

***Deus Absconditus* in Islamic Mysticism**

Forthcoming in *Transcendent Philosophy Journal* Vol.16, 2015

Ebrahim Azadegan

Sharif University of Technology

Abstract: This paper tries to explain the roots of a perplexity which has been faced by a number of mystics who have wholeheartedly devoted their lives to seeking the love of God. In the first part I explain the Sufi interpretation of the *hadith* of the Hidden Treasure. In the second part, I describe the problem that arises when a perfect human being passes through several steps toward becoming a lover of God and afterward encounters a deeper level of divine hiddenness in his religious experience. In the third part, I try to explain this paradox in the context of Islamic mysticism. The end of perfection, according to Sufism, is that the human being becomes the worthy object of divine love. I conclude that *Deus Absconditus* is required for mystics to reach that final point.

Keywords: Sufism, Divine Hiddenness, Annihilation, Islamic Mysticism

I. Introduction

The problem of divine hiddenness has been discussed as a problem against God's existence in contemporary philosophy of religion.¹ The main debated thought in these open-ended discussions is that divine hiddenness *i.e.* the unavailability of evidence for God's existence is a good reason for doubting His existence. The proponents of the argument claim that the perplexity of many people during the history of mankind regarding the existence of God is itself a sign for His nonexistence. One mainly neglected point in all of the contemporary discussions regarding the soundness of the argument

from divine hiddenness for the nonexistence of God is the fact that this perplexity which has not been happened only for non-believers but also for believers and also for mystics, the lovers of God can be interpreted as an *invitation* from God. In This paper I shall try to give such an explanation for the perplexity and bewilderment which has been reported by mystics during their internal journey toward being true lovers of God in order to shed some light on the contemporary debate on the problem of and the argument from divine hiddenness. In order to reach such an explanation in the first part I shall explain the Sufi interpretation of the *hadith* (Prophet's Report) of the Hidden Treasure. According to that *hadith*, God created creatures in order to be known. The metaphor of the Hidden Treasure has largely been interpreted as referring to the aim of seeking and flourishing, such that humans become true worshipers and hence acquire knowledge of God. But acquiring that knowledge of God is not easy, and is not to be had 'on demand'. It requires a lifetime's effort. Sufi texts are replete with clarifications of the steps toward perfection one must take in order to reach knowledge of God. But it should be stressed that only one who truly goes up the path of perfection and reaches the point where he devotes himself completely to God, really loves Him. According to Sufism, God both desires and expects human beings to know and to love Him, and to become His servants such that God will show them His *face*.

In the second part of the paper, I discuss the perplexing problem that arises when a perfect human being passes through several steps toward becoming a lover of God, but afterward encounters a deeper level of divine hiddenness, a God who hides His face from the lover. The mystic sees God even while God remains hidden. In a beautiful interpretation of this complex situation, one can say that at the end of his journey a

perfect man will see not the face of God but only the tresses of the hidden Beauty. The theme of hiddenness of the Beloved for one who loves him is mentioned frequently in Sufi poems. It can be seen as the cause of mystical grief or of perplexity for the lover. The mystics have faced a paradox: God invites them to come, but His tresses prevent them from seeing His face!

In the third part of the paper I try to explain this paradox in the context of Islamic mysticism. It seems that the ultimate aim of the mystical journey is not to acquire knowledge of God or to be the lover of God, because in both cases the subject of love and knowledge – that is, the human being –still remains. The end of perfection, according to Sufism, is that the human being becomes the worthy object of divine love. However, this state cannot be obtained until the human being becomes annihilated in God; for God, the worthy object of divine love is the perfect being, which is Himself. *Deus Absconditus* (as it appears for mystics) is thus required for mystics to reach this ultimate point.

II. *Hadith* of the Hidden Treasure

A common theme in Sufi thought, expressed in their mystical poems, is their teleological view of creation and the role of mankind in the fulfilment of the purposes of creation as the most precious creature of God. They accept the Qur’anic view that God is wise and would never create an adrift and aimless world, and thus that creation surely has a purpose. According to the Qur’an, the world has not been created for play, nor is it without purpose:

“And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play. We created them not but based on Truth, however many people do not know”
(Qur’an 44:38-39).

Also according to the Qur'an, all creatures were created for the sake of human beings:

“See you not (O men) that God has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heaven and whatsoever is in the earth, and has completed and perfected His graces upon you both apparent and hidden offerings” (Qur'an 31:20).

If God's creation has a purpose, and if God has subjected whatsoever is in heaven and whatsoever is in the earth to human beings, what then would that purpose be, and how should human beings fulfil it? The Sufi answer to this question can be found among their interpretations of the sacred *hadith* of the Hidden Treasure. According to this *hadith*, the purpose of the creation is *irfan*, knowledge of God: “I was a Hidden Treasure, then I wanted to be known, then I created the creatures to come to know me.”² This *hadith* corresponds with an important verse in the Qur'an which clearly states that the human being is created for worshipping God: “I created not the Jinn and mankind except that they worship me” (Qur'a 51:55). Allamah Tabataba'i in interpretation of this verse shows this correspondence:

“In the last verse God is talking with the prophet: ‘And remember them because the remembrance is beneficial for believers’, but in this verse He changes the style to first person speech. The reason is to notify us that while the process of creation is an action that God does via some created means such as angels and other mediatory causes, the purpose of creation is something that belongs solely to Himself. And the term ‘except that they worship me’ is a kind of exclusion from a negative sentence, which emphasizes the exclusivity of God's purpose— that is that the creatures become worshippers of God, not for God to be worshipped, for He says ‘except that they worship me’ and does not say ‘I have created them to be worshipped by them, or be their worship-worthy object’. ... So, to become the worshipper of God is the purpose of human's creation. It is worth mentioning that the true worshipping leads to knowledge, knowledge of God. This point can be

inferred from Imam Ali's *hadith* that worshipping in this verse means knowing. Imam Ali seems to point to the higher purpose of the action of worshipping that is to become the knower of God [*'ārif*]. Thus the end goal of the creation is in the heart of worshipping God, which is knowledge of God and it would be acquired only when a man devotes himself to God as a slave and solely thinks and works for Him" (Tabatabaii 1363[1984], 611-616).³

So according to Allameh Tabatabaii the end goal of creation is a human being who is a real servant of God who is then His true knower and lover. Human beings, as God's best creatures, are capable of achieving all the jewels of the Hidden Treasure, and only they can know the Treasure in its totality. Human beings can see the manifestation of God in the earth and in heaven. Suffering, pain, love, longing and relishing are the ways that human beings can experience in their relationship with divine. For the total range of divine manifestation from suffering to love, from pain to relief, from grief to happiness, can be seen and perceived by human beings as the inhabitants of the earth.

Accordingly, the degree of perfection between human beings corresponds to degree of their acquired jewels of the hidden treasure, that is knowledge of God. With regards to the purpose of the creation of human beings and the role of 'man' in God's plan, the Sufis have tried to explain the human path of perfection as being to reach meritorious and virtuous *knowledge* of God (*'irfān*). One who has tried to reach knowledge of God and has (to some degree) succeeded is a virtuous person, a mystic, and a perfect man. How can one reach this level of perfection goes beyond my present concerns. The important point for our dialectic is that acquiring knowledge of God requires lifelong effort and hard work. Sufi texts resound with explanations of the steps one must take to reach knowledge of God. For example, in his book *The Perfect Man*, Aziz Nasafi sets out many stages one must pass to reach the highpoint of being a perfect

man: awakening, willing, remembering, abandoning, recalling, presence, and *love*. Each stage has many practical and theoretically complicated inner sublevels which must be traversed by one who journeys and assays according to the instructions of a master.

Another unified theme in the Sufi tradition is that the perfect human being is one who truly *loves* God, where this love is the result of virtuous knowledge of God. Few themes play as important a role in Sufi teachings as love. When a human being sees and knows the glory and beauty of God, then he will start coming to His love. But it should be stressed that only one who truly completes the path of perfection and reaches the point where he devotes himself completely to God can really love Him. According to Sufism, God desires and expects human beings to recognize and to love Him, to become His beloveds, so that God will show them His secret (the jewels of the Hidden Treasure).

The way of perfection is an endless path through which absolutely poor and needy beings will eventually be reconciled with God, an absolute perfect being. Surprisingly, though, the human soul has the capacity to pass through this long process of purification.

Attar⁴ named this unknown and far-off point Qāf Mountain, the summit of which is inaccessible and has never been seen.⁵ For Attar, the soul-making process is everlasting. It includes many stations and stages. When the Sufis follow the long path back to their Beloved, they pass through numerous ‘states’ of the soul—hope and fear, joy and sorrow, expansion and contraction, intoxication and sobriety—and they acquire the ‘stations’ that are the soul’s virtues, character, traits, and perfections (Chittick 2000,117). In his famous poem *The Speech of the Birds*, Attar tells how the birds gathered together and decided to travel to their king, the *Simorgh* who lives in Qāf Mountain. Guided by the hoopoe, and undergoing many adventures on the way, they flew across seven valleys—aspiration,

love, knowledge, independence, unity, bewilderment, and annihilation—before finally reaching their goal (Chittick 2000,118). It seems that Attar intends us to recall our purpose in creation and the necessity of the journey toward finding the Beloved through analogy with the remoteness of the summit of Qāf Mountain, to which the birds must fly to reach their ultimate goal.

Of course, God could have put us at the summit of the mountain from the first moment of our creation, as he does for angels.⁶ But the person who reaches the summit by meritorious endeavours is not the same as one who without effort settles at that point in the first moment, and our attempts to reach it are signs of our love. If we claim that we love God, we should show our desire to know Him and be with Him through the passion, desire, and perhaps pain, which accompanies our endeavours. The Qur'an asserts that God will test human beings regarding their claims about love and faith:

“Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best indeed”
(Qur'an 67:2).

And:

“Do men imagine that they will be left (at ease) because they say, We believe, and will not be tested with affliction? Lo! We tested those who were before them. Thus Allah knows those who are sincere, and knows those who feign” (Qur'an 29:2-3).

In Sufi tradition, which is certainly inspired by the Qur'anic themes, the notion of the 'test' is crucial for love. God has invited us to undertake a difficult, long, and gruelling journey toward the perfection that is to acquire knowledge of God and to become God's lover. But only real lovers can traverse this path and pass the test of love. According to this Sufi theme, divine hiddenness prepares a situation in which humans must be

consumed by the endeavour to seek their way towards the love of God. A man should travel the path by stages, with hope and with fear. In each step he will find the next, moving wisely so as not to fail the tests.

As Annemarie Schimmel emphasizes:

“[O]ne of the cornerstones in mystical teachings of Sufism [is that] man is, through acts of supererogatory piety, slowly lifted above his own base qualities and instead distinguished by the good qualities seen in God, until he completely lives in Him and through Him” (Schimmel 1975, 43).

Of course, this is a difficult road to stride, but the value to those who reach the hidden gemstones is to become a gem themselves.⁷

III. Perplexing Invitation

According to the Sufi worldview, then, the path to the beloved's hidden treasure is by no means easy. Yet, as Attar points out in the bewilderment stage, when a *perfect* human being (who whole-heartedly adopts God's love and vigorously journeys on the long and difficult way toward Him) becomes a lover of God, she then encounters a deeper level of divine hiddenness in her perception of God. The mystic sees God, even while God remains hidden. In their most beautiful statements, Sufis describe their perceiving as seeing only the beloved's dark tresses, the last veil of the beloved face. This theme is stated repeatedly in the *Divan* of Hafez and many other Sufi poems. At the end of his journey, a perfect man will see not the face of God but the tresses of the hidden Beauty. The hearts of all lovers hang in the flowing curls of the Beloved's tresses. At this point, when a perfect human being puts the veils of darkness and light aside, he cannot

explain his perception in words of ordinary language. Some choose to be silent, while others, adopting symbolic language, explain their insights through poems (or in another artistic manner).

For example, Hafez explains this perplexing situation as follows:

“My heart from me, He took; concealed from me, His face, He made. For God’s sake! With whom can this sport be made? The morning of solitariness was in design upon my soul: Endless favours, the thought of Him made. Like the variegated tulip, why am I not bloody of heart, Since with me, the heavy head, His eye made?”
(Hafez sonnet:376)⁸

And

“From behind the screen of His tress, the moon, displaying the sun, is a great sun that in front, a cloud hath.... Toward Hafez’s wounded heart, when a glance casts, thy intoxicated eye, that, in every corner, a ruined one hath” (Hafez sonnet:124).⁹

And Attar says:

“Till when, O ‘Attar, this figurative language?
Return to the mysteries of oneness!
When the wayfaring man reaches this station
The station itself rises from the road.
It will get lost because he will be found;
It will grow mute because he will be heard.
In the higher school of this strange mystery
You will find a hundred thousand intellects parch-lipped.”¹⁰

The theme of hiddenness of the Beloved for one who loves him is mentioned frequently in Hafez’s and Attar’s poems, and can be interpreted as the cause of a mystical grief or perplexity for the lover. He had once seen God’s face; but now He hides His face from

the lover. This perplexing situation, which is caused by higher-order hiddenness, Attar names *remaining after annihilation*. The Mystics have faced a paradox: God invites them to come, but His tresses do not let them see His face! In Hafez's words: "To this palace they invite Hafez while they detain him" (Hafez sonnet: 194).¹¹ Our perplexity will increase in proportion to the intensity of our quest for loving God. At every step of the way the traveller meets thousands of lost souls who, like himself, are wandering in the desert where all knowledge is ignorance. "We went into the desert in the hope of discovering certainty ... We entered this world perplexed and left it completely bewildered!"¹² Then the lover is so perplexed that he cannot say anything but remember the glory and the beauty of the beloved by his mystical and *symbolic art*, mainly poetry. During the mystical experience, man's ordinary language fails him, because he becomes mystified by the glimpse of divine beauty within the veils. It seems that divine hiddenness and unknowability has been the main source for the sacred arts during the history of mankind. John Bowker assents to this idea, saying:

"[In addition to poetry] many other forms of human imagination expressed in music, for example, or in art, mythology, novels, dance, architecture are equally important in the human attempt to *know the unknowable* in the case of God and universe. The explorations of spirituality are less often expressed in the form of propositions, because artists of all kinds have their own more fruitful ways of working on the boundaries of the unknowable, of that which lies hidden and inviting behind the obvious" (Bowker 2009, 14).

According to this view, *sacred art* is a creative medium for explaining the mystical experiences of hiddenness—the kind of hiddenness which is not a simple invitation to come into the way of worshiping and knowing God, but an experience of hiddenness for

ones who have devoted their whole lives to worshipping God and have passed several stations of purification and soul-making.¹³ So divine hiddenness not only makes the situation of our intellectual flourishing possible, but also in a more profound way provides a spring for our artistic creativity which is the result of our perplexity.

IV. Perplexity as Guide

There is a verse in the Qur'an that has inspired Sufis throughout the history of Islamic mysticism. This verse mentions the theme of perplexity at the higher level of hiddenness of God as experienced by a perfect human being, specifically Moses. Stories of Moses and the Israelites appear repeatedly in the Qur'an. Thus is it recorded that once Moses had reached a state of calmness and tranquillity after his long struggles with Pharaoh, and had convinced his nation to follow him in Exodus toward worshipping only God, then God invited him to come in *khalwat*—a place where lover and beloved are and nobody else comes between—with Him in a special time and place which is named *miquaat*.

“And when Moses came at the time and place appointed by Us, and his Lord (God) spoke to him, then Moses said: ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may look upon You.’ God said: ‘You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain; if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me.’ So when his Lord manifested to the mountain, He made it collapse to dust, and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he recovered his senses he said: ‘Glory be to You, I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the believers.’ ” (Qur'an 7:143-144).

The phrase which is particularly interesting and related to our discussion is Moses' plea to see God in *khalwat*, saying ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may look upon You.’ However, God said: ‘You cannot see Me’. It seems that God did not invite Moses

to come to *khalwat* just to speak with him—He had, after all, spoken to him several times since his journey from the Median, and during his struggle with Pharaoh. The paradox of higher-order hiddenness arises again. Moses was invited to *khalwat* and came there (a metaphor for passing through the way of perfection); but God refrained from showing His face to him. This is a reported situation in which some mystics find themselves, and which makes them perplexed.

Several mystics in the Sufi tradition have pointed to this story, comparing their own experiences with that of Moses. Each has explained their inferences regarding this verse according to their level of perfection and capacity for interpretation. Attar says:

“If you say ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself)’, you will hear ‘You cannot see Me’ again because His beautiful face is hidden eternally” (Attar 1386[2007], sonnet:407).¹⁴

And also he laments:

“I say ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself)’, but I fear You tell me that ‘You cannot see Me’ so I am weeping” (*Ibid.*, sonnet:804).¹⁵

Thus, for Attar, this level of hiddenness causes us to beseech God in fear and hope. We are afraid of hearing a negative answer from God while we hope to receive His positive answer. This model of prayer is admired in the Holy Qur’an: “Invoke your Lord with humility, and in secret... invoke Him with fear and hope” (Quran 7:55-56). He is not disappointed, because he says ‘O my Lord! Show me (Yourself)’, but he fears that he will hear ‘You cannot see Me’.

According to the Qur’an, Moses’ imploring led to the manifestation of God’s splendour, which made Moses fall down in a swoon. God told Moses that he could not

see Him, *but* that if a condition were met, then he would see Him! ‘You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain; if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me.’ But God’s condition could not be met: Moses never can see God. When Moses fell down and became annihilated, he who was saying ‘show me yourself’ would not be standing in between. It seems that the last veil between the perfect man and the Beloved is the man himself, which must be thrown out. Hafez says: “Between the lover and the beloved does no one intervene, Hafiz, remove the veil of self which has been cast between” (Hafez sonnet: 247).¹⁶The higher level of hiddenness is required to complete the perfection, which is not to see God but to be annihilated in God, to see that He is all that is. Attar says:

“He is the lover and love and the beloved.

Who are you then, if He is all that is?

When I look well, I see that from his part

Attar has received nothing but nothingness!” (Attar sonnet: 49).¹⁷

One can hear the same meaning in verses like ‘there is no god but God’, ‘there is no god but He’, ‘there is no god but You’, and, ‘there is no god but Me’.¹⁸ This kind of love is what the hiddenness of God invites us to reach. This is the love of God and not the love of perfection or the love just of seeing God. This is the kind of love that only the mystics who open their strapped hearts from the tresses of the beloved may reach. Then they may see the drowsy eyes of the beloved which invite them to come closer and closer. “Then he approached and came closer, and was at a distance of two bows’ length or even nearer, so Allah revealed to His slave (Mohammad) whatever He revealed, his heart lied not in what he saw” (Qur’an 53:8-11).

The sacred *hadith* of Nearness of Supererogatory (*qurbal-nawwafil*) confirms the idea of reconciliation: “When I love a servant, I, the Lord, am his ear so that he hears by Me, I am his eye, so that he sees by Me, and I am his tongue so that he speaks by Me, and I am his hand, so that he takes by Me.”¹⁹

One who reaches this point and becomes aware of the divine *secret* ought not to disclose it—otherwise he, like Mansour Hallaj, will lose his mundane life.²⁰ Rumi says:

“When Hallaj’s love for God reached its utmost limit, he became his own enemy and he killed himself. He said, ‘I am the Real (*haqq*)’ that is, ‘I have been annihilated; the Real remains, nothing else.’ This is extreme humility and the utmost limit of servant-hood. It means, ‘He alone *is*.’ To make a false claim and to be proud is to say, ‘You are God and I am the servant.’ In this way you are affirming your own existence, and duality is the necessary result. If you say, ‘He is the Real’, that too is duality, for there cannot be a ‘He’ without an ‘I’. Hence the Real said, ‘I am the Real’. Other than He, nothing else existed. Hallaj had been annihilated, so those were the words of the Real” (Mawlana sonnet: 442).²¹

V. Conclusion

I have argued that not only is divine hiddenness required for human beings to become worshipers of God and to yield sincerely to the love of God, but it is also required to lead lovers of God to the summit on their way to perfection. This end is not to acquire knowledge of God or to be the lover of God, because in both cases the subject of love and knowledge still is the human being. The end of perfection, according to those views, is that the human being becomes the object of divine love (*eros*). However, this state cannot be obtained until the human being becomes annihilated; for God loves the perfect being, which is Himself. Divine hiddenness (in its deeper form) is required also for mystics to be guided to this point, otherwise they might be prevented from advancing toward

annihilation. Hafez says: “I complain not about your absence; Without absence no presence brings content” and he continues: “O Hafez why might you complain about the grief caused by absence? In absence there is presence, there is light in darkness” (Hafez sonnet: 254).²²

Imam Ali ibn Abitaleb who is named by the Prophet as his successor and *wali* (spiritual leader) of all believers is admired also by Attar and many Sufi saints as the founder of Islamic mysticism. In the Invocation of Shabanyehe Imam Ali prays to God:

“I am thus having recourse to You, O my God! So, (please) do not disappoint me as regards Your having mercy upon me;

and do not divest me of Your kindness.

My Lord, I am Your powerless sinning slave and Your repentant bondman. So do not make me one of those from whom You turn away Your face, and whom his negligence has secluded from Your forgiveness.

My Lord, grant me complete severance of my relations with everything else and total submission to You. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of their looking at You to the extent that they penetrate the veils of light and reach the Source of Grandeur, and let our souls get suspended by the glory of Your sanctity. My Lord, make me one of those whom You call and they respond; when You look at them and they are thunderstruck by Your majesty” (Imam Ali).²³

Imam Ali clearly mentions the situation of higher order hiddenness and invokes God to guide him toward reconciliation with Him.

I conclude that divine hiddenness or *dues absconditus* is an invitation toward becoming annihilated in God. ‘You cannot see Me’, means to remove the veil of self to reach the stage in which there is nothing between the lover and the beloved, because the

lover becomes reconciled in beloved. Of this stage Allameh Tabataba'ii says: "in the dawn I came to see you clandestinely, two thousand times You said 'you cannot see Me'." ²⁴

Bibliography

- Amjad, Mahmoud , (1387), *EshraghateManavi*, Tehran: Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi.
- Attar, Faridudin, (1998) *Mantiq al-Tayr*; English translation by Peter Avery, *The Speech of the Birds*, The Islamic Texts Society.
- Attar, Faridudin, (1380), *Divan*, ed. B. Forouzanfar, Tehran: Milad.
- Azadegan, Ebrahim, (2014), "Divine Love and the Argument from Divine Hiddenness." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 6, no. 2.
- Bowker, John, (ed.), (2009), *Knowing the Unknowable*, I.B. Tauris Publishers.
- Chittick, William, (2000), *Sufism: a Short Introduction*, Oxford: One world.
- Davis, Stephen T. (2005), "Is Nonbelief a Proof of Atheism?" *Philo* 8: 151–159.
- Green, A. and Stump, E. (eds.), (2015), *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hafez, *Divan*, ed. Ghani and Ghazvini.
- Howard-Snyder, Daniel, and Paul K. Moser, (eds.), (2002), *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Howard-Snyder, Daniel (2006), "Hiddenness of God." In the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2d ed. Vol. 4. Edited by Donald M. Borchert, 352–357. Detroit: Macmillan.
- Keller, James A., (1995), "The Hiddenness of God and the Problem of Evil", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 37: 13–24.
- Klaas J. Kraay, (2010), "The Problem of Divine Hiddenness". In *Oxford Bibliographies in Philosophy*, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396577/obo-9780195396577-0178.xml> (accessed 18-Oct-2015).
- Kulayni, *Al Kafi*, (1370), Tehran.
- Lucian Stone (2006), "Blessed Perplexity: The Topos of Hayrat in Attar's Mantiq al-tayr" in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*.
- Lewisohn, L. and Shackle, C., (eds.), (2006), *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, I.B. Tauris Publishers.

Margaret Smith, (1994), *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, RIP publication.

Mawlana Rumi, (1367). *Divan-e Shams*, ed. Forouzanfar, B., Tehran: Amirkabir Publication.

Maitzen, Stephen. (2006), “Divine Hiddenness and the Demographics of Theism.” *Religious Studies* 42: 177–191;

Nasafi, Aziz, (1367) *Al-Insān al-Kāmil* [The perfect man], Tehran: Tahouri Publication, [1988].

Nasr, S. H., (2006), ‘Religious art, Traditional Art, Sacred Art, Some Reflections and Definitions’, World Wisdom Inc.

Pourjavadi, Nasrollah, (1372), *Bu-ye Jān* , Tehran: Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, Ch. 4. [1993], [written in Persian].

Schellenberg, J. L., (1993), *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Schellenberg, J. L., (2010), “The Hiddenness Problem and the Problem of Evil.” *Faith and Philosophy* 27: 45–60;

Shafi‘i-Kadkani, Mohammad Reza , (1378), *Zabur-i Parsi: Nigahi bi Zindagi wa Ghazalha-yi ‘Attar*, Tehran: Agah, [1999] [written in Persian].

Schimmel, Annemarie , (1975), *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* , Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Tabataba’i, Seyyed Mohammad Hossein, (1363), *Al-Mizan*, (Tehran: AmirKabir and Allamah Tabataba’i publication, Vol. 18, [1984]).

Endnotes:

¹ John Schellenberg is the first one who introduced this problem to the main debates of the contemporary analytic philosophy of religion by his book *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*. The debate continues in other essays such as Keller, (1995); Howard-Snyder and Moser (2002); Davis (2005); Howard-Snyder (2006); Maitzen (2006); Schellenberg (2010); Azadegan (2014); Adam Green and Eleonore Stump (2015); and many other journal papers and book chapters.

For a good bibliography of the contemporary debates on the problem of divine hiddenness see Klaas (2010).

²This is a frequently quoted *hadith*, attributed to God; it is a sacred *hadith* (*hadith qudsi*), for which, like many traditional citations, a reference often cannot be found in canonical collections.

³ English translation is mine.

⁴ Abū Hamīd bin Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm (born 541/1145-46 in Nishapur Iran – died 618/1221), much better known by his pen-names Farīd ud-Dīn Attār (the pharmacist), was a Persian Muslim poet, theoretician of Sufism, and hagiographer from Nīshāpūr who left an everlasting influence on Persian poetry and Sufism. For details on his biography see: Mohammad Reza Shafi‘i-Kadkani, *Zabur-i Parsi: Nigahi bi Zindagi wa Ghazalha-yi ‘Attar*, [written in Persian].

⁵ Attar Nishabouri, *Mantiq al-Tayr*; English translation by Peter Avery, *The Speech of the Birds*.

⁶ The Qur’an 32:12.

⁷ For Sufi ideas in this regard, see Nasrollah Pourjavadi, *Bu-ye Jān*, Ch. 4 [written in Persian].

⁸ Translated by H. W. Clark.

⁹ Translated by H. W. Clark.

¹⁰ Attar Nishabouri, *Mantequ’t Tair*, 3731-40; English translation by Lucian Stone in “Blessed Perplexity: The Topos of Hayrat in Attar’s *Mantiq al-tayr*” in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, ed. L. Lewisohn, and C. Shackle, p.98.

¹¹ Translation is mine.

¹² Attar, *Mukhtar-Name*; English translation by Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, p. 318.

¹³ For more details about the source of sacred art, see Nasr (2006).

¹⁴ Translation is mine.

¹⁵ Translation is mine.

¹⁶ Translated by Herman Bicknell.

¹⁷ Attar, *Divan*, Sonnet 49; translated by Leili Anvar-Chenderoff, in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, 243.

¹⁸ Mahmoud Amjad, *EshraghateManavi*, P.78.

¹⁹ See Kulayni, *Al Kafi*, vol. 2:352; English translation by Margaret Smith, in *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, 20.

²⁰ In many poets in the Sufi tradition, especially in Hafez, Hallaj's disclosure of the divine secret is ironically admired. In a famous sonnet, Hafez explains that we can see God's face by looking at our heart. It seems that this is the secret that caused Hallaj to be killed. While Hafez is disclosing the secret he says, 'And the one put on the cross by his face His crime, secrets of God would unveil' (Hafez, *Divan*, Sonnet 143; English translation by S. Shahriari).

²¹ Mawlana Rumi, *Divan-e Shams*, Sonnet number 442, translated by William Chittick, in *Sufism*, 21.

²² Translation is mine.

²³ Imam Ali ibn Abitaleb, "Munajaat Shabanieh," in Abbas Qumi, *Mafatih al-Janan* (too many publications).

²⁴ I should express my thanks to Mahmoud Amjad one of Allameh's students for informing me of this poem. I am also thankful to Muhammad Legenhausen for his comments on the penultimate version of this paper, and to Amber Grifioen for our discussions regarding the subject matter of this paper, and to the organizers and the participants of the international workshop on "Longing, Suffering, and Love in Mystical Theory and Practice" held in University of Konstanz, August, 2015 where I presented the main ideas of this paper.