, but you have sold yourself to a strange creature which you have created to be your servant and his, when all of a sudden, it came to be your master and his. How strange that a creature should come to excel its own creator, or a slave to dominate his own master - that creature is none but the Dollar."<sup>(1)</sup> This, one takes to imply, that the West has been subjected to a materialistic outlook which "invents to the hungry that which makes him forget his hunger, to the slave that which makes him forget his freedom, to the bored that which amuses him, to the ~~seeker~~ of beauty and perfection that which numbs his conscience, to the seeker of knowledge charms which it calls theory of evolution and the survival of the fittest, to him who seeks liberty charms called nationalism, racialism, and purity of blood and tongue, all of which it patches together in a piece of cloth of various colours which it calls a banner. To the poor people it turns and says, "that is the symbol of your freedom and independence, so sacrifice your blood for it - and the poor people believe what they hear, submerging themselves in blood."<sup>(2)</sup> To the student of Naimy this materialistic outlook, this "mind" of humanity, is obviously associated from his point of view with the West, while the "heart" of humanity, its idealistic and spiritual

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(1) Al-Bayadīr, pp. 166-167.

(2) Ibid., pp. 168-169.

side is associated with the East.<sup>(1)</sup> The "heart" is always yearning to "a life whose justice knows no prejudices, whose brotherhood harbours no deceit, whose beauty is untarnished with ugliness. A life whose heart is free of fear, whose body knows no death. It is a being which does not begin here or ends there, but within whose domain all beginnings and ends vanish, and deep in its depths limits and contradictions are submerged. In its vast expanse all beings meet. No struggle or dispute lies in it - nothing but understanding that is above encounter, and within it there is nothing but love that is not blemished with blood."<sup>(2)</sup> This "heart" of humanity seems always to be associated in Naimy's mind with the East. In fact he maintains that he "visualises that the reins of humanity will one day be transferred from the hands of the West - which is one of the twins of humanity that is guided by its sight - to the hands of the East which is the other

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(1) Mikhail Naimy, implicitly rather than explicitly, expounds this view throughout his writings on the question of the East and West. However, he states the following in a letter addressed to H. Dabbagh:

"The East has never been wholly spiritual nor has the West ever been wholly materialistic. But the fact remains that the East has given God to the World, while the West has given it this highly industrialized and fearfully mechanized civilization."

(2) Al-Bayādīr, pp. 168-169.

that is guided by its insight. I see the East already pulling together its strength to undertake the responsibilities of leadership that will be handed over to it."<sup>(1)</sup>

The East is also associated in Naimy's mind with what he calls its vision. For through its vision, the East, Naimy says, was able to see life as one whole indivisible unit, and thus it conceived its beauty as it is perfect, and its perfection, as it is beautiful. It was in Sinai that the East came to hear the words of that vision addressed to Moses "I am your God, do not take for yourself a God other than Me". In the Bhagavad Gita the conversation between Prince Arjuna and Krishna the incarnation of God, the vision of the East reaches its climax as it sees life having only one Self, where no other self has an entity except as part of that Self, and which no man could reach except by denouncing his individual self - and taking refuge in his comprehensive whole self, which he sees through his vision. The Nirvana, Naimy says, reaches the same heights, so does Christ's teachings about the kingdom of Heaven. Muhammad's preaching, says Naimy, that "There is no God Except Allah" is another example of the East's penetrating vision. If you could tell Buddha today, Naimy says, that we have invented a machine which we can reach the peak of Everest with, his answer would be, "But I have flown to the zenith

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(1) Al-Bayādir., p. 169.

of life, to the Nirvana, with wings that are not made of wood or steel, and are moved by nothing except by my vision".

If you could say to Christ today that we have discovered some rays with which we could see the sick spot inside the human body, his answer would be "But I can see the sick spot with unseen rays - these are the rays of my vision". Likewise, if you could say to Muhammad that we are able now to speak in Damascus and be heard in Mecca, he would say "But I can hear, with the ear of my vision, the voice of Gabriel without your machine, and in his voice I hear the voice of God, and in the voice of God that of life."<sup>(1)</sup> The essence of the message of the East to the world as seen by Naimy, is that the East urged Man to adopt the course of self-negation, and to break the chains of his limited corporeal self in order to unite with the incorporeal greater self. This, Man could only achieve through the development of his inner powers. It is this course that the prophets of the East followed to attain to communion with God.

This, from Naimy's point of view, is the genius of the East that it came to know the truth about life through its vision.

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(1) Ṣawt al-ʿĀlam, p. 57.



What, he asks, has the Western Civilization been able to achieve, except that it has enlarged and expanded our knowledge of perceptible things? If it has been able to increase the average of Man's life by one year, it has simultaneously increased his misery for a larger number of years. If it made the distances between the nations of the world shorter, it set the hearts of these nations farther apart. If it made working hours shorter, it lengthened the hours of vice and debauchery. It is not surprising, he says, that such a civilization should encounter political and economic crises everyday, and that it should spill its blood and destroy itself.<sup>(1)</sup> If the message of the East as seen by Naimy is summarised in stressing self-negation, he seems to have no doubt that the philosophy of the West is basically based on self-assertion. The West, equipped with reason, science and intellect rejects vision and intuition. Naimy admits that the West has achieved great victories in providing Man with materialistic needs, but on the other hand, he maintains that it has failed to provide Man with spiritual values on which he may found his life, and through which he would be able to define its aims and goals.

In analysing Mikhail Naimy's attitude towards Eastern and Western civilizations, one finds that the mystical element in his thinking, which seems to create a conflict between Naimy the individual,

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(1) Sawt al Alam, p. 58.

and Naimy the member of the human race, leads him to seek an outlet in which he could express his dissatisfaction with the predominant mode of thinking in the West. To say that the student of Naimy would not find anything new in the element of Nature-Mysticism in his writings, is not to underrate the value of his thought. It simply aims at stating that these thoughts, important as they are, had been expressed by writers, sufis, poets and thinkers, both Eastern and Western, who were endowed with similar contemplative inclinations. Evelyn Underhill writes that "Man has an ineradicable impulse to transcendence".<sup>(1)</sup> The sense that we, human beings, are far from being fully grown, has always haunted Man's mind. "Let every Christian as much as in him lies," Blake says, "engage himself openly and publicly before all the World in some mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem."<sup>(2)</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, the great Muslim mystic wrote

"I sought a soul in the sea  
And found a coral there;  
Beneath the foam for me  
An ocean was all laid bare.  
Into my heart's night  
Along a narrow way  
I groped; and lo! the light,  
An infinite land of day." (3)

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(1) The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today, by E. Underhill, p. 21.

(2) Blake "Jerusalem" To the Christians.

(3) Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was one of the most profound Muslim Sufi poets. The passage quoted is translated by A.J. Arberry.

Thus Man's attempts to attain "knowledge", his groping in search for "the light" is not a monopoly of the East, nor is it confined to the West. But as Western civilization which is mainly based on Greek logic and reasoning, has achieved its most dazzling successes in the field of Science, there has been a tendency - in the West as well as in the East - to look more and more upon Western Science as the only means of attaining knowledge. This is a fallacy which one could easily disprove by pointing out that the West had had its long heritage in the domain of the spirit long before the so-called "materialism" label was attached to it. Thus, just as the East produced Laotse, Buddha, Rūmī, Ghazālī,<sup>(1)</sup> and Ibn 'Arabī, the West similarly produced St. Augustine, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, to mention but a few names in both parts of the world. Hence, Mikhail Naimy's claim that the West has always given priority to the "intellect" and neglected the "heart" is not convincing. This is all the more surprising coming from such a brilliant writer like Naimy, who is closely acquainted with the history of the West and its culture in every field. Moreover, Naimy's claim that

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(1) It is of interest to mention here that Gibrān, the Lebanese writer, made a study of Ghazālī comparing him with St. Augustine.

the East has always surrendered to a power greater than itself is equally unconvincing. Have Holago, Jankiskhan, Tamer Lane "succumbed" to a power greater than themselves? Surely, these Eastern historical personalities, with all the atrocities they committed against humanity, should not be swept into oblivion when one discusses the question of Eastern civilization remembering only the glorious side of it. For it is far from being objective in this respect if one tends to remember only the greatness of Moses, Christ and Muhammad, especially when this tendency towards selectivity comes from such an important thinker as Mikhail Naimy. There is, Naimy maintains, a lack of balance in Western civilization between the "mind" and the "heart" which has brought about an overwhelming tide of selfishness, rancour, hatred, greed, and deceitfulness. These characteristics, he says, will deal the death blow to that civilization. Here again, one finds a tendency towards discursive reasoning. For these traits have been part of Man's nature since time immemorial, whether they were the factors that destroyed other civilizations is by no means certain. In fact, historians (starting with Ibn Khaldūn, Gibbon, down to Arnold Toynbee) differ as to the causes behind the rise and decline of civilizations. Naimy also maintains that Science is incapable of comprehending the Eternal Fact about life, forgetting that Science does not seek this kind of knowledge. In fact twentieth-century scientists recognize that their domain is relatively limited.

Thus it would be too much to ask Science and scientists to provide us with a kind of knowledge which they never claim to seek in the first place.. Moreover, it seems to be futile to compare what Naimy calls the "insight" of the East (by which he presumably means Eastern Mysticism) with Western Science, as mysticism, according to the Indian philosopher Radhakrishnan is "Integrated thought" in the sense that it brings things together in a new pattern, while science analysis things, or in other words, breaks things into parts. To ask the one to perform the task of the other is like asking a musician to perform the task of an engineer, and to blame him if he fails to do so.

How is one then to explain Naimy's denunciation of Western civilization? Is not Naimy's own mind Western to a great extent? Naimy would certainly not have been the great thinker, writer, and critic we know had he not delved deep into the treasures of Western culture in more than one field. There is hardly one work of his in which he does not express his admiration for a Western thinker, writer, poet, Mystic, or critic. Are these not the product of Western civilization? How is it that a civilization could be all evil as Naimy implicitly rather than explicitly maintains, when it has been capable of producing such admirable figures in the field of knowledge, whom he himself is

the first to admire? In one brief sentence Naimy admits that he is not unaware that his "violent rebellion against Western civilization aimed only at dispelling an agony."<sup>(1)</sup> What was this "agony" that he wanted to dispel through this violent attack against Western civilization? It may be that it was no more than this conflict between Naimy the idealist (basically Christian), and Naimy the man who was constantly forced to live in the world of others, in which there was so much that he disagreed with and disliked. In an article entitled "Sannin and the Dollar",<sup>(2)</sup> Naimy draws a sharp and impressive contrast between peace in Sannin, and the turmoil of life in New York. But are we right in taking Sannin - which is undeniably peaceful - to represent the East, and New York to represent the West? Would it not be possible to describe life in Beirut - which is certainly not wholly spiritualistic in character - as the Epitome of materialism, and to withdraw after that to a quiet village in the West to draw a picture of the peace with which it is shrouded? If we may do so, and there is no reason why we should not, we could easily claim, following Naimy's example, that the East is the symbol of greed, and the West is the Epitome of peace.... thus altogether reversing the picture which Naimy presents to us.

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(1) Sab'un, II, p. 204.

(2) Zad al-Ma'ad, pp. 31-32.

One also wonders how is it that Naimy, who since his days in Poltava felt very strongly that Western civilization was driving Man away from the right path,<sup>(1)</sup> should think that his own contact with the West and that of his other Arab friends abroad was bound to bring back to life all the latent powers that lay under the ashes of ignorance and the authority of the past.<sup>(2)</sup> If the West was leading Man away from the right path, how is it then that contact with its civilization should be of use to us? This, in fact, is only one example out of many which a student of Naimy could give in which he seems to admit the advantages of our contact with the West, while in the same vein deploring Western civilization. How is it possible for us to change our concepts of literature (which presumably means adopting Western concepts according to Naimy) and to say at the same time that "the East could do without adopting a single word from the Western civilization, for adoption is no more than imitation".<sup>(3)</sup> If we are to accept Naimy's views as to what our attitude should be towards Western civilization, we should accept the principle of imposing on ourselves a policy of cultural isolation, which is certainly not to our advantage, whatever the shortcomings of that

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(1) Sab'ūn, II, p. 8½

(2) Ibid., p. 53 (from a letter to his friend Nasīb Arīda).

(3) Al-Marāḥil, p. 60.

civilization are the fact that there are evil aspects for this civilization is not good enough reason to keep us away from it, if we intend to play our part in Man's endeavours to know the truth about himself, a principle which Naimy urges us to adopt. One would also ask did the Arabs in the past isolate themselves from Greek, Persian and Indian cultures? If they had done so, they would have been the poorer for it. Why then should we now turn our back to Western civilization for fear of the evil that it may bring with it?

In thinking of the question of East and West, one finds himself in agreement with a Chinese-American scholar who states

"The Western world is today the arbiter of Mankind's fate. It is paradoxical but true that the reaction against Western physical domination has grown far to complete the conquest of the world by Western culture. To ensure its own survival the rest of the world has been obliged to imitate the West. It is Western methods, beliefs, and goals, that have been accepted and utilized to combat Western control." (1)

Does this statement not apply to Mikhail Naimy's ideas concerning East and West, when he repeatedly exhorts us to "change" our way of thinking and to adopt "new" ones? Are not these "new" ways of thinking other than Western, and are they not, in fact, part of his own way of thinking, which came to be so as

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(1) Francis L.K. Hsu, Americans and Chinese Two Ways of Life, p. 441.



a result of Western influence upon him? There is no doubt that Naimy adopts this attitude in a sincere attempt to ensure the survival of what he thinks to be valuable in the East, but to deny the West all credit, when one uses its very means of thought, seems to be based on emotion rather than on objective judgement.

However, Mikhail Naimy is not the first Eastern thinker to find himself in the difficult position of trying to establish some kind of synthesis between Eastern and Western ways of thinking. Maurice Zinkin, in his Asia and the West, gives us a precise description of how Mahatma Gandhi faced this situation, and what results were produced, when he writes, "He (Gandhi) rejected the respect for wealth and force which runs through so much that is bad in our Western civilizations, but he accepted the democracy, the eagerness to take action to relieve the suffering of the poor, the respect for the individual conscience, and the willingness to let each group get its own way which constitute so much of the good. What he accepted he married to certain aspects of his own tradition - the emphasis on moral force, the admiration for withdrawal from worldly desires, non-violence, the realization in India that the poor meant above all

the village. Out of the combination of these concepts he produced the Congress Movement."<sup>(1)</sup>

One could see no harm in these attempts (whether of Gandhi's or Naïmy's) to found a synthesis between Eastern and Western trends of thinking; for one could claim that no one particular civilization exclusively belongs to one nation or one part of the world, without containing extraneous elements that it adopts or inherits from other civilizations. What one objects to in Naïmy's case is the tendency to draw a marked line between the East and West claiming that the former surpasses the latter and that it has no need "to borrow a single word from it".

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(1) Asia and the West, by Maurice Zinkin, p. 89.

Chapter V.

Naimy, the Critic, Writer and Poet.

"Thought is not expressed in literature for its own sake, but for the sake of the organization it gives to experience. Not only thought, but equally emotions, sensuous impressions, psychological intuitions, and the mass of infinitely variable associations that accompany the movement of thought, must also be communicated to the reader's mind that is to say, experience itself, by being imaginatively provoked there." (1)

Lascelles Abercrombie.

Although this study is mainly concerned with some aspects of Mikhail Naimy's "thought", it would be incomplete if we neglected his role as a critic, writer, and poet in Modern Arabic Literature, especially as it is difficult to draw a clear line between what is literature and what pertains to thought in Naimy's writings. For, according to Naimy, "Literature should help Man to understand himself".<sup>(2)</sup> It is also noticeable that most of Naimy's short stories aim at revolutionizing social thinking among the Arabs, and that his poetry is always the vehicle of certain meditative or broadly speaking, philosophical ideas. His approach in criticism, in the context of the Arab world of the early twentieth-century, certainly constitutes a revolutionary way of "thinking". Thus, the aim in this

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(1) Principles of Literary Criticism, by L.Abercrombie, p. 38.

(2) Durūb , p. 45.

chapter is to try to see how far this criticism, literary writings and poetry helped towards bringing about a new trend of thought in the Arab world, whether towards bringing about a new trend in the field of literature or towards life in general.

To study the influence of Mikhail Naimy from this point of view, it is essential that we should survey briefly the conditions of Arabic Literature later in the nineteenth century, which gives us an idea about the standard of thinking prevalent in the Arab World at the time.

In Egypt, the cradle of the Arab Renaissance "عصر النهضة", we notice the names of Mahmūd Ṣafwat al-Sā'ātī (1825-1880), Alī al-Laythī (d. 1896) Abdullah Fikrī (d. 1889) and several others whose literary activities were no more than jugglery with words, expressed in panegyrics and elegies, proverbs, puns and personal satire of no literary merit. As if to compensate for the insignificance of substance, these writers indulged in extreme exaggerations which betrayed the barrenness of their thoughts. "Thus, all rulers were more just than Kusrā, more powerful than Caesar, more generous than Hātīm, more brave than 'Amr, and cleverer than Iyās." (1)

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(1) Taha Husayn His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance, BY Dr. P. Cachia, p. 15.

If this was the case in Egypt, literary acrobatics were similarly employed in the Lebanon, and indeed all over the Arab world.

Thus, a "great poet", writing an elegy on the death of a friend finds no means of expressing his sorrow other than by drawing an analogy between the fall of his friend and the fall of the moon from its heights

صوى ذلك البدر المنير لقطره فمن بعد في العلياء لننظر البدر<sup>(1)</sup>

No less than pearls, the poet tells us, poured out of his friend's mouth

أريباً خطيباً مصفياً مائلاً ياقط من فيه الدر والدر<sup>(2)</sup>

However, with the closer contact with the Western World, the threshold of the twentieth century witnessed the first great stirrings in the field of literature amongst the Arabs. Ahmad Amin, quoted by Sir H.A.R.Gibb, wrote saying

"In Western literature he (the Arab student) sees vigour of thought and congruence with the present, and a spirit, a life, an activity which he cannot find in Arabic." (3)

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(1) Al-Ghirbal, p. 60.

(2) Ibid., p. 60.

(3) Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature, by Sir H.A.R.Gibb, p. 313.

If ever these words applied to an Arab student of the time, they certainly applied to Mikhail Naimy, who, since his first years in Russia, came to compare the greatness of Russian literature with the stagnation of the literature in his homeland. The immense influence which Russian literature had on Mikhail Naimy is well illustrated in a letter which he wrote to Professor Kratchkovsky, and in which he stated:

"Already in Nazareth my favourite subject was literature... In the seminary I soon immersed myself in Russian literature. It was as though a new world full of wonders had opened before me. I read greedily. There could hardly have been a Russian author whose works I did not read through... The literary stagnation in the entire Arabic-speaking world struck me after I had left Russia. This was depressing and painful to one who had been brought up on the fine art of Pushkin, Lermontov and Turgenev, on Gogol's Laughter through Tears, Tolstoy's fascinating realism, Belinsky's literary ideals and finally, the lofty humanity of the most powerful, profound, complete and penetrating of all Russian writers, Dostoyevsky. You can understand why my first literary essays in Arabic were mainly of a critical character." (1)

This was the literary atmosphere of the Arabs into which Mikhail Naimy was born late in the nineteenth century, and which he could assess all the more clearly when he left the Arab world to live in Russia, and later in the United States. When, in 1923, he published a collection of his articles under the significant

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(1) Among Arabic Manuscripts, by Professor I.Y. Kratchkovsky, trans. by T. Minorsky, p. 58.

name of al-Ghirbāl (The Sieve), the influence of Russian and Western concepts of criticism on him was so noticeable that Professor Kratchkovsky wrote saying

"It seemed to me that his works contained certain echoes of Russian critical thought which was little known to the Arabic Literature of the time. One of the items in this volume (al-Ghirbāl) was the introduction to the play Fathers and Sons, which was unknown to us, and the title of which evoked reminiscences of Russian Literature." (1)

Besides being immensely influenced by Russian Literature, Mikhail Naimy left Russia with a great deal of admiration for the Russians themselves. On leaving the country, he wrote later saying

"I felt that I was leaving a country whose culture came to be part of myself. Its language came to dominate my thoughts so that it almost overpowered the language of my forefathers. The scenery, the songs, and the problems of that country came to be so deeply ~~impressed~~ on my mind that they came to be a part of my being." (2)

To the stagnant, self-centred, shallow literary atmosphere of the time in the Arab world, whose activity was confined to hibernating in the shadow of medieval glories, Mikhail Naimy was a unique phenomenon, a new "blood", which instilled the first signs of life in the decayed body of modern Arabic literature. The tragic aspect of the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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(1) Among Arabic Manuscripts, by Professor Kratchkovsky, p. 57.

(2) Ab'ad min Mūsco wa min Wāshinton, p. 88.

centuries in the Arab world was not only that it was archaic, barren and almost lifeless, but that it also was complacent.

In the United States, Mikhail Naimy came to live in a society the aims of which he did not agree with, as these were not congruous with his meditative, self-searching, religious nature. Nevertheless, he was greatly impressed with the vitality, energy and pioneering spirit of the Americans. This was bound to arouse his anger against the complacency of the Arab world, hence his fiery articles in al-Ghirbāl, in which he aimed at stirring the Arabs into life, exhorting them to adopt a new way of thinking, not only in the literary field but in every walk of life

"We are in a stage of our literary and social evolution in which many spiritual needs have awakened - needs which we did not feel before our contact with the West. As we have not the pens or the brains that can fulfil these needs, let us then translate! And let us honour the translators because they are the mediators between us and the larger human family." (1)

He goes on in the same article to say

"He (the translator), by unveiling to us the secrets of great minds and hearts which are concealed from us by the inexplicability of language, is able to raise us from a small and limited

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(1) Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature, by Khemiri and G.Kampffmeyer, p. 31. (Translated from Al-Ghirbāl, p. 127.)



sphere, in whose mud we wallow, to a sphere from which we can see the more spacious aspects of life, and so we come to live in this world, sharing its hopes, joys and sorrows. Let us then translate!"(1)

One of the main themes in Naimy's criticism of contemporary Arabic literature was the lack of what he called "sincerity" among the writers of the time; as their literature was no more than futile attempts to illustrate their ability in playing about with words in pompous expressions, it had no value in his view, for "The adīb (writer) who is worthy of the name is he who gives out of his own heart."(2) Let those Arab "poetry-makers" who spend their lives "making" poetry follow the example of al-Hutay'ah who, on seeing the reflection of his ugly face in the water of a well, did not hesitate to say

(3) أَرَى لِي وَجْهًا سَوَّاهُ اللَّهُ خَلَقَهُ فَبَجَّ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ وَقَتَّ حَامِلُهُ

(I see a face of mine which God mutilated when He created it...  
Woe for such a face, and woe for its bearer!)

It is a pity, Mikhail Naimy says about his contemporary poets, that they do not see the reflections of their faces in the water of a well, so that they would be able to quote al-Hutay'ah. It is a

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 127.

(2) Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature, by T.Khemiri and G. Kampffmeyer, p. 30. (Trans. from al-Ghīrbāl, p. 28.)

(3) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 62. (al-Hutay'ah was one of the last poets born in the Age of Paganism "الجاهلية". Besides being a distinguished poet unrivalled in satire, he was the rāwī (reciter) of the famous poet Kāb b.Zuhayr. Al-Hutay'ah (The Dwarf), who was known for his ugly face, belonged to the group of poets called "al-Mukhadramun" as they were born before Islam and died mostly as Muslims.

pity too, he goes on to say, that the Arabs have no Molière who might present them with something like Les précieuses ridicules in which Mascarille is made to say

"Oh! Oh! Je n'y prenais pas garde  
Tandis que, sans songer à mal, je vous regarde,  
Votre oeil en tapinois me dérobe mon coeur;  
Au voleur, au voleur! au voleur, au voleur!" (1)

Alas! Naimy says, we have no Molière to make us laugh, cry, and be ashamed of ourselves at the same time! "But remember," he admonishes his readers, "that Molière is not a product of learning dictionaries by heart, or scanning poetry and mastering

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(1) In this play which is one of his early ones, Molière is satirising literary snobbery, as he does also in a later one on a like theme Le Femmes Savantes. The idea behind the words of Mascarille could have been expressed briefly by saying "You have made me fall in love with you". It seems that what Naimy was thinking of when he quoted these lines of Molière, was his wish to satirize the flowery, and *recheché* language used by contemporary Arab writers. To draw an analogy between Molière in French literature and Naimy in modern Arabic literature is irrelevant. For while Molière seems to have regarded himself as a critic of society, which he viewed satirically accepting at the same time many of the conventions of the society of his day (e.g. a woman's place is in the house, she does not need education...etc.) Naimy rebelled radically against the conventions of the Arab society of his day. This is abundantly clear in al-Ābā' wa al-Banūn. Mikhail Naimy, on the other hand, meets with Molière in attacking religious hypocrisy as the latter does in Tartuffe.

its rhymes. A Molière is not restricted by the Tawīl, the wāfir, the rajaz, the raml metres of poetry, nor is he restricted by superstitions, trivialities, and rules. He is a spring that gushes out of Nature's bosom.... How I wish we had a Molière of our own!"<sup>(1)</sup>

In the same article, Naimy's anger and agitation against the stagnation of life in the Arab World reaches its climax when he says, "I have come to penetrate into your hearts of hearts, wherein I want to enkindle a flame like the one I hold in the depth of my own heart! Indeed, I have come to transfuse in your life a germ that will wage in it an eternal war and continuous struggle," and he goes on to say, "For life means the discovery of everything that is new, experiencing what is unknown, and venturing into the heart of anything that might lead you to know the truth of things. Indeed, life is nothing but movement and renovation!"<sup>(2)</sup>

In this article, which Naimy gives the significant title of al-Hubāhīb ( الحباب ),<sup>(3)</sup> his rebellion against the literary and social life of the Arabs knows no bounds. It is a life that is

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(1) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 64.

(2) Ibid., p. 42.

(3) Al-Hubāhīb " الحباب " are the fireflies. Here Naimy uses the term in a contemptuous tone to describe those who consider themselves to be the "udabā" (writers) of the Arab world, when, in his view, they are no more than "fireflies" compared to the great masters, "the Floodlights", of literature in Russia and the West.

"barren, hard and unyielding",<sup>(1)</sup> which he goes on to compare with its counterpart in the West, where literature is flourishing and people are "in constant movement; destroying and building, deposing and installing, searching and excavating, wandering and discovering, and in general, spending more time working than praying. As for us, there is no need to work, for through prayers we achieve everything."<sup>(2)</sup> Who, amongst our great writers of the past, Naimy asks in the same article, would be placed on the same footing with the great writers of the West? In fact, he goes on to say, that the insignificant in what they wrote outweighs the significant.<sup>(3)</sup> As for those towering literary figures in the West, they are, Naimy says, "the wings which lift humanity high to the realms of beauty, perfection and love."<sup>(4)</sup> He attacks those who boast by saying "Our land is the cradle of inspiration and humanity, and the homeland of prophets..."<sup>(5)</sup> maintaining that we must admit our poverty, and that the writers and poets we have are "no floodlights but fireflies".<sup>(6)</sup> Our whole life, he says, is based on void compliments, and so is what our writers produce.

What, Naimy wonders in another article which he entitles Literary Criteria,<sup>(7)</sup> is the secret behind the immortality of the Psalms of David, the Mu'allaqāt, the poetry of Abū-al-'Alā' and Ibn al-Fārīd,

(1) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 43.

(2) Ibid., p. 45.

(3) Ibid., p. 48.

(4) Ibid., p. 49.

(5) Ibid., p. 50.

(6) Ibid., p. 54.

(7) Ibid. p. 65. The Arabic title of the article is "المقاييس الأدبية".

Dante's Inferno and Shakespeare's writings? If there are "immortal" works in literature, then this very immortality is the evidence that there lies in literature that which surpasses time and space. It is clear, he says, that the criteria by which we assess such works of literature are not confined to a certain epoch or place. What then are these criteria? Naimy answers this question by saying that there are criteria common to all nations and individuals at all times and in all places, the most important of which are

(a) Our need to express all the psychological effects to which we are subjected hope and despair, success and failure, belief and doubt, love and hatred, pleasure and pain, sadness and joy, fear and tranquility, and all other reactions that waver between the extremities of such feelings.

(b) Our need for a light in life by which we might be guided. There is no other light to guide us except that of the truth the truth about ourselves, and the truth about the world around us. For even if we differ on the question of what is meant by the truth, one cannot deny that there existed what was "true" in the days of Adam, and which is true even now, and will be true to the end of time.

(c) Our need to discover aesthetic qualities in everything for there is in our souls an unquenchable thirst for beauty. Even when our tastes differ as to what we consider to be beautiful and what we consider to be ugly, we cannot be blind to the fact that there

exists an absolute beauty about which no two persons could possibly differ.

(d) Our need for music for there lies in our spirit a wonderful love for sound and melody which we are unable to comprehend; our souls react to the sound of thunder, the churning of water, and the whisper of leaves. Similarly we shrink from inharmonious sounds while we feel pleased with sounds that are harmonious.

The value of what a man of letters writes should be gauged, according to Naïmy, by the extent to which his writing meets these static demands. These spiritual demands, he maintains, may vary as to the extent of the strength with which we feel them, but they do not vary as far as their essence is concerned.<sup>(1)</sup> The fact that Naïmy takes Shakespeare to be the best example for the role of a man of letters, both shows the extent to which he is influenced by Anglo-Saxon literature, and his insistence on sincerity on the part of the writer, in the sense that his aim should be (like Shakespeare's) to explore the depths of the human soul, and to express this exploration in rhetoric language. Thus to aim at seeking the knowledge of the truth is a fundamental prerequisite for an adīb. On this point Naïmy's view stands in sharp contrast with the view of another towering figure in Modern Arabic literature Taha

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 71.

Ḥusayn writes on this subject, saying "When a poet satirises, he is not to be required to tell the truth; he is required only to be effective in hurting the one he satirises, to excel in defaming and debasing him. As to whether he is truthful or untruthful, as to whether he satisfies morality or is at variance with its commandments and its laws, that is a matter which does not concern Art in any way".<sup>(1)</sup> One might venture to say that Ṭaha Ḥusayn's conception of literature, according to this definition is romantic, in that it assesses the literary merits of a work of literature or a qasīdah by its ability to move and stir the reader, while Naḥmy's view in which he requires that the adīb should seek the truth "about ourselves and the truth about the world around us" makes of the adīb partly a thinker. In an article in al-Ghirbāl in which he discusses the role of the adīb he says, "If ever I regret something it is that a large number of men of letters take literature for a profession and nothing more. To them, its aim is to amuse the reader and to divert his attention from thinking of himself. They also aim at achieving fame and wealth, or to show their ability by constructing a skilful phrase, an impressive qasīdah or a popular novel. Literature to those writers is no more than an exhibition, where the rules of the language and vocabulary are displayed, a field

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(1) "Ṭaha Ḥusayn His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance" by Dr.P.Cachia, p. 132. (Trans. from Ṭaha Ḥusayn's Ma'al-Mutanabbī, II, p. 618.)

where memories compete with each other, when it should be a field of "birth and worship". The man of letters, in my view, should be "born" anew in what he writes, and everytime he is "born" anew in what he writes, he should perform an act of worship in which he glorifies sacred Life, which leads him from the slumber of ignorance to the awakening of knowledge, from the darkness of slavery to the light of freedom. If this act of "birth and worship" is fulfilled in what the writer writes, it makes no difference in my view, whether he devotes his literature to defending the rights of the starving and the oppressed, or whether he turns his attention to other aspects of human life. The important thing is that his words should glow with the warmth of a man who is full of confidence and who is sure of the truth of what he is saying, so that the words may glow in the hearts and thoughts of his readers. It is important too that he should not be intolerant towards other writers who devote themselves to the aim of enlightening the heart, the thought, the conscience and the will of Man, so that he may see his aim, and follow the right path to it."<sup>(1)</sup>

In another article in which Naimy discusses the aim of literature, which, according to him, should translate the feelings of Man, his needs and his conditions, he strongly warns that

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(1) Durūb, p. 53.



literature should not be "directed" or restricted to achieving this particular aim or the other. The limits of literature, he maintains, are the limits of human energy in its desire to be infinitely unbound. The importance of any need or condition of Man depends on the extent to which that need or condition enables him to achieve the aim of his existence. The need for food, for instance, has no value in itself, it becomes valuable to the extent it helps Man to satisfy his hunger for things that are infinitely more valuable and lasting than food this is Man's hunger, Naimy says, for justice, goodness, beauty, love, knowledge and freedom. Had it not been for these, human life would have had no value, meaning or aim.<sup>(1)</sup>

This conception of literature and its aim has always been, since the beginning of the Modern Arab Renaissance, "مسألة النهضة" a controversial question among Arab writers. It might be of interest in this respect to compare Naimy's views on the subject, with his emphasis on the important part that literature should play in unveiling the truth of Man to himself, which could be ascribed to Naimy's meditative and religious nature, with the views of Salāma Mūsā, a contemporary of Naimy, and a non-religious thinker (born a Copt) who, after spending some time in England, came to be a socialist, a member of the Fabian Society, and was called in the Arab World "The Shavian"

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(1) Dūrūb, pp. 52-53.

as he was a great admirer of Shaw. Mūsā's conception of the role of literature was that it should aim at "the education and guidance of the people, the unveiling of the truths of the Universe."<sup>(1)</sup>

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- (1) Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature, by T.Khemiri and G.Kampffmeyer, p. 33. The personality of Salāma Mūsā and his views stand far apart from Naimy's views in every respect. It is interesting that these two important writers who were extremely influenced by their Western Culture and life in the West, returned to propogate diametrically opposite views, whether on the question of "East versus West", "Religion", "Westernization of the Arab-World", "Relations with the past" and many other subjects. Salāma Mūsā, who lived in England at the time when Socialism seemed to be the magic answer to Man's problems, returned to propogate socialist ideas and to attack everything that was Eastern, denouncing it as superstitious and backward. He went so far in this respect that he wrote saying "The more I know the East the more I hate it and feel that it is foreign to me, and the more I know the West the more I love it and become attached to it and feel that it belongs to me and I to it". (The preface to al-Yawm wa'l-ghad (Trans. by T.Khemiri and G. Kampffmeyer in Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature). Salāma Mūsā's views on the need for the industrialization of Egypt and changing it from a country that depends on agriculture to an industrial country, sowed the first seeds (about thirty years ago) to the changes we now witness in that country. Naimy, as we have seen, was not impressed with the magic of socialism as an answer to all Man's problems and needs. Naimy's views in the Arab World are today labled as "too idealistic" and "impractical". One wonders what the Arab World would think of Naimy's views when the industrialization of the Arab World reaches its full strength in the future, when Mūsā's views would certainly be "out of date". Mūsā and Naimy, one may venture to say, represent two schools of thought. It is much easier to believe in Mūsā's views, as their "tangible results" could be seen.

It is most likely that Mūsā meant by "the education of the people" the "masses" as distinct from "Man", and the "truths of the Universe" were most likely meant to refer to the "scientific" truths which have no bearing on the "truths" of Man's environment which Naimy speaks of.

In the age of decline, Arabic, like Arab society, became stagnant a writer came to succumb to the rules of the language and to be governed by them. "Thus the writer himself came to be the instrument in the hands of the language, adapting himself to it without adapting it himself. He came to be servile to the language, while the language came to be his master."<sup>(1)</sup> This is another theme which Naimy dealt with extensively early in his career as a critic. Here, he attacked vehemently stagnation in the language, and those who held the view that the old should be kept untouched: "إبقاء القديم على قدمه"<sup>(2)</sup>. To him, this view was absurd, for he maintained that language was something that developed and changed "The language with which we understand each other today in our periodicals and papers and which we use in our speeches, is different from the language of Mudar, Himyar, Tamīm, and Quraysh."<sup>(3)</sup> There is nothing new in this, he goes

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(1) Al-Ghirbal, p. 93.

(2) Ibid., p. 94.

(3) Ibid., p. 95.

on to say, for the process of change and development has been influencing our language all through the ages. Taking al-Mutanabbī as an example for the development of Arabic, he says "Had he (al-Mutanabbī) written his poems in the same language as that which the writers of al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>allaqāt used, he would hardly have been noticed in our language, rather than being a living force. This applies to Abū al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Alā' too, who, had he written "Ghairu mujdīn" in the same language with which he wrote his<sup>(a)</sup> messages, we would not have had that great poem. If the Andalusian poets had tried to compete with the pre-Islamic and "mukhadramūn" poets, we would not have had the muwashshahāt of<sup>(b)</sup>

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- (a) Abū al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Alā's poem "Ghairu mujdīn" (غَيْرُ مُجْدِي) is one of his most famous poems which reflect his pessimistic outlook. The title is in fact "Ḍuhkat al-Qabr" (ضُحْكَةُ الْقَبْرِ), but it is more famous because of its matla<sup>ʿ</sup> (مطلع) which reads
- غَيْرُ مُجْدِي فِي مِلِّيِّ وَالْمَقَارِي      تَوْحُّ الْإِلِّ وَلَا تَرْسُمُ شَادِ
- (Of no avail, in my faith and belief,  
is the waiting of the mourner, nor the chanting of the singer.)

- (b) The Muwashshah is a form of poetry which flourished in Spain. The qaṣīdah is composed of several stanzas, in which the rhymes are arranged in such a way that the master rhyme ending each stanza and running through the whole poem like a refrain is continually interrupted by a succession of subordinate rhymes. It is rich in music and smooth in language. In this respect, the poetry of the emigrant Arab poets in the New World (to which Naimy belonged) has something in common with the Muwashshah.

Andalusia."<sup>(1)</sup> In this article, Naimy comes to the conclusion that "language is one aspect of life, and it is not to be subjected except to the rules of life. Thus it chooses what is suitable, and out of that it preserves the more suitable for every occasion."<sup>(2)</sup> He goes on to attack the writers who indulge in what he calls "the war of expressions", in which some writers say that a certain expression is **not** permissible, quoting al-Tha<sup>c</sup>ālībī,<sup>(3)</sup> while others maintain that the same expression is permissible, invoking the support of al-Zamakhsharī.<sup>(4)</sup> Naimy was one of the first Arab critics

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 95.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 96.

(3) Al-Tha<sup>c</sup>ālībī, author of the famous Yatīmat al-Dahr was a leading critic who lived in the eleventh century. In al-Yatīmah he maintained that the Pre-Islamic poets were surpassed by their successors in tenderness of poetry, and that both were eclipsed by his contemporaries.

(4) Al-Zamakhsharī is one of the most famous "mufasssīrūn" (commentators) on the Qu'ran. He lived in the twelfth century, and his famous tafsīr is entitled al-Kashshāf. He was a well known grammarian and a Mutazilite, who tried to interpret the Qu'ran in such a manner as to confirm the views of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilah.

in modern times who propagated the idea that our care for our language should not lead us to forget that it is - like any other language - a means through which we express our emotions and our thoughts. Thoughts and feelings, he wrote saying, have their own independent entity separate from that of the language. They both come first, then the language. "All the dictionaries and works on grammar in the world, have never been able to start a revolution nor to make a nation, but thought and feelings renew the world every day."<sup>(1)</sup>

If these ideas sound self-evident to any educated Arab today, the case was not so in 1923 when Mikha'il Naimy compiled his articles of criticism in al-Ghirbāl. Had Naimy not lived in Russia and the United States where he came to be familiar with the cultures of these lands, he probably would have been one of those writers who took part in the quixotic battles of expressions.

Thus, together with al-ʿAqqād, al-Mazīnī, and Ṭaha Ḥusayn, one can say that Naimy was a pioneer in the field of introducing a new meaning to criticism and literature in Modern times in the Arab world. In fact, al-ʿAqqād was one of the first prominent Arab writers to express his admiration for Naimy's thoughts on the meaning of criticism.<sup>(2)</sup> al-ʿAqqād meets with Naimy on the question

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(1) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 105.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 242.

of the meaning of literature in his insistence on truthfulness and naturalness which he set as his main criteria by which to assess the value of a literary work.<sup>(1)</sup> The views of al-Māzinī in this respect are similar to those of Naḥmy's, "They (the old school) say that the new school destroys and does not build, as though it is possible to build without first removing the debris and preparing the ground."<sup>(2)</sup> As to the question of freeing oneself from being subservient to the word rather than adapting it to the writer's needs, al-Māzinī propagated revolutionary views, very similar to those of Naḥmy's "We have inherited the Arabic language from the Arabs, and, as heirs, we have the right to use our heritage as we choose, and not follow the example of the Arabs in everything."<sup>(3)</sup>

The importance of the writer in society is emphasised in one of Naḥmy's articles compiled in al-Ghirbāl, in which he asks his readers, "Do you know what is the furnace of the West? It is these flames that pour out of the mouths of its speakers, burning the dry stalks and preparing the soil for a good new plant. Do you know what are the hammers of the West? They are those pens, which, if

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(1) See Sā'āt bayn al-Kutub, by 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, p. 127.

(2) Hasād al-Hashīm, by A. Māzinī, p. 65.

(3) Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature, by T. Khemiri and G. Kampffmeyer, p. 29.

aimed at the Wall of Babel, would have devastated it down to its roots. Do you know who, in the West, toils in burnishing the minds and protecting them from rust? They are the writers, who, not even the graves could hide, nor the waves of oceans could overwhelm. Have you then a furnace in whose fire we can brighten our minds? Have you any hammers? Have you any tools for burnishing the minds? In other words have you any writers??"<sup>(1)</sup> Like al-Māzinī, he considered that imitating the medieval writers would result in dealing a death blow to Modern Arabic literature, for he wanted the writer to deal with the questions and needs of his own day, and these, he maintained, could never be the same as those of the past.<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, Naṣīm was one of the first Arab writers to raise the question of "bringing classical and colloquial Arabic closer to each other," "raising the literary standards of our readers", "the encouragement of the art of acting among the Syrians", "the reinforcement of the art of writing and raising it to a standard which only those who are adequately qualified should be allowed to practise", "the spreading of literary principles and the translation of the best literary works from European languages into Arabic".<sup>(3)</sup> These views, one has to

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 53.

(2) Sabʿūn, II, p. 164.

(3) Sabʿūn, II, pp. 54-55 (from a letter sent to his friend Naṣīb ʿArīda, in which he explains his ideas about the foundation of a literary circle in the United States.)



bear in mind, were expressed in 1920 at a time when Arabic literature was in the early stages of taking a new turn in its history. Mikhail Naimy was one of the pioneers who precipitated this trend of thought in the literary field. In his first article which appeared in al-Funūn he attacked vehemently what he called "the literature of compliments, occasions, and acrobatics, the literature of superficialities which has no food for the mind or the heart, or any connection with the life we lead everyday".<sup>(1)</sup> Half a century later, he wrote that he had wished then that the pen would change in his hand into a volcano, or that the words would pour out of it like flames that would burn and sweep all that was outdated and outmoded in our literature, so that there would arise a new generation of writers who would set new standards in which sincerity, beauty and all other lofty human values would be given their due place.<sup>(2)</sup> These were the days when he felt that "the disease with which our language was afflicted for several centuries, was a kind of paralysis which deprived it of the forces of life, and made of it, after its past glory, a corpse in which the dim-witted, the "poetry-makers", and imitators dipped their pens".<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Sabʿūn, II. pp. 29-30.

(2) Sabʿūn, II, pp. 29-30.

(3) Al-Ābāʾ wa al-Banūn, p. 11.

The question of the colloquial and how far we should use it in our written Arabic played an important part in Naimy's literary thought. In the preface to his play al-Ābā' wa al-Banūn, he wrote saying, "I thought of the question of the colloquial for a long time, and tried more than once to use the classical (presumably when something is said by an uneducated character in the play), but every time I tried to do so, I felt like a young boy who was forced to take a bitter medicine. The pen would then cease to flow refusing to make "Umm-Elyās" (an illiterate woman in the play) say

لَيْتِي أَعْرِفُ كَيْفَ يَتَنَبَّأُ لِهَذَا الْمَلْعُوبِ أَنْ يَدْخُلَ عَقْلٌ  
"رَبِّينَا" فَيَقْبَلُ أَفْكَارَهَا لَطِنًا نَظِيرًا

instead of her saying

"لَوْ تَعْرِفُ بَسَّ هَذَا لَعَيَّ - هَذَا لَابَهَ سَتِي بِرُطُوشَةٍ - كَيْفَ  
دَخَلَ بَعْقَهَا وَقَلْبَهَا خِلْفَانِي قُدَّامِي ."

(1)

It sounded unnatural to him that an illiterate woman like Umm-Elyās should speak classical Arabic. Undoubtedly, the reader would not believe that a person like her would use a phrase like " كَيْفَ يَتَنَبَّأُ "; in fact it would have sounded ridiculous to put such a phrase in Umm-Elyās' mouth. Naimy came to the conclusion that "of all literary forms, drama is the one that

(1) Al-Ābā' wa al-Banūn, p. 8.

cannot dispense with the colloquial language, but this raises the problem that, if we follow this rule, we should have to write all our plays in colloquial, as there is none amongst us who speaks the pre-Islamic or the early Islamic Arabic. And that means the dying out of classical Arabic - a national calamity which we are far from desiring to bring about. What then is the way out? I have tried in vain to find a solution for this problem. It needs more than one mind for its solution. All I could do, after much reflection, was to make the educated characters in my play speak literary Arabic, and the uneducated speak colloquial. But I sincerely admit that this does not solve the fundamental problem."<sup>(1)</sup> At least this method has the advantage of convincing the reader that what he reads is not affected. In fact a number of Egyptian novelists and playwrights seem since then to have adopted Naimy's method, using colloquial words and phrases uttered by the uneducated in their novels and plays, trying to keep this to the minimum so as not to dominate the whole structure of the play or the novel. As the educated Arab reader is always fairly familiar with the different Arabic colloquial dialects, there is no danger that he should not comprehend the sense of what is being said by a

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(1) Translated in Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature, p. 31, from the preface to Al-Ābā' wa al-Banūn.

Lebanese mountain villager or a simple fellah in Upper Egypt.

Thus Naimy's solution seems to be a sensible and acceptable one.

The fact that he seems not to like it, is perhaps due to the feeling prevalent among educated Arabs that the usage of colloquial, especially in the written form, should not be encouraged, as this might lead to its development into a separate "language" breaking away from the classical, which, being the language of the Qur'an, has a numinous ring about it with which they are extremely reluctant to part.

Another aspect of Mikhail Naimy's thought in the field of literature is his attempt to emphasise the importance of drama, and that the Arabs should change their outlook towards the theatre. On this question he wrote saying, "We still consider the actor as no more than an acrobat, the actress as a prostitute, the theatre as a café, and acting as nothing more than a means of amusing ourselves and spending our time. Our nation has not yet come to appreciate the importance of the art of acting, as it has not yet seen its own life being reflected on the stage. The writers and not the nation are to blame for this, for most of what we have introduced to the nation in this respect is no more than a few translated plays, most of which have no literary merits, all of which are strange

to our people, far from its own taste, and extremely difficult to comprehend. I have no doubt that sooner or later we shall see a national theatre on which the different aspects of our national life is reflected. To achieve this, our writers should in the first place, turn their eyes to the sort of life that is going on around them I mean by this our life with all that is good and bad in it, its joys and sorrows, beauty and ugliness, and to find therein material for their pens - for undoubtedly it is rich in material if they could only know how to look for it".<sup>(1)</sup> Naimy wrote these words half a century ago, and one can see now that a great change did take place in the Arab World with respect to the theatre, and in its outlook towards the art of acting and towards the actor. In this respect, as in many others, Naimy's views were of tremendous importance in achieving this change of outlook. They also comply with a fundamental belief which Naimy has always adhered to in his views on literature in its various forms. That it should derive its material from Man's life, and that the power that literature possesses is based on the fact that it always "explores the depths of the human soul, tracing its ways, and following its tracks."<sup>(2)</sup> Mikhail Naimy never tires of

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(1) Al-Āba' wa al-Banūn, p. 15.

(2) Al-Ghurbāl, p. 27.

emphasising that literature, and the man of letters, should search "in the realm of Man's soul and not in dictionaries."<sup>(1)</sup> "It is high time" he goes on to say in the same article, "that we should give some attention to that animal made out of solid material"<sup>(2)</sup>, who was, and still is, the secret of secrets, so that we may find in him something more worthwhile than studying the head of the fish in the saying <sup>(3)</sup> "أَكْطَتُ السَّكَّةَ حَتَّى رَأَسَهَا!". On the same theme, Naimy writes in another article, "In Arabic Literature today, there are two conflicting ideas on the one hand we have the idea that the aim of literature is confined to the language, and on the other the idea that the language serves the purpose of literature. The supporters of the former idea limit the realm of literature to its being a linguistic exhibition in which they can display to the reader all that they had learnt of the rules and grammar of the language, its rhetoric and prosody, the permitted and the unpermissible,

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(1) Al-Ghurbāl, p. 28.

(2) A reference to Abū al-‘Alā's well known line:

”وَالَّذِي هَارَبَ الْبَرِّيَّةَ فِيهِ حَيَوَاتٌ مُتَحَدِّثَةٌ مِنْ جَمَاهِرٍ“

(3) Naimy here is ridiculing grammarians who indulge in explaining

the usages of " <sup>هَتَّى</sup> " in Arabic and the effect it has on the word that follows it, thus changing the meaning of the sentence.

the opposites and the synonyms, and its examples and proverbs. The poet amongst the adherents to this school is he who is able to write a poem without breaking any Taf'īl, using a single rhyme. He is a true poet if he uses a vocabulary that is understood only by those who had spent their lives in studying the language and nothing else. He is the "prince of poets" if he pays special attention to refining his lines, arranging his rhymes, using a large number of similes and puns. The true writer of this school is he who, when writing on "Jealousy and its Evil in Society", words flow from his pen, forming expressions, and out of the expressions, paragraphs, and out of the paragraphs pages are filled, and out of the pages, volumes are written. All this would be impressive and lustrous Sībawayh, al-Kisā'ī, and Ibn Mālik would certainly find no faults in what the writer wrote. Every stanza in the article is situated where it should be, the transitive verbs are properly used, the intransitive ones used with the proper prepositions which grammarians set for them. On the whole, you would find no flaw in the article, except that you still would ask yourself after reading it What are the evils of jealousy in society?<sup>(1)</sup> It is against this school and its concept of

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 100.

literature, that Mikhail Naimy waged his relentless war. These writers, according to him, did not care what was being said but how it was said. The first question that they would ask themselves when they assess a literary work would be "Is its language sound and impressive?" If so, then they would consider what is written as literature, but if they found a tā' tawīla ( تاء طويلة ), where a tā' marbūtah ( تاء مربوطة ) should have been used, or a hamza written on a "ya" ( ي ) instead of an "alif" ( ا ), then it is no literature. The other idea, the supporters of which maintain that the language serves the purposes of literature, and of which Naimy is a pioneer, gives consideration first to what is said, and then to how it is said. This school considers that the function of literature is to display thoughts and feelings. It is an exhibition where sensitive souls pour onto paper their reactions to life, where living hearts express, in prose or verse, the echoes of life within them. There is not an exhibition for grammatical rules or poetic jargon. The idea, according to this school, is more important than the language of the writer.<sup>(1)</sup> For the language, he says in another article, is a symbol whose value lies in the thing that it symbolises. Thus language has, as such, no value in itself.

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(1) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 101.



It is the idea, the feeling which the language means to convey, that is important. Of course we should give our language the care that is its due, but that should not lead us to forget the aim of the language. The worst we can do is to think that it is perfect, and that none could add anything to its precision. For, if we adopt such an outlook the result would be that our thoughts would come to be symbols, with our words the thing that is meant to be conveyed. Moreover, if we claim that the Arabic language is perfect as it is today, this would imply that we admit to spiritual bankruptcy; for this would mean that we accept the infallibility of the grammarians who set the rules of our language two thousand years ago, that they were the gods of rhetoric, and that we, because of our inferior qualities and the barrenness of our thoughts, are unable to add or to omit to what they set a single letter. If we accept such an attitude we have no alternative but to break our pens and to stop writing, and to be satisfied with our language and the rules it has.<sup>(1)</sup>

If Mikhail Naimy was a staunch opponent of traditionalism in prose writing, he was equally rebellious against the traditional style in writing poetry prevalent among his contemporary poets.

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(1) Al-Ghirbal, pp. 104-105.

The writing of poetry during the age of decline and well into the twentieth century came in fact to be a profession in which the "نظام" or "poetry-maker" followed the set rules of prosody "العروض", while his subject matter would be mostly either panegyric, in which he would go to the limit in hyperbole, or elegiac poems full of affectations. The fashion was to imitate the classical medieval poets or even the pre-Islamic poets. Even a great poet like Shawqī did not hesitate to imitate the style of the mu'allaqāt, when he would stand by the traces of the encampment shedding his tears

”أُنَادِي الرِّسْمَ لَوْ مَلَكَ الْجَوَاءُ وَأَهْزِيهْ بَدْعِي لَوْ أَتَانَا“

The main principle was to adhere to the rules of prosody, but as to whether the qaṣīdah represented the genuine feelings of the poet or not, was of secondary, or even of no importance. Thus the metre and the rhyme came to take the first place in the minds of the poets. It is against this concept of poetry that we find Naimy vehemently at odds "The 'arūd (prosody) has not only done damage to our poetry" he wrote, "but it has inflicted a great harm on our literature in general. For, by giving priority to metre over the subject matter, it made of poetry writing a profession, once the rules of which were learnt, any dabbler in literature was thus able to claim the title of poet"<sup>(1)</sup> Since the poet has always had a

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 118.

special position amongst the Arabs, a large number of "poetry-makers" appeared whose only qualification was that they were able to follow the rules of al-Khalīl b. Ahmad.<sup>(1)</sup>

To Mikhail Naimy, it was absurd that we still should have poets who would stand shedding tears by the vestiges of the encampment of their tribe, when we had no vestiges or remains.<sup>(2)</sup> "Our love for 'arūd (prosody) has reached such a pitch," he wrote, "that we hardly came to utter anything except in verse. Even the grammar of our language came to be taught to our children through verse."<sup>(3)</sup> In the same article he wrote "Such was our love for al-'arūd that verse came to be used in our correspondence, greetings, drinking, eating, christening of our children, marrying them, receiving our friends and bidding them farewell, and congratulating them for the birth of a son, that nothing in our life escaped verse, except our true feelings and emotions".<sup>(4)</sup>

It is to this trend in poetry that Mikhail Naimy wanted to put an end, an aim for which he was accused of being "destructive".

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(1) Al-Khalīl b. Ahmad was the inventor of the Arabic system of metres in poetry and author of the first Arabic Lexicon, Kitāb al-'Ayn.

(2) Al-Ghīrbāl, p. 121.

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

He did not deny the accusation, when he wrote in reply, "It is true that I am "destructive", but I destroy so that I may build What I destroy is not, as some people seem to think, "old" literature, nor what I build is what they call "new" literature. For beauty and truth - which form the essence of literature - never age or vanish, nor is there a human being who is able to destroy them. What I destroy is everything, which in my view, is void of beauty and truth - whether it be old or new -. I am a helper to whosoever sees his life emanating from the inexhaustible spring of beauty, or the ocean of truth whose shores are unbounded." (1)

In another article in which he expounds his views on the meaning of literature he writes, "Man's remains, engraved on stones, are bound to vanish when the stone decays but the remains which Man engraves on the soul of his brother Man are everlasting, as his soul is immortal. True literature should thus be an engraving on souls, and not veils for the sight. So seek with me that we should have men of letters who would be messengers among souls, and not weavers of embroidered veils". (2)

It is important that Mikhail Naimy takes Shakespeare (and not al-Mutanabbī, Abū al-‘Alā’ or any other famous Arab poet) for his example of what the poet should be "Amongst writers and poets who

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(1) Al-Ghīrbāl, pp. 52-53.

(2) Zād al-Ma‘ād, p. 54.

appeared in this world," he wrote in an article, "none has been able to explore the human soul as this English actor was able to do. None has been able to couple this exploration with the rhetoric in which Shakespeare expressed himself. None has embellished his rhetoric with the beauty with which Shakespeare endowed his own. None has enriched his rhetoric with the melodies with which Shakespeare enriched his own. None has imbued his rhetoric with the truths with which this giant infused his plays. That is why Shakespeare remains a Ka'bah to which we go on pilgrimage, and a qiblah towards which we turn our faces".<sup>(1)</sup> It was Shakespeare the discoverer, the explorer of the human soul, who presented his discoveries in rhetoric and moving language that Naimy admired, and it was that ideal towards which he wanted Arab writers to turn their faces. Thus, by trying to give poetry and literature in general a new meaning in the Arab world, he found himself destroying the old concepts and setting up new ones. If we see now that these concepts came to be accepted and taken for granted, the credit is due to Mikhail Naimy and a handful of contemporary writers<sup>(2)</sup> who expounded similar

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(1) Al-Ghirbāl, p. 72.

(2) The members of al-Rabiṭah had the same views on the meaning of literature. But as Naimy, Gibrān and 'Arīda, were the most highly cultured amongst the members of the Rabiṭah they played a more important role in this respect. The views of Naimy, Gibrān and 'Arīda had their effect in the Arab world. As these views agreed with those of a number of prominent Egyptian writers (al-'Aqqād and al-Māzinī in particular) they came to spread all over the Arab countries.

notions in the field of literature.

Turning towards Mikhail Naimy's own poetry, one should perhaps emphasise that "Poetry is and has always been reckoned by the Arabs as their supreme art; for them it has an intellectual and emotional appeal beyond what is normal in Europe".<sup>(1)</sup> It may also be true to say that poetry is by its nature more conservative than prose, and thus more difficult to influence through the introduction of new methods. But Naimy's main characteristic as a writer is his rebellious tendencies against traditionalism, which is equally expressed in his prose writings as in his verse, thus it goes without saying that here we find no trace of panegyric or any other traditional theme, which is an important departure from the traditional tendency of the day. The "sincerity" on which he insisted as one of the fundamental basis for prose writing, is abundantly evident in Naimy's poems; for if we survey his poems in Hams al-Jufun, which is his only Diwan, we find that there is hardly a poem which does not reflect the individual ideas, feelings, and thoughts of Mikhail Naimy. The main characteristics of this poetry are meditative, self-searching, wondering tendencies which are typical of his general trend of thinking. In his Qasidah entitled Aghni Jufunaka Tubsir " اَغْنِيْ جُفُونَكَ تُبَسِّرُ ", (close your eyes and see) we find that Mikhail Naimy expresses his belief in the oneness of life and death,

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(1) Modern Arabic Poetry (An Anthology with English verse Translations) by A.J. Arberry, (Preface).

an idea which he often expresses in his prose writing. Here poetry is used, perhaps for the first time in Modern Arabic literature, as the vehicle for expressing thoughts and ideas

(1) "وَأَبْجَلُ بَلِيَّتِ دَايٍ وَقِيلَ دَايٌ عَيَاءُ  
أَتَغْمِضُ جُفُونَكَ تُبْصِرُ فِي الدَّاءِ دَوَاءُ  
وَعِنْدَمَا الْمَوْتُ يَدْنُو وَاللَّحْدُ يُفْغِرُ فَاهُ  
أَتَغْمِضُ جُفُونَكَ تُبْصِرُ فِي اللَّحْدِ مَهْدَ الْحَيَاةِ "

"When afflicted with a disease  
That is said to be grave,  
Then close your eyes and you will see  
in your disease - your cure.  
When death comes nigh and close  
And the grave opens wide its mouth  
Then close your eyes and see  
the grave as the cradle of life."

That the idea is all important in Naimy's poetry is not to say that it is conveyed at the expense of the language in which it is presented. For here too, we have simplicity of vocabulary, richness in music, and a naturalness void of any trace of ostentation in respect of the poet's ability in playing with words, or resorting to *recherche* language.

This tendency towards meditation, pondering about Man's origin, his destiny and fate tackled by a master poet, is more impressive and has deeper effect on the reader when presented in

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(1) Hams al-Jufun, p. 9.

verse than when discussed in prose. In a poem entitled "Who Are You, My Soul?" "من أنت يا نفسي" the poet is wondering where his self emanates from, a subject which has preoccupied him throughout his life.

"أنت رأيت البحر يطغى الموج فيه ويثور ،  
أو سمعت البحر يبكي عند أقدام الصخر ،  
ترقي الموج الى أن تحسن الموج هديره ،  
وتناهي البحر حتى يسمع البحر زفيره  
اجعاً منك اليه  
هل من الأمواج هيب ؟"

The poet keeps wondering throughout the Qasīdah, until in the last stanza he ends the poem by saying that his soul is "a melody played by an artist, hidden, unseen" and that it is "the emanation of a god".<sup>(1)</sup> which will eventually return to God

"إليه نفسي ! أنت لمن في قد رت صداه  
وقعت يد فنان خفي لا أراه .  
أنت ريح وسيم ، أنت موج ، أنت بحر  
أنت برق ، أنت رعد ، أنت ليل ، أنت صحر  
أنت فيض من إله !"

Here, we have another departure from the traditional style of writing

(1) In this Qasīdah, Naimy seems to express his belief in the unity of Man and God. It is typical of his attempts to convey his philosophical ideas in poetry.

(2) Hams al-Jufun, p. 21.



poetry in which the poet uses one single rhyme throughout the Qaṣīdah, for Naimy in this poem uses one rhyme in each stanza, ending it with one or two lines of different metre and rhyme. This sudden change in metre and rhyme in the last two lines of each stanza gives the Qaṣīdah immense richness in music. It is also a departure from the traditional style which is characteristic not only of Naimy, but of most of the Emigrant Poets "شعراء المهجر" to which Naimy belonged. Nadeem Naimy gives an accurate analysis of Mikhail Naimy's poetry, when he writes "Being as a whole an expression of a soul in intense anguish, Naimy's poetry is soaked throughout with a distilled imperceptible pain that makes it communicate itself directly to the heart, without having first to pay homage, so to speak, to the ear and eye, as was, on the whole, the practice of traditional Arabic poetry. He implements his call in al-Ghirbal that poetry should not be formally subjugated to the classical prosody of al-Khalīl b. Ahmad but should, if need be, mould al-Khalīl's prosody to fit its own modern purposes, by a successful/at this moulding in his own poetry." (1)

The mystical element in Mikhail Naimy's thinking is also noticeable in his poetry. His isolation from the world of others,

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(1) Mikhail Naimy, an Introduction by Nadeem Naimy, p. 194.

and his own world in which he alone lives is reflected in a poem in which he says

”يَسَاقِي الْخُورَسَانِيَّةَ  
تَحْفَظُ بَكَّاسِي بَيْنَ هَذِي الْخُورَسَانِيَّةِ  
أَتَرِيعُ لَغَيْرِي الْكَاسِ أَمَّا أَنَا  
فَأَهْلُ كَأْفٍ لَتُ بَيْنَ الْجُلُوسِ  
وَأَعْبَرُ ، وَرَعْنِي فَارَغَ الْكَاسِ “

(1)

This inclination to "stay apart" does not stem from his desire to be a stranger, but is a result of being preoccupied with sipping "another kind of wine, the like of which there is nothing to extinguish the flames of my heart " For the poet "brews it out of his own heart"

”لَا ، لَا تَقُلْ مَا لَهَا بَتِ الْخَمْرِ لِي  
أَوْ أَنِّي مَا يَسْكُمُ كَالْغَرِيبِ  
بَلْ إِنَّ لِي بِإِصْصَاعِي خُمْرَةً  
مَا مِثْلُهَا يُطْفِئُ بَقِيَّةَ الْكُحْلِ  
أُصْغِرُهَا مِنْ قَلْبِي الْقَاسِي “

(2)

(1) Hams al-Jufūn, p. 28.

(2) Ibid., p. 28.

While others around him are enchanted by the music of the lute, he is immersed in listening to the "tunes of his inner soul", thus he addresses the musician asking him to play his lute, and to leave him alone listening to his own tunes

” لَدَّ ، لَسْتُ بِالْمُؤَثِّرَاتِ بِاصْحَابِي  
فَالْقَلْبُ مِنِّي جَاهِدٌ كَمَا جَلِيدٌ  
لَكِنِّي مُضْغَعٌ لِنَفْسِي ، فَنَفِي  
نَفْسِي أَوْ تَأْتِي وَفِيهَا نَسِيدٌ  
(1) مَا ضَرَبْتُ ، وَرَدَعِي بَيْنَ الْخَطَابِ “

Mikhail Naimy's belief that God, Man, and Nature are parts of one thing; an idea which is prominent in his prose writings, is also expressed in his poetry. For in a qaṣīdah entitled "Supplications", he asks God to enable him to see Him in every manifestation of life

” فِي قُرُوعِ الْبُرْصِ ، فِي وَجْهِ السَّلِيمِ  
فِي يَدِ الْقَاتِلِ ، فِي تَجْعِ الْقَتِيلِ  
فِي سَرِيرِ الْفَرَسِ ، فِي نَفْسِ الْعَظِيمِ  
(2) فِي يَدِ الْمُحْسِنِ فِي كَفِّ الْخِيلِ “

His feelings of love for humanity, based on belief, patience and sincerity, are also expressed in the same qaṣīdah.

(1) Hams al-Jufūn, p. 28.

(2) Ibid., p. 35.

”وَأَجْعَلِ اللَّهُمَّ قَلْبِي  
وَاحِدَةً تَقِي الْقَرِيبَ  
وَالْغَرِيبَ

مَا دُفِّعَ الدُّيُوتُ ، أَمَا غَرَسَهَا  
فَأَتْرَجَهَا وَالْحَبَّ وَالصَّرَّ الطَّوِيلَ  
جَهْدَهَا الدُّخْدُخَ ، أَمَا سَمَرَهَا  
فَالْوَفَا وَالصَّدَقَ ، وَالْحِلْمَ الْحَمِيلَ .“

(1)

In a poem addressed to M.D.B., Naimy's belief in the transmigration of souls is implied

”فَرَهَا حَبَّ يَدًا ، وَهَابَ يَدِي  
عَلَى رَغْفٍ ، عَلَى تَلَدٍ  
وَقَوْلٍ لِدَوْلٍ هَبَلُوا  
مَعًا كُنَّا مِنَ الْأَزَلِ  
مَعًا لِنَبْقَى إِلَى الدَّائِدِ .“

(2)

In her commentary on the poetry of the Emigrant Poets, Nādirah Sarraj wrote, "We may consider that the first principle of al-Rabiṭah was the rebellion against the traditional themes of poetry followed since the days of Imru' al-Qays up to the days of Shawqī." She goes on to say, "It is clear that the Rabiṭah school was the first in Modern Arabic Literature, the members of which were able to

(1) Hams al-Jufūn, p. 35.

(2) Ibid., p. 107.

produce genuine poetry which sincerely reflected the feelings and thoughts of the poets and the hopes and sorrows which their hearts felt."<sup>(1)</sup> In the same valuable work on the Emigrant Poets, Dr. Sarrāj writes, "For here we have Mikhail Naimy admitting that Modern Arabic Literature has adopted a principle from the West, which it came to hold as the cornerstone of its literary revival. The principle is that life and literature are inseparable twins, that literature is as wide as life itself, and that it is as deep as the secrets of life which are reflected in it."<sup>(2)</sup>

In al-Ghirbal, Naimy also admits that the credit is due to the West in making it clear to us that it is possible to write poetry on themes other than love, panegyric, satire, description, elgy, pride and courage, and that is the reason why we came to be enchanted by the "new melodies with which some of our modern poets dared to challenge the sacred confines of our poetry."<sup>(3)</sup>

Studying Mikhail Naimy's poetry, one wonders how far he (and in fact most of the Emigrant Poets) were influenced by the poetry of Western poets like Blake and Emerson. It is almost certain that Gibrān admired Blake and read everything he wrote. "What he liked most in him was his rebellious spirit against strict rules and outmoded traditions".<sup>(4)</sup> Blake's preoccupation with the world

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(1) Shu'arā' al-Rabīṭah al-Qalamīyyah, by N. Sarrāj, p. 119.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 120.

(3) Al-Ghirbal, p. 92.

(4) Shu'arā' al-Rabīṭah al-Qalamīyyah, by N. Sarrāj, p. 122.

of spirit is strikingly similar to Gibrān's preoccupation with the same theme. It may be that this interest in spiritual themes spread to other members of al-Rābīṭah, amongst whom Naimy was a very prominent figure. Dr. Sarrāj also states that Emerson's school which proclaimed the doctrine of transcendentalism and that the spirit is the most important aspect of Man's life, must have influenced the Emigrant poets as they clearly give these themes a prominent place in their poetry.<sup>(1)</sup> Mikhail Naimy's preoccupation with the question of Man's soul and its nature as expressed in his poetry, might also be a revival of Avicenna's belief that the soul which lived in the "Lower World" "العالم السفلي", the world of matter and "fanā'" "فناء", came to enter the body. But as the body is mortal as stated in all the holy books, while the spirit is immortal, it was thus bound to desert the body and to ascend to the world from which it had descended where it would enjoy immortality. This Greek idea, adopted by Avicenna, is expressed in his well-known Qaṣīdah, the opening line of which reads:

(2) هَبَطْتُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْمَحَلِّ الدُّنْفِ وَرَقَاؤُ زَاتُ تَعَزُّزٍ وَتَمْنَعِ

As a short story writer, we also find that Mikhail Naimy often uses the narrative as a means of expressing his thoughts.

(1) Shu'arā' al-Rābīṭah al-Qalamīyyah, by N. Sarrāj, p. 123.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 133.

This is clearly illustrated in his short story entitled "The Cuckoo-Clock",<sup>(1)</sup> which is about Khaṭṭār, a young Lebanese villager, who is about to get married to a young girl in the village.

Before their marriage, a Lebanese emigrant to the States returns to the village, bringing with him a cuckoo-clock which fascinates the villagers and the young girl. The emigrant tells the young girl all about the happiness she would have in America if she accepts his offer of marriage. The girl succumbs to the magic of the cuckoo-clock, deserts her young fiancé, and marries the emigrant with whom she goes to the States, the country which produces wonders. Khaṭṭār, the young villager, stays in his village overwhelmed with hatred for the cuckoo-clock which deprived him of his beloved girl. Soon he is filled with the desire to emigrate to the country of the cuckoo-clock. Who knows, he thinks to himself, there may be more fascinating things in that country than the cuckoo-clock. How happy the people of that country must be, and how unhappy you are in your home land.

The young man leaves his village and emigrates to the New World. After years of struggle and misery, he manages to accumulate some wealth. The first thing he buys is a cuckoo-clock which he displays in the parlour of a luxurious house which he now owns. He gets

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(1) Kān mā Kān, pp. 7-38. The title of the story in Arabic is  
" ساعة الكركو "

married to an American girl of Lebanese extraction, but he is unhappy with her as a result of their different approaches to life. His wife deserts him to live with another man, and he is unhappy and disillusioned. What have I done with my life, Khattār asks himself There, in my homeland, I was the master of myself, my house and my field. Your parents loved you, as did everyone in the village. But now, who are you? A prisoner entangled in the wheels of a huge machine that goes round and round never to stop. God only knows where this machine is heading if you manage to disentangle yourself from it, you will fall to your destruction. If you cling to it, you will see your soul with your own eyes, crushed under its wheels. You wanted to conquer the cuckoo-clock, but it has had the better of you. Later he comes to meet his old fiancée who is deserted by her lover, and like him, finds herself the victim of the cuckoo-clock. Here his mind goes back to his homeland, and compares it with the world into which he plunged. "This New World" he says to himself, "is nothing but a huge tower which resembles a chariot built on thousands of wheels that go round feverishly. The chariot slopes down from the heights of a mountain to a precipice that is unfathomable. He imagines the chariot crushing him, then he sees millions of those who cling to this huge chariot, quarrelling and biting each other, screaming and wailing, rushing to a destination unknown to them. Thousands of his fellow countrymen



are among those who cling to it. Some of them are trodden upon by the racers, others are clinging to the wheels, turning round with the tower, looking as if they are drunk and bewildered. They look back hoping to detach themselves from the wheels, but are unable to do so. On the top of that tower there is a window out of which a huge mechanical bird appears every now and then. The bird shouts at the millions "Cuckoo-Cuckoo" and they all prostrate themselves to him whispering to themselves "the time now is such and such...."

Khattār runs away from America returning to his homeland. Back again in his village, he assumes the name of Mr. Thompson, where he lives with the villagers as one of them. He endears to them, by word and deed, the goodness of tilling the land; "Hail to him who takes a partner for himself in earning his living. Hail to him who takes the soil for his partner, for he then sleeps soundly."

In Khattār's personality, we see much of Naimy's. His attitude towards the machine age, modern civilization, and love for nature. Has he not, like Khattār, denounced this civilization with all its complexities and feverish rush, to live quietly in his peaceful village surrounded by simple folk, unspoilt by the corrupting hand of modern life? As Mikhail Naimy's attitude

towards Western Civilization is clearly reflected in "The Cuckoo-Clock", we similarly find that he uses the short story as his means of expressing his philosophical ideas towards life in general. The characters of his stories strike the reader as being real and ordinary people. But soon Naimy's tendency to move from the natural to the supernatural, converts the ordinary Beirut into a kind of seer, a man of vision, who preaches a certain philosophy. The best example could perhaps be found in his short story entitled "A Nail- Pairing" ( قُدْرَةُ ظَهْر )<sup>(1)</sup> where the shop-keeper who specialises in selling and making belts, exasperates a customer (presumably the author) by procrastinating and delaying his order for a belt for several hours, as he is asked every time he comes for it to return within a few hours. On coming for the last time for his belt, determined to make a scene if he were to be delayed any longer, the customer finds the shop-keeper to his astonishment, busy trimming his finger-nails rather than having the belt ready. Here, the shop-keeper philosophising on his behaviour, lectures his customer on Man's need to trim not only his finger-nails, but the "nails" of his eyes, his mind, his heart and all the "nails" of his desires. Thus Naimy, who preaches that Man's only worthy

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(1) Abu Baṭṭah pp. 133-142. It is noteworthy here that a number of Mikhail Naimy's short stories under the title of "Till We Meet" were published by the Indian Institute of World Culture. Another collection was translated in the Soviet Union. This contains stories which depict social injustice. (See Mikhail Naimy - an Introduction, by Nadeem Naimy p. 252.)

struggle is that which raises him from the animal to the divine, reflects his belief impressively using the short story as his means. It should be pointed out however, that the story preserves its structure, without being sacrificed for the sake of the moral the shop-keeper, with his shop cluttered with rusty hardware, in an environment which is typical Beirutī, is impressively depicted by the writer. The conversation, moving from the ordinary to the extraordinary, is developed in a natural manner devoid of affectation.

Though Mikhail Naimy lived in the United States for a long time, we find that his heart was always in the Arab World. From the very beginning of his career as a writer, his articles in al-Funūn discussed conditions in the motherland. As a short story writer, we find that his first short story The Barren Woman<sup>(1)</sup> deals with the man-woman relationship in the Arab World. A young man who returns home from America gets married. He lives happily with his young wife, but as she does not bear him a child, the man neglects his wife and takes to drinking. The young girl, determined to regain her husband's love, bears him a son, only to commit suicide admitting that the child is not his.

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(1) " العاقر " in Kān mā Kān, p. 52.

The all important man, with the woman entirely subservient to him is the theme of the story. In his only play which he entitled Fathers and Sons<sup>(1)</sup> (a title which he admits to have borrowed from Turgenev's famous novel), Naimy again deals with the social problems prevalent in the Arab World. The mother's belief that a daughter should get married when she is eighteen, failing which her "reputation" is affected. The daughter who is blindly obedient to her parents. The son who rebels against family traditions, and wants to get married to a Protestant girl. The mother whose thinking is entirely sectarian, and who is shocked that her son should get married to other than an Orthodox girl. It is significant that the writer, though far away from the Lebanon, always had the Lebanon in mind. The themes of his writings, the setting of his play, the problems he tackles, all revolve around the Lebanon (and the Arab World in general) and its social structure. This closeness to the Syrian-Lebanese society was kept alive as the community of these two countries is large in the United States. Thus Naimy, though far from Syria and the Lebanon, was able to reflect and criticise in his writings the problems of these two countries through his contact with these communities. Unlike living in Russia, his stay in the United States brought Naimy, in this

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(1) " الآباء والبنون "

respect, closer to the Arab World. It is mainly through his short stories that we see him as a critic of the social conditions that prevailed in the Arab World, and consequently shaking the reader in the hope of making him reconsider the social values of this society. In this field, he very often uses the story as the vehicle for social criticism as much as he uses it to convey his philosophical ideas about life, thus reflecting his belief that a work of literature is of no merit unless it emanates from life and the environment in which the writer lives, communicating to the reader's mind, as Professor Lascelles Abercrombie put it, his own experience by imaginatively provoking it there.

## APPENDIX

The following extracts from Mikhail Naimy's various works are chosen to reflect the main features of his character, and the fundamental themes which he deals with in his writings.

١ - تصوّر القطوعة التالية ميل ميخائيل نعيمة ، منذ حادثته ، الى التفرد والعزلة والتأمل :

" لقد كنتُ في الواقع ، أنفردُ من الضوضاء والمعردة والخصام . فاذا لعبتُ اخذتني حماسة اللعب ، ولكن الى حين . فلا ألبثُ ان اترك الميدان واضي افترس عن خلوة على حافة ساقية ، او في ظل صنوبرة حيث يشغلني جَعَلٌ يدحرج كرة من الزبل ، او سحابة صفيرة تجرى في الجلد الازرق ، الشاسع ، من فوق رأسي ، او خطوط واشكال مبهمة ارسمها على الرمل الامي . وكثيرا ما كان يخالجني الشعور في خلواتي تلك بانني اكثر من واحد . وكثيرا ما كنت اخاطب اولئك الذين كنت اتخيلهم معي ، ولكن من غير ان ارفع صوتي .

لقد كان يؤنسني من رفاقي غير المنظورين انهم لا يصخبون ولا يتشاجرون مثل رفاقي في المدرسة . وانهم لا يستغربون دهشتي لكثرة الكائنات من حوالي . ولا لاشكالها واللوانها وحركاتها العجيبة ؟ ولا يهزأون بسؤالي : اهذه كلها خلقها الله مثلما خلقتني ؟ ولماذا ؟ فذلك السؤال بدأ يلح علي حتى في صباي . وقد لاح لي غير مرة في ساعات استرسالتي مع تأملاتي الباكرة انني على وشك ان اطفر بالجواب . فكلّما كان تحت لسانني ، او وراء اجفاني " .

من كتاب " سيمون " الجزء الاول  
ص : ٨٠ - ٨١

٢ - في المقطوعتين التاليتين نرى مدى تأثير ميخائيل نعيمة بشخصية السيد المسيح وحياته :  
" انك ههنا - وفي سائر أرجاء فلسطين - لفي دنيا من السحر والبركسة .  
فحيثما مشيت ، واني تطلعت ، نَبَتَتْ لك من العاصي السحيق وجوهٌ واحداثٌ بخيرِ عدٍ .  
وكلها قد تعلفل منك في الصميم . وأحبها اليك وجهُ المعلمِ واحداثُ حياته . ما كان  
اقصرها - تلك الحياة ! ولكن ما اعجز الزمان عن ان يطوبها ويلفها بالنسيان . اياك  
ان تنسى يا ميخائيل انك ههنا في حضرة المسيح . "

بمثل هذا الكلام كنت اخاطب نفسي كلما خلوت بها . فالشعور الديني العميق الذي  
حملته معي من سفح صنين احد يزدادُ عمقا في الناصرة . ولكم وجدتني ، ونحن في نزهة  
قصيرة او في رحلة طويلة ، انسلخ بغتة عن نفسي وعن رفاقي اذ اتخيل المسيح وتلاميذه  
ماشين في الطريق الذي نمشي فيه ، او اتخيله جالسا وحده ، وفي حالة انخراط روحي  
تحت تلك الشجرة او عند هاتيك الصخرة . "

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثاني ،  
ص : ١٢٥

٣ - " في الانجيل ان المسيح وثلاثة من تلاميذه صعدوا مرة جبلا عاليا . وفيما هم على  
الجبل هبطت على المسيح غمامة من نور ، فتغير شكله ، وهذا على جانبه النبيان موسى  
وايليا ، وذلك ما يدعونه التجلي . وتصرُّ التقاليدُ على ان ذلك الجبل لم يكن غير  
" جبل الطور " الذي احدثك عنه . ولك الآن ان تتخيل صبيبا مؤمنا مثلي يحضري  
نهارا ويبعث ليلة على قمة ذلك الجبل ، وصورة المسيح المجلبب بالنور تنهض لعينيهِ وفي قلبهِ  
كيفما انقلب . لقد كنت بين رفاقي وكأني لست منهم ولا بينهم . ولقد انفردت عنهم اكثر  
من مرة وضيت وحدي اتوغل في ذلك الجبل وكأن الوهدة المحيطة من الزمان التي تفصلني  
عن عهد المسيح قد انظمرت . فلا هو بالبعيد عني ولا انا بالعريب عنه . انه شعور لا ينقاد  
الى الوصف والتحليل . "

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الاول ،  
ص : ١٢٨

٤ - يذكرُ الكاتبُ كيف ان صديقا له في المدرسة عاتبه على شيء لم يقله ، فيقـرر ان يصمت صمتا تاما لايام ، وهو يصف شعوره في تلك الايام يقول :

" انتهت مدة الصمت ، فرفعت اللجام عن لساني وعدتُ سيرتي الاولى بين رفاقي . ولكنني احسست كما لو كنت عائدا من رحلة بعيدة - بعيدة . فانا انا - وغير انا - .  
لأنني ولدتُ ولادة جديدة . ففي هذه الفترة التي انقطعتُ فيها عن الكلام نبتتُ لخيالي قوادم وفكرى عين غير الميتين في وجهي . ومن بعدها اخذت اشعر انني ، وإن انسجمت في الظاهر مع بيئة انا فيها ، ففي داخلي ما يجعلني ايدا غريبا عنها .  
وهذا الشعور بالضربة ما انك ينشط ويزداد على مر السنين ، حتى يت اعيش في عالمين :  
عالم خلقته من نفسي لنفسي ، وعالم خلقه الناس للناس . والعالمان يتجاوران في حياتي ولكنهما لا يتزاوجان . "

من كتاب " سبعون "

الجزء الثاني ص: ١٤٧ - ١٤٨

٥ - يقضي الكاتب عطلة صيف في لبنان اثناء دراسته في روسيا ، وهو يصف في المقطوعة الثانية بعض ذكرياته من تلك العطلة :

" من ذكريات ذلك الصيف لا تزال ماثلة في ذهبي ذكرى حالة نفسية غريبة مررت بها وأنا جالس عصر ذات يوم تحت اطناف الصخور الشاهقة في الشجروب حيث اششاش الخطاف والسنونو وحيث قناة نبع صنين تكرر فيها مياهه البلورية ، الباردة . ظلال ناعمة تكتنفي . وعلى مسافات متباينة مني حقول فيها الحصادون ، وفيها اغنام وابقار ترمي طمئنة . ومن خلف الجميع قد انتصبت قامة صنين ، وراحت اشعة الشمس تتحلق على نواتشها فتتوهج بالوان كلها سحر وفتنة . "

ويمشي فكري المهين مع الطلال والانوار ، ومع قطرات الماء في القناة ، ومع الاغنام والابقار والرعاة والحصادين في الحقل ، ويمسح خيالي في الفضاء مع السنونو والخطاف .



وما هي الا دقائق حتى يغيب عني كل شيء . وأراني كالطاشي في نفقٍ مظلم تحسنت  
الارض . ففي داخلي اصوات لا تنفك تسألني من اين كل ذلك ؟ والى اين ؟ ولماذا ؟  
من الله والى الله ؟ ومن ، او ما ، هو الله ؟ ولماذا هذا التنوع الهائل في الاشياء  
حتى لا تجد عشبتيْن او زهرتيْن او ثمريْن او انسانين يتشابهان في كل شيء ؟ وما الحكمة  
في ان تصدر هذه الاشياء من الله لتعود اليه ؟ ثم ما الحكمة في انها بين صدورهما  
وهودتها تمر في اطوار عجيبة من النمو والانحلال مع ما يوافق ذلك من لذة وألم ؟ وإن لم  
يكن هنالك حكمة ، وغاية من وراء الحكمة ، فما معنى الوجود ؟ ولماذا تعلقنا به ؟

الظلمة تزداد سوادا ، والنفق يضيق ، وجواب واحد لا يأتيني من اى جانب . حتى  
لاشعربأن انفاسي تهرب من صدرى . فاكاد استغيث .

وبغثة المح بصيصا من النور ، انه ضئيل ، ضئيل . وبعيد ، بعيد . ولكنني اشعر  
في الحال بانفراج في صدرى ، وفي النفق ، وفي الظلمة . ويزداد الانفراج فيضوشبه غبطة .  
وأحس كأن ابوابا كثيرة مغلقة في داخلي اخذت تنفتح . ويبدو لي ان الله الذى افتش عنه  
سيطل عليّ من كل واحد منها ، وان النفق الذى اسير فيه اخذت جدراناه وسقفه تتقلص  
رويدا رويدا . اني ، في مثل لحة الطرف ، سأبصر الله ، سأعرفه ، سأكلّمه . ولكن تلك  
" اللحة " كانت اعز من ان اقتنصها . فقد افلقت مني . واذا بي اعود الى حيث  
كنت - الى اطناف الصخور من فوقى ، واسراب الخطاف والسنونو تروح وتأتي الى اعشاشها ،  
والى مياه صنين تغني في قناتها فتترنح لحنائها الاعشاب من حوالها . اعود وكأنني عائد  
من رحلة استغرقت اهديات . وأحسني كالمهابط الى الارض من علوشاهو . ولكنني ، في الوقت  
عينه ، احسني اوسع واكبر مما كنت بكثير . لقد امتزجت الاشياء بي وامتزجت بها . فلا هي  
غريبة عني ، ولا انا عنها غريب ، بل اني واياها جسد واحد وروح واحد . وهذان المرح  
والجسد يمتدان الى اللانهاية .

لقد كانت لحة اصامت لي سبيلي فيما بعد .

من كتاب " سمعون " الجزء الاول ،  
ص : ٢٤٩ - ٢٥٠

٦ - بعد ان يتحدث الكاتب عن قصة الخلق كما وردت في الكتب المقدسة ، وكما تلقننا من رجال الكنيسة ، يذكر كيف بدأت تساوره اسئلة عديدة حول الموضوع فيقول :

" ذلك ، باختصار ، هو الثوب الذي فصلته الكنيسة لروحي فلبثت مزهوا به طيلة ايام صباى واول شبابي . ولكنني من بعد ان عدت من روسيا وفي ظل شواهد الشخروب ، اخذت اشعر ان ذلك الثوب يضيق بي ، وان جوانب منه تتفتق وتتغزق باستمرار ، ولا حيلة لي في رتقها . ومن غير ان اتعرض بفكرى لله رحت اطرح على نفسي طائفة من الاسئلة . وها انا اورد بعضها على سبيل المثال :

لماذا عن الله ان يخلق عندما خلق وليس قبل ذلك او بعده ؟ وماذا كان يفعل الله قبل ان خلق ؟

ما معنى قول التوراة " ان الله استراح في اليوم السابع " من جميع اعماله ؟ العمل لا يزال " مستريحا " ؟ وما هو عمله من بعد ان خلق الكون واطلقه يجرى على سننه ؟ العمل عمله الاكبر هو ان يحصي على الناس جميع افكارهم واعمالهم ونياتهم وشهواتهم - حتى انفسهم - ليعود فيكافئهم او يعاقبهم عليها ؟ وما معنى قول التوراة ان الله خلق الانسان " على صورته كمثاله " ؟ والانسان تنمو مداركه بالخبرة والتجربة . العمل الله خلق العالم ليختبر نفسه ؟ العمل " ينمو " كما ينمو الانسان ؟

ولماذا لم يصفح الله عن " خطيئة " آدم وحواء ، وها هو المسيح - " ابنه الوحيد " يعلمنا ان نصفح عن زلة قريبتنا لا مرة واحدة ، بل سبعين مرة سبع مرات ؟ أليكون " الابن " اكرم قلبا ، واوسع صدرا من ابيه ؟

وكيف يكون المسيح ابن الله " الوحيد " ولا اكون انا كذلك ابن الله وقد دعاني المسيح اخاء ، وعلمني ان ادعواياه ابي ؟

وكيف يكون ابي وابو المسيح ذات الاله الذي تحدثني عنه كتب موسى وغيرها من انبياء العهد القديم ؟ ان " يهوه " موسى هو " رب الجنود " - اله حرب وبطس ومكر وتشف - اله غضب وثورة ونقمة - اله شعب واحد من كل شعوب الارض - شعب جشع ، اناي ، مختل ،

يستطيع كل مُحَرَّمٍ في سبيل ما يَحْسَبُهُ خيراً له ، وإن كان فيه الويل كل الويل لغيره .  
 في حين أن إله الانجيل أب كله شفقة ورأفة ورحمة ومحبة . فهو يشرق شمسهُ على  
 الأشرار والابرار بالسوا . ويفرح بنعمة واحدة تَصِلُ عن القطيع ثم تعود اليه فَرَحاً  
 بالقطيع كله . وهو ، الى ذلك ، أب لجميع الناس بدون استثناء . وليس له شعب  
 " مختار " يُفدُّ عليه كل عنايته دون باقي الشعب . فكيف أُوفِّقُ بين الالهين كما  
 تريدني الكنيسة أن افعل ؟ لقد بات ذلك فوق ما يستطيع فهمه . "

من كتاب " سيمون " الجزء الاول

ص : ٢٧٥ - ٢٧٧

٧ - يتحدث الكاتب عن المرة الاولى التي رأى فيها الآلة تزرع القمح وتحصده وتذريه فـ في  
 اميركا ، فيتساءل قائلا :

" سألت نفسي ، وأنا أقرب تلك الحصادة العجيبة تفرى السنايل ، ثم تلتهمها ،  
 ثم تنفثُ تنبها وأحماكها في الهواء ، ثم تبصق حَبَّها في أكياس سمينة ، مختومة :  
 ترى ايها اطيب واجلب للعافية : حبة تذررها كُ ، انسان ، وتحصدها كُ انسان ،  
 وتذريها كُ انسان ، ثم تغربلها وتطحنها وتعجنها وتخبزها كُ انسان ؟ ام حبة  
 تزرعها وتحصدها وتذريها وتغربلها وتطحنها وتعجنها وتخبزها ما كينة مفاصلها  
 واضلاعها من الحديد ، اما روحها فالبنزين ؟ والى اين تمشي بنا الماكينة ؟ "

" زيادة في الحركة ، وزيادة في الانتاج ، وزيادة في الاستهلاك . كل ذلك بفضل  
 الماكينة . أما أن الماكينة لم تزد مثقال ذرة في هنائنا ، ولم تنقص مثقال ذرة من شقائنا ،  
 واما انها لم تحررنا من بطن ارجلنا وايدينا وعيوننا وأذاننا الا لتجعلنا عبيدا لها ،  
 واما انها تركتنا وقلوبنا لا تزال ، كما كانت ، نهبا لشتى الاهواء والمطامع والخسوف ،  
 وافكارنا ما برحت مراتع خصبة للشك والحذر والقلق فامور لا يلقي اليها هذا العصر  
 الميكانيكي اى بال . "

من كتاب " سيمون " الجزء الثاني ،

ص : ١٢ - ١٣

٨ - طالع الكاتب مجلة " الفنون " لأول مرة في نيسان عام ١٩١٣ ، وهي المجلة التي كان يصدرها صديقة ورفيقة نسيب عريضة ، فرأى فيما قرأ أول بوادر الغيث في دنيا الادب العربي . وفي المقطوعة التالية يصف الكاتب شعوره وافكاره حينئذ فيقول :

" لا . لا لست في حلم يا ميثا . فهذه النفحات التي هبتْ عليك من " فنون " رفيقك نسيب عريضة لم تنطلق من خيالك ومن رغبتك الملحاح في ان تجدد العربية شبابها . انها حقيقة راهنة . وانها البشارة لك بالانبعثات الذي رحلت ترجاه لهنني قومك منذ ان اطلت على الادب الروسي والادب العالمية وادركت قدسية الكلمة ، وقوة القلم اذا هو لم يدنس الكلمة بالكذب والرياء والتدجيل ، ولم يعبد الحرف دون الروح . بلى . بلى . هذا اول الغيث يا ميثا - قطرة ثم يهي . وهذه القطرة تتحداك يا ميثا . فهل لديك قطرات تضيفها اليها ؟ اذا كنت تريد ان يكون لك نصيب في الغيث الآتي فهذه الساعة هي ساعتك وهذا اليوم هو يومك .

ورحت أدبجُ مقالا مستفيضاً بعنوان " فجر الأمل بعد ليل اليأس " فأنفث فيه كل ما في صدري من نقمة وحقد على الادب المحنط - ادب التمني والتقليد والتدجير - ادب المجاملات والمناسبات والمهلوانيات - ادب القشور لا غداء فيها لا عقل وقلوب ، ولا صلة رحم بينها وبين حياة نحيائها في كل يوم . كنت اكتب وودّى لوي تحول القلم فسي يدي بركانا ، ولو تخرج الكلمات من بين شقيه حملا تجرف وتحرق كل بال وديم ومخاتل في آدابنا لعل ان تنهض لنا اقلام جديدة تقيم وزنا للصدق والجمال وباقي القيم الانسانية الرفيعة . واحتتمت المقال بنقد لقصة جبران " الاجنحة المنكسرة " ، وكانت المصحف العربية في نيويورك قبل ذلك بشهور قد استقبلتها بالكثير من الاعجاب والتكبير .

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثاني ،  
ص : ٣٠ - ٣١

٩ - يتحدث الكاتب عن رفيقه الاسكتلندي " بل " ، وكان زميلا له في الجامعة ، والذي كان يؤمن بعقيدة تناسخ الارواح ، وكيف ان تلك العقيدة وجدت قبولا في نفسه ، ثم يذكر محاوره جرت بينه وبين صديقه ذاك فيقول :

" طالت المحاوراة الأولى بيني وبين صديقي الاسكتلندي . ولم أك من قبلها قد سمعت أو قرأت شيئاً عن التفنن . وعلى قدر ما استغرقت العقيدة واستهجنتها في بدء حديثنا عنها وجدتني ، كلما تطديت في الاسئلة ، وتبسط رفيقي في الأجوبة والشرح ، افتح لها عقلي وقلبي أوسع فأوسع . حتى انني أذهلت " بل " عندما رحلت أفسر حياتي ، والحياة اجملًا ، على ضوء تلك العقيدة . فحسبي منها انها ردت إليّ ايماناً بقدرتها شاملة ، منطمة ، عادلة ، محبة ، لا محاباة في نظامها ولا زيف . وانها عوضتني عن فكرة " الخطيئة الجديدة " والدينونة الموهيية " فكرة الخلاص بجهود الخاصة . وذلك من طريق التجربة المؤدية الى المعرفة . ولأن المعرفة لا تكون معرفة الا اذا لم ييسر لديها اى مجهول ، ولأن تلك المعرفة يستحيل بلوغها في خلال عمر واحد مهما طال ، فالعقيدة قد جعلت الحركه موصولة تتخللها فترات انتقال من جسد الى جسد ، ومن حال الى حال ، وهي الفترات التي ندعوها " الموت " .

وأيُّ بأسٍ على العقيدة في ان " العلم " لا يُقرأ ؟ ولماذا يعرف العلم ؟ انه لا يزال في اول طريقة من درس المحسوسات . وفي كل يوم له افتراضات جديدة تصحوا افتراضات قديمة . وهناك مجاهل كثيرة في نفس الانسان يتحاشى العلم اقتحامها . لانه - وقد تقيد بالاختبار الحسي - ليست له الوسائل لاقتحامها ، ولا هو يستطيع " تشرحها " في أي من مختبراته . ولماذا أُصدق استنتاجات عالم في مختبره ، ولا أُصدق استنتاجاتي الخاصة ، او استنتاجات رجال امثال فيثاغور ، وافلاطون ، والمسيح ، وباتنجالي وغيرهم في امور تتعلق باحاسيس وهو اجس وروى لا تدخل في نطاق العلم واختباراته ؟ ان يكن للعالم مختبره فنفسي هي مختبري . وإن أمضى العالم في مختبره بضع ساعات من يومه ، فنفسي معي في الليل والنهار ، وانا أجرى فيها اختباراتي في كل دقيقة من حياتي . وهي تسجل كل ما اختبره بدقة اين منها دقة الاجهزة الكهربائية والالكترونية .

خلاصة القول ان عقيدة تكرار الاختبار بتكرار الاعمار بغية المعرفة الكاملة والحريية المثلى باتت الركيزة الكبرى التي تقوم عليها فلسفة حياتي من بعد تلك " المصادفة " التي جمعتني برفيقي الاسكتلندي وقادتني الى الحوار الذي جرى بيني وبينه . فالحياة اكثر من مهزلة تبتدى في المهد وتنتهي في اللحد لتعود فتتجدد اماً في غبطة أبدية ، او في عذاب أبدي . او لتتحس بالموت وكأنها لم تكن . والاسان اكثر من الموهبة فسي

يد القدر - حتى وفي يد الله . انه الشرارة الالهية المغلفة بشتى الغلاف والمتوهجة توهجاً لا ينقطع ولا ينفك يحرق تلك الغلاف على مدى الزمان الى ان ينطلق منها نورا يملأ الزمان والمكان . والتوهج لا يكون الا على قدر الشوق الى الانطلاق من الغلاف لذلك كانت الحرارة التي يبعثها فينا شوقنا الى الجمال والمعرفة والحرية مقياس " تقد منا " وكان التمسك بالفضيلة والخلق الكريم والمثل الاعلى مقياس اشوافنا . فهذه اكثر بكثير من مفردات في القاموس . اما الرذيلة والخلق الذميم والاستهتار بالمثل العليا فدخان وسخام وقتام من شأنها ان تحجب الشرارة الالهية وان تحد من توهجها .

وأؤملت بعدئذ في درس التعاليم " الباطنية " منذ اقدم العصور ، وفي درس الديانات " السماوية " وغير السماوية . فادهشني ما بينها من تقارب في الهدف والوسيلة على بعد الشقة في الزمان والمكان . فلا " الفيدا " ولا " الزندفستا " ببعيدة عن " اسرار هرمس " . ولا " الطاو " عند لاوتسو بعريب عن " الاب " عند يسوع . ولا " الفرفانا " في " رهامابادا " الا صورة اخرى من صور " الملكوت المسوى " في الانجيل . والحلاج وابن عربي وغيرهما من المتصوفة العرب يلتقون على صعيد يكاد يكون واحداً مع فرنسيس الاسيزي وجاكوب بوهيم وسويدنبرغ ووليم بلايسك وراما كريشنا وفورديف واوروبندو ومن هنا نحوهم في سائر انظار العالم .

انها لدينا تحفل بالشوق الى " الحقيقة " والى كشف الوسائل التي تمكن الانسان من بلوغها كيما يخلص بها من ربكة الجهل والالم والموت . ولا خير عليها ان تكون غير الوسائل التي يعتمد عليها " العلم " . بل قد تكون هي الطريق الاقرب الى الهدف من تلك التي يسير عليها العلم . والجهل كل الجهل في ان يتعامى عنها اي مفتس عن حقيقة نفسه وحياته .

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثاني ،  
ص ٤٦ - ٤٨

١٠ - في المقطوعة التالية يذكر الكاتب شيئاً من ذكرياته عن الحرب العالمية الثانية حين كان جندياً في الجيش الاميركي . وقد حدث ان كان الكاتب في نوبة حراسة في مستشفى عسكري في فرنسا فسمع اثنين جندي الماني جريح ، وقد أخذ ذلك الجندي الشاب بتوجع مبروداً كلمة " ماما " . يقول الكاتب عن اثر تلك الحادثة في نفسه : " ، م - م ، ، " -

ذلك الصوت ، منذ ان دخلتُ المستشفى ، يطفي على سائر الاصوات التي تلتقطها ، اُنْزِي .  
انه اُعلاها وأُعندها وأفجعها . والحجرة التي ينطلق منها حنجرة مزفها الوجع . اتوقف ،  
والبارودة على كتفي ، امام الحجرة التي ينبعث منها الصوت فأبصر في جملة ما ابصر ،  
سريرا تمدد عليه فتى في نحو التاسعة عشرة من عمره . رأسه مُضَعَّدٌ حتى الحاجبين . وكذلك  
ذراعه اليمنى الممدودة فوق اللحاء . بشرته شقراء ، ووجهه وسيم القاطع . ولكن الألس  
قد عبت بوسامته . اما عيناه فمطبقتان . اما انفه فلا يزال عليه بقايا من الدم المتحجّر .  
وأخجل من نفسي ومن بارودتي حتى الانسحاب . فما قيمتي وفيمتها في ميزات تلك الصرخات  
المتتابعة " ما - ما . . . . " ؟ وهل تلك الصرخات غير شهادات علي وعلى بارودتي  
وعلى كل من حمل بارودة ، وعلى الذين من ورائي ووراء بارودتي ، والذين من وراء ذلك  
الجريح وبارودته ؟

وَأَسْأَلُ المموضة عن الجريح فأعرف منها انه جِنْدِي الماني ، وانه مصاب بكسور في  
جمجمته ، وجروح في ذراعه ، وان شظية من فنبلة عطلت احدى كلتيه ، واخرى استقرت  
في مثانه . وانه ، منذ جئ به المستشفى ، ما انك يصيح " ما ما . " ولم ينطق بكلمة  
سواها .

" ما - ما . ما - ما . . . "

وَأُحَاوِلُ ان اتَحِيلَ تلك ال " ما ما " في بيت ما - في قرية ما - في مدينة ما -  
في بلي ما . فلا استطيع ان اتحيل امرأة بعينها ، في مكان بعينه ، وزمان بعينه . ويلوح  
لي انها كد امرأة ، وفي كل زمان ومكان . بل يلوح لي انها اكثر من امرأة . انها الارض  
والشمس ، والعمر ، وجميع الخيرات في الفضاء بكل ما عليها ، وما فيها ، وما بينها . انها الحياة  
التي منها كل حياة يستعيث بها ذلك المسكين من العابثين باعداسها ، الحاحدين فضلها ،  
المشوهين جمالها طمعا في منجم من الذهب او الفحم او الحديد ، او في بئر من النفط ،  
او غابة من المطاط ، او سون يبيعون فيها سلعهم التافهة .

اين اُنْكَ يا غليوم ؟ اين اُنْكَ يا ولسن ، ويا لويد جورج ، ويا كلمنسو ؟ واتم يا دهافنة  
الطل والاعمال في العالمين الجديد والقديم - اين اُنْاُنْكم ؟ اما تسمعون صراخ  
هذا الجندي ؟ الا بُنِستِ الادان اُنْاُنْكم . وبئس الصيد صيدكم ، والصنائير التي بها  
تصطادون ، والطعم الذي به صنائيركم تزودون : حرية - عدالة - سلام - بحبوحة - رحاء -

سعادة . ألا طَهَرْتُمْ آذانكم من فحيج شهواتكم ، وفلوبكم من رياء السنتكم ؟ لعلكم  
ان ذاك تسمعون نداء الانسانية المعذبة : ما - ما .  
ولعلكم ، ان تسمعون ، تفهمون فترعون ، يا ايها الظالمون . "

من كتاب " سبعون " الجبر الثاني  
ص : ١٠٣ - ١٠٤

١١ - يُقْضِي الكاتبُ اياماً قليلةً في بيئته حشبي بسيط قائم على ضفة نهر في واد اخضر في اميركا ،  
في عزلة اشبه ما تكون بعزلة النساك . وفي المقطوعة التالية يصف الكاتب تلك الايام ، وهو  
وصف يعكس ميله الى العزلة والتأمل في حفايا النفس البشرية ، فيقول :

" ..... وبلا لِسْخَرِ تلك الليلة الاولى التي اُصِيبْتُ بها وحدي على ضفة ذلك النهر  
الصغير ، ولا سمير لي إلا حفيف الاوراق ، وخريف الماء ، وهمسات النسمات العابرات ، ومعازات  
الداراري الحالمات ، ودقات قلبي الطمئن ، وجذل الحياة في دمي النشوان ، في مثل هذه  
السكنية يطيب للنفس ان تستحم وتستجم . لكنني ههنا غير الانسان الذي كنته في نيويورك  
بل لَكُنْ هذا الكوخ الذي انا فيه قصر من قصور الجنة التي يحلم بها القائلون والمعذبون  
والمشردون في الارض . فانا ، وان لم يكن في الكوخ غيري ، احسني شلالاً من الحياة الحافلة  
بشتى الذكريات ، والمخلوقات والمعجزات . وكلها يؤنسني ويحدثني الطف الاحاديث . وليس  
بينها ما يعض او ينهش .

في هذا الكوخ الصغير تلتقي نيويورك وسكنتا ، وبولتافا وسياتل ، والتخروب وساحات  
القتال في فرنسا ، وفاريا ومادلين وبيلا وكوتيا وهاري ، وشعراء الجاهلية واعضاء الرابطة  
القلمية ، والى صورة وصورة ، والى ذكرى وذكرى . فتنسجم جميعها ابدع انسجام . حتى  
لتبدو وكأنها نسيج واحد حاكته يد واحدة على منوال واحد . فلا تنافر بين خيط وخيط ،  
وبين لون ولون . لا بصحيج ولا عجيج . لا طفر ولا ناب . لا معابد تضاء فيها الشموع ويحرق  
المحور ، ولا اوجار يفتح فيها العنس والمحور .

ههنا ليس من يكيلني بمكيال ، او يزنني بميزان ، او يقيسني بغياس . فانا والمعوالسم  
التي في داخلِي ومن حوالي عالم واحد تضيق فيه البدايات والنهايات ، وتتلاشى المسافات ،



وتتعطل جميع المكايل والموازين والمقاييس . وفيمتي فو ي يحصيه عجلي ويدركه خيالي .  
وقبل ايلم - في نيويورك - كنت اذا ركبت " الصبواي " فقيمتي في نظر الشركة التي  
تسيرها خمسة سنوات لا اكثر . وادخلت مطعما او مخزنا او مسرحا فقيمتي في نظير  
اصحاب المعظم والمخزن والمسرح هي قيمة الدولارات التي انفتحتها في كل منها . ولكم  
حاولت ان ارفع من تلك القيمة - حتى في عين نفسي - باكتاري من ريارات المتاحف  
والمعارض والمكاتب ، والاندية التي تلقى فيها المحاصرات ، او تعزف السمفونيات ، او تناقش  
فيها المحاصرات ، او تعزف السمفونيات ، او تناقش فيها شتى القضايا والمشكلات ، فما كنت  
اخرج منها وعالمي ارحب واهنا واجمل مما كان قبل ان دخلتها .

لكنني في هذا الكوخ المتوحد في الجبال الانفي نفسي من جديد ، فأسرُّ بها وتسرُّ بي  
كما لم يسرَّ ابدا عاشقان يتلاقيان بعد فراق طويل . واني لأذكر ببالع اللذة ما حدث لي في  
اول ليلة نمتها في ذلك الكوخ . فقد غفوت غفوة هائلة عميقة . واذابي أفاجا بصعطي شديد  
على صدرى فاشعر ان فليبي يوشك ان يتوقف عن النبض . ويشتد الصعطي الى حد ان لا يبقى  
عندي شك في انني طئت لا محالة . فلا اضطرب ولا اجزع . بل استقبل الموت برباططة  
جأس غريبة . واهتف بصوت عال : *! My dear God* ومعناه  
انني مستعد يا الله . ويوفظني صوتي من غفوتي . واذابي مستلق على ظهري ، وذراعي  
المعنى على صدرى .

من كتاب " سبعون " الحز الثاني  
ص : ٢٥٠ - ٢٥١

١٢ - يحدث الكاتب احاه نسيب في رسالة وجهها اليه عام ١٩٢٩ عطا كان يعتزل في نفسه من  
شاعر الربعة في ان يحيا حياة اقرب الى فكره وفلمه من حياته التي كان يحياها في الولايات  
المتحدة ، فيقول :

" ..... اما السبب الثاني ( في تأخرى عن العودة ) فهو اني راغب ، ان انا عدت  
الى الوطن ، ان اجعله قري الى آخر حياتي ، وان ابدأ هناك حياة هي اقرب الى فلسفي  
وفكري من الحياة التي انا فيها اليوم . غير ان هذه الخطوة تتطلب نكرانا لا مقدرة لي عليه الان  
والنكران الذي اعنيه - ولعلك تعلمه - لا يتم الا بعد حرب داخلية تكون فيها الغلبة للفكر  
على الشهوة ، وللنفس على الجسد ، وللنظر الباطني على النظر الخارجي . وقبل ان اكون واثقا  
من نفسي ومن ان هذا النكران - اذا هوتم - لا يجرح قلب امي وابي ، ولا يضر بقريبي  
او بعيد ، لن أقدم عليه . "

ويشرح الكاتب انه عنى بـ " الفكران " ما يشبه نكران بوذا والمسيح للعالم وأمجاده  
وللذات المحدودة ( Renunciation )

١٣ - في المقطوعة التالية يُصوِّرُ الكاتبُ ما جال في باله من حواطر فيبيل مفادته الولائيات  
المتحدة وعودته الى لبنان عام ١٩٣٢ ، فيقول :

" أليس انني سئمتُ هذه المدينة الفارقة في العجاج الذي يشهده ركعها وراء اشياء  
واشياء تبدو لي سرايا في سراب ؟ ان ما اقتس عنه لن اجده ابدا في ذلك العجاج ، او في  
ذلك السراب . وسأجده في حلوة مع نفسي هناك - في حصن صنين . هناك استطيع  
ان أتعرى امام السماء - امام الصحر - امام النسائم والاشجار والعصافير - امام وحداني .  
فانزع عني جميع ما التصق بي من سائب وادران . وافتح قلبي للنور . قلديخذلني النور .  
واحمع شتات نفسي فتعرفني نفسي واعرفها . لقد طالت غربتي عنها وغربتها عني . والعريب  
عن نفسه غريب عن كل شيء .

ما لي وللعلايين ههنا يلهبُ الدولار ظهورهم بالسياط ، فتسيل دماؤهم ، ولكنهم  
يلحسون ما سال من دمائهم ، ويتلمطون بما يلحسون ، ثم يستأنفون الركض ، وغير الموت  
لا يدركون ؟ ما لي وللعلاهي التي يحلقها لهم الدولار لينسيهم ما هم فيه من غت وبسوس  
وفراع وسو؟ حال ؟ فمواسم للبايسبول . ومواسم للفوتبول . ومواسم للمصارعة والملاكمة . ومواسم  
للانتخابات . ومواسم للاصطياد والاشتاء . واعلانات تسيل اللعاب عن احم السيارات ،  
وانمن المعجوهات ، وامتع السهرات والرحلات والروايات ، وحدث الازياء والاحتراعات ، واندر  
العرض لكس المال والمعدات . ماهيك بالاعباد وما يرافها من هرج ومرج ؟ وبافصائس  
والاساعات ، وبالمصراع بين الطبقات والشركات ، وبالمحاكم وما في المحاكم من مهاترات  
ومداورات ، وبالمعابد وما في المعابد من رياء وتمويه ، وبالمدارس وما في المدارس من  
تحذير وتضليل .

ههنا يحتال القوم حتى على الزمان ، وحتى على الارادة الكلية التي تتخذ من الزمان  
منفذا لاحكامها " فيضمنون " لك حسمك ضد العرص والتفكك والانحلال ، ويضمنون جميع  
ما تملك صد التلف والفسرفة والاعاصير والنار ، وضد الزلازل والنوازل ، وذلك بكيت وكيت  
من المال . ويضمنونه لا حبا بك ، بل شغفا بالدولار . ولكنهم لا يستطيعون ان يضمنوك  
ضد الحزن ، والمضب ، والشك ، والقلق ، والسأم ، واوجاع القلب والفكر والروح .

بلى ٠٠ بلى ٠ ان روجي لفي اس الحاجة الى الاستحمام في عزلة ليس للسدولار  
فيها مثل ذلك السلطان ، ولا الناس في زحمة ولا زحمة يوم الحشر ٠ وتلك العزلة  
لن احدها الا في كتف صنين " ٠

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثاني  
ص : ٣٠٦ - ٣٠٧

١٣-

يَحْدُثُ الْكَاتِبُ أَهْلَ قَرْيَتِهِ بِسَكْنَتَا اثر عودته من المهجر ، فيقول :

" كل ما تسمعونه عن التغرب لكسب المعالي والثروة والفخار ليس إلا قبض الريح ٠٠٠  
فما هي المعالي التي من احلها يُسْتَطَاب رُكُوب البحار وافتحام الاخطار ؟ أهـي ان  
تصبح على رأس جبل وجارك في واد لا سُلَم يرقى به اليك وتنزل به اليه ؟ وما هو الفخار ؟  
أهو ان يسقى جارك لبيتاع بخورا يحرقه املك وان تنعم انت بهخوره وشقائه ؟ وما  
هي الثروة ؟ أهـي ان تشبع وجارك جائع ، او ان تكتب الحرير وهو عريان ؟ صدقوني  
ان لا راحة في ذلك ولا سعادة ٠ "

ثم يقول في نفس الحديث :

" قالت لي احدي النسوة اللواتي ~~جئني~~ جئني مُسَلَّاتٍ عندما وضعت يدها في يدي :  
يا عيب النوم منك ٠ دياتي مخسرين ٠ فأجبتها : بل يا عيب النوم منك ٠ دياتي  
ناعمين - وعجبت لهما تعذر فيه اليد التي تعطي الى اليد التي تأخذ ٠ افول لكم  
ان كل يد حننها العمل تصارع يد الله وتشاركها في توليد حيرات الارض ٠ والسدى  
يخجل بها انما يخجل برئته ٠ في حين ان الكثير من الايدي الناعمة قد لا يصارع  
الا يد ابليس ٠ "

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثالث  
ص : ٤٢ - ٤٣

١٤ - بعد عودة الكاتب من اميركا الى بسكنا وصنين والشحروب اخذ يحيا حياة فيها الكثير من العزلة والتأمل والتفكر ، حتى ان صديقا له ، هو توفيق عواد ، اطلق عليه لقب " ناسك الشحروب " بعد ان زاره هناك . ويتحدث الكاتب عن ذلك في المقطوعة التالية فيقول :

" ..... لا هجرتُ الناس ولا هجرني الناس ، بل ان بقيت مثل قلبي - مفتوح لهم صيف شتاء ، وليل نهار ..... وأن اتحدث الى انسان عينا لعين ووجهها لوجه لحير من ان اتحدث اليه بالحبر والقرطاس . وأن أكسب معرفة انسان لافضل من ان اكسب اعجابه . فالوقت عندي ليس من ذهب . وأن أفرج كربة مكبوب ، او ان افتح كوة للنور والايامن والامل في نفس تكتنفها طلعات السك والقنوط لاثمن عندي من كل ما في اديهم الارض من ذهب وحجارة كريمة .

" إلا انني في علاقاتي مع الناس ، حريص كل الحرص على عزلتي ، فالعزلة حاحة في نفسي مثلما الحبز والماء والهواء حاجة في جسد . ولا بد لي من ساعات اعتزل فيها الناس لأهضم الساعات التي صرفتها في محالطة الناس . أما ان اغرق مع الناس الي ما هو أذني في رغبة مشاكلهم الزمنية ، وأما ان أشعل لساني بالهذر والثثرة كما يشعلون ألسنتهم في مجتمعاتهم ، وان اتصنع الفرح في امراضهم واتكف الحزن في أتراحهم ، وان أتحزب لما يتحزبون او اتحمس لما يتحمسون من مذاهب سياسية واجتماعية وسواها ، وان اسكّر بما جادهم واتورم بأورامهم فامر لا أطيعه ولا أستطيعه . ذلك لان لي هدفا من الحياة غير اهدافهم . "

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثالث

ص : ٥٣ - ٥٤

١٥ - في قصيدة بعنوان " من انت يا نفسي؟ " يتأمل نعيمة الشاعر في مصدر النفس - ما هي ؟ ومن اين جاءت ؟ وينتهي بالقول انها " فيض " من الله " ، وهي فكرة تنسجم مع ايمانهم المستمد من تعاليم الانجيل بان الله خلق الانسان " على صورته ومثاله " . يقول الشاعر :

"من أنت يا نفسي؟"

إِنْ رَأَيْتَ الْبَحْرَ يَطْفِي الْمَوْجَ فِيهِ وَيُثَوِّرُهُ  
أَوْ سَمِعْتَ الْبَحْرَ يَيْكِي عِنْدَ أَفْئَادِ الصَّخُورِ،  
تَرْقُبِي الْمَوْجَ إِلَى أَنْ يَحْبَسَ الْمَوْجَ هَدْيَـهُ  
وَتَنَاجِي الْبَحْرَ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ الْبَحْرُ رَفْسَـهُ  
رَاجِعًا مِنْكَ إِلَيْـهُ  
هَلْ مِنَ الْأَمْوَاجِ جِئْتِ؟

إِنْ سَمِعْتَ الرَّمَدَ يَدُوى بَيْنَ طَيِّبَاتِ الْغَمَامِ،  
أَوْ رَأَيْتَ الْبَرْنَ يَفْرِى سَيْفَهُ <sup>جَيْشِ</sup> ~~جَيْشِ~~ الْمَطْلَامِ،  
تَرْصَدِي الْبَرْنَ إِلَى أَنْ تَخْطُفِي مِنْهُ لَطَاءَهُ  
وَيَكُ الرَّمَدُ لَكِنْ تَارِكًا فِيكَ صَدَاءَهُ  
هَلْ مِنَ الْبَرَنِ انْفَصَلْتِ؟  
أَمْ مَعَ الرَّمَدِ انْحَدَرْتِ؟

إِنْ رَأَيْتَ الرِّيحَ تَذْرِى الثَّلْجَ عَنْ رُؤْسِ الْجِبَالِ،  
أَوْ سَمِعْتَ الرِّيحَ تَعُوى فِي الدَّجَى بَيْنَ التَّلَالِ،  
تَسْكُنُ الرِّيحَ وَتُبْغِي بِاشْتِيَاؤِ صَافِيـهِ  
وَأَنَادِيكَ وَلَكِنْ أَنْتَ عَنِّي قَاعِيـهِ  
فِي مُحِيطٍ لَا أَرَاهُ  
هَلْ مِنَ الرِّيحِ وُلِدْتِ؟

إِنْ رَأَيْتَ الْفَجْرَ يَمْشِي حَلِيسَةً بَيْنَ النُّجُومِ،  
وَيُوشِي جَبَّةَ اللَّيْلِ الْمَوْلَى بِالرُّسُومِ،  
يَسْمَعُ الْفَجْرُ ابْتِهَالًا صَاعِدًا مِنْكَ إِلَيْـهِ  
وَتَجَرِّي كُنْبِي هَبْطَ الْوَحْيِ عَلَيْهِ  
بِخُشُوعٍ جَائِيـهِ  
هَلْ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ انْبَثَقْتِ؟

إِنْ سَمِعْتَ الْهَلِيلَ الصَّيْدَاحَ بَيْنَ الْيَاسْمِينِ  
يَسْكُبُ الْإِلْحَانَ نَارًا فِي قُلُوبِ الْعَاشِقِينَ ،  
تَلْتَلِي حَزَنًا وَشَوْقًا ، وَالْمَهْوَى عَنْكَ بِعِيدٌ  
فَاخْبِرْنِي ، هَلْ غَنَّا الْهَلِيلَ فِي اللَّيْلِ يُعِيدُ  
ذَكَرَ مَا صَيَّكَ إِلَيْكَ ؟  
هَلْ مِنَ الْإِلْحَانِ أَنْتِ ؟

إِيهَ نَفْسِي ٠٠ أَنْتِ لَحْنٌ فِيَّ قَدَرَنْ صَدَاءَ  
وَفَتْكَ يَدُ فَنَاسٍ خَفِيٍّ لَا أَرَاهُ .  
أَنْتِ رِيحٌ وَنَسِيمٌ ، أَنْتِ مَوْجٌ ، أَنْتِ بِحَرٌّ ،  
أَنْتِ بَرٌّ ، أَنْتِ رَعْدٌ ، أَنْتِ لَيْلٌ ، أَنْتِ فَجْرٌ ،  
أَنْتِ فَيْضٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ !

من ديوان " همس الحفون "  
ص : ١٦ - ٢١

١٦- إِنْ مِنْ أَبْرَزِ مَظَاهِرِ شَخْصِيَّةِ مِيخَائِيلِ نَعِيمَةَ مِيلَهُ إِلَى الْعِزْلَةِ وَالتَّوَحُّدِ ، فَهُوَ يَعِيشُ دَائِمًا فِي  
عَالَمَيْنِ : عَالَمٍ حَلَقَهُ لِنَفْسِهِ ، وَهُوَ عَالَمٌ رَحْبٌ فَسِيحٌ تَجُولُ فِيهِ خَوَاطِرُهُ وَتَأْمَلَاتُهُ فِي مَعَانِي  
الْحَيَاةِ وَاهْدَافِهَا ، وَعَالَمٍ آخَرٍ هُوَ عَالَمُ النَّاسِ . وَكَثِيرًا مَا يَنْرَوِي مِيخَائِيلُ نَعِيمَةَ عَنِ عَالَمِ النَّاسِ ،  
ذَلِكَ الْعَالَمُ الْمَلِيءُ بِالرَّغْوَةِ وَالْفُشُورِ وَالشَّهَوَاتِ وَالْإِحْفَادِ ، إِلَى عَالَمِهِ الْمَلِيءِ بِمَحَاوِلَاتِ  
التَّعَمُّقِ وَسِرِّ أَغْوَارِ النَفْسِ الْبَشَرِيَّةِ وَالتَّرَمُّعِ عَنْ دَهَائِلِهَا . وَالْأَبْيَاتُ التَّالِيَةُ تَصُورُ حَالَهُ  
مِنْ حَالَاتِ " انْسِحَابِ " مِيخَائِيلِ نَعِيمَةَ مِنْ عَالَمِ النَّاسِ ، إِلَى عَالَمِهِ هُوَ :

من قصيدة " لو تدرك الأشواق "

يَا سَاقِيَ الْجُلَاسِ بِاللَّهِ لَا  
تَحْمِلْ بِكَاسِي بَيْنَ هَذِي الْكُؤُوسِ  
أَتَرَعُ لِعَيْرِي الْكَاسَ ، أَمَا أَنَا  
فَأَحْسِبُ كَأَنِّي لَسْتُ بَيْنَ الْجُلُوسِ  
وَأَعْبُرُ ، وَدَعْنِي مَارِعَ الْكَاسِ

لا ، لا تَنْتَقِلْ مَا طَابَتْ الْخَيْرُ لِي  
أَوْ أَصَحَّ مَا بَيْنَكُمْ كَالْمَرْيَبِ ،  
بَلْ أَرْلِي يَا صَاحِبِي حَمْرَةً  
مَا مِثْلَهَا يُطْفِي بَقْلِي الْمُهَيَّبِ  
أَعَصَرَهَا مِنْ فَلْسَبِي الْقَاسِي .

يَا مُرْسِلَ الْأَلْحَانِ مِنْ عُدُودِهِ ،  
سَحْرًا يَهْيِجُ الصَّبَّ حَتَّى الْجُنُونِ ،  
إِمَّا رَأَيْتَ الرَّاسَ مِنِّي أَنْحَنِي  
وَالْعَيْنَ غَابَتْ خَلْفَ سِتْرِ الْحَمُونِ  
فَلَا تَغْلُ ذِي حَالٍ وَلِهَئَانِ .

لا ، لست بِالْمَوْلَهَانِ يَا صَاحِبِي  
فَالْقَلْبُ مِنِّي جَامِدٌ كَالْجَلِيدِ .  
لَكِنِّي مُصْغٍ لِنَفْسِي ، فَفِي  
نَفْسِي أَوْتَارٌ وَفِيهَا نَشِيدٌ  
فَاضْرِبْ ، وَدَعْنِي بِسَيْنِ الْحَانِي " .

من ديوان " همس الجفون " .  
ص : ٢٨ - ٢٩

١٧ - في الأبيات التالية من قصيدة " قبور تدور " ما يوحى بإيمان ميخائيل نعيمة  
بعقيدة تناسخ الأرواح :

" هَلُمَّيْ . هَلُمَّيْ نَحْيَ الْقَبُورُ  
وَنَمْتَضْ مِنْهَا رَحِيْقَ الدَّهْرِ  
عَسَانَا اِذَا مَا رَاَيْنَا عِظَامَنَا  
يَعْتَضُ مِنْهَا الرِّيحُ الزَّهْرُ  
عَرَفْنَا بَانَ الْعَنَاءِ بِقَاءِ  
وَأَنَّ الْحَيَاةَ فَبُورُ تَدْرُ "

ديوان " همس الجفون "  
ص : ٦٨

١٨ - في تفكير ميخائيل نعيمة غنى روجي يفوده الى الايطان بان الانسان انما يبلى -  
ما يستعيه لنفسه من سعادة عن طريق التخلص من شهواته ومطامعه ، وانه لا يمكنه  
ان يحقق تلك السعادة عن طريق ما يخترعه من آلات وادوات كما يفعل العرب . وبي  
المقطوعة التالية ما يعكس اتجاه نعيمة الفكري في هذا الحال :

" ويل للانسان يخترع الآلات لتكثير حيراته الارض . واذ تكثير حيراته تكثير غصاته .

ويل له يجد وراء الراحة . واد يجدها لا يعرف كيف يستعملها . فيفد منها فبيحة  
لابليس .

ويل له يستنبط الحيل لتفصيل المسافات فيبقى حيث هو . فلوانه اتخذ جناحين  
ليطير بهط من البغص الى المحبة ، ومن السقاء الى السعادة ، لقلنا : بارك الله في  
جناحيه . لكنه يحمل في الهواء كل ما يحمله على الارض من بعض وحسد ومطامع  
وهوم واهام . فلا فرق اذ داك افطع الف ميل في الساعة ام ميلا واحدا . فالمسافة سين  
ما يعرفه من نفسه وبين ما يجبهه منها هي هي .

وانتم يا ابناء بلادى ليس يؤلمني من امركم شيء على قدر ما يؤلمني تظلمكم  
الى العرب ، وجهدكم في تقليد مدنيته المحتصرة ، واحتقاركم لانفسكم ولكل ما فيكم  
من غنى فطري وعُري روجي .



ولكم سمعتكم تقولون : لنقتبس من العرب حسنة ، ولنصممها لحسانتنا . وعندئذ تكتمل لنا السعادة . أولا تعلمون ان لكل ما تفتبسونه وجهين - وجهها عالحا ووجهها طالها ؟ فانتم ان اقتبستم - مثلا - حكومة البرلمانات اقتبستم مع محامدها كل مفاسدها . ومفاسدها لا تعد . وان احدثتم السيارة احدثتم مع-بركاتها كل لعنتها . مثلما انكم عندما تعبلون قطعة من النعد لا تعبلون " طرتها " دون " نقشتها " ادلا سبيل الى الفصل بين الاثنين .

من كتاب " زاد المعاد "  
ص : ٣٨ - ٤٠

١٩ - تشغل فكرة " النظام الكوني " ركنا اساسيا من اركان اتجاه ميخائيل نعيمة الفكري ، وهو يشرح ما يعنيه تلك الفكرة في كثير من كتاباته ، والمقطوعة التالية مثل على ذلك :

" ومن هو - او ما هو - هذا الذي يسوس الناس ، وماسة الناس ، وجميع ما في الكون المامتناهي ؟

ان مجرد وتسميته تحديد له . وهو غير محدود . فما النفع من الاسماء نحتلقها له فلا تلهث ان تغدو افعالا لمداركنا ، واقفاصا لاشوافنا ، ومزالي لخيالنا ، وسكائم لارادتنا ، وحرايا نطعن بها بعضا في السر والعلانية ؟ إلا ان الناس ، والسواد الاعظم منهم لا يزال من التفتح الروحي في سن الطفولة ، يصرون على تسمية الاشياء المحسوسة وغير المحسوسة تسهيلا للتفاهم فيما بينهم . ثم لا يلبثون ان يركبهم الوهم بانهم باتوا يعرفون ما يسمون كآن الاسم وحده هو تعريف كاف للعمى . وهكذا يقول احدهم " بحر " او " برى " او " زنبقة " او " اسان " فيظن انه يعرب ما هو البحر والبرى والزنبقة والانسان . وهكذا قالوا " البعل " و" ييهوه " و" كرشنا " و" فيشنو " و" الطاو " و" اورمرد " و" زمس " و" جويتر " و" الله " وغيرها وغيرها ليدلوا بهذه الاسماء على القدرة التي من وراء الطبيعة . فباتوا يحسون انهم عرفوا تلك القدرة ، ثم راحوا يصورونها او يتخيلونها كل على هواه . مثلما راحوا يسترضونها ويستعطفونها شتى الدباح والصلوات .

لذلك يصعب علي وأنا في مجال الحديث عن القدرة التي تسوس الكون ان اطلق عليها  
 ايا من الاسماء التقليدية مخافة ان يسيء القارئ فهمي فيحسبني احدثه عن الله  
 هم الاكبر ان يحصي على الناس جميع حركاتهم وافكارهم وشهواتهم - حتى انفسهم -  
 فيثيب الصالحين منهم بعصبة الحنة ويعاقب الطالحين بنار جهنم . اما ولا مناصر لي ممن  
 تسميتها تسهيلا للتفاهم بيني وبين القارئ فسادعوها " النظام الكوني " .

ليس عليك ان تكون فيلسوفا لتدرك انك تعيش في عالم يهيمن عليه النظام في كلياته  
 وجزئياته . ولولا انه كذلك لما كان لاي عضو في حشدك العجيب ان يقوم بوظيفته يوم  
 بعد يوم ، وعاما تلوعام . ولا كانت لك الثقة من ان سمسا تغرب عنك في هذا المساء ستعود  
 فتشرق عليك في الصباح التالي . او ان حبة سمح تودعها التراب في الحريف ستنبت  
 منبلة في الربيع ، او ان طفلا يولد لك اليوم سيعود رجلا او امارة بعد سنين . فانت في  
 كل ما تعمل وتفكر وتستهي انما تطاوع الكون فيك وفي الكائنات من حواليك . لذلك كان  
 عليك ان تعرب هذا النظام لتطاوعه عن فهم وعن رضى علا تشفيك المطاوعة . بل تكون لك  
 مصدر قوة وصمانينة . ولذلك نرا - معسر الناس - نداب بعير انفطاح على فهم ذلك  
 النظام كيما نسير معه لا صده .

من هنا دياناتنا وفلسفاتنا وعلومنا وفنوننا . مهمل هي غير محاولات منا لسبر أغوار النظام  
 الكوني واسراره كيما يتاح لنا ان نتجنب الاحطاء الناجمة عن جهله ومعاندته ؟ وهذه  
 الاحطاء - لا غيرها - هي التي تحمل الينا الوجع والعداب والموت ، وهي التي دعتهما  
 بعض الكتب " الخطيئة " فالخطيئة ليست ذلك " البعبع " الذي يصورون . انها حطأ  
 التلميذ في القراءة والكتابة قبل ان يتقن من القراءة والكتابة . وخطأ الطفل يلشغ قبل ان يتعلم  
 الكلام ، ويسقط مثاب المرات قبل ان يتعلم المشي . ومن حق كل متدرج في اى فـ  
 ان يرتكب الاحطاء قبل ان يملك ناعية منه . ونحن متدرجون في درس النظام الكوني . فـ  
 تشرب علينا اذا نحن ارتكبنا الاحطاء تلوا الاحطاء في فهمه وتطبيعه .

الا اننا نرتكب امدح الحطأ بحسب انفسنا اذا نحن نفينا من تفكيرنا وجود النظام الكوني  
 ورحنا نتوهم ان مقاليد حياتنا في ايدينا وحدنا ، وان في استطاعتنا توجيهها حسبما نشاء  
 فيها هو الواقع يسمنها ويسخر بادعائنا .

هل عرف التاريخ حربا انتهت الى ما كان يتوقعه المحاربون بالتمام ؟ لكم اندثر ملك ومالك وفات ملك . انقول ان الذين اندثروا انما اندثروا حسب " خطة مرسومة " وضموها هم ؟ ام نقول ان الممالك التي لم تكن فكانت انما عانت طبفا لحطسة وضعتها هي ؟ كم من احتراع او اكتشاف او حدث تاريخي جاء نتيجة لما يدعونـــــــــــــــــه " مصادفة " وما هو بالمصادفة ؟

اهي " المصادفة " ان تعثر بنت مرعون على لقيط يهودى فتشقى عليه وتأخذه الى قصر والده حيث ينمو ويتربص ، فلا يلبث ان يقضى على والدها وجيوشه ، وان يؤسس دينا جديدا ومملكة جديدة يعيران مجرى التاريخ ؟

ام هي " المصادفة " ان ينجو منذ ١٩٥٦ سنة طفل اسمه يسوع من سيوف جلاى هيرودوس ليصير ثلاثة وثلاثين عاما لا اكثر تمكن في نهايتها من ان يرسل في الارض تيارا راح يعتقد ويتسع الى ان غمر نصف الارض وحلق حصاره جبارا ما شهدت مثلها الارض من قبل ؟

ام هي " المصادفة " ان يقوم في مكة المغمورة ، النائية ، يتيم يدعى محمدا فينأصبه ذوه الهداء ، ويطرده من بيته ومدينته ، وينصبون له الفحاح والاحاسيل ليودوا بحياته ، فينجو من محاسن واحابيلهم ، وتصبح مكة قبلة الملايين من تباعه ، ويداع اسمه بالتهليل والتكبير من الآف الآف المآدن في المشارق والمغرب ؟

ما حطر في بال كولومبس يوم ابحر من اسبانيا طمعا باكتشاف طريق حديد الى الهند انه سيكتشف عالما جديدا ، وان اكتشافه سيعير وجه الارض ويدفع بالتاريخ والانسانية في مجار جديدة . انقول ان اكتشاف اميركا كان " مصادفة " لا غير ؟

ولا حطر في بال ذى القرنين انه سيموت وفتوحاته لما ننه بعد . ولو انه لم يموت يوم مات لكان تاريخنا غير ما هو اليوم . كذلك قل في ولادة اى عظيم من عظماء الارض وموته . بل في كل ما حدث ويحدث وسيحدث في الارض وغير الارض . فان صح ان نغزو بعضه الى المصادفات . . . صح ان نغزوه كله . ان لا يكون نظام حيث تكون المصادفة . فالاثنان يتنافيان ولا يحتمعان . ولولا اننا نشهد النظام فى انفسنا وفي كل ما يقع تحت حواسنا وفي متناوى عقولنا وحيالنا لكانت جميع علومنا ونظمنا ، وبالتالى حياتنا ، دونا من الهلاهة ،

او الحنون ، او بناء ابراج في الهواء . فما هي حيرتنا اليومية ، وعلومنا الطبيعية من فيزياء وكيمياء ونبات وحيوان وعلوم احياء ان لم تكن تفتيشا عن النظام ، والسنن السني يتمضى عليها كما يتاح لنا تسيير حياتنا بموجبيها ، فبني المساكن والحسور ، ونغرس الاشجار ، ونزرع الحبوب والبقول ، ونسير السفن في البحار ، والطيارات في الاجواء ، ونقيم السدود في الانهار لتولد لنا الكهرباء ، ونعالج الذرة فنطلق الطاقة الهائلة المحبوسة في نواتها الح الح ؟ ان هذه جميعها اعتراف علني منا بوجود النظام الذي علينا ان نفهمه ونسايروه . لان سلطانه موق سلطاننا . وكل معاندة نبديها له تؤدى بنا حتما الى العطل الذريع والوجع الاليم .

ولأن الاوجاع تلازمنا من المهد الى اللحد فمعنى ذلك اننا ، وان عرفنا جانبنا من طبيعة النظام الكوني ، ما نزال نجعل جوانب كثيرة منه . فنندعو بعضها " مصادفات " ونعصى في سبيلنا وقد عقدنا هدنة او مصالحة مع الجهل . وذلك هو منتهى الكسل والخزى والعار . ولو اننا كنا عنيدين في تفتيشنا عن طبيعة " المصادفات " ومصادرها ومعانيها عثا دننا في التفتيس عن طبيعة الحاذبية والحرارة والظهور والعناصر التي تتركب منها المادة لوجدنا ان ما ندعوه " مصادفات " ليس سوى جانب او جوانب من النظام الكوني لا تنفاد للتحليل والتحليل في محتراتنا العيزوائية . <sup>وكيميائية</sup> أنها ، في الغالب ، الجانب الخلفي ، او الروحي ، من النظام الكوني . ~~لا تنفاد للتحليل والتحليل في محتراتنا الفيزائية والكيميائية . انها ، في الغالب ، الجانب الخلفي ، او الروحي ، من النظام الكوني . وهو جانب له من~~ الصلابة والثبات مثل ما للجانب المادي سواء بسواء . وفعله ينسبط على الاحياء دون غيرهم من الكائنات ، وعلى العاقلين منهم اكثر منه على غير العاقلين . لان للعاقلين ارادة وفكرا ومقدرة على التمييز ليست لغير العاقلين . وهم مظلومون بما يريدون ويفكـرون ويميزون . والنظام الكوني يعصي عليهم بأن يحصدوا ما يزرعون ، وان يعاملوا بمثل ما يعاملون .

وما اكثر ما يزرع الناس فينسون ما زرعو . الا ان النظام الكوني لا ينسى . فيرد اليهم غلصة الذي زرعه . وقد يكون حكمها وزوا انها اكثر من حبها بكثير . فيذهلون ويضعفون ويحرقون ويولولون . وما اكثر ما يلجأ الناس في معاملتهم بعضهم لبعض الى العسوة والعت والنفلق والبعض والحمد والطمع والمكر وما اليها . فاذا ارتدت معاملتهم اليهم نادوا بالويل والشور وعظائم الامور . ناسين ان هذه كلها قد صدرت عنهم . ولكن النظام الكوني لا ينسى . فيرد اليهم ما صدر عنهم لعلهم يتعلمون فيعاملون الناس والحلائ غير ما يعاملون . ولا بد من القول ههنا ان النظام الخلفي ، او الروحي ، يسرى علي الجماعات سريانة على الافراد .

فحيثما استركت جماعة من الناس في نيات ، او افكار ، او اتجاهات ، او اعمال بعينها  
بات عليها ان تجني النتائج المترتبة على نياتها وافكارها واتجاهاتها واعمالها  
المشتركة ، كل على قدر نصيبه فيها . فما جرى منها النظام كانت نتيجته حـــــــيرا .  
وما خالف منها النظام كانت نتيجته سرا . والجماعة قد تكون شركة تجارية او فنية  
او دينية . مثلما قد تكون اسرة ، او لدة ، او دولة ، او حلفا من الدول ، او الانسانية  
على بكرة ابيها .

لذلك انقرضت ام بكاملها من على وجه الارض . ولذلك تبدد اليهود في جميع انحاء  
المعصور ، ولن تقوم لهم دولة جديدة ما داموا يبنونها على عين الاسس التي بنوا عليها  
دولتهم القديمة . ولذلك انهارت الممالك التي قامت بحد السيف ، وتنهيار اليوم الدول  
التي تمسك بالاستعمار والاستثمار ، وستنهيار كل دولة تشتري كياناتها وسلطانها بدماء  
العير ومدلتهم او بالمكر والمصغ والمال والدهاء .

وانه لمن المولم حقا ان نرى ماسة الناس وقادتهم في تنق الميادين يتعاملون عن الجانب  
الخلفي ، او الروحي ، من النظام الكوني . فلا يقيمون له وزنا ، ولا يحسبون له حسابا .  
فيعضون يررعون الشفان حيث يرجون ان يحصدوا الوفان ، والحرب حيث لا ينفكون يطلبون  
ويزمرن للسلم . ويثابرون على تقسيم الارض التي هي ارث للناس اجمعين ، وعلى افامة  
التخوم المصطنعة بين النصب : فتحوم حمرافية ، وتخوم عرقية ، وتخوم تجارية وصلاعية ،  
وتخوم ثقافية ، وتخوم دينية ، الى آخر ما هنالك من التخوم التي خلقها الجهل اجمالا ،  
وجهل النظام الكوني على الاخص . انهم لا يفتأون يعكرون الجو الذي يعيش فيه الناس ثم  
يعجبون لذلك الجو لا يصعو من تلقائه ، ولا تدفو حياتهم وحياة الناس . وانهم لا يتورعون  
عن اراقة الدماء " حفظا للدماء " كما يدعون . وقد فاتهم ان الدماء لا تكفر عنها الا الدماء  
اما مؤتمراتهم السلمية ، واما معاهداتهم فشعوزات ومحرفات ما دامت النيات من ورائها تعاكس  
النظام الخلفي - بل تظهره في المصميم . ومتى صغت النيات فاي حاجــــة  
ان ذاك للمعاهدات ؟

وهكذا يبدو ان الناس ما برحوا بعبيدين جدا - او فل قاصرين - عن تفهم النظام  
الكوني والجانب الخلفي ، او الروحي ، منه . لذلك لن يكتب الاستفراق لاي عمل يأتونه  
او نظام يبتدعونه . فلا الديموقراطية ، ولا الراسمالية ، ولا الشيوعية ، ولا اي مبدا او مذهب

يستطيع ان يقطع شوطا من الرمن من غير ان يدب فيه الانشفاق نتيجة لا نحراه او انحراف  
تباعه ، في هذه الناحية او تلك ، عن النظام الكوني الذى لا يطيق اى انحراف .  
وكل محاولة من جانب الفاعمين عليه لتوجيهه في اتجاه واحد ، وللمحافظة عليه سليما  
من التأويل والتعديل والتحويل ، محاولة لا حظ لها من النجاح البتة . لانها لا تتفق  
وطبيعة الجماهير . فليطمئن احصام الراسمالية فهي سائرة الى الزوال . وليطمئن اعداد  
الشيوعية فهي في طريقها الى التفسخ شيئا لا تنصوى تحت علم واحد ، ولا تأتسم  
بامامة واحدة .

اما الذى سيقضي على الراسمالية بالزوال وعلى الشيوعية بالتفسخ فليس اعداد تلك  
او هذه ، بل " القوة الثالثة " التي لا تحصن في موسكو ولا في واشنطن ، وتستحدم  
الاثنين لعيايا لا تدركها اى منها . "

من كتاب " ابعد من موسكو ومن واشنطن "  
ص : ٥١ - ٦٠

٢٠ - يتأمل ميخائيل نعيمة ، وهو على ظهر السفينة عائدا من الولايات المتحدة الى لبنان ، في  
معنى الكون ، فتفوده تأملاته الى تأكيد ايمانه بعكرة " النظام الكوني " . وما كتبه حول  
تأملاته تلك ما يلي :

" ان يكن العالم الذى انا منه وفيه عالم فوضى وجنون فحاولتي ان افهمه بعقلي  
هي الحنون المطبق . واد ذاك فكلانا مجنون - العالم وانا .

ولكنني احس بالغ الاحساس ان العالم الذى في داخلي ومن حوالي منظم ابداع التنظيم  
في ادن جزئياته ، وواسع كلياته . فما من شيء في الكون الا يخضع في تكوينه ، وفي حركاته  
وفي نموه واندحاله لنظام صارم لا يتبدل من يوم ليوم ، ولا من الف عام الى الف عام .  
ولولا ذلك لما كان لنا نحن الادميين ان نتناسل ، وان نزرع ونجني ، وان ننسج ونبلد  
وان نبني البيوت والحسور ، وان نركب اللجة ونمتطي الهواء ، وان نحلم بعزو الاحرام  
السموية ، او ان نعوم بأى من الاعطل الصغيرة والكبيرة التي تحفل بها حياتنا في كل  
لحظة وساعة . فنحن في جميع ذلك انما نساير نظاما نحن منه وفيه وله .

والنظام ينبغي الفوضى والمصادفات والحركات الاعتبارية من ايما نوع كانت . والنظام لا يكون بعير هدف . والا كانت الفوضى . وهدف النظام لا يكون بعير هدف . والا كانت الفوضى . وهدف النظام لا يمكن ان يكون خارج النظام . فهو المصدع والمصدع في آن معا . وهو الهدف والوسيلة الى الهدف .

وها انا - الانسان الصغير الوافد على ظهر سفينة في عرض البحر - اسأل البحر عن نظامه . ثم اعود فاسأل نفسي عن الدافع ، او الدوافع التي تحملني على طرح ذلك السؤال . فهو سؤال لا تطرحه الاسماك التي في البحر ، ولا المياه التي تتحيط فيه ، او تخرج منه لتعود اليه ، ولا المصائد والنباتات والحشرات والحيوانات التي في اليابسة وعليها . وي طرحه انسان مثلي . ولولا انه سؤال معقول لما صدر عن انسان عاقل . ولولا ان يكون طارح السؤال يشعر ان الجواب عليه امر <sup>محكمة</sup> ومعقول لما طرحه ولما اجهد عقله وحياله في الوصول الى جواب عليه .

وبأتيني الجواب في شكل ورقة حافظة الصمغ معها ساء النظام الذي يهيمن علي وعلى البحر ، وعلى ما ظهر لي واستترعني من الاكوان التي تلاء العشاء اللامتناهي . ويبدو لي ان ذلك النظام هو العقل الازلي ، الكلي ، الكامل ، الشامل ، الذي منه عقلي وعقل كل اسان ، وغريرة كل نبتة وحسرة وحيوان ، وطبيعة الدرات التي تتألف منها سائر الاجساد ، سواء السائل منها والجامد ، والحي ، وما نحسبه بعير حياة . وهذا العقل يوزع من ذاته في الكون نظير ما يوزع الشجر من ذاته في الارض . وذلك بغير انقطاع ، فلا هو ينضب . ولا هباء تنضب .

ثم يبدو لي ان عقلي لا يختلف بشيء عن العقل الازلي ، الكلي ، الكامل ، الشامل ، العامل بعير انقطاع ، الا كما تختلف البذرة عن الشجرة التي هي منها ، او كما يختلف الم طفل من والديه ، والجدول عن البحر . فالبذرة ، اذا تهيأت لها الظروف المواتية ، معدة لان تصفح شجرة ، والم طفل معد لان يصبح رجلا او امرأة ، والجدول لان يعدو بحيرة او بحرا . انها فضية طرف زمان ومكان . والزمان صمن الارل والاند يعدو وكأنه لا زمان . والمكان صمن اللانهاية يعدو وكأنه لا مكان ، فعقلي بان ما بقي العقل الازلي الكلي ، الكامل ، الشامل ، العامل بعير انقطاع . والمجال المهيأ لتفتحه وموه هو كل الزمان ، وكل المكان .

وان ذاك فالبحر وما توحيه ابعاده واعماقه ، وارتعاشاته وانتعاشاته ، وتجمداته وتبخراته ، وما ينطلق منه ليمود اليه من ينابيع وجداول وانهار ، واليابسة وما فيها وما عليها ، والفضاء الاوسع بسموسه وامطاره ومحراره وما بينها من فجوات هائلة تبدو كما لو كانت فراغاً وما هي بالفرع ، والولادة والموت وما بينهما من نمو وانحلال ، وفرح وترح ، وشوى وفلينق - كل هذه ليست سوى الظروف المواتية ضمن الزمان والمكان التي أعدها العقل الاكبر للعقل الاصغر كيما تساعده على التفتح والتعدد والتفهم الى ان يصبح كلياً ، وشاملاً ، وكاملاً ، وارلياً ابدياً كالعقل الذي منه انبث .

ثم اني لا استطيع البت - ولا احال غيرى يستطيع - ان هذه الارض هي المسكونة الاولى او المختبر الواحد الذي هياه لنا العقل الاكبر . فقد يكون - وهو الأرجح - اننا عرفنا ارضين كثيره قبل ان عرفنا هذه الارض . مثلما قد يكون اننا لبنا من قبل احسادا غير التي افناها ههنا . وسنلبس احسادا تختل منتهى الاختلاف عن التي نلبسها الان . ففي المسكونة مختبرات غير عد . وهي ليست كلها للانسان وحده . لكل لكل ما في المسكونة من كائنات بعضها دون الانسان تفتح بكثير . وبعضها فوه بكثير . واحده الواحد من هذه المختبرات قد لا تتشابه واجهزة الاحر ومعداته . فالوسائل تتغير وتتبدل بتغير الاوضاع والحاحات وتبدلها . ولا نهاية لقدرة العقل الاكبر على استنباط الوسائل وتبديل الاوضاع التي من شأنها ان تدفع العقل الاصغر على التفتيس بعية التفتح ، والانطلاق من الحدود والقيود الى حيث لا حدود ولا قيود .

ان يكن الانسان اوسع الكائنات تفتحاً في المختبر الذي هو الارض فانه لمن السهف ان نحسب جميع الكواكب والمحرات بعضا من معدات ذلك المختبر بدلا من ان نحسبها مختبرات لكائنات قد يكون بعضها ارقى منا بما لا يقاس . وكيف تكون تلك الكواكب والمجرات وصيقات للارض في حين ان الارض لا تطل ابدا على الكثير منها ؟ وبين ذلك الكثير ما يبعد عن الارض ملايين السنوات الضوئية . واسخف من الذين جعلوا الارض محور الكون هم اولئك الذين جعلوا الانسان سيد الكائنات بأسرها . ثم جعلوه المهم الاكبر لرب الكون ، او اربابه .

اجل . مختبر هي الارض . ولعلها ، في هذه المرحلة من تفتحنا المختبر الامثل لنا ولسائر شركائنا فيها من الكائنات . ولكنها ليست المختبر الاول والاحير . والذي نحبره فيها يتفاوت اعظم التفاوت بالنسبة للمستوى الذي لعه كل منا من التفتح - واد ذاك فلا عجب ان نختلف اختلافا كبيرا في نظرننا الى الاشياء من حيث هي "حقائق ثابتة " او "اعراض رائلة " .



فالزهرة للنفحة والفراشة هي غيرها للذبابة والزنبور . والشجرة للنفلة هي غيرها للمصفور .  
والمطر للصحرة المصماء هو غير المطر للنبهة في الصحراء . والشمس للنسر هي غير الشمس للوطواط  
والشاة لانها الحمل هي غير الناة للقصاب . وجميع الاشكال التي تبدو للرجل المعادى حقائـق  
كثيفة - راهنة ، ثابتة ، تبدو لرجل كافيلاطون حيالات زائلة لفكرة لا تزول . والبحر الذي هو من  
اروع الاجهزة التي اعدّها لنا العقل الاكبر في محبنا الارضي ، يبدو للسواد الاعظم منا وكلّفه  
ليس اكثر من خزان هائل من الماء الاجاج ، نستمد منه الولى لاجسادنا ومزروعاتنا ونصطاد منه  
الاسماك والاسفنج واللؤلؤ ، ونجرى فيه سفننا التجارية والحربية ، ونستحم في مياهه او نغرق  
فيه نفاياتنا وافذارنا .

اما ان البحر كان  $H^2O$  قبل ان يكون بحرا . فعا كانت تبصره عين ، ولا تسمعه اذن ،  
ولا تلمسه يد ، ولا يتذوقه لسان ، ولا يشمه انف ، واما انه في الهواء الذي نتنفس فلا سـمـره ،  
ولا نسمعه ، ولا نلمسه ، ولا نتذوقه ، ولا نشمه ، واما انه يتجمد احيانا فيبرد وعديم الحركة  
والحياة . ثم يذوب فاذا به كله حياة وحركة ، واما انه يثور احيانا ويرغى ويزد لكن اعماقه  
تبقى ابدًا ولا ثورة فيها ، ولا موج ، ولا رغوة ، ولا زيد - فهذه جميعها امور ليس ينتفع  
بمعانيها وموحياتها الا الغليل من الغائمين في محبنا الارض وعليه . اما الكثرة الساحقة علا تبصر  
من البحر اكثر من وحشه ورغوته وزيده . فهي في اضطراع دائم يسبه اضطراع موج البحر الى حد بعيد .  
وهي غارقة في الرغوة والبرد الى حد ان تحسبها من البحر بمثابة المعنى من الكلمة والملمس  
من القشرة . "

من كتاب " سبعون " الجزء الثالث

ص : ١٥ - ١٩

٢١ - يؤمن ميخائيل نعيمة بان الوصول الى معرفة الحقيقة ، حقيقة الكون ، وحقيقة الانسان ، انما يكون عن طريق الخيال الذي يستطيع الانسان بواسطته ان يتعدى حدود الحواس الخارجية والقطوعة التالية توضح ما يعنيه الكاتب " بالخيال " ، وهي مختارة من محاضرة القاها في الجامعة الاميريكية في بيروت عام ١٩٣٣ :

" اني لارجو الا يكون بينكم كثير من الذين تخيفهم كلمة " الخيال " والذين يعتقدون ان لا محل لها الا في قواميس الشعراء والفنانين والسحرة .  
فما هو الخيال ؟

هو قدرتكم ان تبصروا واجفانكم مفضة ، وتسمعوا واذانكم مسدودة ، وتشموا وفي انوفكم سطم ، وتدوقوا والسنتكم في غلاف ، وتلمسوا وايدكم مشلولة . هو قدرتكم ان تتركوا حدود الحواس الخارجية فتجملوا منها عبارة تجتازون بواسطتها الى حيث لا حدود .

الخيال هو المشعل وحامل المشعل في دياجير الجهل من حولنا . هو الطريق والهادي الى الطريق في مهمة الوجود اللامتناهي . هو الدليل الاوحد الى الحقيقة . كل ما تتخيلونه كائن . وكل ما لا تتخيلونه لا كيان له .

لن تستطيعوا ان تروا آفاق كيانكم الذي لا حد له ، وتبصروه وحدة كاملة ، الا ما اشتد خيالكم وكانت له فوادم جبارة تهزأ باعاصير الحس . وحتى يكون لكم حيال كذلك الخيال لن تبصروا الا نثفاً مبعثرة من العالم الشاسع الذي هو انتم . والعلم ان ذاك عالم مبتور ومشوه ابدًا .

اما العقل الذي يعالي الناس في تكريمه فليس سوى ولد يجمع يقوده الخيال من انفسه ولكن فلما يمشي به بعيدا . فاحذروا من ان تلقوا كل اثمكم عليه . او ما ترونه يجهد ذاته بعسير انقطاع ، وبغير جدوى ، في تفهم اسرار الكون ، وهو ما يزال في جهده كالولد الذي اعطيتهم اكداس من الورقيات الملونة وامرتموه ان يركب منها صورة حيوان او انسان ؟ او ما ترونه لا ينفك يضع هذه الوريقة بجانب تلك ، وهاتيك فوق هذه ، ثم يعود فيغير مواضعها ، وحتى اليوم لم تستقر له صورة كاملة لا لحيوان ولا لانسان ؟ فصورته ابدًا مبتورة الرأس والذنب ، واعضائها الحيوية لا تستقر على حال لكثرة ما ينتابها من التثقيب والتبديل .

لا يفتأ العقل يرسم خرائط للطرق التي تسلكها الحواس طمعا بأن يؤلف منها خريطة كاملة للكون الكامل . وهو ماض في عمله بجِدٍّ لا يعرف الملل ، وصبر لا نفاذ له . لا تحوِّله عطفة واحدة في الطريق . ولا مرتفع أو منخفض ، ولا شجرة أو ساقية . ولا يسهر عن بالسه ان يقيم الدلائل ويثبت العلامات الفاصلة على جوانب الطريق . لكنه ما ان ينتهي من خريطة ويلتفت الى الوراء ليغتبط بجمال عمله ودقته فنه حتى يرى ان " يداً خفية " قد عبثت بدلائله وعلاماته ، فنصبت جبلا منيعا حيث كان في خريطة واد عميق ، وسطت بحيرة هائلة حيث كانت في خريطة غابة مدغلة .

غير ان العقل لا يقنط . فهو لا يعتم ان يتناول قلمه من جديد ، وبكل تدقيق يأخذ في تصحيح خريطة بالحبر الاحمر . ولا يكاد ينتهي من تصحيحه ويعلم خريطة جالية من كل نقص حتى يعود ، بعد حين ، ويلتفت الى الوراء فيجد النقص فيها قد توافم . فيعكف على تصحيحه من جديد . وما ذلك إلا لان الطرق التي يحاول ان يرسم خرائطها تمر كلها في صحارى الاختبار الحسية حيث الرمال تنتقل ابدًا من مكان الى مكان ومن حال الى حال .

يدأب العقل بغير انقطاع في الاودية المكتظة باشباح الحواس المطلقة . يتعثر هناك ويدب هناك ، ولا ينتهي الى شيء . اما الخيال فبلحة الطرف يطوف القمم المشرفة على تلك الاودية ، وكويزة البرق لينير بلحظة ارجاء فسيحة من الحقيقة حيث العقل يتلمس سبيله وفي يسد الواحدة عصا كسحاء ، وفي الاخرى سراج بلا زيت .

ان تكن سبُلُ العقل ، كما يزعم الكثير من الناس ، هي السبل الوحيدة الى الحقيقة ما بين هو الانسان الذي في وسعه ان يقطعها كلها في خلال عمر واحد ؟ اين هو الانسان السذ في مُسَقَّطِهِ ان يستوعب في سبعين سنة كل خرائط العقل التي ندعوها علوما كالرياضيات والطبيعية والكيمياء والبيولوجيا وطبقات الارض والنبات والحيوان والطب والفلك وسواها من علوم هذا الزمان الكثيرة ؟ ان يكن كل علم من علوم الناس قد كشف عن جزء من الحقيقة فكيف لي ولكم ان نعرف كل هذه الاجزاء ونضعها بعضها الى بعض لنصل الى الحقيقة كلها ؟ ام ان الحقيقة امر لا ثبات له — امر يتغير ، ويتبدل ، ويتجزأ ؟

كلا ثم كلا . انما الحقيقة واحدة - كانت وكائنة وباقية الى الابد . والحقيقة  
لا تنمو ولا تشيخ ، ولا تزيد ولا تنقص . وهي ليست هنا او هناك او في هذا الشيء او ذاك .  
بل هي في كل مكان وفي كل شيء . وليس فيكم منها اكثر مما في سواكم . بل هي في  
الكل بدرجة واحدة . الا انها لا تزال مكثفة فيكم باكثان عديدة حاكها العقل على منوال  
المحوسس الخادعة والمخدوعة . لكن الزمان طويل . ولا بد من ان يأتىكم يوم يمزق فيه  
خيالك تلك الاكثان فيظهركم لانفسكم حقيقة عارية من كل ثوب .

ان الذين خيالهم ما يزال في اللغائف لا بأس عليهم لو هم أرضعوه من ثدي العقل .  
سَيَكْبُرُ الطفلُ ويشد وينتهي بأن يحمل الله يوم ما على ظهره الى القبرة . والذي لا عكاز له  
يتوكأ عليه غير عقله دعوه يتوكأ على عقله . فخير له ان يكون امرج من ان يكون كسيفا . اما  
الذين نمت اجنحة خيالهم واشتدت ، واستطاحت قوادمها وصلبت فلمهم اقول . " ألا أطلقوا  
خيالك من اقفاص العقل وحلقوا معه حيثما خلق بكم . وعندئذ تجدون ان ليس في الكون  
ارجاء الا ولكم فيها اثر . وعندئذ تلمسون انفسكم في كل ما تلمسون ، وتبصرون انفسكم في كل  
ما تبصرونه . وعندئذ تتذوقون نشوة المعرفة بانكم والحياة باسرها وحدة لا تتجزأ " .

ان خيالا كهذا لهو القدرة الوحيدة التي في استطاعتها ان تحرركم من مدارس الحواس  
التي لا علم فيها ، ومن مطابخها التي لا غذاء فيها ، ومن حوانيتها التي لا كسب فيها . لو كان لكم  
مثل هذا الخيال لما عرفتم الوحدة ولا الوحشة . فانتم لو جلستم وحدكم على صخرة في قفر ، وكان  
لكم خيال ، لو جدم قوافل السنين واحشاء العناصر التي تعاونت في تكوين تلك الصخرة متكئة عليها  
بجانبيكم . وإما مستموها باذيالكم مستم غبار كواكب لا تحصي ، واجنحة طيور لا تعد ، ورمال  
بحار كثيرة حتى وعظام كواكب لا تحصي ، واجنحة طيور لا تعد ، ورمال بحار كثيرة حتى وعظام  
اسلافكم ، بل وعظامكم في اعمار سابقة - ان كنتم من المؤمنين بالتقص . وإما ارهفتم اذانكم  
سمعت زحف اندام الريح على الصخرة وترانيم كل الاجواق المجنحة التي استقرت فيها منذ  
تكوينها حتى الساعة . وإما جسستموها بايدكم وجدتموها ، على كل ما فيها من صلبة طاهرة ،  
ألين في يد الله من العجين في يد العجّان وأطوع من القوس في يد الرامي .

لو كان لكم مثل هذا الخيال لعرفتم ان لا فواصل بينكم وبين شيء في العالم  
الا الفواصل التي تقيمها اوهام الحس . فانتم تخطئون كلما حسبتم ان هناك امورا مختصة  
بكم دون غيركم ولا شأن فيها لمساوكم . اما الخيال فيعلمكم ان لكل انسان ، ولكل خنفساء ،  
ولكل ذرة رمل ، ولكل ما يؤلف الكون الاكبر شأنًا في كل ما تعملون وتشتبهون وتفكرون . مما  
انطلق في الكون صوت الا كان نوبة في ترنيمة الحياة العامة . ولا فكر الا كان خيطا في  
نسج الفكر الكوني . ولا شهوة الا كانت موجة على سطح اوقيانوس الشهوات المشتركة .

والخيال يعلمكم ان الاموات لم يموتوا . فيها هي اشواقهم واحلامهم ، وافراحهم  
واتراحهم ، لعنائهم وبركاتهم لا تزال منبثة في الهواء الذي تتنفسون وفي محيط الرغائب والافكار  
الذي منه تستمدون رغائكم وافكاركم . والخيال يعلمكم ان الذين لم يولدوا بعد هم  
الآن معكم وبينكم فكل الأغذاء انما هي الآن هاجعة في حضن هذا اليوم .

واذ ذاك لعلمكم تعكفون على انفسكم فتناقشوها الحساب على كل فكر ، وكل كلمة ، وكل  
رغبة ، وحتى عن كل نسمة من الهواء تدخلونها صدوركم او تخرجونها منها . عالمين ان ذلك كله  
سيعود حتما اليكم ، ان لم يكن اليوم فبعد اليوم ، مثلما تعود حتما الى البحر كل قطرة خرجت منه  
حتى التي سجنتمها الاقدار في قلب بلورة دقيقة في التراب . ولعلمكم ان ذاك تعرفون ان فيكم  
كل ينابيع الآمكم وملذاتكم . لانكم لا تلتقطون من الحياة الا الذي " تديعون " .

من اجل ذلك اقول لكم : اذا ما نسحتم كساء لانسان فحذار ان تنسجوا فيه حتى  
خيطا واحدا من بغضائكم . لانه وان تستر به بدن غير ابدانكم ، سيخدش ظهوركم .

واذا ما حبزتم رغيها لبيع في السوق فحذار من ان تخبزوا فيه ذرة واحدة من حسدكم  
لانه ، وان مضعت اسنان غير اسنانكم ، سيكون غصة مرة في حلقكم .

واذا ما حملتم الاثير فكرا من افكاركم ، فحذار من ان تكون فيه لعنة . لانها ، وان ولجت  
آذانا غير اذانكم ، ستكون وباءا لآلامكم .

لا تسألوا الخيال ان يثبت لكم ذاته بحجة او برهان . انه الحجة والبرهان لذاته  
لا تسألوا محمدا برهانا على جبريله . فلو كان لكم خيال مد وزن لسطاع انغام الوجود العلوية لسمعتم  
انتم كذلك جبريلكم .

ولا تسألوا يسوع حجة عن ابيه السماوى . فلو كان لكم خيال يسبر الاغوار ويتسلق  
الاعالي التي سبرها وتسلقها <sup>خبر الله</sup> لأبصرتم انتم كذلك اياه السماوى . ولا تسألوه كيف  
رد البصر للعميان ، والنشاط للمقعدين ، والحياة للموات . فعندما تتعلمون كيمياء الخيال ،  
مثلما تتعلمون كيمياء الحس ، يصبح في استطاعتكم انتم كذلك ان تجعلوا العميان يبصرون ،  
والمقعدين يمشون ، والاموات يستردون انفسهم المخلوقة لا باعطائكم البصر والنشاط والنفس .

ما دمتم معرضين عن الخيال ، ولا دليل لكم غير حواسكم الخارجية ، بقي العالم  
الذى تحيون فيه عالما تتعاقب فيه اللذة ، والالم من غير ان يكون في تعاقبهما وتوزيعهما  
ما يشبه العدل او المساواة . اما بالخيال فتدركون ان الالم انما هي كلها الام المخاض .  
هي الام البذرة عندما تنفلق لتلد الشجرة . والام الشجرة عندما تلد البرعم . والام البرعم  
عندما تنشق اجفانه ليتقبل نور النهار وندى الليل . والام الزهرة عندما تنتزع الريح وريقاتها  
الناعمة وتدرسها في الفضاء . واخيرا هي الام الشجرة عندما تضمها الارض اليها لتقتبل  
البذرة من رحمها .

وبالخيال تدركون ان كل ما يتراءى لكم تفاوتا بين حظوظ الناس من حيث اللذة  
والالم ، والجهل والمعرفة ، ليس اكثر من التفاوت بين البذرة والبرعم ، والزهرة والثمرة .  
فالبرعم ، في الظاهر ، يعرف من الوجود اكثر مما تعرفه البذرة . والزهرة اكثر من البرعم . والثمرة  
اكثر من الزهرة . لكنه تفاوت في الزمان والمكان لا غير . والخيال الذى يطوى كل الزمان في  
" الآن " ويحشر كل المكان في " هنا " لا يبصر من هذا التفاوت شيئا . لانه يوى الشجرة  
والبرعم والزهرة والثمرة في البذرة من قبل ان تدرج البذرة من اكافها .

فاحذروا من ان تحنوا رؤوسكم امام انسان . ان ليس في الناس من هو اعظم منكم .  
او ان تكبروا على انسان . ان ليس في الناس من هو اقل عطايا منكم . وان تسألوا شيئا من  
انسان . ان ليس في الناس من يستطيع ان يعطيكم ما ليس بعصا من ميراثكم .

اما اذا لم يكن لكم بد من الانحناء ، فانحنوا امام الخيال الاكبر الذي هو اُمُّ خيالكُم .  
 او لم يكن لك بد من الكبر ، فاكبروا على عناكب الحس التي لا تنفك تنمى اغشية خيالكُم .  
 او لم يكن لكم بد من السؤال فاسألوا الا تفوتكم معرفة الرسل الذين يبعث بهم ابداء اليكُم  
 الخيال الاسمى لينهض بخيالكُم من قيوده كيما يصبح شريكاً له في الخلق وفي تدبير  
 الحياة التي لا تُحد .

ان يدا نصف زاوية تمتد اليك في الشارع مستجدية حسنة قد تكون من رُسل الخيال  
 الاسمى اليك . ومثلها كلمة طائشة تفلت من فم طفل ، او نملة هاربة بجبة من قمحك ، او كلمة  
 تنزل بكم ، او حلي يزوركم في المنام ، وكل ما ينتابكم من عوامل في خلال العمر ، كل هذه قد تكون  
 رسلاً اليك . . . لكن اعظم رسول بحير استثناء هو المحبة . فاطلبوها كيما تتفتح بصائرکم لتعرفوا  
 اولئك الرسل ، وتفهموا رسالتهم ، وترجموها الى حرية خيالكُم . فانتم متى انفك خيالكُم من اصفاده  
 — لا قبل ذلك — تمكنتُم من الوصول الى قلب الجمال والحرية — الى قلب المحبة والحق —  
 الى قلب الله " .

من كتاب : زاد المعاد

ص : ٨ - ١٩

٢٢- الانسان ، في رأى نعيمة ، منقسم على ذاته : فالهزيمة تشده الى اسفل ، والاله فيه يشده  
 الى اعلى . على انه لا بد للانسان من ان يبلغ الالهة ، فهو صورة الله ومثاله ، وفكره وخياله  
 ووجدانه هي الحوافز التي تدفع به في طريق تلك الغاية ، على ان الانسان لن يستطيع ان يحقق  
 ذلك في عمر واحد ، ومن هنا يقوم اعتقاد ميخائيل نعيمة بفكرة التفص . يقول الكاتب :

" يسلك الحيوان سبيله في الحياة على هدى الغريزة . فهو بالغريزة يأكل ويشرب  
 وبالغريزة يتناسل ويتكاثر ، وبالغريزة يقاوم امراضه واعداه ويهرب من الاوجاع والاضطراب .  
 فالغريزة هي النور الذي يستنير به الحيوان .

اما الانسان فله فوق نور الغريزة نور الفكر والخيال والوجدان . وهو حديث العهد بذلك النور فما اتقن استعماله بعد ، ولا اتقن السير على هديه . لذلك يستسهل السير على هدي الغريزة ان لا يلاقي فيه من المشقة ما يلاقيه في السير على هدي الفكر والوجدان . ولكن فكره ما استيقظ ليعود فينام . وكذلك وجدانه وخياله . وهذه الثلاثة تعمل بغير انقطاع ، منفردة ومتحدة ، على تحرير الانسان من ربة الفرائز الحيوانية والسموية الى حيث يصبح حرياً بالميراث المعد له منذ الازل - الا وهو الالهة . اما قيل - وما اصدق ما قيل - ان الانسان صورة الله ومثاله ؟

ما ارتفع الانسان فوق الحيوان ليبقى بعضه حيوانا وبعضه انسانا ، بل ليرقى الى ما فوق الحيوان والانسان . وما اوجاع المميتة ، وشكوك النهاشة ، واشواقه اللافحة ، وما قلقه الممض ، وحيرته الخناقة ، واحلامه المجنونة لان البهيمة فيه تشده الى اسفل والاله فيه يشده الى اعلى . فهو منقسم على ذاته ، وعالمه عالمان لا واحد .

واى دليل للانسان على انه مدعو لان يكون اكثر من حيوان واكثر من انسان ؟

اما سمعتم ما قيل : " الانسان قلبه دليله " ؟ لعمري ان في ذلك القول لمنتهى الصدق والحكمة . فمثلما سلحت الحياة الحيوان بالغريزة يستدل بها على ما كلسه ومشربه وماواه وابنائ جنسه ، سلحت القلب البشرى باشواق يستدل بها على اهدافه . ثم سلحته بالفكر والخيال يستعين بهما في الوصول الى تلك الاهداف . ولا عبارة بما في ذلك القلب من شهوات خسية او نصف خسية . فهداه كلها من بنات الغريزة الحيوانية . والعبارة كل العبارة بما في القلب من اشواق بعيدة لا تنتهي الى الغريزة او البهيمة بصلة قريبة او بعيدة . مثال ذلك الشوق الى الانعتاق من كل قيد ومعناه الحرية المطلقة . والشوق الى معرفة كل شيء ومعناه النور لا يقوقه نور ولا يحده من سنائه ديجور . والشوق الى التغلب على الموت والالم ومعناه الوجود السرمدى . ثم الشوق الى الخلق والابداع بعير حد ومعناه القدرة على كل شيء .



ان هذه الاشواق تنبض بها قلوب الناس من حين الى حين - وقلوب الانبياء والمرسل والاولياء في كل حين - لمهي الدليل القاطع للانسان على ان هدفه من وجوده هو ابعاد بما لا يقاس من الاكل والشرب والتناسل ، وافتقاء الارزاق ، وتكديس الاموال ، وتحصيل العلوم والفنون ، وتفتيل الاعداء والخصوم ، وتشديد الحصار والاطمان ، ثم الانتها من هذه كلها الى القبر الذي لا نهوض منه الا لتصفية الحساب تصفية نتيجتها اما جحيم ناره لا تخمد ، واما نعيم جماله لا يدوى .

قد يقول البعض ان هذه الاشواق التي تكلفنا عنها ليست سوى سرات يتسلسل بها القلب عن غمومه وهمومه ، ويتلهم به الفكر والخيال العاجزان عن اختراق الحواجز التي اقامتها الحياة في وجهيهما . وجوابي ان الحياة ما كانت يوما من الايام فاسية الى حد ان تعبت مثل ذلك المعبث باهنائها . فهي ما أغرقنا بغاية من الغايات الا وهبتنا القدرة على بلوغ تلك الغاية . فما جعلت حشرة بعينها تجوع الى غدا بعينه الا اوجدت لها ذلك الغذاء ، ومع الغذاء القدرة على الوصول اليه والتمتع به . وهي ما حلفت قفلا الا خلقت له مفتاحا . ولا اثارنا الشوق الى امر من الامور الا لانها سلحتنا بالفكر والخيال لتمكننا من بلوغ ما نشتافه .

من طبيعة ما يصدر عن مصدر ما ان يحن ابدًا الى مصدره . فالولد يحن الى والديه والغريب الى اوطانه ، وقطرة الطل الى البحر ، وشعاع الشمس الى الشمس . كذلك يحن التراب فينا الى التراب ، والنور الى النور . وشوقنا الى المعرفة الكاملة ، والحرية القصوى ، والقدرة المطلقة ، والبقاء الدائم هو النور فينا يحن الى النور ويهدينا السبيل السوي اليه . وهذا النور يأتلق ويحبو على قدر ما نقبل عليه او ندير عنه ، او على قدر ما نفتح له منافذ في انفسنا او نسد عليه المنافذ . اما ما عداه من شهوات القلب فاكثره من الدياجير التي تحجب عنا النور ولكنها لا تستطيع ان تطفئه .

يسألني البعض : وهل في مكنة الانسان ، وهو من الضعف والقلو وتشتت الفكر والوجدان حيث هو ، ان يحقق اشواقه في غضون عمر واحد ؟

ههنا الفخ والزلفة . فالناس ما تمكنوا بعد من ان يتخطوا بتفكيرهم حدود العمر . والذين تخطوها الى ما وراء القبر ما بلغوا بالانسان قرا غير جهنم النار وغير جنة الفردوس . ولا فسحوا له من الزمان اكثر من سنوات معدودات يترتب عليه فيها ان يعرف نفسه ، وان يعرف الله ، وان يصفو من كل اكداره ويقهر كل غرائز البهيمية فيه . كأن الصفو من الاكدار ، وقهر الغريزة ، وكأن مصرفة ~~وهي~~ الله امور يسيرة لا يعوزنا لبلوغها الا ان نفكر فيها ونشتهيها . ومن ثم فبيننا الالبم والاعرج والقعقد والاعمى والابله والمجنون . فكيف تساوى بين هؤلاء وبين اصحاء العقول والابدان ؟ ثم كيف تساوى بين الذين عاشوا العائنة والذين ما عاشوا اكثر من العشرين ؟ وبين الذين قدرتهم على الاستمتاع بجمال الجنة تفوق مقدرة سواهم مثلما تفوق مقدرة البعض قدرة الآخرين على تذوق جمالات الطبيعة والفنون ؟ وكيف نوفق بين عدل الله ورحمته وحنانه وبين نار ابدية السعير يشعر بها الخطة فلا هم يترمدون ، ولا من خطاياهم يتظهرون ؟

العمل الله ، والآزال والآباء في قبضته ، شحيح وقاسى الى حد ان يبخل علينا بفسحة من الزمان تكفينا لمعرفة انفسنا ومعرفته ؟ ألسنا من الله وفيه ؟ فعالم لا يمتد عمرنا ما امتد الزمان ؟ وعالم تقف عند الولادة كما لو كانت البداية وعند الموت كما لو كان النهاية ، ولا بدايات في الزمان ولا نهايات ؟ أمّا ما نراه من تقلب وتبدل في المحسوسات فليس اكثر من تحول في طبقات الدياجير التي تكثف النور فينا . لكننا النور باق . وهو لا يتحول ولا يتبدل . فلا الولادة تشعله ولا الموت يطفئه . وما الموت الا انتقال النور من مصباح الى مصباح من انا الى انا ، من حال الى حال ، ونحن ما أوتينا من حدة البصر ما يمكننا من رؤية اجسام كثيرة نشرها في الماء الذي نشرب ونتشقها في الهواء الذي نتشق . فأي عجب ان ذاك ان ~~ليس~~ لا نبصر المصباح او الأنية التي ينتقل اليها النور بعد الموت . وقد تكون من مواد ليست من الكثافة والخسونة بحيث نتكمن من الاتصال بها مباشرة بحواسنا الكثيفة الخسنة ؟

لست اريد ان اتبسط في الحديث عن الحياة بعد الموت . فما همّني كيف يعيش الأومات ولا اين يعيشون . وجُلُّ ما اريد ان أُلقيّه في خلدكم هو ان الموت ليس بالعقوبة الكأداء التي نتوهم . وانه لا يقف في سبيل الانسان الى اهدافه السامية . بل قد يكون من خير المساعدين على الوصول اليها . فنحن ما انبهقنا من الله لنتلاشى فبني ~~المنسوت~~ .

ولا نحن نموت ما دمتنا من الله وفيه . ولكننا نحيا لنصرف انفسنا ونعرف الله . واذا كانت المعرفة الكاملة لعلم من علوم الناس لا تتم لنا في عمر واحد فكيف بمعرفة الله تتم لكائن كالانسان في خلال عمر أو اعمار وهو ما يبرح في اول الطريق تحته على السير اشوانه الى الحق والحرية والكمال ، ولكن غرائز البهيمية فيه تثقل خطاه بما تنشره في وجدانه من شهوات سوء وتزينه لفكره من قيم زائفة ، وهذه كلها دياجير في دياجير . وعلى الانسان ان يفرقها بالنور الذي فيه حتى وان هو اصر في تعزيقها الى تعزيق جلده ولحمه . وذلك يعني انه على الانسان ان يشن حربا على نفسه لا على اخيه الانسان ولا على الاكوان من حوله . فهو ان صفت عينه صفت حياته . وان صفت حياته كان كل الكون في عينه نورا صافيا .

إنها الحرب ضرور شعواء تلك التي يترتب على الانسان ان يشنها على نفسه . وانها لحرب مقدسة . وهي من بين كل انواع الحروب الحرب الوحيدة التي يلقي بالانسان ان يخوض غمارها . وكل ما عداها فظاعة وخزى ورجاسة ودياجير حالكه تعمي الانسان عن هدفه وتحرفه عن المصراط السوي اليه . وما حرب الانسان مع نفسه غير حرب الفكر والوجدان والخيال مع غرائز البهيمية في الانسان . فالغريزة في الحيوان العاجز عن التفكير والتخيل والنطق والشعور بالموجب هي القوة التي تقوده في مسالك الحياة عن غير وهي منه . فلا فضل له ولا ملامة عليه في كل ما يصدر عنه من اعمال . في حين ان الفكر والنطق والخيال والوجدان يرافقها الوعي والشعور بالذات والمسؤولية والموجب تجاهها وتجاه الغير . ومن كان له مثل ذلك الوعي والشعور كانت له الارادة . ومن كانت له الارادة كان مطالبها بانفاق جهده او جهود في تسيير حياته - ولو الى حد - فلا يكون عالة على سواء . وذلك يعني ان الحياة ما سلحت الانسان بالسلاح الجديد وهو الفكر والخيال والنطق والوجدان الا ليستغني به عن السلاح القديم وهو الغريزة ، وإلا ليتقن استعماله . ولانه لا يزال حديث العهد بذلك السلاح فالحياة تدريبه في كل لحظة من وجوده على استعماله فأنا يصيب فيز هو بنفسه . وآونة يخطئ فتسيل دماؤه ودموعه ، ويركه البؤس والالم . ولكن الحياة لا تبكي لبكائه ولا تتألم لألمه لانها تعرف حق المعرفة انه سينتهي بأن يتقن استعمال السلاح الجديد لخيره وخير الكون . "

من كتاب " النور والديجور "

ص : ١٤ - ٢٢

٢٣ - المقطوعة التالية توضح مفهوم " الله " عند نعيمة :

" لقد نَفَخْتُ مع الناس في البوق الذي يمجدون به رباً يعميت ويحيي ،  
ويعاقب ويثيب . واليوم انفع في بوق رب فوق الحياة والموت وارفع من العقاب والثواب .  
اذ وجدت ان القدرة التي ندعوها الله هي الكل في الكل . لا حالات فيها ، ولا صفات  
لها ، ولا حقيقة إلاها ، ولا وجود لشيء الا فيها . فان هي أُمَاتتني فكأنها تميت ذاتها .  
لأنني منها وفيها . وهل يحو الله ذاته بذاته ؟ وان هي عاقبتني فكأنها تعاقب  
ذاتها وتقتص من ذاتها لذاتها . وهل يذنب الله الى الله ؟ "

من كتاب : زاد المعاد  
ص : ٢١

٢٤ - " الحرية " عند نعيمة تعني تحرر الانسان من ربة رجاسة نفسه . يقول الكاتب :

" رأيتُ الناس يُسَيِّجون املاكم وبموتهم وكل مقتنياتهم . اما نفوسهم فيتركونها  
مشاعاً لكل فكر خبيث ونية سيئة وشهوة دنيئة . ومن لم يتحرر من رجاسة نفسه أني له ان  
يتحرر من رجاسة الغير ؟ ان سقراطي سجنه كان حراً وهو يجرع السم حين ان اهل اثينا  
كانوا عبيدا وهم يجرعون الخمر خارج السجن .

وهكذا أَعَلَمَتْنِي الحرية ان أطلبها في روعي لأضمن سيلاجات الناس . وأفهمتني  
ان افقر الناس اكثرهم سيلاجات . واشدهم عبودية من طن ان في وسعه ان يستعبد سواه .  
واضعف الممالك اوفرها جنودا واضخمها اساطيل ، وانزل الامم امة تتوهم ان في طاقة اممة  
اخرى ان تسلبها او ان تهيبها الحرية .

من كتاب : " زاد المعاد "  
ص : ٢٤ - ٢٥

٢٥ - تشغل مسألة الخصاصين الشرقية والغربية والفروق بينهما كثيرا من تفكير ميخائيل نعيمة ، والمقطوعة التالية توضح باختصار موقفه من الحصارين :

" جُلُّ ما فعلته المدنية الغربية حتى اليوم - مثل كل ما سبقها من مدنيات عقلية - هو انها وَسَّعَتْ نطاق المحسوسات . وبذلك اكثر من شهوات الجسد وحاجاته الى حد ان الحصول عليها اصبح مقتلة للروح والجسد معا . فهي ما اكثر خيرات الارض حتى اكثر البطون الفارغة منها باكثر البطون المتخمة بها . وهي ما اطالت متوسط العمر سنة حتى اطالت شقاءه سنين . ولا قربت المسافات بين تخوم الام فرسا حتى ابعدها بين قلوبها فراسخ . ولا نشرت العلم حتى نشرت الجهل . لانها في كل ما تَعَلَّم لا تستعلم الا العقل الذي لا يَعْلَم وليس بامكانه ان يَعْلَم . وهي ما عَزَزَت الفنون الا لتجعل ما فيها من روح مطية لما فيها من مادة . ولا قصرت ساعات العمل حتى مدت ساعات الطيش والوديلة والفحشاء . فلا عجب ان يكون لها في كل يوم ازمة اقتصادية ، او مشكل سياسي ، او صدمة تسيل فيها دماؤها وتمزق لحومها وتتقطع امعاؤها .

قال لي احد الادباء الشرقيين وقد سمعني ابسط مثل هذه الافكار : " ان قناعة الشرق بحياله قد اوصلته الى ما هو فيه اليوم من فقر وضعف وعبودية . اما الغرب الذي لا يعرف للقناعة معنى ففني قوياً وهات . وهو زاحف علينا بسياراته وطائراته ودباباته ، ومدارسه وفوارسه ومبشرينه ، وبزيت النباتي وحريره النباتي . وبمبيون "كواكه" المحككة وأفخازهن العارية . وسواعد مصارعه وقبضات ملاكميه . واخشى - ان تَفَشَّت افكارك في الشرق - ألا يبقى هنالك من شرق . وانا اعيد هنا ما قلته لذلك الاديب -

الفقير من اشتبهى الغنى ولم تكن له المقدرة على الوصول اليه . والغني من توافرت له المقدرة دون الشهوة . انما الفقير المدقع هو من توافرت له الشهوة والمقدرة دون الخيال الذي يعميت الشهوة واوجاعها ويستخدم المقدرة للوصول الى ما هو باقى من الغنى . الشرق اليوم فقير . اما الغرب فمدقع .

والضعيف من اعتقد ان بإمكانه نيل حق بالقوة ولم تكن له القوة . والقويُّ من  
توافرت له القوة ومعها الحيال العارف بان الحق لا يؤخذ ولا يود بالسيف . لذلك يترفع  
عن امتشاق السيف . انما الضعيف من كانت له القوة دون المعرفة بان الحق لا رأس له  
يكسر بالفأس ويجبر بالدفع . الشرق اليوم ضعيف . لكننا الغرب اضعف .

والعبد من انقاد لشيئة يحسبها غير مشيئته ولا قوة له على ردها . والحر من  
استسلم لشيئة جعلها مشيئته . انما عبد العبد هو سيد العبد . الشرق اليوم عبد . اما الغرب  
فعبد العبد .

ان مقاومتك العقل بالعقل كصرك الصخر بالصخر - الاثنان يتفتتان ان لم يكن  
اليوم فغدا . اما مقاومتك العقل بالخيال فكك مقاومتك السيف بالهواء - تكل يد الضارب  
ويصد السيف ويبقى الهواء طليقا لا جرح في صدره ، ولا خوف في قلبه ، ولا انبعاث  
بين شفتيه .

ستعمر امواج المدينة الغربية وجه المعمور شرقا وغربا وشمالا وجنوبا . لكنها عندما  
تبلغ اقدام قم الحيال الشرقي ستنفق عليها غاضبة ، ثم يائسة ، ثم نادمة ، ثم تعسلها  
مستغفرة وترتد عنها وقد تكسرت في زبدِها اشعة الجمال الملتهب فوقها .

اني ارى خيال الشرق يُطلُّ على العالم من جديد . والذي سيحمل مشعل  
نبي عزيمة الارض في رجليه ونوة السماء في ساعديه وبها الحق في ناظريه ووداعة المعرفة  
في لسانه وحلاوة المحبة في قلبه .

وسيمشي هذا النبي بين الناس شرقا وغربا فيتبعه بعض من هم اشد تصلبا  
للعقل ومحسوساته . ويهرب منه الكثير ممن يحسبون انفسهم في رأس ابي الهول وهم ما يزالون  
في ذنوبهم .

وسيحمل هذا النبي قلبه على كفه طعاما لكل جائع . فياكلون منه في الغرب  
ويتناولون منه في الشرق ويحيون . ولن يُصلب .

٢٦ - تلقي الايدان الكبرى التي عرفها الانسان ، في رأى نعيمة ، في انها جميعا تهدي الى اىصال الانسان الى الحقيقة الكبرى " حقيقة الحياة المؤدية الى الراحة الأبدية ، وقد سماها ( بوزلا ) النرفانا . وهذه النرفانا هي التي دعاها المسيح " ملكوت الله " ودعاها محمد الجنة " ، فلا بد للانسان اذا ان يسعى الى معرفة الحقيقة ليتسنى له ان يبلغ تلك الراحة الأبدية . يقول الكاتب حول هذا الموضوع :

" ..... ليس قصدى ان أحدثك عن النرفانا وملكوت الله والجنة . ولكن قصدى ان ألقى في خلدك ان لوجودك هدفاً يجدرُ بك ان تعرفه . وان المال والعلم والفن والقوة والجاه والشهرة وما إليها يستحيل ان تكون ذلك الهدى ما دامت قاصرة ان تُردَّ منك غوائل المرض والشيخوخة والموت وما يسبقها ويرافقها من حزن وتحرق والم . وانك ان لم توفق الى اكتشاف هدفك بنفسك فحريّ بك ان تتكل على الذين سبقوك الى اكتشافه . فلا بوزلا ولا المسيح ولا محمد من الذين يُلحق بك ان تستخف بافكارهم واقتوالهم واعمالهم ، او ان تشكّ مقدار ذرة في صدق نياتهم . ثم انك في خضمّ هذه التيارات الصاخبة التي تتقاذفك اليوم من كل جانب وفي كل صوب لفي أمس الحاجة الى حقيقة تفرغ إليها وتستأنس بها وتتخذها ملاذاً لك في الملأ . انك لفي حاجة الى هدف يتبدل كل ما في الارض ولا يتبدل ، بل تزول الارض ولا يزول ، وهذا الهدف لن تجده في غير الدين اذا انت استطعت ان تستقيه من منابعه الصافية .

لست بجاهل ان كلمة " الدين " قد اتخذت على كر العصور ألواناً غير مستحبة في نظر الكثير من الناس ، وعلى الاخص في هذا الزمان . واللوم في ذلك ليس على الدين ، بل على الذين انحرفوا به عن اهدافه السامية ، فتمسكوا بقشوره ونفذوا اللهب ، ثم انتهوا بان جعلوه مجموعة من الطقوس الجوفاء ، والمصلوات التي تحرك اللسان دون القلب ، والشفاه دون الفكر والوجدان . مثلما جعلوه ركازاً من المشاحنات اللاهوتية ، وسيف تفرقة بين الانسان والانسان ، وبين الانسان والله . والدين الذي لا يغمر القلب بالمحبة ، والفكر بالايمان ، والروح بالاطمئنان ليس بالدين الذي يُرجى للخلاص ويصلح ملاذاً من الشدائد والصحن والموت . ذلك هو الدين وقد فكر صفاء جهل الشاربين منه على حد ما تعكر الابل الحياه التي تتروى منها ان تعوض فيها الى الركب .

لئن استطاع الجهل ان يحجب نور الدين فلن يستطيع ان يبتلمه . فالشمس  
تجيبها الغمامة ولكنها لا تمحقها . ولئن فكر الاغبياء والأدعياء مياه الدين فلن يعكسروا  
منها غير ما انساب بعيدا عن المنبع . اما المنبع فلن تطله اقدارهم وأكوارهم . وان ذاك  
فحذار ان تنكر الشمس لان غيمة حالت بينك وبينها . وحذار ان تحكم على ينبوع بالفساد  
لان الشاربين منه بعيدا عن مصبه قد لوثوا مياهه . حذار ان تنفر من الدين لان السواد  
الاعظم من المتدينين براء من الدين .

انما الدين هدف وطريق . اما الهدف فالخلاص من حياة تتحكم فيها الامراض  
والاحزان والشيخوخة والموت الى حياة ليس فيها لهذه الآفات كلها ولا ظل سلطان . واما  
الطريق فالايمان بان في الكون قدرة مبدعة ، منظمة ، وان نظامها يقضي على الانسان ،  
اذا هو شاء بلوغ الهدف ، ان يغالب ما فيه من غرائز تكبل خطاه في السير نحو الهدف ،  
وان تلك القدرة قد سلحت بكل ما يمكنه من الغلبة . ففي مستطاعه ان يقهر الشك  
باليقين ، والمعنى باللفظ ، والشهوة بالمعفة ، والجهل بالمعرفة ، والبغض بالمحبة .  
وان ذاك فهو من الدين في لبه ، والدين ملاذه الذي ما قبله ولا بعده من ملاذ " .

من كتاب : " دروب "

ص : ٣٣ - ٣٥



Copies of the following poems written in English were kindly provided by Mikhail Naimy.

On a Lonely Bough or The Last Leaf

On a lonely bough  
Of a lonely tree  
Sits a lonely leaf  
Lost in reverie.

While the sky is but one heaving  
Grim, unending cloud;  
And the wind is deftly weaving  
For the earth a shroud.

Neighbours, friends and mates  
Left her long ago.  
None came back to tell  
Of the world below.

Nightingales no longer flutter  
Gaily round her bed.  
Only ravens come to utter  
Dirges o'er her head.

Dry is now the breast  
Whence she sucked the sap.  
Frozen now and cold  
Is her mother's lap.

Yet she neither joys, nor sorrows  
But serenely sways,  
Knowing that all her to-morrows  
Are but yesterdays.

For upon her face,  
Shrivelled though and wet,  
As within her heart,  
All the seasons met.

A Solemn Vow

(To One Who Worries Overmuch.)

Have peace, O restless, sorrow-laden heart!  
I shall not laugh  
Until with sorrow I have made you part  
As parts the wheat, when winnowed, from the chaff.  
Till then I shall not laugh.

O sleepless eyes that weep, yet shed no tears,  
I shall not sleep  
Until from you I've banished cares and fears  
That dimmed your light and taught you how to weep.  
Till then I shall not sleep.

O spirit once athrob with song, now mute,  
I shall not sing  
Until once more I've made you like a lute  
Attuned to quiver in Love's hands and ring  
Till then I shall not sing.

O God's fair image, lost in Shadowland,  
I shall not die  
Until I've torn your veils and made you stand  
A naked loveliness beneath the sky.  
But then - I will not die.

The Endless Race

Say not, my brother, you have lost the race.  
Albeit my feet be fleeter than your feet.  
Yet in the trackless voids of Time and Space  
Your path and mine invariably meet.

Swift is the wind, but so's the languid breeze  
That gives it birth and sleeps within its breast.  
The mother-bird that flutters in the trees  
Cannot outfly the fledgings in the nest.

The mountain stream that hurls in fitful leaps  
From rock to rock, its waters cool and clear,  
Can reach the distant, ever-silent deeps  
No quicker than a dewdrop or a tear.

Come, brother, come. The day is not yet done.  
The race goes on relentless as before  
The time to ask who's lost and who has won  
Will be when Time and Distance are no more.

Till then let's drown my laughter in your tears  
And cast away their soul-benumbing load  
And stride along unmindful of the jeers  
Or cheers of those who loiter on the road

Let Them Pass

These minds and hearts on rails and rubber tires  
Rolling, forever rolling God knows where,  
These hurried feet led on by mad desires  
Out of one snare into another snare, -  
How can we be their road-fellows, my soul!  
They seek too many goals - we seek nō goal.  
So step aside and let them march and roll.

With all of Time coiled within our NOW,  
And all of Space compressed within our HERE,  
With Life and Death enthroned upon your brow  
In perfect love, what's there to crave or fear!  
So when you hear the ever-surgings mass  
Demand the right-of-way with drums and brass,  
Step silently aside - and let them pass.

To The Hudson

You pour yourself forever in the sea,  
 And, lo! the sea re-fills you evermore;  
 You shun the heights, and yet in ecstasy  
 The summits stand and watch you from the shore.

While I would make the sea my drinking bowl  
 And reach the farthest star with one swift bound,  
 Yet I'm athirst and fettered to the ground  
 Is my dream-ridden, over-eager soul.

You pay no heed to obstacles, nor lend  
 An ear to doubt, to passion, or to pride,  
 But leisurely, unerringly you wend  
 Your way without a compass, or a guide.

While all the streams that never cease to gush  
 Out of my heart have yet to find their course  
 They flow and overflow, they halt and rush,  
 They churn about and dissipate their force.

And as the air bears equally the dust  
 Of star and stone, so do you bear as one  
 Man's good and ill, his shining gold and rust,  
 His fickle seasons, tragedies and fun

While I persist in frittering THE ALL  
 To separate my sorrow from my joy;  
 And so 'twixt good and evil, like a buoy  
 Upon the waves, I ever rise and fall.

Yet am I not a derelict so long  
 As in my depths rings loud your silent song

"The truly high is ever low.  
 The truly swift is ever slow.  
 The highly sensitive is numb.  
 The highly eloquent is dumb.  
 The ebb and flow are but one tide.  
 The guideless has the surest guide.  
 And he is great who's also small.  
 And he has all who gives his all."

Golgotha

There is a Golgotha in every heart.  
 On every Golgotha a cross.  
 Upon each cross a crucified.  
 Upon his brow a crown of thorns.  
 And on his lips a word awaiting utterance.

That do I see in my own heart.  
 What see you, Brother, in your heart?

My cross I chisel of my thirsts unquenched,  
 My hungers unappeased,  
 My hopes still-born,  
 My tongueless sorrow and my doubt-stung faith.

Is not your cross, my Brother, like my cross?

He who is nailed upon my cross is I,  
 The fool who chases Time with Time,  
 Who looks for his house while living in his house,  
 Who created Good and Evil, Life and Death, only to seek escape  
 from Good and Evil, Life and Death.

That is my crucified. Is not my crucified and yours one?

My crown of thorns I plait out of my attachment to what is  
 attached to nothing,  
 My hatred of what cannot be loved, therefore, cannot be hated,  
 My fear of substances which are without substance,  
 My coveting shadows.

That is my crown of thorns. Is there not one like unto it  
 upon your brow?

As to the word upon my lips, its hour is not yet.  
 But Time is endless.  
 And I am patient.

The Mystic Pact

(To Gibran)

I chanced upon my Brother's tryst with Death.  
Fast were they locked in each other's embrace,  
My Brother saying, "Mother of my breath,  
Bid it be still, bid it dissolve in space.  
It chokes my nostrils with the heavy smells  
Of still-born hopes and putrid days and nights;  
And breathless would I dwell upon the heights  
And in the depths where breathless Beauty dwells.

"Reach deep, sweet Lover, deep into my breast;  
Perchance you'll find a fragment of a heart.  
'Tis all I have to offer you; the rest  
Is mine no longer Here and there a part  
I laid on canvas, melted into song,  
Planted in fields unwedded to the plow,  
Forged into tongues for all the mute who long  
With tongues their silent longings to endow.

"Now cleanse me, Lover, of the salt and froth  
Of earth to sail with you the shoreless sea."  
And Death responded to my Brother's plea,  
And with the kiss of silence sealed the troth.

As I, a witness to the mystic rites,  
Stood dazed, enveloped in a thousand nights,  
There spoke a voice exceeding soft and kind  
"WHAT IS AHEAD IS ALREADY BEHIND."

Inspired by "Niunia"

To-night my eyes shall bathe in Beauty's fount.  
 My tongue and lips shall touch her holy fire.  
 My spirit shall take pinions and shall mount  
 Higher than earth-bound spirits dare aspire.

For I shall hide behind your lids when they  
 Shut out the world to help you see your dream.  
 And when your eyes shall gleamingly convey  
 The vision seen, I shall be in that gleam.

I shall be in the floor beneath your feet,  
 And in the walls about, the ceiling overhead;  
 And I shall be in every stitch and thread  
 That hug your breast and hear your brave heart beat.

I shall be cradled in your hands sublime  
 As they reach up to grasp the hand of God.  
 And I shall know the glory of a clod  
 Of earth released from bonds of Space and Time.

And I shall be the hungry flame that leaps  
 Out of your limbs, from toe to fingertip, -  
 The flame that feeds upon itself and keeps  
 Its name unsoiled by any tongue or lip.

And I shall say to those who seek, entranced,  
 To know your art's the substance and the sum  
 "No flesh and bone and blood before you danced.  
 I know the secret... but I'm deaf and dumb."

Then I shall go my solitary way  
 And bury deep my secret, very deep.  
 And dance alone, and laugh alone and weep  
 Until the Night bring forth another Day.



Be Quiet, Reason!

Be quiet, Reason!  
 Else lay down your crown.  
 This time my ears are deaf to your commands.  
 Now that I found the chalice with the wine,  
 The virgin wine I have for ages sought,  
 You shall not seal my thirsty lips, nor bind  
 My hungry hands.  
 No longer can I fool  
 A parching heart with all your dewless mist.

If it be sin to call this chalice mine,  
 Then let me die a sinner.  
 Yet do I know  
 That but to touch it is to leap across  
 Eternities and universes vast;  
 And to inhale its fragrance is to dwell  
 In Beauty's heart and burn with Beauty's flame,  
 And to be drunk with its wine is to merge  
 Into the Deathless and be all in all.

The Weaver

I am the loom, the weaver and the thread.  
I weave myself out of the living dead  
Of yesterday, to-day and days unborn.  
And what I weave no hand can e'er unweave, -  
Not even mine.

That is my story, Stranger.

Pray with me

That Love may guide your shuttle as he guides  
This minute mine, with you upon my loom,  
A pattern as mysterious as Fate,  
A mystery as infinite as God.

Now go your way, and bid me no farewell.  
I bid no one farewell.  
I must ~~weave~~ on.

To M.S.M.

You must not break, my heart.  
 If sorrow seems to fill you to the brim,  
 Make room for more. For somewhere in the grim  
 And pathless caves, where fantoms moan and groan,  
A sister-heart is bleeding all alone.  
 Her burdens you must carry as your own,  
 Else she'll be crushed, and you'll be rent apart.  
 You must not break, my heart.

You must have faith, my heart.  
 Remember that the very hand that fills  
 With sorrow hearts, that very hand distills  
 From sorrow joy. Whoever can't contain  
 The one will seek the other but, in vain.  
 If pain must come, say - "blessed is the pain  
 Of the acorn that gives the oak a start."  
 You must have faith, my heart.

You must be calm, my heart.  
 Let this bewildering kaleidoscope  
 Of Life at grips with Death, Despair with Hope,  
 Blur not your vision to the master hand  
 Behind it. Winds will blow the snow and sand  
 Off mountain peaks, but mighty mountains stand  
 Though thunders roar and lightnings stab and dart.  
 You must be calm, my heart.

Arise, Belovéd!

Arise, Belovéd! Night upon the hills  
 Is fast disrobing, and within the folds  
 Of her dream-garments sleeps the infant dream  
 That made is older than all yesterdays  
 And younger than all morrows to be born.

Dawn is re-filling with baptismal light  
 The holy fonts of Day wherein each Night  
 Must needs immerse her new-born mysteries.

Belovéd, are your arms so steady and so strong  
 As to receive and hold the babe baptised?  
 And are your breasts prepared to give it suck?  
 And know you that the moment it is weaned  
 It'll steal away and be forever gone?

If not, ... sleep on until another Dawn.

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