



## Mirror Ciphers in Islamic Mysticism and Wisdom Islam Tasavvufunda ve Bilgeliginde Ayna Şifreleri

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Ali Babaei<sup>1</sup>

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Email: [Hekmat468@yahoo.com](mailto:Hekmat468@yahoo.com)

Orcid No. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2680-2824>

Abdollah Hosaini Eskandiyani<sup>2</sup>

Email: [hosseinieskandianabdullah@gmail.com](mailto:hosseinieskandianabdullah@gmail.com)

Orcid No. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2318-022X>

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### Abstract

In Islamic wisdom and mysticism, various ciphers and allegories have been used to explain the meanings and teachings of philosophical and mystical issues. As one of the strongest ciphers in the world of wisdom and mysticism, mirror has been used as a cipher for the recognition of noetic truths, from the foundation of Ibn Arabi's theoretical mysticism and the foundation of the originality of existence of personal oneness of Mulla Sadra to the foundation of romantic mysticism, as well as the teachings of religious texts. The explanation of the cipher, analogy and its relationship with the owner of analogy requires special attention to clarify the reason for the cipher of the mirror and in this article by using descriptive-analytical method we want to investigate this issue. In Islamic wisdom, mirror is a cipher that depicts the way concepts appear in the mind, and just as the absent world is a mirror of the suprasensory world, the human mind is also a mirror of the absent world, and it should try to become pure wisdom by relying on its rational faculties or it reflect God.

**Keywords:** Mirror, Wisdom, Mysticism, Cipher, God, Man

رمزهای آینه در عرفان و حکمت اسلام

### چکیده

در حکمت و عرفان اسلامی در جهت تبیین معانی و معارف حکمی و عرفانی از پدیدارهای مختلفی استفاده شده است. آینه به عنوان یکی از قوی‌ترین تمثیل و رموز عالم معرفت، در نحله‌های مختلف جگمی و معرفتی مورد استفاده قرار گرفته است؛ از مبنای عرفان نظری ابن عربی و مبنای اصالت وجود وحدت شخصی صدرایی تا مبنای عرفان عاشقانه، و نیز تا آموزه‌های متون دینی به عنوان تمثیلی برای شناخت حقایق معرفتی مورد استفاده واقع شده است. تبیین وجه تمثیل، مثال و رابطه آن با مسئله نیازمند امعان نظر خاصی است و آینه در عرفان و حکمت اسلامی از این منظر بسیار مورد توجه قرار گرفته که در این تحقیق با روش توصیفی-تحلیلی سعی در بررسی این مهم را داریم. در حکمت اسلامی، آینه رمزی است که نحوه ظهور مفاهیم در ذهن را به تصویر می‌کشد و همانطور که عالم عین آینه عالم مثال است، ذهن آدمی نیز آینه عالم عین است و باید بکوشد تا با تکیه بر قوای عقلانی خود، خرد محض گردد یا صفات حکیم مطلق را تقلید کند و یا انعکاسی از او باشد.

واژگان کلیدی: آینه، حکمت، عرفان، رمز، خدا، معرفت، انسان

### Introduction

According to the principles and teachings of Islamic wisdom and mysticism, the allegory and cipher of mirror can be considered from several important perspectives, one of which is its allegorical foundation. The mirror can be used as a cipher of the allegories of the world of wisdom to explain mystical and philosophical issues; just as other allegories such as the cipher of light (= noûr), water, circle, soul, etc., can be used to explain mystical and philosophical issues. The cipher of the mirror has been used many

<sup>1</sup>. Prof. Dr., University of Tabriz, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Iran

<sup>2</sup>. PhD student in Islamic Theology, University of Tabriz, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Iran

times in the theoretical mysticism attributed to Ibn Arabi, as well as in the romantic-mystical mysticism of mystics such as Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani, Ruzbihan Baqli, Rumi and other mystics. Also, the cipher of mirror has been used in the view of sages like Mulla Sadra to explain philosophical issues; therefore, a wide and diverse range of philosophical and mystical sects have benefited from this cipher.

Now, the explanation of the analogy, the allegory and the appointment of the owner of analogy require complete theoretical precision in the ciphers of mirror to clarify the various aspects of its use in noetic issues. This article has adopted such an approach to consider more dimensions of the mirror's ciphers. The cipher of "mirror" has been used in explaining many issues such as the cognition of Hâqq Taâla (= Almighty God), the quality of manifestation of Hâqq Taâla, the oneness of existence, the manifestation of Names and Attributes of God, the cognition of soul, God's Affairs, the stages of the world, the stages of man and many other mystical and philosophical issues. Mirror has been used from the ordinary life of human life to the highest stages of mystical cognition. The peak of this usage is in the essentials of Ibn Arabi's view of the oneness of existence and in the essentials of the originality of the existence and personal oneness of Mulla Sadra. Manifestation, affair, exterior and epiphanic form are the most important interpretations that have been used in explaining the characteristics of the mirror. The image of the owner of the image falling in the mirror is called "manifestation". The relationship between the image inside the mirror and the owner of the image is called "affair", and in another way, what is in the mirror is called "exterior", meaning the owner of the image, and the mirror is the "epiphanic form" of that image. Other stages of noetic life are also ready to use the ciphers of mirror to explain mystical teachings; this usage is possible based on the views of romantic mysticism and the simile of a relationship between the lover and the beloved, which can bring many results. Both at the stage of spiritual, mystical and philosophical life and at the stage of vulgar and popular life, mirror is used as a cipher of cultivation, correction, recognition, measurement, journey, etc. The capabilities and ciphers have turned the mirror into one of the most amazing creatures of Almighty God, which can accept many interpretations. We analyze and investigate several of these ciphers of mirror in this article.

### **Methodology**

This article tries to discover the ciphers of the mirror in the world of wisdom and mysticism with a consequential, argumentative and library focus and by using an analytical method. The beginning of these ciphers is "newness" until it ends with the cipher of "scale".

### **Research Background**

Muslim mystics as well as theistic philosophers have paid special attention to the cipher of mirror and have used this cipher to explain their mystical and philosophical thoughts (al-Hallaj, 2007); (al-Qushayri, 2012); (Ibn Turke, 2007); (al-Ghazali, 2007); (Mostamali Bukhari, 1984); (Suhrawardi, 1993); (al-Qunawi, 2002). According to historical evidence, both religious texts as well as philosophical and mystical texts have been subject to the symbolic and allegorical use of mirrors. In Islamic texts, the famous hadith "A believer is a mirror of a believer"<sup>1</sup> refers to this issue (Muttaqi, 1998). In the mentioned hadith, both believers are interpreted as a servant of the people of faith, but from the point of view of a group of thinkers, if we interpret one of the believers as the meaning of Almighty God, it will induce much deeper and different meanings; because one of the Names of God is "Believer" and another believer is considered as a servant of the people of faith. Another important use of the cipher of mirror is related to the hadith of Imran Sabi. Imam Reza (A.S) in the hadith known as the hadith of Imran Sabi (Majlesi, 1983) in response to the question of how it is possible for Hâqq Taâla to be present in this world and be with the creatures, but this should not cause any defects, dwelling and absorption in Him, says: "The presence of God in this world is like the reflection of the faces of people in the mirror" (Tabarsi, 2002).

On the other hand, theistic philosophers, especially Mulla Sadra, have used the cipher of mirror to explain many philosophical issues, such as the stages and affairs of God, the stages of the soul, the stages of the world, and other philosophical issues (Mulla Sadra, 1981; Mulla Sadra, 2008; Mulla Sadra, 1984; Mulla Sadra, 1982; Sabzewari, 1992). Due to the widespread use of the mirror in explaining



philosophical and mystical issues in the history of Islamic thought, Henry Corbin referred to the mirror as “mirror phenomenon” in the world of Islamic wisdom (Corbin, 2012; Corbin, 2014).

Aâmeri and Panahi (2015) in the article “reflection of the symbol of mirror in mythology and mysticism based on Bundahishn and Mîrśad al-Īybād (= the path of God's bondsmen from origin to return)” have tried to investigate the mirror symbol from a mystical and mythological point of view in a comparative way, focusing on the two books of Mîrśad al-Īybād and Bundahishn. Roshan (2008) in the article “the symbol of the mirror in Rumi's thought” tried to discover and explain the symbolic and allegorical aspects of the mirror in Rumi's works and especially from the point of view that the mirror is a symbol of the manifestation of divine secrets. Also, Hamzēyyan and Khademi (2016) in the article “a comparative study of mirror in the works of Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani and Rumi” had tried to analyze the ciphers of mirror according to Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani and Rumi. Until now, there has been no research that tried to discover the hidden ciphers of the mirror - not only semantic and practical aspects- in Islamic mysticism and wisdom without adhering to the thought of a certain philosopher or mystic, and this research tries to explain the hidden ciphers of the mirror in expressing the magnificent mystical thoughts and also special philosophical issues.

## **1. Mirror Ciphers in Islamic Wisdom and Mysticism**

### **1-1 The mirror is the cipher of newness: the condition of the heart is to be fresh and new every moment**

One of the most important characteristics of the mirror is that the mirror has newness inside it every moment. The mirror is full of images, but it is not limited to any image and takes on a new image every moment and does not have a fixed image. While the mirror has a special image at every moment, it is not limited to any image, and this is why the mirror can take an infinite image. This cipher can be adapted from many aspects with noble and deep religious, philosophical and mystical teachings; if the mirror is a mirror of creatures, the creatures themselves are the mirror of the Almighty God. The creatures take a new image of the Existence of the Almighty God every moment; He is the All-Highest, and according to the verse “Everyone in Heaven and Earth asks for something from Him; each day He is [Busy] at some task”<sup>2</sup> (Ar-Rahmān: 29), He is in manifestation and epiphany every moment. Creatures that are the result of the manifestation of Him and are His Affairs, accept this manifestation every moment, and they are refreshed and renewed every moment, both physically and spiritually; therefore, the flow of Divine Grace is continuous every moment among all creatures and even non-material objects, and they all find newness. The relation of the owner of the image to the image in the mirror is the relation of Hâqq Taâla to the creatures.

On a higher stage, the perfect human (= anthropos teleios or al-Insān al-kāmêl) is like a mirror that carries spiritual realities and teachings. At any moment, through the onslaught of spiritual realities, the mystic receives beautiful forms in his heart and happy states in his body. In common language, such states are likened to a house that has many guests, but it is not attached to any guest just as the mirror is not attached to any image. There are many inspirations inside the poet, mystic, sage and artist, but none of them are permanent and constant. The perfect human is not bound by any inspiration or spiritual realities. Man is a guest of this world that he will travel from it one day (Nasafi, 1401). This world is like a mirror in which everyone who comes, looks at it and leaves, and the images that come and go in the mirror are the same guests that come and go. This is the expression of the cipher of the constant flow of God's Grace in the universe and a confirmation of the honorable verse “Everyone in Heaven and Earth asks for something from Him; each day He is [Busy] at some task” (Ar-Rahmān: 29).

This is the cipher of the mirror, which is manifested in the mystical thought of Rumi, and he considers the house of the heart worthy of hosting unseen and hidden guests due to its detachment, and he says: “If the mirror is empty of images, it is valuable because being empty of all images means that the mirror has all images”<sup>3</sup> (Rumi, 2019).

Also, Saib Tabrizi refers to this cipher of the mirror and says: “I have no servants, guards and porters and I am like a house and a mirror that is never empty of guests and images”<sup>4</sup> (Saib Tabrizi, 2021).

The fact that the heart has guests every moment and it is not empty of guests in a deeper sense means loving all creatures, that is, the heart of the perfect human has such an expanse that it considers creatures, regardless of their stage of existence, as the creatures of Hâqq Taâla, and the heart sees all creatures as equals and as a reflection and manifestation of Hâqq Taâla without feeling attachment or affiliation on anyone or neglecting them. The mirror itself never reacts, but the heart is like a mirror that always reacts and becomes new, and newness is its characteristic, and this renewal and being refreshed and renewed every moment means getting rid of the previous image and beautifying the current image and preparing to receive the next image. Such a state with all the images that it has is the same as imageless and empty of any image. For the rational confirmation of “every moment of change and novelty in the world”, two important philosophical principles can be put as arguments in this regard:

1. Change in substance: According to the originality of the existence of gradation, the material world is full of change, transformation and newness (Mulla Sadra, 1981),

2. The renewal of likes: According to the originality of the existence of personal oneness, not only the material world, but even the immaterial world (= invisible world) of non-material objects is in change, transformation and newness (Mulla Sadra, 1981; Babaei, 2023).

### **1-2 Mirror is the cipher of newness in non-material objects**

It is known that movement and change exist only in the material world, but in the immaterial world, movement and change has no meaning; because movement is to reach from faculty to actuality, and non-material objects are pure actuality, and they have no faculty (Zamzami et al, 2023). On the other hand, the principles of Islamic wisdom and mysticism, such as the view of personal oneness, the renewal of likes, and the interpretation of the verse “Everyone in Heaven and Earth asks for something from Him; each day He is [Busy] at some task” (Ar-Rahmân: 29) require renewal in the world of non-material objects as well. The eternal Grace and manifestation of Hâqq Taâla requires that non-material objects also benefit from this Grace and accept change and newness. In the world of non-material objects, renewal occurs without movement, that is, reaching from faculty to actuality. Mirror is the best example of such a renewal because the mirror receives a new image every moment, without ever reaching from faculty to actuality.

### **1-3 Mirror is a cipher of the relationship between truths and delicacy (= rāqqayeq)**

The image in the mirror is a cipher of the relationship between truths and delicacy. It is stated in philosophical discussions that when a word is created, it has such generality that it includes common meanings and related examples. According to this relationship, the meaning of “hand” is something that is used to grasp, expand, and move, whether this is from non-material object power or current knowledge or a part of the body (Sajadi, 1983). “Pen” refers to a concept that is used to write and make a mark, therefore it includes the most exalted pen, which is the “universal intellect” and the “active intellect” that by them, the rationally speaking souls are written, and also it includes the imagination and imaginal faculty as well as the physical pen, which is made of straw or metal or wood. The “scale” is also something that is weighed, compared and measured in that sense (al-Qunawi, 2002). This is why Rumi referred to the mirror as a scale and says: “The mirror and the scale are excellent measures by themselves, and if you serve for the mirror and the scale for two hundred years and say so”<sup>5</sup> (Rumi, 2019).

According to the principles of Transcendent Wisdom, what is meant by truth and delicacy is that every reality in the stages of creation has a special epiphany (Mulla Sadra, 1981; Forouhi and HosseiniEskandian, 2021). The meaning of the scale, which has an abstract truth there, if it goes through several stages of creation, it will appear in the form of balance, beam, and even mirror. The apparent fire that is in this world is a manifestation of Divine Indignation; this is why Sabzewari says: “The fire



of the next world is so intense that the fire of this world is like water compared to it. In this way, the forms of this world have truths in the next world, and this means that the truths in this world are a summary of those eternal truths". (Sabzewari, 1992).

On another stage of this cipher, just as the image in the water or the image in the mirror belongs to the owner of image, in the same way, all beings of this material world belong to their truth in the next world. On another stage, according to the relationship between truth and delicacy, mirror is the essence of meaning of "showing"; therefore, everyone and everything that accepts "showing" is considered a mirror in various ways. If the heart shows Almighty God, then it is a mirror. If the believer shows the believer, then he is a mirror, and if the lover shows the beloved, then he is also a mirror.

On another stage, mirror is a delicacy of an exalted truth that called "Essence of Divine Unity", because God is The Clarifier, The Exterior, The Scale, The Reckoner, and The Mirror of all creatures and The Revealer of their secrets. Not only the mirror, but all the phenomena and creatures are revealer and mirror. It is the Essence of God that makes Him known by the manifestation of Attributes, and it is God's Essence and Attributes that makes Him known by the manifestation of Actions; that is, everything is a delicacy of a true mirror and therefore everything is a mirror (Babaei, 2012).

Mir Fendereski refers to the same cipher from the mirror and says: "The sky with these stars is marvellous, excellent and beautiful, and a form is below the sky, the sky is above that form, and the sky itself is a lower form for the form that is above it"<sup>6</sup> (Mirfendereski, 2010). God is the mirror of creatures, and all creatures can also be His mirror because the existence of all creatures depends on Him.

#### **1-4 Mirror is the cipher of the four journeys of mystics**

With a mirror, one should first look at the phenomenal aspect of each phenomenon, and then after seeing the same aspect, transfer to the real owner of that phenomenon and pay attention to thinking about the owner of the image, not the image itself. Cleansing the face from any blemish and imperfection is combined with looking at the mirror and the image again after the face has been beautified, and it is with this return that true beauty has been achieved and can be seen. By seeing the image in the mirror, not by simply seeing the mirror itself, the mystic's journey begins, and he thinks about God and the owner of the image, and finally he returns to the creatures once again to bring them with himself. Since there is a mirrority relationship between the creatures and Hâqq Taâla, the possibility of journey becomes possible, otherwise the holy traveller (= sâlêk) could not reach the owner of the image from image.

On another stage, sages and mystics have spoken about the first, second, third birth, etc.; it means the birth of a nature that can understand both the simple external realities and the deep esoteric realities. For example, we can mention the concept of "monotheism" (= Tâwhid); for the general public who are on the way to enter the religion, testifying to the oneness of God is the way to enter religion, and such a thing is done only by using a few words on the tongue, and in this case, thinking, analyzing and deep understanding are no longer relevant, but staying at this stage of understanding is not suitable for a believer who wants to reach perfection and is adorned with moral virtues. Entering the valley of Sharia is entering the world of worship, wisdom and affection. Hand by hand and foot by foot, Sharia will bring the human tongue and eye to the mind and heart, and it will elevate the mind and heart to the soul, and it is in this ascension that the soul will reach its true worlds (= angelic world), and it is in the return from this ascension that the understanding of the simple concept of "testimony" has such a depth that it cannot be compared to that first understanding. This is why philosophers and mystics have stated different stages for testimony and monotheism, which can be mentioned as follows: "I testify there is no deity but God" (= ašhadu 'an lâ 'ilāha 'illa- llāhu), "I testify there is no deity but He" (= ašhadu 'an lâ 'ilāha 'illa- hūwā), "I testify there is no deity but You" (= ašhadu 'an lâ 'ilāha 'illa- āntâ), and "I testify there is no deity but Me" (= ašhadu 'an lâ 'ilāha 'illa- aā`na). Reaching each stage requires the acquisition of special perfections and it is necessary for the holy traveller to pass through special valleys to reach a higher stage (Suhrawardi, 1996). In this way, a traveller lives among spiritual concepts in several journeys, transitions and returns, and this is one of the reasons why the Prophet (PBUH) passed all the



stages of wisdom as an “excellent exemplar”, and after going through these stages, he returned to the creatures to be a guiding light for all those who want to ascend and reach perfection, and he is the creator of the circle of existence, and his descent was with the Holy Quran and his ascension was with the event of the Ascension (= Mi'raj), with which he reached the pinnacle of wisdom (Suhrawardi, 1996). Mulla Sadra has made the understanding of the truth of the unity of the intelligent, the intelligence and the intelligible subject to the birth of the third constitution [= *fītrā*] (Mulla Sadra, 1982).

### **1-5 The image in the mirror is a sign of the embodiment of actions**

The mirror itself does not make someone's face ugly or beautiful. In other words, it can be said: “Whatever you are, the mirror will show you the same”. If this world and the hereafter are mirrors, according to the cipher of analogy, human actions and deeds in these two worlds will also be analogous. According to the verses and hadiths, everyone's status in the hereafter will be the same as what he has earned in this material world. This state is called “analogous” and in the language of the Sharia, it is called “embodiment of actions”. Whoever remains blind in this world will be blind in the hereafter, and whoever is sighted here, will be sighted there as well.

In this regard, Waāēz Qazvini considers the mirror as a sign of the embodiment of actions and says: “My sinfulness is so clear and obvious that the letter of my deeds can become a mirror in my hands”<sup>7</sup> (Waāēz, 2006).

It is interesting to pay attention to what the Prophet (PBUH) said to Qêys ibn Asêm: “O Qêys, honor is accompanied by humiliation, life is accompanied by death, and this material world is accompanied by the hereafter, and for everything, a guard has been placed, and for every work, an observer has been determined, and for every end, there is a definite time. It is inevitable that there will be a companion with you, and he is alive, and you will be buried with him while you are dead. So, if he is honorable and noble, he will make you honorable and noble, and if he is low and humble, he will make you low and humble. Then your companion will not be surrounded except with you, and you will not be surrounded except with him, and they (= God or angels or prophets) will not ask you except about him. So, try so that this companion of yours finds a good position in front of God. If he is righteous, he will be your friend, and if he is sinful and humble, nothing but fear and terror will reach you, and this companion of yours is your “actions” [= *âmāl*] (Naraqī, 2006).

According to Mulla Sadra's point of view, the embodiment of actions is the most necessary, the best, the noblest and the most subtle, but the most hidden issue that can be discussed (Mulla Sadra, 2008). In simple terms, the embodiment of actions means that the morals of a person in this world become his body in the hereafter. In this regard, it has been said that due to the actions in the body of every human being, there is an imaginal body that does not disappear with the death of a person, and its state and position is like a state between intellect and sense. This body will be assembled in the form of the appearances and acquisitions that the soul has gained in this world. God covers the size of the human body with the size and quality of these acquisitions, that is, it is these actions that are his companion, and in a more complete sense, it is these actions that become a human being (Mulla Sadra, 1984). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) in a hadith says: “People's lives and days in the hereafter are like their lives and days in this world” (al-Hurr al-Amili, 2007). He also says: “Everyone will be assembled in the next world in the form of what he loved in this world, even if he loved a stone” (Majlesi, 1983). In another hadith we read: “Paradise is a dry and barren desert. Plant as much as you can. They (= Companions of the Prophet) asked what should we plant? He said: what you see in paradise, every blessing of trees, rivers, fruits, houris and palaces that are in it, are the actions, morals, abodes and inner states of yours in this world that will be yours in the next world” (al-Hurr al-Amili, 2007). By referring to this cipher of mirror, Vahshi Bafqi stated that every behavior, action and word we have, affects on our soul and mind: “Every cipher that passes in the heart, its image is created in the heart, and your mirror is your actions that make it visible”<sup>8</sup> (Vahshi Bafqi, 2022). By constantly repeating anything, that thing makes room in the soul and its characteristics are institutionalized in the soul. This will cause actions for the next stages to be issued easily, and this will cause a greater impact on the soul until it completely dominates the soul and mind, and the soul and mind, which are the whole truth of man, should accept



all those negative characteristics until in the next world where the senses are removed and the inners are revealed, the whole personality of man is the same characteristics that are institutionalized in him (Babaei, 2012). The cipher of this issue is that every constant and institutionalized characteristic in a person has a special appearance and manifestation in different stages of existence, that is, a form has different effects in different stages, and in the hereafter, which is another stage of existence, the characteristics of the stage of this material world will have a manifestation related to that stage. We can see a simple example of this issue in our own behavior in this material world, for example, when we get angry, it causes excitement of the soul, reddening of the face and burning of the materials of body, the veins rush and the body parts contract, and it may even lead to illness and death. We know that anger is an animated characteristic that is in our inner world, but it influences material and immaterial world. It is even possible that anger in the next world will become a burning flame that falls in the heart and burns its owner. By referring to this fact, Mulla Sadra states: "Whatever a person perceives with his senses, a trace of it ascends to his soul and accumulates in the book of his essence and the treasury of his objects of perception. The human soul is like a collected book that its inners are hidden from the eyes today, and when it dies, those hidden inners will be revealed. The institutionalization of these characteristics and countenances, which are known as "acquisitions" in the language of philosophers, and "angel" (= *mālak*) and "devil" in the language of mystics, causes the eternal merit and punishment" (Mulla Sadra, 2008). Therefore, every work and word of a human being is like the patterns of the book in the flashes, and in this regard this holy verse refers to this issue: "You will not find a people who believe in Allāh and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allāh and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those - He has decreed faith within their hearts and supported them with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allāh is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - those are the party of Allāh. Unquestionably, the party of Allāh - they are the successful"<sup>9</sup> (Al-Mujādalah: 22).

Mulla Hadi Sabzewari in confirming this issue stats: "The verbal root of "the King" (= *mālik*) and "acquisition" (= *mālikāh*), and also, we can say "angel" (= *mālak*) is the same, because angels (= *mālāikkāh*) are the plural of *mālak* and *mālikāh*. In fact, angels are like *mālikāh* of God's words, and it can be said that God's words become *mālikāh* if they are repeated in the heart (Mulla Sadra, 2008). The existential angels of every human being are the same angles that emerge from the mainfestation of human actions in the hereafter. Therefore, the so-called resurrection is the place of mainfestation of human actions in the mirror of existence.

### **1-6 The image of the mirror and the analogy of the image are in proportion**

Image, analogies and doubles are in proportion. Therefore, everyone is not affected by anything and everything cannot be affected by anyone: "What Jacob saw of Joseph's beauty was special to him, and Joseph's brothers were not benefited from seeing this beauty"<sup>10</sup> (Rumi, 2019). By referring to the story of Joseph, Ibn Arabi considers him a mirror in which Jacob saw the beauty of God: "Joseph's brothers took him to the desert and threw him in a well, but Jacob had seen the Divine Beauty on Joseph's face and became impatient with him, so that from the side where Joseph's shirt was brought, the messenger could not smell it- even though Joseph's shirt was in his arms, but Jacob tasted Joseph's scent to his soul at such a distance in Canaan. Every mystic picks the fruit from the tree of his talent and what he gets is the result of his talent and perfection" (Ibn Arabi, 2006). It is the difference in capabilities and talents that makes the fate of people different, like a small mirror makes the face small, and a rectangular (stretched) mirror also makes it into its own shape; if one looks into the trembling water, he will see his face trembling. In this case, the face is the same, but it looks different depending on the location and position. The face may appear variable in the mirror and the right side of the viewer is usually placed in front of the left side of the face.

The story of the crow and the pigeon mentioned by Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani refers to the same cipher of mirror: "Among birds, it is customary to get along less with the opposite sex. In the meantime, it was seen that a crow and a pigeon were flying together, which surprised everyone. A sage said: There must have been a mutual understanding between these two, which led to friendship between them. They

searched about this and found out that both have lameness. The sage said: this is the reason” (Ayn al-Quzat Hamadani, 2001). The lover and the beloved become one when they are compatible with each other, otherwise there is no relationship between Hâqq Taâla and the contingencies, and affection is the only affair that establishes a relationship between the Creator and the creatures: “O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion - Allāh will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, strong against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allāh and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favor of Allāh; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allāh is all-Encompassing and knowing”<sup>11</sup> (Al-Mā'idah: 54).

### **1-7 From seeing the image in the mirror, we are transferred to the owner of the image (= ourselves)**

According to this cipher of mirror, we transfer from finding deities in ourselves to the true God (= Hâqq Taâla). The mirror is a cipher for transmission; this is because if we look in the mirror and find a blemish on our face, we don't touch the mirror, but we touch our face and cheek and remove that blemish. In fact, by seeing the blemish on our face in the mirror, we have been transferred to the owner of the image, that is, ourselves. It is through the heart that Almighty God is perceived, and with every image we find in our heart, we realize not the image itself, but the owner of the image, that is, the true God.

By referring to this cipher of mirror, Saib Tabrizi invites us to go beyond material appearances and realize the transcendent truth: “Put aside material forms to become immortal, and you can find the fountain of youth in the mirror”<sup>12</sup> (Saib Tabrizi, 2021). It is only in this state that one can be freed from idolatry and associationism. Transferring from face and form to the reality in the mirror is liberation from idolatry and associationism, because the face is only an outward sign, as Saif Farghani says: “Love has somehow made me disappear in itself that even when I look in the mirror, I don't see myself in it”<sup>13</sup> (Saif Faraghani, 2011).

Another aspect of the superiority of the way of love over other ways of nearness to God, is that the way of love leads the lover not to see himself, but to see the beloved. God is the same as goodness and beauty; He loved Himself for who He is, and nothing else. So, he revealed beauty because He Himself was Beautiful, and any perception of beauty in any part of existence that we have, must necessarily be for Him, and this is the meaning of transmission. It is according to this issue that Ibn Aṭ'ā in interpretation of this honorable verse “It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things”<sup>14</sup> (Al-Baqarah: 26) states: “God created everything for man so that all creatures are for man and man is for God. The blessings of this material world that were created for us should not cause us to distance ourselves from God because we were created for Him” (Ruzbihan Baqli, 2016).

This cipher of mirror is a response to some contemporary sects that have attributed to mysticism, which seek God only in the heart, and do not accept any truth outside of the heart for Him. It is also a response to some Western sects that do not accept God or a Divine Being as a reality independent of the human mind. According to them, God is a kind of intellectual symbol for the religious dimension of the world and divinity, and divinity is a temporary creation of the mind or a projection of a new being that resides in one of the satellites of a small planet. According to them, God is neither the Absolute Creator of the universe nor its Absolute Arbitrator, rather God reflects imagination in a limited realm of time and space, which will last until the death of man (Hick, 1997).

In fact, it is because of ignoring this cipher of mirror that today the word “religion” or “faith” is used instead of the word “God”, and religion is discussed as an aspect of human culture, and God is known as a secondary issue in the wider field of religion. Longitudinal knowledge of this issue has been reduced to horizontal knowledge and historical line. However, at least that linear existence has its origin in the length and existence of the upper world and beyond the historical line. According to them, religion is generally considered psychologically as a kind of human activity that its role and function is to help people to achieve internal harmony and coherence and also help them to achieve this harmony in relation





to their environment. If we return to the above-mentioned cipher of mirror, looking at the mirror and staying in the mirror is like giving cookie to a child, as Saadi Shirazi states: “The secrets of The Pen and Divine Absolute Power are evident in your face like a mirror. We do not want anything from You (= God) except You and give the cookie to someone who has not tasted your affection”<sup>15</sup> (Saadi Shirazi, 2022).

Rabindranath Tagore says: “O beauty, find yourself in affection, not in the flattery of the mirror.” [It means that the mirror shows your outward beauty. Search for your inner beauty in affection] (Chittick, 2007).

The universe is a mirror of God and any image we find in it, and any phenomena of the creation, we must transfer it to its owner, it means Almighty God. Every phenomenon in the universe has two sides like a mirror; one is behind that is substantial side, and the other one is the transparent side, or in other words, an Eastern side and a Western side, just as the earth has a bright side facing the sun and a tenebrous side in front of it. Those signs of universe, which do not represent God, and represent themselves, are a veil of darkness, and every sign that represents God, is a surface of light and inspiration. Seeing creatures only with external senses is the same as the apparent sufficiency of the soul, and this means lowering and degrading the soul to the stage of senses, and even worse than that, degrading it to the negative stage of human life, that is, to lust, passion and temptation. We see and hear with our external senses, and we transfer with our mind and heart, which is the soul. The sense is a lower stage than the soul, and the mind and heart are a higher stage than the sense. Every stage of the soul we stop at prevents us from reaching a higher stage. In other words, half of man prevents him from reaching his whole existence. Back and face in the mirror are one truth with two aspects, body and soul, world and hereafter, sense and soul are also one truth with two aspects. In the higher mystical realities, God and creatures are one truth with two different aspects as the role of the mirror and the owner of the image is the same. A person who is deprived of this transmission, according to Rumi, is similar to a hunter who has aimed at the shadow of a bird and runs after the shadow, while the bird is in the sky with the phoenix (= *sîmôrgh*), and the hunter runs after the shadow (Rumi, 2019).

In another interpretation, one of the ciphers of the mirror is that the mirror must be pure and clean to show images. If a person does not clean his image, that is, the same image he saw in the mirror, he has not taken the true image because the image that is in the mirror is not real. In this regard, Rumi says: “You read the name, so go and search for the Named (= Almighty God), fog is from the sky, not from the water of the arroyo”<sup>16</sup> (Rumi, 2019).”

On another stage, the transfer in the mirror is a cipher of the mystics' relinquishment, because the mystics consider getting rid of moral vices as an introduction to attaining adornment and epiphany (= manifestation). But some mystics are not only liberated of their moral vices, but also seek liberation from themselves; that is, by negating themselves in the realm of actions, attributes, and attachments, they enter the realm of their essence and find God there. In any stage, if acquisition is considered, it is the opposite in the stage of absorption, and it is intended to decrease oneself (Kakaei, 2002). If a person wants to become a mirror of God, this is the only way.

### **1-8 Entering the image in the mirror is a cipher of entering the world**

In any mirror, the image falls into the shape and characteristics of that mirror while maintaining the originality dependent on the owner of the image. The shape, characteristics and type of mirror are effective in this field, and the amount of light and the constant or changing of the mirror also has its own effect. According to the cipher of “embodiment of actions” and the cipher of “truths and delicacy (= *râqqayeq*)”, the light of existence in any world it enters, finds the characteristics of that world. Therefore, the worlds are tied together like a string, and this string that comes to each world, while maintaining the originality of existence, manifests itself in a different aspect, so that the light of existence shines in the world. A part of it will lose the pureness of the original world (= Higher World) to enter the world of human existence (= Possible World), that is, the soul, heart, spirit, reason, and senses. Therefore, taking the head of this string should be done step by step until it reaches the source of the fountain of youth,

which is pure and clear and does not become contaminated with slush, mud and ooze in the winding riverbed (Sajadi, 1983).

In a higher stage, the key to entering the world is the key to the connection between existence and nature. In different mirrors, one thing is present in all mirrors and is constant, and one thing is inconstant. The originality of the image depends on the owner of the image, and the size of the image, turbidity, lightness, roundness, squareness, etc., are different and depend on the type of the mirror. In the worlds, what is present at all stages and is always constant, is “existence” with different manifestations; these different manifestations are natures (= māhiyāt), and in every world, there is a nature associated with it.

### **1-9 The mirror is a scale**

For a person to see himself, it is related to remonstrance, therefore, most of the people talk to themselves in front of the mirror. The signs of appearance and the signs left on the head and face of committed acts are the evidence of this remonstrance and reprimand. It is said in a hadith: “It is appropriate for a wise person to look himself in the mirror and see his own face in it, so that if his face is beautiful, he does not make it ugly by doing bad actions, and if his face is ugly, he does not make it uglier by doing bad actions, so do not combine two ugliness in one place” (Nouri Tabarsi, 1990). Therefore, mirror is related to measurement and calculation and is a scale. Whenever the Prophet (PBUH) looked in the mirror, he used to say: “Thanks God who perfected my creation and made my face beautiful and made beautiful for me what is ugly for others, and guided me to Islam and blessed me with prophecy” (Ibid). In a sense beyond that, in the world of the hereafter, being God as a mirror to His servants and creatures means that He is a scale for them. The “Book of Actions” is the pictures that each person has attached to his beauty and personality, so that in the hereafter, people are recognized by their looks (Ar-Rahmān:41; Al-A‘rāf: 48). God is The Swift in Reckoning, and whoever sees himself in His mirror, which is the truth mirror, becomes aware of his situation and characteristics. In this regard, Rumi states: “If you deny your bad actions, it is useless, because the mirror and scale will reveal your bad actions. The mirror of your soul has come out of its physical veil and shows all the truths and ciphers. When and where does a clear and pure scale like mirror show something contrary to reality?”<sup>17</sup> (Rumi, 2019).

### **1-10 Resurrection is mirrorality (= merāthi)**

In confirmation of the previous cipher, i.e. “mirror is a scale”, and with a different perspective, it can be said that the truth of the Resurrection will also appear in a mirrorality form. And this cipher simultaneously clarifies the answer to several important questions about the state of the hereafter and the relationship between God and creatures, and it answers to these questions: will the hereafter not be repetitive and boring? How is it possible that the creatures show the Majesty of Almighty God? And is the mirror of the creatures, and the image of God that is manifested in the mirror of creatures is worthy for Affair of God? And how is it possible to audit so many creatures? To understand this mirror, we should use several allegories of mirror at once; 1. Every mirror shows its own size, 2. In the mirror, transmission is the condition, 3. The mirror is refreshed and renewed every moment. Therefore, in the Day of Resurrection, the creatures will face the Almighty God, and the image of them will fall in Him, and they will be transferred to themselves in their own capacity, and the image of the Almighty God is reflected in the creatures, and He will be transferred to Himself in His Affair. Since the concept of “infinity” is formed from the confrontation of two mirrors, and every moment, the image of the mirror is renewed and a new aspect of the Almighty God is manifested in it, both the infinity of the Almighty's Manifestations and the novelty and newness of each moment remove the suspicion of boredom and repetition. At the same time, everyone benefits from the Almighty God to the extent of his existence (that is, the size and capacity of his mirror), and the observation of the Almighty God will also be in the size of His Affair and Existence, and it will not be reduced to creatures.



### **1-11 Mirror is the cipher of ciphers**

The mirror is the cipher of heart, and the heart is the cipher of God, therefore not only the mirror, but all the ciphers of the material world are cipher of ciphers. By referring to this fact that the material world is full of ciphers, Shah Nimatullah Wali says: “Divine affection is like a candle, and our soul is like a mirror in this symbolic expression, and the lightness of the mirror is completely clear and obvious for lovers”<sup>18</sup> (Nimatullah Wali, 2014). If a mirror is the cipher of ciphers, then the cipher should be put aside and the heart should be considered in the first stage. Then, in the second stage, it is necessary to put aside the heart and reach the owner of the heart, that is the Almighty God. It is only in this state that we will not become idolaters, that is worshiping the mirror. In this way, the mirror is also the cipher of liberation from idolatry.

The Perfect Man (= al-Insān al-Kāmêl) among the creatures has a beautiful heart in the largest and most beautiful possible state, and whatever name he is called, he is like a mirror that is comprehensive of all ciphers. In this regard, al-Qayṣarī states: “All the Divine and engendered being (= ḵāwni) stages, from the universal intellects and souls, and the stages of nature to the last descents of existence, are the stage of The Perfect Man, and for this reason, man is The Caliph of God, and is the comprehensive Book of Divine Books and engendered being” (al-Qayṣarī, 2007).

Shah Nimatullah Wali also considers The Perfect Man as a mirror that sees everyone but does not see himself and is not selfish: “Man is the name of the eye that like The Perfect Man is all-seeing, but not self-seeing” (Nimatullah Wali, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

In the first stage, the mirror indicates an object, in the second stage, it is interpreted, and finally, in the third stage, it becomes a symbol and cipher, and this is where it takes the foot of discovery and interpretation to reveal itself and indicate different teachings and realities. If we don't say that these realities and ciphers are infinite, we should say that the mirror provides a lot of ciphers in different aspects to be a metaphor for the descent of the Divine cognitions on the material world.

In Islamic wisdom, mirror is a cipher that shows the true proportion and size of the natures and indicates the existence of the best system governing the world of creation. The mirror brings a person from the body to the soul, from nature to the supernatural, and finally from himself to God, and mirror is a cipher for the relationship between existence and nature (= māhiyā). Just as in a mirror, the image is constant and the size, brightness, distance, and proximity of the image are inconstant, in the worlds, the principle of existence, which is The Necessary Existence, is constant, but with different manifestations, and natures are these manifestations, which ultimately lead to Hâqq Taāla.

In Islamic wisdom, the mirror is a cipher of movement in the essence, and the contingency of every moment of the world is related to the cipher of newness of the image in the mirror. The mirror is a cipher of the unity between the intellect, intelligence and intelligible, and its two-dimensionality refers to the two realms of man, worldly and otherworldly. The mirror is a cipher of entering to the worlds, and it is a cipher to find out the cause by the effect and it gives meaning to existence and non-existence and finally transforms anthropology into theology. In mystical thought, the mirror is a place of true manifestation, which appears in the form of eternal essences and unseen created beings, and it is attributed to two existences: sometimes the existence of man is the mirror of Hâqq Taāla, and sometimes the existence of Hâqq Taāla is the mirror of man.

In mystical works, the mirror is a cipher of ciphers, so that it is a cipher for the manifestation of the Almighty God in the natures. The mirror expresses the optical annihilation in its full meaning, and expresses the relationship between truth and delicacy, as well as the embodiment of actions and the four mystics' journeys, and finally, it is a reference to the heart, which is the mirror of the whole face of the Almighty God, which always shines eternal realities on it. In Islamic mysticism, the mirror is a scale for a person to find his place in universe, and in this sense, a mirror is related to measurement and

calculation. In Islamic mysticism, the mirror is a cipher of the presence of Hâqq Taâla in the world, it explains the coexistence of Hâqq Taâla with creatures, it is both a sign and an obstacle, and finally it is a cipher for showing and not appearing, and it leads a person to this important thing that he should not only be a manifestation of Hâqq Taâla, but he should be a mirror to show Him, and this is where the springs of wisdom will flow on his tongue and eyes. According to what has been said, the mirror has many cipher aspects, and these ciphers also contain other ciphers, and it is this characteristic of the mirror that has caused it to be used by sages and mystics to explain and express the highest realities in various aspects of theology and anthropology. Finally, we will say that the mirror is the Quran of natures (= māhiyyāt) , and just as the Quran is instructive, interpretable, and is full of ciphers, the mirror is the same.

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- 1 "المؤمن مرآه المؤمن"
- 2 "يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ"
- 3 "آينه بی نقش شد باید بها، زان که شد حاکی جمله نقش‌ها"
- 4 "برده‌دار و حاجب و دربان نمی‌باشد مرا، خانه چون آینه بی مهمان نمی‌باشد مرا"
- 5 "آینه و میزان محک‌های سنی، گر دوصد سالش تو خدمتها کنی"
- 6 "چرخ با این اختران نغز و خوش و زیباسی، صورتی در زیر دارد آن‌چه در بالاستی"
- 7 "ز بس پیداست از پیشانیم خط‌گنه‌کاری، تواند نامه‌ی اعمال شد آینه در دستم"
- 8 "عکس هر رازی که در دل بگذرد آید پدید، حوضه‌ی آینه کردار تو از فرط صفا"
- 9 "لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ أُولَئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ"
- 10 "آنچه یعقوب از رخ یوسف بدید، خاص او بد او به اخوان کی رسید"
- 11 "يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ"
- 12 "بشکن طلسم صورت و جاوید زنده باش، آب حیات در پس دیوار آینه است"
- 13 "عشق از آن سان محوگردانید رسمم را که من، می‌نبینم روی خود گر بنگرم در آینه"
- 14 "هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ"
- 15 "سر قلم قدرت بی چون الهی، در روی تو چون روی در آینه هویداست، ما از تو به غیر تو نداریم تمنا، حلوا به کسی ده که محبت نجشیده‌است"
- 16 "اسم خواندی رو مسمی را بجو، مه به بالا دان نه اندر آب جو"
- 17 "مکر خود را گر تو انکار آوری، از ترازو و آینه کی جان بری، آینه‌ی تو جست بیرون غلاف، آینه و میزان کجا گوید خلاف"
- 18 "عشق او شمع است و جانم آینه وین رمز ما، روشن است بر عشق‌بازان منور آینه"