

Islamic Platonism:
Ingress to Social Orientation in
Eternity Ash and King Charles III

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مدخلا إلى الانتماء الاجتماعي في (رماد الخلود)
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Abstract

The most paramount target of the study is to manifest the roots of the Islamic Platonism and its impact on the social orientation in both Eivernity Ash and King Charles III. Thus, there are two sections ; Islamic Platonism and Social Orientation and Social Orientation into Application, the first comes as theoretical and the second as practical. As a matter of explication, it is hypothesized that the Islamic Platonism in general and the Miskawayh ethics in particular contribute much ethical touches and depth to the Husseinist theatre theory and the futuristic play as it endeavours hard to guide man to enlightenment and prosperity. Moreover, it is hypothesized that the social orientation, being in the serving others, goes socially a higher in the saddle nowadays. In doing so, the study develops an eclectic model to explicate certain excerpts from the selected plays to trace the sense of the social orientation after crystallizing the theoretical side in section one. The two plays yield themselves to the social orientation and prove that the pivotal characters sacrifice everything for the sake of faith and the others. After all, the eclectic model employed in the study could be applied to explicate modern novel and poetry in light of the social orientation. The conclusion results in these two plays cuddling and emphasizing that confronting death does nothing in the face of a man with a freedom-loving soul or with a beneficence-trying hand. Future studies of the Islamic Platonism and access to social orientation are desperately needed to fathom and show how man should respond to life fraught with hectic daily challenges.

Keywords: modern verse drama, social orientation, Platonism, Islamic Platonism, Islam passion play, futuristic play, cathartic effect, self-knowledge

ملخص البحث:

يقع جل اهتمام البحث الحالي في معرفة جذور الأفلاطونية الإسلامية وتأثيرها على الانتفاء الاجتماعي في المسرحيتين (رماد الخلود) و(الملك جالس الثالث) ولذا توزع البحث إلى فصلين: الأفلاطونية الإسلامية وتطبيق الانتفاء الاجتماعي على هذه النصوص المختارة وجاء الفصل الأول نظرياً بينما حل الآخر عملياً تحليلاً وعلى الصعيد التحليل الأدبي فإن الفرضية تقول ان الأفلاطونية الإسلامية عامه والتأثير الأخلاقي مسكويه على وجه الخصوص قد ساهما إسهاماً أخلاقياً ببصمات جليلة وعمق مدروس في أغناء نظرية المسرح الحسيني وكذلك المسرحية المستقبلية ويسعى هذا المسرح بجد لتوجيه الإنسان نحو النور والعيش الرغيد. ودارت رحى الفرضية الأخرى على أساس ان الانتفاء الاجتماعي أو الانصهار في خدمة الآخرين يواصل تقدمه في الحياة الاجتماعية في وقتنا الراهن. ولتحقيق هذين الفرضيتين فإن الدراسة عملت على إرساء قواعد لنموذج تحليلي لبعض المقاطع المأخوذة من المسرحيتين المختارة لتتبع ماهية الانتفاء الاجتماعي مستفيدة من الجانب النظري الذي احتل الفصل الأول. وهنا خضعت كلا المسرحيتين لعناصر الانتفاء الاجتماعي لتثبت تضحية الشخصيات المحورية بكل شيء من اجل المعتقد وحياة الآخرين. ولهذا يمكن إن يطبق النموذج التحليلي المستخدم في تحليل هذه النصوص على الراوية الحديثة والشعر في ضوء الانتفاء الاجتماعي. وجاءت الخلاصة تؤكد إن هاتين المسرحيتين تعتبر مواجهة الموت لا تعني شيء قط طالما احتوى قلب الإنسان المحبة لعقب الحرية او اتسعت يداه للخير لجميع بنو البشر. وعلى ضوء ما تقدم فإن من الواجب إن تنطلق دراسات مستقبلية للأفلاطونية الإسلامية وتشجيع الانتفاء الاجتماعي كنموذج تحليلي لمعرفة كيف يستجيب الإنسان للحياة ملئها تحديات يومية مريرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المسرحية الشعرية الحديثة، الانتفاء الاجتماعي، الأفلاطونية، الأفلاطونية الإسلامية، المسرحية الدينية الإسلامية، المسرحية المستقبلية، تأثير التطهير، المعرفة الذاتية

Section A: Islamic Platonism and Social Orientation

Platonism as a concept concerns itself much with bits of liberation of man from mundanity and human desires into the bits of wisdom (Baldwin and Hutton 32) and salvages man from loss and being “scattered” (210) as much as it advocates the pillars of being and existence. Man thirsts for reason and intellectuality (Pater 127) and for “a more perfect justice, a more perfect beauty and “a more perfect condition of human affair” (126-7). Calling for perfection, peace of mind, security and prosperity tends to be an essential necessity at all times, that is why literature reflects such a propensity for more platonic ideas and visions in its genres. Most of the writers; Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden and Iris Murdoch, exploit such platonic images in their artworks to perceive the world. For them, Plato, is ingress to fathom the surroundings and to respond efficaciously to life (Baldwin and Hutton 2)

As a corollary, Platonism confronts a state of ebb and flow throughout ages. In the medieval age prose and poetry revert into platonic ideas, in the Renaissance it works in tandem with humanism and lurks in the love poems of the Elizabethan century. Then in the Seventeenth century the religious aspects are coalesced with the platonic prismatic colours, yet the eighteenth century shows no patina of Platonism, then in the nineteenth century it emerges more ostensibly as “secular and scholarly”. In the twentieth century Platonism is employed more vehemently to scrutinize a society (xiv). That is to say, Platonism as a catalyst for both “creativity and poetic imagination” (12) proffers a kind of reason and spirit to shield humanism from “social fragmentation” (271). The eternal realities lie in “the good, love and truth” that grant identity, “meaning and value to human life” (271).

What is more, Islam as a religion believes in peace and prosperity and nourishes man how to tame nature for the best levels of felicity in alignment with ethics and morality. For adequate betterment, Islamic Platonism is better observed and evidently traced in Miskawayh, Abu ‘Ali Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ya‘qub Miskawayh (932–1030), Islamic ethical thinker and the “Third

Teacher”, after Al-Farabi the “Second Teacher” and Aristotle the “ First Teacher” (Al-Dīn 132), who gives much shrifts to ethics in particular and to Platonic principles in general than Al-Kindi does (Majid Fakhry 40). Even the term of the Islamic passion plays as related to HTT emanates from the Miskawayh impact on the Islamic Platonism:

The foregoing clarifies, to a great extent, how Miskawayh remained one of the Muslim thinkers most devoted to Greek philosophy, for he distinguished between reason and faith, or between philosophy and religion. Supreme happiness is a human happiness, one which is neither imposed nor withheld by anything outside the scope of people’s will, and issuing from an intellect greater and stronger than their own Miskawayh discussion of the training of young men and boys is placed within this framework, and his viewpoint on the matter of training must be understood according to the age-group he is addressing. (Al-Den 136)

The study in question, **Islamic Platonism : Ingress to Social Orientation in Everternity Ash and King Charles III**, takes hold of the Islamic Platonism and Social Orientation in these two modern verse dramas to capture mind, logics, heart and reason under the “ artistic persuasion “ paraphernalia, ethos, logos and pathos appeals (Thompson 7). These help the reader peruse a text and act as a permanent rapport between the reader and the text:

On the ethical and social side Humanism sets up service to all humankind as the ultimate moral ideal. It holds that as individuals we can find our own highest good in working for the good of all, which of course includes ourselves and our families. In this sophisticated and disillusioned era Humanism emphatically rejects, as psychologically naïve and scientifically unsound, the widespread notion that human beings are moved merely by self-interest. It repudiates the constant rationalization of brute egoism into pretentious schemes on behalf of individuals or groups bent on self-aggrandizement .It refuses to accept the reduction of human motivation to economic terms, to sexual terms, to pleasure-seeking terms, or to any one limited set of human desires. It insists on the reality of genuine altruism as one of the moving forces in

the affairs of human beings .(Lamont16)

“ working for the good of all “ sounds resonant in the Islamic principles and wisdom literature ; the wisdom artworks, *Eviternity Ash* and *King Charles III*, belong to the HTT, Husseinist Theatre Theory, advocates to promulgate a kind of humanitarianism, interfaith dialogue and philanthropy man could resort in time of despondency and frustration. It is a kind of Platonism to prod “aphoristic literature”, moral sagacity “and “uprightness” into the Islamic ethics the HTT exploits in its artwork (Majid Fakhry 40). Humanism or ethical principles is / are traceable throughout ages since literature acts as a surrogate for religion and vice versa in guiding him into self-identification, self-knowledge and affinity with other people in the world, nations and nature. That is why self-knowledge takes precedence over other humanism manifestos as it is the “chief part of wisdom” (Wells 2005) finding great ground in the HTT manifestos that proffer certain remedies for various sophisticated problems. Husseinist dramas convey a kind of wisdom cosmopolitan, universal, moral and beyond provincialism:

If self-knowledge, meaning both awareness of your individual strengths and weaknesses and an understanding of humanity in general, was ‘the chief part of wisdom’, as Erasmus put it, literature could help you to acquire that wisdom. the arts of poetry and drama could help you to understand your ‘human-kindness’. (Wells 2005)

As a consequence, a trenchant critical view could fathom the root of social orientation in these two dramas in focus, arbitrate whether a text corrupts or edifies, truck the setting shifts, themes variety, techniques diversity to rationalize the theme beyond their se mise en scene devices and delve into the contour of the texts, literary or linguistic, moral or poetic, social or philosophical to have certain principles, doctrines and norms observed. Still further, literature in general or drama in particular gains momentum and credence in having great cathartic effect on the interlocutors and the readership as much as it attaches vinculum with every day life troubles and choices man confronts and transpires what really he thinks of. From time immemorial, man takes refuge in himself, nature and other

people for the sake of peace of mind and tranquility. That is why, the social orientation, heaves into view to fathom the social propensity of the pivotal characters in *Eviterminity Ash* and *King Charles III*. Here cultures ramify into various types in concordance with their social orientation. A culture with an independent social orientation tends to certify the self and solitude, yet a culture with an interdependent social orientation tends to be more engrossed in harmony and “emotion”. The former engages felicity and the latter disengages it, it is a matter of being lone or dovetailed to achieve the purpose in focus. (Varnum et al. 9).

For surety, the societal and environmental factors take so great a role to stern the prow of the social orientation, for instance, politics could impose the shape and soul of the social orientation of a nation as it calibrates the level of communal interactivity, connectivity and the system of industrialization (12). From another vantage point, the social orientation could be a way of survival as much as one exerts himself to be a part integral to his community:



(SO diagram 1)

Under the shade of the social orientation, man could improve his skills and bring his ambitions into effect as much as he serves the community. In doing so, he will grow as an essential mesh in the social orientation productivity concatenation and none could do without his presence, mentality and social achievements. Missing someone designates missing something crucial others need desperately and working shoulder by shoulder does working for the best of all, to all and by all.

Section B: Social Orientation into Application

Being in the others is one of the most salient trench marks of the social orientation and elevates man into the peerage of humanity and into the Miskawayhian Islamic Platonism ethics ; angelic aspirations to sublimity (Fakhry 49), to live with dignity. In this regard, man should be in the mould of his surroundings to cull his entire purposes and goals, entity and existence (Langlotz 22). In respect to these prerequisites, the social orientation could be applied to these two verse dramas, *Eviternity Ash* and *King Charles III*. As a historical verse drama *Eviternity Ash* penetrates more profoundly and resonantly the psyche of the villains to expose the human intricate machinations to usurp and intimidate; it is a tale in the human history and chronicle that man should be man in all that struggle. The dramatist erects his two contradictory poles and paves the way first to man versus man conflict and second to man versus himself conflict to delineate the rationale the martyr Zeid Ibn Ali, the protagonist, holds to the last in the light of punitive satire void of levity. Exuding all the precepts of self-confident and self-abnegation to confront the iron-and-fire authority, he holds mundanity cheap and falls martyr in the road of the free. Much to the regret of humanity and his adherents: he ascends and flutters into eviternity as a platform of sacrifice and struggle, as a citadel of persistence and sapience and as a trumpet to the free to be themselves for ever, though the despots dominate such an iron-fire-authority. To be a trumpet and a trumpeter to his nation, whether breathing or crucified, on a palm tree for years spews the adrenaline

of volition and determination : in tongue presence he exerts himself to strike a note of revolution at the expense of his life, his being and his glory as a fighter and as a reformer; the dramatist does his best to convey the portrayal of the breathing or tongue trumpeter and the crucified trumpeter, people imbibe knowledge and sapience from him in life and in crucifixion phase though they run into reticence and intimidation, none dare utter a word of change or revolution or insurrection. Then the formulae changes since the stranger acts as a social, moral and doctrinal scruple.

As quite reputed in literature in general and drama in particular, an old man or woman, a traveler at midnight, a fugitive, and so forth comes to the fore to unknot the knotted tales in a drama. The stranger, here, is exploited, as a folklore character, to plunge into the scene with great perception of religion and humanity to be a clarion sound to people and rocks mind into thinking and rethinking. Why not burying the crucified Zeid? Isn't it of Islam to bury a dead one? Isn't he pertinent to the abode of the infallibility? All these issues find existence in the structural trinity; prosimetrum, humanity and narrativity to cast some scruples into the human mind. Verily being crucified then burnt measures evergreen revolution in the human soul to change and to reform; the stranger instigates the faith stamina in people and ensconces the seed of Zeid the martyr in the hearts of the free and the revolutionaries palpitating with life and eviterminity: " One who fears death will never do anything worthy of a living person " (Bartsch 181).

Not only does man find subsistence, but he could revert into literature, theatre, for nourishment and edification. For the fact that "any utterance in a piece of drama as in any ordinary communication is said for a certain function" (Al-Maashta 34). For the words that " have power to influence humans and their relationships ", (Rjaa M. Flayih 19). For the task of salvaging man is a sole and essential one, none gives loose to the starting point of theatre, Gilgamesh, whose impact on the nowadays drama begets certain conditions and manifestos. In a sense, a protagonist dies for a noble target and sacrifices all his treasures and pleasures in the face of insurmountable forces. In the *Eviterminity Ash* there is parallelism

with the Gilgamesh nodal character; a man breathes in the bud of pearls and ecstasy, all people gird him with love and veneration, no need for anything; mundane desires and the like, no hardship in life he confronts. Relinquishing some principles designates losing some to other some! It is a formula or a bargain one takes in time of tumult and chaos, in time of oblivion. The events of the play apply themselves bit by bit to revelation as the dramatist, Al-Khafaji, with highly cultivated poeticism, manipulates free verse to portray his noble character, Zeid the martyr more profoundly and ostensibly, that is why simplicity of diction and transparency of ideas work in tandem with the social orientation components :



(SO diagram 2)

**Thy stances lead no to a fair solution,
 Thy policy emanates from power!
 From swords, malicious and traitorous.
 Be informed and attentive
 Such a nation never tends to be reticent,
 So we do resolve to fall martyr, free and brave,
 for the sake of justice. (Al-Moosawi39)**

There should be a shout at the face of despotism; a freedom fighter never dies in a land spurning all forms of oppression and coercion. Zeid the martyr as a pivotal character finds that there is no way to live in dignity unless he bears arms and gains freedom. That is, the political situation stipulates a candid social orientation to revolt, there is no choice, no benefit of dying glorious deaths and the masses accrue less freedom, or rather they have nothing:

Nobody ever gives an ant an order. Yet, by picking up a single grain of sand and carrying it away, the ant helps dig the nest in the desert. The secret freedom fighter is like the ant .Working without instruction or orders from anyone, he follows his natural instincts, fighting the oppressor whenever and wherever he can. Yet in a freedom-loving society, he will not be working alone. Others ,hopefully hundreds and thousands of others, will also be operating, acting without direction or order .The total sum of thousands of individual acts will give the appearance of a massive organization. That’s what the oppressor will think he is facing-an organized rebellion .(Mack 8)

The ember of revolution in the “freedom-loving” land fights being smothered to demise in a battle or a corpse, chopped and dismembered! It is a volition in the heart, one does hate all the walking-cannibals, talking-tails and proxy war protégés at the expense of a striped and a robbed man, it is enough, no move, no breath, no luster he maintains:

**It is another night, another nightmare
gnawing me and devastating all my ecstasy.
I wonder if Zeid Ibn Ali shows me quarter
or leave me. (going to and fro)
It is to unshackle myself from such a dilemma,
a nightmare clung to my chest.
years pass,
the corpse crucified in Kufa and the gruesome nightmare gnaws
me. (Al-Moosawi 66)**

The internal focalization, monologue, unveils the great success and marvelous harmony people gain to disturb the rhythmic stratification of the tyrant. On the scale of interdependence the

masses triumph and the despots sway to topple:

It is the time of the faithful and chosen prophets

Earth, everyday, breathes its hectic agony

Bleeding from the very outset.

Earth needs much blood, sacrifice, the time of seduction

Still seeps to lure the servile. (Al-Moosawi 72)

In the best interests of a community, man operates to cull the highest values of the social orientation; it is a stance for survival to cull felicity in line with the Miskawayh angelic aspiration to sublimity (Fakhry 49). "Earth needs much blood, sacrifice, the time of seduction" enrolls in the meaningful engagement of the social orientation, to survive dignity and freedom intact stipulates being in a harmonious sapient engagement. Then "It is the time of the faithful" designates that man adapts and modifies his potentials and volition to achieve his ultimate mission in life; entity.

From a self-abnegated martyr to a philanthropist king, the existence through the others and for the best interests of them is the core locus of the *King Charles III* of Mike Bartlett that ramifies into two main plots, the first comes as political and humanitarian, and the second does as romantic and hierarchic, to lay importance on the humanity pole of such a historical verse drama. What is to the point is that the interpreter should abnegate his accumulative experience from the text and considers it as a part of reality to trace facts and reasons. The king refuses to be a factotum to the government and truly desires to change the status quo of the quack king scepter and to give the press more rights for the sake of legitimate surveillance over the abuse of the government authority on the political and humanitarian measures. Thus, he buttresses the affair between Harry and Jessica when being in a moral scandal.

As a futuristic drama savours of "speed and dynamism" (Berghaus 6), the past and the present, edification and experience, as its saga unfolds a common ambition to the readership. A heir waits for his position as a king after his mother queen Elizabeth II. Then he is catapulted into the throne to pass a bill restricting the press but the uncorronated king decides not to comply with the government and persists in having certain emendation. The more he grapples with

emendations, the more his entourage sets certain machinations to pass. Everything in the street is exploited according to the modern “street policy” to cajole the public mood into a particular state man, logically detests or rejects as Alex Gottesman, in his *Politics and the Street in Democratic Athens* and David C. Brotherton and Luis Barrios in their *The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation: street politics and the transformation of a New York City gang* argue:

we think that this alternative sociological construct can have continuing relevance as we enter a new and vitiated culture of street politics, particularly as more and more youth reject and are rejected by mainstream politics and the bankrupt morality of our contemporary capitalist democracy becomes painfully apparent. (339)

Consequently the protest processions and family detention lead to his expected abdication in favour of his son William. It is quite convenient that the play tackles pivotal viewpoints of volition, existence and the acts of extrapolation that are” bounded only by current notions “(Alkon 7). Albeit tradition and trodden leeway, the play sheds light on the life of the monarchy under no shade of constitution, that is why patronage, precedent and traditions tend to be the cornerstone of the political and social life. There are specific spotlights on democracy coping with the desire of suppression, phone surveillance wreaking havoc on the freedom of privacy, thus, perversion grows momentum in the age of domination and usurpation. So “the setting of a future social or political condition”(7) is quite evident in the play. As the political isle heaves into horizon as essential to expose the social orientation of the king:

Your bill concerning privacy, that sets

Restriction on the freedom of the press.

I understand it’s passed the House and soon

Will be the British law, is that correct? (King Charles III 25)

“Restriction on the freedom of the press” flirts with both the political and cultural orientation the king determines to achieve in pursuit of thorough interdependence. As a king, he wants to practice the perquisite of his position and to give force to the traditional portrait of the monarchical authority:

Sometimes I do confess I imagines if

**My mother happened to die before her time,
A helicopter crash, a rare disease
So at an early age I'd be in charge-
Before me years of constant stable ryle.
But mostly I have hoped she'd keep in health
That since for most, outrageous dreams and hopes
Are all they `ii ever have, and yet their life is full,
So I am better Thoughtful Prince than King.
Potential holds appeal since in its castle walls
One is protected from the awful shame
Of failure. (King Charles III 15-6)**

In the orbit of functionality, "So I am better Thoughtful Prince than King " designates that rights protection and communal prosperity are the best services a king could do for his multitudes. For him, a prince with authority to serve is more effective and influential than a quack king drained of deeds. Here, harmony surges as an essential ingredient a pivotal character, King Charles, targets to be a part in his society, though adapting to dissolve the parliament but in vain. Thus, to survive is to be a real king, unless otherwise stated, he is dust :

Harry. None of my friends are talking to me. Every second people recognize me and laugh. And I never wanted any of it. I don't be famous and I don't want anything to do with that. Or you. Not any more.

HARRY.

You mean that ?

JESS.

Yeah. Just ...go home.

HARRY.

But I don't I don't know what to do without you. (King Charles III 89)

The love subplot terminates in failure and fiasco as the new king, love dictator, decrees that there is no place for a commoner, a working class girl in the palace. Harry acts upon the edict without a mutter, so he adapts such a policy to take the monarchy privileges under his wing, yet Jess adapts a policy of departure with dignity

as a posture of entity. To the detriment of any compendium of the social orientation, domination and usurpation prevail and conquer man, flora and fauna under different banners, William prevails, conquers all his rivals and compromises on the street and palace troubles to lay a cornerstone of “ realistic future setting “ (Alkon 246) that comes true in reality. The king Charles as Zeid the martyr gives loose to mundanity and takes hold of more angelic factors of sublimity in life: They cuddle the pearls of their soul and mind tight more than do other characters. For them social orientation is existence and for the antagonists it is real perdition:

**Not like a Thief, shall Thou ascend the mount,
But like a Person of some high Account;
The Crosse shall be Thy Stage; and Thou shalt there
The spacious field have for Thy Theater. (Paul H Fry 1)**

Conclusion

Throughout the two sections of the study the main focus falls within the remit of the Islamic Platonism and social orientation application. The first section, Islamic Platonism and Social Orientation, tackles Platonism as a concept in general and the Islamic one in particular and delineates the major components of the social orientation to be a parameter to explicate the plays in question. The second section, the practical side of the study, Social Orientation into Application, trucks the propensity of the pivotal characters for preferring the interests of others to theirs and applies the social orientation components to certain excerpts from the plays, *Eviternity Ash* and *King Charles III*.

As inferred from the explication and social orientation application to *Eviternity Ash* and *King Charles III* the Islamic Platonism gives nourishment to the social orientation in these two dramas. In particular, the Miskawayh factor, angelic aspiration to sublimity angelic sublimity, looms larger in the events to show how the pivotal characters, Zeid the martyr and King Charles, spurn everything mundane for the sake of principlism and find their real; existence in serving a cause. The utopian elements are brought into effect and surpass reality, so the platonic ideas in these plays palpitate

with life and take acts of commencement : Zied the martyr calls for freedom and falls victim to the despots and the king Charles does not comply with the machinations of the government to sign more restrictions on the press. Chief among the contributions of the study is that the Miskawayh factor, angelic aspiration to sublimity angelic sublimity, is evidently traced in *Eviternity Ash* and *King Charles III* and the social orientation is found in the main characters to convey humanitarian missions in the face of despotism and human desires, treasures and monarchical privileges.

The study, here, offers an attempt to manifest the vital role of the modern verse drama in addressing the most critical crises in the world with a poetic style. On the basis of theses concluding insights and remarks, it is recommended that the Islamic Platonism in modern poetry and novel deserves to be explicated in light of social orientation and being in the other could be traced in modern genres in light of wisdom literature.

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