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An Investigation of Hegel's and Gilbert Durant's Views of Imagination and Visualization and Their Reflection in the Iranian Miniature

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Abstract

Faculties of imagination and visualization, having a history as long as the history of the creation of man, play major roles in the formation of various arts and since there could be no works of art without their direct and indirect influence, the research on these forces seems indispensable. Accordingly, the present study which is a library research using the descriptive-analytical method aims at examining the "structure" of imagination and visualization as understood by Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel- the German Philosopher- and Gilbert Durant-French orientalist, Islam scholar and philosopher-and other thinkers such as Henry Corbin-prominent orientalist and Islam scholar, Shaheb-e-ddin Sohrevardi-philosophy of illumination, Avicenna, and Abu Hamed Ghazali- and their reflection in the Iranian miniature. These figures consider the faculties of imagination and visualization in the realm of "form" and "conception" or in the field of "association of meaning" and "metaphor" or the "simile" and "interpretation" or in the sphere of "revelation" and "inspiration" with respect to the "material" and the "spiritual". In this research, first the review of related literature is presented which is relatively poor as to the scarcity of articles and books on the subject and then historical roots of the terms imagination and visualization are brought to the fore as they have been used and defined in works of different philosophers and finally to dig deeper into the two concepts, the article not only does go over the German philosopher Fredrich Wilhelm Hegel's ideas about them—especially his theory of criticizing audio and visual arts which is based on the analogy between creative and fantastic structure in the arts—but also it deals with some ideas of Gilbert Durant- French philosopher and Islam scholar- and other orientalists like Henry Corbin and Gaston Bachelard as well as Iranian thinkers and philosophers and jurists like Avicenna, Shahab-e-ddin Sohrevardi-philosophy of illumination, and Abu Hamed Ghazali. In so doing, the present research tries to discover the reflections of the opinions of these philosophers in the works of a group of Iranian artist belonging to the Teymurid and Safavid era. In fact, after scrutinizing the views and opinions of the aforementioned philosophers, orientalists and mystics regarding the concepts of imagination and visualization, this paper brings to the fore the ways in which men of letter and art have managed to apply them in their works and, subsequently, to make out whether the artistic creation is totally through imagination and visualization or other forces and faculties should be taken into account. The findings of this study exposed the "supernatural" effects of the power of imagination and visualization in the realm of Iranian miniature.

Keywords: Imagination and visualization, form and conception, Mssociation and metaphor