



The control of the ego

Sheikh Nazim had said at a dinner organized in Paris in 1993, in his honor, by the disciples of Chandra Swami : "...when I meet people I don't ask them their religion, if they are Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims... I ask them first of all what they did with their crocodile and if they managed to control it..."

It seems that the teaching expressed by Mawlana Sheikh Nazim is often misunderstood or narrowly reduced, especially when he used the Qur'anic expression "*Kunu Rabbaniyyin*" from the Qur'anic verse (3:79) (video visible in NewsLetter #1).

A person from another brotherhood interpreted it as the fact that being a teacher one should set an example, which is true but largely insufficient in the rendering of the expression. Sheikh Nazim was clear, however, that this expression comes from a station "beyond the brotherhoods" which have too often become "pharmacies without medicine", he added.

After a *khalwa*, a 40-day retreat, which opened me to another world as after a second birth, Mawlana gave me his own coat and said to me : **"Sheikh Amanoullah, you must say to the *murîds*: "No one should look at himself as being better than the other. Rather, everyone should see that there are basically only two categories: the one who has achieved the *Fath Rabbani* (Awakening) and the one who has not! "**

In fact, Mawlana has always taught us the importance of effective realization which is very different from the simply "mental and school based" vision too often conveyed in the brotherhoods today. Sheikh Al 'Alawi, in his time, wanted to give spiritual authority, even at the first degree, that of the simple *Moqadem*, only to the one who had "opened the eye of his heart". There is a real difference, indeed, between the one who analyzes the Koran, the hadiths, the texts of the masters by thinking like a theologian of Islam (in the best of cases) and on the other hand the one who SEES the spiritual lights and the theophanies "*'ala al bassira*" (with the eye of the heart, confirmed by a Master).

**To entrench oneself in the forms without perceiving the spirit**

And yet, today, we see claims that are as arrogant as they are simplistic, for example, from such a "*moqadem*" who claims to be a "bearer of knowledge" and who, far from conveying a true realization, is a "bearer" of a teaching that has been reduced (by the bearer) to a mental dimension, with moreover an intellectual pride that does not do honor to the simple "*tabarruk*" that he has received, which is moreover far from the true initiation that is given in the *khalwa* (retreat). Now he is giving advice in a public site with the style of a schoolmaster (but with spelling mistakes) and with a completely disordered violence, whose disharmony is significant. He reproaches me for mixing the rituals during mixed meetings with a Hindu. The latter Swami, by the way, declared the *shahada* and received the naqshbandi initiation while crying, saying "what a beautiful religion where one makes the *sujûd*" (prostration). But here is what this pseudo-Guenonian writes :

"...Why then, in fact, not also propose to Muslims, on retreat or not, to "taste" the Christian or Buddhist rites in the name of universal "love", "Eucharistic" communion and "supra-tradition" ? (SIC... spelling) Or to implement who knows what other kind of "Hinduizing" twaddle even more ridiculous than implausible? Is it surprising, indeed, to envisage, in this unbalanced and "out-of-bounds" context, marked manifestations of syncretic tendencies and practices ?"

Everyone will be able to appreciate in addition the fluidity of the style !!!

Unfortunately, this is the misunderstood vision of the sunna of the *taqlid* type, slavish imitation: "It is necessary! We must! Do it like this!..." A situation where one retreats into the forms when one does not perceive the spirit! One does not know how to live it as the support of a state of mind with which one becomes ONE with one's whole being. And what can we say if we add to this a "Guenonian" claim, also of a mental, imitative and "ritualistic" type. The disciples of Sheikh Mustapha Vâlsan remember well how he used to make fun of those who were "ritualistic" and of the Guénonians who formed themselves into a "school" trying to imitate his style rather than to live the spirit of it. Moreover, there is a significant oversight of the degrees if by situating oneself at the level of the *tariqa* one believes to have arrived at an understanding of the *taçawwuf*! Yet the *tariqa* by vocation, when it does not convey a simple *tabarruk*, leads beyond the *tariqa* to the *ma'rifa* (knowledge) and the *haqiqa*. It is through the light of *haqiqa*, revealed by "actual" experience, that *Shari'a* takes its full place and is truly respected and lived



according to authentic Islam. Living according to the *Shari'a* is not a mere childish imitation but the station of true men, of the *rojouliyya*. At this level of being, the *tariqa* is no longer necessary and even appears as limiting and scholastic, while recognizing its importance and role for the beginnings. The rivers in fact have the vocation to go towards the Ocean of the "Great Presence" and from then on, whatever their names are: the Nile, the Ganges, the Seine, once they reach the Ocean, there is no trace and no name. But it is still necessary to arrive at the Ocean because some people organize "stages" in the river: they build houses, restaurants, schools, offices of expertise, police stations, shops in such a way that the travelers end up "settling" in the river, forgetting that the goal is to reach the Ocean. Thus, it is the brotherhoods, most of the time! They organize discussion forums, teachings that address only the mind and thus confuse reflection and reality. This is what Mawlana Sheikh Nazim wanted to point out by emphasizing the spiritual retreat or *khalwa*, the place par excellence of authentic spiritual experience.

I remember that it was only after the experience of 3 *khalwa* of 40 days or more that he gave me the authorization to lead people in the retreat and to establish a place in this sense. Of course the stages exist and it is all the work of the *tariqa* to participate in an educational and progressive way but on the condition of giving oneself the means to go towards the spiritual experience of the *Fath Rabbani*. In reality, the role of the *Tariqa* is mainly situated at the level of the *da'wa*, the call to the Way. At this level as well as at the level of Haqiqa and experience, Sheikh Nazim was also an incomparable master, harmonizing the two aspects in a complementary way. There is no need to recall the number of countries he visited and the number of people he led to Islam, by millions. It is therefore in his footsteps that we try to maintain this teaching from the outside through the *da'wa* and then towards the inside, especially in the *khalwa*. As for the *da'wa*, some of my companions like S.Khaldoun like to testify fraternally of a thousand people who would have taken the path with me in France but for my part, I have not taken it into account for a long time, especially since my visits to India for more than ten years and now to China, opening hearts to Islam in greater proportions. These visits have also taught me to relativize the importance that the Parisian microcosm gives itself, which believes itself to be at the center of the world. I speak of this aspect of the *da'wa*, obviously not to call upon me for praise but to justify the use of certain tools on which I am sometimes criticized by the microcosm of Paris and suburbs. I recognize, however, that a quick



overview of these tools of *da'wa* can be confusing, especially when they are poorly presented. I would like to remind you that in a *da'wa* work we address people who have no Islamic reference, or even a negative reaction to what is muslim. It is clear that those who criticize do not have the experience of *da'wa*. The international experience has led me to use new pedagogical tools accessible to the general public. This is precisely the case of my work on the Enneagram in sufi practice, which is obviously not the one presented by the "new age" currents, but rather a science of the soul, *'ilm an nafs*, based on the Koran. I have written an entire book on how egotistic tendencies are perversions of a spiritual calling. Showing how Chapter 9 verse 112 of the Qur'an mentions 9 categories of sainthood (taken from Sheikh Muhyî dîn Ibn arabi's book, *tabaqât al awliyâ*, in an unedited manuscript). It is a matter of becoming aware that we are called into a spiritual family by our "predisposition", *isti'dâd*, and leads to a practice of the divine names that correspond to it. The first step is to discover the mask of our ego and to face it, because it is also the inversion of the virtue that calls us. Thus, according to this *icharat* (allusion) quoted by Sheikh Muhyî dîn: " *inna dâi, dawa'* ", " the disease can be the basis of the remedy ". So it has nothing to do with psychiatry or even modern psychology. However, in a website that is supposed to be a "carrier of knowledge" I found that this teaching is identified with "the pasychatry denounced by Guénon" !!!!

Here again the commentator, although not informed, cannot resist the pleasure of a caricature in a Guénonian style, (without the class nor the spirit). All this without prior reading, nor references either to my book or to my positions, which are quite clear in this site through now 7 letters. The author of the article, who is in a "cultural police" perspective, brandishes the scarecrow of psychiatry which has no relation with this subject, forgetting moreover that the *da'wa* must begin as it should by a work on the ego. It is obviously difficult to control today the confusion that is spreading everywhere and it is too well known that websites can use pieces of material and present us without our consent or control. I think this has happened to many of us as well because of the proliferation of websites. Particularly through text but also through photos. I have to admit that it happened recently in a site presenting me with a great choice of photos in a great confusion that I did not control because of my absence in China for a *da'wa* work. A new convert to Islam, an excellent designer, had been asked to design a future site related only to professional coaching or training and he took initiatives, without malice but without knowledge and without control mixing all the genres. I had the site suspended as soon



as I noticed it. This is only a small problem of coordination far from deserving the anger of my fundamentalist gendarme who wrote, I quote : "repent" !!!! Or again: "highwayman"...

One sees the ridiculousness but also the misery in his capacity of measure and discernment ! So let's say, "*inna ma'a l'ussri yussra*", "With every difficulty or evil there is a positive ease" (Qur'an 94), and let's take advantage of this situation caused by these critics to explain the use of some tools that can be used to address non-Muslims in this era of rejection of Islam. Sometimes it is worth noting that this can also be beneficial to Muslims who are still in the pre-Islamic *jahiliya* in an unconscious way.

This approach of using exceptional means at this time has its source in some hadiths which state that in the time of *fitan*, "the tribulations of this end of the cycle", the classical prayers would not be enough. It is like medicine that has to adapt to the new diseases of our time. Who would not understand that the disease of the soul in our time, its cancer, is the growth of the ego.

But prayers, even *dhikr*, are not enough to reduce this ego. On the contrary, prayers contribute to its development. A bit like vitamins could support the development of cancer. In this, some new tools are necessary to adapt to the disease of this time: the incredible arrogance of the ego and its ambition of control which largely escapes the conscience of the practitioners, including in the brotherhoods. What is our state? Are we aware of it if this "surgical" work has not taken place ? It is well known that before his *Isra wal mi'raj*, the night ascension, the Prophet Mohammad had the surgery done by the angels who washed his heart with snow and removed a black lump.

But then if this being of perfect excellence had this operation what should be our need to us who are simple and weak humans ? We can understand the importance of working in the depths of the unconscious where what Islam calls *chirk al khafi*, (associating with God, the "self of Pharaoh"), is nestled. The unconscious from the point of view of Islamic culture is *Nifaq*, hypocrisy, "harder to spot than a black ant on a black rock on a dark night" according to the prophetic expression. It is a matter of understanding clearly that our "mind", the one that makes analyses, conjectures, is the ego itself. Sheikh muhhyi dîn says that '*aqida*, conceptualization, is a word of the same root as '*uqd*, the knot. This means that our "conceptualization" of truths



is a distortion of reality operated by the mind itself identifying with the controlling ego. This mind is produced by the identification of the consciousness with the body and this is what makes it produce limiting concepts, "boxing" our ideas, experiences or subtle perceptions, against the fluidity of the experience proposed in the verse (Sura *ar-Rahman*): "Every day God is at a new work". The angels who have no body have no concept and live this fluidity of the "here and now" which is also the goal of the initiatory pilgrimage, at the station of '*arafat*', where it is enough to be : at this place at this time.

It is in this spirit and supported by Mawlana sheikh Nazim (by a handwritten letter which supports this teaching approach) that I started to work on '*ilm an nafs*', the science of the soul. This is for everyone, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, because it is a '*wudu*', a cleansing that precedes all rituals. It is not about mixing rituals as some people still misunderstand it (sometimes attending non-Islamic rituals in a pedagogical spirit of '*da'wa*' is not mixing either) but it is about using techniques of cleaning the ego. This is how the technique of the Enneagram is situated, which is a work on the ego without any relation with a mixture of religion.

This is also the case with another magnificent tool for cleansing "poisonous memories": the process of "birth" that *Sheikh al Akbar* Muhhyî dîn relates to the work on the ego in "Jonah's Verb" (see *fussûss al hikam*). The belly of the fish is the ego, that is why Jonah says : "*la ilhaha ila anta subhanak ini kuntu min ad dhalimîn*", No god but YOU, my "self" has obscured me". To come out of this "me" is the second birth.

But for that, we must learn to go down into the depths of our poisonous memories which are like black ants on a black rock on a black night. That is to say, to go down into the depths of the unconscious to become aware of our very old egotic fixations produced not only by our lives but by our parents, our ancestors and the civilization itself (whose influence acts on the ego in 5,000 year increments). However, only a non-mental technique allows us to identify them and to free ourselves from them by becoming aware of them according to a very precise process which is the result of a very precise science. Let us know that our mind is the size of a cup of coffee which cannot be enough to empty the ocean of the unconscious. The illness of our time requires another technique based on the science of the breath led by a spiritual influence adapted to this illness. It is in the same spirit that it is possible to "live" the experience



of *issra' wal mi'râj* which is not a "simple exit out of the body" as some have perceived it, but a participatory experience through the experience of the soul by following exactly, each to his measure, the path described in the hadiths by sayyidina Mohammad. This is to prepare the experience of the *khalwa* which will lead to a more complete experience of it. This is also the teaching of Mawlana and Sheikh Muhyî dîn Ibn 'Arabi who both link this experience to the *khalwa*.

To conclude and not to be too long I would like to open a perspective that I will deal with in a following letter: In Mawlana sheikh Nazim, the expression "*rabbaniyyin*" is clearly related to his teaching on the coming of Imam Mahdi (*'alayhi salam*) who opens towards universal sainthood. The limits of the theological understanding of Islam, including within the brotherhoods, as we have just seen, cannot grasp the content without renouncing their corporatism, which is not relevant in this universal spirit. There are at this moment mysterious convergences, willed by the divine plan, between different spiritual currents, which together bring the perfume of this universalism of holiness announcing Imam Mahdi. I would show in particular that Sheikh Muhyî dîn in his book of the *fusûs*, while treating the verb of Loqman (which represents precisely the teaching of the Chinese wisdom) speaks about the *Mashia* the principal will and the *Irâdat* the operative will, according to a teaching which is the exact equivalent of the "anterior sky" and the "posterior sky" of the Daoist tradition. Here again, in spite of the narrow-minded, **we can see that the arch of Islam "integrates" all the traditions by presenting them in their essence of wisdom.** In order to understand the depth of it, it was necessary for me to put in resonance the wisdom of China with the heart of Islam by contemplating it not in a mental way but by the eye of the heart which opens on the Unity of the traditions.

Wa mina Allah at Tawfiq.

Servant of the Way, S. Amanoullah