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RFC: ATII20618V12

Revista Dilemas Contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valores.

<http://www.dilemascontemporaneoseducacionpoliticayvalores.com/>

Año: VII Número:3 Artículo no.:43 Período: 1ro de mayo al 31 de agosto del 2020.

TÍTULO: Estudios filosóficos y místicos del mundo sobre una mujer.

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RESUMEN: El objeto de investigación en este artículo es la imagen de una mujer y su papel en las enseñanzas místicas del mundo. El autor identifica dos tipos principales de misticismo: inmanente y inmanente trascendental. El misticismo inmanente considera a una mujer como la quintaesencia del mundo material. Hay tres posibles actitudes hacia las mujeres (monismo, holismo, integración), que dependen de la solución de la cuestión de la relación entre la existencia material y la ideal. El misticismo inmanente trascendental considera a una mujer como una personalidad. Aquí solo es posible el camino de integración, la unión sinérgica del Creador y la creación, durante el cual la personalidad imperfecta se transforma a imagen y semejanza de la persona absoluta Divina.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Absoluto, ideal y material, masculino y femenino, misticismo inmanente trascendental, misticismo inmanente.

TITLE: Philosophical and mystical studies of the world about a woman.

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ABSTRACT: The object of the research in this article is the image of a woman and her role in the mystical studies of the world. The author distinguishes two types of mysticism – immanent and transcendental immanent. The immanent mysticism sees a woman as quintessence of the material world. There are three options for treating a woman (monism, holism, integration), which depends on the attitude to the intersubordination of ideal and material being. The transcendental immanent mysticism sees a woman as a person. Only the path of integration, the synergistic union of the Creator and creation is possible here, which results in the transformation of the imperfect person in the image and likeness of the Divine absolute personality.

KEY WORDS: Absolute, ideal and material, male and female, transcendental immanent mysticism, immanent mysticism.

INTRODUCTION.

At the current stage of humanities evolution, we observe a growing interest in the experience of mystical studies. In the first place, it is driven by the need to find a way out of a deep spiritual crisis created by the modern consumer civilization. The interest can also be attributed to globalization processes happening in the world, which necessitate the search for a common core of religions.

In the XX century, the phenomenon of “mystical” was studied by such outstanding Russian and foreign scholars as E. Underhill, N. Berdyaev, S. Grof, D. Goleman, W. James, V. Lossky, W. Stace, F. Strang, E. Torchinov, F. Happold, D. Hollenbeck, O. Huxley, M. Eliade and others. They pointed out the polysemy of “mystic”, “mysticism”, and “mystical” concepts. In their studies, they present the mystical phenomenon as a complex occurrence in mankind’s spiritual life, aimed at a “unity” with the Absolute reality, which leads to a qualitative transformation of man’s consciousness and personality (Zhirtueva 2018: 6-9).

According to R. Ellwood, mystical experience is not just a part of religious experience, but its main part linking all elements of the religious matrix. If religion is a system tasked to comprehend “the methods of ultimate transformation”, then mystical experience is “the most important means of ultimate transformation” (Ellwood 1980: 29, 34).

N.A. Berdyaev notes that “if the word “mysticism” is derived from the word “mystery”, then mysticism should be recognized as the core of religion and the source of creative movement in religion.” In his opinion, religious experience is born “from direct and live contact with the ultimate mystery”, and all great initiators and creators of religious life had a primary mystical experience, in other words, mystical face-to-face encounters with the Divine (Berdyaev 2003: 233).

Mysticism epitomizes the essential core of religion and religious experience. Mysticism combines theoretical and practical parts: experiences of adepts during their contact with the Absolute, various psycho-practices, analytical texts with comments, etc. This leads to the development of a certain mystical tradition, which facilitates the transfer of mystical theory and practice from one generation to another (Zhirtueva 2018: 11). Mystical experience is always personal and is shaped in a specific cultural environment and a specific historical subtext (Hollenbeck 1996: 1).

At the same time, the phenomenon of mystical is so multidimensional that it requires a thorough scientific research. Our study uses a comparative philosophical and theological analysis, which allows revealing both common and individual features of mystical traditions around the world. The comparative analysis helps distinguish two types of mysticism – immanent and transcendental immanent. They stem from the idea of Absolute reality, with which a mystic seeks to unite. The arguments in favor of choosing these terms were given in my previous study (Zhirtueva 2018: 32-34). Certainly, there are other classifications of mysticism types in research literature. For example, W. Stace singles out introverted and extroverted mystical experience (Stace 1961: 131).

Immanent mysticism is primarily intrinsic to “religions of pure experience” or “natural religions” that are devoid of any notion of the supernatural Absolute. It claims a mystic can achieve “unity” with the Absolute by nature, “merging” with Him. **Transcendental immanent (antinomian) mysticism** is specific to “religions of revelation” that are based on the ideas of monotheism and creationism, and affirm the heterogeneity of God, and “created” and “uncreated” world. This type of mysticism insists it is possible to “unite” with the Absolute not by nature, but by grace.

Each type of mysticism has molded a certain image of a woman and her role in mystical practice. Next, we will take a closer look at how the female aspect is perceived both by immanent and transcendental immanent mysticism.

DEVELOPMENT.

Methodology.

Methodology of the study: comparative philosophical religious analysis. The main method of the study: comparative analytical. General scientific methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization, individualization.

Results and discussion.

Immanent mysticism is represented by a wide variety of mystical traditions; for example, Hindu Jnana Yoga insists on the existence of a true reality of the objective spiritual aspect – Absolute Brahman, and the subjective aspect identical to it - Atman. All other realities, such as the world of material objects and subjects are deemed a false reality and an illusion (*maya*). “The Eternal is not a moving world; it differs from it. Nevertheless, everything that is not it is nothing and is invalid per se (a simple phenomenon). Everything that seems to be something other than the Eternal, is an illusion, a hoax similar to a mirage in a desert” (Streltsov, Russkikh 1994: 169).

Essentially, Jnana Yoga is a monistic mystical tradition that acknowledges the reality only of the spiritual aspect of existence. Male and female wholly belong to a material, untrue world; therefore, they are ignored in the course of mystical practice. At the first stage of practice, an adept should learn to differentiate between the eternal (true) and the non-eternal (untrue), and strive for the former. Shankara said, “Only the eye of wisdom (not the eye of sciolism, dreaminess and fantasy) can see the omnipresent Trinity of Being-Consciousness-Bliss” (sat-chit-ananda), Self (Atman)” (Streltsov, Russkikh 1994: 170).

At the second stage of Jnana Yoga practice, one should disengage oneself from any material and sensual desires, any cravings for pleasure, which are seen as illusion of unenlightened mind. Shankara is convinced that this goal could be achieved only by taking a vow of *sannyasa* (monasticism).

Raja Yoga, unlike Jnana Yoga, considers matter (Prakriti) to be as real and eternal as spirit (Purusha). Matter is proclaimed to be a creative force that gives birth to all diverse forms of the universe. In tantric Yoga, the concept of the mother-matter was formed gradually, later acquiring a sacred status. There are three different types of matter – gunas (from Sanskrit “quality”, “thread”): sattva (quality of light and mind), rajas (quality of energy and activity), and tamas (quality of static and inertia). The gunas alter endlessly, transforming from equilibrium (the world before collapse or genesis) to dominance of one of the gunas over others (the world between genesis and collapse).

At the stage of world genesis, Prakriti takes the form of energy mass “mahat” (from Sanskrit “large”), which has a colossal potency. In that manner, matter is associated with the concept of “energy” and is endowed with a powerful potential. A man needs to balance the gunas properly. The main tool of matter – mind – takes an active part in Raja Yoga psycho-practice, enabling a man to make good use of his energy.

However, despite recognizing the reality of matter, Yoga still regards it as an inferior reality. Mystic Kabir, a disciple of Bhakti Yoga, said, “This world is a cubicle with soot, the fortress [body] is also

in soot” (Gaphurova 2004: 272). This teaching perceives a woman as the embodiment of the worst qualities in the material world (inertia and ignorance), as an object of temptation. Excessive attachment to matter is regarded as a dangerous obstacle on the path to enlightenment. That is why a man, attached to a woman, is considered “unclean”. Bhakti Yoga deems the sin of voluptuousness to be the most grievous. Kabir warns, “By taking pleasure, voluptuaries destroy bhakti. They have lost the [priceless] Diamond [and] wasted their lives”. “Blinded by [his love of a woman], a man thinks nothing, losing his self-control”. Views on a woman are unflattering: “A woman is scourgings of the world, [something] between good and bad”. “A man [who loves a woman] will never find his love [for God], will never achieve salvation [and] Divine knowledge” (Gaphurova 2004: 352-355).

Raja Yoga teaching is paradoxical. It constantly balances between monistic theism and dualism (the Sankhya philosophy has two forms – epic and classical). On the one hand, it argues that spirit is contaminated with matter seen as inferior, “contaminated” reality. Therefore, there is a desire to purify and separate spirit from matter during mystical practice. On the other hand, Purusha and Prakriti are not acknowledged as independent realities, but as different forms of God’s manifestation (Radhakrishnan 1993 II: 127, 166); that is why they are closely related, revealing a hidden unity; for this very reason, Raja Yoga and Bhakti Yoga still remain monistic traditions.

Only in Tantra Yoga, matter receives a status equal to the spiritual aspect. Hindu Tantrism teaches that unmanifested Absolute Brahman needs creative potency, strength and energy in order to create the Universe and turn into manifested Absolute Shiva. The Absolute reveals Itself through Shakti (“strength, energy, and creative power”). S.V. Pakhomov notes that Absolute reality in Hindu Tantrism is embodied in the paradoxical union of two equivalent halves, two aspects of the Absolute – Shiva and Shakti. The paradox lies in their identical nature and different form, i.e. the way of their existence – “over-worldly” and “worldly” (Pakhomov 2004: 138).

The significance of Shakti is that Shiva without Shakti is absolutely passive and inactive. Only their oneness and union drive Shiva to creativity; that is why, Tantrism can be classified as integration mystical tradition. The “Anandalakhari” text says, “Shiva has the power to create only in conjunction with Shakti. Without her, he can hardly move” (Streltsov, Russkikh 1994: 124).

Shakti is identified with matter-Prakriti and is a wife of Shiva. She is often called the Great Mother or Goddess (Devi). The Tantric teaching is characterized by awe of women who are regarded as forms of the divine Mother (Radhakrishnan 1993 II: 370). Since the world is born by goddess Shakti, it cannot be anything other than sacred.

Whilst Bhakti Yoga considers a woman a dangerous obstacle on the path to enlightenment, in tantrism she helps a man in mystical practice. Sexual practice (maithuna), as a combination of ritual sexual relations between a man and a woman, becomes sacred for partners, because it identifies them with Shiva and Shakti. Maithuna should awaken the energy of the lower chakra (Shakti), so that it rises along the spine to the highest crown chakra, the seat of Shiva. Thus, a human body becomes a laboratory, in which Shiva and Shakti unite (Zhirtueva 2018: 54-55). Bhagavan Osho Rajneesh, a modern representative of Tantra, pays much attention to the relationship between male and female in his works (Zhirtueva 2018: 188-1890).

Taoism has created an original image of the Absolute as the embodiment of femininity and motherhood endowed with all the attributes of the goddess-mother cult – “Mysterious Female”. In the sixth zhang of “Tao-te Ching” we read: “The spirit of emptiness is immortal. It is called the Mysterious Female. The gateway of the Mysterious Female is called the root of Heaven and Earth. It is like a vapor, barely seen, but always present. Use it effortlessly.” Zhang 25 also says: “There was something that finished chaos. Born before Heaven and Earth. So silent and still! So pure and deep! It can be called the Mother of the whole world” (Torchinov 2001: 22, 24).

The purpose of Taoist mysticism is to unite with Tao by “moving backwards” – into the “womb” of the Mother Tao. In Taoism, this practice is called “internal alchemy”. A Taoist mystic seems to return to the intrauterine state, which symbolizes the initial unity with the Absolute. It is no coincidence that Lao Tzu compares himself to an infant “who has not yet smiled”, that is, to a fetus in his mother's womb (Zhan 20). This image is symbolic. Mother is Tao itself, or a foundation of all things, and it is the womb of the Mother that carries the Infant-Wiseman who acquires immortality and great power. It is assumed that a disciple should first create elixir of immortality (“Golden Flower”) in his body, and then out of it - “immortal embryo” (*xian tai*) that gradually turns into a new immortal body. Taoism considers the lower “cinnabaric field” called the “ocean of vitality” (*qi hai*) as the main energy center. It is here an embryo is formed, and the body of the mystic symbolizes the mother's womb. Sexual practice is an important method of Chinese alchemy – “nurturing life with the help of yin and yang” or “joining of yin and yang to nurture life” (*yin yang yang sheng zhi dao*). Intimate relationship between a man and a woman symbolizes the great unity of energies of Heaven and Earth. It is commonly believed that “celibacy is contrary to the innate law of nature, since everything in nature has either female or male properties, i.e. refers either to yin or yang. Taoist sexual mysticism evolved on a fertile soil of Chinese society, where family relations were a standard of Confucian ethics, and procreation was a sacred duty of every Chinese”.

Sexual practice is based on the desire to preserve seminal fluid and acquire the vital energy of the partner. It is believed that a systematic feeding of *yan* in a man by *yin* in a woman ensures health and longevity of the man. Accordingly, the woman also achieves health and longevity, when she nourishes her *yin* with the man's *yan*. Taoism can also be seen as integration mystical tradition.

Buddhism was a basis for original mystical traditions that rejected the very idea of separate material and ideal aspects of existence. Buddha claimed that our existence consisted of many dharmas. Theravada becomes the most consistent pluralistic teaching, and holism prevails in Mahayana, i.e.

the affirmation of the absolute integrity and inseparability of our existence. One can speak of pluralistic and holistic mystical traditions formed on the basis of Buddhism. Any concepts about a conflict of spiritual and material, absolute and phenomenal, unmanifested and manifested are proclaimed as a sign of unawakened consciousness. This refers to the fundamental non-duality, non-dichotomy of Buddhist worldview.

Initially, Buddha had little respect for women. When Ananda asked him how a man should act in the presence of a woman, Buddha replied, "Avoid looking at her ... if you need to look, do not talk to her; if you need to talk to her, beware." On some occasions, he even refused to let women join the sangha. Again, Ananda asked, "Are Buddhas born into this world only for the good of men? Undoubtedly, they are born for the good of women too." Later, women were accepted into the community (Radhakrishnan 1993 I: 200).

The concept of unity of two principles – *prajna* and *karuna* – became widespread in Mahayana and Vajrayana doctrines. While the former is associated with the female (left) aspect, the latter is linked to the male (right) aspect. The first principle – wisdom (*prajna*) – implies the existence of higher enlightened knowledge expressed in the ability to directly perceive the world as it is. The second principle in Vajrayana – empathy (*karuna*) – means unselfish serving to unawakened beings and active dispensation of Buddha (*upaya*). Thus, the whole world is presented as a unity of male and female, and even three treasures of Buddhism are interpreted along these lines. If Buddha is male, and wisdom is female, then a Sangha community is an offspring of the supreme married couple. All men are Buddhas, all women are *prajnas*. It is alleged that empathy without wisdom is blind, and wisdom without empathy is passive and inactive, and only together they can awaken the consciousness.

In the Buddhist Tantrism (Vajrayana), an important role is played by sexual practices aimed at harmonizing female and male energies. Vajrayana teaches that one should not fight against energies of the body, on the contrary, one should respect and actively involve them in mystical practice:

“Imagine the spirit both inside and outside until you enter universal spirituality.” “Do whatever pleases you, whatever its basis.” “Do not consider anything either pure or unclean” (Streltsov, Russkikh 1994: 151, 153, 156).

Buddhism has no conflict between male and female, and both a man and a woman can equally take a bodhisattva oath. S. Radhakrishnan describes the time when the Buddhist teaching spread: “Although women stayed away from the struggle of life, they had equal rights with men in the spiritual fight for salvation. Maitreyas, Gargis discussed deep spiritual problems and joined philosophical battles” (Radhakrishnan 1993 I: 102).

Christianity went down in history as a philosophical doctrine that perceives the Absolute not in the form of an impersonal Monad, but the most perfect personalit”, whose essence is Love. The Absolute Personality, creating the world by the power of love, consists of three hypostases – the Holy Trinity – and is the unity of Divine essence and Divine energies that cannot be reduced to each other. It is deemed possible to gain mystical knowledge of the unknowable essence of God through perception of His energies, which are “uncreated” (or blessed) (Zhirtueva 2017: 54).

Christianity has led to a brand new anthropological teaching that proclaimed absolute uniqueness and value of every human Personality created in the image of the Holy Trinity. Firstly, a man has a three-part soul, secondly, an unknowable entity that forms the basis of his personality, and “created” energies, and thirdly, using these “created” energies he is able to create.

Christianity acknowledges a fundamental heterogeneity of ideal and material existence, but at the same time, it respects the material as a result of Divine creativity. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite argues that matter cannot be evil: “Why is matter evil? In fact, if it does not exist anywhere at all, it is neither good nor evil; if matter does exist somehow, then it must come from Good, because everything that exists comes from Good, and if Good does evil, then evil that comes from Good is good” (Areopagit 1991: 55). It is emphasized that evil lies not in corporeality as such, but in the

improper use of it. According to Isaak Sirin, the “world” is a combination of human passions or a disoriented state of the soul, its betrayal of its own nature. Therefore, it is necessary to wage a struggle not with the surrounding material “world”, but with the will that surrenders to the material.

In the mystical doctrine of Orthodox Hesychasm, influenced by the patristic concept of “deification” (the Greek “theosis”), matter and flesh were finally acquitted. For Hesychasm, the goal of mystical practice is to transform an imperfect human personality in the image and likeness of the Absolute Divine Personality. Collaboration of divine (uncreated) and human (created) energies, called synergy, is essential to thesis.

“Deification” can only be a joint creation of a man and God, and in fact, it is the highest form of human creativity, which leads to holiness. Asceticism is a preparatory stage in mystical transformation. Hesychasm can be defined as an integration mystical tradition (Zhirtueva 2017: 55-56). Gregory Palamas, an ideologist of Hesychasm, established a doctrine about “the integral character of knowledge of God”, “participation of body in spiritual life, its capacity for enlightenment and unity with the Divine in a single praying activity, embracing the whole person”.

It is believed that “deification” is equally available to a man and a woman, to a married person and one who took monastic vows. It implies a gradual liberation from soul-destroying passionate states and the acquisition of virtues. At the same time, Gregory Palamas points out that “celibate life is much more feasible and less difficult than married life” (Palama).

Since the Christian mysticism always has a personal character, the true meaning of relationship of a married couple is to overcome a tragic division of genders (“gender” is “пол” (“half”) in Russian), the creation of a single, integral personality. That is why love, as a method of mystical practice, is directed not only at God, but also at one’s neighbor. Love between a man and a woman helps restore the integrity of personality.

If we look at transcendental immanent mysticism of Muslim Sufism, we can say that this teaching also adopts a respectful attitude to a man's personality. Al-Arabi, speaking of a man, compares him with a gem in a signet; a man is nothing but a sign, a mark that the Lord puts on his treasures. He is the highest form of divine manifestation, in which the divine and the created are inseparably united. Moreover, it is the most perfect existence of the Universum. If other forms of existence reflect only one of many attributes of the Absolute, a man synthesizes all forms of divine manifestation.

An important difference between Sufism and other mystical traditions is the fact that most Sufi mystics were married. The Sufis adhered to the idea that marriage was a duty of a religious Muslim, since “a wife is more in need of caring attention, noble wisdom, kindness, generosity, friendliness and participation”. Asceticism and monasticism took no root on the basis of Islam (Andrae 1960).

The Sufis also believed a profane love to be the first stage of developing a mystic love. According to Ibn Al-Arabi, “contemplation of God in a woman is [for a man] the most complete and perfect”. Thus, by loving another person, we learn to see a divine spark in him/her. And only he who has learned to love another person can love God. Jami said “You may try a hundred of different tricks, but only love will set you free. So never run away from love – even love in its worldly guise – for it is a preparation for the higher Truth. How can you read Quran without learning the alphabet first?” (Tiraspol'skiy 2004: 103, 109).

Another difference of Sufism is its perception of God as Femininity, while in other mystical traditions God embodies the masculine aspect, and the soul of the enamored mystic embodies the feminine aspect (Andrae 1960).

CONCLUSIONS.

As we can see, mystical traditions differ from each other by their perceptions of a woman and her role in mystical experience. Matter and woman are united by a common motherly aspect. She is the

Earth, she is the Mother, and she gives birth. Undoubtedly, female energy is one of the strongest energies in the material world. A woman actively involves a man in the material world, first giving birth to him, and then, engaging him in further procreation, which often becomes captivity and bondage for a man. It is no accident that there are religious doctrines, including mystical teachings, which tend to develop the spiritual aspect and neglect the material and female, excluding it from practice. However, according to W. Stace, mystical experience, first of all, is experience of unity. Therefore, from his point of view, mystical “dualism” is inferior mysticism (Stace 1961: 62, 232). This study has led to the conclusion that the concept of the Absolute essence plays a definitive role in the perception of a woman in mystical teaching.

Immanent mysticism considers a woman, above all, quintessence of the material world, expressed in the mother aspect, as one of its most active energies. In immanent mysticism, attitude towards a woman depends on how the mystical tradition solves the issue of a relationship between the material and the ideal. Monistic traditions deny the material and acknowledge its inferiority. It is allowed to use the material only in the context of ascetic practice. Integration traditions recognize the material as a sacred, equivalent part of the Absolute.

Holistic traditions affirm the reality of the non-dual Absolute, which unites material and ideal, male and female into a single whole. Both traditions support the need for a union of matter and spirit, female and male, their active participation in practice.

Transcendental immanent mysticism views a woman as a personality. Only the path of integration, the union of the Creator and creation is possible here, which results in the gracious transformation of the imperfect personality in the image and likeness of the Absolute. A thesis or “deification of creation” is accomplished with the active involvement of the material in mystical practice. Mystical love aimed at achieving the integrity of personality plays an important role in practice.

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RECIBIDO: 4 de enero del 2020.

APROBADO: 20 de febrero del 2020.