

# Arānī, Kasravī and Demonic Irrationality: Discourses of Reason and Scientific Explanation<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

As part of a broader postsecular historical investigation into the role of demonological discourses in the formation of Iranian modernity, this article seeks to account for the presence of the demonic in the works of two interbellum thinkers, the Marxist theoretician and physicist Taqī Arānī (1903-40/1321-59 gh.) and Arānī's defence attorney during the Group of 53 trials, a religious reformist who was a major proponent of the anti-mystical rational theology, Aḥmad Kasravī (1890-1946/1308-65 gh.). What is unique about these two thinkers is that their respective commitments to materialist inquiry and the conceptualisation of a God of Reason accommodated the residue of "traditionalist" demonism in different functional forms. Primarily through the use of idioms, embodied evil was delineated in a manner that radically contravened long-standing demonological

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trappings. As seen in works such as “Jabr va Ikhtiyār (Determinism and Free Will),” *Pisikūlūzhī: ‘Ilm-i Rūh* (Psychology: The Science of the Spirit), *Ākharīn Difā ‘-i Duktur Taqī Arānī* (Dr. Taqī Arānī’s Final Defence), *Mātiri-yālism-i Diyāliktīk* (Dialectical Materialism), “‘Irfān va Uṣūl-i Māddī (Mysticism and the Principles of Materialism),” and *Bashar Az Naẓar-i Māddī* (The Human from a Material Standpoint), Arānī allowed the satanic to serve an instrumental role in scientific explanation, the crystallisation of proletarian-state relations, and the framing of irrationality even though he was swift in his dismissal of occult existence. Arānī’s major demonological contribution, his assertion of demonic irrationality, is one that he shared with Kasravī. In *Rāh-i Rastgārī* (The Path of Salvation) and *Āyīn* (Creed), the Shī‘ī reformist elaborated the idea of demonic irrationality in his attempt to promote a universalised rational order, and this was done through the use of exclusionary logic.

## Introduction

In his interbellum work, “Jabr va Ikhtiyār (Determinism and Free Will),”<sup>2</sup> the Iranian Marxist theoretician and physicist Taqī Arānī (1903-40/1321-59 gh.) was inadvertently participating in a transformative mode of demonographical inscription that gave prominence to demonic irrationality. This is of note in three direct respects. Firstly, notwithstanding his inveighed assaults against religion and dismissal of demonic existence,<sup>3</sup> Arānī’s process of *thinking by means of the demonic*—even if ultimately tongue in cheek—illustrates how secularity was complicit in religious conceptual formations, and how a secular ethos was in part established through religious imaginaries. This observation is, of course, indebted to the postsecular impulse with

<sup>2</sup>Taqī Arānī, “Jabr va Ikhtiyār (Determinism and Free Will),” in *Āsār va Maqālāt* (Œuvre) (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1977), 146-57.

<sup>3</sup>In this regard, my approach, which at times incorporates the views of thinkers who categorically denied the existence of demons but obliquely contributed to the evolving longevity of demonism through their demonographical inscriptions, departs from those studies that focus on the “convictions of those who believed in its very possibility.” For the latter position, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.

its historiographical denial of religion as containing a “transhistorical essence,”<sup>4</sup> and its assertion that religion is “attached to specific processes of power and knowledge”<sup>5</sup> and dependent upon “historically distinctive disciplines and forces.”<sup>6</sup> Secondly, in Iran the extrusion of demonic irrationality points to the contemporaneous circulation of rationalisation nomenclature and debates concerning the place of rationality in social discourse. As “irreducibly stochastic,”<sup>7</sup> the demonism being described here coincided with and even encouraged the most concerted Iranian attempt to establish a universal rational order. Thirdly, the attempt to establish a closed rational order by so-called “anti-traditionalists” allowed demonic irrationality to enter a stage of autonomy and exteriority beyond *logos*—an unprecedented development in Iran’s Islamic history. The modernist confrontation with the “ancient or vestigial” autonomy of “pure irregularity”<sup>8</sup> is precisely the matter under consideration here.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these statements, along with their implications, as they are found in a series of interbellum works by Arānī and Aḥmad Kasravī (1890-1946/1308-65 gh.), Arānī’s defence attorney during the Group of 53 trials and a religious reformist who was a major proponent of the anti-mystical “rational theology”<sup>9</sup> that jettisoned demonic figures from the scope of order. During the first Pahlavī period (1921-41/1300-20 sh.) these two thinkers contributed to the processual break with the longstanding alliance between the satanic and the rational in Islamic thought. After all, it was during the formative stage of the religion that Qur’an commentators unequivocally linked Iblīs—Satan in angelic/jinn form, the “fiery primogenitor”<sup>10</sup>—to *qiyās*, or analogical reasoning. This attribution gave the Zāhirī school of jurisprudence an opening

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<sup>4</sup>Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.

<sup>5</sup>Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 42.

<sup>6</sup>Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 54.

<sup>7</sup>Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>8</sup>Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, 2.

<sup>9</sup>Lloyd Ridgeon, *Sufi Castigator* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 45.

<sup>10</sup>Whitney S. Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 239.

to redouble its critique against the futility of human reason without scriptural guidance, but it did not entirely diminish the importance of reason among other branches of law—for instance, *qiyās* holds a prominent place in Shāfi‘ī thought.<sup>11</sup> What many commentators ultimately agreed upon was how satanic pride, narcissism, spiritual vapidity and the inevitable downfall that accompanied these traits were neatly nestled within an excessive reliance upon intellection.<sup>12</sup> Even when—in the style of “the sibling rivalry motif”<sup>13</sup>—it is conceded that Iblīs’ view regarding his essential superiority over Adam retains integrity and is the expression of a faculty that was bestowed upon him by God Himself, Satan’s tragedy is that he is lambasted for his sound rational judgment.<sup>14</sup> It is in this light that Satan as the tempter should be explained. Rather than focusing on the irrationality of the passion-driven carnal soul, of which Satan is construed as the proprietor, and demonic possession as “destroy[ers] [of] the rational structure of the mind,”<sup>15</sup> the accent should be placed on Iblīs’ rejected offering of reasons<sup>16</sup> as the precipitating moment behind the machinations for which he is most reviled. To top it off, he is considered the first to have ever exercised reason.<sup>17</sup> In other words, satanic temptation is based in rational proposals.

Often ridiculed by Sufi scholars such as al-Hujwīrī (c. 990-1077/c. 380-469 gh.), the eighth-tenth century rationalist movement known as Mu‘tazilism partially evaded the consequences of a rational evil by associating the development of the rational faculties with true spiritual commitment.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the Mu‘tazilites went so far as to conclude that the human mind is capable of grasping the reason(s)

<sup>11</sup>Peter J. Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 35.

<sup>12</sup>Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption*, 95.

<sup>13</sup>Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 239.

<sup>14</sup>Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 25-6.

<sup>15</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) 1: 114.

<sup>16</sup>Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 139.

<sup>17</sup>Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 163.

<sup>18</sup>Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption*, 95.

behind God's dismissal of Iblīs' antagonism.<sup>19</sup> To this extent, evil itself can be comprehended, a position that was embraced by Ibn Sīnā (c. 980-1037/c. 369-428 gh.) even though he was a known critic of Mu'tazilism.<sup>20</sup> All of this is to say that evil, the first figural expression of which was simultaneously the first appearance of reason,<sup>21</sup> is construed by rationally inclined Islamic thinkers as intelligible.

While we can thus far conclude that the demonic has traditionally been construed as both rational and intelligible, it has also common practice to situate him within the divine cosmic scheme. As the cleric and constitutionalist Āqā Najafī Qūchānī (1878-1943/1295-1362 gh.) put it in *Siyāhat-i Sharq* (Eastern Journey), "All existents (*mawjūdāt*) are created (*makhlūq*) by, are the shadows (*zil*) of, and are dependent (*mansūb*) upon" God. Even though the degree of divine attribution (*andāzah-yi intisāb*) in Satan may be limited, he is nevertheless enclosed within the Islamic cosmological order.<sup>22</sup> As the "necessary instrument in [God's] Hands,"<sup>23</sup> the archfiend "possesses powers only by extension."<sup>24</sup> It is against this background of a contained and instrumentalised Satan that Arānī's commentary of the demonic becomes piercing in its distinctiveness. There is tension between the demonic as it is situated within recognisable and coherent limits and that to which Arānī is referring. If demonological discourse during the early twentieth century teetered away from Qūchānī's traditional conception towards one that is more lawless and impervious to

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<sup>19</sup>Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblīs*, 264.

<sup>20</sup>Wilferd Madelung, "Al-Ghazali's Changing Attitude to Philosophy," in *Islam and Rationality*, vol. 1, ed. Georges Tamer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 28.

<sup>21</sup>What gives credence to this statement is Satan's association with the jinn, subtle beings thought to possess rational faculties. In the same way that Qur'an commentators link Iblīs' rational follies to that of humans, the holy text reprimands humans and jinn in equal measure for their egregious use of reason and free will. See Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 13-5.

<sup>22</sup>Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan Āqā Najafī Qūchānī, *Siyāhat-i Sharq* (Eastern Journey) (Mashhad: Chāp-i Tūs, 1972/1351 sh.), 14.

<sup>23</sup>Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 194.

<sup>24</sup>Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, 147.

disciplining, then how was this received, compounded and guided by literate culture?

### *Arānī's Demonology*

Let us first detail what Arānī actually said in “Jabr va Ikhtiyār.” After a brief deterministic account of causation, he states that without the benefit of laws or principles (*qānūn yā nāmūs*) it would not be possible to predict (*pīsh' bīnī*) any occurrences.<sup>25</sup> This mechanistic conception of reality lent itself to a positivistic and materialist worldview that came to inform revolutionary leftist theory in Iran for decades.<sup>26</sup> However, it is the logic of the following statement that has gone under the radar: “Today, bread is baked in an oven but it is possible (*mumkin ast*) that if Satan so desires (*agar Shayṭān bikhvāhad*), tomorrow bread can grow (*sabz shavad*) on trees like fruit.”<sup>27</sup> Is this desire of which Arānī speaks not reminiscent of the originary “passionate desire” of Satan in *Paradise Lost* that is subverted and made to be forgotten by God and Christ in their capacities as “reason and restraint?”<sup>28</sup> By being juxtaposed to a form of causal reasoning that can be traced back to Aristotle, Satan’s desire here escapes logical comprehensibility and coherence. Again, this is rather odd considering how, in the Islamic tradition, the fallen angel is associated with analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) and thus the “limitations and ultimate unreliability of human intellection.”<sup>29</sup>

What is implicit in Arānī’s conception is how similar Satan is to the Ash‘arite understanding of God as an Absolute Will that is purely arbitrary. In this view, “no contingent being or event can be rationally accounted for.”<sup>30</sup> The instrumentalised Satan falls by the wayside in favour of a sovereign Satan who assumes “the truest and most

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<sup>25</sup>Arānī, “Jabr va Ikhtiyār,” 147.

<sup>26</sup>Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 97.

<sup>27</sup>Arānī, “Jabr va Ikhtiyār,” 147.

<sup>28</sup>Harold Bloom, “Introduction,” in *Satan*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2005), 8.

<sup>29</sup>Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, 35-6.

<sup>30</sup>R.M. Frank, “Currents and Countercurrents,” in *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought & Society*, ed. Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 133.

complete manifestation of God and his omnipotent freedom.”<sup>31</sup> The appearance of the latter satanic form should not be simply construed as a stale extract from a millennia-old depository of edifying turns of phrase, but rather the expression of an intellectual debate over the merits of determinative causation. Compare Arānī’s approach to determinism with that of the well-known lawyer Maḥmūd Sarshār (1901-1964/1280-1343 sh.), whose thoughts on the matter were written just over a decade after Arānī’s death. In the case of Arānī, a prominent figure within the religious imagination is transformed into a carrier of the torch of chance. For Sarshār, the prospect of discovering laws (*qavānīn*) and relations between phenomena and theories (*bāyad ḥavādiṣ va qazāyā rā mū’shikāfi kardah va irtibāt-i ānhā rā bā yik dīgar paydā nimāyad*) is at the basis of a determinative science. With this telos in mind, the veils of ignorance (*pardah’hā-yi jahl va nādānī*) can be torn, and he tables a Qur’anic verse to seal his position.<sup>32</sup> While Sarshār helps to incorporate scientific determinism into an Islamic framework, Arānī’s commitment to dialectical materialism separates it off from religion, leaving the latter with only fortuitousness.

Theorists who emerged after Iran’s far-left transition from social democracy to orthodox Marxism<sup>33</sup> advocated a certain “unswerving”<sup>34</sup> dogmatism that had the world’s disenchantment<sup>35</sup> at its basis. It is

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<sup>31</sup>Michael Allen Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 103.

<sup>32</sup>Maḥmūd Sarshār, “Ṭarīqah-yi Kashf-i Ja’ldār ‘Asr-i Ḥāzīr (The Path to Unveiling Forgeries in the Present Era),” *Kānūn-i Vukalā* 32 (1953/1332 sh.): 22.

<sup>33</sup>Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, 64-5.

<sup>34</sup>Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, 66.

<sup>35</sup>“... increasing intellectualization and rationalization does *not* mean increasing general knowledge of the conditions under which we live our lives. It means something else. It means the knowledge or belief that *if we only wanted* to we *could* learn at any time that there are, in principle, no mysterious unpredictable forces in play, but that all things--in principle--can be *controlled through calculation*. This, however, means the disenchantment of the world. No longer, like the savage, who believed that such forces existed, do we have to resort to magical means to gain control over or pray to the spirits. Technical means and calculation work for us instead. This, above all, is what intellectualization actually means.” See Max Weber, “Science as

within this context that the demonic strangely emerges, not as the theoretical intelligence of the early determinists that is “capable of ascertaining the complete set of initial conditions of the world system at any one instant of time,”<sup>36</sup> but as a stochastic force that helps to stabilise the theory of determination through the production of chains of indeterminacy.<sup>37</sup> While Arānī used a disenchanted and aseptic materiality to disprove manifestations of idealist and religious discourse, he nevertheless preserved these manifestations—usually in the form of familiar but “irreverent idioms”<sup>38</sup> or metaphors—as the face of incoherence and lawlessness in the determinism vs. anti-determinism debate.

Though at times invoked as a relatively abstract principle, Arānī’s lawlessness is also localised in phenomenal entities, as detailed in *Pis̄kūlūzhī* (Psychology). In his discussion of the psychological notion of “suggestion (*talqān*),” Arānī uses an image of a satanic child (*bachchah-yi shayṭānī*) who, by biting into a sour lemon (*līmū-yi turshī*) in front of a military band (*shaypūrchī’hā-yi nizāmī*), is able to disrupt its performance by inducing salivation.<sup>39</sup> Here, we observe lawless demonic exteriority intruding upon the world of laws without any direct physical causes (*bidūn-i vujūd-i ‘illat*).<sup>40</sup> Similar to the notion of religiously grounded satanic whispering (*vasvasah*) as the subversion of human fortitude and fidelity, demonic suggestion is pivoted upon the absence of physical causes. However, the question implicitly asked is not how to safeguard oneself from temptation, but

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a Vocation,” in *Max Weber’s Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, ed. John Dreijmanis, trans. Gordon C. Wells (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 33.

<sup>36</sup>Karl Popper, *The Open Universe* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 30.

<sup>37</sup>This is my modification of Alfred Landé’s statement that the deterministic impulse “may have its roots in a feeling of being ourselves demons who can deliberately start deterministic chains.” See Alfred Landé, “The Case for Indeterminism,” in *Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science*, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: Collier, 1961), 85.

<sup>38</sup>Adam Weiner, *By Authors Possessed* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 48.

<sup>39</sup>Taqī Arānī, *Pis̄kūlūzhī: ‘Ilm-i Rūh* (Psychology: The Science of the Spirit) (N.p.: Intishārāt-i Ābān, 1978/2537 sha.), 259.

<sup>40</sup>Arānī, *Pis̄kūlūzhī*, 259.

how the outside enters the inside without resistance.<sup>41</sup> How could pure rational discipline (military band) be violated by unrefined arbitrariness (demonic child) when no clear physiological connection is apparent?

Arānī's resolution comes by way of the meta-will (*māvarā-yi irādah*). This concept when an individual presumes that due to the lack of direct and discernible internal causes (*bidun-i illat-i mustaqīm*), certain external experiences are actually instigations of foreign stimuli, such as magic (*sihr va jādū*) or spirits (*arvāh*), when indeed it is the meta-will that is the source of these actualisations.<sup>42</sup> This is similar to the way in which in capitalist production "the activity of the worker is [perceived as] not [being] his own spontaneous activity."<sup>43</sup> For Arānī, the truth of the reaction is completely internal to the actors involved.<sup>44</sup> In comparing this discussion to his description of suggestion, it is clear that in the first instance, the distance between subjectivity and an invasive demonic irrationality is affirmed, while in the second, both the occult and its foreignness disappear in favour of the "blind circuit"<sup>45</sup> of reason.

In some of Arānī's arguments, the demonic is alluded to in order for persuasive scientific points to be made. He goes beyond occultist logic but he also allows his rhetorical "resources"<sup>46</sup> to be partially derived from this very location. This resort to "local knowledge"<sup>47</sup> allows him to appeal to an audience invested in the scientific debates of the time, and in doing so he borrows from, as well as

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<sup>41</sup>"[...] versagt sie sich zugleich jedem Eindringen in sie." See Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes (1935/36)," in *Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914-1970, Band 5, Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 33.

<sup>42</sup>Arānī, *Pisṭkūlūzhī*, 260-1.

<sup>43</sup>Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)," in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 327.

<sup>44</sup>Arānī, *Pisṭkūlūzhī*, 260.

<sup>45</sup>Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 167.

<sup>46</sup>R.W. Serjeantson, "Proof and Persuasion," in *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 3*, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133.

<sup>47</sup>Serjeantson, "Proof and Persuasion," 145.

tinkering with, a reconfigured demonological discourse. What is remarkable is that scientific persuasion provided an outlet for this new demonological configuration to be transmitted. Thus, instead of nullifying the role of the demonic in the conceptualisation of actuality, Arānī “rehabilitat[es]”<sup>48</sup> it in the service of a relatively new genre concerned with polemic and scientific popularisation.

The dearth of demonic references in *Pisīkūlūzhī* and related texts can indeed be raised as a rejoinder to my position, but attention should be directed to their mere presence and what this says about the genre of scientific popularisation in Iran. In Arānī’s contribution to this literature, key explanations of scientific facts were “garnished”<sup>49</sup> with the demonic because he was attuned to the way his audience was in the midst of rethinking the role of the occult in society. Nature for him was devoid of all religious meaning and significance, and yet the “obfuscatory” element remained textually embedded. Not exactly a form of “fetishistic disavowal of belief” where, in this case, the demonic “enables the subject to accept [the] knowledge [of the demonic] without paying the full price for it,”<sup>50</sup> Arānī’s use of the demonic was part of a “textual strategy” meant to capture his audience’s full attention.<sup>51</sup>

In *Ākharīn Dijā ‘-i Duktur Taqī Arānī* (Dr. Taqī Arānī’s Final Defence), Arānī’s partially transcribed 1938/1317 sh. public trial, in which he “spoke vigorously in his own defense,”<sup>52</sup> the demonic occult emerges in the social conflicts that crash like waves against the state,<sup>53</sup> specifically those concerning workers. By this time, the notion of an identifiable working class had a very short history in the country. Initially and primarily deployed by social reformers and

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<sup>48</sup>Serjeantson, “Proof and Persuasion,” 160-1.

<sup>49</sup>Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), vii.

<sup>50</sup>Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2009), 300.

<sup>51</sup>Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 16.

<sup>52</sup>Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, 67.

<sup>53</sup>Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 1.

democrats in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as a theoretical device, it was only in the 1920s/1300s sh. when the likes of Āvitīs Sulṭānzādah (1889-1938/1306-57 gh.) started speaking of workers (*kārgarān*) as an identifiable class.<sup>54</sup> This is not to say that there did not exist prior instances of proletarian organisation. During the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11/1323-29 gh.), workers (notably local tanners) coordinated strike actions and political parties championed the interests of workers. A boom in the Soviet oil sector during the 1910s/1330s gh. attracted many Iranian workers who became receptive to the didactic efforts of Russian Social Democrats.<sup>55</sup> The early 1920s/1300s sh. was also a time when a number of organisational efforts made headway, particularly by postal, telegraphic and educational workers.<sup>56</sup> The rise of Rizā Shāh Pahlavī (1878-1944/1295-1363 gh./r. 1925-41/1304-20 sh.) and the shadow that his state cast<sup>57</sup> were obstacles for proletarian striving, and it was in this context that Arānī's intellectual productions were nestled.

In *Ākharīn Dijā'*, the physicist questions, rhetorically, how Iran's toilers (*ranjbarān*), or workers, are able to provoke such great fear in the state.<sup>58</sup> He also expresses curiosity as to why the police (*ma'mūrīn-i shahrbānī*) violently tear apart any bulletin, leaflet or communiqué on which the word 'toiler' appears.<sup>59</sup> In Arānī's discourse, the excessive sensitivity and supposed apprehension evident in the authorities was to be partially expected for they were dealing with the working class as the 'universal redeemer of humanity.'<sup>60</sup> Though law enforcement

<sup>54</sup>Asef Bayat, "Historiography, Class, and Iranian Workers," in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies*, ed. Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 192-3.

<sup>55</sup>Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 5-6.

<sup>56</sup>Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 14.

<sup>57</sup>Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, 1.

<sup>58</sup>Taqī Arānī, *Ākharīn Dijā'-i Duktur Taqī Arānī* (Dr. Taqī Arānī's Final Defence) (N.p.: Int-ishārāt-i Hizb-i Tūdah-yi Irān, n.d.), 17.

<sup>59</sup>Arānī, *Ākharīn Dijā'-i Duktur Taqī Arānī*, 17.

<sup>60</sup>In response to the question of whence German emancipation will arise, Marx says, "... in the

during Rizā Shāh's reign had until that point been consistently and aggressively quelling union activities,<sup>61</sup> May Day festivities and strike actions, and maintaining networks of surveillance,<sup>62</sup> state authorities are said to be more frightened of workers than jinn confronted by the Qur'anic preamble 'In the name of God' (*miṣl-i jinn va bismillāh*).<sup>63</sup>

While the notion of fear is paramount in this formulation, it should be viewed as part of an irreconcilable opposition. In his *Kitāb-i Kūchah* (Book of the Street), poet Aḥmad Shāmlū (1925-2000/1304-79 sh.) defines *miṣl-i jinn va bismillāh* as "two things or individuals that will never come close to one another; mutual antipathy between two things."<sup>64</sup> Through the use of this idiom, Arānī wishes to say that while the state is full of dread, a fully evolved proletariat is fearless, for the object of fear is always outside and ahead of the thing experiencing it: "The worker is not a proletarian by virtue of what-will-happen-to-him-tomorrow, but by virtue of what happens to him every minute of the day."<sup>65</sup> Arānī's declaration further revealed the Pahlavī state for what it was: an entity that never truly established the "legal-rational authority" proposed by the constitutionalist movement<sup>66</sup> and was thus fearful of its future. The facade of rationality that the largely traditional monarchy was able to erect through modern state institutions<sup>67</sup> was quickly turning to an irrational acting out (the

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formation of a class with radical chains, a class in civil society that is not a class of civil society, of a social group that is the dissolution of all social groups, of a sphere that has a universal character because of its universal sufferings and lays claim to no particular right, because it is the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general. This class can no longer lay claim to a historical status, but only a human one." See Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," in *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 81.

<sup>61</sup>Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 17.

<sup>62</sup>Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 20-2.

<sup>63</sup>Arānī, *Ākharīn Dijā'-i Duktur Taqī Arānī*, 17.

<sup>64</sup>Aḥmad Shāmlū, in collab. with Āydā Sarkīsiyān, *Kitāb-i Kūchah, B, Daftar-i Duvvum* (Book of the Street) (Tehran: Maziār, 1998/1377 sh.), 1318.

<sup>65</sup>Louis Althusser, "The International of Decent Feelings," in *The Spectre of Hegel*, ed. François Matheron and trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 1997), 25.

<sup>66</sup>H.E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), 17.

<sup>67</sup>Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 51.

destruction of every document on which the word ‘toiler’ appears), as per the dictum: “what the common human understanding finds irrational is in fact rational, and what it finds rational is irrational.”<sup>68</sup>

In fact, what was perhaps more disturbing for the state was the prospect of having the illusion of rational order exposed as an illusion. This is where the jinn in *miṣl-i jinn va bismillāh* take precedence because like the state, their claim to being the harbingers and custodians of truth lose substance with the invocation of a single protective or apotropaic phrase.<sup>69</sup> The effect of *bismillāh* is instantaneous, and when combined with the Marxian eschewal of the criterion of existence from any theoretical discussion of the state,<sup>70</sup> the gaunt and even superfluous character of occult actuality becomes over-pronounced. To put it in a different way, the working class was capable of exposing the non-existence of the state and simply dispelling it with the slightest of gestures, before any self-reflection on the part of the state itself. After all, “[s]ince [its] strategy is [...] often not known in advance within (and by) the State itself, it is not always susceptible to rational formulation.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, in this account, Arānī uses the jinn to describe the existential and rational limitations of the state and vice versa.

As such, the jinn became essentially homologous to the arguably defunct presuppositions of idealist philosophy in that they are “ideal figments of the brain.”<sup>72</sup> In *Mātiriyālīsm-i Diyālikṭīk* (Dialectical Materialism), Arānī asks that if the idealist position of the internality of movement, time, and space to the mind (*ḥālāt-i zihni-yi mā hastand*) is affirmed,<sup>73</sup> meaning the “pure forms of sensible intuition

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<sup>68</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 vols., trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin, 1991) 3: 914.

<sup>69</sup>Alireza Mohammadi Doostdar, “Fantasies of Reason: Science, Superstition, and the Supernatural in Iran” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), 61.

<sup>70</sup>Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, 49.

<sup>71</sup>Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 2000), 33.

<sup>72</sup>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. R. Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 73.

<sup>73</sup>Taqī Arānī, *Mātiriyālīsm-i Diyālikṭīk* (Dialectical Materialism) (Tehran: Mu’assisah-yi Intishārāt-i Ātash, 1946/1325 sh.), 16.

as principles of *a priori* cognition,<sup>74</sup> then the sensuous effects of, for instance, telephone calls, must essentially be attributed to miraculous or magical sources (*mu 'jizah va sihr va jādū*).<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, dragons, demons, Rustam, Satan and the jinn are said to be in contradiction to internal logic (*tazādd-i bāṭinī-yi manṭiqī*),<sup>76</sup> for there are no materially based reasons for the supposition that spirit is constitutive of reality (*rūḥ hamah jā mawjūd ast*)<sup>77</sup>—an unfortunate stance that

<sup>74</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 157.

<sup>75</sup>Arānī, *Mātiriyālism-i Diyālikīk*, 16. If we are to suppose that Arānī is referring to Kant's transcendental idealism by virtue of his quip against his distinctive theory of time and space, then the argument concerning the questionable sources of sensuous effects was raised by others as well. Like Jacobi, Arānī is suspicious of the place of matter and its determinacy in the idealist system, but their ultimate arguments are at variance. According to Jacobi, "what we realists call actual objects or things independent of our representations are for the transcendental idealist only internal beings which exhibit nothing at all of a thing that may perhaps be there outside us, or which the appearance may refer. Rather, these internal beings are merely subjective determinations of the mind, entirely void of anything truly objective." See F.H. Jacobi, "On Transcendental Idealism," in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 334. The problem is that Kant admits to the existence of matter and its permanence, and simply states that "outer sense" is tied to "inner sense" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 122.). This connection makes the supposed idealist bewilderment of external incidents quite dubious. Furthermore, Kant had a specific understanding of miracles and their relationship with rational comprehension. As he puts it, "[in] practical affairs, [...] we cannot possibly count on miracles, or in any way take them into consideration in the employment of our reason (which is necessary in all circumstances of life)." See Immanuel Kant, "Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason," in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, trans and ed. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 101.

Notice how remarkably similar Arānī's critique of idealism in this one sentence is to the example of the satanic child used to explain the concept of suggestion. In both cases, an inexplicable evil bursts forth from the external world. In his critique of idealism, he rebukes what he had acceded to earlier, thus alienating himself from his true association with the demonic. For a homologous example concerning religion, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York: Verso, 1997), 99.

<sup>76</sup>Arānī, *Mātiriyālism-i Diyālikīk*, 31.

<sup>77</sup>It can be argued that Arānī is here presenting another skewed interpretation of the idealist tradition. It is not simply that mind or spirit constitute what appears to be the material world. After all, Kant himself was careful to point out that matter is "something permanent, which must therefore be a thing distinct from all my representations and external" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 122.). External objects, matter, or to put it in Kant's term, "outer appearances," are only

more often than not leads to the claim that our pockets are brimming with tiny slippery devils (*shayṭānak'hā-yi rīz va līz*).<sup>78</sup> Rather than the beings themselves, it is the belief in such spirits that is derivative of the material environment (*'avāmil-i māddī-yi muḥīt*). According to this position, and as Arānī illustrates in “‘Irfān va Uṣūl-i Māddī (Mysticism and the Principles of Materialism),” there were specific material preconditions that historically necessitated jinn-worship (*jinn'parastī*).<sup>79</sup>

Arānī is here thinking of “natural religion,” the early adherents of which were alienated from a world that had “hardly been altered by history.”<sup>80</sup> This being so, in *Mātiriyālīsm-i Diyālikīk* Arānī is careful to remind his readers that they are living in a time during which causes (*'illat*) are no longer based on belief in the effects (*i'tiqād bi ta'ṣīr*) of idols and the insidious Ahrīman,<sup>81</sup> meaning those “mental projections” that thwart a scientific theory of knowledge.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, it was his Marxian commitment to “objective law, causality and necessity in nature”<sup>83</sup> that allowed him to maintain this position. In another section of the text, he expands upon his approach to the occult through a discussion of contradiction, which is worth quoting in full:

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grounded by the mind (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 158.). Certain “subjective condition[s]” need to be met before the intuition of these appearances (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 161.), which hold particular “shape[s] and position[s] (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 163.).

This being said, Arānī might as well be referring to Berkeley’s subjective idealism which, at times, staggered close to objective idealist territory, particularly in his argument that the world is “the product of a single supreme spiritual cause.” See V.I. Lenin, “Materialism and Empirio-criticism,” in *Collected Works*, 45 vols., trans. Abraham Fineberg and ed. Clemens Dutt (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) 14: 32.

<sup>78</sup>Arānī, *Mātiriyālīsm-i Diyālikīk*, 51.

<sup>79</sup>Taqī Arānī, “‘Irfān va Uṣūl-i Māddī (Mysticism and the Principles of Materialism),” in *Āṣār va Maqālāt* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1977), 140.

<sup>80</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “The German Ideology,” in *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1976) 5: 44.

<sup>81</sup>Arānī, *Mātiriyālīsm-i Diyālikīk*, 54.

<sup>82</sup>Lenin, “Materialism and Empirio-criticism,” 78.

<sup>83</sup>Lenin, “Materialism and Empirio-criticism,” 155.

It is usually said that any statement that does not engender a logical contradiction is true, for contradiction is a sign of error. If we were to carefully study this definition of truth, we would find it to be false. For instance, it has until recently been said that there exist only three dimensions in nature—length, width and depth. In physics, we now know that time is another dimension, meaning that the physical properties of nature consist of four dimensions. With this in mind, is there a logical contradiction in the statement that nature consists of five dimensions?

If someone were to claim that nature must comprise of five dimensions in the same way that it has four, we would say that they are mistaken. Hence, though there is no internal logical contradiction in our thinking when we refer to dragons, demons, Rostam, Satan, jinn, etc., all of these imaginings are nevertheless false. Now, let us consider the other side of the coin: It is possible that, in reality, a contradiction can exist without the presence of an error—meaning that there is no logical contradiction—and that from an existing contradiction we can deem a certain position to be egregious. For instance, a three dimensional world apparently contradicts the notion of nature being comprised of four dimensions, but it cannot be said that the first case is false. If it were, none of the discoveries made on this spurious foundation could have been true and practical, meaning that the notion of three dimensional space has had a certain truth to it.

This being said, the fundamental sign in the recognition of truth is one's connection to experience. We remarked that recognition is the relation between thought and nature, so if we want to pay attention to recognition then thought and nature must be related in actuality, and not simply have relations created between words in thought. We say that statements that affirm the existence of fantasies, jinn [and]

dragons [...] are erroneous because dragons, etc. cannot actually be shown. However, we say that Kepler's statements regarding planetary orbit have truth to them because in every instance the orbit of the planets can be made subject to study as a way to assure the accuracy of Kepler's law. The natural and material sciences of today have truth to them because according to their own principles they are being actualised in factories where the necessities of life are being produced. It is enough for you to pay attention to the light of the electric bulb that surrounds you, the sound of the radio, and the automobile that gives you motion. You will then see that the principles of these sciences are in orderly relation to real events.<sup>84</sup>

To put it succinctly, though there is no logical contradiction in the assertion that demonic beings exist, the inability to empirically test this existence (or experience it in nature) compels Arānī to completely dismiss the possibility of occult existence. However, the crux of the matter is that although he relegated the belief in the demonic to the realm of non-existence, he nevertheless contributed to the movement that was positing the nature of the demonic as irrational. While early-modern Europe was witness to forms of experimentation that united witchcraft theory with scientific inquiry,<sup>85</sup> here Arānī derides the absence of experimentation in occult thought while simultaneously using the demonic in the service of scientific explanation. It can be argued that Arānī's allusions to the demonic were intended to be purely tongue-in-cheek or that they semantically transcended their constituent meanings, but this detracts from the way that language "recommends" itself to the user, that it is possible to be "surprise[d]" by certain vernacular invocations.<sup>86</sup> Thus, in a moment of scientific explanation, a demonological expression, which

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<sup>84</sup>Arānī, *Mā'iriyālism-i Diyālikīk*, 30-1.

<sup>85</sup>Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 146.

<sup>86</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "On the Phenomenology of Language," in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 88.

is possibly intended to be tongue-in-cheek, is actually presented to the user by the prevailing lexicon. The demonological offering is arguably the once missing variable that makes the explanation finally work. The science that needed to be accounted for was beholden to a demonological framework that was being re-worked at the time, and by embracing the offering Arānī was also participating in its diachronic reformulation.

It is in light of Arānī's demonology that his critical remarks against Shī'ī *mujtahids* should be examined. Clerics of his time are said to have ignored the precision of technical terms in the hard sciences. Instead, their loose and flexible handling of these terms emptied them of any empirical weight (*magar īn ki mā kalamāt rā bi har ma'nī ki khvudimān khvāstah bāshīm*). The example Arānī draws on in “‘Irfān va Uṣūl-i Māddī” was the much discussed notion of how the European discovery of microbes (*mīkrūb*) was actually the disclosure of Satan's deceptive spite (*gharaz az Shaytān ki mīgūyand shumā rā gūl mīzanad*).<sup>87</sup> Part of what Tavakoli-Targhi has called the “Pasteurization of Islam,” the microbial conception of the demonic emerged during a crisis in religious knowledge, particularly as it pertained to ritual purity. The identification and spread of contagious diseases allowed many skeptics to question pre-microbiological methods of maintaining cleanliness, but coupled with this were attempts to redeem the role of Islamic jurisprudence in governing hygiene. A few prominent medical professionals began reconciling microbiological facts with religious ordinances, and it is out of this that the identity of the jinn—the demonic more generally—and microorganisms began to take shape.<sup>88</sup>

Consistent with his criticism of the “spirit worship and Spiritism of America's old women (*rūḥ parastī va Spīrītīsm-i pīrzan'hā-yi Āmrīkā*)” and the dictates of jinn-catchers (*jīn'gīr'hā*) in *Bashar*

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<sup>87</sup>Taqī Arānī, “‘Irfān va Uṣūl-i Māddī,” 119.

<sup>88</sup>Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, “From Jinns to Germs: A Genealogy of Pasteurian Islam,” *Iran Nameh* 30 (2015): iv-xix.

*Az Naẓar-i Māddī* (The Human from a Material Standpoint),<sup>89</sup> the occultist narrativisation of microbiology represented another form of mystification for Arānī. However, based on what we have demonstrated, it can be argued that while in the case of the medical practitioners studied by Tavakoli-Targhi the demonic is explained by science, Arānī's demonology deploys an irrational demonism in the service of scientific explanation even though it is simultaneously relegated to non-existence.

Besides his unique approach to scientific explanation, Arānī also contributed to the way the occult sciences developed an enduring “epistemological legacy”<sup>90</sup> at the heart of scientific discourse. This is seen in “Jabr va Ikhtiyār,” where Arānī differentiates the prognostications of the social sciences (*‘ulūm-i ijtimā’ī*) from the fallacious and flattering (*durūgh va tamalluq*) forecasts of occult practitioners,<sup>91</sup> or the so-called “men of faith” who set up shop (*dukān*) to deceive their customers.<sup>92</sup> However, he uses the same term, *pīsh’bīnī* (forecast), to account for the activity of each field of investigation. To paradoxically both deepen and rupture the association between the two, he then deploys the term *ghayb’gū’ī* (divination/prognostication) and allows for its double meaning to flourish. This case expresses how some elements of demonic and occult nomenclature were wrenched away from their traditional abode and integrated into scientific discourse while others were more deeply engrained into the fibre of lawlessness, as was the case with the satanic.

On account of these examples, one would be tempted to declare Arānī to have been devoutly idiosyncratic, but his uniqueness laid in the way his demonology, along with his contribution to the discursive

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<sup>89</sup>Taqī Arānī, *Bashar Az Naẓar-i Māddī* (The Human from a Material Standpoint) (Tehran: Majallah-yi Dunyā, 1944/1323 sh.), 34.

<sup>90</sup>Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 236.

<sup>91</sup>Arānī, “Jabr va Ikhtiyār,” 156.

<sup>92</sup>Rahnema, *Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics*, 113.

structure of modern Iranian scientific discourse, were embedded in a deep commitment to materialist methodology and sensibility. Similar to the notion of over-identification where the “exaggeration of gestures” reveals a certain distance from the identity that those gestures embody,<sup>93</sup> Arānī’s intense fidelity to materialism betrays a certain distance from this mould insofar as he was beholden to the offerings of language, which made almost necessary the inclusion of the demonic in scientific explanation.

Thus, take note of the foregoing in light of the more orthodox and historical passages in *Pisīkūlūzhī*: According to the materialist critique, jinn, spirits and gods were engendered as personifications of human qualities and mediated by a distinct class of practitioners equipped with skills in fortune telling (*fālgīrī*), divination (*az ghayb khabar dādan*), magic (*sihr*), and geomancy (*raml*). “However, slowly but surely, this profession (*hīrfat*) came to serve as the basis of the group’s material life (*zindagānī-yi mādī*)” and was able in large part to structure popular opinion (*‘aqā‘id-i ‘umūmī*).<sup>94</sup> Before dialectical materialism was said to be able to adequately explain the social function of devotion (*fadākārī*), it was once thought that an individual’s social powers (*quvā-yi ijtimā‘ī-yi yik fard*) were rooted in the influence of beings like Ahrīman the Ignorant (*jahl*).<sup>95</sup> According to Arānī, during periods of religious reformation (*mazāhib-i iślāḥ*) when the space for scientific inquiry was permitted (*maydān rā barā-yi ‘aqāyid-i ‘ilmī āzād mīguzārad*), practices such as divination (*ghayb ‘gū‘ī*) become naturally inhibited.<sup>96</sup>

Because of this form of progress and man’s repudiation of his former incapacitation (*dar ibtidā bashar ‘ājiztar būdah*),<sup>97</sup> he no longer needs to feel compelled to act based on the injunctions of jinn and

<sup>93</sup>Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing* (London: Verso, 2012), 355.

<sup>94</sup>Arānī, *Pisīkūlūzhī*, 270.

<sup>95</sup>Arānī, *Bashar Az Naẓar-i Mādī*, 30-1.

<sup>96</sup>Arānī, *Pisīkūlūzhī*, 272.

<sup>97</sup>Arānī, *Pisīkūlūzhī*, 275.

devils (*ḥukm-i ajinnah va shayāṭīn*),<sup>98</sup> engage in apotropaic rituals—such as tribal tattooing (*khāl'kūbī*)—to distance himself from their insidiousness,<sup>99</sup> or submit to Mawlavī's (Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, 1207-73/604-672 gh.) periodisation model that describes the progressive perfection of existents (*takāmul-i mawjūdāt*) in contradistinction to the findings of the natural sciences (*'ulūm-i ṭabī'ī*), such as fossil-based paleontological mapping,<sup>100</sup> for he understands that to cleanse one's heart through illusory mystical instructions (*dastūrāt-i mawhūm*) is equivalent to wanting to dominate the skies by means of a flying carpet (*qālīchah*) or Sīmurgh, the ancient mythical flying creature of Iranian lore. “Not only has materialist thinking and methodology (*ṭarz-i tafakkur va uslūb-i māddī*) in reality effaced (*maḥv kard*) such illusions,” it has also offered man the conditions and instruments to realise goals such as flight.<sup>101</sup> Above all, it is the dialectical materialist thinker (*mutifakkir-i māddī-yi diyāliktīk*) who, with the precise and absolute laws of physics and chemistry (*qavānīn-i fīzīk va shīmī-yi daqīq va jabrī*) in his possession, is capable of brushing aside (*pusht-i pā bizanad*) the fallacious power of the geomancer's breath (*nafas-i rammāl*).<sup>102</sup>

### ***Kasravī's Demonology***

Besides their equal disdain for mystical thought,<sup>103</sup> Arānī's notion of an irrational demonism also corresponded with Shī'ī reformer Aḥmad Kasravī's approach to the topic. To understand Kasravī's demonological contribution, it must be recognised that late-nineteenth century Iran was a period of immense religious transformation that radically altered the structure of Shī'ī inquiry and the sect's

<sup>98</sup>Arānī, *Pisṭkūlūzhī*, 275.

<sup>99</sup>Taqī Arānī, “Hunar va Mātiriyālism (Art and Materialism),” in *Nivishtah 'ha-yi 'Ilmī, Fal-saft, va Ijtīmā'ī* (Scientific, Philosophical, and Social Writings) (Florence: Intishārāt-i Mazdak, 1975/1354 sh.), 32.

<sup>100</sup>Arānī, “‘Irfān va Uṣūl-i Māddī,” 119.

<sup>101</sup>Arānī, *Bashar Az Naẓar-i Māddī*, 31.

<sup>102</sup>Arānī, *Bashar Az Naẓar-i Māddī*, 57.

<sup>103</sup>Ridgeon, *Sufi Castigator*, 191.

understanding of reason. In addition to the (debatably) crippled state of scholastic rationalism<sup>104</sup> and the Orientalist exhortation that Iranians replace “their *myths* with *facts*,”<sup>105</sup> the reformist writings of ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī (1851-95/1270-1314 gh.) and Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī (1838-97/1257-1316 gh.), which were rejuvenated a few decades later by the likes of Rizā Qulī Sharī‘at Sangilajī (1890-1944/1309-63 gh.), ‘Alī Akbar Ḥakamī‘zādah (d. 1988/1367 sh.) and Kasravī marked an attempt to reverse what they perceived to be a steep decline in thought (*inḥiṭāt-i tafakur*).<sup>106</sup> These thinkers and their supporters shared a desire for a rationally-inspired Islamic renaissance that would finally relinquish the dependency on the hadith-centrism of the Majlisī School.<sup>107</sup> The accompanying critique of fanaticism, superstition, and traditionalism was construed by the clerical establishment as a serious affront to its socio-political standing.<sup>108</sup> In spite of this, the reformers persisted in their efforts, and in so doing contributed to the complexity of the period’s demonological configuration.

In Kasravī’s *Rāh-i Rastgārī* (The Path of Salvation), not only is the necessity of religion declared (*jahāniyān bi’ dīn natavānand zīst*), the central place of reason (*āyīn-i khirad*) in the endurance of dispensational unity is also underlined. By allowing rationality to be the internal guide of religion, every element that contradicts this precept becomes situated beyond the normative bounds of the creed (*rāhnamā-yi dīn khirad ast va har ānchah bā khirad durust nabāshad az dīn bīrūn ast*).<sup>109</sup> As Kasravī puts it, let the past be

<sup>104</sup>John Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 169.

<sup>105</sup>Ali M. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>106</sup>Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

<sup>107</sup>Ali Rahnama, *Shi’i Reformation in Iran* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 112.

<sup>108</sup>Sohrab Behdad, “Utopia of Assassins: Navvab Safavi and the Fada’ian-e Eslam in Prerevolutionary Iran,” in *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity*, ed. Ramin Jahanbegloo (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004), 73-4.

<sup>109</sup>Aḥmad Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī* (The Path of Salvation) (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Majīd, 1378 sh.), 26.

the past (*guzashtah'hā guzashtah'hā*).<sup>110</sup> With reason at its helm, religion serves to inhibit dispersion (*parākandagī*) and the groundless thoughts (*pindār'hā-yi bī'pāyah*) that underpin this scattering. One of these thoughts is the hypostatic Ahrīman.<sup>111</sup>

What is ultimately betrayed in Kasravī's line of thinking is his adherence to a crude and skeptical form of phenomenological bracketing<sup>112</sup> that jettisons the demonic from determined frontiers of reality for the purpose of focusing on the rational kernel of actuality. Kasravī says that if one accepts the reality of Ahrīman, there is a simultaneous misunderstanding (*nimīshināsand*) of religion.<sup>113</sup> In other words, like many ancient Greeks who “relapsed with a sigh of relief into the pleasures and comforts of the primitive” in the midst of great philosophical and medical advances,<sup>114</sup> Kasravī asserts that a regressive segment of Iranian society is attracted to Ahrīman's fallacious advances during a time when rationalised religious discourse is most available for observance.

Like Arānī who renounced demonic existence but simultaneously used it for scientific explanation, Kasravī coerced the demonic into the realm of irrational non-existence, all the while allowing it to remain an integral part of his explanatory apparatus. To put it differently, for Kasravī the conceptualisation of a rational religion hinged upon the inclusive exclusion of the demonic. This is seen when Ahrīman is presented in a roundabout way as the product and producer of a multiplicity of polluted unknowings (*ālūdah-yi šad nādānī*),<sup>115</sup> forms of idleness (*bīkārī*),<sup>116</sup> as well as a renewed commitment to idol worship (*but'parastī'hā-yi nuvīnī āghāz kardah'and*) and the generational perversions (*ān gumrāhī'hā-yi mardumān ast ki*

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<sup>110</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 117.

<sup>111</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 26-7.

<sup>112</sup>Edmund Husserl, *Ideas, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 61.

<sup>113</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 27.

<sup>114</sup>E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 193.

<sup>115</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 28.

<sup>116</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 152.

*har zamān chīz-i dīgarī bāshad*) that spring up unfailingly<sup>117</sup>—the consequence of such nescience being the scattered focus of obedience (*dar barābar-i ānhā gardan kaj mīsākhtand*).<sup>118</sup> He goes on to say that the idol worshippers (*but'parastān*) who pursue these avenues will end up in a shoreless field of thoughts and suppositions (*maydān-i pindār va ingār-i bīkarān ast*)<sup>119</sup> similar to the pre-Socratic Apeiron in that its limitlessness cannot be reduced to anything but itself.<sup>120</sup>

Kasravī's realm of degenerative sliding (*laghzhishgāh*) is said to be due to the abandonment of Islam's simplicity (*dīn-i sādah*) in favour of Greek philosophical (*falsafah-yi Yūnān*) debates put forth by the likes of Plato (*Aflātūn*) and Aristotle (*Arastū*). Independent thoughts were appended to ancient Greek ideas (*īnhā pindār'hā ī nīz az khvud bi pindār'hā-yi kuhan-i Yūnānī afzūdand*) and this led to the creation of Sufism (*Šūfī'garī*), esotericism (*bāḡinī'garī*), and *kharābātī'garī* (doctrine of frequenting taverns).<sup>121</sup> What resulted from all this activity of diluting truths with crookedness (*rāstī'hā rā bā kajī'hā dar ham āmīkhtah'and*)<sup>122</sup> was the production of empty and meaningless texts (*nivishtah'hā-yi pūch-i bī'ma'nā'ī*).<sup>123</sup> Though this meaninglessness has limitless potential, it is essentially based on a perceptual limitation (*andāzah nigāh nadārand*), particularly among those considered to be the most learned (*dānishvarān*).<sup>124</sup> They insist upon bringing forth self-circumscribed truths through the weaving of incantations (*munājāt'bāfī*), verse construction (*āyah'sāzī*), and sleight of hand (*shu'badah'bāzī*), while absolute certainties are left to languish.<sup>125</sup> This being so, there is a bestial (*chahārpāyān va*

<sup>117</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 76.

<sup>118</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 28.

<sup>119</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 37.

<sup>120</sup>Adam Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians: The Divine Arche* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 9.

<sup>121</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 37-8.

<sup>122</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 76.

<sup>123</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 39.

<sup>124</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 41.

<sup>125</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 76-7.

*dadān*)<sup>126</sup> quality to all these doctrinal constructions in that they are rooted in irrationality.

In his account of the bestial in *Āyīn* (Creed), Kasravī places stress on necessity (*nāchār va nākhvāh*)<sup>127</sup> and because the bestial is situated outside the bounds of the rationalistic religion he is advocating (*kasānī ki dīn rā kinār mī' guzārānd hamtā-yi chahārpāyān va dadān 'and*),<sup>128</sup> Natural necessity begins to intermingle with the demonic, since Ahrīman is also located in the beyond. Kasravī states that “most Europeans do not separate humans (*ādamī*) from other creatures (*jānivarān*),” and this leads to their support of human emulation of animal existence (*bi gumān-i īshān ādamī mītavānad balkah mībāyad hamchūn dadān va chahārpāyān zindagī kunad*).<sup>129</sup> By endorsing this crosspollination, scholars and philosophers (*dānishmand va fīlsūf*) are said to be enemies of humankind (*gūyī dushman-i jins-i ādamī būdah 'and*) and envious (*rashk*) of animals,<sup>130</sup> even though (to Kasravī's unbeknownst) the truth may be more ambivalent than this, for they also “refuse [...] to be like [...] animal[s].”<sup>131</sup> All the same, the function of reason is to reject man's integration with the bestial and to thus guide him away from irrationality (*ādamī bāyad khirad rā rāhnamā-yi khvud sākhtah*)<sup>132</sup> through the rise of prophets (*payghambarān bi dushmanī-yi ānhā barkhvāstah 'and*).<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 51.

<sup>127</sup>Kasravī, *Rāh-i Rastgārī*, 51.

<sup>128</sup>Aḥmad Kasravī, *Āyīn* (Creed) (N.p.: Chāp-i Rashdīyah, 1977/2536 sha.), (Part I) 52.

<sup>129</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part I) 56.

<sup>130</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part II) 5.

<sup>131</sup>In respect to historical memory, it is said, “Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night and from day to day, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure, and thus neither melancholy nor bored. This is a hard sight for man to see; for, though he thinks himself better than the animals because he is human, he cannot help envying them their happiness - what they have, a life neither bored nor painful, is precisely what he wants, yet he cannot have it because he refuses to be like an animal.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 60.

<sup>132</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part I) 57.

<sup>133</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part II) 10.

Running parallel to the wave of self-doubt that swept over segments of the Western intelligentsia just prior to and during the Second World War when “technical rationality” simply became synonymous with the “rationality of domination”<sup>134</sup> and “the Enlightenment [...] eradicated the last remnant of its own self-awareness,”<sup>135</sup> was Kasravī’s assertion that modern European contributions to science—which, one could say, is of Ahrīmanic origin insofar as they are not rooted in a rational kernel—directly led to the creation of hellish instruments (*abzār’hā-yi dūzakhī*) of war. According to him, prior to the European takeover as the vanguard scientific civilisation, the sciences offered humanity more benefit than harm (*sūdāsh bīshtar az zīyānash būdah*), but that this has now reversed. Similar to the way Islamic philosophers and mystics supplement unalloyed truisms with self-circumscribed propositions, European scholars likewise pervert objective scientific findings with trifling ideational (*pindār’hā*) additives. This tendency is rooted in their insubstantial core (*bīmāyah’and*) and illusory claim to mastery (*da’vī-yi ustādī mī’kunand*). The connection between economic motive (*vasīlah-yi tavāngarī*)<sup>136</sup> and technology’s social ascendancy<sup>137</sup> enters the demonological landscape when Kasravī equates profit maximisation with the increased production of hellish instruments (*shumārah-yi abzār’hā-yi dūzakhī rūz’afzūn ast*).<sup>138</sup> Though the Europeans have acquired a great wealth of knowledge (*dānish-i bīkarān andūkhtah*) and talent (*hunarmandī zamīn rā bi āsimān dūkhtah*), it is due to their irreligiosity (*bī’dīnī*) that the world has transformed into hell (*dūzakh*).<sup>139</sup>

Confused by the hypnotic grip the hellish instruments have on man

<sup>134</sup>Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 95.

<sup>135</sup>Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 2.

<sup>136</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part I) 38.

<sup>137</sup>Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 95.

<sup>138</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part I) 38.

<sup>139</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part I) 52.

(*ākhar īn abzār-i dūzakhī chi arzišī dārad ki jahān īn hamah giriftār-i āsīb 'hā-yi ū bāshad?!),*<sup>140</sup> Kasravī leaves us off with the strong impression that it was not simply Rizā Shāh who was “fascinated by technological aspects of modernisation.”<sup>141</sup> The wicked acts of the authorities (*rizālat 'hā-yi mamūrīn*)<sup>142</sup>—which he speaks of in *Qānūn-i Dādgarī* (The Just Law)—an almost obvious place to look for the demonic, is not the operative location of Iranian demonology during this time. It cannot even be said that his charge against the European scientific intervention is part of a critique of reason. For Kasravī, much of lived experience is rooted in demonic irrationality, to the point where bestial anti-humanism and modern instruments of war enter its orbit. In so doing, both the Shī'ī modernist and Arānī, the hardened dialectical materialist, contributed to the transformation of a discourse they are rarely—if ever—associated with, thus sending the demonic into a deeper state of lawlessness.

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<sup>140</sup>Kasravī, *Āyīn*, (Part II) 18.

<sup>141</sup>Atabaki and Zürcher, “Introduction,” 11.

<sup>142</sup>Aḥmad Kasravī, *Qānūn-i Dādgarī* (The Just Law) (Tehran: N.p., 1961/1340 sh.), 34.