Acculturation Experience of Muslims in the West: An Imaginal Approach

by

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses the imperative task of understanding and facilitating the acculturation of nearly 30 million Muslims in the West. It explores acculturation challenges by examining the role of theistic beliefs as a pivotal yet understudied factor. Critically engaging with the existing research gap, the study argues that secular models inadequately capture the distinctive acculturation experiences of Muslims. Consequently, the primary objective is to investigate Muslim acculturation through a theistic lens. To achieve this, the study synthesizes insights from Islamic sources, particularly drawing upon the great Islamic scholars Ibn Arabi and Rumi, and integrates their insights with Western psychological perspectives, emphasizing integrative and interpretive models of acculturation. The central argument centers on the need to balance unity and diversity for a holistic understanding of Muslim acculturation. The study critiques the skewed emphasis on unity among Muslims, contrasting it with the extreme emphasis on diversity in the Western context and exploring its implications in theistic, psychological, and educational domains. Given the dominance of empirical studies in existing research, this dissertation adopts a theoretical/analytical approach. Such a shift is necessary to prepare the grounds for an acculturation model that takes theism into account, which is a central aspect of Muslim life. Further exploration includes a comparative analysis of the Islamic conception of the human self and Western psychological theories of selfhood. The goal is to bridge the gap between these perspectives, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding Muslim acculturative identities. In essence, the study contributes to the psychology of acculturation by incorporating theistic beliefs into psychological discourses as a sociocultural factor, introducing an imaginal approach supplementing the mainstream rational one. The study concludes by unravelling the practical dimensions of the presented acculturation account, providing actionable steps for individuals navigating this journey. It explores educational implications, emphasizing the need for an inclusive and holistic approach aligned with both Islamic and Western educational objectives. Serving as a guide for policymakers, acculturation theorists, educators, and community leaders, this dissertation encourages a balanced approach between unity and diversity in political, theoretical, educational, and communal contexts, hoping to facilitate the acculturation of Muslim immigrants in Western societies.

Keywords: acculturation; theism; imagination; empathy; unity; diversity

Dedication

To my beloved wife, Mahsa, whose unwavering support and love sustained me through the challenging journey of doctoral studies. This work is dedicated to you with profound gratitude and deep affection.

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Chapter 1.   Introduction

The increasing number of Muslim immigrants settling in Western societies has raised significant challenges for Western politicians to maintain social unity while managing cultural diversity (Fetzer & Soper, 2004; Heckman, 2005; Norris & Inglehart, 2012). Given that nearly 30 million Muslims live in the West and that the number is on the rise (Khawaja, 2016), questions related to the acculturation of Muslims and their acculturative identities are central to the field of psychology. A new survey of religiosity by Statistics Canada (Cornelissen, 2021) has found that the Muslim population has more than tripled since 1996, making Islam the second-largest and fastest-growing religion in the country. The reasons behind this vast immigration are numerous. One primary reason is poverty in its economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, which has overarched the Muslim world in the past few centuries. Most immigrants are either looking for better educational and occupational opportunities or taking refuge from the atrocities and cruelties of their war-torn or oppressed countries (Khawaja, 2016). These immigrants bring unique cultural and religious values that can be both an opportunity and a challenge to their inevitably new way of life in the new country. As a result, they face an acculturation process that can sometimes be shocking and distressful. Furthermore, recent studies have underscored negative public attitudes about Muslim immigrants held by members of the host society compared to immigrants from other cultural backgrounds (Closson et al., 2014; Rousseau et al., 2011). Islamic tradition has been criticized as irreconcilable and a menace to Western values (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Saeed, 2007; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). In this context, it is evident that Muslim immigrants may experience distinct difficulties in adjusting to a potentially unreceptive environment.

1.1.   Statement of the Problem

Although the 9/11 attacks sparked more research on Muslim immigrants, most studies have focused on Islamophobia, terrorism, racism, radicalization, and discrimination (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Bastug & Akca, 2019; Kunst et al., 2016). Most of the research on the acculturation of Muslims has been conducted in the United States and Europe, with some studies in New Zealand, Australia, and a handful in Canada. Despite the recent increase in the study of Muslim immigrants, there is still a dearth of knowledge about the acculturation of Muslims in the West (Khawaja, 2016). Much of this research investigates Muslims' acculturation experiences empirically. However, this small but growing body of research is confronted with a significant

problem. To be a Muslim is to hold attitudes and beliefs that guide one's actions. However, the bulk of the research is mostly, if not thoroughly, guided by secular Western theories and models of acculturation, which inevitably yield recommendations for practice that do not necessarily reflect how Islam teaches its followers to live. For example, research has consistently supported the desirability of an acculturative integration strategy compared to assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Berry & Hou, 2017; Fassaert et al., 2011; Kunst & Sam, 2013). Integration in this fourfold model occurs when individuals adopt the cultural norms of the dominant culture while also maintaining their culture of origin (Berry, 1997a). However, from an Islamic perspective, it is unclear to what extent a Muslim can reasonably be expected to adopt an integration strategy, given the tenets of their faith.

I contend that current Western accounts of acculturation fall short of accurately capturing the Muslim acculturation experience, primarily due to their secular[1] approach. For the most part, they neither recognize Muslims' needs nor help them acculturate adaptively. For example, an integration strategy may not be possible for Muslim immigrants with an exclusivist[2] perception of Islam. Hence, this study investigates and addresses a sociocultural factor (i.e., theistic beliefs) that is believed to be a significant factor in the distinct acculturation experiences of Muslim immigrants. Scholars in the field (Bhatia, 2002; Bhatia & Ram, 2001b, 2009) argue that an immigrant's identity is tightly interwoven with sociocultural factors such as power, race, language, and gender. Although they shy away from mentioning theistic beliefs as a sociocultural factor due to their secular approach, it is self-evident as well as empirically documented that religion is inseparably intertwined with culture (Saroglou & Cohen, 2011), and religiosity plays a vital role in the degree of adjustment to the new culture for Muslims (Bastug & Akca, 2019; Berry et al., 2006; Gattino et al., 2016). Therefore, theistic beliefs are as important as power, race, language, and gender in the acculturation process, if not more. In other words, instead of highlighting factors such as power and race (i.e., Islamophobia and discrimination), which are concerned mainly with how non-Muslims tend to view or perceive Islam, this study primarily focuses on how Muslims themselves tend to perceive Islam and how their imperfect perceptions may hinder a healthy acculturation process in a non-Muslim context.

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[1] . Secular in that they ignore the theistic beliefs of Muslims, and not in that they do not appeal to the divine in explaining acculturation, or anything else for that matter, as a phenomenon. A secular approach can and should accommodate the former, while the latter is beyond the boundaries of a secular approach.

[2] . The belief that Islam is the only true religion and that the rise of Islam rendered previously revealed religions null by abrogation.

I believe that the theistic beliefs held by Muslim immigrants, which have been socioculturally shaped by real and/or imagined connections to the Muslim world, have tremendous relevance for understanding issues related to Muslim immigrant identities and acculturation. Such understanding will inform the urgent need to address the various challenges (e.g., self-identity, parent-child relationship, emotions, peer relationships, and school achievement) that Muslim children and families face following immigration and during acculturation. Furthermore, I contend that taking a theistic perspective to understand Muslim acculturation will provide alternative explanations for acculturative phenomena at a psychological and behavioural level that are overlooked by the current prevalent secular approach. For instance, adopting a separation strategy wherein one abandons their host culture in favour of retaining their heritage culture can be attributed to Muslim immigrants' strict legalistic/jurisprudential[3] perception of Islam rather than to factors such as power, age, race, gender, language, sociopolitical constraints, and discrimination. Even though a separation strategy is associated with religiosity (Bastug & Akca, 2019; Berry et al., 2006), it is unclear whether all forms of Islamic religiosity result in the distancing of Muslims from the broader society or if only select variations have this effect.

Through personal and collective practices, specific perceptions of Islam are kept alive in most Muslim immigrant communities that act as powerful resources for meaning-making. Such beliefs have played a large part in constructing and maintaining what is known as Muslim diasporas. Muslim diasporas distinctly attempt to maintain real and/or imagined connections and commitments to the existing perceptions of Islam in the Muslim world and recognize themselves and act as a collective community. The existing acculturation models have not adequately acknowledged or understood such theistic perceptions. Most researchers have sufficed to report a negative correlation between religiosity and optimal acculturation (Bastug & Akca, 2019; Berry et al., 2006; Gattino et al., 2016; Kunst et al., 2016) without further discussion of either or both from a theistic perspective. Driven by my personal encounters as a Muslim immigrant, I aim to expand and elaborate on the existing cross-cultural theories of acculturation in psychology. This endeavour seeks to address the intricate epistemic contradictions and complexities inherent in the contemporary experiences of Muslim immigrants.

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[3] . A perception of Islam that puts much emphasis on Shariah (Islamic canonical law that is based on the teachings of the Koran and the Hadith)

To the objection that psychology is founded on secular standards of argumentation and reasoning and the claim that taking a theistic perspective in a psychological project is swimming against a powerful secular tide in the discipline and the academy more broadly, one can reply that psychology may have grown to be secular, but it was not founded as secular. As Slife and his colleagues (2012) put it:

> It is probably fair to say that most psychologists assume that psychology was founded as a secular discipline. What is probably less well known is that secularism did not originally exclude theistic religions (Pannenberg, 1996; Reber, 2006). In fact, many early American psychologists viewed theism and psychology as mutually supportive (cf. Maier, 2004; Slife & Reber, 2009a). Only with the advent of modern forms of secularism, especially those inhabiting scientific disciplines, did psychology detach itself from faith (Maier, 2004) and move toward what historian of psychology Leahey (1991), calls the "central dogma" of psychological science, naturalism (p. 379). Naturalism is the system of assumptions or method worldview that psychologists acquired, perhaps without complete awareness, when they adopted historically the methods of the natural sciences. (pp. 218-219)

If psychology is founded on secular standards, what makes psychologists eligible to investigate, conceptualize, and make recommendations for interventions regarding a theistic phenomenon if, indeed, Muslims' religious beliefs are woven inextricably into their acculturation experience? Naturalism, on which psychological inquiry is founded, excludes religious explanations and has prevented psychology from representing theistic phenomena or a theist's experience in terms that grant their legitimacy beyond a secular interpretation of them (Slife et al., 2012). However, psychological research does not necessarily need to employ the methods and standards of scientific inquiry to be legitimate. For instance, there are modes of inquiry derived from the humanities that have been shown to be compelling and legitimate means for interpreting and understanding psychological phenomena (Sugarman & Martin, 2020; Teo, 2017). Adopting a theistic approach could benefit psychology, especially when science is unequipped or under-equipped to address issues that are, at root, a matter of theistic orientations. Such projects may sound like a theistic drop in the secular ocean of psychology, but this is how theists who make up a significant number of psychology's clientele can benefit from the outcome of psychological research, especially in the area of acculturation which most recently involves a large number of immigrants with theistic orientations.

Knowing that faith is central to the Muslim psyche is essential to successfully explore a psychological account of acculturation for Muslims. For example, Muslims are not rationally

able to believe in the existence of Jinn[4], but they are required by virtue of having faith to believe in what the Koran or the messenger declares as true. The secular doctrine in the West treats issues of self and identity as if they are separated from the sacred and the divine and should only be articulated through the application of reason (Bhatia, 2012). However, in Islam, the boundaries of theology and psychology are not as clear-cut and definitive as in the West. In fact, the two are so intimately tied together that it is impossible to either theoretically or practically untie them without making significant sacrifices. In this context, it is impossible to address and explain Muslim acculturation without getting into the heart of Islamic theology/psychology, as this provides the foundation for a psychological account of Muslim acculturation. Even in the West, it was only gradually that psychology distanced itself from theology, and many psychologists carried some basic theological ideas into psychology, albeit while attempting to sanitize the ideas of their theistic origins (Slife et al., 2012).

Moreover, since this dissertation is circumscribed to addressing how Muslims can reinterpret their faith in a particular light that will help them deal with acculturation, it may not be necessary to argue for the legitimacy of a theological approach to acculturation in a psychological project. In other words, the variant of theism I propose is one among many that specifically characterize the situation for Muslims. Although I will present a broad account of reality/existence, it should not be considered a universal account that is the ultimate truth and to which everyone is expected to adhere. I assume current Muslim theistic beliefs are a hurdle to their successful acculturation. Situating the problem of acculturation in the theistic beliefs of Muslims, I will present a specific account of theism that I will argue is more helpful to their acculturation based on the sources they believe in, which are the Koran and Hadith[5]. Non-Muslim readers do not have to accept this belief system to understand the argument. All they need to accept are the following two assumptions: 1) current Muslim theistic beliefs are a hurdle to the acculturation of Muslims, and 2) Muslims' acculturation will probably improve if they adopt this specific belief system based on the tenets of their own Islamic resources, and which is more compatible with the new host society in which they are situated.

Relatedly, it is of paramount importance to distinguish between viewing acculturation as a theistic or psychological phenomenon. The former implies that acculturation is divinely shaped, while the latter suggests it is a secular, human phenomenon independent of divine influence. Slife

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[4] . Creatures who are made of fire and live parallel to the world of humans but are not observable.

[5] . Sayings of prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him.

and his colleagues (2012) have made a similar distinction by distinguishing between thoroughgoing and partial theism. They posit that God is essentially required in all aspects of psychology as a difference-maker, necessitating thoroughgoing theism for a theistic conceptualization in psychology.

> However, the functional relevance of God (not God's irrelevance or passivity) is the central thrust of any theistic worldview, by definition. As philosopher/theologian Plantinga (2001) described it, "God is already and always intimately acting in nature which depends from moment to moment . . . upon divine activity" (p. 350). Thus, unlike a soft or weak definition of naturalism, where God is not essentially required, a theist would at least argue that God is essentially required for any theistic conceptualization in psychology. Moreover, a thoroughgoing theist would need to apply this conceptualization to all psychological events. We emphasize "thoroughgoing" here because a popular intellectual position is partial theism, where one postulates a difference-making God for some locations (e.g., the supernatural) [dualism] and some times (e.g., creation) [deism] but not for other locations and other times. This partial theism position, we believe, is itself a viable method worldview. However, it necessarily implies that the other locations (e.g., the natural world) and other times (e.g., post-creation) do not require a functionally relevant, difference-making God, and thus a weak naturalistic worldview is implied at these other locations and times. (2012, p. 220)

Nonetheless, even as they strive to transcend the division between the natural and the supernatural, between creation and post-creation, a significant duality persists: if God is the difference-maker, what then is the human role? More importantly, if God's influence permeates all psychological events, what delineates psychology from theology? Throughout the upcoming chapters, particularly in chapters two and three, where I lay the theoretical foundations of this study, I strongly contend that acculturation is simultaneously a product of the intricately nuanced unity between God and the cosmos, particularly the human self. Hence, from this perspective, acculturation, as a psychological phenomenon, is both influenced by the divine and shaped by human agency, or it is neither entirely divinely shaped nor is it exclusively influenced by human intervention. However, as this study falls within the realm of psychology and not theology, my primary focus will be on the latter. Any exploration of the former aspect is intended to provide insights and elucidate the human dimension of acculturation.

This is particularly important in this study because the key query revolves around how the existing Muslim beliefs impede their acculturation. In response, I propose that their limited and exclusive interpretation of theism plays a pivotal role. Currently, the scope of theism is delimited to ritualistic observances encompassing activities like Quranic recitation, daily prayers, Ramadan fasting, the Hajj pilgrimage, and the individuals who engage in these practices. This

understanding remains entirely compartmentalized and disengaged from the broader socio-cultural milieu they inhabit. If they can adopt a comprehensive perspective on theism, one that interweaves every facet of their lives, including interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds, into the tapestry of their theistic journey, it is plausible that a more enriched acculturation experience ensues. Evident from this discourse, the broad account of existence followed by a discussion of religious diversity presented in chapter two serves to broaden Muslims' psychological realm of theistic perception, encompassing a more diverse array of life domains, including their acculturative process.

As can be interpreted from the aims of this study, this is a psychological project because it situates the problem of acculturation in the minds of individuals. However, another legitimate objection would be that a psychological (i.e., individualistic) explanation of problems of acculturation blames the victim. This objection would hold if that explanation ignored or underestimated the social, cultural, economic, geographical, political, and historical factors influencing acculturation. The explanation I will provide in the chapters to come by no means does this. In fact, solid recognition of contextual factors is demonstrated by bringing a neglected sociocultural factor (i.e., theistic beliefs) into discussions of acculturation. It is believed that current Muslims' theistic beliefs, which I consider hurdles in their acculturation process, are primarily due to the permeation of exclusivist branches of Islam in the Muslim world. Muslim immigrants continue to hold and practice such perceptions through their real and/or imagined connections with the Muslim world in their diasporas. In addressing this issue, following the teachings of the Koran, I will take an individualistic approach. However, the fact that the Koran mainly advocates an individualistic approach to salvation should not detract from all it has to say about the influence of contextual factors. I believe the individualistic approach is even more justified in Muslim acculturation because most Muslim immigrants have demonstrated tremendous psychological resilience in the face of the myriad of highly influential contextual factors. They were not sufficiently psychologically resourceful or equipped to transform their societies. However, they were at least psychologically resilient enough to transcend their undesirable circumstances by choosing to immigrate rather than stay and gradually become dissolved in their home societies.

At this point, I would like to think that I have made a case for a theistic individualistic approach to acculturation in this study. It is theistic because an entirely secular approach to acculturation is incapable of explaining a phenomenon involving so much theism. And it is individualistic because such an approach aligns with the religious teachings Muslims receive

from the Koran and Hadith. If this case is well taken, the acknowledgement of founding a psychological work on theological assumptions comes with it, especially when the two are inherently inseparable in theism.

1.2. Background

There are two dominant historical definitions of acculturation. The first, articulated by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936), is:

> Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. Under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture-change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from diffusion, which, while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the type of contact between peoples specified in the definition given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation. (p. 149)

The second definition, offered by the Social Science Research Council (1954), is:

> Culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from noncultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors. (p. 974)

These definitions have recently been criticized for being ill-defined and outdated (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009). They are ill-defined because they fail to provide psychologists with guidelines to investigate the symbolic, social, linguistic, and psychological aspects of acculturation. They are outdated because they are taken from antiquated anthropological literature. Chirkov and Rudmin argue that current definitions mainly address acculturation phenomena on a group level, primarily a sociological approach lacking representative and reliable sampling. Another criticism is the common terminological confusion of the terms "integration" and "assimilation" in the context of acculturation research across different historical periods and research communities (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Weinreich, 2009).

In brief, the current body of literature yields four notable acculturation schools of thought, namely, assimilative, integrative, interactive, and interpretive. The assimilative model, in which preservation of the heritage culture and acquisition of the host culture are viewed as two ends of a single continuum, suggests that acculturation is uni-dimensional and synonymous with assimilation. In this school, immigrants gradually absorb the values and norms that prevail in their host society at an individual and a group level, especially on an inter-generational basis (e.g., Gordon, 1964, 1978). According to this model, as immigrants assimilate into the new host culture, they abandon the values, beliefs, and practices of their heritage culture. Many Americans believe that earlier waves of European immigrants to the United States followed this model of acculturation (Schildkraut, 2007), and newer waves are often criticized for not following the same path (Huntington & Dunn, 2004).

Extensive criticism of the assimilative model led to the development of the integrative acculturation model. In this school of thought, most notably promoted by the Canadian cross-cultural psychologist John Berry (Berry, 1970, 1980; Berry & Hou, 2017; Sam & Berry, 2016), taking up the host culture's beliefs, values, and practices does not inevitably necessitate rejecting the beliefs, values, and practices of the home culture. Berry developed a bi-dimensional acculturation model in which two orthogonal dimensions motivate the acculturation of individuals and groups. One dimension is the degree to which the heritage culture and identity are retained. The second dimension is the degree of acquisition of aspects of the host culture. The intersection of these two dimensions in Berry's model generates four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. In this model, assimilation occurs when the heritage culture is abandoned in favour of adopting the values and beliefs of the host culture. Separation occurs when the host culture is rejected to retain the beliefs and values of the heritage culture. Marginalization happens when both the heritage and host cultures are dismissed. Finally, integration is present when a balance is sought between host and heritage cultures. Initially, these two basic dimensions were approached from the perspective of specific minority groups (Berry, 1970). Later work incorporated a third dimension to include the decisive role the majority group plays in shaping the orientations of acculturating groups and individuals (Berry, 1974). Hence, the initial four acculturation strategies were rephrased as the melting pot (assimilation), segregation (separation), exclusion (marginalization) and multiculturalism (integration) when sought, forced, imposed, and accepted by the dominant group, respectively.

Building on Berry's approach, Bourhis et al. (1997) proposed the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM), which seeks to combine the following components into a theoretical framework: (1) acculturation orientations adopted by immigrant groups in the host community; (2) acculturation orientations adopted by the dominant culture towards specific groups of immigrants; and (3) interpersonal and intergroup relational outcomes that are the product of combinations of immigrant and host community acculturation orientations. Bourhis et al. extended Berry's model to include acculturation orientations embraced by members of the dominant culture. Their model is mainly based on the acculturation preferences of the majority group members or the degree to which it is considered acceptable for immigrants to maintain their cultural heritage and how receptive the majority group members are to immigrants adopting the host culture. From the orthogonal projection of the dominant culture's acculturation orientations (integration, assimilation, segregation, exclusion, and individualism) against their revised version of Berry's immigrants' acculturation orientations (integration, assimilation, separation, anomie[6], individualism), 25 possible relational outcomes would emerge depending on the concordant or discordant intergroup relationships (i.e., consensual, problematic, or conflictual). They claim that their model predicts the quality of intergroup relations derived from a combination of dominant majority and immigrant minority acculturation orientations (Bourhis et al., 1997).

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[6] . Individuals who reject both their heritage culture and that of the host society and are most likely to experience cultural alienation.

Host Community	Immigrant Community				
	Integration	Assimilation	Separation	Anomie	Individualism
Integration	Consensual	Problematic	Conflictual	Problematic	Problematic
Assimilation	Problematic	Consensual	Conflictual	Problematic	Problematic
Segregation	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual
Exclusion	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual	Conflictual
Individualism	Problematic	Problematic	Problematic	Problematic	Consensual

Figure 1. **Relational outcomes of acculturation orientations: The Interactive Acculturation Model**

The three models described above primarily explain acculturation from a social-cognitive psychological perspective, which characterizes identity as a measurable mental characteristic. This approach has been extensively criticized for essentialism, oversimplification, and ignoring the discursive, historical, and political aspects of identity construction, which involves constant negotiation and mediation between past and present, homeland and hostland, self and other (Bhatia & Ram, 2001b, 2009; Chirkov, 2009; Howarth et al., 2014; Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010). Authors who adopt an interpretive perspective conceptualize identities as actively constructed in public discourses and social interactions instead of locating them in private cognitions or experiences. Contrary to the social-cognitive approach, the interpretive approach views identities as communal and culturally variable. Within this approach, culture is not just an independent external variable of influence but a constitutive element of individuals' psychology.

1.3. Methodology

This research intends to advance theory and inform practice by (1) critically reviewing the current Western literature on acculturation, (2) exploring and developing an Islamic account of acculturation, and (3) integrating the two to suggest implications for the education of Muslim children and youth in the West.

The dominant method for my research is theoretical/analytical. To accomplish the first objective, I will critically review Western acculturation theories. To do this, special attention will be given to integrative versus interpretive approaches to acculturation. To be included, studies must have been published in academic peer-reviewed journals and in English; however, there will be no date or age restrictions.

The second objective will be attained through two primary sources: textual and factual. Textual sources include the holy Koran and Hadith, which most Muslims commonly accept. Due to multiple interpretations of the Koranic verses and prophetic quotes among Islamic scholars, preference will be given to Sufi interpretations of the Koranic verses or prophetic quotes. I choose this variant of Islam because it has been embraced in the West through the works of Rumi (1207-1273) in public discourses and Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) in academics. Since textual sources are only acceptable to people of the faith, I will factually argue in support of them by adhering to the rules of logic and philosophy. Islamic logic and philosophy are partially rooted in the Greek tradition, a common ground with which to link Western and Islamic thought. Most of the discussion in this section will revolve around the thesis that Islam recognizes diversity and deems it necessary for societies to succeed. The last and third objective will be achieved by integrating Western acculturation theories and my newly developed Islamic thoughts on acculturation. In my attempts to do so, I will first set the necessity of diversity as the frame of reference that acts as a basis for my discussion. Second, I will list the similarities and differences between the two paradigms. Third, based on the listed similarities and differences, I will create a thesis or argument about how the two paradigms are similar and different. Fourth, I will attempt to reconcile the two paradigms or recognize the differences if the incompatibilities are irresolvable. Finally, I will discuss the implications of my research for the education of Muslim children and youth in the West.

1.4. Contributions and Potential Benefits

At a theoretical level, I think there is a lack of coherence and integrity within and among the existing acculturation theories. I will draw attention to these issues by critically reviewing the theories and suggesting possible ways to resolve them. In addition, I will explore and develop an Islamic account of acculturation that has so far been only viewed and theorized through a Western lens. I hope this will spark interest in members of other minority groups to view acculturation through their own cultural lens, hopefully enriching acculturation theory and research and moving it onto a new phase.

At a methodological level, research on Muslim acculturation has been dominated by empirical studies informed mainly by Western acculturation theories. In my view, work on Muslim acculturation would greatly benefit by shifting the focus from the empirical to the theoretical. Such a move is necessary to prepare the grounds for an acculturation model that takes theism into account, which, as I have argued, is a central aspect of Muslim life.

Finally, I hope Islamic centers and leaders will benefit from my work at a practical level. They can take advantage of this study to inform their members of the common epistemic difficulties Muslims experience when acculturating and suggest ways they might face these difficulties so that their expected way of life as Muslims is least affected. Additionally, members of the host society and, more specifically, schools and teachers will benefit from this research by getting acquainted with the Muslim acculturation process. They can use this knowledge to better interact with Muslim students and their respected parents.

1.5. Summary of Chapters

Chapter two delves into the Sufi perspective on reality, primarily drawing insights from the renowned Sufi scholar Ibn Arabi. This exploration serves as a foundational component for broadening the scope of theistic phenomena within the Muslim mindset to facilitate their acculturation. The implications of this perspective are woven throughout the dissertation, especially in chapter four, which provides actionable steps for navigating the acculturation process. Chapter two also initiates a discussion of religious diversity based on the presented account of reality, aiming to create an epistemological opening in the Muslim mindset. This shift in perspective aims to foster an elevated state of self-awareness, a crucial element in nurturing the empathy necessary for healthy acculturation, as discussed in the subsequent chapter.

After establishing the theoretical foundations for a theistic approach to acculturation in the preceding chapter, chapter three shifts its focus towards integrating this approach with psychological perspectives on acculturation. It commences by emphasizing the significance of investigating the human self within the context of acculturation studies and introduces Ibn Arabi's interpretation of the self. This is succeeded by a comparative analysis of his perspectives with contemporary psychological theories of selfhood. I will argue that acculturation has been predominantly approached from a rational standpoint in Western studies. However, according to Ibn Arabi, reason alone is inadequate for understanding any phenomenon, particularly theistic ones. While reason plays a fundamental role in knowledge acquisition, only when harmoniously

combined with imagination can it yield a fulsome understanding of the subject under investigation. The chapter concludes by exploring how psychological constructs, particularly empathy, can be redefined from a theistic perspective to facilitate the meaningful integration of Muslim immigrants into Western societies.

Chapter four explores the practical dimensions of Sufism through an analysis of the journey embarked upon by Sufis in their quest for unity with God. This journey mirrors the integration process of immigrants into host societies. It can assist immigrants in unveiling the nondelimited state of selfhood, a valuable asset for their acculturation, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Building upon the foundation laid in the previous chapter, this chapter adopts an imaginal approach to acculturation and predominantly leverages Rumi's teachings to illuminate the potentially transformative journey immigrants undertake. In tandem with Sufi guidance, the chapter incorporates the insights of Romantic poets. Their focus on imagination, intuition, and the spiritual dimension of existence broadens the scope of this analysis. It bridges cultural divides, presenting a more accessible and relatable perspective for a Western audience. In summary, by tapping into spiritual principles and practices, this chapter offers guidance and actionable steps for individuals navigating the intricate journey of acculturation.

The concluding chapter examines the educational implications stemming from the presented discourse on acculturation. It centralizes the elucidation of the alignment between the goals of Islamic education and those within a Western context. As I delve into this final chapter, I revisit the overarching theme recurring throughout the dissertation: the paradigm of unity versus diversity. This examination occurs within the context of unitary theistic objectives intrinsic to Islamic education, contrasting them with the multiplicitous secular goals underpinning Western education. By examining the implications of acculturation on education, this chapter yields theoretical insights and practical frameworks for fostering inclusive learning environments and nurturing the holistic development of individuals across familial, communal, cultural, social, and political landscapes. One practical facet of this inquiry revolves around the exploration of integrating Muslim schools with public schools and the consequences of addressing this pivotal question.

Chapter 2.   Ontology

Similar to the Western intellectual tradition, much of Islamic intellectual thought addresses the nature of reality. Many Islamic thinkers have emphasized the oneness of Reality[7] to the relative neglect of its multiplicity. By contrast, Western intellectuals have emphasized multiplicity[8] over oneness by studying objects separated from their Real roots[9]. The consequences of this imbalance have been unfavourable for both sides. The former led to the formation of spiritual societies lacking in harmony, while the latter resulted in harmonious societies lacking in spirit. Both sides have tried to revive what has been lost and correct the profound imbalances of their civilizations by referring to the intellectual works of one another (Chittick, 1994). The resulting scholarly exchange has not been even over the past few centuries. Scholars from the Muslim world have studied and practiced Western intellectual traditions more than the converse, leading to the widespread Westernization of Muslim societies in social, cultural, political, and economic aspects (Keddie, 1995). Despite the widespread adoption and practice of Western intellectual values in the Muslim world, Muslim countries have failed to generate social, cultural, political, and economic achievements comparable to those in the West. Muslim nations suffer a multitude of problems that have led many individuals to immigrate to the West. Seeking a better life, Muslim immigrants and their families face many dilemmas in their new host societies, where their religious beliefs and cultural values are very much in the minority compared with those of the broader population. Most significant among these dilemmas is the extent to which Muslims' religious beliefs allow them to integrate into the larger host society.

In the past few decades, many studies have been conducted under the general topic of Muslim acculturation to address this issue. Most researchers have taken an empirical approach focusing on the acculturative strategies adopted by Muslim immigrants when confronted with these dilemmas and advocating those strategies that bring about greater integration. However, researchers have failed to take into account the epistemological nature of the dilemmas from an Islamic perspective. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the present theistic beliefs held by Muslims hinder their acculturation in at least two significant ways. First, these beliefs are

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[7] . "Reality" designates the unity of existence. It is capitalized because it refers to the existence of God, which will be further discussed later in the document.

[8] . "Multiplicity" designates existence with respect to its manyness, which includes the whole cosmos and everything found in it.

[9] . The intention here is to compare a Platonically informed view of the universe to one that is more Aristotelian.

constrained in the sense that they primarily focus on a limited set of religious rituals and practices, failing to encompass a broader spectrum of sociocultural phenomena, including acculturation. Second, their theism is exclusively confined to the appreciation of convictions and beliefs within their own religious tradition, particularly their specific denomination. To address this issue, it is imperative to examine religious diversity[10] from an Islamic perspective. This exploration holds great significance because it is the Islamic worldview of these immigrants that positions them within their dilemmas and informs their choices of acculturation strategies. Consequently, this chapter aims to present an Islamic account of Reality that can serve as a foundation for discussing religious diversity. This diversity is considered a fundamental epistemological factor in the genesis of the acculturative dilemmas experienced by Muslim immigrants and the strategies they employ to navigate them. In essence, while most research on acculturation primarily focuses on identifying the challenges faced by immigrants and their adaptive approaches, this study seeks to delve into the underlying causes of these dilemmas.

Before delving into the issue of religious diversity, it is beneficial to outline some of the key challenges faced by Muslim immigrants. Foremost among these is the predicament of returning to their countries of origin, which remains a complex issue for many Muslim families even after years of residing in their new hostland. This challenge may resonate with immigrants from various cultural backgrounds. However, for Muslims, it is compounded not only by sentiments of patriotism or attachment to their home country but also by the discomfort of living and raising children in a predominantly secular environment. This discomfort intensifies if they have real and/or imagined connections or commitments to exclusive branches of Islam, which discourage leaving Muslim lands. Another significant dilemma arises in the choice between Muslim or public schools for their children's education. The scarcity of Muslim private schools and their high tuition rates heighten the complexity of this choice. Nevertheless, many Muslim parents willingly endure financial hardships and long commutes to ensure their children attend a Muslim school. Some Muslim children spend extended hours on school buses, while their parents may relocate closer to their children's schools, even if it means a longer commute to their workplaces. A further predicament revolves around the struggle to balance family and community relationships and interactions within the broader society. Muslim youth, in particular, struggle to strike this balance when peer pressure conflicts with their familial and communal norms. In light

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[10] . An examination of religious diversity insinuates an Islamic perspective on whether or not Muslims should be open to other forms of religious and non-religious beliefs. A discussion of the diversity of beliefs within Islam would require discussing different branches of Islamic thought, like Shia or Sunni Islam, which is not helpful to the aims of this dissertation.

of these dilemmas, it becomes evident that Muslim immigrants encounter distinct challenges that are directly or indirectly connected to their religious beliefs.

2.1. Background

It could be argued that few phenomena in human history can be studied irrespective of the role of theistic beliefs and practices "or, in more recent times, from reaction against these beliefs and practices" (Chittick, 1994, p. 5), and acculturation is no exception. How acculturation takes place for Muslim immigrants is heavily tied to the religious beliefs and practices they bring from their cultures of origin. Hence, in this chapter, I will present an account of reality followed by a discussion of religious diversity from an Islamic perspective and advocate the orientation that is believed to be most helpful to the acculturation of Muslims in the West.

The Islamic tradition has witnessed a massive discussion on the issue of religious diversity throughout history. There are three principal orientations to the treatment of religious diversity within Islam. One orientation is exclusivism; a second orientation is inclusivism; and a third orientation, adopted by a few, is toward diversity and inclusivity. This third orientation differs from the second in that inclusivity is understood to arise out of necessity rather than openness. Throughout this chapter, I will advocate the opinions of the venerated Islamic scholar Ibn Arabi, who is widely believed to be the most compelling spokesperson for the third orientation (Chittick, 1994).

Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240), mostly known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar, "the Greatest Master," may be the most profound and prolific thinker in the entirety of Islamic history (Chodkiewicz, 1993). Born in Murcia in Muslim Spain, he is reported to have demonstrated his exceptional intellectual and spiritual gifts at an early age. By synthesizing and integrating the differing branches of the Islamic intellectual tradition, Ibn Arabi established a comprehensive and inclusive system of thought based on mystical experiences. In fact, Islamic theoretical mysticism flourished with his works, laying the foundation for the theorization of the largest and most accepted Islamic philosophical school of thought conceived about three centuries later by Mulla Sadra (1571-1635) and called Hikmah al-Muta'āliyah or "Transcendent Theosophy[11]." Ibn Arabi's legacy encompasses over five hundred books and treatises, but for this study, the primary sources

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[11] . Any of various religious or philosophical systems claiming to be based on or to express an intuitive insight into the divine nature.

drawn upon will be his two most significant works. The first is his extensive masterpiece "Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah" or "Meccan Openings" (1994), found in its latest edition with a staggering 560 chapters spanning over 15,000 pages. The second is "Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam" or "Bezels of Wisdom" (1946), considered his magnum opus, comprising a concise twenty-seven chapters within approximately one hundred and eighty pages[12]. Although he claims to have received his knowledge through mystical intuition[13], Ibn Arabi consistently supplements his mystical findings with logical reasoning and references to the Quran and Hadith. These two foundational sources (i.e., reason and revelation) within the Islamic intellectual tradition serve as the touchstones against which he validates the authenticity of his mystical insights in his works.

Thanks to his spiritual gifts, Ibn Arabi soon became so famous that the renowned philosopher Averroes or Ibn Rushd became interested in meeting him and asked his father to arrange for Ibn Rushd to meet him. The meeting between fifteen-year-old Ibn Arabi and fifty-five-year-old Ibn Rushd is crucial from a historical and intellectual point of view because it was a meeting of two important intellectual figures whose differing perspectives suggest "a symbolic parting of ways between Islam and the West" (Chittick, 2020, p. 2; Corbin, 1981). Despite his thirst and pursuit of mystical intuition, Ibn Rushd is primarily viewed as a representative and follower of reason and argument. However, for Ibn Arabi, rational investigation is not sufficient. According to Ibn Arabi, one should seek prophetic revelation and mystical intuition together with reason to attain knowledge of God and the world. During their short meeting, Ibn Rushd sensed that the knowledge he had gained over his life through rational investigation had come to the young Ibn Arabi through mystical intuition.

Although both Ibn Arabi and Ibn Rushd stressed the two wings of spirituality and rationality in the pursuit of knowledge, their views have been misrepresented. The rationality in Ibn Rushd's works quickly spread among Western philosophers and scientists over the succeeding centuries, resulting in the ever-growing reduction and fragmentation[14] of human knowledge with a total divorce from God (Chittick, 2020; Corbin, 1981). By contrast, the

[12] . "Bezels of Wisdom" has received the most commentary among Ibn Arabi's works because it is written succinctly, making it exceedingly difficult for many scholars to understand.

[13] . Knowledge obtained from its divine sources without the need for any intermediaries like rational investigation or prophetic revelation.

[14] . The term "fragmentation" is used as it is usually applied to reductionist modes of thought, frequently with the related pejorative term of scientism. The linear reductionist approach to nature, technology, and human sciences promoted a fragmented understanding of reality. If taken to extremes, this approach deprives us of the ability to study objects with respect to their indivisible Real root.

spirituality in Ibn Arabi's works, which included mystical intuition on one side and prophetic revelation on the other, was overemphasized by Muslim Sufis and Jurists, respectively, at the price of diminishing the value of reason. Centuries later, Mulla Sadra (1571-1635) and his followers attempted to harmonize reason, mystical intuition, and revelation. However, their efforts remained primarily philosophical and hardly ever found their way into other branches of knowledge.

Ibn Arabi is recognized as a Sufi Muslim within the four main branches of Islamic intellectual tradition: jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and Sufism. Sufism, or mystical Islam, is a branch of Islam that emphasizes individuals' inner states and attitudes. Compared to the other three branches of Islamic thought, Sufism is identified by preserving all the merits of the other branches while simultaneously overcoming the strict legalism of jurists, dry rationalism of theologians, and confounding skepticism of philosophers through having direct experience with the objects of the faith[15] (Chittick, 1994; Chodkiewicz, 1993).

In what follows, I will explain various aspects of Ibn Arabi's worldview as it is relevant to the discussion of religious diversity. It is hoped that, through this examination, an in-depth analysis of religious diversity is made possible, the implications of which can contribute to comprehending the acculturation of Muslim immigrants in the West.

2.2. Ibn Arabi's Ontology

The doctrine of "Unity of Existence" or "Oneness of Being" is the anchor point of Ibn Arabi's ontology, on which his other ideas are based. Although some Sufis had referred to this notion before him (Makhzoomi, 1013-1119; Ibn Sabin, 1217-1271), Ibn Arabi is believed to be the first to have established the grounds for its systematic theorization. What sets Ibn Arabi apart from earlier and later Sufis is his equal emphasis on the multiplicity and unity of existence. As I will endeavour to demonstrate, this emphasis holds centrality in the discourse on religious diversity and the issue of acculturation.

Before explaining Ibn Arabi's ontology, it is worth briefly mentioning that despite some superficial similarities, Ibn Arabi's notion of existence stands far from that of notable 20th-century

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[15] . For example, there is a difference between knowing that an apple is sweet and tasting its sweetness. In the latter case, one has direct experience with the object. Similarly, in divine matters, for example, knowing God is all-Merciful is different from feeling and tasting His mercy.

Western thinkers such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). One significant distinction is that these Western philosophies of existence are mainly limited to humankind's existence rather than the existence of the whole world of being. Individual existence, freedom, and choice are at the heart of Western existential theories.

The equivalent of the term "existence" in the Arabic language is "Wujud," which means "finding" or "to be found." Delving further into the term's meaning, every external object consists of two aspects. One aspect concerns an existence we can intuit by something being experienced as present. The other aspect is the object's quiddity, the unique features that distinguish it from other things and are used to define it in response to the question, "What is it?" Perceiving the existence of something occurs either through intuiting its presence or detecting its quiddity. Intuition provides a direct experience of an object while comprehending its quiddity produces an abstraction fabricated by human intellect.

Unlike many Islamic thinkers who believed in existence as a mental or conceptual fabrication without any objective reality, Ibn Arabi strongly believed in the objective reality of existence. To him, nothing is more self-evident and immediate than existence, which makes it needless to define. Existence is self-evident and thus precedes the formation of concepts. In contrast to quiddity, as intuitively grasped, existence has the same meaning in all its applications, whether we apply it to humans or any other entity. It is quiddity that requires existence to be realized and not vice versa. Nevertheless, Ibn Arabi does not imply that the universe and everything in it are illusions. Instead, he takes a more moderate position and considers multiplicity[16] as mental and conventional garments (abstractions) that dress objective reality.

According to Ibn Arabi, existence is unitary, signifying the existence of God. Everything apart from God is regarded as mere designations and manifestations of the same single, indivisible, coherent, integrated, and infinite existence that encompasses all reality. This framework raises a pivotal inquiry: If existence is a shared attribute among all entities and represents the sole reality, what accounts for the apparent distinctions among these entities despite their shared essence? Ibn Arabi offers an explanation, asserting that the existence of one entity is intrinsically identical to that of another. The observed variations among objects,

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[16] . Existence with respect to its manyness (i.e., the whole cosmos and everything found in it).

according to him, stem from the diverse modes or states in which the Real[17] existence manifests Himself[18].

At the highest mode, existence is the absolute, infinite, indefinable, and unknowable reality of God, the "Necessary Being[19]" that cannot not exist. In this sense, existence is the essence of God or the Real, the only reality that is real in every respect[20]. In the lower states, to be definable and knowable, the Real existence determines[21] or designates Himself to create the primary substance of everything other than Himself. Hence, existence with respect to its indeterminate essence refers to the reality of God. However, existence with respect to its differentiated manifestations refers to the whole cosmos or the universe and everything found in it. By acknowledging the reality of multiplicity, Ibn Arabi does not mean to suggest that multiplicity exists in the same sense that God exists since there is only one actual existence (Chittick, 1994).

Some critics have argued that accepting such absolute unity of existence contradicts accepting the reality of multiplicity. If the Real exists in absolute unity, there is no room for anything other than the Real. All multiplicity, therefore, will be nothing but human ignorance or illusion. If the cosmos or the universe really exists, the absolute unity of the Real is meaningless. This is one of the most perplexing elements of Ibn Arabi's theory of the unity of existence. Many Muslim and Western scholars have stumbled in fully understanding it, leading to misrepresenting his theory and Sufism in general. Hence, Ibn Arabi and his followers have used numerous allegories to simplify the concept.

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[17] . The article "the" is purposefully used to differentiate between the two modes of existence: existence with respect to its unity, which is real in every respect and existence with respect to its multiplicity, which is only real in some respects. Just like considering the existence of a sea with respect to its seaness and with respect to its waveness.

[18] . Please notice that God is not gendered. In Arabic, there is a difference between manhood and malehood. The former refers to attributes such as power, bravery, autonomy, etc., while the latter refers to one's gender. The former qualities are not exclusive to men and can be attributed to women.

[19] . By convention, every name attributed to God must be capitalized.

[20] . The famous Western philosopher Hegel has a similar definition of this mode of existence in Science of Logic. "Being is the indeterminate immediate; it is free from determinateness in relation to essence and also from any which it can possess within itself. This reflectionless being is being as it is immediately in its own self alone" (p. 130.)

[21] . To make oneself known with a specific characteristic. For example, a sea determines itself when it makes itself known by forming a one-meter-long wave.

Among famous Sufi allegories is the parable of the sea and its waves. Sufis have used this allegory to explain the theory of the unity of existence and to clarify the relationship between God and creation. On the one hand, waves differ from the sea because it is possible to imagine a calm sea with no waves. On the other hand, the waves are the same as the sea and are not different because they have not added anything to the sea. After the sea has rippled, we will have nothing but the sea or water again. Therefore, waves are both existent and non-existent at the same time. They are nonexistent in themselves but existent through the existence of the sea. The secret of such a state for the waves is that they have a dependent or conditional existence in relation to the existence of the sea. The same is true about God as the Real. He is both the sea of existence and waves of creation.

Another famous allegory that Ibn Arabi employs throughout his works is the example of light taken from the Koran, where God likens Himself to light (24:35). According to Sufis, light has three unique characteristics. It is single, colourless, and self-manifest. Self-manifest implies that light is manifest by itself, unlike other objects that need light to be seen. When light reaches a coloured glass, it seems to take on the properties of the glass. However, Ibn Arabi reminds us that light is always light and never abandons its unique characteristics by mingling with the properties of the glass. The lights that appear behind the coloured glass are, first, multiplied, and second, colourful (i.e., green, red, blue, yellow, etc.). A single colourless light turns into multiple colourful realities while preserving its unique properties. The multicoloured lights behind the glass are colourless in one respect and colourful in another, just like in a rainbow where the multiplicity of colours does not negate the unity of light that constitutes them. One can acknowledge the reality of colours without attributing an independent existence to each. Red and blue exist only through light. They are one in their luminous substance but two in their specific realities.

A third allegory contributing to a more precise understanding of Ibn Arabi's theory is the example of human language, which is also taken from the Koran, where in many verses, God likens the cosmos with everything found in it to His words (31:27). To clarify, words are nothing but the simple, formless, and indeterminate human breath that comes from the lungs, and after passing through the throat, mouth, tongue, teeth, and lips turn into sounds, and from there, into letters, words, and sentences. Therefore, while preserving its unity and subtlety, there is human breath in the heart of every spoken word that has manifested itself in a certain way with different meanings and applications. The existential dependency of words on the breath is evident because if someone ceases to breathe, they will inevitably cease to speak. Similarly, the reality of cosmic

words is only verifiable if one considers them in relation to and dependent upon the breath of their Speaker.

In several passages explaining his ontology, Ibn Arabi draws upon many Koranic verses to support his theory. For example, he maintains everything other than God only possesses metaphorical or loaned existence by citing verses such as "*To God belong the east and the west. Whichever way you turn, there is the Face of God, He is the Embracer, the Knower" (2:115)*, "*He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and Nonmanifest" (57:3), and "He is with you wherever you are" (57:4)*. God is with objects in the same way the sea is with the waves. Ibn Arabi also interprets the many expressions of God's unity in the Koran, saying, "*There is no god but God*" to mean, "There is nothing in existence but God[22]." To return to the example of light, Ibn Arabi cites the famous verse from the Koran that says, "*God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (24:35)* and equates light with existence. He reminds us that everything in the cosmos is embraced by existence in the same way colours in a rainbow are embraced by light. What we perceive as colour is nonexistent in itself, but existent only through light. However, by nonexistent in itself, Ibn Arabi does not mean to imply absolute nonexistence.

Referring to the example of words and shedding some light on the verses of the Koran, such as "*God encompasses everything in knowledge" (65:12)*, he asserts that every object exists in God's infinite knowledge in a state of relative nonexistence in the same way our ideas are relatively nonexistent in our minds compared to when we articulate them in the form of words and sentences. Once articulated, our thoughts descend from a state of relative nonexistence to a state of metaphorical existence where they are fully embraced and constituted by the breath of the speaker. However, Ibn Arabi constantly reminds us that the multiplicity of objects in God's knowledge does not negate his absolute unity in the same way that the multiplicity of our ideas does not cause our minds to be disunited.

To recap Ibn Arabi's ontology, I will quote a passage from William Chittick (1994), the contemporary American Islamologist whose works attempt to translate Ibn Arabi's thought for a Western audience:

> If we pursue the similarity of God's Breath with human breath a little further, we come across another primary teaching of Ibn al-'Arabi. Is breath the same as the human being or different? This question cannot be answered unequivocally. In one respect, a person's breath is not himself since he is he, and his breath is his breath.

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[22] . Please note that according to Ibn Arabi, God is the cosmos in His differentiated manifestation and not that He is the source of all existence. There is unity in the former belief but duality in the latter.

But a human being without breath is a corpse, and breath without a human being is moist air. So, in fact, the two terms, human being and breath, are somehow inseparable. In the same way, the Breath23 of the All-merciful is the same as God, yet it is different from God. And the words that become articulated within the Breath are the same as the Breath, yet they are different. Hence, there is no absolute identity between an existent entity and God, nor is there absolute difference. The exact relationship remains a mystery, even though we can understand something of it through rational investigation and God's help [revelation]. (1994, p. 19)

2.2.1. Divine Names and Attributes

The study of divine names and attributes forms the basic skeleton of Islamic religious thought. Ibn Arabi refers to the famous Hadith Qudsi,[24] which states, "*I was a hidden treasure, so I wanted to be known; hence I created the creatures so that I might be known*" to assert that Real existence is inaccessible and unknowable in its essence and only when He self-discloses Himself in the form of creation can He be known. Ibn Arabi typically cites the famous Hadith from the prophet that says, "*I have not known You as You deserve to be known,*" to remind us that we can only know God to the extent He discloses or reveals Himself to us as finite existents. He does that either linguistically through the many names He has attributed to Himself in the scriptures of all the revealed religions or ontologically and epistemologically through everything found in the cosmos and knowledge of our own selves. Here, Ibn Arabi likes to quote the Koranic verse, "*We [God] shall show them Our signs in all the cosmos and themselves until it is clear to them that He is the Real" (41:53).* Ibn Arabi insists that the verse begins with the plural pronoun "We" to stress the plurality of divine names and attributes as opposed to His unity.

Before delving into this issue, its importance and relevance to this study need to be clarified. It is important because, as mentioned previously, the Real existence is indefinable and inaccessible. We can only know Him to the extent He has revealed Himself in the things of the cosmos through His names and attributes. In other words, any discourse concerning God's essence is restricted to an acknowledgment of our inherent ignorance. Therefore, any inclusion of God into psychological discourses must necessarily center around studying His names and attributes. Furthermore, this topic is relevant because it is assumed that the diversity of religions and beliefs stems from the diversity of divine names and attributes. In other words, if the Real is

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[23] . "Building on hadiths in which the Prophet refers to the "breath" of the All-merciful and Koranic verses in which God's "breathing" is mentioned, the Shaykh compares the process of God's giving existence to the cosmos to the breathing of a breather. The All-merciful Breath is the substance underlying all things. Within it, they assume their specific characteristics." (p.19)

[24] . A special category of Hadith that is attributed to God, but the actual wording is credited to the prophet.

diverse in His differentiated manifestations, it follows that a form of diversity, rooted in unity, must exist among different religions and belief systems to truly reflect the Real.

In Sufi teachings, an attribute is an existence that has manifested itself in a certain way. And a name is the product of considering an existence with a particular attribute. For example, an existence (e.g., a teacher) who possesses the attribute of knowledge is the origin of knowledge. Once that existence is considered with the attribute of knowledge, they are named "teacher." Similarly, God is existence, and once He manifests Himself with the attribute of knowledge, He is named "Knowing." Divine names and attributes are relationships and ascriptions, not ontological entities. Were they ontological entities, the Real would have become multiple through them. To return to the example of the teacher as an existence, a teacher would not lose their unity by being ascribed different names or attributes such as parent, spouse, and friend. In short, the essence, together with a particular attribute, creates a name. Hence, all divine names are common in their Real unitary essence but different in their specific modalities depending on the attributes hidden in them. This is what Ibn Arabi means when he asserts that all the entities in the cosmos are nonexistent in themselves but existent through the existence of the Real. According to him:

> When God created the world, we found that it had diverse levels (maratib) and realities (haqaiq), each of which demanding a specific relationship with God … But he does not become multiple through them. If they were ontological qualities (umur wujudiya) subsisting within Him, they would make Him multiple. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/2022, p. 56)

At its most elevated state, the Real existence is so concealed and veiled that no name or attribute defines it. This obscurity arises from the complete annihilation of names and attributes due to the intensity of existence at this level, akin to how the radiance of stars is engulfed by the brilliance of the sun at noon. An existence is only knowable when it has at least one attribute in which it is designating itself. To illustrate, if someone informs us about a shape on a piece of paper but stops there, we remain utterly unaware of the shape unless additional attributes or properties are disclosed. Similarly, when we are told of a singular existence encompassing the entire cosmos, we remain ignorant of the nature and qualities of that existence until names and attributes that define it are provided.

According to Ibn Arabi, there are at least three modes or stages in which the Real self-discloses Himself to traverse the path from absolutely unknown and indefinable to relatively known and definable. In the first stage of self-disclosure, the Real existence manifests Himself with all His perfections at once without differentiation. Existence in this mode is named Allah in

the Koranic language. Put otherwise, when the Real existence discloses Himself with the attribute of divinity, He is named Allah, God, or the Divine. Allah is the all-comprehensive name. The secret to its all-comprehensiveness is that it contains the attribute of divinity, and divinity can only be attributed to an existence that has all attributes, including the seven major attributes of life—knowledge, desire, power, seeing, hearing, and speaking—, from which all other attributes derive. Allegorically speaking, Allah is the all-comprehensive name in the same way that white is the all-comprehensive colour from which all other colours, including the seven primary colours of red, yellow, blue, orange, green, violet, and indigo, derive.

In the second stage, the Real existence manifests Himself with a single attribute in its full measure, one at a time in a differentiated state. For example, when He fully discloses Himself with an attribute such as generosity, He is named Generous, and when fully disclosed with an attribute such as justice, he is named Just. In this stage, the different modalities of existence are called God's "universal names" by Ibn Arabi's followers. Although all divine names share the same essence, they are existentially ranked. To return to the example of the seven major names, the realization of the three names of Seeing, Hearing, and Speaking are contingent upon the other four names of Living, Knowing, Desiring, and Powerful. Among these four names, the realization of desiring and powerful is contingent upon the existence of Living and Knowing; that is, an existent would not have any desire and power if they lacked life and knowledge in the first place. Eventually, Living takes precedence over Knowing since knowledge without life is unimaginable. Therefore, Living possesses the highest rank among the universal names of God.

In the third stage, in the context of the name Knowing, the Real existence manifests Himself in groups of two, three, or more attributes in different degrees and proportions to form the "particular names" of God in His eternal knowledge. For example, when the Real existence discloses Himself with certain degrees of the attributes of life and subtlety, He is named Water, and when disclosed with certain degrees of the attributes of sublimity, subsistence, and might, He is named Mountain. The particular names in this mode of existence will form the universe and everything found in it when descended from God's knowledge. In this sense, creation is the descendance of particular names from God's eternal knowledge. This notion is endorsed by Koranic verses such as "*And there is not a thing but with Us are its treasuries, and We do not send it down except in a known measure" (15:21)* and "*We have sent down iron in which there is great might and diverse benefit for people" (57:25).*

One should not confuse divine names in these three modes of existence with linguistic terms used conventionally to refer to them in each language. The former are called names, while the latter are called names of the names or terms. To break it down, we have a single unified existence, an attribute, a name, and a term. For example, when the single unified existence discloses Himself distinctly with the attribute of knowledge, this designated mode of existence is a universal divine name for which we use the terms "knowing" in English, "alim" in Arabic, and "dana" in Farsi. Or, when the single unified existence discloses Himself simultaneously with specific degrees of attributes of life and subtlety, this designated mode of existence is a particular divine name for which we use the terms "water" in English, "ma" in Arabic, and "aab" in Farsi. In other words, divine names exist independent of the terms used to refer to them.

The stages of God's self-disclosure are similar to how poets compose their poems. They first feel a profound sense of beauty within themselves that needs to be outpoured. At this stage, the poem is still inaccessible and indefinable. The deep sense of beauty is then disclosed in the form of a comprehensive subject such as love that comprises multiple words to define and describe it. The words are then grouped and sequenced in the poet's mind to compose the verses. Eventually, the poet gives an external realization to the poem by writing or reciting the verses.

For Ibn Arabi, the divine names and attributes are the link between seen and unseen modes of existence, both ontologically and epistemologically; ontologically through the things of the cosmos that signify the Real existence, and epistemologically through knowledge of ourselves aided by divine names revealed in the scriptures without which no one could gain a decent understanding of themselves and the cosmos. According to Ibn Arabi, everything in the cosmos shares all divine attributes because each displays the Real existence, and the Real existence is God, the treasury of all attributes. However, not all existents are prepared to display all attributes. Even if they are, as in the case of imperfect human beings, they are not prepared to display them in their full measure and, more importantly, in full equilibrium[25]. "Preparedness" in Sufis' terminology is the extent to which the nominal constitution[26] of an existent allows for the attributes of God to be displayed. Hence, the whole cosmos is ranked in degrees of excellence depending on the degree to which existing entities display the attributes of God.

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[25] . The balance between divine names and attributes.

[26] . The divine names from which the particular name of an existent is formed in God's eternal knowledge. This is called Fitrah or Shakeleh in the Koranic language.

Ibn Arabi typically cites the famous verse from the Koran that says, "*He (God) taught Adam the names, all of them" (2:31)* and also the famous Hadith that says, "*God created Adam in his own form*" to argue that every name or attribute of God such as life, knowledge, desire, power, speech, generosity, justice, mercy, forgiveness, and so on manifests itself in varying intensities within the things of the cosmos. For example, some creatures possess life, knowledge, and power with greater intensity and some with lesser intensity. A mountain manifests power in a certain passive way. A tree shows life, knowledge, desire, and active power. Animals display all these attributes with much greater intensity (Chittick, 1994). Imperfect human beings are potentially prepared to display every attribute, including justice and forgiveness, which are not ascribed to other creatures except metaphorically, not to mention the attribute of speech, which is an exclusively human property. Finally, at the top of the hierarchy of existence, the perfect human beings (prophets) are prepared to display all attributes in full measure and equilibrium. Therefore, they display God as Allah, the all-comprehensive name to which all other names refer.

To break it down, there are the divine attributes, degrees of intensity for each attribute, and degrees to which one can balance different attributes that sometimes have conflicting effects. Nonhuman creatures can only display a limited number of attributes with limited degrees of intensity and equilibrium. Imperfect human beings can potentially display all attributes with limited degrees of intensity and equilibrium. Perfect human beings (prophets) can display all attributes in full intensity but with limited degrees of equilibrium. Finally, the last and most perfect of all perfect human beings (Muhammad) can display all attributes in full intensity and equilibrium. This hierarchical existential excellence is endorsed by the many Koranic verses that refer to the excellence of human beings over other creatures (17:70), the different degrees of excellence among human beings (17:21), the excellence of some prophets over others (2:253), and finally, the excellence of Muhammad over all other prophets (33:40).

To the objection that divine attributes can sometimes have conflicting effects and therefore cause disequilibrium within an existent, one can reply that this can happen due to the dominance of one attribute over another in the same way affection sometimes dominates over reason in parenting. For non-human creatures and imperfect human beings, disequilibrium is either caused by the lack of some attributes and their limited degrees of intensity or the environmental and socio-cultural factors that are largely influential in bringing the latent nominal constitution of an existent from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality. For perfect human beings other than Muhammad, who possess all divine attributes in full intensity and actuality, disequilibrium is caused by other reasons. However, any detailed discussion of such

disequilibrium would render this paper appropriate for the faculty of theology and not education. It is worth briefly mentioning that disequilibrium in the divine attributes of prophets stands at a great distance from disequilibrium in imperfect human beings and would not lead to any sinful consequences. For example, the dominance of the attribute of mercy in Jesus brought about his intense closeness to God, which is why he barely had a social life, spent most of his life travelling in solitude, and never got married.

2.3. Diversity of Religions

Unlike other creatures that are on a determined path towards their perfection[27] (11:56), humans are given a choice by the fact of possessing greater degrees of the divine attribute of Desiring. They alone are created in God's form and can potentially display every divine attribute. The attribute of desire necessarily brings about the need for the attribute of guidance. That is, any creature who is desiring needs to be guided; otherwise, they may go astray. Hence, Ibn Arabi views the revealed religions as guidebooks to be followed if the human nominal constitution is to blossom (2:38). He argues that even in its most brilliant manifestation, reason[28] alone is insufficient to guide people to salvation[29].

Although thoroughly versed and committed to the methodological approach of the jurists and theologians who put much emphasis on the legalistic aspect of Islam or Shariah[30], Ibn Arabi was reluctant to take the same path in addressing the problem of religious diversity. Relying on the tenets of his ontology, Ibn Arabi firmly acknowledges the necessity of diversity among religions, which signifies the diversity and multiplicity of divine names or attributes. Unlike many Muslim jurists and theologians who maintain that the rise of Islam rendered previously revealed religions null by abrogation, he contends otherwise and writes:

> All the revealed religions are lights. Among these religions, the revealed religion of Muhammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun. Their being hidden is like the abrogation of the other revealed religions that takes place through Muhammad's revealed religion. Nevertheless, they do in fact exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized. This

[27] . Notice that human perfection, in its Islamic conception, does not imply any static finality. It signifies conscious awareness of the dynamic and never-ending unveilings of God's self-disclosures in one's heart.

[28] . A further detailed discussion of why reason is insufficient is provided in the next chapter.

[29] . To fully actualize/manifest the divine names and attributes that God has reflected in humans. For example, by manifesting the attribute of mercy, one is stepping toward his/her salvation.

[30] . Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran and the Hadith.

explains why we have been required in our all-inclusive religion to have faith in the truth of all the messengers and all the revealed religions. They are not rendered null by abrogation—that is the opinion of the ignorant. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 125)

Among the Koranic verses that the jurists and theologists cite to support their position regarding the issue of abrogation is the verse that says, "*The only religion with Allah is Islam*" *(3:19)*. To escape the dry exclusivism implied by this verse, many Muslim inclusivists have taken the literal meaning of Islam which is "submission to God," as what the verse implies. This will include other revealed religions under this verse, as the essence of any revealed religion is nothing but submission to God (4:165). This position is endorsed by other Koranic verses such as "*Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was of pure faith, a Muslim (submitter)*" *(3:67)*, which claims Abraham was a Muslim (submitter) before the three main revealed religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism even existed.

Building upon this argument combined with Ibn Arabi's doctrine of divine names and attributes, one can delve some layers deeper and say that since all prophets are manifestations of the name Allah (29:21), which is the all-comprehensive name, in principle, they all carried the same monotheistic message (3:64) even if the rulings they brought were different depending on the specific needs of their time and place (3:50). Hence, they all displayed Allah, albeit in varying degrees of equilibrium. The oneness of the prophets is implied from verses such as "*We (believers) do not differentiate between any of them (prophets), and to Him, we are submissive (Muslims")* (2:136)*, while their varying degrees of excellence is declared in verses such as "*And certainly, We (God) have made some of the prophets to excel others" (17:55)*. This notion renders the whole discussion of religious pluralism[31] unnecessary since there is only one religion with God that has taken different forms and names throughout history depending on the dominant human dispositions of every specific time and place.

One crucial distinction between Ibn Arabi's perspective of religious diversity and modern expressions of religious pluralism is his emphasis on the hierarchy among religions as concerns how well or fully they address or reveal the "truth." Contemporary pluralistic perspectives claim that all religions are equally valid and all sources of the truth. Ibn Arabi also acknowledges the validity and truth of every religion but in a hierarchically graded manner. When religions are

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[31] . Here, religious pluralism is used as opposed to religious diversity. The former implies sheer multiplicity, while the latter refers to the multiplicity originating from oneness, as discussed in Ibn Arabi's ontology.

considered in relation to the Real, they are all equally valid because they reflect nothing but the Real. However, when they are considered in relation to one another, a relativistic hierarchical approach is unavoidable because one reflects the Real more comprehensively than another. Allegorically speaking, our many photo album pictures are all equally valid because they reflect no one but us. Yet, compared to one another, some reflect us in a more detailed and comprehensive manner than others, so we pick them as profile pictures.

In his magnum opus Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam or "Bezels of Wisdom," Ibn Arabi states that every person has a nominal constitution agreeable to the constitution of one of the prophets in terms of equilibrium and displaying specific attributes shared with that prophet will help with actualizing their constitution. Hence, not only are the previously revealed religions not rendered null by abrogation, but they are also necessary to exist at every time to make possible the salvation of their followers. In his opinion, such diversity is derived from God's wisdom and mercy, which is implied from the famous Hadith that says, "*'The divergence of the religious scholars is a mercy*" and the following Koranic verses, "*We have appointed a law and a Path for each of you. Had God willed, He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you by that which He has bestowed upon you" (5:48)*, "*People, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into (different) nations and tribes so you might know one another. The noblest of you before God is the most righteous of you" (49:13)*. This is why, in many instances, the Koran speaks highly of the followers of other revealed religions and guarantees their salvation if they truly follow the guidance of their prophets as in the following verse "*Surely those who believe, Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds shall be rewarded by their Lord; they have nothing to fear nor are they saddened" (2:62)*.

The equilibrium among the divine names in one's constitution plays a crucial role in understanding how Ibn Arabi explains religious diversity. Since Muhammad manifests all names (Allah) in full intensity and equilibrium, his religion embraces all other religions. This implies that followers of other faiths are Muslims, regardless of what they declare. Put otherwise, even among Muslims, regardless of what they declare, there are followers of Jesus and Moses, which is why some Muslims are so dominated by the attribute of mercy and compassion (a dominant characteristic of Christianity) while others are so much bound by religious rulings and laws (a dominant characteristic of Judaism) which reflects the divine attribute of "Commanding." However, true Muhammadan followers display all divine attributes in proper balance and overflow with every attribute in its right station.

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Among the paths is the path of blessings. It is referred to in God's words, "*To every one of you [messengers], We have appointed a right way and a revealed law (5:48)*". The Muhammadan leader chooses the path of Muhammad and leaves aside the other paths, even though he acknowledges them and has faith in them. However, he does not make himself a servant except through the path of Muhammad, nor does he have his followers make themselves servants except through it. He traces the attributes of all paths back to it because Muhammad's revealed religion is all-inclusive. Hence the property of all the revealed religions has been transferred to his revealed religion. His revealed religion embraces them, but they do not embrace it. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, pp. 145–146)

2.4. Diversity of Beliefs

In Ibn Arabi's worldview, since everything in the cosmos is a manifestation of God, there have been no errors in creation. On the contrary, everything has been given its most perfect creation, as echoed by Koranic verses such as "*It is He who created everything in the best manner" (32:7)*. Among the things of the cosmos are humans and their beliefs. No matter how limited and distorted, every belief is a locus of manifestation in which the Real existence is disclosing Himself, or else it could not exist. Hence, all beliefs are true to the extent that the nondelimited Real existence is delimiting Himself in them, which is why they correspond, in some way or another, with the way things are. However, the mode in which a belief, or the speech derived from it, is true often escapes the understanding of the observer.

There is no speaker but God, and none who causes to speak but God. All that remains is the opening of the eye of understanding to God's causing to speak in respect to the fact that He only causes speech that is correct. So, all speech is protected from error and slipping. However, speech has homesteads, loci, and playing fields within which it has a great expanse to roam. Its playing fields are so vast that the eyes of insights are unable to perceive their outer limits... Indeed, there is absolutely no error in the cosmos. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 140)

The diversity of beliefs stems from the diversity of divine names and attributes that can combine in infinite possibilities with certain degrees and proportions to form the particular names of God in His eternal knowledge, as discussed in Ibn Arabi's ontology. Hence, God Himself is the origin of all diversity of beliefs.

God, Himself is the first problem of diversity that has become manifest in the cosmos. The first thing that each existent thing looks upon is the cause of its own existence. In itself, each thing knows that it was not and that it then came to be through temporal origination. However, in this coming to be, the dispositions of the existent things are diverse. Hence, they have diverse opinions about the identity of the cause that brought them into existence. Therefore, the Real is the first problem of diversity in the cosmos. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 4)

Such diversity of beliefs is not limited to the followers of revealed religions. It includes all forms of idolatrous, polytheistic, agnostic, secular, modern, and postmodern ideologies that at times reject the idea of God altogether, as echoed by the famous Hadith that says, "*There are as many paths to God as there are human souls*." After all, in a broader sense, religion is nothing but a set of assumptions and beliefs that constitute one's knowledge about the universe and oneself, which consequently informs one's actions. In this sense, everyone believes in God because nothing other than the Real presents itself to us in the cosmos (2:115).

> There are none but knowers of God. However, some of the knowers know that they know God, and some of them do not know that they know God. The latter have knowledge of what they witness and examine, but they do not know that it is the Real. If you ask such a person, "Do you know God?" he will say that he does not. But if you ask him about what he witnesses, "Do you know what you witness in respect of the fact that it is the object of your witnessing?" he will say that he does…So, he is only ignorant of the fact that this [divine] name applies to that object of witnessing. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 139)

In such a context, the only difference between divine religions and other systems of beliefs is that divine religions invite people to believe in Allah, which is God's universal and all-comprehensive name and reflects His unity. By contrast, manmade religions invite people to believe in particular names of God, such as idols and ideologies that reflect His multiplicity. The former displays God in His full splendour, while the latter displays Him from one respect but veils Him from another due to their limited loci of manifestation. Ontologically, the former invites to existence while the latter invites to nonexistence in the same way the beauty of multiple colours may so transfix one in a rainbow that they neglect the colourless light upon which all those beautiful colours existentially depend. Particular names of God are called lords (rab or ilah) in the language of the Koran. In Arabic, Rab or Ilah means serving, worshiping, and adoring. By this definition, a lord is anything one serves and sets as one's ideal. The Koran, however, discourages worshiping diverse lords and invites people to worship the lord of the lords, Allah, where it says, "*Are diverse lords better, or Allah the One, the Conqueror?" (12:39)*.

To say that all beliefs are true suggests the salvation of all belief holders regardless of the content of their beliefs. This questions many eschatological consequences, such as heaven and hell, repeatedly mentioned in the scriptures. Constituted in the form of God (15:29), the human soul is existentially inclined to return to its original state of perfection (35:10). The actualization of the divine attributes latent in human nature depends, to some degree, upon human effort by virtue of being free. Failure to do so demands distance from God, which will be experienced as pain and chastisement in the hereafter. However, contrary to the beliefs of many followers of

revealed religions, including his fellow Muslim scholars, Ibn Arabi thinks the pain will not last forever and is the inevitable consequence of actualizing human potential in the same way a pregnant woman experiences pain in growing and giving birth to a latent child inside her.

In other words, human perfection will continue in the next world if not fully achieved in this world. However, how one's perfection is actualized differs in the two worlds. In this world, perfection can be achieved by freely choosing to do certain deeds that annihilate human delimitation and bring about nearness or similarity to the nondelimited Divine. For example, helping others would annihilate the human delimitation of meanness to take on the nondelimited divine attribute of generosity. However, the divine attribute of freedom cannot exercise its effects in the next world. It will be dominated by the attribute of power manifested in the fire to actualize the latent human potential. Although the fire in the hereafter is unimaginably different from the earthly fire, it has similar effects, so it has been allegorically used in the scriptures. Earthly fire burns or annihilates the delimitation of objects so they can quickly be shot up toward the sky in the same way virtuous deeds help the human soul ascend toward its perfection by burning or annihilating its delimitations (35:10).

In several passages that Ibn Arabi tries to explain this crucial eschatological controversy, he bases most of his argument on the famous Hadith saying, "*God's mercy takes precedence over His Wrath*," which is also implied by many Koranic verses. In his opinion, not only does God forgive all sins (39:53), but also limited sins in a transient lifespan cannot warrant unlimited and eternal chastisement in the hereafter (78:26). Hence, he audaciously states, "Since God is the root of all diversity of beliefs within the cosmos, and since it is He who has brought about the existence of everything in the cosmos in a constitution not possessed by anything else, everyone will end up with mercy" (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 156). He explains that God is sheer existence, and existence is sheer mercy. Wrath only comes into play when He starts creation because every creature, to some degree, is deprived of existence for creation to happen. Lack of existence combined with its state of potentiality in this world causes humans to deviate from their original divine path, which is the most concise definition of sin in the scriptures. This deviation needs to be compensated by the attribute of wrath, which originates from mercy to actualize human potential in the same way parents may sometimes be wrathful towards their children out of compassion.

In short, according to Ibn Arabi, the ultimate destiny of all beliefs is salvation. However, those who believe in the universal manifestation of God revealed through prophets instead of His particular modalities constructed by the human mind "travel on the path of felicity that is not preceded by any wretchedness, for this path is easy, bright, exemplary, pure, unstained, and without any crookedness or deviation. As for the other path, its final outcome is felicity, but deserts, perils, vicious predators, and harmful serpents are found along the way. Hence no created thing reaches the end of this second path without suffering those terrors" (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 139). Nevertheless, Ibn Arabi would probably agree with someone who argues that what seems a hazardous and difficult path from one's point of view may be considered safe and easy from another person's perspective.

2.5. Conclusion

Many Muslims come to the West with the mindset that Islam is the only religion that can actualize one's salvation. However, they may act and express otherwise because of the unfavourable consequences it bears in a non-Muslim context. Such a belief tacitly affects every decision they make in their day-to-day personal and social lives. This mindset is mainly due to the exclusivist doctrines which have dominated the Muslim world, leading to the separation, marginalization, and assimilation[32] of Muslim immigrants in the West. To some degree, the inclusivist approach adopted by select Muslim scholars has facilitated the integration of Muslim immigrants into non-Muslim societies. However, since this inclusivist approach is merely out of openness and not necessity, it has led to surface integrative acculturative strategies that hinder meaningful engagement with the host societies. For example, numerous Muslim immigrants and their families have adopted dual identities to circumvent isolation or marginalization. This dual identity entails living a Muslim life within their own families and communities while embracing a more Western-like lifestyle in the broader society, particularly in contexts such as the workplace and school.

I will argue in the next chapter that adopting such a lifestyle requires that Muslim immigrants delimit themselves in terms of specific qualities and attributes and flee from their nondelimited selves, which demands them to live in between the cultures and not within them.

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[32] . Since some Muslims find their religious beliefs irreconcilable with their new context, they decide to do away with some or all of their theistic beliefs and adopt the values and beliefs of their host society to avoid isolation and marginalization.

Eventually, immigrants who live such a lifestyle feel torn between their home and host cultures. They decide to separate, marginalize and/or assimilate to be included in their communities, workplaces, and schools and consequently experience less distress and uncertainty. Another costly outcome of such a mindset has been negative public attitudes toward Muslim immigrants by members of the host society compared to immigrants from other cultural backgrounds (Closson et al., 2014; Rousseau et al., 2011). Islamic tradition has been criticized as irreconcilable and a menace to Western values (Saeed, 2007; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). In this context, it is evident that Muslim immigrants experience distinct difficulties in adjusting to a potentially unreceptive environment.

The bulk of Muslim acculturation research is dominated by empirical studies guided by Western theories and models of acculturation that overlook the crucial epistemic feature of Muslims' perception of Islam and religious diversity. In this chapter, however, I analytically investigated the ontological roots of religious diversity that explain why Muslim immigrants encounter particular challenges at an epistemological level, resulting in adopting or rejecting specific acculturative strategies extensively discussed in the empirical literature. In addressing this problem, I drew upon Ibn Arabi's scholarship, which takes a different approach that necessitates diversity. To return to the dichotomy of oneness versus multiplicity, I raised in the introduction, unlike many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, Ibn Arabi refrains from sacrificing one side in favour of the other. Instead, he advocates a perspective briefly summarized as "unity in diversity and diversity in unity." His perspective on religious diversity opens up other possibilities for reading Islam that can profoundly benefit Muslim immigrants in their acculturation journey. Modern accounts of religious pluralism that favour equality and have no tolerance for Ibn Arabi's hierarchical excellence of all forms of religious and non-religious beliefs—albeit with their equality untouched—have failed to be adopted by most Muslims. However, the significance of Ibn Arabi's approach lies in advocating diversity while preserving the values that are core to Muslims' beliefs. In short, Ibn Arabi's perspective of religious diversity can be summarized in his following advice to the wise:

> Beware of becoming delimited by a specific knotting [belief] and disbelieving in everything else, lest great good escape you… Be in yourself, a matter for the forms of all beliefs, for God is wider and more tremendous than that He should be constricted by one knotting rather than another. (Ibn Arabi, 1946/1994, p. 176)

Chapter 3.   Epistemology

Having established the theoretical foundations for a theistic approach to acculturation within the prior chapter, in this chapter, I focus on the integration of this approach with psychological perspectives on acculturation. The chapter introduces Ibn Arabi's interpretation of the self, followed by a comparative analysis of his viewpoints with contemporary psychological theories of selfhood. Ultimately, this chapter concludes with an exploration of how psychological constructs, notably empathy, can be theistically redefined to facilitate meaningful integration of Muslim immigrants into Western societies.

In the past three decades, the study of the human self has almost been overlooked in research on acculturation. Instead, acculturation theorists have primarily focused on either developing models of acculturation that categorize immigrants into specific groups based on their similar patterns of behaviour or conceptualizing acculturation with regard to unique contextual factors within which the immigrants are situated. From an Islamic perspective, however, to overlook the self in the study of acculturation is to abandon the knowing subject and attribute acculturative phenomena to outward behaviour and environmental factors. Such studies can be potentially helpful in informing macrosocial, political, economic, cultural, and educational decisions and policies. However, they do not and cannot contribute to what constitutes humanity. In the view of Islamic mysticism, to be human is to seek knowledge that will increase one's self-awareness. Self-awareness is a defining characteristic that sets humans apart from other species. Studies of acculturation that do not consider the quest for self-awareness disregard the distinctively and vitally human aspect of acculturation phenomena, even if they yield some practical gains. Only by probing deeply into the issue of selfhood can we hope to understand Muslim acculturation in particular and acculturation in general.

I used the adverb "almost" in the previous paragraph because although the self has been given some consideration in acculturation studies, it has neither been the focus of these studies nor has it been studied with regard to its imaginal nature and capacities. In the West, acculturation has been studied as if it can be understood by reason alone. In the last chapter, however, I argued that according to Ibn Arabi, reason alone is insufficient to attain knowledge of any phenomenon, especially theistic phenomena[33]. Although reason plays a fundamental role in acquiring

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[33] . All religious traditions accord a central role to imagination in acquiring knowledge of God and the world (Chittick, 1989).

knowledge, only when harmoniously combined with imagination can it provide fulsome knowledge of the subject of inquiry. Given the paramount importance that Ibn Arabi accords to imagination and the myriad ways it bears influence, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address all aspects of his views on the role and significance of imagination. Hence, in this chapter, I focus on critiquing the widely accepted rational approach to studying acculturation and presenting the theoretical grounding for a complementary imaginal approach. Acculturation was not a problem for Ibn Arabi. Nevertheless, once his general worldview is grasped, it is my hope that it can be applied constructively to address the issue of acculturation.

3.1. Reason and Imagination

Before Ibn Arabi and according to the ancient tradition of Greek philosophers, the range of human perceptions was understood to be limited to senses and reason by peripatetic philosophers. Sensory perception was viewed as a rudimentary source that provides data for the intellect as a more advanced form of knowing. Hence, reason was regarded as the ultimate means to affirm the authenticity of human knowledge. Ibn Arabi, however, posed a significant challenge to this tradition by emphasizing the importance of imagination that unlocks certain possibilities of knowing not available to the rational mind. Orientalists such as Henry Corbin (1981) and William Chittick (1989) have extensively unpacked this aspect of Ibn Arabi's teachings in their works, highlighting that the emphasis that Western thinkers have put on reason deprives them of a significant body of knowledge provided by imagination. Corbin (1976) uses the term "imaginal" to distinguish between the Western concept of "imaginary," which refers to one's fantasies and what Sufis meant by imagination.

> The reason why I had to find another expression was that, for a good many years, my calling and my profession required me to interpret Arabic and Persian texts, whose meaning I would undoubtedly have betrayed had I contented myself — even by taking all due precaution — with the term imaginary. I had to find a new expression to avoid misleading the Western reader, who, on the contrary, has to be roused from his old, engrained way of thinking to awaken him to another order of things. In other words, if in French (and in English) usage, we equate the imaginary with the unreal, the Utopian, this is undoubtedly symptomatic of something that contrasts with an order of reality, which I call the mundus imaginalis [imaginal world]. (Corbin, 1976, p. 2)

For Ibn Arabi, imagination is an isthmus between two realities that shares the attributes of both but is entirely identical with neither. An example of an imaginal reality is the image reflected in a mirror. It should be acknowledged that the mirror image is both the same as the mirror and different from it at the same time. Also, it is simultaneously neither identical with the reflected

object nor entirely different from it. Hence, the mirror image resides in an intermediary domain between the mirror and the reflected object. This state of in-betweenness and ambiguity that can be defined by the logic of "neither/nor" or "both/and" is imagination. Even the conventional meaning of the term in the West derives from this more fundamental definition, as one's fantasies dwell in an intermediary sphere between reality and unreality.

Contrary to the mainstream of Western thought, Ibn Arabi grants a distinct ontological and epistemological status to imagination. Ontologically and at a macrocosmic level, the whole cosmos and everything found in it is imagination/imaginal. This is imagination in its broadest sense, which Ibn Arabi calls "nondelimited imagination." As explained in Ibn Arabi's ontology, everything in the universe is between existence and nonexistence. On the one hand, there is nothing in the universe other than the existence of God, which is real in every respect. On the other hand, because the universe ostensibly exists, it possesses a specific state of relational existence that is nonexistent in itself but existent through the existence of God. Put otherwise, the universe is neither existent nor nonexistent and dwells in an intermediary realm between absolute existence and absolute nonexistence. Ibn Arabi succinctly refers to the intermediary state of imagination as "He/not He." That is to say, the cosmos is both identical with Him and different from Him at the same time. In other words, He is not isomorphic with creation, nor is He different from it.

> The cosmos stands between existence and nonexistence. It is neither pure existence nor pure nonexistence. Hence the cosmos is all sorcery, and you are made to imagine that it is the Real, but it is not the Real. And you are made to imagine that it is creation, but it is not creation. For the cosmos is not creation in every respect, nor is it the Real in every respect. Hence, it is known for certain that were creation to be disengaged from the Real, it would not be and were it identical with the Real, it would not be creation. (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 27)

> Hence everything that we perceive is the existence of the Real within the entities of the possible things. In respect of the He-ness of the Real, it is His existence, but in respect of the diversity of the forms within it, it is the entities of the possible things… Since the situation is as we have mentioned to you, the cosmos is imaginal. It has no true existence, which is the meaning of "imagination." That is, you have been made to imagine that it is something extra, subsisting in itself outside of the Real, but in fact, it is not so. Since the situation is as we have described, you should know that you are imagination and that everything which you perceive and concerning which you say, 'This is not I," is imagination, for existence is all imagination within imagination. (Ibn Arabi, 1946/1994, p. 27)

The imaginal existence of the cosmos is echoed by Koranic verses that deny the authority or true existence of everything other than God. "*That which you worship, other than Him, are nothing but names which you and your fathers have named and for which God has sent down no authority. They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire, even though there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord (12:40, 53:23).*" Consistent with his contention, Ibn Arabi quotes a famous Hadith saying, "*People are asleep, but when they die, they wake up.*" The relevance of this prophetic Hadith lies in the imaginal nature of dream images. For example, if someone sees their grandfather in a dream, they affirm that what they saw was their grandfather and not anyone else. They also acknowledge that the dream image was a state or mode of their own selves. Therefore, they saw both their grandfather and themselves at the same time. However, the dream image was neither their grandfather nor themselves. Hence, the dream image is an isthmus between themselves and their grandfather that shares the attributes of both but is entirely identical with neither.

In a narrower ontological macrocosmic sense, imagination is the intermediary world between the worlds of the senses and spirits or, in philosophical terms, the sensible and the intelligible realms. Ibn Arabi calls this intermediary realm "discontiguous imagination" because it exists independently of the knowing subject. According to the scriptures, the cosmos consists of three fundamental created worlds of two kinds: the phenomenal world of the senses with which we are all familiar and the non-phenomenal worlds of imagination and spirits[34]. The worlds of the senses and spirits have contrasting qualities, such as dark and luminous[35], visible and invisible, manifest and nonmanifest, divisible and indivisible, one and many. The world of imagination, however, is an isthmus between the two because it possesses the attributes of both but is identical with neither (Chittick, 1989). Referring to the example of a dream image, Muslims traditionally believe that the soul transcends to the world of imagination during sleep, which is why we have dreams. The dream images are both one and many, invisible and visible. Or, they are one and invisible in relation to the world of the senses, but many and visible in relation to the world of spirits. Another example would be the preceptory faculties of human beings. In the realm of intellect, for example, as a concept, "shape" is unitary, invisible, and formless, which can be

[34] . "The world of spirits is inhabited by angels, who are said in the traditional symbolism to be created from light, while the world of bodies is inhabited by the three kingdoms, whose visible parts are made of clay. Between these two worlds stand many other worlds that combine the qualities of spirit and body and are known collectively as the "World of Imagination." (Chittick, 1994, p. 26)

[35] . In Sufi terminology, luminous refers to a unitary undivided reality, the closest example of which is light.

contrasted with the multiple visible forms in the sensory world. In the imaginal world, however, one can imagine an unlimited number of shapes that are both one and many or neither one nor many. They are both invisible and visible, or neither invisible nor visible.

Epistemologically and at a microcosmic level, the soul/self[36] is the locus in which imagination becomes manifest. In Islamic teachings, human beings possess three dimensions: spirit, soul, and body. As stated in the last chapter, since humans are the only comprehensive manifestation of God, the three worlds externally found in the macrocosm of the universe (worlds of spirits, imagination, and the senses) correspond precisely with these three dimensions in the microcosm of human beings. In the present context, our primary concern is understanding how the soul/self can be considered imaginal. The human soul/self is an intermediate reality between the unitary and indivisible human spirit and the extended and divisible human body. Since there are no commonalities between spirit and body, there needs to be an intermediary reality that connects the two. The spirit is one, indivisible, luminous, nonmanifest, and unseen, while body is many, divisible, dark, manifest and seen (Chittick, 1989). The soul/self, however, is both one and many, indivisible and divisible, luminous and dark, manifest and nonmanifest, unseen and seen, consistent with the observation that we have an integrated sense of selfhood despite possessing multiple existential dimensions. Since the original state of the soul/self is both luminous and dark, the human task is to keep this balance by not allowing the soul/self to be dominated either by spiritual light or bodily darkness. The domination of the soul's spiritual light amounts to experiences of unity and integration, while the increasing domination of the soul's bodily darkness results in experiences of multiplicity and dispersion.

In a narrower epistemological and microcosmic sense, imagination is a faculty of the human soul/self. Ibn Arabi names the soul/self and the faculty of imagination 'contiguous imagination" since they do not exist independently of the imaginer.

> The difference between contiguous imagination and discontiguous imagination is that the contiguous kind disappears with the disappearance of the imaginer, while the discontiguous kind is an autonomous presence, constantly receptive toward meanings and spirits. It embodies them in accordance with its own characteristics, nothing else. Contiguous imagination derives from the discontiguous kind. (Ibn Arabi, 1946/1989, p. 117)

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[36] . There are many commonalities between the conceptualization of the soul in Islamic theology/psychology with the conceptualization of the self in Western psychology.

As a faculty, imagination is an isthmus between sensory perception, which is entirely material, and intellectual understanding, which is altogether immaterial. Realities known in this realm are neither wholly sensory nor entirely intellectual and share the attributes of both. For example, our five senses perceive the material properties of a tree, such as size, shape, colour, odour etc. Imagination can then form and retain an image of the tree with the same properties but disembodied from matter. Lastly, through reason, the concept of tree is abstracted, which is disembodied both from matter and image and makes it possible to differentiate the tree from other objects[37]. In other words, realities in the realm of senses and reason are sensory and abstract, respectively. However, realities in the imaginal realm are both sensory and abstract or neither fully sensory nor entirely abstract. Imagination subtilizes or spiritualizes sensory objects, as in the example above, and embodies or corporealizes the meanings, as in the case of imagining a beloved when confronted with the abstract concept of love.

> Imagination is the meeting place of the two seas—the sea of meanings and the sea of sensory things. The sensory thing cannot be a meaning, nor can the meaning be a sensory thing. But imagination which we have called the meeting place of the two seas, embodies meanings and subtilizes the sensory things. (Ibn Arabi, 1946/1989, p. 123)

Although reason and imagination are not opposed, we can still set up a meaningful contrast between them for the purpose of this discussion. Contrary to reason that mostly[38] separates and establishes difference by abstraction, imagination establishes similarity by creating a bridge between things. Reason knows objects as either the same or different. Imagination, however, can simultaneously see objects as both the same and different or neither the same nor different. This can also apply to the trueness or falseness of notions or any other reality involving a dichotomous contrast. Hence, what seems contradictory and impossible to the rational mind is sensible and possible to the imaginal mind because imagination can reconcile opposites and contradictions. Since imagination escapes the logic of "either/or," which is specific to reason, it plays a crucial role in understanding the scriptures and Sufis' writings, which are replete with all sorts of allegories that act as bridges between the highly sensory-dependent understanding of people and the tremendous suprasensory nature of monotheistic beliefs and eschatological events.

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[37] . For example, "human" is an abstract concept that is neither sensory nor imaginal, which is why it applies to anyone and can help differentiate humans from other objects in the world.

[38] . Reason also establishes similarity by generalizing. However, the generalization derives from the differences it has abstracted among the objects in the first place.

3.2. Similarity and Incomparability

One of the very old and central topics in Islamic theology is the discussion of divine similarity and incomparability, which refers to two ways of acquiring knowledge of God and identifies different branches of Islamic thought. Some Muslim scholars believed that no attribute could be proven to be possessed by God. He is neither comparable to the creation to have attributes such as knowledge, power, desire, sight, hearing, and so forth, nor is He completely devoid of similarity to creation. Therefore, nothing can be said about God, and there is no way to know Him. Another group believed in the absolute similarity of God and creation to the extent that they attributed bodily characteristics to Him. A third group of scholars believed in the absolute incomparability of God and creation, albeit not in such a way that would lead to a suspension in acquiring knowledge of God as in the first group. They concluded that God bears no resemblance to creation and is pure from the attributes of creatures. Most Islamic theologians and philosophers accepted this last theory, albeit with some differences.

Ibn Arabi sought to use imagination to unite the three schools described above. As mentioned previously, God is inaccessible and thus unknowable regarding His essence. Hence, in respect of His essence, he is beyond similarity and incomparability, and the only knowledge of Him is the admission of ignorance. However, in respect of His names and attributes, which have been disclosed or manifested in the things of the cosmos (signs), it is possible to acquire some knowledge of Him. Sensory perception and reason can only understand His similarity and incomparability. To return to the example of a mirror image, sensory perception mostly affirms sameness between a mirror image and the reflected object, which is why some animals are deceived by their image. Contrarily, reason chiefly establishes otherness and affirms the incomparability of the image with the reflected object by abstraction[39]. Through imagination, however, one can acknowledge the similarity and incomparability of a mirror image with the reflected object at the same time. Similarly, in acquiring knowledge of God, excessive emphasis upon incomparability disengages God from the cosmos, while extreme stress on similarity clouds the unity of God and results in polytheism.

> If you only believe in His otherness (incomparability), you have delimited God,
> and if you only speak of His sameness (similarity), you have (again) delimited

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[39] . One should be cognizant that neither of the two mentioned faculties functions in isolation, and the discussion is based on the prevalence of one over another.

Him. But if you speak of the two together, you have strengthened the word and will be a master and leader in knowledge. (Ibn Arabi, 1946, p. 134)

These two ways of viewing reality are integral to the Koran and essential to understanding it. Ibn Arabi bases most of his argument regarding divine similarity and incomparability around the Koranic verse, saying, "*There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearing, the Seeing (42:11)*." He reminds us of the subtlety that has been eloquently employed by unifying the two positions of similarity and incomparability in a single verse. The first half of the verse affirms God's incomparability, while the second half establishes His similarity with creation. Sensory perception demands by its essence to see God and therefore proves attributes for Him that exist in the things of the cosmos. However, reason requires, by its abstractive essence, to know Him, and in doing so, it tends to negate such attributes from Him. Either faculty alone provides a distorted picture of the Real. However, imagination bridges the two sides together due to its in-betweenness and ambiguity. Hence, perfect knowledge of God and the cosmos can only be acquired when both faculties are employed in harmony and equilibrium through the power of imagination.

Do not look at the Real in such a way that you have disengaged Him from the creation, and do not look at the creation except in a way that is clothed with the garment of the Real, rather believe in His simultaneous likeness (similarity) and dislikeness (incomparability) and sit in the position of truth. (Ibn Arabi, 1946, p. 210)

3.3. Discussion

So far, I have provided a brief survey of Islamic ways of looking at reality to harvest its implications for discussing acculturation. Whether reality is considered the unified existence of God or the different modalities in which the Real has manifested Himself in the things of the cosmos that we know as multiplicity, the same rules apply in acquiring knowledge of each. That is to say, if God is inaccessible and thus unknowable in respect of His essence, so are humans in respect of their deepest psychological constitution. If He is only known to the extent He chooses to reveal Himself through His names and attributes in the things of the cosmos, so are humans to the extent they choose to disclose themselves in interacting with their environment. If God is to be best known by His simultaneous oneness and manyness, so are humans by their concurrent unity and diversity. If He is to be best known by imagination instead of the senses and reason, so are humans by this isthmus-like faculty. Finally, if God is to be best known by His simultaneous similarity and incomparability to the cosmos, so are humans by their concurrent sameness and otherness in respect to one another.

Once we know our epistemological limits in understanding the nature of acculturation, we can set out to investigate what can be known about this phenomenon. Current models of acculturation are primarily rooted in the more contemporary Western ideology of modernism. Modernism in human sciences is mainly characterized by its emphasis on reason. Modernists reject traditional premodern universals and principles emphasizing the interior spiritually unified domains of the self by insisting on the experientially diverse aspects of selfhood that are empirically detectable. By contrast, postmodernists reject the authority of both spirituality and reason. Instead, they view the self as a construction that reflects the features of its specific social, cultural, political, and historical context. While modernists advocate clarity and simplicity in acquiring knowledge of the self, postmodernists champion complex, multifaceted, and often contradictory manifestations of selfhood. In this chapter, I neither intend to undertake a comprehensive critique of all the different modern and postmodern models associated with acculturation nor do the theories I critique entirely subscribe to all components of modernism or postmodernism. Instead, I will engage in a selective discussion of integrative and interpretive models of acculturation that share some of the components of modernism and postmodernism, respectively.

John Berry's (1997b) four-fold theoretical model, widely adopted in acculturation research, is an integrative approach that shares many of the components of modernism. For Berry, the self is a Cartesian, universalistic, singular, and unified entity that can be understood largely independent of its embodiment and context. His conception of culture is something "out there" that exists independently of psychologically capable individuals rather than as integral to the constitution of structures and processes in the self. Although he claims culture is "simultaneously outside and inside the individual" or "being both ''out there'' and ''in here''," his critics maintain such statements are not congruent with the large body of his research activities in the past three decades that have primarily studied culture as an independent variable (Bhatia & Ram, 2009) as is evident in his following statement "Hence, I consider that culture is, in important ways, an independent variable (or more accurately, a complex set of inter-related independent variables)" (Berry, 2009, p. 363). In his model, Berry theorizes about four modes of immigrants' identities, which convey multiplicity of some kind. However, the centralized unified self is still accountable for all mental processes. In other words, the form the self takes in Berry's conception does not vary in its psychological composition, but rather, only in its outward manifestations. It is noteworthy that Berry rarely writes about the self, and the conception of selfhood outlined above is implicitly inferred from his works.

Central to Berry's theory of acculturation is the assumption of universality. Berry and Sam (1997) posit that although there are "substantial variations in the life circumstances of the cultural groups that experience acculturation, the psychological processes that operate during acculturation are essentially the same for all the groups; that is we adopt a universalist perspective on acculturation" (p. 296). Berry (2009) contends that, as people, we share essential psychological characteristics common to humanity and that these commonalities allow social scientists to conduct comparative research across various cultures. In the most prevalent psychological model of acculturation (Berry & Sam, 1997), acculturative strategies adopted by immigrants represent fundamental psychological processes that unfold during adjustment to the host culture. The optimal acculturation strategy for immigrants is integration, which is believed to be a reliable predictor of positive outcomes such as occupational success (Foroutan, 2008). Recall from chapter one that integration involves preserving one's heritage culture while actively engaging with the host culture. Immigrants who do not adopt this strategy experience higher acculturative stress (Berry, 2006) and suffer from more psychological health issues (Fassaert et al., 2011; Ünlü Ince et al., 2014).

Berry's integrative model and its assumption of universality have been widely criticized by interpretive scholars whose thinking is more in line with postmodern ideology, although they might describe themselves differently. They view immigrants' selves as a cultural/communal product (Bhatia, 2002; Bhatia & Ram, 2001b; Chirkov, 2009; Ngo, 2008). For example, Bhatia and Ram (2001b) argue against any linear decontextualized conceptualization of acculturation that is apolitical and ahistorical.

> Most people living in contemporary diasporas, their negotiation with multiple cultural sites is fluid, dynamic, interminable, and often unstable (2001b, p. 13) … To suggest that such a process is universal and that all immigrants undergo the same psychological processes in their acculturation journey minimizes the inequities and injustices faced by many non-European immigrants. Even worse we risk underrating, overlooking, and suppressing the discordant and discrepant history of immigration in the United States (and elsewhere as the case may be). (2001b, p. 9)

Contrary to Berry and his colleagues (Segall et al., 1998), who consider the role of culture as an independent variable that only shapes psychological operations, Bhatia (2002) argues that an immigrant's identity or self is tightly interwoven with sociocultural factors such as power, race, language, and gender. He takes a postcolonial diasporic approach to acculturation, which allows for thinking beyond fixed national and cultural boundaries where an immigrant's self is constantly being negotiated and mediated between past and present, homeland and hostland, self and other. The diasporic self captures the multiplicity of the selves of immigrants. The selves of immigrants reflect the multiplicitous, fractured, conflictual, and negotiated conditions and constitution of diasporas. For Bhatia, the psychology of people reflects their contexts, and the contexts of immigrants are diasporas with all the diversity of composition that diasporas entail.

The intellectual heritage on which Bhatia draws derives from the work of the Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans, which has its roots in the theories of William James and Mikhail Bakhtin, both of whom theorized the multiplicity of selfhood. Although James (1890) hypothesized multiple selves, he also wrote about a volitional I, which ensures the self's continuity through time. Bakhtin (1984), by comparison, likened human psychology to a novel in which multiple characters portray different perspectives. For him, the self was expressly multiple, decentralized, and discontinuous. Inspired by the Jamesian and Bakhtinian notions of selfhood, Hermans (2001) theorized the dialogical self. He describes the dialogical self as the developmental capacity of psychologically capable individuals to create the different positions of participants in an internal dialogue. For Hermans, thought consists of a multiplicity of I-positions, which he sometimes refers to as "self-positions," that can enact dialogical relations in an imaginative space with one another. Hermans and by association Bhatia, view the self as local and culturally variable. Therefore, there are many kinds of I-positions depending on the cultural resources available to construct them. However, how are we to conceive of "I-positions"? Are they different selves or just one self transitioning among them?

In line with James (1890), there is continuity among the I-positions. The dialogical self takes the form of differing I-positions occupied simultaneously in the conversations of thought. In line with Bakhtin (1984), however, there is discontinuity among the differing I-positions or voices. Hermans (2001) reconciles the two positions by arguing that "a particular feature of the dialogical self is the combination of continuity and discontinuity" (2001, p. 248). In his conception, "the existence of unity in the self, as closely related to continuity, does not contradict the existence of multiplicity, as closely related to discontinuity. The combination of unity and

multiplicity was already discussed by early 20th century critical personalism as represented by the writings of William Stern, who proposed the composite term unitas multiplex (unity-in multiplicity)" (2001, p. 248).

Bhatia (2001a) acknowledges Herman's conception of the dialogical self by stating that "Hermans' theory allows us to appreciate multiplicity and dynamism without losing sight of continuity and unity, and provides us with a mind-expanding, subtly articulated and deftly argued understanding of the self"(2001a, p. 308). However, concerning Bhati's views on acculturation, and more specifically when he contrasts his views with those of Berry's, Bhatia seems to emphasize the discontinuity of the dialogical self more than its continuity. This is mainly due to his postcolonial diasporic perspective that allows for understanding and studying acculturation with regard to "the distinct experiences of non-western, non-European immigrants" (2001b, p. 2). In the context of Bhatia's postcolonial views, dialogicality is thus more Bakhtinian than Jamesian because "the concept of the diasporic condition insists that we situate any idea related to acculturation or the formation of immigrant identity within a historical context, bound up in a set of political positions, and based on negotiation, dislocation and conflict" (2009, p. 142.143). Although Hermans (2001) describes dialogue as "spatially located interlocutors involved in question and answer, and in agreement and disagreement" (2001, p. 259), Herman and Bhatia are most interested in the incongruent and discontinuous aspect of dialogicality when it pertains to hybrid identities in the field of acculturation.

> The asymmetry of dialogical relations is a challenge to the idea that there can be some kind of blissful marriage of the cultures that are part of the hyphenated identity….cross-cultural notions such as 'integration strategy' (Berry, 1980) and 'bicultural competence' (LaFromboise et al., 1993) overlook the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful, rupturing experiences associated with living between cultures. This field of tension, where the person is somewhere between new chances and dangers, requires a shift from a focus on developmental end-states (like 'integration' or 'competence') towards a more process-oriented notion of acculturation that can account for situated, negotiated and often contested developmental trajectories. (Hermans, 2001, pp. 271–272)

As Bhatia and Ram (2001a) elaborate:

> One of the most important contributions of Hermans' work on the dialogical self is that conflict, hierarchy, misunderstandings and disagreements are considered an integral part of the dialogical relationship. For Hermans, dialogical understanding does not mean that all the voices involved in communication with self or others are always in a harmonious accord with each other. Rather, the dynamic movement between I-positions involves negotiation, disagreement, power, negation, conflict, domination, privileging and hierarchy. (2001a, p. 301)

The contention between Berry and Bhatia reflects the confrontation between modernism and postmodernism, positivism and post-positivism, and quantitative versus qualitative approaches to human sciences. They are the same in their rationalistic approach to the human self. However, they differ in their practice by the fact that Berry and his colleagues are primarily focused on establishing similarity[40] between specific modes of selfhood to portray psychological universality. In contrast, Bhatia and his colleagues focus mainly on establishing difference based on contextual factors, thus eschewing universality. In Ibn Arabi's terminology, the former chiefly advocates similarity or sameness, while the latter primarily endorses incomparability or otherness. Reason is a double-functioning faculty. Its primary function is to particularize and establish difference. However, once differences are established, it generalizes to establish similarity between specific categories of objects to attain universality. Both approaches mentioned above have put too much faith in reason, the primary function of which is to establish difference. Bhatia promotes the primary function of reason, while Berry advocates its secondary function. I argue that fulsome knowledge of acculturation can only be acquired when both approaches are supplemented in harmony and equilibrium with imagination.

Unlike imagination, the insufficiency of reason lies in the fact that it cannot establish similarity and difference at the same time. With reason, a self is only the same or different from another self. However, with imagination, a self can simultaneously be both the same and different from others. For example, an immigrant's acculturative identity can simultaneously be both the same and different from other immigrants. They are the same with respect to the uncertainty they face during the immigration process and different in respect of the depth and types of the uncertainties and the process through which they try to regain balance. Berry and his colleagues emphasize a uniform psychological process in a way that ignores the particularities and contexts of immigrants. In contrast, Bhatia and his colleagues have attributed acculturative psychological processes to contextual factors in a way that the selves are emerging from and entirely constituted by their contexts. Just like the two aforementioned branches of Islamic thought, a Berrian

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[40] . Notice that the similarity established by reason differs from that established by imagination. The former is derived from diversity, while the latter is rooted in unity. The former is accidental, while the latter is existential. For example, the colours red and orange in a rainbow are similar in two ways. Rationally, they are similar because they share the same colour spectrum. Imaginally, however, they are similar because they are embraced with the same luminous substance that is light. The former type of similarity can only be relatively drawn between specific colours, while the latter is absolutely true about all colours in a rainbow.

perspective is mainly recognized by theorizing similarity among immigrants, while a Bhatian line of thinking assumes immigrants' incomparability.

Viewing acculturation through imagination enables us to accept and reject both positions simultaneously. It allows us to present the highly nuanced structure of human reality by acknowledging the validity of each of the positions and, at the same time, recognizing their limitations. Imagination strikes a balance between opposites and extremes. It recognizes the multiplicity[41] evident in both positions while at the same time preserving the unity that is essential to our personal and collective selfhood. It unifies while appreciating differences. It does not offer a single overall system that would take everything into account. Instead, it allows the scholar in the field to imaginally dwell between the cultures and examine their theoretical stance by seeing and presenting acculturative realities as they are known by immigrants.

Both Berry and Bhatia primarily investigate the nature of acculturation without suggesting recommendations for immigrants that improve their acculturation experience. Although Berry introduces integration as the optimal acculturative strategy, as Bhatia (2001b) correctly points out, he barely discusses how that integration is accomplished. Based on Ibn Arabi's ontological and epistemological stance drawn from the heart of the Koran and the Hadith, I take an imaginal approach instead of the rational approach dominant in the field. It is hoped this approach benefits people from both majority and minority cultures, although my primary addressees are Muslim immigrants.

Earlier in the other chapter, I mentioned that according to Sufis, humans are created in God's form. Unlike nonhuman creatures inherently dominated by certain specific attributes of the Real, human beings are believed to have the potential to display every divine attribute such that ideally, each attribute stands in perfect balance and equilibrium with every other. In other words, all creatures except humans can neither ascend nor descend from their fixed positions and are determined by certain specific attributes of the Real. To be a human being, however, allows for the full manifestation of those attributes of God that bring about integration, harmony, equilibrium, and comprehensiveness (Chittick, 1994).

The different modalities of an immigrant's identity, which Bhatia (2002) refers to as "I-positions," are diverse manifestations of the nondelimited, non-compound, unified self every human possesses by virtue of being created in God's form. A self that is not only nondelimited

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[41] . Various modes of identity in Berry's model and multiple I-positions in Bhatia's conception.

but also free of delimitation by nondelimitation. In other words, its very nondelimitation entails that it cannot be limited by any limitations whatsoever, including that limitation, which is to declare it nondelimited and only nondelimited. Hence, it is also limited and can delimit itself to distinct I-positions without thereby becoming delimited by them. Bhatia maintains that immigrants are constantly going back and forth between these I-positions. At times, one position takes over the others, determining how the immigrants self-identify in the larger society. Although many of these I-positions can be mutually contradictory, I argue that balance and harmony can be sought among them in a way that an immigrant is simultaneously identical and different from them if they develop in harmony with their nondelimited self.

Inferred from Ibn Arabi's teachings, the highest unified mode of selfhood demands that the different I-positions reach an equilibrium such that immigrants are uncoloured and nondelimited by any I-position whatsoever. This is a mode of selfhood in which no specific position dominates over any other. For example, the immigrant self is expected to be situated in an isthmus between being a Muslim and a Canadian, so they are both Muslim and Canadian or neither Muslim nor Canadian. Although Bhatia and Ram (2001b) claim that this state of in-betweenness can be a painful and rupturing experience, I argue that this is precisely the advantage of being an immigrant if adopted appropriately. Living in an isthmus between cultures may initially inflict much pain. However, if appropriately guided, this pain can be the driving force to unveil the nondelimited layer of one's identity and free one from the prevalence of a specific I-position that has prevented them from standing in other positions.

If immigrants fail to develop in harmony with the nondelimited self and are ruled by a specific I-position, their acculturative identity will unfold in keeping with certain specific qualities or attributes. Hence, they will enter a delimited state of selfhood from which all unfavourable faces of acculturation, such as being assimilated, separated, and marginalized, and feeling discriminated against and distressed emerge. However, if immigrants develop in harmony with their nondelimited selves, they will reach a nondelimited identity. An immigrant who reaches this layer of selfhood will display every quality of diverse I-positions in perfect harmony and balance with every other. This is to say that, by standing in all positions, they can situate each position in its proper place without being delimited and defined by it. They may practice or display one position more than others outwardly. However, they are not fixed and delimited by that position and are enormously diverse and ever-changing in their inward forms. In other words, they have no fixed positions in their souls, so they can become anyone at all. As Ibn Arabi states,

"Correct nondelimitation goes back to the one who has the power of becoming delimited by every form without being touched by the harm of that delimitation" (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, p. 59).

An immigrant who actualizes this state of selfhood ceases to be solely this or that position and stands in every position while not being constrained by any specific position. In Ibn Arabi's terms, such an immigrant has taken the position of "He/not He." They are both identical with other I-positions and different from them at the same time. In other words, there is no absolute identity between their nondelimited self and different I-positions, nor is there absolute difference. This is the actualization of the original human constitution since it is a return to the nondelimited and all-comprehensive divine form from which Adam was created. However, the problem with actualizing a nondelimited self is how to prevent being too Muslim, too Arab, too Canadian, too Chinese, etc. How can the perfect balance of I-positions be achieved? What is the means through which the different I-positions can be peacefully integrated?

One way to explain the idea of balance and harmony among the different acculturative identities is to return to the allegory of light. I mentioned earlier that pure colourless light is likened to the Real. All things in the cosmos are different manifestations of this colourless light seen in infinite colours. In the same way, achieving a unified colourless identity can be compared to the actualization of pure, colourless light by unifying and harmonizing coloured lights of varying intensities, as difficult as it may seem. Just as light is simultaneously identical and different from various opposite hues such as red and green, so also one's self can simultaneously be and not be an Arab, Muslim, Iranian, Canadian, American, Chinese, etc.

Given that immigrants are expected eventually to find their place in the larger society, how can their contradictory I-positions derived from the complex nature of acculturation be harmonized into a single unified identity? Bhatia does not think immigrants should seek balance among their distinct I-positions. He is highly critical of Berry's conception of integration as a status that can be attained simply as a matter of choice: "Integration as the endpoint or the teloi of the individual or the group's acculturation process overlooks the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful, rupturing experiences associated with 'living in between' cultures" (p. 14). Further, core to the integration strategy is the assumption that majority and minority cultures have equal status and power, misleadingly suggesting that immigrants can unproblematically become competent in both cultures. He views "the wisdom of insecurity or uncertainty" as a more realistic endpoint, the acceptance of which, and that required to attain it, furnishing more psychological

resilience to face the myriad of very concrete difficulties of acculturation to which, he thinks, Berry does not give much attention.

According to Ibn Arabi, however, there is no wisdom in "insecurity" alone or "security" alone. True wisdom lies in simultaneously feeling secure and insecure. For the sake of illustration, when a researcher is struck with a research question, it can create a state of disequilibrium (insecurity), from which they are motivated to seek equilibrium (security) by finding an answer. Suppose they remain in that state of insecurity by being unable to come up with an answer or are permanently satisfied with the security of finding a solution. In either case, they will never develop a new research question to start further research.

Similarly, speaking in Berry's acculturative terms, insecurity alone results in rejecting the values of both the heritage and host culture (marginalization), and seeking security alone leads to one of the following three paths: only keeping the values of the heritage culture (separation), thorough acceptance of the values of the host culture (assimilation), and pretentious or showy acceptance of the host/heritage culture while conservatively keeping the values of the host/heritage culture (integration). In effect, my conception of integration as the endpoint based on my imaginal approach (feeling simultaneously secure and insecure) differs from the integration Berry theorizes as the endpoint based on his rational approach (feeling secure). Contrary to rational thinkers who favour stability over variegation (Berry) or variegation over stability (Bhatia), a scholar who takes an imaginal approach should argue for stability in variegation and variegation in stability.

To further unpack the idea of integration, I would like to return to the opposition I set up earlier between reason and imagination for the purpose of this discussion. To view acculturation from the perspective of incomparability or through reason is to emphasize that every immigrant dwells in multiplicity, otherness, and distance from others. However, to view acculturation from the position of similarity or through imagination is to stress that all immigrants acculturate in unity, sameness, and closeness. Incomparability requires distance, dispersion, and estrangement, while similarity demands closeness, unity, and mutual love. Ontologically, the latter qualities take precedence because they pertain to the fundamental nature of our shared existence, while the former qualities pertain to our individuality inasmuch as it is distinct from others.

The priority of similarity and sameness over incomparability and otherness indicates that attributes such as distance, dispersion, and estrangement serve the objectives of the more

fundamental attributes such as nearness, unity, and mutual love. For example, the distance between a lover and the beloved may serve to intensify their unity and mutual love. It follows that reason that understands otherness must, in some sense, be subordinate to imagination, which understands sameness. If reason needs to be the starting point, it must be directed toward subserving the more basic attributes established by imagination (Chittick, 1994). For example, the purpose of reason should be to give immigrants the discernment of their actual situation so they can overcome dispersion, distance, and otherness and establish unity, nearness, and sameness. In other words, reason gives way to imagination, and the attributes of incomparability are substituted or at least moderated by the attributes of similarity. Nevertheless, how should imagination function in the everyday acculturative life of immigrants, and more importantly, how can it help immigrants unify or integrate their different I-positions? The closest psychological concept that somehow matches the function of imagination is empathy.

Empathy in Merriam-Webster dictionary is defined as "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner." When psychologists have conceptualized empathy, there is often a distinction made between empathetic understanding and empathetic experiencing (Basch, 1983; Greenberg & Elliott, 1997; Mahrer, 1997). More recent scholars (Maibom, 2017) have studied this distinction by distinguishing between cognitive and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy is primarily based on the intellectual understanding of others, whereas affective empathy involves experiential identification with others. In addition, cognitive empathy operates on rational data such as meanings, concepts, and thoughts (Goldman, 2011), whereas affective empathy operates on more sensory data such as smell, sight, and sound (Shlien, 1997). In cognitive empathy, the empathizer attempts to conceptually simulate or take the perspective of others without necessarily being experientially affected (Spaulding, 2017). In affective empathy, however, the empathizer experientially resonates with others and is affected by their psychological states and the understanding resulting from such resonance (Hoffman, 2000). Most scholars in the field agree that being empathetic demands both understanding and experiencing. However, it is not theoretically clear how the cognitive and affective components can be integrated in empathizing with others and why the adverse effects of empathizing with others, such as empathetic distress (Eisenberg, 2000), emerge and can be alleviated.

In Sufism, although not explicitly labelled as such, empathy is defined as the imaginal manifestation of an existential state before an object as if it is united with it. The "as if" condition

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is also implied from Rogers' (1959) often-quoted statement that to empathize is "to perceive the internal frame of reference of another… as if one were the person, but without ever losing the "as if" condition." Therefore, in Sufis' conception, empathy is neither entirely intellectual nor fully experiential. Or, it is both intellectual (subjective) and experiential (objective). For example, when a colleague or neighbour of ours suffers a loss, through reason, we establish difference by determining it was their loss and not ours, even though we may deem it socially appropriate to sympathize[42] with them. Through our senses, combined with the reflections of what is sensed in one's mind, we can see and hear their pain and may be similarly affected. Imagination, however, enables us to empathize with them by imaginally experiencing the extreme pain and sorrow they are going through without being affected by harms, such as being empathetically distressed. In effect, sympathy is a subjective rational state reflected in one's mind, while empathy is an existential state reflected in one's heart. Through the former, one knows but does not taste, while through the latter, one both knows and tastes how others experience things.

Sufis define heart as the nondelimited state of selfhood that can take any form. The rational faculty knows through reason, but imagination sees through the heart. In Islamic texts, heart is a locus for knowledge and experience. The Koran employs the term about 130 times and often attributes both understanding (47:24) and experience (8:63) to the healthy heart. The equivalent of the word "heart" in Arabic is "Qalb," which, as a verbal noun, means fluctuation, transformation, and change. By contrast, the equivalent of "reason" in Arabic is "Aql," which means shackle or chain in its root form. Reason strives to shackle or delimit the self by establishing difference. However, the heart unshackles the self of all constraints and absolves it of all limitations, even as it is simultaneously enabled and constrained by them. The heart alone can manifest itself in different modes/I-positions and fluctuate among them without being delimited by their limits and bounds. Ibn Arabi claims to have uncovered his heart in a famous mystical poem translated by Reynold Nicholson (1914), where he writes:

My heart has become capable of every form:

It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,

And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Kaba,

And the tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran.

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[42] . Sympathy is defined "as an affective response that consists of feeling sorrow or concern for the distressed or needy other (rather than feeling the same emotion as the other person" (Eisenberg, 2000, p. 678).

I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take,

That is my religion and my faith. (p. 105)

The "as if" condition in imagination is implied from a prophetic Hadith saying, "*worship God as if you see Him, for, if you do not see Him, He sees you*." According to Ibn Arabi, had it not been for the existence of imaginal faculty within human beings, the prophet would not have said "as if" since reason and the senses are unable to assume an "as if" situation. Reason requires proof in what it examines, and sight does not perceive anything other than the sensory objects before the worshiper (Chittick, 1989). This Hadith, combined with the Koranic verse "*Whichever way you turn, there is the face of God (2:115)*" helps the worshipers actively attend to God and observe courtesy before Him while praying. Since Muslims are expected to be constant in their prayers (70:23), it follows that praying is not restricted to the daily ritual praying required by the Shariah but to each and every moment of life. Hence, every interaction a believer has with their environment should be imaginally regarded as a confrontation with the face of God that never repeats itself due to its infinity. No matter how distorted and limited that face may look, they are expected to humble themselves (23:2) by the "as if" imaginal manner the prophet has taught them. Similarly, if people from both minority and majority cultures are able to empathize with one another by imaginally situating themselves in the position of others, they can overflow with every imaginable state of selfhood while not being restrained by its limitations. Immigrants who develop in harmony with this state of selfhood can both know and taste from whence every individual reacts or speaks and recognize that their reaction or belief is appropriate in respect of the I-position they are situated in. In the following chapters, I will argue, in more practical terms, how immigrants can approach and benefit from developing in harmony with this state of selfhood in their educational, occupational, communal, and societal settings.

I have already suggested that both Berry and Bhatia, as two dominant theorists in the field of acculturation, emphasize incomparability. Therefore, they stress difference, differentiation, and dissimilarity among people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Although Berry tries to draw similarity among immigrants' acculturative strategies, that is an accidental similarity derived from their initial differences. According to Ibn Arabi, while not totally in error, this is an imbalanced way of looking at reality. Once our emphasis lies in incomparability alone, emphasizing differences and otherness automatically emerges. Whether these differences lead to similarity in the oversimplified universal categories of integrative approaches (Berry, 1980, 1997b) or remain in the complex and contextually situated self-positions of interpretive accounts of acculturation (Bhatia, 2002; Bhatia & Ram, 2001b), the prevalence of incomparability over

similarity has flawed our vision of the acculturation process and turned fundamental cultural values such as respect for the other, cultural inclusivity, and social justice into infertile political gestures rather than a productive social reality.

In short, if current acculturation theories tend to stress incomparability and otherness by taking a rational approach, the Islamic perspective presented in this chapter highlights similarity and sameness by taking an imaginal approach. I argued that fulsome knowledge of acculturation requires a balance of the perspectives of similarity and incomparability. Since current scholarship in the field primarily relies on rational investigation, my critique of the work done by cross-cultural psychologists aims to provide a new perspective that simultaneously views acculturation phenomena through imagination and reason, particularly as it pertains to Muslim immigrants. By adding imagination to our understanding of acculturation, rational impossibilities can be viewed as imaginal possibilities, and one would avoid mere conceptualization by experiencing acculturative facts as they are known by immigrants. With reason and imagination, immigrants should understand that they are both near and far, similar and incomparable to others.

I know no better way to conclude this chapter than citing the following quote from Ibn Arabi, where the idea of balance between reason and imagination is neatly stated.

> Those who are able to combine reason and imagination in proper balance are those who have truly witnessed the lifting of the veils between themselves and God— the People of Unveiling. "The common people stand in the station of declaring similarity, the People of Unveiling declare both similarity and incomparability, and the rational thinkers declare incomparability alone. Hence, God combined the two sides in His elect" (Ibn Arabi, 1994/1994, pp. 123–124).

Chapter 4.   Psychology

Following the examination of the theoretical underpinnings of Sufism and its association with acculturation theories, I now turn to the practical aspects of Sufism to offer insights into how incorporating spiritual practices and principles can enhance acculturation. To this end, I explore the journey of Sufis toward unity with God and how this journey can resemble the integration of immigrants into host societies. Through analyzing the similarities and differences between these processes, practical strategies for promoting successful acculturation can be developed. This chapter emphasizes an imaginal approach to acculturation and draws primarily on Rumi's teachings to highlight the potentially transformative process immigrants undergo. Rumi, also known as Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, was a 13th-century Persian poet, mystic, and Sufi philosopher. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest poets in history, celebrated for his profound spiritual insights and captivating poetry. Rumi's works, particularly the collection of mystical poems known as the Masnavi, explore themes of love, unity, and divine connection. His teachings center on spiritual unity with the Divine and the importance of transcending the limitations of the self. Rumi's poetry continues to inspire and resonate with people from diverse backgrounds, transcending time and cultural boundaries. His use of metaphors and symbolic language provides a unique imaginal perspective on acculturation. His impact lies in his ability to bridge the gap between the esoteric teachings of Sufism and the broader audience, including those who may not be familiar with its intricacies. Through his poetic expressions, Rumi masterfully translates the mystical concepts of Sufism into accessible and relatable imagery, making them intelligible to the lay public. This is particularly useful when exploring the process of acculturation, as Rumi's metaphors and symbols serve as powerful vehicles for conveying complex ideas and experiences. His symbols and metaphors evoke emotions, spark imagination, and invite readers to reflect on their own acculturation experiences. Through Rumi's teachings, the reader can gain a deeper understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of acculturation, transcending mere intellectual comprehension to resonate on a visceral and spiritual level. Overall, this chapter offers a framework potentially useful to professionals working with immigrant and refugee populations and sheds light on the complex terrain of cultural transition, especially concerning Muslim immigrants.

The use of poetic imagery as a means to challenge rationalism is not exclusive to Sufi scholars. In the West, the Romantic movement arose as a reaction to the growing rationalism and empiricism of the Enlightenment era. Romantics rejected the mechanistic philosophy of the

Enlightenment, which focused on reason and observation. Instead, they emphasized the importance of imagination over reason, bemoaning the damage done to the spiritual aspects of human life by overreliance on the latter. They used imaginative language in their works to promote a more intuitive and unified understanding of phenomena, resisting the dualistic view of the Enlightenment. While Sufis and Romantics both employ similar language in their works, they differ in that Sufis stress the importance of striking a balance between reason and imagination, recognizing the importance of both in understanding and experiencing phenomena. In contrast, Romantics viewed imagination as superior to reason, which is why I used the term "imaginative" instead of "imaginal" in describing their work. Throughout this chapter, examples from both Sufi teachings and the works of Romantic poets will be interwoven, showcasing their shared spiritual orientations despite their differences in time, geography, culture, and theology. By including the insights of Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats, alongside the teachings of Rumi, I can provide a broader context for the discussion and foster a deeper resonance with the content presented. Their works delve into the realm of imagination to explore the depths of human existence and connect with the divine. Integrating the works of Romantic poets into my exploration helps expand the scope of the analysis and bridge cultural gaps. It allows me to offer a more accessible and relatable perspective to a Western audience. The Romantic movement, with its emphasis on imagination, intuition, and the spiritual dimensions of life, provides a parallel context to the Sufi teachings I examine. Together, these diverse voices create a richer tapestry of insights and experiences, enhancing our understanding of the potentially transformative nature of spiritual experiences and their connection with the process of acculturation.

While the spiritual journey toward unity with God and the process of integrating into a new society will primarily be discussed in terms of an analogy throughout this chapter, there is also more than just an analogous connection being insinuated. In chapter two, it was discussed that, according to Ibn Arabi, the cosmos is a manifestation of divine names and attributes, signifying that nothing other than God is present within the cosmos. Additionally, it was mentioned that the name "Allah" is the all-comprehensive name that encompasses all other names and attributes. Its all-comprehensive nature originates from its embodiment of the attribute of divinity, which can only be ascribed to an existence that possesses all attributes, including the seven major attributes of life, knowledge, desire, power, seeing, hearing, and speaking, from which all other attributes derive.

Similarly, a society can be seen as comprehensive in the sense that it comprises numerous divine names and attributes. As discussed in chapter two, from Ibn Arabi's viewpoint, followers of various ideologies, whether monotheistic, polytheistic, idolatrous, agnostic, secular, modern, or postmodern, represent specific names and attributes of the divine Reality. Therefore, from this perspective, integration or unity with society can be equated with unity with God. When immigrants can effectively integrate and empathize with individuals from diverse beliefs and cultural backgrounds, they are, in essence, uniting with God. The more they transcend differences, embrace diversity, and foster understanding, the deeper their unity with God becomes[43]. Therefore, there is an ontological connection between the spiritual journey and the acculturation process. From this viewpoint, the spiritual and the social are interconnected, and acculturation is not merely a superficial or external process but is deeply intertwined with one's spiritual journey. The integration of different cultures and the development of a multicultural identity can be seen as a reflection of the unity and diversity inherent in divine creation.

However, it is also important to note that the relationship between the spiritual journey and acculturation can also be viewed as an explanatory or epistemological device. It provides a framework for understanding and making sense of the complex process of acculturation by drawing upon spiritual concepts and insights. It offers a lens through which individuals can reflect on their experiences, gain insights, and find guidance in navigating the challenges and opportunities of acculturation.

Finally, applying the spiritual journey to the acculturation process serves a dual purpose, encompassing both descriptive and prescriptive dimensions. Descriptively, this approach seeks to capture the intricacies inherent in the acculturation process. By delving into the spiritual aspects of the journey, it aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of acculturation. From a prescriptive standpoint, however, the significance of the spiritual journey lies in its practical implications. By drawing on spiritual principles and practices, it offers guidance and actionable steps for individuals undergoing the acculturation process.

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[43] . Recall from chapter three that it is a unity free from the delimitations of the existent with which one unites/empathizes.

4.1. Four Spiritual Journeys of the Self

In Sufism, the concept of journey refers to the spiritual voyage that individuals undertake to reach a state of unity with God. The journey is commonly described as consisting of four stages: Shariah, Tariqah, Haqiqah, and Marifah. However, it is crucial to understand that these stages do not denote separate journeys but represent different aspects of a unified journey. The division into four stages serves as a conceptual framework to comprehend the distinctive features of different aspects of the journey[44]. The Shariah stage is characterized by adherence to the exoteric aspects of Islamic law and doctrine, which includes performing daily ritual prayers, fasting during Ramadan, and actively observing what is deemed permissible (Halal) and prohibited (Haram) in the law. By contrast, the Tariqah stage emphasizes the esoteric aspects of Islamic law, which involves cultivating inner qualities such as humility and devotion through practicing them when interacting with others. The Haqiqah stage is marked by a deepening of the seeker's understanding of the true nature of Reality through the annihilation of one's delimited self(es) in loving the Other, often culminating in the embodiment of divine attributes in the seeker. Finally, the Marifah stage pertains to the subsistence of divine attributes in the seeker and liberation from the constraints of delimited selfhood, resulting in a state of harmony and unification with all that exists.

Similarly, acculturation involves a transition and adaptation journey that immigrants undergo when they move from one cultural context to another. Immigrants often start by conforming to the external aspects of the new culture, such as language, customs, and social norms, which parallels the Shariah stage. As they become more familiar with the new culture, they may begin to cultivate inner qualities such as openness and respect for the new cultural context, resembling the Tariqah stage. Over time, as they deepen their understanding of the new culture and develop empathetic relationships with its members, they may experience a sense of belonging and integration, similar to the Haqiqah stage. Finally, successful acculturation involves attaining a subsistent and nuanced identification with the new culture(s) and the ability to navigate between diverse and occasionally conflicting cultural contexts with ease, analogous to the Marifah stage. In the following sections, I will elaborate on these four stages, discussing the

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[44] . I will use the words "journey" and "stage" interchangeably because it is common among Sufis to refer to each stage as a journey despite there being a singular journey.

common states and challenges immigrants experience in each stage and suggesting strategies to face them effectively.

4.1.1. Annihilation and Subsistence

To discuss the spiritual journey, it is first essential to explicate the underlying principles of annihilation (fana) and subsistence (baqa), which are integral components of each stage of the journey. In Sufism, annihilation and subsistence refer to two stations[45] of human becoming that are essential in actualizing the nondelimited state of selfhood. Sufis have formulated various understandings of these terms over time. However, at their core, annihilation involves the negation of the self and affirmation of God, while subsistence entails the reemergence of the self, albeit in a transformed state, since its creaturely attributes have been substituted by the divine attributes through annihilation. Commonly, it is believed that annihilation and subsistence are interdependent, with subsistence being a more elevated station of spiritual growth. This is because the seeker is constantly being annihilated from a lower state of selfhood to subsist in a higher mode, making subsistence the higher state. A nuanced understanding of the difference between annihilation and subsistence can be facilitated by distinguishing between union and unity. The term "union" refers to the act of joining two or more things together into a single entity, whereas "unity" refers to the state of being one or undivided. In other words, unity suggests a state of being, whereas union indicates a process of becoming. In this context, union (Tawhid) is achieved when divine attributes are cultivated in a seeker. However, it is only through achieving unity (Wahda) that these attributes subsist within the seeker in full harmony and equilibrium.

The notions of annihilation and subsistence in Sufism have their roots in the Koran, which says, *"All that dwells on the earth is annihilated, and there subsists only the face of your Lord, the possessor of majesty and generosity" (55:27).* Sufis' interpretation of this verse suggests that inasmuch as things of the cosmos are incomparable to Him, they are annihilated, but inasmuch as they are similar to Him, they subsist. Annihilation and subsistence are also inferred from the famous Hadith of the prophet, saying, *"Die before you die."* This Hadith is typically interpreted as an invitation to the seeker to die from their delimited self(es), worldly desires, and

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[45] . In Sufism, a "station" refers to a spiritual stage or level of attainment on the path of spiritual development. It represents a milestone or state of consciousness that a seeker can reach in their journey toward spiritual enlightenment and closeness to God. The stations signify progressive stages of spiritual growth and realization, representing a distinct phase of the seeker's inner transformation.

all that is temporal and limited before the actual physical death. It is thus not death, but rather a resurrection to nondelimited states of consciousness (Zargar, 2013).

A crucial aspect to consider when discussing annihilation is that it does not entail a complete obliteration of one's identity. Rather, the ultimate objective of annihilation is to attain a heightened state of selfhood that coexists with the existential awareness of God. This state is often symbolized by the image of a candle's light being annihilated in the radiance of the sun during the day. As the tiny flicker unites with the brilliance of the sun, its unique delimited identity is annihilated. Yet paradoxically, in becoming nothing, it becomes everything. In his work "Endymion" (1811), the renowned romantic writer John Keats (1795-1821) expressed the same sentiment:

> There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
>
> Of light, and that is love…
>
> Melting into its radiance, we blend
>
> Mingle, and so become a part of it (Endymion, I. Lines, 806-811)

In "A Defence of Poetry," Shelley (1792-1822), another renowned Romantic writer, explores the idea of losing one's sense of self and views selflessness as a form of empathy: "The great secret of morals is Love, or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own" (2000a, p. 796). Finally, perhaps the most beautiful expression of the Sufi concepts of annihilation and subsistence can be seen in the following piece from Rumi:

> Die now, die now, in this Love die; when you have died in
>
> This Love, you will all receive new life.
>
> Die now, die now, and do not fear this death, for you will
>
> Come forth from this earth and seize the heavens.
>
> Die now, die now, and break away from this carnal soul, for
>
> This carnal soul is as a chain and you are as prisoners.
>
> Take an axe to dig through the prison; when you have broken
>
> The prison you will all be kings and princes. (Arberry, 1968, p. 105)

The principles of annihilation and subsistence in Sufism can be likened to the process of acculturation, which involves adopting and adapting to new cultural norms and values. Just as the seekers should undergo a mystical death to liberate themselves from the constrictions of their worldly identity, the immigrants should die from their former cultural identity so they can be reborn into a renewed, nondelimited identity that shares the attributes of both cultures, yet is entirely identical with neither. As Shelly (1792-1822) puts it: "No more let Life divide what Death can join together." (2000b, l. 477)

4.1.2. The Journey from Diversity to Union

In the first stage of the Journey, known as Shariah, the seeker traverses a path from the diverse and multifaceted world of multiplicity to the unitary realm of the Divine. Rumi analogizes a seeker to a reed, illustrating the seeker's states and experiences from the first stage to the last. Rumi explains that the reed is rooted in the ground, symbolizing the worldly desires and attachments of the seeker to the material world. The reed then needs to be cut, cleaned, hollowed, and shaped by the flute maker, representing the preparation and purification that the seeker needs to undergo to achieve a state of unity with God. The hollowing of the reed characterizes the emptiness and selflessness that the seeker must cultivate to achieve unity with the Divine. Furthermore, the emptiness of the reed signifies the need for the seeker to shed the limitations of their delimited self(es) and become receptive to the nondelimited state that lies beyond it. Finally, Rumi emphasizes that when the reed is transformed into a flute and tuned, it can produce unlimited beautiful music. This symbolizes the potential for the seeker to overflow with every imaginable state of being while not becoming restrained by its limitations.

This journey often commences with a profound awakening (yaqze) that allows the seeker to recognize the restrictions of their delimited self(es), which is dominated by worldly desires and attachments. Similarly, in the process of acculturation, the first stage can be viewed as a form of cultural shock, during which an immigrant becomes cognizant of the differences between their home culture and the host one. This awakening prompts them to recognize how their cultural identity has been shaped and delimited by their original culture, rendering them unable to envision alternative ways of thinking and behaving had they not immigrated. For many immigrants, this is a journey from diversity to union because it is marked by many challenges and obstacles that immigrants must overcome to reconcile the differences between their original cultural identity and the new cultural environment. This upheaval leaves them feeling unsettled and overwhelmed, struggling to adapt to their new surroundings and forge a sense of union and

belonging with the new culture. Hence, in the first journey, diversity has a negative connotation, reflecting the overwhelmingly diverse aspects of the new culture(es) and the cognitive and emotional turmoil in which immigrants are situated.

This journey is characterized by the annihilation of actions or behaviours that contradict the laws of Shariah. With every instance of compliance to Shariah, seekers annihilate their worldly desires and submit themselves to the will of God. This process of submission is often painful and challenging, as it requires seekers to confront their innermost earthly desires, which may be at odds with Shariah. For example, refraining from eating and drinking during the month of Ramadan is an act of self-annihilation that prepares the seekers to become more attuned to their spiritual dimensions. This stage is known as the annihilation of actions because, despite adhering to the law, they still have the desire to transgress it. However, they resist the temptation to avoid punishment. In other words, at this stage, obedience stems primarily from the fear of consequences or the anticipation of rewards rather than a heartfelt devotion to God. Nonetheless, abiding by Shariah is pivotal for spiritual growth as it prepares seekers to progress to higher stages of the journey by annihilating their earthly dimensions and helping them to subsist in the spiritual realm.

In a parallel manner, the initial phase of acculturation necessitates that immigrants align with the legal and sociopolitical standards, as well as the cultural practices prevalent in their host societies. It demands relinquishing previous behavioural patterns that may no longer be deemed appropriate in the new milieu. For example, immigrants often encounter challenges in discarding ingrained habits, such as driving behaviours, to embrace new regulations that govern their actions in the host country. Despite harbouring personal reservations towards certain regulations and practices, immigrants frequently conform to avoid unfavourable repercussions or to avail themselves of favourable outcomes. By engaging in the annihilation process, wherein they relinquish those old practices and behaviours that are illegal or inappropriate in the new cultural landscape, immigrants lay the groundwork for personal growth and development within the new context. Consequently, they cultivate the capacity to subsist in consonance with the legal practices and social norms of the host society, thereby facilitating their integration throughout the subsequent stages of acculturation. By the end of this stage, immigrants have formed a partial union with members of the host society, having learned to conform to the external aspects of the new culture, which is the most rudimentary prerequisite in the acculturation process.

A crucial aspect of the first journey involves the practice of spiritual retreat, commonly referred to as "khalwah." In this transformative undertaking, seekers purposefully detach themselves from the entanglements of the material world, analogous to the reed that is severed from its earthly root. The rationale for the spiritual retreat is the highly receptive nature of the self. In the early stages of acculturation, the self is characterized by a state of naive openness and receptivity, rendering it more inclined toward receptiveness rather than exerting influence or control. It assumes a passive role, willingly accepting and absorbing various states of being without subjecting them to critical scrutiny and thereby becoming delimited by them. The purpose of the retreat is thus to create a space where seekers can distance themselves from external distractions and disengage from the captivating hold of worldly desires and temptations. By temporarily withdrawing from the incessant clamour of external influences that have shaped their identities, seekers strive to weaken the attachments that limit them within the confines of their delimited selfhood, thus facilitating access to their nondelimited self —a state of selfhood characterized by a receptive nature that is not bound by the limitations of form. It is receptivity that allows an individual to transcend the naivety of the initial stage and embrace various forms (i.e., I-positions) while having full control over them.

It is important to emphasize that while Khalwah involves a certain level of self-distancing from society in situations where engagement is deemed unnecessary, it must not be misconstrued as advocating isolation or separation from society (Knysh, 2000). Rather, it entails a deliberate shift of focus and attention, whereby seekers maintain their presence within their respective societies but consciously choose not to engage in the intricacies of societal affairs. In other words, seekers are neither distanced from their societies nor are they entirely engaged in them. Their presence within society remains, yet their mental and spiritual resources are primarily focused inward, emphasizing introspection and the pursuit of spiritual growth. In brief, the spiritual retreat serves as a powerful tool for seekers to traverse the path from the outward realm of multiplicity to the inward realm of unity within themselves. This process leads to the revelation of the innermost aspects of one's existence and the attainment of an enlightened self-awareness. It helps create an environment conducive to self-discovery and cultivating union with the divine through practices such as prayer, recitation of sacred texts, and contemplation.

Similarly, in the early stages of acculturation, the spiritual practice of Khalwah holds the potential for informing and shaping acculturation practices, thereby giving rise to a concept that can be aptly described as "acculturative retreat." During this phase, immigrants must strike a delicate balance between their personal lives and engagement with their ethnic communities and

host societies. This retreat involves minimizing their interactions with both sides to an optimal level. The acculturative retreat serves several purposes in facilitating the immigrants' integration. Firstly, immigrants create an introspective space where they can critically examine and evaluate their former ways of thinking and acting in light of the new cultural context, thereby enabling immigrants to identify and annihilate those patterns that may hinder their acculturation. Secondly, it helps to avoid premature and/or excessive engagement with the host society, which may lead to undesirable outcomes such as separation, assimilation, or surface integration strategies. Additionally, by temporarily taking a step back to reflect and observe, thereby retreating from the immediate assimilative pressures of ethnic communities or host societies, immigrants can engage in a more nuanced exploration and appreciation of both cultures, develop a stronger sense of self-identity, and consequently make more informed decisions regarding their acculturation.

In their hermeneutic analysis of psychotherapeutic empathy, Martin and Dawda (1999) underscore the significance of attaining a certain degree of self-distanciation from one's own pre-understanding. They argue that "for understanding to progress, the therapist must achieve a necessary degree of self-distancing from those symbolic preconceptions, social practices and subjective experiences that constitute the therapist's own pre-understanding, and practical and experiential engagement" (1999, p. 473). While Martin and Dawda's focus is on therapists practicing self-distanciation from the therapist's own pre-understanding in order to create "an opening in one's horizon of understanding" (1999, p. 467), I propose that within the context of acculturation, self-distanciation during the first journey should be accompanied by reflective participation. This entails not only distancing oneself from one's own pre-understanding as an immigrant but also critically examining the perspectives and biases inherent in the pre-understanding of members of the host culture. This aspect of hermeneutic engagement is essential to prevent premature assimilation of the majority culture's experiences and understanding into one's own immigrant perspective. Hence, immigrants can navigate the acculturation process with a more informed approach, allowing for the development of a culturally adaptive mindset that balances the influences of both their original and host cultures.

To avoid conceptual confusion, it is imperative to make a clear distinction between the concept of acculturative retreat and the notion of marginalization, as theorized by Berry (1997b). While marginalization involves the reactive disregard of both heritage and host cultures, acculturative retreat is a proactive strategy aimed at optimally minimizing engagement with both heritage and host culture(s) to facilitate successful integration in the subsequent stages of acculturation. Acculturative retreat, in contrast to marginalization, is undertaken before any deep

interactions occur. Its primary objective is to acknowledge and exert control over the inherent tendencies of the delimited acculturative self(es), which can be characterized as either naively receptive or ignorantly resistant. Rather than permanently dismissing both heritage and host culture, acculturative retreat is a purposeful temporary effort to navigate the complexities of the early stages of acculturation by consciously limiting engagement with both cultures in a way that one is neither entirely engaged nor completely detached from their heritage and host culture(es).

In the second chapter, I mentioned that a significant number of immigrants, particularly those with theistic orientations, and more specifically Muslim immigrants, often seek out their diasporas upon their arrival and actively assimilate into their ethnic communities. In their diasporas, they make deliberate attempts to maintain real and/or imagined connections and commitments with their pre-existing perceptions of Islam, often disregarding how those perceptions and practices could be redefined, reshaped, or even dismissed to reflect the realities of their new cultural context. Many even choose to reside near their diasporas to facilitate access to Islamic education for themselves and their children. However, in light of the four journeys I am discussing, I contend that this approach represents an ineffective strategy for acculturation, ultimately leading to long-term outcomes of separation, assimilation, and marginalization. While I acknowledge that exclusive reliance on diasporas as a strategy for navigating the acculturation process can only be characterized as a separation strategy, I maintain that this approach may result in adverse long-term consequences, including assimilation or marginalization.

Over time, the inherent conflicts arising from the perceived disparities between immigrant communities and the larger society may render this strategy untenable, compelling individuals to adopt alternative approaches. Faced with seemingly insurmountable disparities, individuals may gravitate towards strategies such as assimilation, whereby they abandon or dilute their original cultural identities to conform to the dominant culture, or marginalization, wherein they feel excluded or peripheral to both their heritage culture and the host society. Even in cases where integration appears to occur, it tends to be minimal and surface-level. Taylor et al. (1986) have referred to surface-level integration as the "illusory" contact problem, which persists even in contexts explicitly designed to facilitate genuine interaction (Maoz, 2011). Further evidence suggests that in supposedly integrated spaces, individuals from various racial and religious groups tend to resegregate themselves from one another (Alexander & Tredoux, 2010; McKeown et al., 2016). In other words, desegregation and integration are frequently conflated in intercultural research. Desegregation pertains to the act of bringing separate parts together without necessarily achieving a unitary entity, whereas integration involves the harmonious merging of these parts to

form a unified whole. Desegregation faces the persistent risk of resegregation, whereas integration is not susceptible to such a risk.

While Muslim immigrants' primary driving force behind their early inclination toward their communities is their theistic orientation, for non-Muslims or non-practicing Muslims, the motive is often driven by the fear of loneliness, depression, and the desire for a sense of community. Nonetheless, both groups share common negligence towards the potential for transformation and personal growth that can be derived from the challenging yet transformative process of immigration. They fail to recognize that changing their place of residence necessitates a corresponding epistemic change within themselves that cannot be successfully accomplished without temporarily retreating from their communities first. This epistemic change is an inherent part of the immigration experience. However, immigrants have the agency to shape its direction, pace, and ultimate destination, to some extent, from the very beginning. This perspective highlights the need for immigrants to embrace the opportunities presented by the upheaval of immigration, using it as a catalyst for personal development and a more comprehensive understanding of themselves. It is important to reemphasize that this retreat does not imply a complete withdrawal from their communities or abandonment of their theistic beliefs and practices. Rather, it primarily entails an epistemic self-distanciation that involves critically educating oneself in both cultures, thereby equipping immigrants with insightful knowledge to fight the naivety and ignorance that result in blind receptiveness and/or biased resistance to multiple aspects of the new culture.

Another crucial aspect of the first spiritual journey that can potentially inform and shape acculturation practices is mentorship, commonly referred to as spiritual guidance or discipleship. Sufism is not merely an intellectual pursuit. It is a transformative spiritual journey. It is an esoteric tradition with intricate teachings, practices, and rituals. A mentor, known as a Sheikh or Morad, serves as a conduit for transmitting these teachings to the seekers or Moreeds. The mentor acts as a guide who has traversed the spiritual path and can share their own experiences and insights with the disciple. This experiential learning is crucial in Sufism, as it allows the disciple to gain a deeper understanding of the teachings and practices through firsthand experience. Through a direct, personal relationship, the mentor imparts knowledge, shares wisdom, and guides the disciple in understanding and implementing Sufi teachings. They draw upon their own experiences and understanding of Sufism to help the disciples navigate the spiritual path. They provide a safe and supportive environment where the disciple can explore their inner experiences, express doubts, seek clarification, and receive encouragement. The mentor-disciple relationship

often involves a form of spiritual accountability. The mentor holds the disciple accountable for their spiritual practices, intentions, and behaviour. This accountability ensures that the disciple remains focused, disciplined, and aligned with the teachings and values of Sufism. The mentor provides feedback, guidance, and corrections when necessary, helping the disciple stay on track and avoid pitfalls or deviations on the spiritual path.

Likewise, the Morad-Moreed relationship can be translated into a mentor-mentee relationship in the context of acculturation. Immigrants can benefit from the wisdom, support, and guidance of mentors who have already navigated the challenges of adapting to a new culture. The mentor can share their adaptation experiences, provide cultural context, and help the mentee understand and embrace the cultural nuances of the host country. By imparting knowledge and practices specific to the new culture, mentors facilitate the acculturation process, foster personal growth, cultural understanding, and a smoother transition into the host society. In fact, the mentor becomes a bridge between the mentee's cultural background and the new cultural context, facilitating a deeper appreciation and integration of both. They act as trusted confidants, offering emotional and psychological support during moments of cultural disorientation or challenges. Additionally, the mentor holds the mentees accountable for their efforts in adapting to the new cultural environment, encouraging them to actively engage in learning the language and sociopolitical norms, traditions, and values of the host culture(s).

Furthermore, mentorship programs offer significant advantages to immigrants as they complement the process of acculturative retreat by reducing the necessity for immigrants to rely solely on their diasporas or the broader society for assistance upon their arrival. By connecting immigrants with mentors who have already undergone the acculturation process and share a minimal level of sociocultural tradition and experience with their mentees, these programs can effectively guide immigrants through the initial complexities of acculturation and mitigate potential misunderstandings, stress, and conflicts. These programs serve as an isthmus between immigrants and the larger society. By matching immigrants with mentors who possess knowledge of the immigrants' culture of origin and the host culture(s), they alleviate some of the assimilative pressures that arise from their diasporas and the larger society while fostering a sense of belonging and community. Through the mentorship relationship, immigrants can receive support and guidance tailored to their unique cultural background and challenges in adapting to a new environment.

Mentorship programs can encompass various initiatives, including language assistance programs, language exchange programs, and cultural orientation programs. Language assistance programs provide immigrants with the necessary tools and resources to enhance their language skills in the host country's language, enabling better communication, which is essential for successful integration. Language exchange programs offer opportunities for immigrants to engage in language learning exchanges with competent speakers, simultaneously facilitating linguistic proficiency and a certain degree of cultural exchange. Cultural orientation programs familiarize immigrants with the host culture's customs, values, norms, and societal expectations. These programs help immigrants navigate social situations, comprehend cultural norms, and adapt their behaviours accordingly. They provide essential knowledge about education, employment, healthcare, legal systems, and other aspects of daily life, empowering immigrants to make informed decisions and effectively engage with their new environment. These programs collectively set the stage for the successful integration of immigrants in the subsequent stages of the journey.

4.1.3. The Journey from Union to Unity

Having annihilated the earthly dimensions of the self in the last stage, the seeker embarks upon the second stage of the journey, known as Tariqah, wherein they find themselves at the threshold of divine union. This stage commences with the seeker's transition from their multiplicitous creaturely self to a state of union with their divine dimension, ultimately culminating in the realization of their original state of unity as expressed in the verse *"When I have made him and breathed into him My spirit, you should then bow down in prostration" (15:29)*. Metaphorically, the first journey can be likened to traversing arid and diverse landscapes within the self, leading seekers to the shores of an expansive and unified ocean symbolizing the divine. Upon reaching this juncture, which marks the outset of the second journey, the seeker must immerse themselves in this divine ocean, striving to embrace and embody as many divine attributes as their unique disposition allows. This process aims to achieve a state of unity with the divine, necessitating the annihilation of their delimited human characteristics to unite with the transcendent attributes of the divine.

In contrast to the initial stage, which is solely characterized by the annihilation of actions, the second stage can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase involves the annihilation of attributes, moving from a state of union towards partial unity. In contrast, the second phase entails the annihilation of essence, marking the transition from partial unity to complete unity.

In the first phase, seekers not only align their actions with the will of God, but their desires also become harmonized with the divine desire, eradicating any inner inclination to transgress. In other words, their actions are not driven by the fear of consequences or the anticipation of rewards; rather, they act solely out of their heartfelt devotion to God. The attainment of this state demands that all the attributes that the seekers have falsely ascribed to themselves be negated and attributed to God because, in truth, these attributes belong to Him alone. According to Rumi, this is the application of the first Shahadah, Muslims' declaration of God's unity, expressed as "There is no God but God" (la ilaha illa Allah). The "no" of the Shahadah negates the reality of everything other than God, including man's self-existence. Therefore, the illusory self, along with everything attributed to it, must be annihilated. However, the "but" of the Shahadah signifies that God alone can be affirmed as real; thus, every positive attribute belongs to Him alone. This can be achieved through immersive engagement in specific actions that further internalize divine attributes. For instance, in the initial stage, seekers annihilate the non-exclusive human attribute of meanness to subsist in the exclusive yet still delimited human attribute of generosity by performing acts of benevolence such as helping the impoverished. In the first phase of the second stage, however, seekers must die from their delimited human attribute of generosity by engaging in various acts of generosity, including being generous with their time and knowledge, while constantly negating the attributes from themselves and affirming them as originating from God.

This phase involves the negation of something on one hand and the affirmation of another on the other. As a result, this phase is the realization of Tawhid, a composite state of negation and affirmation that is still distant from complete unity. Tawhid can be best understood as "Not seeing the other but seeing Him," or "Seeing Him in everything," or "Negating the other and affirming Him." During this phase, humans become the loci through which God manifests His most exalted names and attributes. However, it is the sociohistorical limits of the loci that determine the breadth and magnitude of the divine manifestation. This is the farthest point attainable through human agency. Beyond this point, which marks the beginning of the second phase, the journey toward complete unity rests solely upon the grace of God.

In the second phase, the culmination of Tawhid, known as Wahda, the manifestation of God intensifies within the seeker, leading to complete[46] unity with the ultimate Reality. At this

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[46] . Notice that complete unity does not imply absolute unity in an all-encompassing sense. Instead, it signifies a state of fullness or perfection accommodated by the individual's level of readiness or preparedness.

phase, the seeker ceases to perceive anything other than God and becomes completely annihilated in His essence. Contrary to Tawhid, Wahda is not a composite state, but rather a unitary and indivisible state solely characterized by the act of seeing and affirming Him. It can be succinctly expressed as "Seeing Him" and "Affirming Him," as there is no "other" involved. This concept is beautifully echoed in the narration attributed to Ali, a prominent companion of Prophet Muhammad, who proclaimed, "There is no He but He" (la huwa illa huwa). While the traveller's state in the first phase is seeking God, their state in the second phase is seeking themselves because their individuality has been completely annihilated, leaving them in a state of bewilderment and awe. Having annihilated all human dimensions, including their sociohistorical individuality, the seeker transcends the role of being a mere locus for the manifestation of God's names and attributes. Instead, the seeker assumes the exalted station of a living embodiment of God or His vicegerent (Khalifah) on earth.

In a poetic imagery, Rumi draws an analogy between the seeker's second journey and the transformative states of iron within the embrace of fire. In the first phase, reminiscent of Tawhid, while preserving its unique individuality as a solid object with a distinct form, the iron becomes a locus for the fire's attributes, manifesting its red hues and fervent heat. Yet, in the second phase, symbolizing Wahda, a profound transformation takes place as the iron remains immersed in the flames, deepening its union with the fire's essence. The iron gradually relinquishes its individuality, its very ironness. With every passing moment within the flames, the iron transcends its former identity, embodying the very properties of the fire until it becomes indistinguishable from the fire itself.

> The color of iron is obliterated by the color of the fire,
>
> The iron boasts of fire yet remains silent.
>
> When red like the gold of the mine,
>
> It exults without tongue: "I am the fire."
>
> It has gained honor through the color and nature of the fire,
>
> It says, I am the fire, I am the fire.
>
> I am the fire, if you are doubtful or suspicious,
>
> Test me! touch me with your hand! . . ." (Trans. by Chittick, 1983, p. 193)

In short, the first journey involves the transcendence from one's nonexclusive human nature to an exclusive human state. In contrast, the second journey entails progressing from the delimited human state to the nondelimited divine realm. The initial journey encompasses the traversal through the realms of multiplicity or darkness and the gradual annihilation of successive veils of darkness (i.e., non-exclusively human attributes) through acts of worship and disciplined effort (riyazah). In contrast, the second journey encompasses the progression into the realms of light or union and the gradual annihilation of veils of light (i.e., exclusively human attributes) through immersive engagement with divine attributes. According to Rumi, the first journey is characterized by rigorous discipline and persistent striving, while the second journey is predominantly guided by a magnetic pull and a profound sense of love exerted upon the seeker by the divine source of light.

The second journey of the self draws some conceptual parallels with the acculturation process. After cultivating resilience by consciously distancing themselves from their original culture and the new culture(s) to mitigate the premature receptiveness and/or resistance tendencies of the self, immigrants are now poised to embark on the second journey. Just as the seeker partially unites with the divine in the first phase of the second journey (Tawhid) through immersive engagement with divine attributes, the immigrant seeks to connect with the new culture(s) in the process of cultural immersion. This transition involves deeply embedding oneself in the historical and sociocultural traditions of the new culture(s), as it is only through this experiential immersion that a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the new culture(s) can be achieved, leading to the embodiment of different aspects of the new culture(s), which is essential for successful integration.

Unlike the first journey, which focused on adapting to the external aspects of the new culture(s), such as language, laws, and social norms, the second journey involves gradually immersing oneself in the new culture(s) to embody internal qualities such as openness and respect. During this stage, immigrants' actions of conformity are no longer driven by the fear of consequences or anticipation of rewards, but rather stem from a sincere sense of respect and identification with the new context. Consequently, immigrants transcend the extrinsic aspects of the new culture and establish intrinsic empathetic connections with members of the host society. The extent of unity with the new culture(s) in this phase is contingent upon the level of similarity between their original cultural identity and the host culture(s). A closer alignment between the two engenders an enhanced sense of empathy or identification with the new cultural context.

In this stage, immigrants may need to reconcile their own values and beliefs with the standards and values of the new culture. This process entails immersive interaction with individuals from other cultures, giving rise to a state of imaginal ambiguity in cognition that challenges and expands one's understanding. It prompts the individual to develop a heightened awareness of their own lived experiences and encourages a more conscious examination of their beliefs and perspectives. In other words, immigrants may need to negate aspects of their national, ethnic, religious, and cultural identity that are incompatible or misaligned with the new context, including shedding misconceptions, biases, or stereotypes while affirming the new cultural values. This immersive experiential engagement in specific cultural traditions allows individuals to internalize and embody the attributes and practices that are highly regarded and valued in the host society. As Gadamer (1960/1995) beautifully states, such engagement with the other "make[s] conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding so that… another's meaning can be isolated and valued on its own" (1995, p. 299). Drawing upon Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to inquire into interpersonal understanding in psychology, Martin and Dawda (1999) echo this even more eloquently in the following statement wherein they emphasize the importance of experiencing for understanding:

> In perception and action, a suspension of one's preconceptions creates an opening in one's horizon of understanding. However, this crucial suspension does not require an absence of pre-understanding, but rather the embodiment and submission of the pre-understanding to a practical test. In the opening thus created, one's preconceptions are revealed through a particular form of encounter with the other. In this encounter, it somehow must be the case that the different understandings of the other are not prematurely assimilated into one's pre-understanding, but are first perceived, then understood as different in a way that results in a kind of critical 'distancing' from one's pre-understanding—a process of self-distanciation that results in the necessary suspension of one's pre-understanding, and sets the stage for the possibility of revising one's pre-understanding in light of the different understanding of the other. (1999, p. 467)

The notion of cultural immersion also aligns with the contact hypothesis in social psychology, which proposes that increased contact between members of different cultural or social groups can lead to reduced prejudice, improved intergroup relations, and increased social cohesion (Allport, 1954). According to this hypothesis, interactions between people from different groups can help to break down stereotypes and promote greater understanding and empathy, ultimately leading to more positive attitudes towards each other (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2011). Psychologist Gordon Allport first proposed the contact hypothesis in the 1950s. Allport (1954) argued that contact between members of different groups could lead to attitude change only if certain conditions were met, such as equal status between groups, cooperative activities, and support

from authorities. Although Allport (1954) cautioned that certain forms of contact could actually worsen intergroup relations by reinforcing negative mental associations with particular racial or religious groups, studies have generally found that negative contact experiences are less common compared to positive ones (Barlow et al., 2012; Graf et al., 2014). By logical inference, the presence of some negative experiences does not negate the value of contact, just as the occurrence of some accidents does not negate the value of driving.

The second phase of the second journey demands an intensification of exposure and engagement with the new culture(s) to achieve a state of complete unity (Wahda) with the new culture(s). This phase begins with a sense of selflessness and culminates in the emergence of one's nondelimited state of selfhood, which marks the beginning of the third journey. During this phase, immigrants are so immersed in the host culture(s) that their original cultural identity becomes completely annihilated or obscured. The state of immigrants in this phase can be best described as a search for self. It is as if they have undergone a temporary loss of self-identity, seeing and affirming only the values and traditions of the host culture(s). By the end of the second journey, immigrants become fully integrated and expressive members of the new cultural community, reflecting the living embodiment of the new cultural attributes and values.

It is noteworthy that cultural immersion in the second journey does not contradict engaging in the practices and rituals of one's own culture and communities. The second journey is primarily characterized by the principle of annihilation, while the third and fourth journeys are primarily characterized by the principle of subsistence. As previously mentioned, annihilation does not involve a complete obliteration of one's identity. Instead, the ultimate objective of annihilation is to attain an elevated state of selfhood that embraces the broader cultural context while retaining the essential aspects of one's identity in the background. Allegorically speaking, the immigrant's state during this stage, before subsisting in their renewed state of selfhood in the third journey, can be likened to that of a driver who becomes fully immersed in their thoughts or a phone conversation while performing the necessary actions of driving, such as braking, checking mirrors, and changing lanes. In this analogy, the driver successfully reaches their destination, yet if asked about the specific route taken or the precise details of the journey, they cannot recall. In other words, despite being fully immersed in thoughts and actions unrelated to their driving identity, they automatically and proficiently carried out the required tasks expected of licensed drivers.

It is also important to distinguish the concept of cultural immersion from assimilation as conceptualized in Berry's (1997b) acculturation model. Unlike assimilation, which involves the complete abandonment of one's heritage culture, including its values, beliefs, and practices, in favour of adopting those of the host culture(s), cultural immersion does not require such a dissolution of one's cultural identity. While both assimilation and immersion involve becoming indistinguishable from the majority culture, they differ in that cultural immersion is followed by a state of distinguishability, which marks the beginning of the third journey from "unity to diversity with unity." Even when immigrants are indistinguishably united with the majority culture during the second journey, they retain a subtle and simultaneous distinguishability in the heart of indistinguishability. In other words, they are simultaneously indistinguishable and distinguishable from the majority culture. To return to the example of the iron within the fire, as it reaches a point where it unites seamlessly with the fiery blaze, its distinct form remains intact, only to be revealed when the skilled blacksmith withdraws it from the embrace of fire. Similarly, immigrants undergoing cultural immersion retain their distinctive cultural identity, which may only become evident and discernible when circumstances call for its expression.

In the process of cultural immersion during the second journey, a legitimate question arises regarding the possibility of achieving complete unity. For example, in the context of psychotherapeutic relationships in psychology, Martin and Dawda assert that:

> Such hermeneutic insights make it impossible to regard empathic attunement as a pure encounter of a therapist with the experiences of a client in psychotherapy. Such encounters inevitably carry the trace of the therapist's historically and practically shaped perspectival understandings. Thus, empathic attunement cannot entail a complete experiential identification with the other. (1999, p. 472)

They seem to be criticizing Rogers for implying complete unity when they say:

> Rogers' (1959) often quoted statement that to empathize is to 'perceive the internal frame of reference of another without ever losing the "as-if" condition' (p. 210) implies that the experiential identification with the client is not, and should not be, complete. However, in his later work, a more holistic Rogers (e.g., Rogers, 1980) tended to risk dissolution of the "as-if" condition in a more complete absorption into the client's viewpoint— 'it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other' (p. 129). (1999, p. 471)

This question can be addressed by distinguishing between perfect (i.e., complete) and absolute unity. In Islamic philosophy and Sufism, perfection is understood as a graded reality that does not necessitate absolutism. The realization of perfection entails the complete actualization of one's potential within the necessary confines of one's unique disposition or nominal constitution, as

explained in the second chapter. Individuals who fully embody and manifest their unique capacities, including the divine names and attributes embedded within their essence, reach a state of perfection unique to their own being. Similarly, in the context of acculturation, complete unity should be understood as the embodiment and manifestation of the values and perspectives of the host culture(s) relative to immigrants' level of readiness or preparedness and not in an all-encompassing sense. Hence, complete identification is possible, but it is inherently tied to the existential expanse or breadth of the empathizer. In other words, it is complete in respect of the empathizer but necessarily incomplete in respect of the uniquely multifaceted reality of the existent with which they are empathizing. Drawing upon the analogy of iron within the embrace of fire, despite the complete unity of iron with fire to the extent of indistinguishability, it can only manifest certain qualities of the fire, such as redness and heat, while being unable to manifest other qualities like expansion and height due to its necessarily limited locus of manifestation.

Furthermore, just as the second spiritual journey is primarily driven by a magnetic sense of love exerted upon the seeker by its divine source, the acculturation process in its second stage necessitates an environment characterized by inclusive and embracing social, cultural, and political traditions. The receptivity and acceptance extended by the host culture(s) play a defining role in facilitating the realization of complete unity by the immigrants. The acculturation process encompasses a complex interplay between individual agency and the enabling and constraining factors present in the environment. However, as the degree of cultural immersion intensifies beyond the initial phase of the second journey, the role of contextual factors becomes increasingly apparent. It is crucial to acknowledge that the success of the acculturation journey discussed in this chapter is contingent upon the welcoming nature of the sociocultural and political fabric of the host culture(s). Nevertheless, it is also necessary to recall that this discussion adheres to the commitment of a theistic individualistic approach justified in the first chapter. As stated in the opening chapter, my argument maintains that regardless of the host culture's receptiveness in facilitating contextual factors, the individual's psychology, if characterized by a closed mindset and resistance to embracing alternative ideologies, can impede successful acculturation. In symbolic terms, imagine the iron and magnet positioned closely together, with the magnet exerting its captivating force, pulling the iron towards it. However, if the iron is encased within a sealed vault or concealed behind an impenetrable cement wall, no magnet can attract it, no matter its power. Consequently, the explicit examination of the pivotal role played by the host culture(s) in facilitating the traversal of the acculturation journey has been intentionally bypassed, recognizing that it warrants an extensive study of its own. The premise

remains on the assumption that the degree to which the sociocultural and political aspects of the host culture are welcoming and accommodating directly correlates with the level of success achieved in the acculturation journey discussed in this chapter.

While this study focuses on the psychological aspect of individuals in relation to acculturation, it is important to note that contextual factors have been taken into account in both the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of the analysis. However, the treatment of culture in this study diverges from conventional approaches, emphasizing the broader cultural context. Specifically, the closed mindset that poses a challenge to the acculturation of Muslims originates from their original context. It is further perpetuated and reinforced through real and/or imagined connections to their original context by actively participating in their diasporas and community networks in the Western host societies. To address this, the second chapter explores Sufis' inclusivist perception of Islam, aiming to open an epistemological window within the typical Muslim mindset. While opening the epistemological space is a necessary step, it alone is insufficient. The remedy lies within the new context. Hence, the concept of cultural immersion becomes a vital component in the journey of acculturation, allowing for a gradual transformation of the Muslims' mindset and the emergence of a more adaptive and inclusive psychology.

As a practice, cultural immersion can be effectively implemented through various initiatives, such as cultural exchange programs, interfaith dialogues, and inclusive workplaces. These initiatives create spaces for meaningful interactions where individuals can engage in open dialogue, share experiences, and learn from one another's perspectives. However, despite the epistemological opening created in the last journey, it is important to acknowledge that some individuals, particularly Muslims, may still harbour apprehensions about engaging in immersion due to perceived disparities between their heritage and host cultures(s). To address this challenge, it becomes crucial to begin with immersion experiences that encourage immigrants to engage with and explore different cultural narratives vicariously. This is where the tradition of storytelling in Sufism emerges as a powerful tool.

Storytelling holds a significant place in the tradition of Sufism (Zargar, 2017). It serves as a powerful means of transmitting spiritual teachings, insights, and wisdom from one generation to another. The practice of storytelling in Sufism can be traced back to the earliest Sufi masters, who used stories and parables to convey profound spiritual insights in a relatable and accessible manner. The storytelling tradition in Sufism encompasses a wide range of narratives, including allegorical tales, anecdotes, fables, and parables. These stories often revolve around the lives and

experiences of spiritual figures, such as Sufi saints, prophets, and mystics. They are crafted to capture the listener's imagination and evoke a sense of wonder, curiosity, and introspection. Sufi stories are not merely entertainment; they are vehicles for conveying deeper spiritual insights and teachings. Through metaphor and symbolism, these stories explore themes such as love, devotion, selflessness, detachment, and the quest for spiritual unity with God. Sufi storytelling employs rich imagery and vivid descriptions to create a sensory experience for the audience. The stories often depict the journey of successful seekers, the challenges and triumphs faced along the spiritual path, and the ultimate realization of divine unity. They employ elements of adventure, mystery, and poetic language to captivate the audience and draw them into the narrative. Moreover, Sufi stories are characterized by their multi-layered nature. They often contain hidden meanings and allegorical interpretations that invite the listener to reflect and contemplate. The stories serve as a catalyst for self-inquiry, encouraging individuals to explore their own inner landscapes. In Sufism, storytelling is not limited to formal settings or specific rituals. It is a living tradition found in various forms of expression, including poetry, music, dance, and visual arts. Sufi poets like Rumi, Hafiz, and Attar have masterfully employed storytelling techniques in their poetry, weaving tales of love, longing, and spiritual awakening. The transformative power of Sufi storytelling lies in its ability to touch the hearts of the audience, bypassing intellectual barriers and connecting on a deeper level. It invites individuals to embark on their own inner journey, explore the depths of their souls/selves, and seek a direct experience of divine presence.

Within the realm of acculturation, the traditional practice of storytelling among Sufis can be adapted into intercultural storytelling circles, events, and workshops. Furthermore, the advent of contemporary advancements in the arts and various innovative modes of artistic expression and storytelling, such as films, television series, and documentaries, presents a remarkable opportunity to foster cultural immersion among immigrants. Media platforms like films and series have a wide reach and are easily accessible to a diverse audience. Through these mediums, immigrants not only have the opportunity to witness their own experiences reflected on screen, thus validating their struggles and aspirations, but they can also vicariously engage with diverse cultural narratives and landscapes that they might hesitate to explore on their own. Films, as a visual and narrative medium, have the power to transport viewers to different cultural contexts, offering a window into the lived experiences of immigrants and their communities. By presenting authentic stories and depicting the challenges and triumphs of immigrant journeys, films can evoke powerful emotions and create a sense of empathy among viewers. They can challenge stereotypes and biases by humanizing the immigrant experience and shed light on the individual

stories behind immigration statistics. Similarly, series offers extended storytelling formats that delve deeper into cultural nuances and provide a more comprehensive exploration of the immigrant experience. With their episodic nature, series allows for a more immersive and long-term engagement with characters and their cultural backgrounds. Viewers can develop a sense of familiarity and attachment to the characters, fostering a deeper understanding of their cultural perspectives and challenges. Documentaries provide a platform for real-life stories and in-depth examinations of immigration-related issues. They offer an opportunity to explore various aspects of the immigrant experience, including the social, economic, and political dimensions. Documentaries can educate viewers on the complexities of immigration, challenge stereotypes, and raise awareness about the contributions and struggles of immigrant communities. Overall, by harnessing the potential of these mediums, we can bridge cultural gaps, cultivate empathy and understanding, provide a platform for vicarious learning from the lived experiences of immigrants, and instill in the immigrants the courage to engage with similar cultural intricacies and environments.

For example, "The Big Sick" (2017) is a critically acclaimed romantic comedy based on the real-life experiences of comedian Kumail Nanjiani and his now-wife Emily V. Gordon. The film follows the journey of Kumail, a Muslim-Pakistani-American stand-up comedian, and Emily, a white American woman, as they navigate cultural differences, family expectations, and unexpected health challenges. "The Big Sick" creates a vicarious cultural immersion experience in a unique way by delving into the complexities of interracial, intercultural, and intergenerational relationships. It provides an intimate and heartfelt portrayal of the challenges faced by individuals who straddle different cultural identities. The film offers a nuanced perspective on the immigrant experience, shedding light on the tensions and negotiations that arise when cultural backgrounds collide. Through its authentic storytelling, "The Big Sick" allows viewers to empathize with the characters' struggles, both personal and cultural. It addresses themes of love, family, and tradition as Kumail grapples with his own cultural heritage while navigating his relationship with Emily and dealing with a health crisis. The film highlights the tensions and expectations placed on individuals caught between two worlds, prompting viewers to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives. Although the film's central theme leans more toward assimilation than integration, "The Big Sick" facilitates cultural immersion by presenting the complexities and nuances of cultural integration and acceptance. It challenges stereotypes and prejudices while emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding in fostering meaningful connections. The film also encourages viewers to confront their own biases and preconceptions, promoting a

deeper appreciation for the diverse experiences and perspectives within immigrant communities. In short, by presenting a relatable and empathetic portrayal of the immigrant experience, the film invites viewers to explore their own beliefs and biases, ultimately raising a greater appreciation for the richness and diversity of human experiences.

4.1.4. The Journey from Unity to Diversity with Unity

In the third stage of the journey, known as Haqiqah, following the complete annihilation of their delimited human identity in the preceding journey, the seeker enters a state of subsistence within their nondelimited divine Self. As previously discussed, the second journey is primarily characterized by the annihilation principle, while the subsistence principle characterizes the third and fourth journeys. This journey is called "unity to diversity with unity," as it entails progression from the gradual embodiment of diverse divine attributes in the previous journey to manifesting these attributes in perfect harmony and equilibrium. In the second journey, the state of the seeker is described as "Seeing Him in everything" or "Seeing unity in diversity." However, in the third and fourth journeys, the seeker's state shifts to "Seeing everything with Him" or "Seeing diversity in unity." Put otherwise, in the second journey, the act of "Seeing" is undertaken by the sociohistorically delimited human self, which struggles to find unity amidst the diversity of existence. However, in the third and fourth journeys, the act of "Seeing" is undertaken by the nondelimited divine/human Self, which finds the diversity of existence inherently harmonious with their own being. In essence, the second journey centres on unity, while the third and fourth journeys emphasize diversity. However, the nature of this diversity differs from the diversity experienced in the first journey, as it is not marked by distracting multiplicity, but rather emerges from and is accompanied by a simultaneous and harmonious sense of unity. Rumi likens this journey to a reed that has been prepared through the processes of cutting (khalwah), cleansing (tawhid), and hollowing (wahda) in the previous stages, ready to produce an infinite range of melodies or to iron that has been removed from the embrace of fire and is now malleable, capable of assuming any desired form. Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey (1798/2012) beautifully captures the essence of this elevated state of selfhood as he recounts his experience of "that serene and blessed mood":

> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened: —that serene and blessed mood,
>
> In which the affections gently lead us on,

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame

And even the motion of our human blood

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul:

With an eye made quiet by the power

Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,

We see into the life of things. (1798/2012, ll. 39–49)

During a moment of introspection, Wordsworth seems to undergo a state of illumination where the weight of the "unintelligible world," symbolizing the perplexities of a questioning intellect that engenders divisions, is alleviated. The verses "the motion of our human blood/ Almost suspended, we are laid asleep/ in body" reflect the state of self-annihilation or "fana" in Sufism, where the seeker transcends their delimited self and unites with God. Similarly, "become a living soul" resonates with the notion of subsistence in God or "baqa," wherein the seeker experiences an enduring identification with God. Furthermore, the expression "Of harmony, and the deep power of joy/ We see into the life of things" echoes the state of the seeker in the third and fourth journeys, wherein the seeker finds themselves in a state of profound harmony and unification with everything that exists (Beyad & Vafa, 2021).

In the context of acculturation and as explained in the second chapter, the concept of "unity in diversity," which constitutes a salient feature of the second journey, refers to the notion that all religious, secular, and cultural traditions are fundamentally one, unified reality, and that apparent diversity and multiplicity are merely manifestations of this underlying unity. Conversely, "diversity in unity," which is the primary characterization of the third and particularly the fourth journey, suggests that while all traditions are ultimately one, each tradition possesses its own unique qualities and attributes, and this diversity is to be celebrated and appreciated rather than denied or suppressed. The key to understanding the relationship between unity and diversity is to recognize that they are not mutually exclusive but complementary aspects of the same reality. In this view, the diversity of traditions serves to manifest the unity of the society, while the unity of the society simultaneously encompasses and transcends all diversity. Symbolically speaking, just as the vibrant spectrum of colours beautifully unfolds in a rainbow, it reminds us that it is only through this very diversity that the unity of the colourless light, which gives birth to each hue, can find its manifestation. It also reminds us that the harmonious interplay

of diverse colours is not only a celebration of their individuality but also a testament to the encompassing and transcendent unity from which they emanate.

At this stage, immigrants enjoy a state of harmonious development with their nondelimited Self, transcending the dominance of any specific culturally constructed I-position. They embody a simultaneous identity and differentiation from all I-positions, seamlessly integrating the qualities of each position in perfect harmony with one another. By actively immersing themselves in newly constructed I-positions and simultaneously distancing themselves from previously ingrained I-positions, coupled with a dialogically critical examination and revision of each position during the preceding journey, immigrants can now situate each position appropriately without being limited or defined by it. While they may outwardly engage with certain positions more prominently, they remain unfixed and unbounded by any single position, exhibiting immense diversity and continual transformation in their inward forms. To borrow from Wordsworth's poetic language, they are a "living soul" devoid of fixed positions and thus capable of assuming any and all positions.

An important question arises regarding the possibility of an immigrant failing to emerge from the immersion process in the second journey and consequently assimilating into the host culture(s). In other words, what guarantees the emergence of the nondelimited Self subsequent to the complete annihilation of one's former cultural identity? While absolute assurances are elusive, maintaining an unwavering commitment to the exoteric aspects of one's heritage culture, including the observance of religious and cultural rituals, can serve as a protective shield against assimilative pressures. Integral to each journey, these rituals should assume a central role in immigrants' lived experiences. By engaging in these practices, immigrants reinforce their ties to their cultural roots, preserve their distinct identities, and fortify themselves against the potential erasure of their heritage within the host society. Therefore, these rituals should be regarded as essential components throughout the entirety of the immigrant's journey. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that similar to the spiritual journey, where any progression beyond the union or Tawhid phase solely rests upon the grace of God rather than human agency, the acculturation journey is also contingent upon the welcoming and accommodating nature of the host society. In essence, the sociocultural and political fabric of the host society acts as a decisive factor in determining whether the immigrant can withstand the assimilative pressures of cultural immersion, particularly as they intensify during the unity or Wahda phase. For example, if the host culture(s) resembles a melting pot, the likelihood of immigrants progressing to the nondelimited state of selfhood in the third journey can be significantly diminished. In societies

characterized by a strong melting pot dynamic, immigrants are advised to exercise caution when engaging in immersive interactions with the host society. It may even be more prudent to advance toward the union or Tawhid phase and maintain their position.

4.1.5. The Journey from Diversity to Diversity with Unity

In congruence with the insights previously conveyed, the fourth spiritual journey, known as Marifah, encompasses all the characteristics of the third journey, with the additional element of a bestowed social responsibility by God. Having completely embodied the divine attributes, the seeker is now entrusted by God with the task of disseminating His teachings among the inhabitants of the earth, liberating them from the confines of their delimited selfhood. In a manner akin to their own transformative passage, the seeker is now called upon to assist others, offering guidance and support at every juncture of their spiritual journey. In a state of profound harmony with the entirety of existence, seekers at this stage exhibit remarkable adeptness in traversing the intricate tapestry of diverse and, at times, conflicting cultural backgrounds. Their presence becomes an inviting and guiding force, compelling others to embark upon the journey toward unity. Notably, the universality of their message transcends the limitations of time and space, resonating with individuals far beyond their immediate context. Their words and guidance persistently endure, transcending temporal and geographical boundaries, thereby attesting to the timeless relevance of their wisdom. Rumi's poetic expression masterfully encapsulates the essence of the final journey, wherein he portrays himself as a prison breaker entrusted with the sacred task of dismantling the obstacles that impede humanity's journey toward unity with God.

> I have returned, like the new year, to break the locks of the prison,
>
> And smash the claws and teeth of these man-eating spheres.
>
> The seven waterless planets are devouring the creatures of earth,
>
> I will throw water upon their fire and still their winds.
>
> I have flown from the beginningless King like a falcon,
>
> In order to kill the parrot-eating owls of this ruined monastery.
>
> From the beginning I made a covenant to sacrifice my spirit to the King,
>
> May my spirit's back be broken should I break my pledge and covenant! (Trans. by Chittick, 1983, p. 346)

The significance of the fourth and third stages lies in their rarity among Sufis, as only a select few Sufis have reached these elevated states of being. While writing this chapter, I observed a noticeable scarcity of information on the last two journeys, in stark contrast to the abundance of literature available on the first two journeys. This scarcity reinforces the idea that most Muslim scholars prioritize the unity of existence over its multiplicity. As argued in the second chapter, this excessive emphasis on unity has yielded notable ramifications. On the one hand, among Muslim jurists and theologians, it has engendered exclusivist interpretations of Islam, limiting the recognition and acceptance of diverse perspectives. On the other hand, among Sufis and philosophers, it has fostered a dismissive attitude and contemptuous disregard for everything phenomenal as opposed to nonphenomenal or spiritual, thereby discouraging the empirical observation of phenomena that have been instrumental in propelling scientific progress in the Western world. In my perspective, this skewed focus on unity has contributed significantly to the stagnation of knowledge in the Muslim world in recent centuries. However, notable figures such as Ibn Arabi and Rumi challenge this prevailing perspective. They assert that seeing diversity in unity represents a more elevated spiritual station than seeing unity in diversity. This perspective is rooted in the belief that God's ultimate purpose in creating the cosmos was to manifest His absolute unity through differentiation, allowing Himself to be known through the existence of diverse creatures, as stated in the Hadith of "The Hidden Treasure" discussed in the second chapter. Consequently, diversity, driven by the Divine desire for differentiation, assumes a paramount role in the creation of all things, bestowing it with greater importance than unity alone.

The relevance of the fourth journey to the process of acculturation particularly lies in the social responsibility undertaken by immigrants who reach this stage. By embodying the essence of the fourth journey, these immigrants become catalysts for positive social change, facilitating the acculturation process by bridging cultural divides and fostering a climate of inclusivity and understanding. Their ability to navigate and reconcile diverse perspectives allows them to guide others in embracing the multiplicity of cultures while recognizing the underlying unity that binds them together. Furthermore, their capacity to balance unity and diversity effectively helps bridge the gap between the collective culture often associated with Muslim societies and the individualistic culture prevalent in the West. In doing so, they not only recognize the potential hazards of emphasizing unity over diversity, which may lead to exclusivity and a lack of appreciation for different cultural expressions, but also the perils of emphasizing diversity over unity, as is evident in the Western dominant spirit of "celebrating our differences," which has given rise to highly individualistic societies lacking a sense of communal spirit and belonging.

Furthermore, the fourth journey has significant practical implications for community leadership among immigrant diasporas. For example, the process of selecting leaders within Muslim communities should prioritize individuals who have successfully undergone the complete journey of acculturation, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in this process. It is disconcerting to observe that many Muslim communities frequently appoint permanent leaders or invite temporary lecturers from the Muslim world who lack direct experience as immigrants or are unfamiliar with the unique acculturative dynamics specific to the communities where they provide spiritual guidance. Such perception of spirituality as completely detached from the social, cultural, and political dimensions of life by Muslim communities represents a noticeable departure from the fundamental tenets of Islamic teachings. By neglecting to include individuals who possess firsthand knowledge of the acculturation journey, these communities risk missing out on the valuable insights and nuanced guidance that can only be provided by those who have successfully navigated the complexities of cultural transition. Therefore, to cultivate effective leadership and offer comprehensive support to community members, it is essential to prioritize appointing leaders who possess experiential wisdom derived from immersive engagement with the culture(s) they are tasked to lead. Such leaders can empathize with and understand the distinct needs and aspirations of their fellow immigrants and fellow citizens.

Last but certainly the most salient relevance of the fourth journey in the context of acculturation process is notably highlighted by the necessity of experiential identification or empathetic resonance of acculturation theorists with the immigrants they theorize about. This compelling factor, which propelled me to embark on the journey of writing this dissertation, underscores the essential role of experiential engagement in fostering empathetic understanding as a prerequisite for conceptualizing acculturation theories. While it may seem idealistic to require acculturation theorists to personally experience every stage of the aforementioned acculturation journey when theorizing about Muslim acculturation, parallels can be drawn from psychotherapy, where Martin and Dawda (1999) emphasize the necessity of a minimal degree of shared sociocultural tradition and experience for achieving therapeutic understanding. Likewise, acculturation theorists should possess a certain measure of shared social, cultural, and historical experience with the immigrant population under investigation. Without such experiential grounding, theorists risk conceptualizing acculturative phenomena without truly understanding the nuanced complexities experienced by immigrants. This limitation is exemplified in Bhatia's

objections to Berry's theory, stemming from Berry's failure to adequately capture the complex acculturation experiences of immigrants, which is evident in Bhatia's following statement:

> Such negotiations have not been adequately recognized or understood in many of the existing acculturation models. Motivated by our own experiences as non-European immigrants, we seek to extend and elaborate on current cross-cultural theories of acculturation in psychology in order to encompass some of the contradictions, complexities, and the local specificities involved in present day migrant experiences. (Bhatia & Ram, 2001b, p. 3)

Similarly, in this dissertation, I undertook the formidable task of delving into the subject matter due to the inadequacy of secular accounts of acculturation, as discussed in previous chapters, in capturing the theistic and epistemic intricacies of Muslim acculturation. By acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of existing theories, I intended to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in Muslim acculturation, providing a complementary imaginal perspective that encompasses the theistic aspects often overlooked in the mainstream rational discourse. I acknowledge that the proposed acculturation account sets a high standard and may be considered an ideal rather than a practical framework. Nonetheless, it is an ideal that should not be overlooked. With the growing number of Muslim immigrants in multicultural societies, there is justification to perceive Muslim acculturation as distinct. Therefore, it is crucial to not only explore this distinctiveness in theory but also incorporate it into legal and social practices within society at large.

In the forthcoming fifth chapter, I will delve into the educational implications arising from the account of acculturation presented thus far. The focal point will involve elucidating the alignment between the objectives of Islamic education and those of education within a Western context. By examining the implications of acculturation on education, I endeavour to provide theoretical insights and practical frameworks for promoting inclusive learning environments and nurturing the holistic development of individuals across familial, communal, cultural, social, and political landscapes.

Chapter 5.   Education

In this concluding chapter of my dissertation, I examine the goals of Islamic education, contrasting them with those of education within a Western context. The theme of unity versus diversity has been a constant thread throughout the preceding chapters. As I navigated through various theological and psychological discussions, I highlighted the distinctive perspective of Ibn Arabi, whose equal emphasis on the manyness and oneness of existence profoundly informs my examination of Muslim acculturation. In the second chapter, I explored this theme in the context of the diversity of religions and beliefs, illuminating how different belief systems and faiths converge upon a common anchor—the unity of the Real—without necessitating an endorsement of pluralism or relativism. Chapter three, in turn, unveiled the multifaceted nature of this theme through an exploration of the interplay between reason and imagination. In contrast to reason, which primarily establishes difference, imagination serves as a unifying force by fostering similarities and establishing bridges between entities. While reason categorizes objects as either the same or different, imagination possesses the unique capacity to perceive objects in a manner that transcends this dichotomy. It can concurrently recognize objects as both similar and different or as neither strictly similar nor entirely different. In chapter four, this theme was investigated in the context of Sufi journeys toward unity with God. I distinguished between Tawhid and Wahda, ultimately transcending the duality of unity and diversity. I mentioned that contrary to Tawhid, a composite state of negation and affirmation, Wahda, the culmination of Tawhid, is a unitary and indivisible state where unity and diversity are no longer opposites and can harmoniously coexist. As I venture into this final chapter, I revisit this overarching theme concerning the unity versus diversity paradigm. This exploration is situated within the context of unitary theistic objectives intrinsic to Islamic education, contrasting them with the multiplicitous secular goals underpinning Western education.

Throughout this chapter, my analysis will predominantly hinge on an examination and critical evaluation of the scholarly viewpoints put forth by the distinguished Islamic scholar William Chittick. Chittick's scholarly perspectives on education resonate closely with the central theme of unity versus diversity, thus serving as a foundation for this discourse. In brief, the central aim of this chapter is to undertake an inquiry focused on determining the viability of harmonizing the core objectives of Islamic education, rooted in unity, with those inherent to Western educational systems, rooted in diversity. The discourse surrounding unity and diversity serves as a guidepost, urging us to transcend binary debates and explore the intricate dance

between unity and diversity in education. It encourages us to craft educational systems that instill a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of knowledge while honouring the unique contributions of each discipline. For example, one practical aspect of this inquiry revolves around the exploration of integrating Muslim schools with public schools and the repercussions that ensue when addressing this pivotal question. Before discussing this theme, defining a few fundamental Islamic educational concepts is imperative.

5.1. Islamic Branches of Knowledge

The term "educate" originates from its Latin root, signifying the act of leading forth and pulling out. This Latin root reflects the fundamental idea that education involves not just imparting knowledge but also drawing out innate knowledge by guiding individuals toward self-realization (Chittick, 2011; Ravi, 2022). Hence, from a theistic perspective, discussions on teaching (leading forth) and guidance (pulling out), integral to education, are not confined to the earthly realm but extend to considerations of the hereafter. This consideration emerges from the unique human condition. As explored in chapter two, humans hold a unique position distinct from other creatures by virtue of their creation in the divine image. They are bestowed with varying degrees of the divine attribute of Desiring, granting them the potential to embody every divine attribute. The exclusive presence of this attribute of desire inherently emphasizes the need for guidance. In essence, any being driven by desire requires guidance to avoid straying from the path of fulfillment. Thus, from this vantage point, the imperative of education for humans becomes evident as a means to actualize their potentialities by way of transmission, intellection, and inspiration.

This idea seamlessly aligns with the Islamic perspective on education, which encompasses the transmission of knowledge, termed "transmitted knowledge" (ulum naqli), as well as the process of drawing out knowledge, referred to as "intellectual knowledge" (ulum aqli) and "inspired knowledge" (ulum kashfi). Transmitted knowledge, as the name suggests, relies on the passing down of information from one generation to another. It is a knowledge that can only be obtained through the instruction of others. For instance, social sciences and history are classic examples of areas where transmitted knowledge prevails. Individuals gain this knowledge through hearsay, learning from authorities, or adhering to established customs and traditions. In essence, it depends on external sources for its acquisition. Transmitted knowledge, in the context of revealed religions, is knowledge acquired through divine revelation or religious texts. Islamic

theology (kalam) and jurisprudence (fiqh) are considered transmitted knowledge since they are primarily based on the Quran and Hadith.

In contrast, intellectual knowledge is knowledge acquired through human reason or intellect. It cannot be transmitted from one person to another, although teacher guidance can help in the process. It primarily relies on human intellect and empirical observation as independent sources of authority. Mathematics, philosophy, and natural sciences are considered intellectual knowledge because they rely on human reason and empirical evidence. This type of knowledge necessitates the training and refinement of the mind. Philosophy is often cited as an example of intellectual knowledge. Unlike transmitted knowledge, which relies on authority and external sources, the individual discovers and understands intellectual knowledge independently. The law of causality in philosophy is an example of intellectual knowledge. For instance, you do not need an authority to tell you that when you strike a match (cause), it produces a flame (effect), or one's volition or intention (cause) leads to a specific action or behaviour (effect). Once comprehended, it becomes self-evident and carries its proof in the very act of knowing it.

Inspired knowledge is cultivated through intuition. It can be triggered and nurtured by transmitted knowledge and intellectual knowledge but resides independently within each individual, waiting to be awakened. It requires individuals to embark on a journey of self-awareness. In a theistic context, it is a divinely endowed knowledge. It often refers to finding the inner dimensions of faith in oneself and for oneself by committing to acts of devotion that bring about closeness to God or what many Islamic scholars call "polishing the heart." The concept of gravity serves as a comprehensive example encompassing the three forms of knowledge. Transmitted knowledge arises when people unarguably trust scientific authorities' explanations of gravity. Intellectual knowledge emerges when individuals observe phenomena like a falling leaf and logically deduce the presence of an unseen force. Inspired knowledge, on the other hand, represents a personal and intuitive understanding of gravity, where individuals feel weighted, be it through self-discovery or external guidance. The critical distinction between these three forms of knowledge becomes apparent when we consider the concepts of "imitation" (taqlid), "verification" (ta'qul), and "realization" (tahqiq).

Transmitted knowledge, on the one hand, primarily involves imitation. To become a part of a particular religion, culture, society, or academic discipline, one must learn from existing members by imitating their practices, beliefs, and intellectual findings. This process is how language, culture, religious rituals, legal systems, and scientific theories are passed down. In the

Islamic intellectual tradition, Taqlid refers to following established religious scholars or jurists in matters of Islamic law and jurisprudence. Those who practice Taqlid, known as Muqallids, rely on the legal opinions (fatwas) of recognized scholars in matters of practice without engaging in personal independent legal reasoning. Muqallids accept the legal rulings of a specific school of Islamic jurisprudence and follow the interpretations provided by scholars of that school. Taqlid is typically followed by individuals who do not have the expertise or knowledge to engage in independent legal reasoning (ijtihad). It ensures consistency and avoids personal interpretation. Ijtihad is independent legal reasoning and interpretation in Islamic jurisprudence. A person who performs Ijtihad is known as a Mujtahid. It involves deriving legal rulings directly from the foundational sources of Islamic law, including the Quran and Hadith, using analogical reasoning (qiyas) and other juristic methods. A Mujtahid has the authority to interpret Islamic law and provide legal rulings on various issues. Ijtihad requires a deep understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and legal principles. Mujtahids are the pioneers of Islamic legal thought and have the authority to adapt Islamic jurisprudence to changing societal contexts and new issues by issuing Fatwas independently. Nonetheless, Muqallids and Mujtahids are almost entirely engaged in transmitted learning rooted in Taqlid.

Intellectual knowledge, on the other hand, is rooted in verification. Someone who engages in Ta'qul, known as Aqil, relies on the faculty of intellect and rational thought. They are required to understand not only the "what" but also the "why" behind a particular concept. In intellectual pursuits like mathematics and philosophy, simply accepting information from any authority other than one's intellect (aql) is insufficient. Understanding the underlying principles and reasons is crucial. The distinction between Ta'qul and Taqlid represents a fundamental contrast in Islamic thought and intellectual inquiry. Ta'qul embodies the spirit of critical thinking, independent inquiry, and intellectual rigour. It involves the sincere search for truth and understanding through personal reflection, deep contemplation, and a direct engagement with primary sources and texts. Those who engage in Ta'qul are often seen as independent thinkers and scholars who strive to comprehend the deeper layers of Islamic teachings, transcending mere surface-level interpretations. In this realm, imitation often practiced by Muqallids and Mujtahids is seen as a characteristic of beginners or students, not masters. Ta'qul plays a fundamental role in understanding the relationship between reason and revelation in Islam. Islamic philosophers, such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Mulla Sadra, explored the relationship between human reason (aql) and divine revelation (wahy). They sought to harmonize the insights of philosophy with the teachings of Islam without relying on the authority of religious texts, emphasizing the

compatibility of reason and faith. This explains why, in Islam, Taqlid is permissible exclusively in practical matters linked to Shariah, while it is strictly forbidden in fundamental principles concerning Tawhid, Prophecy, and the Return. In simpler terms, it is not considered acceptable for a Muslim to profess belief in God, Muhammad, and the hereafter solely because their parents or the great religious authorities have done so.

Contrastingly, inspired knowledge emerges through personal realization, albeit it typically requires a trigger or awakening within one's consciousness. An individual who possesses Tahqiq, known as a Muhaqqiq, comprehends matters through direct realization or intuition, bypassing the need for transmitted or intellectual knowledge. This is akin to how everyone is immediately aware of their state of consciousness without relying on a prophet for such knowledge (transmitted knowledge) or a philosopher to expound a theory of self (intellectual knowledge). The term Tahqiq is rooted in the same Arabic linguistic origin as "haqq," signifying truth, reality, appropriateness, rightness, responsibility, and duty. The problem with Tahqiq, however, is that a Muhaqqiq can only understand the haqq of things in oneself and for oneself. Hence, although they can intuit the haqq of things, they may not be able to act and fulfill their social responsibilities accordingly unless equipped with transmitted knowledge and intellectual knowledge, which are the most appropriate worldly means of disseminating knowledge. This is why, within the Sufi tradition, which primarily focuses on the pursuit of Tahqiq, numerous Sufis have been known to exhibit behaviours and expressions, referred to as "shathiyat," that may appear inappropriate to external observers, despite the truth and rightness of their intuitions. To illustrate, consider the realm of selfhood theories. Theorists who rely on Tahqiq or intuition to argue for the immaterial and continuous nature of the self may articulate their theories in ways that lack intellectual verifiability or support from transmitted knowledge, be it from the scriptures or empirical evidence.

To conclude, in Islam, the only reliable knowledge is that which is revealed through transmission, verified through intellection, realized through intuition, and responsibly practiced through volition. Consistent with the journeys outlined in the previous chapter and the insights of contemporary Muslim scholars, such knowledge can be called "marifah," representing the fruit of the final stage of the journey. The word "marifah" in Arabic originates in the root word "arafa," which simultaneously encompasses meanings of knowing, verifying, and realizing. This root word appears in the Quran and Hadith in various forms and contexts. An individual who embodies Marifah, known as Arif, fulfills their responsibility toward themselves, God, and creation on the basis of knowledge that is simultaneously rooted in transmission (taqlid),

intellection (ta'qul), and inspiration (tahqiq). Therefore, from this perspective, the goal of Islamic education is to encourage Marifah while simultaneously discouraging knowledge that is independently rooted in Taqlid, Ta'qul, or Tahqiq. In other words, the ultimate goal of Islamic educational institutions should be to nurture Arifs and not Muqallids, Mujtahids (jurists), Aqils (philosophers), or even Muhaqqiqs (Sufis).

5.2.   The Reign of Takthir

Several conflicts between Islamic and Western education, particularly regarding the core Islamic principle of Tawhid, become evident in Chittick's analysis. As Chittick (2011) outlines, modern education claims to be grounded in "science" and seeks authority through its "scientific" nature, emphasizing multiplicity and empirical observation accessible through the senses. It primarily dismisses knowledge that is not empirically verifiable, a viewpoint that Chittick argues is at odds with Islamic learning, which centers on the sole true and reliable knowledge of Tawhid, asserting that nothing is real but the Ultimate Reality. According to Chittick (2011), contemporary notions of education in the West are profoundly incompatible with Islamic conceptions of human nature. The latter is firmly anchored in the triad of principles integral to Islamic thought: Tawhid (the oneness of God), prophecy (the acceptance of divinely appointed prophets as messengers of God), and the ultimate return to God (the belief in the afterlife and judgment). As elucidated by Chittick, these principles, profoundly grounded in the notion of unity (oneness), serve as guiding beacons for the human soul/self in its journey toward unity with God. In contrast, Western educational ideals, significantly influenced by Enlightenment philosophies, tend to gravitate towards a paradigm rooted in diversity (manyness), closely aligned with the pragmatic exigencies of modern states.

While the scientific approach has proven effective in controlling both the environment and individuals, particularly in governance, the military, and industry, it carries the risk of elevating scientific knowledge to the status of the sole valid knowledge, a perspective Chittick refers to as "scientism." According to Chittick (2011), scientism asserts that truth is exclusively accessible through science, a viewpoint often challenged by conscientious scientists who recognize it as an ideological stance without an empirical basis. Nevertheless, as Chittick observes, scientism remains a prominent element of the modern worldview, with many giving precedence to the truth claims of science over those of religion. In this framework, science, according to Chittick (2011), is often regarded as the arbiter of knowledge and objective reality, while religion is relegated to the subjective realm of opinions and emotions.

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While contemporary scientists, according to Chittick (2013), seek unity in their search for comprehensive theories of nature and the universe, the predominant theories of today's scientific and academic disciplines are manifestations of Takthir. Tawhid, deriving from Wahda, oneness, asserts the unity of God and the Ultimate Reality, while Takthir, originating from Kathra, manyness, posits the multiplicity of reality. Chittick (2011, 2013) points out that this Takthir worldview implicitly or explicitly denies Tawhid, replacing One Reality with many realities, leading to the fragmentation of human knowledge and various conflicts and discord. Chittick emphasizes that Takthir is not inherently negative, and some Muslim philosophers used the term to describe the act by which God creates the world of multiplicity. However, Chittick contends that humans are called to transcend Takthir, perceiving beyond the multiplicity and discord governing the visible realm. The duty, according to Chittick, is to establish Tawhid, promoting unity, harmony, balance, equilibrium, and peace, beginning with the individual. Chittick (2011) contrasts this with modern thought, which believes in imposing a system on society for harmony, wherein individuals conform to the imposed system. As Chittick puts it, "Traditional [Islamic] thought says, 'Begin with yourself.' Modern [Western] thought says, 'Reform others (2011, p. 89).'"

Chittick (2013) contends that the scientific worldview, characterized by "Takthir without Tawhid," often results in the ever-increasing specialization within various scientific, social, and humanistic disciplines. This specialization can become so pronounced that faculty members in a single department may rarely possess awareness of each other's work. The consequence of this phenomenon is a profound disintegration of any coherent vision of human nature within the modern university. The intense focus on narrow areas of expertise renders individual sciences virtually unintelligible to anyone but the experts themselves, and the overall structure of science and learning becomes overwhelmingly complex and opaque. Consequently, when Takthir rules over human thought, as Chittick (2013) argues, the outcome is not merely differentiation, distinction, and disunity but also the isolation of knowledge, inhibiting the synthesis of diverse perspectives and impeding the development of holistic insights.

In contrast, Chittick (2013) highlights that the traditional Islamic worldview is characterized by "Takthir in the service of Tawhid," where disciplines like mathematics, astronomy, and medicine were developed in highly sophisticated ways, always within the greater vision of Tawhid. The Islamic intellectual framework began with the foundational belief in God's reality and the unity of the ultimately Real. This belief anchored all understanding of the world in terms of God—the Ultimate Reality. According to Chittick, knowledge of the world that does not

contextualize it within its Transcendent Source is, in essence, ignorance, as it prevents individuals from perceiving things as they truly are. Chittick clarifies that within Islamic intellectual tradition, four primary areas of inquiry dominated the concerns of Muslim intellectuals: metaphysics, cosmology, spiritual psychology, and ethics. Notably, the various branches of intellectual learning that resembled what we now classify as "science" primarily focused on secondary issues within cosmology. Most Muslim intellectuals viewed these issues not as separate and independent realms but as complementary domains seeking to illuminate primary topics. Hence, according to Chittick (2013), at the core of Islamic intellectuality was its unitary vision. The sciences were not isolated disciplines but interconnected fields of inquiry. Investigation into the external world, the domain of cosmology, was believed to yield insight into the internal world, the realm of spiritual psychology. This interrelationship among intellectual fields, especially evident in cosmology and spiritual psychology, exemplifies the unitary vision that characterized Islamic thought.

Chittick (2013) notes that the Western tradition diverged from this Islamic perspective, particularly in the Enlightenment era. While the Islamic tradition emphasized understanding the knowing self, recognizing its integral role within a greater whole, the Western Enlightenment thinkers, often considered the progenitors of modern thought, largely disregarded the complementarity of the soul and the cosmos. This divergence underscored a fundamental difference between the two traditions: the inseparability of the knowing self from the cosmos in the Islamic worldview versus its relative neglect in the Western Enlightenment tradition.

Chittick's professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2012), further explains why this situation is problematic for the Islamic world, emphasizing the urgent need to reintegrate Islamic education. Nasr underscores that Islam is fundamentally rooted in Tawhid and that educating students within the framework of two disparate worldviews fostering a compartmentalized mindset is fundamentally debilitating. In Nasr's view, the current educational landscape, prevalent even in Western universities, compartmentalizes knowledge, and religion remains intellectually marginalized, as if unrelated to other disciplines. Nasr echoes the concern that a compartmentalized mind is increasingly prevalent among students today. He warns that this intellectual segregation can lead to sclerosis, akin to a sign of old age, potentially stifling intellectual growth. For a civilization to thrive, Nasr (2012) insists that its facets of life and knowledge must be interrelated, a principle particularly pertinent to Islamic civilization, grounded in unity. He critically observes that many individuals in the Islamic world, regardless of their form of government, have adopted a scientistic approach, where modern science occupies a

preeminent intellectual space, sometimes overshadowing Islamic values. Nasr emphasizes that this is not an argument against studying modern sciences but a call for their integration into an overarching Islamic worldview. He believes that Muslims should not merely embrace modern science but also undertake the critical task of integrating scientific knowledge, even those beyond the rational and empirical realms, into a coherent Islamic cosmology and worldview. Ultimately, Nasr (2012) underscores that an integral and integrated educational system is essential for nurturing a holistic understanding of knowledge, which is crucial for the intellectual vitality and survival of the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Chittick's perspective on education posits that Tawhid represents a vision that individuals must strive to attain, emphasizing self-realization and personal understanding. Without the quest for understanding, Chittick argues, individuals remain ignorant and forgetful, regardless of their mastery of various disciplines rooted in Takthir, such as science, engineering, history, and medicine.

> It is characteristic of modern times that any discussion of "education" revolves around the needs of states and societies. These needs are defined in terms of the multiple gods that rule over the worldview of takthīr. These gods are well known to everyone, because they determine the orientation of modern societies and are constantly discussed by politicians and ideologues. People assume that these gods are good gods, and that if they worship the gods by devoting effort to achieving what they promise, they will be happy. Worship of these gods is part of the modern ethos and is taken for granted, just as tawhīd was part of the pre-modern ethos and was taken for granted. In many contexts today it is dangerous to speak against the gods of takthīr, because the worshipers of these gods are fanatics who possess a great deal of social and political power. Nonetheless, we should be realistic and acknowledge the names of the ruling gods of our times. No list could be exhaustive, because there are so many gods. But these names are representative: freedom, democracy, science, medicine, technology, progress, development, equality, education. The worship of the god "education" is held in the highest esteem. All the other gods encourage us to attend at the temples of this god, for education trains people to reject the ancient gods and to abandon the principles of traditional thought—that is, tawhīd, prophecy, and the Return. Education in this sense is everywhere a primary concern of politicians and states. States must provide education, they must train people in the worldview of takthīr and accustom them to worship at the temples of the many gods. The least responsibility of Muslims in this situation should be to acknowledge that modern education is destructive of the goals of tawhīd. Without acknowledging the dead ends of ideology and the worthless promises of paradise made by politicians, there will be no hope for people to follow the Straight Path. (Chittick, 2011, p. 91)

In summary, Chittick's perspective highlights the inherent incompatibility between modern and traditional Islamic education. Modern education, as Chittick suggests, predominantly aligns with the Takthir worldview, which is marked by its emphasis on multiplicity, empirical observation, and a scientific approach. On the other hand, traditional Islamic education is firmly grounded in the principle of Tawhid, emphasizing the oneness of God and His ultimate unity. A critical examination suggests that these paradigms may not be as dichotomous as portrayed by Chittick (2011, 2013). This dichotomous worldview is a subject that has been rigorously examined and critically appraised over the course of the past three chapters, offering an exploration of pathways to transcend this dualistic paradigm.

5.3. The Reign of Tawhid

Chittick (2013) predominantly focuses on the hazards associated with "Takthir without Tawhid," a viewpoint he contends is emblematic of mainstream Western thought, particularly in the post-Enlightenment era. Given his Western background, it is understandable that he gravitates towards addressing the most pressing issues within his own cultural milieu. However, it is crucial to acknowledge this perspective while evaluating his viewpoint. This acknowledgment does not diminish his commitment to the revitalization of Islamic civilization, as a substantial portion of his work is dedicated to this cause. Yet, it underscores the need to recognize the origins of his perspective. Consequently, it becomes evident that Chittick's emphasis on the perils of "Tawhid without Takthir" remains somewhat limited. This perspective, I argue, constitutes the root of the challenges facing the Muslim world, especially concerning the foundations of its education.

The prevailing pursuit of unity, divorced from a concurrent recognition of diversity, a condition often referred to as "Tawhid without Takthir," introduces a host of potential perils within various segments of Muslim scholars. As discussed in chapter two, foremost among these perils can be seen in an exclusive interpretation of Islam among Mujtahids and their respective Muqallids, who constitute the majority of the Muslim population. This particular perspective embraced by Mujtahids engenders an exclusivist outlook on Islam, contending that Islam alone is the sole religion acceptable to God. It represents a numerical conception of Tawhid, asserting that God is singular instead of an existential Tawhid, which conceives of God's oneness as encompassing the entirety of reality. The numerical interpretation of Tawhid, in which the belief in God's oneness precludes the acknowledgment of any other deities, serves as the foundational premise. Exclusivism, while contentious, represents the less extreme manifestation of this perspective and can be discerned among Mujtahids. However, the Muqallids, who are only

allowed to follow them in matters of practice and not belief (i.e., Tawhid, prophecy, and the Return), thoughtlessly extend this exclusivity to more radical extents, sometimes veering into Islamic extremism and dogmatism. This extremity finds expression in various forms, ranging from the ideologies of Islamic terrorist groups to the autocratic regimes prevailing in numerous Muslim-majority nations across the globe.

The perspective of "Tawhid without Takthir" assumed a distinct form among Muslim philosophers, often referred to as Aqils. Their interpretation of Tawhid was inherently existential rather than numerical. However, they grappled with the challenge of transcending the duality inherent in the concepts of unity and diversity. Instead of transcending this duality, they formulated theories that accentuated the primacy of "One" over "many." This philosophical articulation closely aligns with Chittick's earlier assertion regarding the role of "Takthir in the service of Tawhid." Using the terminology introduced in the preceding chapter, it becomes apparent that a significant portion of Muslim intellectuals remained entrenched in the realm of Tawhid, symbolizing union or " la ilaha illa Allah," without progressing to the stage of Wahda, signifying unity or "la huwa illa huwa." The pronounced emphasis on the primacy of unity over diversity, a philosophical stance referred to as Tawhidism or monism, engendered a certain stagnation in branches of knowledge rooted in diversity. Even when these diverse fields were explored, it was often solely to the extent that they could shed light on or unravel the complexities of the overarching unity. This propensity towards Tawhidistic idealism contributed to a state of intellectual stasis within the Muslim world, particularly evident in disciplines concerned with the study of the cosmos.

The situation is no different among advocates of inspired knowledge, particularly within Sufism. Much like proponents of intellectual knowledge, such as philosophers, Sufis also adhered to a dualistic worldview. However, their dualism was not intellectual, but rather intuitive. Within Sufism, intuitive dualism commences with asceticism, involving a deliberate abstention from all that is worldly. It culminates in a state of spiritual intoxication or ecstasy, marked by an involuntary detachment from all aspects of the material world. This state of intoxication is induced by the mesmerizing and enchanting vision of Tawhid, wherein one becomes transfixed by the unified reality underlying all existence, rendering them incapable of perceiving or appreciating multiplicity. The intuitive intoxication experienced by Sufis within the beguiling worldview of Tawhid has also significantly contributed to the stagnation of knowledge in the Muslim world. It is as if the allure of Tawhid's worldview ensnares them such that they struggle

to re-engage with multiplicity. Even when they do, their contributions often emphasize nothing but disdain for and detachment from Takthir.

To break it down, the prevailing worldview among Mujtahids can be best described as "Tawhid without Takthir," giving rise to tendencies of exclusivism among them, which consequently foster extremism and dogmatism within their respective Muqallids. This outlook tends to deter open engagement with alternative perspectives, thereby impeding interfaith dialogue and growth. Such exclusivism often emerges, where specific factions assert an exclusive right to the "correct" interpretation of fundamental principles, potentially marginalizing those with differing beliefs. Moreover, it can fuel intolerance, discrimination, and resistance to change, ultimately resulting in the erosion of the cultural and religious heritage of minority groups, the fragmentation of societies composed of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, and, consequently, a fracture in social cohesion that obstructs progress.

Conversely, the approach predominant among Muslim philosophers can best be described as "Takthir in the service of Tawhid." This approach carries the inherent risk of intellectual stagnation as it cultivates an insurmountable dualistic worldview wherein the study of many is perpetually subservient to the study of One, as if One and many are fundamentally incomparable. This perspective may discourage critical inquiry into the realm of multiplicity, potentially impeding innovation and the realization of more advanced societies. This viewpoint fails to acknowledge that, for many to be appropriately subordinate to One, it must first be comprehensively explored and understood. Since there is no limit to understanding One, it follows that there should be no limits to comprehending many so long as the intellectual is committed to observing the ethical responsibilities that come with such knowledge.

Drawing upon the worldview that prevails among Sufis, it can be best described as "Takthir in favour of Tawhid." In this perspective, many are often disdained and overshadowed in favour of seeking closeness to One. They are ultimately disregarded in a state of spiritual intoxication that arises from the favourable ecstasy of closeness to One. Proponents of this perspective are often too busy rejoicing in their intuition of One that they deem any discussion of exclusivity, inclusivity, and primacy of One over many undertaken by Mujtahids and philosophers as worldly distractions. They have only found the truth in themselves and for themselves and are often too intellectually underequipped to effectively transmit their intuitive insights to others. This explains why there is so much historical stigma associated with the term "Sufi" in the Islamic intellectual tradition, to the extent that many contemporary Muslim scholars

have opted for the term "Arif" in an effort to make possible the revival of the profound teachings of Sufi luminaries like Ibn Arabi and Rumi, who possessed and embodied a comprehensive understanding of all the aforementioned branches of knowledge.

While Chittick focused on the risks associated with "Takthir without Tawhid," which involves differentiation, distinction, disunity, disharmony, dispersion, and disequilibrium, my emphasis has been on the dangers of "Tawhid without Takthir." This perspective encompasses issues like exclusivism, intolerance, discrimination, dogmatism, extremism, violence, Tawhidistic idealism, intellectual stagnation, and excessive asceticism. For instance, one critical concern, particularly among Muslim philosophers, is the prevailing notion that it is not within the purview of a theorist to engage in practical discourses or the translation of the philosophical tenets they espouse into social, political, cultural, educational, and artistic forms. In contrast to their predecessors during the Islamic Golden Age, who were not only well-versed in many disciplines rooted in Tawhid and Takthir but also actively engaged in practical endeavours aligned with their intellectual pursuits, contemporary scholars often advocate for a more circumscribed role: one solely dedicated to theoretical contemplation, with practical application, delegated to others.

This widely, albeit implicitly, accepted approach has created a significant gap between theory and practice within the Islamic intellectual tradition, a schism fundamentally rooted in Tawhidistic idealism. In contrast, Western scholars actively engage with intellectuals from diverse backgrounds. They foster intellectual exchange and collaboration by delivering lectures and participating in international conferences. Their approach involves translating complex philosophical ideas into accessible language, disseminating the practical implications of their scholarship, and broadening their global audience. Notably, one of the defining strengths of Western civilization lies in its ability to effectively translate theory into practical application. This capacity is attributed to their robust engagement with Takthir. However, it is important to note that practicality, on its own, is not inherently virtuous; it must be accompanied by the unifying vision of Tawhid to establish ethical boundaries and foster a singular sense of meaning and purpose.

Additionally, Chittick appears to be somewhat confused about the concept of danger when he posits, "In many contexts today it is dangerous to speak against the gods of takthīr, because the worshipers of these gods are fanatics who possess a great deal of social and political power (Chittick, 2013, p. 91)." However, to my knowledge, he has continued his scholarly pursuits in the West without apparent adversity after writing this piece. Nevertheless, if he had

expressed similar viewpoints concerning the God of Tawhid in specific Muslim-majority nations, including the one where he acquired most of his Islamic education, the likely consequences would have included criminal charges, imprisonment, academic dismissal, and even physical harm, such as torture, capital punishment, or becoming a target of terrorism by zealous individuals. I must emphasize that my intention is not to promote Islamophobia or similar sentiments. Rather, I aim to underscore that the perils associated with "Tawhid without Takthir," which Chittick appears to have given limited attention to in various works I have encountered, can be equally or potentially more detrimental than the risks stemming from "Takthir without Tawhid."

5.4. Transcending Dualism

The perspective I have consistently championed throughout this dissertation, drawing from the teachings of Arifs like Ibn Arabi and Rumi, can be best encapsulated as "Tawhid in Takthir and Takthir in Tawhid," or simply put, "unity in diversity and diversity in unity." This perspective places equal importance on unity and diversity, recognizing their interdependence, and it represents the culmination of the transformative journey detailed in the preceding chapter. When Ibn Arabi delves into this perspective, he often invokes a Quranic verse: *"He who is God in the heavens is also God on the earth; He is the Wise, the Knower (43:84)."* His interpretation of this verse does not entail merely "seeing unity in diversity," a characteristic of the inherently dualistic stage of Tawhid, but rather "seeing diversity in unity," a prominent feature of the non-dualistic stage of Wahda, as explained in the previous chapter. This verse suggests that God is equally present here on earth, in the realm of multiplicity, the same God who reigns in the unitary realms of heaven. This interpretation sharply contrasts with the common hierarchical understanding of Reality prevalent among Muslim philosophers, rooted in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra, which posits that existence is graded. According to this philosophy, the invisible realm holds a greater reality than the visible one, and owing to its relative unreality, the world of multiplicity should always remain subservient to the more real world of unity (Chittick, 2013; Rizvi, 2009). Such an interpretation aligns with the typical function of reason, which tends to dissect, organize, classify, and prioritize elements to facilitate comprehension[47]. However, as the

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[47] . Mulla Sadra underwent a significant shift in his philosophical orientation, aligning more closely with Ibn Arabi's concept of the "personal (shakhsi) unity of existence." This marked a departure from his earlier standpoint, primarily rooted in the notion of the "hierarchical (tashkiki) unity of existence."

Quranic verse implies, Reality remains constant, whether in the unitary invisible realm of heaven or the multiplicitous visible world of the earth.

To illustrate this concept, I recall an insight shared by one of my spiritual mentors that has left an indelible mark on my understanding. He conveyed that an Arif takes equal delight in witnessing God in the most exalted spiritual states as in encountering the lifeless body of the most repulsive creature on earth. In fact, they find delight in bearing witness to the existence of things, and because both God and the humblest of creatures share in the essence of existence, the joy derived from this realization remains seamlessly the same. Rumi portrays this even more eloquently when he writes about his vision of Wahda:

> Since I am ever at peace with this Father,
>
> This world is like Paradise in my sight.
>
> At every moment (appears) a new form and a new beauty,
>
> So that from seeing the new (visions) ennui dies away.
>
> I see the world to be full of bounty,
>
> The waters constantly gushing from the springs. (4:3263-3265)

In essence, Tawhid worldview inherently embodies a duality. As long as Muslim scholars remain stuck in this worldview in its different forms, as previously discussed, there exists a risk that many Muslims may succumb to one side of this duality. Again, as Rumi has artistically articulated it, "to unify form [many] with such deep-seated essence [One]/ is not possible except by a sovereign king (3:1393)." Without advancing toward Wahda worldview, the root of Tawhid and a perspective exclusive to Muhammad's religion, as expounded upon in chapter two, it is improbable that the unfortunate state of affairs in the Muslim world will witness any substantial improvement.

Chittick's dualistic perspective becomes increasingly apparent as he discusses his views on education and the role of the individual self. He succinctly captures this dichotomy by asserting, "Traditional thought says, 'Begin with yourself.' Modern thought says, 'Reform others (2011, p. 89).'" This statement highlights the fundamental divide between two worldviews: one that emphasizes personal development and another that focuses on societal change.

> No recovery of the [Islamic] intellectual tradition will be possible until individuals take steps for themselves. The tradition can never be recovered by imitation or by

community action, only by individual dedication and personal realization. Governments and committees cannot begin to solve the problem. Understanding cannot be imposed or legislated, it can only grow up in the heart. (Chittick, 2013, p. 21)

The above quote from Chittick also reinforces this dualism. In this view, governments and social institutions are seen as incapable of beginning to solve the problem, and true understanding can only emerge from within the hearts of individuals. Nevertheless, it is crucial to subject this standpoint to critical examination. Chittick seems to present a binary between the individual self and the societal context it inhabits. This perspective implies that the individual self can be developed independently of its historical, social, and political environment, a perspective that is not only in contrast with many contemporary conceptions of selfhood but also at odds with the scripture (16:78, 3:137, 22:46) as well as his own expressed views elsewhere regarding the complementarity of the self and the cosmos (Chittick, 2013). It is essential to note that Chittick's concept of understanding does not pertain to ordinary cognitive processes like reflective thinking and memorization; rather, it delves into the fundamental essence of human existence, namely, consciousness and awareness. While it is accurate that such understanding cannot be forcibly imposed or legislated, it is equally true that this understanding is exceedingly challenging to initiate within an individual in the absence of appropriate external stimuli and support. This aligns with the underlying philosophy behind the emergence of revealed religions, whose primary objective is to awaken individuals to this level of understanding. Societal structures, educational systems, cultural norms, laws, and policies all play a significant role in veiling or unveiling individual understanding. Even if such understanding begins with the individual, as in the case of rare Sufis often identified as "majzub salik," it will predominantly remain within the individual with limited outward manifestations that benefit the society at large. This is evident in some Sufi traditions advocating asceticism and withdrawing from societal engagement.

In contrast to Chittick's viewpoint, many contemporary thinkers argue that understanding is not solely attained through individual endeavour but a complex interplay between personal dedication and external influences. In chapter four, I explored this theme, particularly within the context of acculturation, explaining how individuals, especially immigrants, attain such an understanding or, as I have articulated, realize their nondelimited state of selfhood. Unlike Chittick, I posit that such understanding is deeply entwined with what modern Western scholars refer to as "contextual factors." Within the context of my theistic approach, these factors manifest as "divine names and attributes." As expounded upon in chapter four, this understanding is triggered by the context, realized, and developed through a complex interplay between the

individual self and the surrounding names and attributes in the cultural immersion process. As this understanding deepens, it becomes an integral part of the individual, subsisting within them. Eventually, it permeates into the wider society, serving as a beneficial force for society at large.

In essence, Chittick's perspective highlights a duality between individual agency and societal influence in the quest for knowledge and understanding. While he champions the importance of personal dedication, it is essential to recognize that the relationship between the individual and society is so inextricably interconnected that it is almost impossible for one to succeed in any meaningful way independently of the other. Nevertheless, I share many of Chittick's perspectives regarding the multiplicitous objectives of Western education. Where our views diverge is in his assertion of an irreconcilable duality between the Tawhid worldview and the Takthir worldview, which he suggests inherently clashes the goals of Islamic education with those of Western education. As previously discussed, these two worldviews can be reconciled if Wahda worldview is adopted. In what follows, I will discuss a prominent practical implication of adopting Wahda worldview in the context of the education of Muslim children in the West.

5.5. Educational Implications

In the context of traditional Islamic education, the purpose of searching for understanding or knowledge was spiritual transformation. This was understood to involve total conformity with the divine attributes and character traits, equally embodying attributes that manifest the name "al-Wahid" (the One) and those that manifest the name "al-Mukaththir" (He who creates the many). It was often called "takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah," which means assuming the character traits of God as one's own. It had three complementary dimensions. First, it meant to realize such understanding within oneself, establishing a solid foundation for the rest of the human journey. Second, it necessitated the practical application of this comprehension in all facets of thought and activity, thereby manifesting the divine attributes in one's conduct. Finally, it mandated disseminating this understanding into the broader fabric of society, functioning as a source of human fulfillment. It is evident that attaining these goals is not feasible unless individuals are adequately versed in all the aforementioned branches of knowledge.

The principles of Tawhid and Takthir call for a delicate balance that transcends any duality. Their relevance becomes apparent as we consider how they guide our approach to fostering holistic and inclusive learning environments. In essence, Tawhid and Takthir present two distinct yet complementary paradigms in education. The former, rooted in unity, epitomizes

Islamic education, embracing a holistic approach that seeks unity in the diversity of knowledge disciplines. Meanwhile, the latter, grounded in diversity, represents Western education, celebrated for its inclusivity and commitment to acknowledging the multiplicity inherent in various fields of study.

A holistic education, inspired by Tawhid, is characterized by its commitment to a unified vision of knowledge. It views diverse disciplines not as isolated islands but as interconnected facets of a larger whole. In this educational framework, the pursuit of knowledge is a journey toward recognizing the divine unity underlying the multiplicity of human understanding. It strives to foster a profound sense of interconnectedness among various branches of knowledge, emphasizing the harmony that exists when they are viewed as contributing threads to the same tapestry of knowledge. This, in turn, equips students to apply knowledge across different contexts. This approach often focuses on nurturing the whole individual, not just academically but also emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually, and ethically. It can promote personal growth, self-awareness, and a sense of purpose.

Conversely, inclusive education, grounded in Takthir, thrives on diversity or multiplicity. It cherishes the richness of different knowledge domains, acknowledging that each discipline holds a unique perspective on reality. In this educational paradigm, diversity is celebrated, and no discipline is marginalized or considered less important. It aspires to create an inclusive space where students are encouraged to explore the vast spectrum of human knowledge, appreciating the distinct contributions each field offers. In this educational paradigm, every academic discipline, whether mathematics, history, science, philosophy, theology, or the arts, brings its own principles, methodologies, and perspectives.

In brief, both holistic and inclusive education possess inherent strengths and limitations. Holistic education, driven by the principle of Tawhid, might excel in uniting different fields of study, but it can sometimes risk becoming insular, limiting its inclusivity. On the other hand, inclusive education, rooted in Takthir, celebrates diversity but may occasionally lack the cohesive vision found in holistic approaches. However, the crux lies in recognizing that these two paradigms need not be mutually exclusive. Instead, they can complement each other to enrich the educational experience. By embracing the principles of both Tawhid and Takthir, educators can construct learning environments that nurture the interconnectedness of knowledge while celebrating its diversity. This synthesis offers students a holistic yet inclusive education that harmonizes their educational experience.

This matter gains particular significance in the realm of acculturation, especially concerning the decisions made by numerous Muslims regarding their children's education. Many Muslim parents have decided to enroll their children in Muslim schools despite the financial and logistical challenges, as previously discussed in chapter two. This choice stems from the observation, as aptly noted by Chittick (2011, 2013), that public schools in the Western context have become dominated by the principle of Takthir. In modern Western public schools, there is an absence of a unified vision, a singular orientation, or any overarching purpose that provides life with meaning and direction.

> The history of European thought is characterized by the opposite trend. Although there was a great deal of unitarian thinking in the medieval period, from that time onward dispersion and multiplicity have constantly increased. "Renaissance men" could know a great deal about all the sciences and at the same time have a unifying vision. But nowadays, everyone is an expert in some tiny field of specialization, and information increases exponentially. The result is mutual incomprehension and universal disharmony. It is impossible to establish any unity of understanding, and no real communication takes place among specialists in different disciplines. Since people have no unifying principles, the result is an ever-increasing multiplicity of goals and gods, an ever-intensifying chaos. (Chittick, 2013, p. 13)

Chittick posits that countering the escalating trend of Takthir in the modern West necessitates a return to Tawhid, the foundational principle of all revealed religions. My perspective, in contrast, contends that both Tawhid and Takthir pose challenges when pursued in isolation. The solution lies in embracing "Tawhid in Takthir and Takthir in Tawhid," a vision reminiscent of the Islamic Golden Age, which was gradually lost over time. An important implication of adopting such a worldview for the education of Muslim children in the West is a departure from exclusive attendance at Muslim schools, often driven by the principle of Tawhid alone. Hence, instead of solely focusing on constructing new Muslim schools or expanding their existing infrastructure, Muslims should strategically allocate their attention and resources toward advocating for integrating Islamic education within the public school system. This proposition should not be deemed extreme, especially in the context where proponents of gender ideology actively promote their beliefs in public schools. Rather than merely opposing the propagation of such ideologies, Muslim communities should channel their efforts into asserting the inclusion of their own values and beliefs within the public education framework.

The scope of religious education in public schools is subject to the laws and regulations of each country, which varies significantly across different countries and regions. Constitutional provisions regarding religious freedom, the separation of church and state, and the rights of

parents and students shape the policies and practices in this regard. In many Western schools, education takes a secular approach that, at best, includes a comparative study of major, minor, and indigenous religions or moral education. From an academic and objective standpoint, students are exposed to different religious traditions, allowing for a broader understanding of diverse belief systems. Moral education draws inspiration from various religious and philosophical doctrines and emphasizes important values like compassion, respect, and honesty. However, it is important to note that this approach has limitations in fostering a deep theistic understanding that leads to the fulfillment of human possibility, which is the ultimate goal of Islamic education.

The prevailing secular worldview, rooted in Takthir, which forms the foundation of Western education today, has garnered its dominance by asserting its neutrality and apparent inclusivity, even with respect to theistic worldviews. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Slife et al. (2012), this notion, often referred to as the "myth of neutrality," is now under scrutiny. At the core of this myth lies the assumption that the research findings and conceptual underpinnings of secular psychology are inherently impartial and compatible with various worldviews, theistic ones included. When viewed through this lens, the question naturally arises if secularism is merely one of several worldviews, each possessing its unique biases, methodologies, and assumptions, why should our educational systems be predominantly informed and shaped by it, particularly in multicultural societies like Canada and the United States? Why not offer space for other worldviews, theistic included, to contribute to the educational landscape?

> We realize in saying "scientific ideas" that it can be jarring to many psychologists to even consider theism as a potentially scientific idea, especially in view of their secular and naturalistic training. Theistic perspectives, especially when used to conceptualize research and practice, have long been implicitly, if not explicitly, illicit in science. Yet, if we are going to challenge the myth of neutrality and compare the method assumptions of different worldviews, we have to operate with a view of science that is broader than any particular epistemology (empiricism) or method worldview (naturalism). The hallmark of science is the investigation of ideas, with investigation and method allowable in a variety of forms, including qualitative and perhaps even theistic forms. To identify science with a particular epistemology and/or method worldview is to decide before investigation what philosophies work best. This position seems singularly unscientific to us. (Slife et al., 2012, p. 221)

A valid concern arising from this argument pertains to how we prioritize the inclusion of various worldviews in shaping educational policies and practices. The question emerges if every worldview is to be considered, where do we begin? The criteria for this determination can be

rooted in the simultaneous presence of at least two key principles: relevance and inclusivity. Relevance hinges on factors such as the size and growth of the worldview's population within a given context. As I highlighted in the first chapter, for instance, in a country like Canada, Muslims constitute the second-largest and fastest-growing religious group. This demographic relevance underscores the importance of considering their perspectives. Inclusivity, on the other hand, is determined by the extent to which a particular worldview is open to engaging with other worldviews. As elaborated in the second and third chapters, Ibn Arbi advocates for an openness born out of necessity, exemplified by an imaginal approach leading to empathetic behaviours rather than an openness based solely on respect, symbolizing rational approaches, resulting in sympathetic behaviours. A current, albeit not ideal, illustration of these principles can be found in Finland, a nation that shares similarities with Canada in its strong commitment to multiculturalism. Finland's national core curriculum for basic education explicitly emphasizes supporting diverse cultural and religious identities within schools (see Basic Education Act 1998, Section 13, Amendment 454/2003). It affirms students' right to religious education in accordance with their own faith, provided that at least three students from the same tradition reside in the same area, and their parents make such a request. Consequently, there are no exclusive Islamic schools in Finland, and the majority of Muslim students in the country participate in Islamic religious education (IRE) as a compulsory school subject (Sakaranaho & Rissanen, 2021). This practice reflects both relevance, given the presence of a Muslim population, and inclusivity, as it simultaneously acknowledges that the Islamic worldview can coexist within the educational framework without inherent conflicts and can, therefore, be accommodated.

An additional valid concern pertains to the diversity of Islamic groups and sects and the question of which specific sect should take precedence in considerations surrounding the integration of Islamic education within the public school system. The response to this inquiry is rooted in the fundamental triad principles of Tawhid, Prophecy, and the Return, constituting the core tenets of belief for all Muslims, irrespective of their sectarian affiliation. In essence, Islamic education should predominantly emphasize the instruction and comprehension of these three overarching principles, which are universally embraced by all Muslims. Conversely, the detailed exploration of areas where interpretations and practices diverge, especially concerning Sharia, should remain within the purview of their respective Muslim communities. While these foundational principles are universally acknowledged across different Islamic sects, their interpretation may diverge among various Muslim denominations. For example, one may observe the prevalence of numerical Tawhid within a particular sect, whereas existential Tawhid finds

greater acceptance within another denomination. Determining which interpretation should be prioritized can be approached by revisiting the established principles of relevance and inclusivity, as previously discussed. This entails that the prioritization should be based on the concentration of specific Muslim groups in particular cities or urban areas as well as the alignment of their worldview with the overarching objectives of the educational system. This approach presents numerous advantages, particularly with regard to the process of acculturation. It ensures that all Muslim children have the opportunity to attend public schools, negating the imperative for exclusive enrollment in Muslim schools. The notable relevance of this matter to the process of acculturation is self-evident. As long as Muslim families feel compelled to enroll their children in Muslim schools due to the inadequacies of the public education system in accommodating their fundamental beliefs and values, or sometimes even conflicting with them, a conspicuous cultural divide persists between their host society and their culture of origin. This division can impede the integration process and contribute to feelings of isolation and marginalization.

A crucial challenge with introducing Islamic education into public schools lies in its potential resource intensiveness. Schools may necessitate additional staffing, specialized training programs, and support services. Furthermore, adapting the curriculum to accommodate diverse age groups and students from various cultural and religious backgrounds poses a significant challenge, especially for educators who lack adequate training in Islamic education. Hence, a pressing need emerges for establishing Islamic educational institutions dedicated to training educators proficient in all facets of Islamic knowledge. Consequently, the Muslim community in the West should reconsider their investment priorities, directing resources towards the creation of such institutions instead of building more Muslim schools. This implies that Islamic education should commence at the college or university level rather than at the elementary or high school levels. This shift in approach addresses the prevailing shortage of qualified Muslim educators within Muslim schools. This situation often results in the hiring of secular teachers or the employment of underqualified Muslim educators whose knowledge of Islam is limited to Taqlid, transmitted from the Quran and Hadith. The objective is to nurture well-versed Islamic educators who can be integrated into public schools effectively, facilitating the inclusion of Islamic education in the broader educational landscape.

The implementation of Islamic religious education in public schools presents a spectrum of challenges and successes, which warrant a thorough examination of its own. Nevertheless, within the confines of this dissertation, the primary focus revolved not around an analysis of Islamic education within public schools, but rather on establishing the theoretical necessity for

integrating Islamic education into public school curricula. This idea should not be considered as a bridge too far, especially when such integration has occurred in various regions globally. A pertinent example arises in Europe, where the Muslim population constitutes approximately five percent of the total population and continues to grow. Consequently, the issue of Islamic religious education (IRE) within public schools has gained significance in several European nations, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland (Franken & Gent, 2021). Given that this initiative is still in its initial phases, it would be premature to discuss its merits or shortcomings. However, individuals even marginally acquainted with the Islamic intellectual tradition and the broader objectives and educational context in the Western world are likely to concur that if Islamic religious education (IRE) is to prosper within Western public schools, it would benefit most from adopting and integrating the Sufi worldview. Compared to other branches of Islamic thought, this worldview is notably modest, adaptable, and inclusive in scope, primarily due to its emphasis on empathy, a theme explored in the third chapter of this dissertation.

In this research, I endeavoured to strike a balance between holistic and inclusive education, integrating disciplines such as theology, psychology, education, and literature. I aimed to foster a holistic yet inclusive approach to learning that bridges the gap between theory and practice. The Sufi tradition, with its deep spiritual insights and teachings, served as a wellspring of wisdom in this study. These teachings, often considered abstract or theoretical, were brought into the realm of practicality, elucidating their relevance within contemporary contexts, particularly in the intricate acculturation process. In contrast to Chittick, whose focus on the practical outcomes of acquiring knowledge appears limited, as evident in his statement below, I firmly contend that the revitalization of Islamic thought hinges on its ability to discover contemporary significance and applicability. This can only be achieved by integrating the Wahda worldview into modern sciences.

> It is a common misinterpretation of Islamic intellectual history to say that Muslim scholars made scientific discoveries but then failed to follow up on them, so the torch of learning passed to the West. This is to read the empirical methodology and practical goals of modern science back into the intellectual methods and spiritual goals of the wisdom tradition. The goal was not to establish a fund of transmitted knowledge which other scientists could imitate and build upon and from which technologists could draw for practical ends. The goal was to discover the truth for oneself in oneself. Practical, worldly applications were of relatively little interest. Excessive attention paid to physical welfare and material benefit was considered a sure sign of a failed intellectual. (Chittick, 2013, p. 56)

Humanities, with psychology as a prime example, serve as an ideal starting point for this exploration due to its extensive areas of investigation that intersect with Islamic thought. However, this application should not be driven solely by the pursuit of material wealth, knowledge, or power, nor should it be a means to an end, whether worldly or spiritual. Instead, it should revolve around the profound appreciation of things as they are, devoid of any hidden motives, whether of a worldly or spiritual nature. The dualistic worldview of Tawhid tends to seek change by striving for oneness and unity, yet it often struggles to find peace with the Father, as beautifully expressed by Rumi. Consequently, it also struggles to perceive the present state of the world of multiplicity as paradise, regardless of its apparent chaos. Until this worldview drives Muslim scholars, they may find it challenging to truly appreciate things as they are. Consequently, their capacity to contribute significantly to meaningful change may remain limited.

My intent in embarking on this dissertation journey was to explore the contemporary relevance of a specific branch of Islamic thought, Sufism, within the context of the current Muslim experience in the West, particularly the process of acculturation. The academic requirements of a doctoral dissertation necessitated a clear purpose, which, in my case, revolved around enhancing Muslim acculturation in the West through theism, essentially improving their psychological well-being through spirituality. However, as critical as I am of the current state of Muslim acculturation in the West, I also hold a deep appreciation for the substantial waves of Muslim immigration to these regions, regardless of the complex reasons behind this phenomenon and the many challenges ahead. This immigration represents the convergence of two civilizations in dire need of each other. The latter thirsts for Tawhid, while the former longs for the infusion of Takthir. In my perspective, the marriage of these two civilizations is the most beautiful of occurrences, especially when there is the hopeful prospect of a child being born with the worldview of Wahda, embodying unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

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