Lecture 5: The Present Moment

“My friend, the Sufi is the son of the present moment. To say ‘tomorrow’ is not our way.”
—Rumi
I heard Abu Ali al-Daqqaq say that the “now”—waqt—is that in which you are. If you are in the world, your “now” is this world. If you are in the next world [the higher dimensions of the Tree of Life], your “now” is the next world. If you are in joy, your “now” is joy. If you are in sorrow, your “now” is sorrow. He means by this that the present moment is that which has dominance over a person.

—Al-Qushayri,
*Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*
Requirements for the Moment

Waqt [the present moment] may refer specifically to the time in which one is. Some people say that the present moment is between the two times, that is, the past and the future. And they say that the Sufi is the “son of his moment.” This means that he occupies himself immediately with whatever sort of devotion should come first in a given moment. He bases himself upon what is required of him at the time. It is said, “The dervish cares for neither the past nor the future of his moment: he cares for the moment in which he is.” And regarding this, “To be preoccupied with what escaped you in a moment that has passed is to waste a second moment.”

—Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
The Sufis also may use *waqt* to mean the power and direction of the Truth when it comes over them regardless of their own will. They say, “So-and-so is under the rule of the now,” (bi hukm il-waqt)—that is, he has surrendered himself without preference to whatever appears to him from the unknown. This can apply only to circumstances where God Most High has given no order, and where there is no model in the Divine Ordinance that one is obliged to follow. For to neglect that to which you have been ordered, to make an order an object of surmise, and to be indifferent to your falling short of your duty, is to depart from the religion.

—Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*
The Moment is a Sword

One of the sayings of the Sufis is, “The moment is a sword.” That is, in just the way that a sword severs, the present moment shows forth the influence of God’s action, ending things and bringing them to be. It is said, “The touch of the flat of a sword is temperate, but its blade cuts”—the one who treats it gently is safe and the one who treats it rudely is destroyed. Thus with the “now”: Whoever submits himself to its authority is saved and whoever resists it deteriorates and declines. They have recited about this:

Like a sword, if you polish it, its touch is soothing
But its edge, if you are harsh to it, is harsh.
If the moment makes someone happy, it is just a moment to him.
If it makes him miserable, it becomes something hateful.

–Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
Remembering God with the heart is called the sword of seekers. With it the seeker slays his enemies [egos, defects, nafs] and drives off [karmic] troubles that are headed for him. Even if difficulty should overshadow the servant, his fleeing to God Most High in his heart immediately turns away from him the thing he hates.

–Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
Psychological States and External Events

The best weapon that a human being can use in life is a correct psychological state. One can disarm beasts and unmask traitors by means of appropriate internal states. Wrong internal states convert us into defenseless victims of human perversity.

You must learn to face the most unpleasant events of practical life with an appropriate internal uprightness...

You must not become identified with any event. Remember that everything passes away.

You must learn to look at life like a movie; thus, you shall receive the benefits...

You must not forget that if you do not eliminate mistaken internal states from your psyche, then events of no value could bring you disgrace.

Unquestionably, each external event needs its appropriate fare, that is, its precise psychological state.

—Samael Aun Weor, *Treatise of Revolutionary Psychology*: “Personal Events”
God, the Most High, says, “Then did you come hither as ordained, O Moses!” (20:40). The metaphysical moment or time constitutes an instant in which nothing but God can be contained. The people of the metaphysical moment are three groups. For one, the metaphysical moment is like a flash of lightning, for another, it is lasting, while for another, it is overwhelming.

–Abdullah Ansari of Herat, Stations of the Sufi Path
The Three Levels of Sufism

- Introductory: Shari‘ah, Exoteric
- Intermediate: Tariqah, Mesoteric
- Advanced: Haqiqah / Marifah, Esoteric
Three Degrees of the Moment

The moment that is like a flash of lightning is purifying, washing away defects. The moment that is lasting is awe-inspiring and keeps one occupied. The moment that is overwhelming destroys and annihilates.

The moment like a flash of lightning arises from contemplative reflection (fikrat). The moment that is lasting arises from delight in divine remembrance and invocation. The moment that is overwhelming arises from the audition of spiritual vision.

That which is like a flash of lightning makes one oblivious of the world and illuminates one’s recollection of the hereafter. The moment that is lasting will keep one engaged in itself rather than preoccupied with the hereafter, until the Truth becomes evident. The moment that is overwhelming eliminates the conditioned habits of the human state, so that the transcendent Truth alone abides.

–Abdullah Ansari of Herat, Stations of the Sufi Path