

Recognition and Identity: the case of the Bahâ'î Faith

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I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

The inquiry on the demand for “Self-consciousness” is the starting point for numerous philosophical discourses throughout the historical course. “How can I and must I come to be conscious of myself ?” asks Robert C. Solomon within the framework of methodological solipsism. This question can be a favourable starting point in the efforts on “identifying”.

The modernization process is a grand turning point on these philosophical inquiries. In contrary to the dominant, old world-view that constructs and shapes itself merely around the term of religion, it is the modernization which settled the humanbeing on the center, as the main criterion of the universe. Dating from that transformist reform, the humanbeing, which was previously a simple object, is henceforward the Subject, the

basis of “the Knowledge”. But at its origin, that concept of “the Subject” was abstract rather than being an actor in the existent societal equations. The most mature form of that understanding was Descartes’ concept of *cogito*. “For Descartes, the ‘I’ of the *cogito* is clearly not dependent upon other persons and not itself a person”... In his sixth *Mediation*, Descartes alleges that “the ‘I’ is neither person nor human body, but the thinking mind”.¹ That proposition was the main allegation that influenced numerous philosophers of the 18th century, constructed around the hypothesis of an “abstract” Subject and individual. Following the mentioned philosophical chain, in his dualist conceptualism, arguing that the human beings belongs both the world of nature and the reason, Kant offers a more abstract and transcendental subject, rather than a concrete individual. The concept offered by Kant on “the Subject” was ahistoric, (...) and abstract.²

As a turning point, Hegel was the primary name on rejecting that abstract fiction of the Subject isolated from societal relations. Though criticized by Marx as reducing the subject to thought and neglecting to express “the real Subjects” as the starting point, Hegel added the historical dimension and the reference of the Other to that concept of the Subject.³ To begin with, Hegel negotiates the mentioned abstraction in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* by accepting: “Self-consciousness is *in* and *for itself* in and through being in and for itself for another Self-consciousness; that is, it is only as something acknowledged, or recognized.”⁴

Primarily stressing the importance of social relationships/societal equations on the development of an individual’s identity, today that predecessor approach on the individual, or in Hegelian term the *Self-consciousness*, is employed in many political arguments on the allegation that the plural societies can be build on the basis of equal recognition of the

particular identities and/or entities. Within the complex equations of the current global world, in consistent with the increasing belongings of the spheres of the “shared” and the “contradictory” variables on the question of identity, the locus of the struggle: the “struggle for recognition” is becoming the focus of the political debates of the present age, in which Hegel’s dialectic is mostly stated as a proper ground for a politics of civic recognition centered around the “politics of recognition” and “multiculturalism”.

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel presents mutual recognition as “the ideal form of ethical exchange among self-conscious beings”. In the raising claims of today’s society, in synonymous with the stresses of the theorists like Charles Taylor and Martha Nussbaum on cultural differences, a common plea for identity and recognition is heard especially from the minority groups, namely suffering an identity crisis mostly by that lack of recognition.

At that stage, the main question emerges: How is the mentioned recognition attained? Is the process of conflict essential? Or can that process of recognition be performed on the platform of reconciliation without conflict? It can be argued that it is the emancipatory recognition of an “alien” identity which can also be interpreted as the tragic acknowledgement of the boundaries of your own sphere of identity. Sartre demonstrated that “mutual recognition was impossible given the inevitability of the temptation to the bad faith” The problematique of recognizing the Other emerges a troublesome process, when recognizing “the Other” challenges your legitimacy. Especially when the parties are religions, which offers grand belongings to their adherents, the codes of belongings that claim the invalidity of the Other. Can “the politics of recognition” offers a satisfactory response on the claims of identity? How -or-can the actors be demonstrated in Hegel’s

dialectic of “*Lordship and Bondage*”? Can that historical form be applied to the claims of the validity of their faith by the Bahâ’is towards Islam?

In the statement of the Azhar, signed in January 1986, “Bahâ’ism” was argued as a “false creed”, since “it is at variance with Islam in denying the Day of Judgement, the Resurrection, Heaven and Hell; in repudiating the Prophet Muhammad's station as the ‘Seal of the Prophets’; in claiming that God became incarnate in the person of Bahau’llah; and in altering the forms of worship ordained by Islam.⁵ Meanwhile, in contrary to that, Bahâ’î Faith offers the annulment of the Islamic law, the validity of the Qur’an the Prophecy of Muhammad; by the claim of not replacement, but the fulfillment of the previous statements and prophecies of Islam. This inclusive approach in quest for identity and legitimacy embraces Bahâ’î Faith’s total vision towards the other religions: “the appearance of the promised “Lord of Hosts” come down “with ten thousands of saints”; “a Buddha named Maitreya, the Buddha of universal fellowship”; “the fulfillment of Christ's promise to bring all people together so that “there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”; and “the fulfillment of the promise of the Qur'an for the “Day of God” and the “Great Announcement,” when “God” will come down “overshadowed with clouds.” So, though recognized by most of the Islamic scholar as a radical sect of the Shaykhiyya, these claims of being “a world religion” performs a challenge for Islam both in the intimate and public spheres of identity.⁶

The aim of this work is not a pretentious claim to solve that antagonism, but to comprehend and clarify the relation between two religious traditions Islam -which seems as taking the form of agnosticism-, and questioning the position of the Bahâ’î identity towards Islam on the framework of “recognition” offered by Hegel in his dialectic of “*Lordship and Bondage*”.

II. HEGEL ON DIALECTIC OF LORDSHIP AND BONDAGE

Throughout the chain of philosophical discourses, interest in Hegel has mainly been centered around the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In its all-embracing methodology, that “autobiography of man as the image of God”⁷, particularly with its chapter IV (“*Self-consciousness*”) including the dialectic of *Lordship and Bondage*, has influenced numerous philosophers, political theorists and social psychologists. All the efforts within a wide spectrum of philosophy were for interpreting “one of the persistent topos in Western philosophy” that is, to John O’Neill: “the narrative of the rise of human consciousness from within the world of nature and a historical society that recognizes itself through such a story.”⁸

Under the heading of the *Truth of the Certainty of Oneself* in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel introduces the transition from consciousness to Self-consciousness as a stage within the broader framework of the unfolding of freedom through the world history, over the key term of the *desire*. In its origin, human beings are the *beings*, possessing consciousness. “Consciousness passes through various stages of experience: It begins as the consciousness of impulse, instinct, and the desire.”⁹ The mentioned is a dynamic process which needs proceeding the previous ways of certainty within a cycle that embodies “life” so that the consciousness will transform itself into the self-consciousness. Within that framework, by proceeding from subjectivity to inter-subjectivity, the consciousness enters “the native realm of truth”.¹⁰ In that stage, that self-consciousness, or our own subjectivity, bears to the external “objective spirit” of the society, in such a way that, as Alexander Kojève had

pointed out: “for the idea of oneself to be a truth, it must exist not only for oneself but also beings other than oneself.”¹¹

In the course of the satisfaction of that desire, “Self-consciousness, argues Hegel, learns by experience of the independence of its object.” In order that, Self-consciousness must come “outside itself”, so that its object becomes another self. To Hegel, “the desire and the certainty attained in the satisfaction of desire is conditional upon the object, for the certainty exists only through the doing-away of this other; for there to be this doing away, this other must exist”¹² Self-consciousness, through its function of the desire, must achieve self-certainty and establish its “own self-standing independence” through overcoming an object or an otherness by destroying the independence or “self-sufficiency” of that object. In short, “Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.”¹³ Hegel constructs this process of realization over the term of recognition. To Hegel, “Self-consciousness is *in* and *for itself* in and through the being in and for itself for another self-consciousness; that is, it is only as something acknowledged, or recognized.”¹⁴ By alleging the concept -or the fact- of recognition as the fundamental means to become aware of our own selves, it can be concluded that within Hegelian construct “one becomes a subject by viewing oneself as an addressee or interlocutor of other subjects.”¹⁵ It is only through this experience that the Self-consciousness will realize “its truth”.

Under the framework of the broader spiritual unity, the “desire for recognition” of the two parties, that each has the reflection of the other as another self-consciousness, obliges a hypothetical clash for recognition between these two pre-social human beings, which will provide one to become “a real and true man” over the acknowledgement of the other. Namely, “Self-consciousness, argues Hegel, must do away with this otherness it has

(...) in order thereby to become certain of itself as the essential being.”¹⁶ The stages of the dialectic is embodied within the conduct of that speculative struggle. To Hegel, “The relation of the two self-consciousness is hence determined in such a way that through the combat for life and death they *prove* themselves and each other. They must enter this combat, for they must raise the certainty of themselves, of being for themselves, to truth in the other and in themselves.”¹⁷ This is the struggle which “humanity” will come to light only in risking own’s life to satisfy that desire.

One of the main features of that struggle is that it demands mutual recognition. In other words, as Eimear Wynne argued, vital to the Hegelian practice of recognition is “*reciprocity*”. One may not risk life. He can indeed be recognized as a *person*, but not an *independent Self-consciousness*. But although each seeks the death of the other as in staking his own life, death damages the required sense of recognition: The one who has died can never be recognized, and the victor no longer have an other to provide recognition. So, this struggle to death comes to an end when one party faced with his virtual death at the hands of the Other: this is the relationship what Hegel calls as the Lordship and bondage; Master and slave as the opposed forms of consciousness: “one, the independent consciousness, to which being-for-self is the essence; the Other, the dependent consciousness, to which life or being for another is the essence; the former is the *master*, the latter the *servant*.”¹⁸

By his own consent, one was put in slavery due to the desire to save his life and is in an external relation with the master through his labour without satisfaction. On the other hand, what Master gains after that struggle is the “consciousness existing for itself which is in mediate relation with itself through another consciousness (...) The master relates himself to the servant mediately through independent being”¹⁹ He is the party that

gets enjoyment without labouring. In a nutshell: “the master has his acknowledgement, by another consciousness granted him; for the other consciousness establishes itself in these moments as something inessential, first, in the working of the thing, second, in the dependence upon a particular existence; in both it can not achieve mastery over being and attain absolute negation.”²⁰

But this not what was aimed in the logic of that struggle: the conclusion is contradictory: a “one-sided and unequal recognizing”. The object, the inessential consciousness, which will realize the *truth* of the certainty of the master is a *dependent* one, which could not dared to risk his life, in maturing his Self-consciousness. On account of that failure, the success of the master is indeed “an illusion”. Proceeding from that statement, “The master standing over against the servant was still no truly free, for he still did not thoroughly look on himself in the other. Consequently, it is only through the liberation of the servant that the master, too, becomes perfectly free.”²¹

However, the fear of the master, fear of that “for its whole being” of the slave, which obliged the servant to work for another consciousness is “the beginning of the wisdom”. Whereas the master is fixed in his mastery, through the work, the consciousness, which is *for its self* in its origin, will come to itself so that it will be transformed into “a truly independent consciousness”. Passing through the obligatory stages of *fear* and *service*: “The consciousness that works therefore attains a consequence a view of independent being as itself”.²² But still it is “a freedom which as yet remains within subjection.”²³ Beyond that process of “refinding of itself by itself”, the truth of the freedom is available only by constructing a sphere of common freedom based on the rational point of view that respects mutual recognition of the different self-consciousness.

III. THE PRACTICE: ISLAM AND THE BAHAI FAITH

After such a philosophical introduction, as we argued in the first section of our work, we will try to analyse the relationship between Islam and the Bahâ'î Faith, especially the position of the Bahâ'î Faith towards Islam through the Hegelian framework of recognition in relation to the construction of identity.

Clarifying our pattern, it will be proper to recognize the difference of the model of Hegel. In contrary to the perennial human condition drawn by Aristotle in his *Politics*, that can “never be modified or changed”; For Hegel that label of master and/or the servant is not given but achieved in a process. As Hegel argued, it is the primary consequence of “the first struggle between man and man”. “Man is not born a slave or a master, he *becomes* slave or master in a historic action” (...) For Hegel, this division is “only the start of history (...) which will be overcome and erased in the course of history.”²⁴ By his labour, both transforming his position and negating the Mastery, the slave is both a position and a site that history is “realized”.

Hence, with a presupposition as recognizing the Bahâ'î faith as the slave in its origin due to its inferior position depending on the lack of recognition, we should begin with a description of the history/background of the Bahâ'î faith and the forces which shaped its development.

A. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE BAHÀ'Î FAITH

Although the Bâbîsm is recognized as a separate religion from the Bahâ'î Faith, due to the mission of Bâb, Mîrza Ali Muhammed (1819-1850) as the announcer of the coming of the "he whom God shall manifest", we can accept the preach of Bâb on "the Day of God", 1844, as the starting point of the Bahâ'î faith.

a. the Bâbî Movement (1844-1866)

In 1844, with his mission alike to John the Baptist, Mîrzâ Ali Muhammad proclaimed himself to be the Bâb (Gate), "the forerunner of one greater than himself. But as the movement spread throughout much of Iran and Iraq, and especially after the Bab formally declared that Bâbîsm was a new religion he was subjected to the growing confrontations by the other Shiite 'ulamâ which will lead violence and finally his execution by firing squad in 1850.

It was mainly the Shaykhî movement, a heterodox school within the Twelver branch of Shiite Islam, that the Bâbî movement had its origins. With his philosophical and mystical views, especially with its main claim that many of the concepts within theological framework that were understood as literally true should in fact be understood metaphorically as spiritual truths. This was the main tendency that directed the methodology in the Bâbî scriptures.

Following the appointed successor, Sayyid Kâzim Rashtî, the disciples were in search on the order of Rashti: “to disperse and seek out the one whom they were to follow”. Coming to Shiraz in 1844, the disciples accepted the claims of the Bâb, to be “the Promised Qa’im” awaited by the Shi’i Muslims. Bâb, called these earliest disciples as the "Letters of the Living" and ordered them to disperse throughout Iran and Iraq and spread his teachings. This was the initial sphere of expansion.

It was 1848 which marks a turning point in the history of the movement with a series of events: The first was the promulgation of the Bayân by the Bâb, as the book of his laws; secondly he declared that he was the Hidden Imâm, the promised Mahdî that the Shiites were awaiting, at his trial in Tabriz (July 1848); and finally at the summer of this year, the conference of Badasht, at which a group of Bâbîs proclaimed the independency of the Bâbî religion. These events provided a marked change in the future of the movement: the claim of an equal station to the last Prophet Muhammad or in the Hegelian terms, by the aim of abrogating the Islamic dispensation, that was the claim of gaining independence and Self-consciousness.

These claims led violence and persecutions towards the Bâbîs of Iran synonymous with their upheavals. They were subject to a series of attacks including the public execution of some of the religion's prominent members in Tehran in February 1850 and finally the execution of the Bâb in Tabriz in July 1850.

Following the execution of the Bâb, the Bâbîs were leaderless. Gathering in Baghdad, though, on account of a letter of authority that had been sent to him by the Bâb, Mîrzâ Yahyâ Subh-i-Azal -Bahâ'u'llâh's half-brother- claimed the leadership of the Bâbîs, with its effective leadership in reorganizing the community, Mîrzâ Husayn Alî Nûrî -

“Bahâ’u’llâh”- aroused as a prominent figure among the Bâbî community. Especially after performing a “dramatic” religious experience when in prison, known as Siyah Cal (*the Black Hole*) in 1852 at Tehran, it was not just a successor anymore, but the holder of the claim of a new prophetic mission that will transform the fate of the Bâbî movement.

On his release, returning to Baghdad, after two years in solitary contemplation in the outskirts of Sulaymaniyya, he took over the absolute leadership of the Bâbî community, and short while before his exile to Istanbul (Constantinople) in 1863, in the garden of Nadjib Pasha -called by the Bahâ’is as *Bag-i Ridvan*- declared himself to be “to whom God shall manifest” (*man yuzhiru’ llah*). After four months in Istanbul, the exiles were sent to Edirne (Adrianople). As the declaration was not announced widely, Bahâ’u’llâh was still regarded as a leader of the Bâbis. Edirne was going to be the locus of the open declaration.

b.The Emergence of the Baha’i Faith (1863-1892)

In Edirne Mîrzâ Husayn Alî Nûrî openly announced his claim to be “He Whom God shall make manifest,” the Messianic figure promised by the Bâb. It was also the period that Bahâ’u’llâh sent letters to the kings and the rulers of “the East and the West”, proclaiming his mission and call them to accept. His claim was opposed by the followers of Azal. Azal's opposition caused eventually the further exile of Bahâ’u’llâh to Akra (Acre) where he will live until his death in 1892, and the Azalîs to Cyprus.

This period was the turning point in the history of the Bahâ’î Faith. These include, production of a number of books in which Bahâ’u’llâh laid out the laws and the ordinances of his religion as well as the social and the administrative principles which would act as the basis for the new world order which he advocated; a series of letters to many of the leading

rulers of the world, announcing his message to them; and the instructions given by Bahâ'u'llâh for a number of his followers to take up residence in other countries, thus spreading the new religion. With the conversion of non-Muslims, Bahâ'î Faith was opening a new chapter in his claim of independence.

In his will (*Kitab 'ahdi*), Bahâ'u'llâh appointed Abdu'l-Bahâ as his successor and the leader of the Bahâ'î Faith. In his two important writings, the *Kitâb-i-Aqdas* and *the Book of the Covenant*, Bahâ'u'llâh designated his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, "Abdu'l-Bahâ" as the sole authorized interpreter of the writings of Bahâ'u'llâh as well as the center of authority -the center of the Covenant-.

c.The Ministry of Abdu'l-Bahâ (1892-1921)

Abdu'l-Bahâ was faced with the opposition of his half-brother, Mîrzâ Muhammad Ali of claiming for himself a station equal to Bahâ'u'llâh. But the majority of the world Bahâ'î community remained faithful to Abdu'l-Bahâ. Releasing from the prison, in 1908, under the amnesty of the Young Turks, Abdu'l-Bahâ began his missionary journeys: to Egypt (1910), to France and Britain (1911) and to America and Europe (1912-1913).

When he took over the leadership of the community, the Bahâ'î Faith had adherents in 15 territories through the world. The most significant development in that period was that the spread of the Faith to North America in 1894 by the efforts of Ibrahim Kheiralla. This Western expansion spread from Northern America to Europe and Australia. Soon there was a flow of American and European pilgrims coming to Akka in 1898.

This Western expansion has significant consequences on the independence of the Faith. As a consequence of the efforts the Bahâ'î Faith was introduced to the peoples from

different backgrounds than the previous believers and converts. Though limited in scale, with a diverse background of the new believers, Bahâ'î Faith was no longer confined to a Muslim milieu, but rather an international framework.

These developments also lead the change in the interpretation of the Bahâ'î teachings. In that process of reformulation, although preserving the general Shiite understanding and conceptualization, new formulations of the Bahâ'î teachings were developed in terms of Christian terminology. Abdu'l-Bahâ, himself, dealt with the reformulation in religious and philosophical themes, as in *Some Answered Questions*.

The other significant events in the period of Abdu'l-Bahâ's ministry were: the transfer of the remains of the Bâb from Iran to Akka and their entombment in a shrine built by Abdu'l-Bahâ on Mount Carmel; the writing by Abdu'l-Bahâ of *the Tablets of the Divine Plan*, as the master-plan for the spread of the Bahâ'î Faith and the first steps in constructing the administrative institutions of the Bahâ'î Faith throughout the world; the activities of Mîrzâ Abu'l-Fadl Gulpâygânî in teaching the Bahâ'î Faith at the University of al-Azhar; and the international travels of a number of Bahâ'îs, which all helped to develop the feeling of a worldwide religion.

In 1921 Abdu'l-Bahâ died in Acre and buried near the shrine of the Bâb on Mount Carmel. When he died, there were 35 countries/territories that the Bahâ'î Faith exists. In his will, he appointed the eldest son of his eldest daughter, Shoggi Effendi (1899-1957), as the "guardian of the Cause of God" and "infallible interpreter of his writings and those of his father".

d. The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi (1922-57)

Shoghi Effendi played a key role in the development of the Bahá'í Faith. He performed two-sided development: building up the Bahá'í administrative order; and the development of the Bahá'í world center in Haifa. Establishing the local assemblies, Shoghi Effendi set the plans for the expansion and consolidation of the Bahá'í Faith.

Beside his contribution on the development of the original Bahá'í literature in English, on the dimension of consolidation, he assigned national plans, first of which was the Seven Year Plan (1937-1944), in which the American Bahá'í community was directed to establish the Bahá'í Faith in Latin America. By pioneering the developments of the other national communities, in 1953 Shoghi Effendi launched the first global plan for the twelve national spiritual assemblies, known as the *Ten Year Crusade*, to disperse the Faith over the world.

e. The Interregnum of the Hands of the Cause

When Shoghi Effendi died without leaving a will in 1957, the only group which aroused to have any basis of authority for leading the Bahá'í Faith were the Hands of the Cause, 27 individuals, who had been appointed by Shoghi Effendi between 1952-1957, as “the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's Embryonic World Commonwealth”. The Hands of the Cause held a series of Conclaves. By the second one, in 1958, they decided to bring into being, the Universal House of Justice, an institution ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and stated by Abdu'l-Bahá to be under divine guidance, at the end of the Ten Year Crusade.²⁵

f. The Universal House of Justice

By the election of the nine-man of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the existing 56 national Bahá'í communities, the Bahá'í Faith entered a new phase of its development: the leadership of the religion changed from hereditary leaders to an elected council. Henceforward, the dual framework of the consolidation and the expansion of the Bahá'í Faith was going to be preserved and advanced by the Universal House of Justice.²⁶ It continued to launch a series of international plans for the processes of expansion and development. "Besides detailing specific goals for the number and distribution of Assemblies and localities, these Plans have included other goals of both a quantitative and qualitative nature. These goals have included:

1. The development of the Bahá'í World Centre in the Haifa-Akka area through the acquisition of several properties connected with the lives of Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá, the construction of the seat of the Universal House of Justice (1983), and the extension and beautification of the lands surrounding the Bahá'í shrines;
2. The collection and classification of the Bahá'í sacred writings and of their authoritative interpretations (by Shoghi Effendi) has been continued so that there are now in excess of 60 000 original documents or copies held at Haifa;
3. The translation and publication of literature. Bahá'í literature had by 1988 been translated into 802 languages, and published in 520 languages; some of this published material consists only of small pamphlets but at least one book of 60 pages or more is now available in 111 languages and there is quite a substantial literature in several European and Indian languages as well as languages such as Swahili and Samoan;

4. The construction of Bahâ'î Houses of Worship of which all but one of the seven presently built were constructed during the 1957-1988 period;
5. The establishment of Bahâ'î radio stations, seven to date: five in Latin America, one in the USA and one in Africa;
6. The fostering of the spiritual, communal and intellectual aspects of Bahâ'î life;
7. The proper functioning of Spiritual Assemblies;
8. The enhancement of the role of women within Bahâ'î administration and community life;
9. The strengthening of family life;
10. The education of children;
11. The initiation of socio-economic projects including those concerned with literacy, education, agriculture and health.²⁷

These plans that led an unprecedented growth of the religion; the seemingly negligible, heterodox trend within Shiite Islam removed from obscurity to the public realm on the international scale: While the Bahâ'î population was 213.000 in 1963, it was about 4.500.000 in 1988.²⁸

That growth also led to a decisive shift in the demography Bahâ'î community internationally. By the 1960's, the majority of Bahâ'îs increasingly came to be drawn from the "Third World", which will decrease the ratio of the Iranian believers to 6% (1988)²⁹: though mostly accepted as an obscure heterodox grouping within Shiite Islam, the Bahâ'î faith was achieving believers throughout the world, the persons probably never heard a Shiite term in their life.

Moving forward through these stages, the Bahâ'î Faith as a little-known religion shaped around the hegemony of the hereditary leadership within Iranian community in its origin has been transformed into a much better known religion under the government of an elected council composed of members on numerous nationalities. "Originating as a sectarian movement within nineteenth century Iranian Shiite Islam argues Momen and Smith, the Bahâ'î Faith has developed into a religion of considerable scope and dynamism. Whilst elements of its Shiite origins are clearly discernible in its corpus of beliefs and practices, the religion has transcended its Islamic roots. It is now a distinctive and independent religious movement, whose leaders claim for it the status of a new world religion. Validation for this claim may perhaps be found in the religion's impressive record of expansion."³⁰

However, beside having achieved in the process of expansion, this universalism was also a given nature of the Bahâ'î faith. By proclaiming himself, to be the promised one of all religions, Bahâ'u'llâh was putting all the other religions in the "other" side of the equation that should be resolved by its missionary import. From that point of view, the missionary endeavor due to the mentioned claim of Bahâ'u'llâh, was also a dynamic redefining process of itself depending upon the relative differences. That claim of fulfillment obliges to define itself in dependence upon "the Other". Or in the Hegelian term, in order to prove itself, it needs to be "recognized". And, rather than any other religion, Islam must be the object of that recognition, which the Bahâ'î faith claims the annulment of its validity.

IV. ESTABLISHING THE OTHER

When we try to analyze the relationship between Islam and Bahá'î faith, we met a presupposition that any reconciliation between two parties is impossible. While one party is declaring its independence at every possible opportunity in his struggle for recognition; the Other, Islam, rejects that recognition completely by regarding the other as a sectarian movement in its sphere of life, but not “the Other” that has its “own” the reality. The common aspect is that, within the boundaries of its own understanding, both is aware of “who they are”: “the Master”.

Most of the interpretations on the relation between Islam and the Bahai Faith apply merely to the theological approach, which leads the question to agnosticism. Accepting the essentiality of that determinist approach, we will try to apply another layer of reasoning to clarify the mentioned relation: through an understanding of the Hegelian fact of the Master-Slave dialectic.

Following the point of view that Islam performs, it is not a necessary stage to be acknowledged by any other; within the framework of the reality of its truth, it is “the Religion” that does need any admission by any other, especially “a false creed” that has originated within its boundaries. But there seems to be a lacking point, a gap that must be filled in that presupposition. Though accepted by many Islamic scholars and authorities as a sectarian/radical movement flourishing from Shaykiyya, Bahá'î Faith is in continuity within its process of expansion, also in the Islamic heartland. That indicates that an absolute rejection does not provide an absolute solution, indeed for Islam. Then, how can Islam recognize “an-other” that challenges its legitimacy and claims its invalidity? That question obliges a normative analysis. Putting off that question, to use in our synthesis, let us turn back to our analysis of the dialectic for the Bahá'î Faith.

The dialectical form of the history within Hegelian philosophy is developed through the work of the slave; so that it is the actor who shapes the continuity of the relationship. At its origin, by being rejected, or not recognized, Bahai Faith seems to be in the position of the Slave. So, primarily, it will be proper to demonstrate the position of the Bahai Faith. According to Hegel, attaining Self-consciousness” (self -aware) is a process which necessarily involves the Other. In order to develop Self-consciousness one must face the Other and enter a life-and-death struggle for recognition.

As the starting point for recognition, argues Hegel, “Self-consciousness is faced by another Self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This has a two-fold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an other being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.” This is the process that is embodied in the claim of the fulfillment of the Bahai faith, in other words, Bahâ’î faith finds its true identity in its relationship with the other religion. But in contrary to Hegel’s dialectic, none of the parties give up their desire for recognition³¹ ; but apply to another attitude. Depending on the confidence that it was already awarded his prestigious status -as a Master?- Islam, ignores the opponent’s claims, without any need of facing any process of recognition. That may be true in the framework of theology, but not the case for Hegel’s framework of the dialectic: The Master is called the Master because he strives to prove his superiority over nature and over the slave who is forced to recognize him as a master.

As in the case of “entering the native realm of truth”, Self-consciousness “learns by experience of the independence of its object”. This needs “the desire and the certainty attained in the satisfaction of desire (...) conditional upon the object, for certainty exists only through the doing away of this other.”³² The believers of the Bahâ’î Faith are

confident that Bahâ'u'llâh is the prophet of this age and the Bahâ'î Faith is the last revelation of the God. But "Self-consciousness (...) is only as something acknowledged, or recognized." That is the main motive for the stage of notification, what we proposed, as the Bahâ'î Faith entered, by the reign of Bâb for gaining converts so that it can emphasize itself as a new religion by the annulment of the Islamic law- and period. Whenever the Other does not "condescend" the mention struggle for recognition, this becomes just a one-sided effort, which in the Bahâ'î case leads the fiction of the new "Others" for the process of "coming outside itself" to "achieve the sense of its freedom".

Hegel proposes that by the fear of death, the process of labor which the slave performed is the means of the aimed self-realization. We can argue that, the stage on which "the Cause" is subjected to the adherents of the other religions, not just the Islam; and especially by gaining the converts with the non-Islamic backgrounds, strengthens the claims of independence of the Bahâ'î Faith both in the demographic statics and the interpretation of the scriptures. In other words, this ensures it on working off a complex due to the dependence on Islam: that provides it the station of independence. What subjected to the other side of the equation, the enjoyment is rather not to notice the claim preached by the Bahâ'î Faith for independence.

But all these demonstrations contain paradox for both sides. One party, as we argued, does not ignore the Other's assertions by admitting it as a sect flourished within its boundaries. For Islam, Bahâ'î Faith is a "false creed", but not the Other that its reality and dignity is recognized. Due that confidence, it does not already take it seriously to refute its claims. On the other side, the Bahâ'î Faith, though not recognized by Islam -as proper within its Divine logic- gains adherents within its dynamic process, which provides itself as a worldwide religion. But that must be, in terms of Hegelian dialectic, a "mutual recognition".

Having been guided by that presupposition, the present, agnostic, relation may be redefined within a Hegelian logic of “mutual recognition”. That does not mean that it obliges a process of dialogue. But, whenever Islam recognizes the Bahá’í Faith as external to its history, recognizing 1844 as the start of the Bahá’í Faith -again and absolutely as a “false” claim- that process of re-naming will lead re-discovering its own “reality” and “truth” over the Bahá’í Faith, but not a self-destruction. As Hans-Georg Gadamer argues, “It is essential for Self-consciousness that the other continues to exist. Only, if the other is not simply the other of the first Self-consciousness, not simply his other, but rather free, can it provide confirmation of the first Self-consciousness.”³³ That method of communication elected with a material-value may even provide more concrete legitimations for a life-and-death struggle, if it is ought to be realized.

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Notes:

¹ SOLOMON, Robert C. *From Hegel to Existentialism*. (UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.11.

² LARRAIN, Jorge. *Ideoloji ve Kültürel Kimlik*. (Istanbul: Sarmal. 1995), p.200.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 200

⁴ INWOOD, Michael. *A Hegel Dictionary*. (USA: Blackwell, 1992) p. 173.

⁵ ENAYAT Mohsen, “A Commentary on the Azhar’s Statement Regarding ‘Bahá’ís and Bahá’ism, in the *Bahá’í Studies Review*, Vol 2.1, 1992. P. 52.

⁶ For such allegations on the claim of being a world religion, see: CHOLEUR, J. "The Bahá’í Faith: World Religion of the Future," *World Order* 12.1 (1977). FAZEL, Seena, Is the Baha’I Faith a World Religion, *Journal of Bahá’í Studies* 6:1 (1994). MOMEN, M. "Is the Bahá’í Faith a world religion?" In *Soundings - Essays in Bahá’í Theology*. Ed. S. McGlinn. Christchurch, NZ: Open Circle, 1989. SHOGGI EFFENDI, "The Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, a world religion," *World Order* 13.7 (1947). SMITH, P. Review of "The Babi and Baha’i Religions: From Messianic Shi’ism to a World Religion" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103.3 (1989). SMITH, P. and MOMEN, M. "The Baha’i Faith 1957-1988: A Survey of Contemporary Developments," *Religion* 19 (1989).

⁷ HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Tr. by T.M. KNOX, *Early Theological Writings*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 47.

- ⁸ HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Ed. by J. O'NEILL, *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Text and Commentary*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 1.
- ⁹ HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Tr. by T.M. KNOX, *Early Theological Writings*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 48.
- ¹⁰ HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Ed. by Michael J. INWOOD, *Hegel: Selections*. (USA: MacMillan, 1989), p. 168.
- ¹¹ KOJEVE, Alexandre. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit. (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 11.
- ¹² HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Ed. by Michael J. INWOOD, *Hegel: Selections*. (USA: MacMillan, 1989), p. 172.
- ¹³ Ibid., p.173.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.173.
- ¹⁵ WYNNE, Eimear. "Reflections on Recognition: A Matter of Self-realization or a Matter of Justice?," in *Thinking Fundamentals*. IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences. Vol. 9: Vienna 2000., p. 3.
- ¹⁶ HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Ed. by Michael J. INWOOD, *Hegel: Selections*. (USA: MacMillan, 1989), p.174.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p.176.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.177.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 177.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 178.
- ²¹ HEGEL, G. W. F. Enzyklopadie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III. 1817, Werke 10. (EG) Tr. by William Wallace and A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), § 436 A.
- ²² HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Ed. by Michael J. INWOOD, *Hegel: Selections*. (USA: MacMillan, 1989), p. 179.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 180.
- ²⁴ FERM, Vergilius. *Encyclopedia of Morals*. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 208.
- ²⁵ This decision was opposed by Charles Mason Remey, who was both one of the Hands of the Cause and president of the International Bahâ'î Council, by proclaiming himself to be the second Guardian.
- ²⁶ House of Justice itself defined of its own powers and responsibilities in a formal constitution which was adopted in 1972.
- ²⁷ SMITH Peter and MOMEN Moojan. *The Bahâ'î Faith 1957-1988: A Survey of Contemporary Developments*. in *Religion* (1989) vol. 19. (pp. 63- 91), p. 74-75.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 72.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.72.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 63-64.
- ³¹ Abdülbaki Gölpinarli, in his work of "*Türkiye'de Mezhepler ve Tarikatlar*" (Istanbul: Inkilap, 1997, p.167-168), points out that Ali Muhammad, the Bab, had declared that he gave up all his claims in his "*Letter of Penitence*" (*Tövbe-nâme*) which is preserved in the National Council (*Sûrâ-yi Millî*). But this document does not used even by the Muslim scholars to refute the basis of the Babî religion. If realized evidently, that would be what Hegel called as a dead unity.
- ³² HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Ed. by Michael J. INWOOD, *Hegel: Selections*. (USA: MacMillan, 1989), p.172.
- ³³ GADAMER, Hans-Georg. "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-consciousness", *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 64

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