

4. Waiting for the Appointed Hour: Iamblichus and Ostad Elahi on the Soul, by Farasha Euker

4.1. Introduction

To me belongs everything, and the whole of it has been given to me. I have gone in as a falcon, I have come out as a phoenix; the Morning Star has made a path for me, and I enter in peace in to the beautiful West. I belong to the Garden of Osiris, and a path is made for me so that I may go and worship Osiris the Lord of Life.¹



THE QUESTION OF BEING, what it means to be, is, or should be, the fundamental point of departure for all truly philosophical endeavors, yet much of the current philosophical discourse is distinctly opposed to questions of metaphysics and ontology. A conjectural reason for such a change in the philosophical climate is the separation of meta-philosophy into its constituent parts: religion, psychology, philosophy, logic, etc. As such, the person best able to be a philosopher, as opposed to a sophist, is one who is knowledgeable in many subjects—something the current compartmentalization of knowledge makes distinctly difficult. To be a quintessential philosopher, in the traditional sense of the word, means to not only be knowledgeable in all matters, but to be one who unravels the sublime mysteries of being. One philosopher notable for his research into the question of fundamental ontology is Martin Heidegger, but one should bear in mind that others have explored the topic in more fruitful detail. The modern human may be best able to answer questions of alienation or technology, but those best able to know what it is to be were the ancients, individuals whose lives were much freer from distractions, and who were able to devote their entire existence to a simple and pure philosophical quest for knowledge of the macrocosm and microcosm, the transcendent and immanent. Early humans had no need to ponder the mysteries of being, since they directly experienced life in all of its fullness and beauty. After the advent of agriculture and the beginnings of the sedentary city, there arose a dire need, the need to preserve the meanings of the previous modes of life, and that need was fulfilled through philosophy. Classical philosophers were the individuals best able to present a discourse on being, not only due to their proximity in time to “primitive” life, but because understanding reality was their one and only occupation from youth until old age. No one who must deal with the very different

1. Carol Andrews, ed., *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, trans. Raymond O. Faulkner (London: British Museum Publications, 1985), 113-114.

lifestyle we lead today can possibly claim to have approached the level of understanding held by the traditional philosophers, foremost among them being the Platonists (wrongly called Neoplatonists), heirs to the Platonic philosophy and to Pythagorean and Orphic wisdom. To unfold the meaning of life, the meaning of being, even the mysteries of the Divinity, it is necessary to delve deep into the mystery of the soul, which contains answers to all questions, sought and unsought. In regard to the abovementioned, this paper aims to analyze the compatible perspectives of two of the greatest theorists of being and the soul: Iamblichus Chalcidensis and Ostad Elahi, the former a classical Platonist, and the latter a member of the Ahl-e-Haqq sect of Shi'a Islam. A bit of justification may be needed for the inclusion of the somewhat obscure figure Elahi. It is the opinion of the author of this paper that Islamic philosophy, particularly the Eastern Islamic philosophy flowing from Shahab ad-Din Suhrawardi, is the true heir to Platonic philosophy. Any Iranian-Islamic philosopher, therefore, is naturally predisposed to a metaphysical inclination, but the more important factor for Elahi was his unique upbringing, which, as James Morris makes clear in the introduction to his translation of *Knowing the Spirit*, was radically austere.²

Iamblichus is the quintessential outsider-philosopher in this world without meaning, for he dared to do that which the postmodern pundits deem impossible: give meaning to the word, world, and self. This is precisely the reason for his long-standing neglect, namely that he is a religious philosopher³ in an irreligious world and a believer in the unseen in a world bereft of imagination. All of the factors that led to the dismissal of Iamblichus' writings are, in fact, those factors that should lead not only to a resurgence of interest in his life and writings, but, in addition, to a most fruitful comparison with Ostad Elahi. Religious belief, which is a characteristic most frowned upon in a philosopher, is one of Iamblichus' many traits that place him closer to the Muslim philosophical and mystical traditions than to modern and postmodern philosophy. Elahi and Iamblichus are two individuals that embody the most profound aspects of religion, philosophy, theology, and mysticism, and, most importantly, they share a deep and abiding conviction that the soul is immortal, a proposition that gives life meaning, and if deemed incorrect, would naturally rob life of its beauty and meaning. This is why a study of Iamblichus and Elahi is so important. Not only can their writings help achieve a reconciliation of religion and philosophy, but they can spur a recovery of meaning in a world filled with individuals—nihilist in ideology—who no longer know how to be, and no longer profess faith in God, the unseen, or even that which is their essence, their soul, the source of their intellect and the route leading from “solitude to the solitary.”⁴

4.2. Iamblichus

Though enough of Iamblichus' writings have survived for us to be able to decipher many of his characteristic doctrines, the situation is not ideal, as many of his writings have been lost or only

2. “It was during those formative years of his youth, completely devoted to contemplation and study, that he developed the basic foundations of his later philosophic and spiritual thinking.” Ostad Elahi, *Knowing the Spirit*, trans. James Winston Morris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 3.

3. “Iamblichus is primarily a religious thinker.” John F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, American Classical Studies 14 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 6.

4. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, vol. 6, Loeb Classical Library 445 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 345.

remain in fragments. Sadly, the text that could have, possibly, shed more light on Iamblichus' doctrine on the soul, *De Anima*, has survived only in quotes in Stobaeus' *Anthology*. As John Finamore and John Dillon state in the introduction to their translation of the *De Anima*: "Stobaeus shows more interest in passages that set out the multiple theories of various philosophers than those that would have highlighted Iamblichus' doctrine. Hence, we find more doxography than Iamblichean psychology."⁵ Due to the unfortunate state of the *De Anima*, the Iamblichean doctrines on the soul must be pieced together, largely through recourse to his major surviving work *De Mysteriis*. One of the most distinctive Iamblichean doctrines on the soul is that it necessarily, due to its nature, both contains and is contained by the Intellect and the body, the transcendent and the immanent. One of the clearest explanations of this, as it relates to the imaginative life, comes from Pseudo-Simplicius:

[The soul] is immediately connected with it [i.e., with the sensible faculty], the imaginative life is aroused by it, using the same body, but not as sensible and externally affected in some way but as imaginative and imprinted and shaped by the imaginative life. And it is not surprising if the same vehicle is subject to our different lives, since it is also subject to our rational life. For indeed not only the pneuma but also this solid body are affected by our rational activities.⁶

4.2.1. Before Birth

Prior to the emergence of our consciousness at birth, were we non-existent, only to return to nothingness, or were we alive in a more subtle form, now living in a state of forgetfulness? Iamblichus emphatically takes the latter perspective, claiming that "the soul's salvation [lies] in the recovery of the sphere: the line curved back upon itself, mortality entering a consciousness without beginning or end."⁷ This perspective is shared by Hinduism, many forms of Buddhism, and some forms of Abrahamic mysticism. Our current life is not a beginning, but the middle point of an infinitely long procession that began with a descent from the One and reaches its culmination with a qualified reunification with the One. Simone Weil, the quintessential Christian Platonist echoes this sentiment when she writes:

Marvellous coincidence between the relationship between a point moving along a circumference and its projection on the diameter, to which projection it is connected by a segment representing the proportional mean between the parts determined on the diameter, and the relationship between the Divine Act, closed in upon itself, our oscillating acts, and meditation. Pythagoras could rightly offer up a sacrifice to the gods.⁸

5. Iamblichus, *De Anima: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. and trans. John F. Finamore and John M. Dillon, *Philosophia Antiqua* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 13.

6. *Ibid.*, 245.

7. Gregory Shaw, "The Sphere and the Altar of Sacrifice," in *History of Platonism: Plato Redivivus*, ed. John Finamore and Robert Berchman (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2005), 147-148.

8. Simone Weil, *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*, trans. Arthur Wills (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 528.

This circle appears to be without reason, a cycle leading only to pain and back to an identical beginning started long ago. In reality, this cycle of existence is a great gift bestowed upon souls by the Divinity, for that Solitary Entity wished to be known, but an inexperienced soul could not possibly withstand the magnificence of the pure light of the Divinity; therefore, our pure souls emanated from a “god that sacrifices its divinity on the altar of the human body,”⁹ starting the descent into the realm of matter.

Being, as we are, stuck in the material realm, the primary goal of any human being—essentially a soul—is to free themselves from matter, rising to divine heights. This is attained through a knowledge of the rational soul, and by a constriction of the ego, which one tends to think of as their self, but which is merely an extension of their body, i.e. the lowest aspect of their being. This knowledge of the soul, according to Iamblichus and all Platonists, comes about through a process called *anemnesis*, meaning the re-emergence of remembering in the midst of a forgetful state. The process used to progress towards *anemnesis* and, finally, knowledge of one’s divine nature is philosophy. The term philosophy, as used by Plato, Iamblichus, and most traditional thinkers, has little to do with the current usage of the term, which has been radically perverted into yet another tool of materialist, late-capitalist, ideology. Philosophy for Iamblichus was, along with its sister science theurgy, a set of “spiritual exercises”¹⁰ for reaching a profound knowledge of the soul, and hence not only what it means to be, but what it means *to be God*. Learning how to die is only the first part of philosophy, which inevitably leads to a re-emergence of consciousness in a God-like state in which one’s soul is both at one with and separate from the Divinity that basks one in a beautiful and refulgent light. Proclus, who spoke from the heights of wisdom, and whose *Platonic Theology* stretched the limits of what is possible to express in any human language, states the following:

Philosophy says that a forgetfulness of eternal reasons is the cause of the departure of the soul from the Gods, and that reminiscence of the knowledge of the eternal reasons or Ideas is the cause of the return to them, but the Oracles assert that the forgetfulness and reminiscence of the paternal symbols are respectively the causes of the departure and return. Both statements are in harmony. For the soul is constituted from intellectual reasons and divine symbols, of which the former proceed from the intellectual species, but the latter from the divine unities: and we are images of the intellectual essences, but statues of the unknown symbols. And just as every soul is a fullness (*pleroma*) of forms, but subsists wholly or simply according to one cause, thus also it indeed participates in all symbols, through which it is united to divine things, but the summit of the soul in the one is separated or divided, so that every multitude in the soul is led into one summit.¹¹

God “*has generated my soul from eternity, and rendered it an attendant on his divinity.*”¹² [emphasis in original] We have the choice to either live as matter, enduring the never-ending cycle of birth,

9. Shaw, “The Sphere and the Altar of Sacrifice,” 160.

10. See the writings of Pierre Hadot.

11. Proclus, “Excerpts from the Commentary of Proclus on the Chaldean Oracles,” in *The Exhortation to Philosophy*, ed. Stephen Neuville, trans. Thomas Moore Johnson (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1988), 127.

12. The Emperor Julian, “To the Sovereign Sun,” in *Collected Writings on the Gods and the World*, trans. Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series 4 (Dorset, UK: Prometheus Trust, 2006), 75.

death, and re-birth, or attaining knowledge of our fallen state and divine nature, which leads to liberation for the soul. Despite all of the pains and horrors of this world, most beings cling to their forgetfulness, because this world has its pleasures, and clinging to the known is always easier than making a leap of faith into the unknown. We are fallen souls living in decadent societies where most individuals no longer marvel at the spiritual mysteries of the self and the cosmos, hence it is very difficult for anyone to practice pure philosophy. This is why religion is so important: it allows the common person to gradually ascend to a state of gnosis. Iamblichus, also living in a decadent age, was well aware that few beings could truly practice philosophy without some preparation. That preparation was *theurgy*, a set of religious rites that in their essence are similar to religious prayer and lead one gradually towards philosophy and thence into truth. *Theurgical* rites, just like prayer, aim to bring the power of God down to Earth, not as an upward, magical movement, but as a downward movement from the One, and this is only with God's will and because of His grace. While *theurgy* and prayer lead to philosophy, philosophy and invocation of the divine Name lead to an alchemical transformation whereby the soul is freed from its body, becoming God-like, or what the Hindus term *jivanmukti* — while still alive. The goal is to see that:

The soul as a sort of fallen *daimon*, or as a Dionysian divine spark, is buried in a tomb-like material body, thus entering the cosmic cycle of elemental transformation. Hence, the soul is the pre-existing and immortal knowing subject. It passes through a number of incarnations in a cyclical pattern, and these bodily incarnations may be regarded as a sort of punishment, ordeal, or simply viewed as a result of forgetfulness, ignorance and play.¹³

4.2.2. The Soul's Nature

Dispersed through harmonious members,
this Soul, which moves all things,
divided into two orbits,
gathers motion, making a return, and passes
into itself, encircling the vast Mind,
turning the heavens in the same manner.¹⁴

The nature of the soul, the subject of this section, is a difficult subject to handle adequately. Since the soul cannot be touched or felt, but only intuitively known, there have been a multitude of theories of the soul dating back to the dawn of writing, and probably to the dawn of humanity. Despite all of the different theories, there are some remarkably stark similarities. Imagine a grid in which each religion or philosophy makes up a column and each of their possible doctrines a row. Laid out like this, and organized from the most exoteric (the bottom row) to the most esoteric (the top row), a pattern emerges, that shows almost all faiths and philosophies to be very different at the exoteric level, but very similar at the esoteric level. Despite these similarities, there are some differences, some of which take a doctrine closer or farther from truth. Of all of

13. Algis Uždavinys, *Orpheus and the Roots of Platonism* (London: The Matheson Trust, 2011), 49.

14. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Scott Goins and Barbara H. Wyman, Ignatius Critical Editions (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 88.

the doctrines of the soul (and everything else metaphysical in nature), that of Iamblichus and his fellow Platonists is among the most profound.

The essence of the Iamblichean theory of the soul that distinguishes it from the theories of fellow Platonists is that the soul's descent into a body is not accidental or evil, but a necessity and "[w]ithout its descent into a body the soul could not, as Iamblichus puts it, 'serve the work of creation,' or function as the 'mean between the divisible and indivisible, corporeal and incorporeal'".¹⁵ If the soul never descended into the body, it would not be able to fulfill its destiny, namely its angelic function to worship the Divinity. A soul that never tasted the depravity of matter would never be able to thirst for the Divinity with such profound urgency; a soul that never left its original home would never know the joy of the wondrous and magical homecoming. Though this is a truth, it paints only half of the picture, since matter itself serves the divine task of functioning as *maya* or the veil that seemingly separates us from the Divinity. Not only humans, but all beings are sacred, because humanity itself is an illusion, and is only a step on the path of progress towards God, for "not only God, but all mind as well, whether angelic or animal, extends itself whole through infinity."¹⁶ All souls are equally divine, but some have progressed farther along the path than others. Those beings that embody the tripartite attributes of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, have made their nature divine, i.e., its original state. Not only humans, but any thing can have a divine nature if true, beautiful, or good, and the more of these attributes a thing embodies, the more divine it is. Nature, in its very essence, is divine, whereas most products of modernity, lacking as they are in truth, beauty, and goodness, are furthest from sanctity. As Iamblichus states, "[a] divine nature, therefore whether it is allotted certain parts of the universe, such as heaven or earth, or sacred cities and regions, or certain groves, or sacred statues, externally illuminates all these, in the same manner as the sun externally irradiates all things with his rays."¹⁷

Despite the soul's divinity, it is of an ontological status lower than the One or the personal God(s). "Because the human soul was the lowest divinity it suffered with the mortal lives that it sustained,"¹⁸ yet "the soul is itself by itself immutable, as being essentially more excellent than that which suffers."¹⁹ This is seemingly paradoxical, but leads to some of the most profound understandings of Iamblichus' system. The soul suffers during its encapsulation in the human shell, but the soul is anterior to the body, and greater than the body. In a sense, the soul itself never suffers, but only the body that contains it. The soul experiences the body's suffering to a greater or lesser degree depending upon its level of subordination to the body, e.g., a fully or partially realized philosopher should feel very little physical suffering. In a very real sense, the body has no independent existence of its own, but only exists as an extension of the transcendent-immanent soul that uses it as its vehicle in this earthly training ground that acts as a spiritual preparation for

15. Shaw, "The Sphere and the Altar of Sacrifice," 151.

16. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. James Hankins and William Bowen, trans. Michael J. B. Allen and John Warden, vol. 1, The I Tatti Renaissance Library 2 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 127.

17. Iamblichus, *Iamblichus on the Mysteries and the Life of Pythagoras*, trans. Thomas Taylor, The Thomas Taylor Series 17 (Dorset, UK: Prometheus Trust, 2006), 33.

18. Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1995), 45.

19. Iamblichus, *Iamblichus on the Mysteries and the Life of Pythagoras*, 35.

a communion with the Divinity. Other than God Itself, “[t]he substantial existence of the Soul, then, does not depend upon serving as Form to anything: it is an Essence which does not come into being by finding a seat in a body; it exists before it becomes also the soul of some particular living being.”²⁰ We cannot touch, feel, taste, or smell the soul, but it exists, and is the reality behind our being and the force that animates our body and gives us breath²¹. Our true essence is nothing but soul, and the soul’s true essence is eternal, immortal, and divine. Thomas Taylor, one of the most profound scholars of Platonism, and a practicing Platonist himself has the following to say: “Since the soul, therefore, is an unextended, indivisible, and immaterial substance, it is consequently incorruptible and immortal; for every thing capable of dissolution and dispersion is either corporeal and composite, or exists in some subject from which it is inseparable.”²² The nature of the Iamblichean soul now explicated, it is necessary to give an overview of the embodied soul and the path of release, including a basic overview of Platonic eschatology, in the following sections.

Immortal is the soul, and is not yours
 But Providence’s. When the body wastes,
 The soul starts like a racehorse from the gate,
 And nimbly leaping mingles with light air,
 Hating its fearful, heavy servitude.²³

4.2.3. The Embodied Soul

Whereas the pre-bodily origins of the soul are primarily of theoretical interest, and the nature of the soul after death not of immediate concern for most, the nature of the embodied soul and its importance, should be plainly obvious, not just because it is the soul in the here and now, but, more importantly, because it is by and through our actions in the now that we can tip the balances in favor of the soul’s liberation *now* and after death. Iamblichus, unlike the orthodox Platonists, at one extreme, hypothesizes that the soul is wholly embodied, but unlike Peripatetics, at the other extreme, he does not consider the soul corruptible. The soul has a dual nature without necessarily resorting to ontological dualism, for the soul was, is, and shall remain an undivided and indivisible pure substance. For all Platonists, only the rational soul truly exists, but the rational soul entered a body through its vehicle—which is itself of an ontological status, inhabiting the mean between soul and body—and now experiences bodily existence, inhabiting the second of “two different stages in the soul’s life. First, there is the rational soul itself existing by itself. Second, there is the rational soul in a body. Iamblichus [...] refers to this as the double life.”²⁴ It must be emphasized that despite the seemingly insurmountable importance of the body, the body is really nothing and the soul everything. Despite being fully embodied, the soul, must by its very nature maintain a connection to the ethereal realms. For Iamblichus, the *anima* or soul, though whole and divine,

20. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (Burdett, New York: Larson Publications, 1992), 404.

21. Interestingly, the word for soul in ‘Arabic, *ruh*, also means breath.

22. Thomas Taylor, “Dissertation on the Nature of the Soul,” in *Commentary on Euclid*, The Thomas Taylor Series 29 (Dorset, UK: The Prometheus Trust, 2006), 63.

23. Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana 2*, ed. and trans. Christopher P. Jones, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 17 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 423.

24. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, 14.

lives in such a state of forgetfulness in this world that special spiritual techniques are needed to reverse the descent into a body. These *theurgical* techniques, meant to bring the power of the gods down into the core of our beings, so that our soul can ascend back to the realm of the gods, only attain some degree of efficacy if we begin to loosen the shackles of forgetfulness, attaining to a state of *anemnesis*, where we *know* that “the soul, which ranks as a whole, presides over all the mundane body, and that the celestial Gods ascend, as into a vehicle, into a celestial body.”²⁵

Iamblichus was part of a *golden chain* of philosophers and mystics that stretched back past Plato, through Pythagoras, and all the way to the primordial human. For Iamblichus, Plato was a Pythagorean, and consequently, the entire Platonic tradition had as its basis, not an interest in self-perpetuating rational discourse, but a search for the Divinity. “The aim of all the Pythagorean precision about what should and should not be done is association with the divine. This is their starting-point, and their way of life has been wholly organized with a view to following God.”²⁶ The purpose behind both the Iamblichean doctrine and practice is a unification with the One or the Divinity. To know God, while reaching a state of *anemnesis*, one cannot simply know something intellectually or empirically, but must *know* intuitively with their *third eye*. Much of the confusion surrounding the Platonic tradition revolves around the seemingly large difference between Plotinus and Iamblichus. Iamblichus’ emphasis on religious practice has been looked at as a corruption of the pristine intellectuality of Plotinus. Even if this were so, few could seriously contend that Plotinus had no interest in religious matters. It is certainly possible that Plotinus preferred a more discursive path to liberation, but it should be realized that his *Enneads* are written in such a manner as to act as spiritual practice, when contemplated, and to function as one’s guidance in the absence of a living master. That being said, it is highly likely that Plotinus also practiced some form of *theurgy*, but that he taught the practice only orally, and only to a close set of students. Iamblichus’ emphasis on *theurgy* as a liberatory practice for reaching the divine, should not be looked upon as a degeneration of the Platonic tradition, but instead, as a continuation and culmination of that tradition, because “purification of the soul and its separation from the body is through theurgy; philosophy alone is insufficient.”²⁷ The embodied soul, at least unconsciously, fervently seeks liberation. *Theurgy*, though wildly misunderstood, is a particularly powerful means to achieve the soul’s liberation, but it is important to remember that “[t]he problems of the soul’s embodiment and disembodiment, like those of theurgical unification with the gods, must be approached hieratically, not conceptually.”²⁸

A fuller discussion of *theurgy* is called for, now that it has been concluded that the primary problem facing the embodied soul is its entrapment in the human cage, and that the spiritual practice of *theurgy* is Iamblichus’ preferred method of achieving liberation. *Theurgy*, which consisted of a set of rites that have largely been lost, was a method whereby one could use matter to summon the gods, for the gods, free as they were from the stain of matter, held the power to free the embodied soul. Once the gods (or angelic beings) descend, the soul is partially awakened. One of the signs of awakening is that “the soul in contemplating blessed spectacles, acquires another life, energizes according to another energy, and is then rightly considered as ranking in

25. Iamblichus, *Iamblichus on the Mysteries and the Life of Pythagoras*, 108.

26. Iamblichus, *Pythagorean Life* 137 Deubner. Cited in Robin Waterfield, ed. and trans., *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and the Sophists*, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98.

27. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, 4.

28. Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy as a Rite of Rebirth* (Westbury, Wiltshire: The Prometheus Trust, 2008), 65.

the order of man.”²⁹ In essence, *theurgy* allowed one not only to eventually reclaim their divinity, but, in addition, to live a more fully human life. The sudden intensification of delight at nature helped one to commune with *living matter* in a way that increased the effects of the *theurgic* practices. This is one of the primary reasons for Platonic vegetarianism, namely, that heavy dead matter restricts the soul’s ability to escape from its prison. The soul is *God-like*, but “Iamblichus wanted, however, to react against a ‘tendency’ which he believed he ascertained in certain ‘mod-erns’ (*νεωτεροι*), namely, the overemphasis of the transcendence of the soul.”³⁰ For Iamblichus, only through the body and through matter do we actualize the potential that the soul contains. Despite the seeming contradiction between this perspective and that of Plato, there are parts of some dialogues that could easily support the Iamblichean position. As Gregory Shaw states: “That the soul’s ritual use of matter could itself bring about the salvation of the soul was certainly a new development in the Platonic tradition, yet despite its apparent unorthodoxy, there are elements in the dialogues that lend it support.”³¹ At any rate, the Platonists were not after a literal reading of the dialogues, but the most *truthful*: they pursued the reading that could project the greatest degree of illumination upon the reader’s soul. Proclus, for instance, “is not interested in conveying a strictly linear reading of the Parmenides or the Platonic corpus. Instead, he is after an effect that can be achieved through only an oversaturation in the discursive realm.”³² Once a practitioner of *theurgy* became adept at the practice, an opening was created to pure gnosis, which consisted, first, of a remembering that one was not body but soul, and then a unification of the soul with the Divinity. This quest for union is the same quest shared by mystics from all religious traditions, from both the East and the West. Due to the fact that he preserved the concept, if not the practices, of *theurgy*, and due to his metaphysical doctrines, Iamblichus should be considered one of the primary luminaries of the *philosophia perennis*. The religion of Iamblichus, incorporating Chaldean, Pythagorean, Egyptian, and Hermetic ideas, was thoroughly traditional, but Iamblichus also expressed a willingness to explore and expand upon rarely touched philosophical subjects, such as the possibility of knowing God *as such*.

Both Neoplatonists and Hermetists maintain that the only really useful knowledge is that of the way of immortality. Though the idea that one may know God (common in Christian usage) is rare among Hellenic writers, for Iamblichus liberation from fate occurs only through knowledge of the gods.³³

The soul must free itself from matter because “[a]s long as the soul is stained by material additions, it remains unable to partake properly in the essential Good because matter distorts the Good’s emanation.”³⁴ The culmination of the spiritual path is only actualized after the death of the mortal body, but a limited union can be achieved while the soul resides in the still-living body through

29. Iamblichus, *Iamblichus on the Mysteries and the Life of Pythagoras*, 38.

30. Carlos G. Steel, *The Changing Self, A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Brussels: Paleis der Academien, 1978), 32.

31. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, 24.

32. Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194.

33. Uždavinys, *Philosophy as a Rite of Rebirth*, 79.

34. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, 53.

purificatory rites of both the lunar and solar *Logos* along with certain philosophical *askesis* [that] are conducted while still being alive in one's mortal body—through initiation which separates the *ba* and allows to observe the mortal body from a distance—as well as in the afterlife through the *anamnesis* of Truth. The remembrance of one's divine nature is based on the esoteric knowledge (*gnosis*) of names.³⁵

This *ένωση*, or union, is so utterly ineffable, that no human language could possibly describe what the experience is like, but more than that, even the knower cannot know the essence of God, but can only intuit it “for a *henosis* that can be enumerated or even known could not be a true *henosis*.”³⁶ If a soul is freed from its embodied state, achieving qualified *henosis*, then after the death of the body, the soul is freed from the cycle of birth and death and ascends to higher realms, eventually reaching the Highest. After all, every word written by a true Platonist has *henosis* as her/his goal, and as, perhaps, the quintessential Platonist, *the divine* “Iamblichus believed that the perfection of an individual soul occurred only through its return to the celestial orders, and through them to the Demiurge.”³⁷

4.2.4. After Death

If death is the end of the philosophic quest, as it is the end of a human life, it is not *the end* as such, because a soul has immortality as its primary characteristic. In the Iamblichean cosmology, a soul was not created, but it emanated through a combination of necessity and grace of the Divinity. Since the soul existed forever, it will exist forever, since that which has no beginning can have no end. Immortality may be the primary characteristic of the archetypal soul, but the embodied soul has forgetfulness as its primary characteristic. When we leave this mortal realm, one of two things happens according to Iamblichean eschatology: we either come back to the world, taking the form of a new body to complete the purification process, or, if purified prior to death, we return home to the heavenly realms from which we sprang, but this time instead of leaving as an inferior deity of sorts, we come home as a being joined with God, divine, yet not God. A soul experiences the light of the Divinity in full knowledge of its human lives, retaining its individuality, yet also sharing in the unique individuality of all other souls, and the supreme individuality of the Divinity, who alone is ontologically *Real*, and who alone, through Its grace, allows all souls to exist in perpetuity. One may escape after a few or many lifetimes, some involving much punishment or suffering, but the mercy of the Divinity means that “the possibility of the Platonist *anamnese* is assured: remembering is nothing other than a becoming *conscious* of what the superior soul always beholds[...] Inasmuch as the human soul always remains united with the divine, it has no need of the ‘redemption’, supernatural help, or magico-religious rites.”³⁸ Once *henosis* is achieved, *theurgy*, even the subtle practices of Plotinus, become superfluous. The liberated soul is not in a heaven-like state/place, but something much higher, more profound, and indescribable. The soul in this highest of places participates in divine activities, fulfilling its

35. Algis Uždavinys, “The Egyptian Book of the Dead and Neoplatonic Philosophy,” in Finamore and Berchman, *History of Platonism: Plato Redivivus*, 178.

36. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, 109.

37. *Ibid.*, 67.

38. Steel, *The Changing Self, A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus*, 37.

destiny, which is: “to return to the One, not just in the sense that the soul will develop wisdom or knowledge but also in the sense that the soul becomes instrumental in the completion of the spiritual circuit.”³⁹

In the current secular climate, belief in God and immortality are increasingly viewed as quaint superstitions from an ignorant period of human history. Nothing could be further from the truth, since it was those ancients who devoted their entire lives to studying being, *and* actually lived fully realized lives. The ancients were free from the distractions of the modern world and they experienced the virgin purity of the theophany that is nature. That being said, there were differences of opinion on the nature of God, the soul, and its fate. Iamblichus is unambiguously a supporter of the doctrine of the infinite immortality of the soul’s memory and *personality*. The nonsensical *objective immortality* of Whitehead and Hartshorne has no place in Iamblichus’ system, in which the subjective personality survives: “For Iamblichus, the whole irrational life remains and is preserved (as a complete entity) in the cosmos.”⁴⁰ While the immortality of the thinking subject is a doctrine that could bring much comfort to many depressed and troubled persons, the doctrine does lead to the problem that a soul may become too attached to the body and its pleasures. While “the enjoyment of bodies, which once were united to soul, impress in us heaviness and defilement,[...], and produces many other diseases of the soul,”⁴¹ there is also the possibility that a soul becomes liberated and such a thorough master of matter that the material realm exercises no temptation whatsoever. In such a case, it is possible that a liberated soul may choose, as part of its divine mission, to return to the material realm as an angelic being intent on saving other souls, a doctrine akin to the Buddhist concept of a *bodhisattva*.

Once the soul leaves the body, if not purified, it returns to the plane of becoming, i.e. the human realm. One of the principal debates among proponents of the belief in reincarnation is whether or not the soul can transmigrate among species. Iamblichus believed in a progressive path of realization. While the soul may have been encased in animal bodies at one point, once a soul reaches the level where it can enter a human body, it can transmigrate into a nearly infinite number of human forms, but never descend into other forms of life (with the exception of certain higher animals). “The divine Iamblichus condemned, and justly so, the transmission of the soul from a man into beasts.”⁴² It must be remembered that for the Platonists—Iamblichus included—animals were not lower life forms lacking sentience. The human form is privileged precisely due to its median ontological state, which allows the soul to achieve liberation more readily than from any other form. It is precisely the human capacity for self-destruction and disbelief that makes the pious human a precious thing. When the soul, in human form, has the free will to choose the alluring entrapments of matter, but instead chooses to believe in the Divinity, and practice *theurgy*, then that “human soul, that is not every human soul, but a pious one, is spiritual and divine. When such a soul has freed itself from the body and passed the test of piety, which is to know God and to harm no man, it becomes pure *Nous*.”⁴³ To disregard the flesh and seek the

39. Damascius, *Damascius’ Problem and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, trans. Sara Ahbel-Rappe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xxiv.

40. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, 18.

41. Iamblichus, *Iamblichus on the Mysteries and the Life of Pythagoras*, 108.

42. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. James Hankins and William Bowen, trans. Michael J. B. Allen, vol. 6, The I Tatti Renaissance Library 23 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 47.

43. Hermes Trismegistus, *The Way of Hermes: New Translations of The Corpus Hermeticum and The Definitions of*

divine is the hardest thing one can do, for it involves a death of sorts: dying to the idea of what we *think we are* and being reborn into what we *really are*. This dichotomy between self and soul on one hand, and soul and God on the other hand, is beautifully expressed by Plutarch:

But this much may be said: it appears that as a sort of antithesis to “Thou art” stands the admonition “Know thyself,” and then again it seems, in a manner, to be in accord therewith, for the one is an utterance addressed in awe and reverence to the god as existent through all eternity, the other is a reminder to mortal man of his own nature and the weakness that beset him.⁴⁴

It is the nature of human existence that “the mass of men would prefer to preserve this mortal life with all its infamies rather than to exchange it for an eternal and ever-living life of felicity.”⁴⁵ For the liberated being, death is not an end, but a beginning. The life of the soul in matter is a training ground that “culminates in transition—in Egyptian terms—to the Osirian realm (*Duat*), the alchemical body of the goddess Nut (Heaven), sometimes represented as the macrocosmic temple in the form of a cow.”⁴⁶ Beyond this cursory summary of Iamblichean eschatology, little can be stated that genuinely captures the essence of the liberated state. This is why Iamblichus, the Platonic priest, is considered “the divine” by the Platonists, because, unlike Plotinus and many other Platonists, Iamblichus realized that all language was limited and therefore he mined the depths of the symbolism of the *Mysteria* and the ancient Egyptian religion. Algis Uždavinys, one of the few scholars to understand this, writes: “The Platonic philosopher, like the bird-shaped *ba* of the Egyptian initiate, indeed must re-grow his wings in order to fly up to the stars (visible symbols of the eternal noetic archetypes) and, standing on the back of the ouroboric universe as on the back of the Egyptian goddess Nut, to contemplate what lies beyond and what is, therefore, formless and colorless.”⁴⁷ This is as far as philosophy, even the immensely profound philosophy of Iamblichus, can take us. Ultimately, more secrets are revealed through obscure texts such as the cryptic *Book of Going Forth by Day*, but spiritual practice and experience can teach us more. This end of philosophy is nothing like the end of philosophy declared by current analytic and postmodern philosophers, because the Platonist knows that “the end of philosophy means the full coincidence of the self with the Self through the divine knowledge and assimilation to God who is the All, or *pantheos*.”⁴⁸

Who knows what is going on on the other side of each hour?

How many times the sunrise was
there, behind a mountain!

How many times the brilliant cloud piling up far off

Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius, trans. Clement Salaman et al. (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2004), 50.

44. Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, vol. 5, Loeb Classical Library 306 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1936), 253.

45. Iamblichus, *The Exhortation to Philosophy*, 90.

46. Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy & Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (San Rafael, California: Sophia Perennis, 2010), 14.

47. *Ibid.*, 87-88.

48. Uždavinys, “The Egyptian Book of the Dead and Neoplatonic Philosophy,” 179.

was already a golden body full of thunder!

This rose was poison.

That sword gave life.

I was thinking of a flowery meadow
at the end of a road,
and found myself in the slough.

I was thinking of the greatness of what was human,
and found myself in the divine.⁴⁹

4.3. Ostad Elahi

Every morning I am now on the heights of the Corinthian Isthmus and, like a bee among flowers, my soul often flies back and forth between the seas that, to the right and left, cool the feet of my glowing mountains.⁵⁰

Fifteen-hundred and seventy years after the death of Iamblichus, Nur Ali (Ostad) Elahi, the great spiritual renewer of the twentieth century was born. Despite the large—small on a cosmic scale—span of time separating the two individuals, Iamblichus and Elahi shared some remarkable similarities. During the final phase of ancient thought and civilization, the ruling powers engaged in a wholesale destruction of traditional cultures and religions. All peoples unwilling to submit to the draconian will of the newly ascendant political forces, faced immense persecution. During this final phase of ancient civilization, a group of Platonists, including Damascius, were exiled from Roman territories and given asylum in the Persian Empire. This seemingly unfortunate event may have saved Platonism from the possible oblivion that was forced upon the Manicheans and others. From Persia, the Platonist doctrine travelled to Harran, then Baghdad, eventually becoming a major facet of Islamic philosophy. The greatest of all Muslim Platonists, Shahab ad-Din Suhrawardi, may have known some of the last living Platonists, and created a perfect synthesis of Islamic and Platonic doctrine that he called the *Isbraqi* (illuminationist) philosophy. Elahi, the greatest intellectual and spiritual heir to Suhrawardi certainly deserved his given name *Nur* (light).

Elahi, much more of a Platonist than an orthodox Muslim, considered all sentience to stem from an incorporeal spirit or soul, which is, in turn, bound to the Universal Spirit or World Soul. There are multiple selves, including the *nafs* or berating self, which is what most individuals consider to be their “I”, culminating in the rational soul, which is not so rational as it is pure spirit that has an intuitional connection to the subtle imaginal realms. A human creature is not conscious because of neurochemical reactions in the brain, but attains consciousness through

49. Juan Ramón Jiménez, “Who Knows What Is Going On,” in *Lorca & Jimenez: Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. Robert Bly (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 19.

50. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, trans. Ross Benjamin (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011), 10.

[t]he spirit, or “rational soul,” is that which is the life-source for each being; the origin of the different distinctive perceptions and powers of action and reaction; the originating basis for all natural forms; and the governor and director of all the forms of organization in the substrates of being and quiddity, matter and form, and the nature and specific constitution of every living thing.⁵¹

The soul is, therefore, that which animates a body that would otherwise be akin to a dead piece of flesh. What is the nature of this soul and what is its origin? The origin of the soul, like the origin of “[a]ll existent things[,] come[s] into existence from the void of nonexistence through the effusion of the overflowing emanation of the Grace of the Necessary Being, by the intermediary of their primary and secondary causes and effects.”⁵² This “Necessary Being,” God, is eternal, existing before time and subsisting long after the universe as we know it ceases to be. Since the First Cause is immortal, it is reasonable to assume that those entities that emanated from Its Pure Substance are also immortal.

Though most Muslims believe in immortality, their vision is of a bodily resurrection, whereas Elahi comes much closer to the Platonists by positing that

the original Cause of causes and Everlasting Source (of existence) is immortal and everlasting, it is self-evident that the effusion of the emanations of Its Light should also be eternal [...] *Consequently those spirits—which have come into being through God’s Will and His Command, and which continue to exist through the bountiful effusion of the overflowing emanation of Grace of the Supreme Source and the inbreathing of His Power—are also immortal.*⁵³ [emphasis in original]

This purely incorporeal, spiritual entity cannot die, but the material body and lowest levels of the self can perish. This is why one seeking liberation from both this world, and from pain in general, must spiritually die to the idea that they can be identified with their ego, for the ego will perish, but “what never disappears, under any condition or circumstance, is precisely that original, substantial ‘essential reality’ (that is) the existential core of its very being, the essence of its ‘self,’ and the underlying being of its existence.”⁵⁴ This rational self that never perishes is what animates us and it does contain the memories of all of its past lives, but it is not the pleasure-seeking machine that most humans are. Therefore, a soul whose body dies before dying to the lower self experiences a great amount of pain and suffering, and a return to this bodily realm. Whatever the soul’s state or station, “their different positions in the chain of being [...] do not affect this dimension—[of the soul’s intrinsic immortal and godlike essence]—in any way at all.”⁵⁵ As should already be evident, Elahi shares not only many of the fundamental assumptions of the Platonists, but also their vocabulary, which should come as no surprise, since it was the Muslims who preserved the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and more importantly, Plotinus (through a partial Arabic translation of the *Enneads*) and Proclus. Elahi is not surprising for his Platonism, but for

51. Elahi, *Knowing the Spirit*, 55.

52. *Ibid.*, 65.

53. *Ibid.*, 58.

54. *Ibid.*, 73.

55. *Ibid.*, 75.

the radicality of his adherence to the Platonic doctrines. It is unknown whether Elahi studied the extant texts of Iamblichus, but if he did not, it would prove that knowledge of the Truth can be independently arrived at by anyone, and that “the proper understanding of the nature of the Source depends on our coming to know ‘Being’ and the transformations of its substance in the course of the process of perfection of its essential nature.”⁵⁶

The embodied soul, for both Iamblichus and Elahi, “will not be able to perceive the sensations (*nasha’at*) of the spiritual realm as long as it is under the influence of the desires and passions of the domineering self.”⁵⁷ [emphasis in original] For the soul that leaves this world in such a state, the path is first to an intermediary realm, then back to an earthly life. The intermediary realm — variously called the imaginary realm, *’alam al-mithal*, or *mundus imaginalis* — is a place, existentially, between this world of matter and the world of pure spirit. The *mundus imaginalis* is a realm of both spirit and subtle matter, but the spirit dominates, so all that is thought comes to be. During the soul’s stay in the *mundus imaginalis*, the veil (*bijab*) that covered its awareness of its timeless past is removed, “[s]o whenever it is dwelling in the other world, without the body and bodily life of a human-animal form, none of the events and happenings from its earlier successive bodily lifetimes are hidden from it. Indeed certain of the predestined conditions of the future are also not concealed from it,”⁵⁸ but “it is not the material body in itself that causes the veil of forgetfulness keeping us from an awareness of our earlier experiences. Rather, it is the passions of the domineering self that bring that veil of obscurity into existence.”⁵⁹ [emphasis in original] All souls enter and leave the *mundus imaginalis*, but their ultimate destination depends on a particular soul’s station at death, the best off being those who practice “[m]ystical prayers (like the Sufi *dhikr Allah*), themselves regarded as *sunthemata* of the gods, [...] ‘intellectual powers’ that bring about the union with the gods,”⁶⁰ therefore:

[I]n the case of each being endowed with a (morally) discerning spirit that succeeds in completing the process of perfection while in its initial body and material form, after death its spirit will be taken to its eternal abode and there will forever enjoy the fruits of its actions. However, if any sort of event or cause[...] should compel its ascending process of spiritual and/or bodily perfection to come to a stop, then at the time of separation from its material body, the spirit will be transferred and introduced, either immediately or after a delay, directly into the intermediate world.⁶¹

Elahi devises a doctrine remarkable in its similarity to Iamblichus’ doctrine of the soul’s vehicle. The vehicle, itself immortal, may exist in the *mundus imaginalis* at the same time as its corresponding soul exists on Earth. The symbiosis existing between the soul and its vehicle is such that “the spirit in the intermediate world is able to make use of the sensations drawn from its ongoing connection with the spirit existing on Earth for its own process of perfection.”⁶² Once the soul leaves the imaginal realm, it either returns to the world, or unites with the Divinity. On

56. Elahi, *Knowing the Spirit*, 66.

57. *Ibid.*, 80.

58. *Ibid.*, 101.

59. *Ibid.*, 102-103.

60. Uzdavinys, *Philosophy as a Rite of Rebirth*, 253.

61. Elahi, *Knowing the Spirit*, 89.

62. *Ibid.*, 93.

both of these possible destinations, Elahi and the Platonists are largely in agreement, but it is the *return* that necessitates special attention due to Elahi's strong divergence from mainstream Islamic doctrines. To even suggest a possible return to Earth in some form is heterodox by the standards of all Abrahamic faiths, including Islam, but to suggest that one may return in other forms is highly unorthodox. Elahi, like Iamblichus, considers the view of transmigrationists to be at least somewhat false, for he allows an infinite upward evolution from plant to human, but only a limited potential for downward incarnation. Elahi's view is that a soul, once human, may "pass through one thousand[...] stages in a human form, whether in its initial form or in subsequent successive forms, through what is called 'the process of perfection,' until it reaches its reunion with God, the Truly Real, in the thousand-and-first stage, and becomes eternally blessed in the abode of the hereafter."⁶³ but that it may incarnate only in the bodies of highly intelligent animals, such as dolphins or dogs.

A soul "may be connected with a spirit having a material body like its own, or higher or lower[...] a human being may be paired with another human, or an animal, an animal with a human, and so on,"⁶⁴ but "[i]f a human spirit should descend to being (connected with) an animal, it will appear in those higher animals that possess a certain power of reflection."⁶⁵ If this alone were Ostad Elahi's doctrine of return, it would be remarkable enough, but added to this is a doctrine of sexual fluidity that has remarkable parallels to Aristophane's speech in Plato's *Symposium*⁶⁶ and is a corrective to many of the wrong-headed notions on gender and sexuality commonly held by religious authorities throughout history. Elahi affirms that the soul, while tied to matter, can exist as either gender or in a state of androgyny. In addition, he opens the door to a possible Islamic non-essentialist theory of sexuality and sexual interpretation. In a world rife with homophobia, Elahi could stand out for introducing a strong metaphysical basis for LGBT rights in the Islamic world. According to Elahi: "The third group is the androgynous category, who[...] can become truly male or female, either in this bodily form or in other later forms, as a result of particular changes or accidental causes; or they may remain indefinitely in this androgynous condition. As can be seen in some cases, the sexual identities of some people do change after a certain period."⁶⁷ Ultimately, the spirit transcends gender and even matter itself, and after one, or up to one thousand human births, "the Sufi mystic, the one who 'wraps himself in the light of the Holy Spirit',[...] does not circumambulate the Temple Mount Jerusalem. Rather, he circumambulates the Ka'bah of his own heart, externally represented by the Abrahamic Meccan sanctuary,"⁶⁸ attaining liberation in this life and awaiting the inevitable union with God that was her/his destiny from before the beginning of time. For the first time since the soul was incarnated into matter, "that which was hidden becomes evident,[...] that of which he was merely informed is directly seen,[and] the soul no longer derives any profit from that which it believes but only from that which it contemplates and sees."⁶⁹

63. Elahi, *Knowing the Spirit*, 98.

64. *Ibid.*, 93.

65. *Ibid.*, 100.

66. See Plato, *The Banquet*, trans. Percy Bysshe Shelley (Provincetown, Massachusetts: Pagan Press, 2001), 46-52.

67. Elahi, *Knowing the Spirit*, 100.

68. Algis Uždavinys, *Ascent to Heaven in Islamic and Jewish Mysticism* (London: The Matheson Trust, 2011), 172-173.

69. Amir 'Abd al-Kader, *The Spiritual Writings of Amir 'Abd al-Kader*, trans. Michel Chodkiewicz (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 72.

4.4. Conclusion

This study analyzed the correspondences between the ideologies of Iamblichus and Ostad Elahi, particularly their doctrines concerning the soul. Despite the vastly different times and places of the two mystics and philosophers, their doctrines are remarkably similar. The cosmology, ontology, and eschatology of Elahi is pure Platonism in everything but name, to the point that followers of Elahi's *Ahl-e-Haqq*⁷⁰ sect of Islam could be considered not only followers of Elahi—intellectual heir to Shahab ad-Din Suhrawardi *al-Maqtul* (the martyred)—but of the late Platonists themselves, foremost of which is Iamblichus. Sadly, the ancient religion has died out, leaving us only minute fragments of once holy doctrines and practices. If history was so generous as to bestow upon future generations a largely intact Platonic doctrine, it has not been so forthcoming with the rites, rituals, and practices of the Platonists. This, more than anything else, is what makes the life and thoughts of Ostad Elahi so important, because his writings wed the Platonic doctrines to a minority sect of Islam and a set of practices outside Islamic orthodoxy. This is the marvel of the Muslim Platonists from Suhrawardi, to Ibn Sab'in, to Elahi: they all allow one to not only believe in the Platonic doctrine, but to practice Platonism, that most profound and beautiful of all ways of life.

Grow and be a whole wood! Be a more soul-inspired,
Fully blossoming world! Language of lovers now
Be the language our land speaks,
And their soul be the people's lilt!⁷¹

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70. People of Truth. To which could be appended Beauty and Goodness.

71. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michel Hamburger (London: Anvil Press, 2004), 199.

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He rectifies himself, and seeks for nothing from others, so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against Heaven, nor grumble against men. Thus it is that the superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven, while the mean man walks in dangerous paths, looking for lucky occurrences. —To love God is to love His will. It is to wait quietly for life to be measured by One who knows us through and through. Ostad Elahi would mostly illustrate the points he sought us to understand either through anecdotes and events relating to the lives of prominent spiritual personalities, or through his own personal experiences and dreams. These illustrations were used to set the stage for teaching us about the structure and purpose of creation, or about some specific points relating to lessons that we needed to learn. — Ostad Elahi was able to do just that and for the most complex concepts. That always puzzles me! For example even to date, scientists struggle to define life. — I implored and pleaded for help for hours until dawn with no resolution until I fell asleep. Wait for the appointed hour. It is irreverent to the Gods to give you this demonstration, but for your sakes it shall be done. Iamblichus of Chalcis or Iamblichus Chalcidensis (Ἰᾶμβλῖχος Ἁλικαρνεῖσις; c. 245 — c. 325) was a Greek Neoplatonic philosopher from Syria who heavily influenced later Neoplatonism, and much of western pagan philosophy. — No one will deny that the soul of Pythagoras was sent to mankind from Apollo's domain, having either been one of his attendants, or more intimate associates, which may be inferred both from his birth, and his versatile wisdom. Ch. 2 : Youth, Education, Travels.