

## THE BOILING CIRCLE, THE ROTATING CIRCLE (Two kinds of symbols of the Circle in Islamic Tradition)

### Abstract

In theological sources, many symbols are used to explain the transcendent truths of existence. Among the shapes, the circle has the most use of a symbol which is important for religions, philosophers, and mystics. Usually, when talking about a circle, a round line appears that starts from a point on the surface and ends again at that point. In this way of drawing a circle, the most exterior and superficial epistemological symbols are explained. Contrary, the present article proposes a novel way of drawing a circle, and with this approach, examines some philosophical concepts. We call this drawing “Boiling Circle” because the rays are coming out boiling from the centre. We also have analyzed and introduced a unique example of a mystical-philosophical-religious Architectural building, during which a circular spring has been built. Its water comes out boiling of the centre and fills the five circles within itself and twelve eyes around it. This article begins with the drawing of a boiling circle, explains the philosophical symbols of the boiling circle and boiling spring according to Islamic mysticism, and compares and expresses the differences between the symbols of the two circles.

Keywords: symbol, circle, wisdom, mysticism, spring, boiling circle.

### Introduction

Undoubtedly, the culmination point of knowledge among Islamic mystics and thinkers is the explanation of the relationship between God and the universe. This issue manifests itself among philosophers and mystics in the form of the discussion of “Unity and Plurality”; the shape of the circle plays a substantial role in explaining this issue, but its significance is not limited to the discussion of unity and plurality. Instead, it encompasses a wide range of epistemological and existential topics - from psychology to transcendental theological discussions. The circle is the best symbol of epistemic discussions among the shapes, and it is one of the best ones among all symbols. Among the religions, the circle is the most sacred shape of the world of knowledge, which, in addition to its epistemological role, connects religious teachings with the world of thought and mysticism. Even the world of art

and architecture has used this shape prominently to convey abstract concepts.

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), an influential figure in Islamic mysticism, has written a short work entitled *Inshâ' al-dawâ'ir*, “The Book of the Description of the Encompassing Circles (Ibn Arabi, 1426 AH), which admits in the text of his main book, *The Meccan Illuminations (The Mecca Illuminations)*<sup>1</sup>, part of which was written during the Hajj and the pilgrimage to the Kaaba (Ibn Arabi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 98). His circumambulation around the Kaaba, which takes place in a circle, was probably the main inspiration for writing some content of this work. This eminent mystic says at the beginning of writing the book: “When God showed me the truths of objects, I wanted to draw them in a sensory form so that the audience could easily understand them. I wanted to help anyone who does not have the

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<sup>1</sup> *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*

intellectual power to understand the truth of meaning” (Ibn Arabi, 1336 SH, p. 4).

He then draws some of its teachings in the form of several nested and longitudinal circles in the mentioned work (Ibn Arabi, 1426 AH, p. 149). What can be understood from this point of Ibn Arabi and his other teachings in his works is to use the symbol of the circle to explain the deep mystical concepts.

With this in mind, the most valuable thing is Ibn Arabi’s implied reference to an event called the “incarnation of meaning”. The mystic and the sage reach an understanding of spiritual observations that cannot be explained to the common people; therefore, to explain it to beginners, they use the embodiment of meaning. While this approach means reducing “meaning” to the “body”, it also means elevating the body to the level of meaning. What mystics and philosophers do with drawing symbols, for example, a circle, is what God has done with the creation of the universe. Just as the circle we draw on paper represents the sense we have understood, so the entire universe represents God. Therefore, if drawing the meaning in the form of the circle is a kind of reduction and descent, symbolical reading is also a kind of promotion of the intrinsic value of the material. It both enhances the value of objects and symbols and fills the observer with transcendent meaning.

According to the Islamic sages, the entire world is a symbol. So the main work of man is reconciling the symbol with the owner of it. The understanding of symbols is like a ladder that elevates beginners to the world of meaning. Research on symbols and one of the most widely used of them, the symbol of the circle, is a way to gain a deeper understanding of valuable wisdom and mystical teachings.

Research Method: Our method is a combination of an analytical literature review and field

observation review.

### How is the Circle Drawn?

The key to understanding the many allegories of the circle and the circularity of many facts of existence is paying attention to how the circle is drawing and what philosophical and mystical interpretations justify this way of drawing? Because without paying attention to this point, the meanings of many theological and mystical issues will be neglected. As a result, the main mediator in the complete comparison between the symbol (= circle) and the owner of the symbol (= epistemological issues) will be lost.

We seem to be in the habit of drawing the circle customarily. We draw a rotating line with a compass or any other device and assume the centre and consider the circumference of the centre to be real. In this method, we place the tip of the pen on the surface of the paper and continue drawing the line until it returns to the first point. In comparison, the actual procedure for drawing a circle is the opposite. The circle is drawn from the centre to the environment. In both mystical and philosophical perspectives, the point draws the line, and the line draws the shape. The pivotal matter in the drawing the shape of a circle is the centre point of the circle. So the radius and circumference are nothing but the effect of the centre of the circle. If we draw an infinite line from the centre, the shape of a circle is created. In this drawing of the circle, we should not touch the circumference of the circle at all. Still, the circle’s circumference will appear automatically from the infinite manifestation of the radius to the sides. So the circumference of the circle is entirely hypothetical, it will exist only by considering the radius, and it has no existence of its own. (Bābāei, 1398 SH, p. 158).

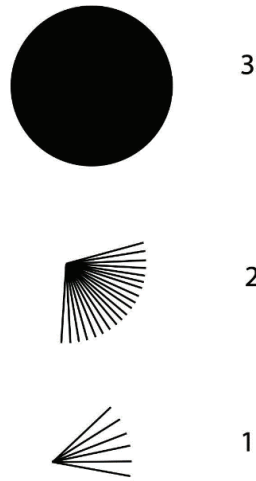


Figure 1. This figure shows the quality of the circle drawing; the order of drawing is from number one to number three. The beginning of drawing a circle is a point in the centre, and by repeating the manifestation of the point outwards, the environment is created. What is seen in number three as the environment results from the manifestation of the radii, and we do not draw the environment.

That is if we draw outward lines from the centre of the circle, which is a point, in all possible directions, the circumference of the circle will appear, while there is no circumference. All that is are the radii manifested from the centre of the circle (Figure 1.). These radii take their credit and existence from the centre, and if the centre of the circle is destroyed, all the radii and environments will be destroyed simultaneously. It seems that the point of the great mystic, Ibn Torkeh, also refers to the same meaning when he said: “The point is the place where the environment sits and is located, that is, the existence of the environment is by the point, and the circumference is the expansion form of the point” (Ibn Torkeh, 1375 SH, p. 103). Ibn Torkeh considers this subtle mystical allusion worthy of further reflection. He uses the word “understanding” to emphasize his words much more. “Fa’Efhām” “Please contemplates”. In Arabic philosophical and mystical texts, the term “Fa’Efhām” is used whenever the subject has a special delicacy and contains a profound issue.

So the circumference seems to exist; just as we turn the fiery ring around our head, it looks circular while it is not. It is our delusion that dic-

tates the circularity of fire in space. At any given moment, our hand exerts a force on the centre of the fire ring; As a result, a circular fire ring is seen. It is with this understanding that many mystical and philosophical teachings such as the relationship between the Supreme Being and the universe, the meaning of the connection of the human soul with its forces, the relationship between unity and plurality, the meaning of appearance and interior, the meaning of the first and the last, etc., will become clearer. The mystical point of Sheikh Mahmoud Shabestari indicates that this other form (of the Almighty) is all from your delusion; Just as a point is seen as a circle from the speed and intensity of its motion (Shabestari, 1382 SH, p. 8).

So, here, the drawing of a circle in which the radii come out of the centre in the form of a boil is called a “boiling circle” to distinguish it from another kind of drawing of a circle that relies on the linear drawing of a ring.

#### A Boiling Circle Spring in Islamic Architecture and Its Symbols

The reason that Ibn Arabi uses the symbol of

the circle to explain mystical teachings (according to the introduction) is the same reason that

our architects use to convey philosophical and mystical concepts in a circular source.



Figure 2. A boiling circle/spring in the tomb of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili. These photos were taken by visiting the site in person and with the help of the cultural heritage expert of the collection (Mr Tohid Ghavām).

Designed in the best possible condition in the heart of the tomb of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili, the spring has been supported by enormous theological and mystical meanings. In the courtyard of the World Collection of the tomb, there is a pond or circular spring with twelve surrounding eyes in a circular environment, which has gathered some meaningful symbols in one place (Fi-

gure 2. and 3.). The reason for the connection between the symbol and its meaning is an extract from the significant theological, mystical, religious, and political-religious teachings of the Safavid period. The spring is located in the main courtyard, and recently, a new example of it has been prototyped near the main work (Figure 4.).



Figure 3. Another Figure of the boiling circle/spring in the tomb of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili.



Figure 4. A new example of the fountain and boiling circle/spring of the tomb of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili.

The boiling point of the spring has been placed carefully in the middle of the circle. The ma-

nifestation of the mentioned circle starts from the centre; Undoubtedly, if the surface of the spring

floor is worked uniformly and does not have a slope, its boiling will be circular; Which can associate the meaning of the boiling of the universe from the divine essence. The existence of the universe with the manifestation of the Supreme Being from within the universe has a substantial connection with the verse of the Qur'an: "The heavens and the earth were closed up, but we have opened them, and we have made of water everything living".<sup>2</sup>

There is a significant relationship between the "Fatg = Expanding and opening" of the heavens and the earth with the reviving of everything with water. In this verse, immediately after mentioning the "Expanding and opening" of the heavens and the earth, the term "reviving with water" is used. The word "Khalq = Creation", in Arabic, means the opening of a bud. The term "creation of the heavens and the earth" is used in many other verses. Thus, the Fatg means the opening of the accumulated existence. The radii and the circumference are created by splitting and opening the centre, like an open bud, in a circle. In this verse, "Ratgh and Fatgh" have semantic and symbolic connections with the boiling of water, spring, boiling, and the manifestation of the circle from the inside out, with the manifestation of the Supreme Being, and with the elaboration of brief collective existence. Indeed, the boiling of springs and water from the heart of the earth is an example of the manifestation of the existence of the One Supreme Being from the position of his essence and collective existence and the elaboration of the creatures with this manifestation.

According to Mullāsadrā (1571-1636, lived in the Safavid period) interpretation of the verse "Kānatā Ratqan Fa'fataqnāhomā= These two were together, and we expanded them", Ratq refers to the "unity, undifferentiated and, the summary fashion of the existence of a pure = simple unit" and "Fatq" refers to the differentiation of this single existence in the form of the creation of the heavens and the earth, intellect,

soul and... (Mullāsadrā, 1981, vol. 6, p. 7). The phrase "Hayy=living" in verse has a semantic commonality with the phrase of self-subsisting = Qāyem (Hayy-e Gāyem) used in Illumination wisdom about human truth; A life with which the land of human existence and consequently the human body acquires life and understanding; Once again, this concept is also related to the name of the "Hayye- Gayyum = self-subsisting" of the Supreme Being, and everyone's existence and life depend on him; and what is meant by water, is the emanation of existence to all creatures. The water that keeps everything alive is the mercy of the Almighty that "encompasses everything". Thus, considering the differences in degrees, the life-giving material water, the living light of man, and the living light of the supremacy of the Supreme Being are semantically related to the difference between "symbol and symbol owner".

The mentioned spring is located in front of the central courtyard, and if it is filled with water will also act as a mirror in which the photo of the main building will fall. Thus, one of the most valuable allegories for explaining the relationship between the Supreme Being and the universe, or for explaining significant theological and mystical teachings, is the symbol of the Mirror and the trinity of "the owner of the image, the mirror, and the image." The author wrote a book on this subject entitled *Infinite Symbols of Mirror* (Bābāei, 1391 SH).

According to the mentioned above circular spring:

1. This spring is reminiscent of a Quranic verse from Surah Al-Baqarah: "When Moses asked for water for his people, we said to him, hit the rock with your cane! Suddenly, twelve springs of water boiled from the rock, and each group knew their drinking-place" (Al-Baqarah. 60).
2. On the other hand, the number twelve this spring refers to the religious beliefs of the Iranians, who are the Shiites of the Twelve Imāms. There is a significant relationship be-

<sup>2</sup> Anbiya(prophets), 30.

tween the three interpretations of sainthood (Velāyat), prophethood and leadership (Imāmate); Velāyat has a unique feature that both other phrases lack; because, unlike the other two phrases, velayat is a divine attribute; That is, God is the guardian, but not the prophet and the Imām (Āmoli, 1352 SH, p. 180). According to Seyyed Haidar Āmoli, the famous Shiite mystic, the existence of both the prophet and the Imām is the existence of the guardianship of the Almighty. The central point of the circle of divine command is the rays from which prophecy and the extension of these rays draw the Imāmate (Āmoli, 1382 SH, p. 31).

3. The mentioned points in the interpretation of the spring are also related to the concept of guardianship, prophethood, and its relation to the Imāmate; According to the Twelve Imāms Shiite belief, the immediate successor of the Prophet (PBUH) is Imām Ali (AS); and this point and the content of the mentioned spring, once again evokes a meaningful relationship between Imām Ali and Prophet Moses (PBUH), which is the famous hadith of “Manzelat”. The Prophet (PH) said to Ali: “Your relationship with me is the same as that of Aaron with Moses, except that there is no prophet after me” (Colini, 1429 AH, vol. 15, p. 262).
4. In some mystical sources, a sermon called “Bayān” attributed to Imām Ali (AS) has been narrated, during which he says: “...I am the stone from which twelve springs it was split...” (Āmoli, 1422 AH, vol. 1, p. 215, footnote).
5. In Ibn Arabi’s mystical school, the circular manifestation of Almighty is drawn in the form of a “boiling circle”. These circles are formed, in undifferentiated mode, in three nested circles, and, in differentiated mode, in five nested circles, which are known as Five Presences (Al-Hazarāt Al-Khamseh) (Jāmi, 1370 SH, p. 181). The drawing of the twelve eyes around the Five Presences formed

around the centre of the circle signifies that the twelve supreme leaders are constantly benefiting from the table of divine spirituality.

### The Symbols of the Boiling Circle

In this opportunity, we will mention only ten of the symbols of the circle in wisdom and mysticism:

#### 1. The circle is the manifestation of the point

The circle, this analysis considered, is nothing but a point; the point that appears around its axis and with this effect creates its surrounding pluralities; that is why the mystic of Hamedān says: “The circle is not more than one point, from which, hundreds of circles are brought out” (Hamedāni, 1370 SH, p. 178).

This point is one of the most beautiful allegories of the relationship between the Supreme Being and the universe. According to the doctrine of Islamic philosophy and mysticism, God is the centre of the circle of existence, and creatures are the same rays or even environments that appear with the manifestation of the Supreme Being (Sabzevāri, 1360 SH, p. 615). In the importance of this symbol and the relation of the point with the circle, it is enough to mention that: Some mystics have interpreted the position of the Supreme Being as a point (Dehdār, 1375 SH, p. 172).

#### 2. The circle is the symbol of Existence Appearing as Non-Existence

According to Islamic mysticism and wisdom, the Supreme Being is a real being who is hidden from the intensity of his appearance, and because of this secrecy, does not seem to exist for the superficial eyes. For this reason, the status of his essence is interpreted as the essential phrase of “*Hast'e'Nist'Nema*” (= Existence appearing as non-existence). Likewise, the truths of the universe, which are his manifestations, are interpreted as “*Nist'e'Hast'Nemā*” (= Non-existence ap-

pearing as Existence).

These beings are subordinate to the Supreme Being and do not exist independently of themselves.

In the same way, in that ordinary drawing of the circle, the environment is “*Nist'e'Hast'Nemā*”, and the centre of the circle is “*Hast'e'N-ist'Nemā*”. Having said that, these beings are not pure non-beings; rather, they exist only in terms of the independent existence to which they depend. More importantly, the circle’s circumference exists only in terms of the existence of the centre and its whole identity. In religious texts and also in the final stage of Islamic philosophy, the whole world is mentioned as Verses of the Almighty. Because the identity of the verse means: that it is something that shows another and is not seen by itself. Just like a mirror, when you look at it, you do not see the mass of the mirror, but you see the image inside the mirror.

The empirical scholars of the modern world often use the example of “carpenter and table” or “watch and watchmaker” to cite an example to illustrate God’s relationship. In contrast, these examples are rejected based on Islamic tradition. In today’s empirical science, based on these two allegories, if they also believe in the existence of God, then God is only the creator of the universe, just as the carpenter that is the creator of the table. Here God is only the Creator and not the Preserver, and the creatures have an independent existence for themselves. But according to Islamic tradition, among objects, circle and mirror allegories are more appropriate allegories. In these two cases, God is both the creator of the universe and their protector, and this creation and protection happen every moment.

Another instance in which a circular relationship can be assumed is the relationship of the “I” or the human soul to its forces, which we will explain in another title. But we turn to another significant feature of man’s relationship with his forces. In the school of Ibn Arabi and Mullāsadrā, man is the supreme example (symbol) of the Almighty; (Mullāsadrā, 1354 SH, pp. 495-496,

Mullāsadrā, 1360 SH, pp. 26, 367, Mullāsadrā, 1354 SH, p. 487). Thus, in the realm of human existence, the relation of the human soul to its forces is the relation of the Supreme Being to the universe; Our body is pure dependent on our soul, and the soul is inherently needless of the body, But the soul does not appear to our senses and eyes; And what we know about ourselves in the first stage is our physical body and forces; Therefore, the soul in this image is “Hast'e'N-ist'Nema” and our body is also “Nist'e'Hast'Nema”; and does not exist; Not that it is pure non-existence, but in fact, it has benefited from existence only by relation to the human soul; Like a shadow that exists only in the presence of light. In the same way, the universe does not exist; and indeed, it exists with regard to the Supreme Being.

### 3. Circle and the names of Apparent, Inward, First, and Last

In the circle, the environment is the manifestation of the centre, and the centre is an inward aspect of the environment. The environment is only the appearance of the centre and has no independence from itself. As in Islamic mysticism, the Supreme Being is the interior of creation, and creation is the appearance of the Supreme Being. Appearance is the appearance of the interior, and the interior is the interior of the appearance (Ibn Arabi, 1972-1991, vol. 2, p. 427; Āmoli, 1422 AH, vol. 5, p. 262). In the symbol of a circle, the central point is the interior of the radii, and the radius and the circumference are the appearances of the point (Hamedāni, 1370 SH, p. 162).

Also, in the symbol of the circle, wherever we touch the circle, it is both the first and the last; And this point is both the beginning and the end; That is, here the first is the same as the end, and the end is the same as the first, and every Eternity (Abad= eternity without end) is the same as Eternity (Azal= eternity without beginning) (Shabestari, 1382 SH, p. 9; Faraghāni, 1379 SH, p. 532; Āmoli, 1422 AH, vol. 5, p. 261).

First, End, Outward, and Inward are the

names of the Supreme Being. Therefore, the circle is a symbol of God in this respect.

4. The ratio of the centre to all radii is equal

In the symbol of the circle, the ratio of the centre of the circle is equal to all the radii. Also, in contrast to appearance, which indicates that the circumference of a circle surrounds the centre of the circle, it is the centre of the circle surrounding the radii and the apparent circumference.

Since in the spherical image of the circle, the Supreme Being over everything is the environment, the ratio of all truths in each round of the environment to the supreme Being and the ratio of the Supreme Being to all the truths of that order is equal (Baqli, 1428 AH, p 342). This is also true of the existence of the Supreme Being with creatures. Hence, in the Qur'an, one of the names of God is "Environment".

In the universe, every creature is a radius toward the centre of the universe, God. This statement has very high existential, epistemological and educational values. Islamic sources state that: "There are as many ways to reach God Almighty as there are creatures". All of the ways are right, not in every path but if they are facing the centre.

5. The centre of the circle is present in all radii

The centre of the circle is present in all radii because the interior is always present in appearance. The external identity is the identity of complete dependence on the interior and the emergence of the interior. Therefore, appearance without interior does not make sense. The appearance is the appearance of the interior, and the interior is the interior of the appearance. There is a "connecting unity" between the appearance, the inward, and the first and the last in a more philosophical sense. If there is no unity, nothing can be said. If there is no unity, there will be no sentence or statement to say or write. The sentence is made by establishing a kind of union between the subject and the predicate. The circle

always has a centre, radius, and circumference; Existential precedence is with the centre.

In the same way, the Supreme Being is present in all quiddities; and it is in his presence that quiddities are made possible. It is stated in Nahj al-Balaghah: "he is with everything, not that it is associated with them, and it is other than everything, not that it is separated from them" (Sharif, 1414 AH, p. 40). One of the most significant points of Islamic tradition, or any believer, is the presence of God in all aspects of existence; no place in the universe is free from the existence of the Supreme Being. Our soul is present in all our forces and even in all our physical organs, without the issue of incarnation.

6. The circle is the symbol of unity - plurality relationship

According to Ibn Arabi, "Every line that leaves the centre of the circle and reaches the environment is equal to its counterparts that go out of that point and reach the environment". Although these lines are proliferative, the focal point is inherently the same and never multiplies (Jahāngiri, 1375 SH, p. 51). So if the radii and the environment are the manifestations of the centre, in terms of the centre, unity will be necessary; And in terms of radii, which is the manifested face of the centre, will be multiplied; This symbol is a symbol of the connection between unity and plurality in the circle of existence and the relation of creatures to the Supreme Being. "Unity is the interior of plurality, and plurality is the appearance of unity, and the truth is the same in both. The 'being' seems imaginary and multiple, as the circumference of a circle looks like.

7. The point causes the appearance of the environment, and the environment causes the recognition of the circle

We have mentioned in the drawing of the circle that point is the cause of the existence of the environment, and the environment is the cause of the recognition of the point. So, the environment is both The Real (Hagg) and creature (Khalg),



and the point is The Real and creature. From the point and the central circle that appears outwards, circles are continuously and uninterruptedly created, the outer circle of which is the manifestation (Shahādat) of the first circle, and with this manifestation, the inner circle will disappear; and here come the two key concepts of the Qur'an, namely, "the unseen (Geyb) and the obvious (Shahādat)" and even the interpretation of the veil (Hijāb) and the verse (Āyeh) (Ibn Arabi, 1972-1991, vol. 3, p. 363). With this interpretation, God gives creatures the existence, and the creatures give God the appearance.

8. *The circle is the symbol of the "Indivisible Nature" (= Basit Al-hagige)*

According to Islamic scholars, especially Mullāsadrā, among the shapes, the circle is the most indivisible one; and other shapes are made with a circle (Mullāsadrā, 1368 SH, vol. 8, p. 250, vol. 4, p. 166). Ibn Arabi also believes: the circle is the first and most complete shape (Ibn Arabi, 1378 SH, p. 100). And therefore, in this respect and among the shapes, it is the closest shape to explain God's relationship with the universe; the culmination of the explanation of this view in Islamic tradition and mysticism is known as the "Indivisible Nature" principle, which has many effects and consequences. According to this rule, everything that is simple and indivisible (= Basit) is everything, and there is none of them. (Mullāsadrā, 1981, vol. 6, p. 110, Mullāsadrā, 1417 AH, vol. 1, p. 47).

Since the human soul is the supreme symbol of the Almighty, this is also true of the relation of the human soul to its forces, that is, the human soul is all forces and is none of them; This rule is also interpreted as "the soul is in its unity, all forces" (Mullāsadrā, 1981, vol. 8, p. 51). In other words, the circle is the collective existence of radii, just as the Almighty is the collective existence of all the perfections of things, and our soul is the collective existence of all subordinate forces; And this collective existence does not mean the accumulation of plurals; Rather, because of

indivisibility and abstraction, all reality exists in the ultimate intensity of presence.

It was pointed out that the relationship that the environment and the rays have with the centre of the circle is the relation that our body has with the forces and finally with our "I" or our "soul"; All our forces gather in our most secret and most hidden being; Our "I" is our essence; The manifestation of our "I" in the direction of our various actions and attributes are the same attributes that are realized by our forces. The most apparent aspect of these forces is our five senses. The end of these sensory forces is the body, which is nothing but the pod and the end of the forces, and it has no role in the truth of our identity. Just as the circumference of a circle is nothing but the end of radii, so the body in the longitudinal direction is nothing but the end of our forces; in this sense, the real and spiritual form of our existence, as a symbol, is like a circle that appears outward from the centre. By maintaining order and observing differences, our existence and this kind of manifestation of our self is also a symbol of the manifestation of the essence of God in the three levels of existence. This point is clearly stated by Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), Ibn Arabi of the West, and his Followers:

This pure and straightforward Being is altogether in all things and altogether outside all things. Hence a certain doctor says: God is a circle, whose centre is everywhere, and His circumference nowhere.

A certain wise theologian says that God, regarding His Godhead, is like a vast circle, of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference, nowhere (Inge, 1904, pp.78, 82).

9. *The centre of the circle is black (and dark)*

Black is the last colour of mystics. The ultimate colour that mystics report in their observations is black, But the black light. It is better to refer to it as the paradoxical interpretation of "black light". Just as our eyes look at the sun and are blackened by the intensity of its light, so the

light of reason sees black as it approaches the perception of the divine essence.

This is also true of the human soul; Human actions and forces come from the manifestation of the soul. According to Meister Eckhart, “the essence of the soul is dark” (Kākāei, 1385 SH, p. 314; Eckhart, 1941, p. 174). And this darkness is the unity with the Absolute Being, which is one with the essence of the soul.

Meanwhile, Eckhart says that “being is a circle for God,” and he calls the soul a “circle of the world, and he calls on humans to be a circle ... filled with the spirit of the Lord”. He says, “Heaven constantly runs in a circle; therefore it has to be round so that it can run more swiftly in a circle. For it, bestows on all creatures their being and their lives” (Kieckhefer, 1978, p. 215).

#### 10. The circle and the trinities of the wisdom

From the manifestation of the centre, the trinity of “centre, radius, and circumference” is obtained, which, of course, is in the same longitudinal relation as pure unity; In Islamic tradition and mysticism, this trinity is a symbol of the three states (sha’n) of actions, attributes and essence of the Almighty, and within man, it is a symbol of the trinity of human forces: the senses, intellect, and soul. In Islamic tradition and mysticism, since there is a belief in a purely material being and a purely abstract being, and there must be an intermediary between the abstract and the material, then the principle is based on “triple” not doubles. The trinity of God’s states (actions, attributes, and essence) is the axis of these trinities. In an independent book, nearly a hundred longitudinal trinities are mentioned in this case, and their relationship is explained by the fact that the relationship is all nested circles (Bābāei, 1397 SH, p. 47). In each of these trinities, a circle can be assumed that the order of appearance is like the circumference, the middle order is like the radius, and the inner order is like the centre of the circle.

#### The Symbols of the Rotating Circle

A rotating circle means one whose centre and radius are not taken into account, And only the circumference of the circle is considered. In this respect, the circle has been used symbolically, which has significant differences from the symbols of the boiling circle.

##### 1. The symbol of evolution

The circle of existence is complete when the descent and ascension are complete. According to some mystics, including Ibn Arabi and the followers of his school, intellect is the first and last point of this circle, and man is the fruit of the tree of existence because man is in the last link of the hierarchy of existence. It is perfected when it reaches the intellect (Nasafi, 1386 SH, p. 127).

##### 2. The symbol of lover and beloved

According to mystics, the lover and the beloved form a circle divided into two halves by a line. If that line disappears when the lover’s attributes appear in the attributes of the beloved, the circle will become one (Irāqi, 1363 SH, p. 391).

The reason is that the lover and the beloved give meaning to each other, and the attribute of a lover is born in the lover’s existence, in the presence of the lover, and vice versa. This symbol is true not only for the relation of lover and the beloved but also for any duality that gives meaning to each other.

##### 3. Ascent and descent arcs

The essence of the Supreme Being is, without any limitation, the source of the emission of beings, and the existence that emanates from its essence has a hierarchy, and every being has it to the extent of its capacity. From the highest to the lowest, the hierarchy of the universe eventually ends in a pure power (Hyle). In the ascending series, existence begins at the lower stage and ascends to the higher stage, leading to a being

that is not superior to that being. The circles of the grace of existence are connected to each other (Mullāsadrā, 1366 SH, vol.3, p. 435).

#### 4. Organizing the matter and returning of it

“God Almighty organizes (Yudabberu) the matter from the heavens to the earth. Then the matter returns on a day which, according to you, is a thousand years”. Thus, the matter of continuous “existence” is a circle of spiritual and physical truths and arises from those two pleasant and original forms (Hassanzādeh, 1378 SH, p. 671).

#### 5. The symbol of walking around (Tawāf) the beloved and the god

Rotation around someone is a symbol of his popularity and deity; this statement is not only symbolized in the pilgrimage to the House of God in Mecca, but also the case of any deep attachment to something or someone; Attar says in this regard: “Whoever revolves in this circle makes a point of his heart a mirror of life. When he sees the face of the soul (Jān) through the mirror of the heart, he makes his soul the mirror of the beloved (Jānān)” (Attār, 1384 SH, p. 243).

#### 6. The symbol of wandering and vain life

Even sometimes, those who have spoken with a negative view and have not realized the great secret of existence and creation have interpreted the philosophy of existence as a “circle of wandering”.

In the circle in which we come and go, there is neither the beginning nor the end. One cannot speak truthfully about this meaning: where does this come from and where does it go (Khayyām, n.d, Rubā'yyāt N. 33)

In contrast to the first group, mystics such as Hāfez do not consider the universe to be in vain and consider its secret to be discovered through love. Instead, these groups of Sages with all the importance they attach to reason, find it confused in the circle and realm of existence: “Wise people are the compass point of the circle of existence, but love knows that they are wandering in

this circle” (Hāfez, 1385 SH, p. 323).

The purpose of existence is to find that central point, but this is not possible with reason; anyone who has tried to discover the purpose of existence in this way is like a wandering circle (Kermāni, 1366 SH, p. 123).

#### 7. The symbol of time

In Arabic and Persian language, the expression “Dāyere= circle” is rooted in “Dowr (= the round), Dowrān (= Rotation, Era, Turning), And Dowrān is also used to mean times. “Someone’s Dowrān” means: commensurate with his purpose, age, time, etc. Therefore, all interpretations related to sphere rotation, period, rotation of time, wheel, rotation of days, etc., have deep meanings with the circle. We will only briefly point out that sometimes mystics create a relationship between “Dāyere = circle” with “Day-yār = homeowner”, and they liken the universe to a circular house and land inhabited by the beloved everywhere. Note that this house is both the house of the horizon, the world of existence, and the house of the soul, the world of the inside. So the only inhabitant in this house is beloved. According to Khajoo Kermani in mystical and literary sources: “If you are not our beloved, tell me who is and where is he? Who lives in this circle beside you?” (Dehkhodā, 1383 SH, p. 1375).

In Islamic tradition, time is a function of existence; if existence is explained in a circle - and all our symbols refer to it - then the explanation of the truth of time will also be circular. In the boiling circle, apparent time is the result of the boiling of the centre of the universe and, consequently, of the boiling of the Eternal (Sarmad), and in fact, time is the rays of Eternal; and in the rotating circle, apparent time is the result of the rotation of the universe.

#### 8. The Symbol of many temporal and spatial phenomena

The movement of the heavens and the spheres is a circle, and the reason for the existence of the

creator in them is movement; because it is obvious that every mover needs a stimulus that does not move (Râz, 1363 SH, p. 14).

Beyond this argument, in the traditional view, the rotation of the sky, the rotation of the planets, the shape of the sky, the rotation of night and day, the rotation of the month and the year, the motion of the earth, birth and death, the return to the original self, etc. are depicted in a circle.

### Conclusion

In Islamic Tradition, the symbol of the circle has been used to explain the most significant epistemological issues. A contemplation on the above topics demonstrates that two significantly different types of the use of the circle can be identified, and many epistemological topics can be explained accordingly:

1. If we emphasize the beginning of the circle from the centre, the circle starts from the manifestation of the centre and forms the radii, and at the same time, the “environment” is formed and appears by itself; We have nothing to do with the circle environment, and in fact, the circle environment does not exist in a certain range and is only hypothetical. This way of drawing the circle contains many epistemological concepts, the most significant of which we point out: “The manifestation of God, the existence of creatures by God and the appearance of God with creatures, the name of appearance and interior and the first and last name of the Almighty.” The equal relation of all creatures to God, the presence of the Supreme Being with all creatures, the explanation of the relation of unity and plurality, the explanation of the significant rule of the simplicity of truth, the explanation of the essential trinities of the world of knowledge, the explanation of the relationship of the soul with his forces., and...

We pointed to a practical example of this way of drawing a circle in Iranian architecture

and some of its symbolic meanings in the form of a symbol of a boiling spring.

2. If we emphasize the circumference of the circle and consider the rotating circle, then the circle is the symbol of perfection, the relationship between lover and beloved, the arc of ascent and the arc of descent, the order of the matter from heaven and the return of the divine order, the return of everything to his origin, it will be the symbol for many of the physical, temporal, and natural phenomena of the universe, and even the symbol for confusion and emptiness.

Comparing these two modes of drawing a circle, it becomes clear that the boiling circle, as it boils from the depths, deals more with the more profound concepts of existence, with more abstract concepts and relations, and the rotating circle with the outer concepts. It is more relevant, general, and material.

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