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جامعة عين شمس

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the light of Abdelwahab Elmesseri's epistemological paradigm of Immanence and Transcendence

Mai Muhammad Abbas

Abstract:

Abdelwahab Elmesseri (1938-2008) is an Egyptian critic who has developed what he calls an epistemological paradigm of Immanence and Transcendence. Based on the anti-foundationalist modern theories is the idea of Immanence where the divine is manifested in the human and both of them are again manifested in nature/matter resulting in a pantheistic existence where dichotomies such as divine vs. human or human vs. matter are obliterated. According to these theories, there is no independent human space, only a denial of the human's ability to transcend his material nature. On the other hand, Elmessiri's utmost point of referentiality is Ontological hermeneutics that incorporates macro narratives in view of a grand theory of human existence. The Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) is best remembered by his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This novel is to be studied in the light of the above mentioned epistemological paradigm of Elmessiri. The protagonist Dorian Gray epitomizes Elmessiri's notion of Immanence where "Pleasure is the only thing worth having a theory about" and where "Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval" (Wilde, 64). In presenting the final mutilation of the picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde shares Elmessiri's ideology of transcendence, and the inability of natural sciences to encompass the phenomenon of human nature.

Abdelwahab Elmesseri (1938-2008) is a professor of English and Comparative Literature and an Egyptian thinker. He obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. from Rutgers College, New Jersey, in 1969. He has written widely on secularism, prejudice, Western culture, and contemporaneity. Elmesseri develops what he calls an epistemological paradigm of *immanence* and *transcendence* (other words for materialism and idealism). The term "immanence" implies that divinity is existent in all things. On the other hand, transcendence assumes that the divine being is distinct from the natural world. Other western theorists who share Elmesseri's position and reach beyond the transcendence principle are Aristotle, Kant, and the Frankfurt School theorists, along with theorists like Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman, Christopher Lasch, Noam Chomsky, Charles Taylor, and others. On the other hand, another group of theorists who adopt the immanence paradigm includes Giordano Bruno, Baruch Spinoza, and Hegel. The shades of differences to be discerned among these philosophers are vast, but highlighting them would go beyond the scope of this paper.

However, the main difference between Elmesseri and his Western counterparts—especially the Frankfurt School theorists—is that while Elmesseri viewed the problems of modernity as various manifestations and expressions of one phenomenon, Western philosophers dealt with each expression as an independent phenomenon. In other words, instead of a reductionist paradigm, Elmesseri strived to reach a generative, complex, analytical paradigm that incorporates not only economic, political, and social dimensions but also unique cultural and cognitive contexts. Thus, Elmesseri's distinctive paradigm attempts to comprise and synthesize all the seemingly different and even contradictory themes and theses of modern philosophies.

Indeed, Elmesseri emphasizes the humanist aspect of the philosophical concept of transcendentalism and condemns what he considers the anti-human materialist philosophical perception of immanence. However, whereas Elmesseri presents the dichotomy of transcendence and immanence, he also manages to develop this dichotomy into a unique epistemological paradigm that resists the hegemony of the western critical methodology. Elmesseri constructs an independent and unbiased alternative centered on the particularity of one's own social and ideological context. From this perspective, Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is to be studied in the light of Elmesseri's different epistemological paradigms of immanence and transcendence. The paper will attempt to answer this central question: how might a reading of the novel from within al- Elmesseri's peculiar view of the conflict between the two paradigms add more meaning to such a widely studied text like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Elmesseri's distinct paradigm is three dimensional: firstly, the paradigm illustrates human's relation to nature/matter (Note that according

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
in the light of Abdelwahab Elmesseri's
epistemological paradigm of Immanence
and Transcendence

Mai Muhammad Abbas

to Elmesseri, the term *matter* is synonymous to the term *nature* because, as Elmesseri argues, *matter* is the raw substance that constructs *nature* in the Western immanent view of the cosmic order). Secondly, the paradigm introduces the telos of human existence; thirdly, the paradigm underlines the utmost point of referentiality (Elmesseri, *Difa an Alinsan* 315-316).

According to Elmesseri, the difference between the two epistemological paradigms of immanence and transcendence is based on humans' relation to nature/matter. Based on the anti-foundationalist theories that refer to the liquidity and relativism of post-modern thought is the idea of immanence, which means a world-view that lacks a transcendent approach. This world-view claims that the divine dwells within the human, and both of them again dwell within nature/matter resulting in one unity, that is, a pantheistic existence where dichotomies such as divine vs. human or human vs. matter are obliterated. According to these theories, there is no independent human space, only a denial of the human's ability to transcend his material nature. In other words, the concept of immanence implicates the disappearance of "the split between subject and object, inherent in human consciousness and irremediable in the Cartesian opposition of man ... to a surrounding world" (Arendt 312)¹.

Thus, the presence or the absence of *a space* between nature/matter on the one hand and the human on the other becomes the primary distinction between the immanent and transcendental paradigms. The disappearance of such a space means that the human's existence particularity is wiped out and that the laws which are applied to nature/matter are equally applied to human beings. The world is viewed as having no discontinuities; it is self-sufficient and self-determining. Similarly, the human is an autonomous individual who sees himself as "the place of immanence who cannot tolerate any limitations, restrictions or responsibilities and so is incapable of attaining delayed gratification"² (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 156). This individual, according to Elmesseri, lives according to the narrow materialistic and utilitarian rules of his society, not being able to internalize any ideals that might help him to transcend such narrowness (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 156). Roxanne Euben uses the same metaphor of *spaciality* when he refers to the "foreclosure" caused by the rationalist denial of *meaning*:

Yet it is particularly striking that these voices share a critique of modernity as a condition of crisis and paralysis occasioned by the rationalist rejection of foundations that transcend human existence and power. Contrary to Enlightenment aspirations of opening up the world to new forms of knowledge, experience,

and politics, in these critiques, there is a sense that the organizing principle of modernity is not enlargement but foreclosure. Here emerges the anxiety that the achievements of rationalization may have been bought at too high a price, and that rationalism has been the midwife not of maturity but crisis. (Euben 27)

Transcendentalism does not adopt the notion of pantheism (Elmesseri, *Dirasat Marifeyya* 15). The idea of transcendence, oppositely, adopts the presence of a space between nature/matter and the human, enabling the human to transcend his/her material nature. In other words, within the transcendent framework, God does not dwell within humans or nature; instead, an individual is burdened by the responsibilities of his human identity:

We can place the "human" or "divine" tendency in opposition to the "embryonic" tendency. The former tends towards a transcendence of nature/matter and the world of materialism and reification and towards a separation between parts and whole, individual and community, man and nature, creator and creator. It tends towards maintaining a distance between them, which means that the world is characterized by a degree of duality. It also means that when man is separated from the whole, and nature, and his creator, he becomes a free and responsible being who accepts boundaries and the burden of consciousness and the affirmation of human identity. (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 255)

The difference between the two paradigms is also based on the telos of human existence. According to Elmesseri, within the paradigm of immanence, the telos of human existence depends on two metaphors, both of them express the material view of the world. The first metaphor is the "mechanical" view of the world; the second is the "organic." Although the two metaphors may appear to be different, they, in fact, resemble each other to a great extent (Elmesseri, *Al-Lugha wa al-Majāz* 28-29). The mechanical view of the world is espoused by a lot of thinkers. According to Spinoza, man is likened to a stone that is powerfully thrown into the air. The stone thinks it controls its path, yet the truth is that it moves mechanically with no purpose. According to Newton, man is likened to a clock that has been designed and then forgotten by God. The clock, like the stone, conforms with the technical laws of science. Locke likened the mind to a blank sheet that works like an engine. The engine collects and combines simple ideas in order to form the complex ideas of the human mind.

In addition to this mechanical view, the organic view is also adopted by a group of theorists. For Darwin, the world is not a machine; it is rather a jungle moderated by the invisible hand of physical power where the survival

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
in the light of Abdelwahab Elmesseri's
epistemological paradigm of Immanence
and Transcendence

Mai Muhammad Abbas

is only for the fittest. Freud likened the human being to an animal who is driven by his biological instincts (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 139). As a result of these mechanical and organic views, the world becomes telos-free; that is to say, the world is seen as moving in a meaningless spiral motion. Instead, the immanent paradigm announces the accumulation of knowledge and the comprehensive control of human resources as the only potential telos of human existence (Elmesseri, *Al-Lugha wa al-Majaz* 36).

This idea of progress as synonymous to full control, perfect harmony and earthly felicity leads to what Elmesseri names the end of history (Elmesseri, *Dirasat Marifeyya* 91). A clock or a fly has no history; their lives are composed of meaningless mechanical events. On the other hand, the concept of transcendence denies the ability of a full control of the human phenomenon. That is to say, since the human phenomenon is not only material but also spiritual, then a full control of such a phenomenon is impossible. The alternative is a process of a relative interpretation (Ijtihad) of the world that differs from the material relativity in that it assumes the presence of an absolute outside the laws of nature, i.e., the world of the divine. The telos of human existence becomes to transcend the world's materiality and to attempt reaching the world of the divine. According to the materialist world view, the most significant is the efficiency of the system that serves the human interests, i.e., instrumental rationalism. On the other hand, according to the transcendental world view, moral value is more important than the mere efficiency of such systems (Elmesseri, *Dirasat Marifeyya* 138). For Elmesseri, the instrumental rationalization of the human behavior is a "manifestation of the eradication of the human-nature duality and of the continuous movement towards a natural materialist monism which robs human society of its vitality, transforming it into a huge machine whose movement can be readily predicted since it follows general laws and central plans" (Elmesseri, *Epistemological Bias* 47). The result is a complete failure to heal the degenerated spiritual condition of man. Moreover, a direct consequence is a complete adoption of whatever means that leads to progress. Thus, for instance, exploiting the third world is justified because it is *efficient*, regardless of the immoral value of such manipulation (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 334).

Moreover, the difference between the two paradigms is based on the absolute point of referentiality. Immanence adopts the positivistic epistemology that is not committed to any concept of Truth because Truth belongs to "the world of fantasy, unrealism, and utopianism" (Bauman, *Critical Sociology* 75). The laws of the material world remain "inherent to it

and its operating force [remains] internal" (Elmesseri, "Secularism" 58). In other words, matter's utmost point of referentiality is matter itself. That is to say, it is self-referential. The laws of matter are absolute; it cannot be disrupted or suspended. Within such a framework, an absolute point of referentiality is omitted, leaving behind an authority not less than the authority bestowed on the metaphysical in the world of transcendence. Elmesseri explains:

We can view the whole process of immanentization/modernization/secularization in terms of the death of God discourse. God became first incarnate (immanent) not in one man, but in mankind as a whole, and not temporarily but permanently. This led to the rise of humanism, and of the solipsistic subject. This humanism becomes imperialism and racism when God is incarnate in one people; it becomes fascism when He is incarnate in the Leader... the process continued inexorably, and immanetisation (secularization/modernization) got more radical. The centre kept on shifting and the incarnations too many, till we got a multiplicity of centres. Nature itself was fragmented and atomized. It lost its stability, coherence, and self-referentiality. It could no longer serve as a stable center... *All things change except change itself.* (Elmesseri, "Secularism" 75)

The loss of a referential framework did not free humans. Living in a world with no center, the modern man became alienated. For when the mechanical laws of history or biology or science become the ultimate point of referentiality, the modern man loses rather than gains any kind of control of his own world. On the other hand, Elmesseri's concept of transcendence manifests that the utmost point of referentiality is ontological hermeneutics. "Ontological hermeneutics treats signs, texts, narratives and phenomena in the light of a grand theory of human existence" (Ali, 76). Elmesseri argues that "man cannot live without a center or framework . . . he/she cannot reach this general theory save via . . . the assumption of a center, and 'believing' in it" (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 174).

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) is one of the most popular Irish playwrights in London throughout the 1890s. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* presents two main characters who symbolize the two opposing paradigms. On the one hand, Lord Henry Wotton epitomizes the paradigm of immanence; on the other hand, Basil Hallward represents the transcendental framework of thought. This war between the two paradigms is internalized within the psyche of Dorian Gray (Elmesseri's modern man) who trades his soul for the luxury of eternal youth and whose internal conflict between conscious and sensibility can be seen as mirroring Wilde's own confusion.

Dorian Gray's ideology epitomizes Elmesseri's notion of the disappearance of a split between the subject and the Object, supporting the "relentless separation of scientific, moral and aesthetic discourses" (Bauman, *On Modernity* 21). Dorian's character reflects Elmesseri's autonomous individual who "lives according to the narrow materialistic and utilitarian rules of his society, not being able to internalize any ideals that might help him to transcend such narrowness" (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 156). The autonomous Dorian starts to see himself – in terms of Elmesseri's description of the modern man— as "*the place of immanence...who cannot tolerate any limitations, restrictions and responsibilities and so is incapable of attaining delayed gratification*" (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 156). This is what Elmesseri calls the normalization of hedonism: the modernist movement towards earthly felicity as *the telos of human existence* (Elmesseri, *Dirasat Marifeyya* 89). Dorian Gray has *no ultimate point of referentiality*. Rather, he adopts what Elmesseri calls "an excessive plurality of meanings and centers which cancel each other out, till the world becomes meaningless and centerless" (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 202).

It is important to investigate Lord Henry's immanent ideology. Lord Henry believes in a meaningless, brute, Darwinian universe. He talks about fidelity as "purely a question for physiology" (37). Moreover, after Sybil Vane's suicide, Lord Henry describes life tragedies as inartistic, incoherent and vulgar controlled by "sheer brute force" (113). The exceptional in Sybil's tragedy is that it possesses "artistic elements of beauty," thus influencing us as a dramatic event (113-114). In other words, because the universe is chaotic and meaningless, there is *no final or ultimate point of referentiality* according to which a human being can evaluate his/her deeds. This is why for Lord Henry, "nothing is ever quite true" (90). The only emotional escape from this frantic metaphysical chaos is contemplation: contemplation in the meaninglessness of such a brutal world and the attempts of humans to overcome such chaos through sensuality (*the new telos of human existence*). This is why Lord Henry seeks aesthetic pleasure in the investigation of the human psyche. In other words, Lord Henry takes the role of a spectator who vivisects others in order to escape through them from his sufferings and despairs.

Dorian becomes Henry's archetypal projection: "To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth . . . there was a real joy in that" (44). Dorian, for Henry, becomes an interesting scientific experiment: an experiment of a romantic

moralist who is shocked into the meaninglessness of the world, and whose only escape from life's web is through becoming a hedonist indulging endlessly in new sensual pleasures. Henry tells Dorian:

The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly-that is what each of us is here for . . . I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream-I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of medievalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal. (25)

According to Henry, these maladies of medievalism are the false morals and principles of the nineteenth century (30). These standards prevent a human from uniting with nature resulting in a split that distinguishes the modern man from other creatures. Consequently, the universal scientific laws that may apply to these creatures can never apply to the human (Elmesseri's paradigm of transcendence). Thus, self-denial, helping the poor, caring for one's neighbors are nothing but outdated medieval principles (89) only triggered by the fear of society and the fear of God (25). Natural desires are banned by "monstrous laws." However, one can get rid of these desires only by yielding to it?: "Resist it, and your soul grows sick." As for the moral responsibility, it should be disregarded, simply because it does not even exist for, in a meaningless and purposeless world, in a world with no ultimate Truth, sins happen only in our minds (26). This thought echoes exactly Elmesseri's description of the modern man in his inability to "tolerate any limitations, restrictions or responsibilities" and in his inability to delay his sensual gratifications (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 156).

Influenced by Lord Henry's ideology, Dorian adopts almost every idea declared by him. Preserving the glamor of youth, he believes will make him "[l]ike the gods of the Greeks . . . he would be strong, and fleet, and joyous" (120). Like Henry, in order to escape the sufferings of his conscience, Henry convinces himself that he is merely a spectator of a purposeless universe. The miseries one causes to others are meaningless, yet if they are dramatic, an individual can rather find them beautiful. Indeed, upon Sybil's suicide, Dorian argues that: "A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them" (122). Since Sybil's suicide is dramatic, then it becomes "a wonderful ending to a wonderful play" (113). Moreover, even while looking at his portrait as it is "some infamous, ignoble satire," (173) Dorian adopts the role of a narcissistic spectator: "There was neither real sorrow in it nor real joy. There was simply the passion of the spectator, with perhaps a flicker of triumph in his eyes" (174). The hedonistic Dorian is primarily motivated by Henry's

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
in the light of Abdelwahab Elmesseri's
epistemological paradigm of Immanence
and Transcendence

Mai Muhammad Abbas

philosophical views. Indulged in sensual life, Dorian echoes Henry's opinion that sins exist only in one's mind, prevented exclusively by fears to break social norms or fears of punishment by a metaphysical divine power. Such fears are only imaginary since it is evident—in a Darwinian sense—that the strong is successful despite his/her immoral actions, and the weak is let down despite his/her moral actions (221). Since the autonomous individual is immanent in material nature, and since a man's sole point of referentiality is his own desires, then the history of man is a history of meaningless sacrifices:

But it appeared to Dorian that the true nature of the senses had never been understood, and that they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of making them elements of a new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic." As he looked back upon man moving through History, he was haunted by a feeling of loss. So much had been surrendered! and to such little purpose!
(146)

Basil, on the other hand, represents the ability of the modern man to transcend his material nature. Basil's impact comes chiefly from his standing in contrast to Henry with his materialist views. Basil believes in the duality of the body and the soul—in Elmesseri's terms, the dichotomy of the divine vs. the human. Indeed, when Dorian tells Basil that Sibyl "spiritualises" her audience, Basil declares that this is the most valuable deed an individual can ever do. Basil illustrates that to "spiritualise" is to "give a soul to those who have lived without one," to "create the sense of beauty in people whose lives have been sordid and ugly" and to "strip them of their selfishness and lend them tears for sorrows that are not their own" (93). In other words, Basil believes that, as Elmesseri puts it, there is a degree of duality in the world: man is separated from his creator and consequently becomes responsible for his actions (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 255). For Basil, the individual is not *the place of immanence*; that is, an individual is able to transcend his/her own instincts, can tolerate restrictions, bear responsibilities and delay his/her sensual fulfillment. The point of referentiality is not one's self; rather, an ultimate metaphysical Truth—only God can see your soul, Basil tells Dorian (170). This Truth decrees that a sinful will eventually bear the burden of his sins through "remorse," "suffering" and "the consciousness of degradation," (89) and that the good will eventually be rewarded for his good deeds. Basil

believes that "sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed. People talk sometimes of secret vices. There are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands even" (167). Yet, Basil does not ignore the material side of the human existence. Rather, he seeks what he calls a "harmony of soul and body" (17). In the overture of the novel, Dorian for Basil is the "visible incarnation" of this harmony, and this is why Basil is infatuated by Dorian (128). As for the sufferings in the world, Basil does not escape from it through contemplation or self-indulgence; rather, he allows himself to sympathize with the suffered and believes that it is the responsibility of man to change their pains; thus he tells Dorian: "You have a wonderful influence. Let it be for good, not for evil" (169).

Dorian represents the conflict between the immanent paradigm symbolized by Henry and the transcendent view symbolized by Basil. Although Dorian is massively dominated and manipulated by Henry, yet, still, he is torn between Henry's cynicism and Basil's moralism. Dorian tells Basil: "Each of us has Heaven and Hell in him, Basil" (175). Upon Sybil's suicide, though Dorian would declare that the suicide, being dramatic, seems to be "a wonderful ending to a wonderful play," (113) he initially expresses "a feeling of infinite regret," wondering "Why had he been made like that? Why had such a *soul* been given to him?" (103) (italics added). Despite feeling triumphant when he looks at his own bizarre portrait, (174) because of his own biological victory over his degenerating soul, yet Dorian's mere wish that his portrait may carry the burdens of his sins while his body remains intact reflects an inherent recognition of the existence of the duality of body and soul. In other words, Dorian's wish belongs to Elmesseri's transcendent paradigm. The portrait reveals to Dorian the slow decay of his soul caused by his sins: "His own soul was looking out at him from the canvas and calling him to judgment" (135). Pained at the sight of the portrait which reminds him of the ruin of his soul, Dorian decides to wrap it in a golden, satin coverlet. The coverlet, he contemplates, hides a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself something that would breed horror and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive. (134)

Terrorized upon murdering Basil, Dorian reflects on the impossibility for him to continue his life when the phantoms of his conscience are chasing him wherever he goes (222). The glamorous soulless Dorian has eventually lost interest in his once thrilling experience; he now feels that "[l]ife had suddenly become too hideous a burden for him to bear" (228). Sicked by his memory, this "horrible malady" which was "eating his soul away," Dorian

thinks of atonement: "*There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven* (245) [italic mine]. Moreover, he tells Henry that he is now sure that the soul exists: "The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned, or made perfect. *There is a soul in each one of us. I know it*" (238). However, neither forgiveness nor forgetfulness was possible (205). Entrapped by his inability to continue his life under the burdens of his conscience and by his belief in the impossibility of atonement, Dorian decides to destroy the duality which characterizes the human existence; Dorian decides to destroy the soul, thus getting rid of the dichotomy of body and soul or the divine and the human. But, the duality cannot be undone: the body cannot exist without the soul. Thus, when Dorian destroys the portrait/the soul, he ceases to exist; nothing is left except his mutilated body.

Dorian may refer to the dilemma of the modern man who is torn between the immanent and the transcendent paradigms. Wilde aims at incorporating the spiritual side of the modern man with the material side. Indeed, Wilde adopts the aesthetic philosophy; he refuses that man should give up his desires for the sake of social rules. Yet, he also believes that material self-indulgences should be controlled by transcendent elements that would allow an individual to appraise the consequences of his/her actions deliberately. Dorian's ruination is an allegory of such a desired balance. This transcendental duality of body and soul condoned by Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* mirrors the same transcendent duality condoned by Elmesseri's in his theory of human existence.

Endnotes

1- Elmesseri uses another term for immanence which is "materialist monism." The word monism refers to the absence of distance between man and nature. In other words, when man/created is unified with nature/creator, this unification leads to such monism. Elmesseri, however, differentiates between "monism" and "monotheism." Whereas the former relates to the materialist world, the latter relates to transcendental essence. The oneness of monotheism refers to the creator Himself, not to the unification between the creator and the created (monism). Likewise, Elmesseri differentiates between duality and dualism. Whereas duality refers to the interaction between the creator and the created, dualism, on the other hand, refers to the relationship between the creator and the created. This relationship, although it starts with the presence of the two poles "(like the gods of good and evil, and of light and darkness, in some pagan religions)," one pole eventually "liquidates the other, or merges completely with it, forming one element [returning] to monism once more." (Elmesseri, *My Journey* 113).

2-My thanks go to Elmesseri's office manager in Damanhour who agreed to give me an unpublished English translation of Elmesseri's autobiography.

المخلص:

صورة دوريان جراي لأوسكار وايلد في ضوء النموذج المعرفي لعبد الوهاب
المسييري للكمون و التجاوز

مي محمد عباس

عبد الوهاب المسييري (1938-2008) هو ناقد مصري طور ما أسماه نموذجًا معرفيًا عن الكمون و التجاوز. تستند النظريات الحديثة المعادية للثوابت إلى فكرة الكمون حيث يتجلى الإله في الإنسان ثم يتجلى كلا من الإله و الإنسان مرة أخرى في الطبيعة / المادة و هذا ما يسمى وحدة الوجود الروحية حيث يتم طمس الثنائيات مثل الإله مقابل الإنسان أو الإنسان مقابل المادة. وفقًا لهذه النظريات ، لا توجد مساحة إنسانية مستقلة ، بل إنكار لقدرة الإنسان على تجاوز طبيعته المادية. من ناحية أخرى، فإن أهم نقطة مرجعية للمسييري هي علم التأويل الأنطولوجي للقصص الكبرى في ضوء نظرية ميتافيزيقية للوجود الإنساني. في هذه الورقة البحثية تتم دراسة رواية صورة دوريان جراي للشاعر و الكاتب أوسكار وايلد (1854-1900) في إطار النموذج المعرفي للمسييري المذكور أعلاه. تُلخص رواية "دوريان جراي" فكرة المسييري حول الكمون حيث "المتعة هي الشيء الوحيد الذي يستحق نظرية" وحيث "المتعة هي اختبار الطبيعة ، هي علامة على موافقتها." (وايلد ، 64). التشوه النهائي لصورة دوريان جراي يوضح مشاركة وايلد لفكر المسييري القائم على التجاوز، وعجز العلوم الطبيعية عن شمول ظاهرة الطبيعة البشرية..

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