



ANA'L-ḤAQQ

ANA'L-ḤAQQ “I am the Truth,” the most famous of the Sufi *šāḥīyāt* (ecstatic utterances, or paradoxes). Uttered by **Ḥosayn b. Maṣṣūr Ḥallāj** (executed 309/922 in Baghdad), these words are traditionally said to have been spoken when he knocked at the door of his master, Jonayd, after returning from a pilgrimage in 282/896; asked, by Jonayd, “Who is there?”, he is supposed to have answered *ana'l-ḥaqq*. Jonayd thereupon cursed him. However, L. Massignon has shown that the words were not a sudden outcry, but rather form part of Ḥallāj's doctrine that the uncreated Divine spirit can transform for a moment the created human spirit so that a change of subject takes place. Hence the Divine and the human person work together, and here is no question of “incarnation” or “Unity of Being.” The expression is found in Ḥallāj's *Ketāb al-ṭawāsīn* in the context of his discussion of the claim of Eblīs, who said “I am better than (Adam),” and of Pharaoh, who said “I am your Lord Most High” (Qur'ān 79:24). Since according to early Sufi theories (particularly Ḳarrāz) only God has the right to say “I,” the utterance “I” is, in itself, blasphemy. Ḥallāj's *ana'l-ḥaqq* was later generally understood as meaning “I am God,” for *ḥaqq* had become a frequently used equivalent of “God,” especially in the non-Arabic areas. Hence, *ana'l-ḥaqq* was interpreted as the most daring expression of man's essential unity with God, and is a key expression in the mystical poetry of Iran, Turkey, Muslim India, and Indonesia wherever the theories of *waḥdat al-wojūd* “Unity of Being” were employed.

Sufi leaders were divided in their opinions about Ḥallāj. Some, like 'Abd-al-Qāder Gīlānī, thought that he “sang tunes which are not permitted to a



mortal”; others tried to explain *ana'l-ḥaqq* by comparing the mystic in his ecstatic state to the burning bush out of which God spoke (ʿAṭṭār, *Tadkerat al-awliā'*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, rep. London, 1907, II, p. 136), or, like Rūmī, by using the metaphor of the iron which, red-hot in the midst of fire, imagines itself to be the fire (*Maṭnawī* II, vs. 1347ff.). Most of the sober orders, particularly the later Naqṣbandīya, saw in *ana'l-ḥaqq* a sign of dangerous intoxication (hence the numerous allusions to “Maṣūri wine” in poetry) or of immaturity, for “only as long as the water is not boiling does the kettle produce a sound,” or “the caravan bell is heard only when the goal has not yet been reached,” in such manner do the later poets in India describe the delusive state of Ḥallāj's *ana'l-ḥaqq*. Others tried to defend Ḥallāj's utterance by explaining that he was overwhelmed by love, like a gazelle who becomes so infatuated with the gardener that she exclaims, “I am a human being” (Nāṣer Moḥammad ʿAndalīb, *Nāla-ye ʿAndalīb*, 2 vols., Bhopal, 1309/1891, I, p. 133). They might also contrast the *ḥaqq* “eternal, hence real” to the *bāṭel* “vain, decaying”: And is not man's spirit (*rūḥ*) indeed *ḥaqq*? (ibid., I, p. 622). Or else they saw Ḥallāj as the enraptured gnostic who discovers, once the veils of createdness and ignorance have been lifted in ecstasy, that everything is identical with God; thus he hears the trees, mountains, and fishes proclaiming with mute eloquence *ana'l-ḥaqq* (cf. Šabestari, *Golšan-e rāz*, and Lāhijī's relevant commentary: *Šarḥ-e Golšan-e rāz*, ed. K. Samīī, Tehran, 1337 Š./1958, pp. 368-79, esp. p. 369). But to unveil the secret of either loving union or absolute identity, to “beat the drum of Unity” as the poets say, was considered *bī-adabī* “lack of etiquette” (ʿOrfī, *Kolliyāt*, Tehran, 1340 Š./1961, p. 431), for the true lover does not divulge the secret of his beloved, nor the servant that of his master. Again, others, like Rūmī, held that *ana'l-ḥaqq* was the expression of perfect selflessness (*Fīḥī mā fīḥī*); the mystic had completely forgotten himself in God, so that his “I” was a sign of Divine grace; in contrast, Pharaoh's “I” became a curse for him (*Maṭnawī* II, vs. 2523; V, vs. 2035). The expression *ana'l-ḥaqq* was so popular that the poets could easily presuppose its knowledge even among the masses (e.g., folk poetry in Sindhi, Panjabi, Pashto). Akbar Allāhābādī (d. 1921) cleverly juxtaposed *ana'l-ḥaqq* to Darwin's “I am a monkey” to point to the difference between Muslim and modern Western approaches to humanity.

Ḥallāj's utterance attracted the interest of European scholars as early as the beginning of the 19th century; most of them followed a pantheistic interpretation or declared Ḥallāj a “pure monist” (A. von Kremer) and tried to trace back the *ana'l-ḥaqq* to the *aham brahmāsmi* of the Upanishads (particularly M. Horten). Massignon, however, showed its correct place in



Ḥallāj's theology. His explanations led even Moḥammad Eqbāl, formerly a critic of Ḥallāj's "measureless pantheism," to the opinion that *ana'l-ḥaqq* rather meant "the Infinite entering into the loving embrace of the finite."

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