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Allahu Akbar: When the Imaginative, the Beautiful and the Ethical Meet in Muslim Futures

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Abstract

This article explores and situates the manifestation of Muslim futures, a socio-ethical and aesthetic movement encompassing young Muslims creating artworks in which they engage a wide range of moral dilemmas ranging from systemic oppression (in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries), unequal wealth distribution, to the consequences of climate change. Taking a Muslim futures exhibition in Berlin as point of entry, this article argues that within the praxis and intellectual paradigms of imagining and articulating Muslim futures, the entities of ethics imagination (*khayal*), ethics (*akhlāq*), and beauty (*jamal*) are intrinsically linked and paramount in an understanding of how the Islamically meaningful influences these endeavors. This paper aims to contribute to understandings of Muslim subjectivity through a decolonial framework by situating analysis into a non-secular framework of reference, exercising the latest calls to go “beyond the human horizon”, placing the spiritual undertones of the project at the center of consideration.

Keywords

imagination – ethics – beauty – Muslims in Europe – futures – decoloniality

1 Introduction: Decolonizing Decoloniality?

Recent theoretical scholarship on the study of Muslims has called attention to the lack of epistemic diversity despite intentions and aims to embrace it as both “a matter of principle and intellectual imperative” (Harrison, 2016,163). This call has been spurred by the conceptual currents underlying the idea of decoloniality, according to which more space should be carved out for epistemologies that come from “the knowledge traditions of the West’s internal and external others” (Mignolo, 2021; Santos, 2018). Accordingly, these should be “taken seriously” as Eurocentric universalism is addressed and resituated as one truth-claim and knowledge paradigm among others. In her sharp and compelling article, however, Yasmin Moll questions the “taken-for-granted invocations of what decolonizing disciplines demands”, for she pinpoints how this project of including knowledge traditions outside of the “West’s internal and external others” is predominantly “secular and tacitly liberal” (Moll, 2023,748). Even “in seeking imagined alternatives beyond it”, the secular and liberal knowledge paradigms still reign supreme, and serve as primary valorising and validating forces in attempts to take other knowledge traditions “seriously” (Moll, 2023,748). In defining the secular, Moll relies on Charles Taylor, who argues that the secular can be seen as the theorization of a social life that is not predicated on divine sovereignty (Taylor, 2006). Talal Asad goes on to coin the secular as an epistemic category, as the “new sacred”, for it orders and structures the analytical gaze – including when we attempt to understand the importance of the metaphysical and ethereal realms of divinity in the lives of believers. Accordingly, as Moll points out: we seldom explicitly “make them [God, the divine] the explicit basis of either our pedagogy or our theory” (Moll, 2023,749). This does not mean that we should make a call for epistemological truth-claims, arguing about whether God(s) exists or not. It has more to do with the endeavour to spatialise and intellectualise the idea of the divine in our attempts to understand adherents of any faith. In essence, it is a call to actually “take seriously” the self-proclaimed aim of decoloniality to include other epistemologies – even if these epistemologies are premised on the metaphysical. Underlying this call is therefore also the notion that the human should be decentred as the primary point of orientation. Initially stemming from environmental studies (and in particular from indigenous eco-philosophies), this anthropocentric critique encapsulates the idea that humans, rather than being the main/sole point of reference and primary object of inquiry, are but one cog in the mechanism that is the cosmology of life in all forms, given the interconnectedness and interdependence between all creatures, organisms, and life forms on planet earth (Grim, 1997). Applying these anthropocentric critiques to the field of religion, we include not only trees and plants but also spirits,

God(s) and other metaphysical entities. As Amira Mittermaier notes, this centring of the human has in essence meant that we have sealed off “the visible, material, and worldly from the invisible, immaterial, and other-worldly” (Mittermaier, 2021,22). This worldview in turn leads us to “write out God”. For Muslims, it is not other humans who centre their worldview – it is God (the importance of which is comprised, for Muslims, in the idiom of *Allahu akbar* – Allah is the greatest, as pointed out by Mittermaier).

In this article, I attempt to exercise this call for the decentring of the human and applying non-secular epistemologies by making God the starting point of my pedagogy as I seek to explore, situate and reflect on the upcoming artistic and intellectual movement that is Muslim futures in Europe. In other words, I attempt to “write God in”, to pay heed to Muslim positionality not only in name, but in content, worldview and dialectic. Thereby, I aim to unpack and add layers to this positionality from which these artists and thinkers seek to situate their artworks and projects, and explain a Muslim movement, for what it is worth, “Islamically”, divinely.¹ A conscious effort to decolonise Islamic or Muslim Studies entails not only addressing Sunni-centrism, discussing Orientalism, and combatting tropes on integration or radicalization; it also speaks to the epistemological structures of the kind of knowledge making we pursue. An objection levelled at a non-secular framework could be that I am purporting yet another normative framework of sorts. I do not completely disagree here – I am not arguing for the complete replacement of one thing by another. If anything, I argue that multiple normative frameworks of reference can coexist and be in dialogue with each other. The question we should ask ourselves, however, when these concerns are voiced is why the secular presupposes claims of neutrality and inherent objectivity when its parameters have been birthed in particular contexts in particular spaces in particular times (Enlightenment period in Western Europe) and these have come to assume a universalism, set to influence and inspire epistemes across the global academy (Blankholm, 2022; Bhambra, 2011). If, as Faye Harrison mentions, an important part of the decoloniality of knowledge-making includes welcoming different epistemes, this article is an attempt at such an endeavour, using Islamic concepts to make sense of a movement in which Muslims are the primary agents/actors.²

1 I have not taken anything from any legal or juridical paradigms in Islam, for the legal, despite it being paramount to both Sunni and Shiiia traditions, does not comprise the only path forward to making sense of Muslim subjectivities, imaginaries or consciousness. See Thomas Bauer (2021) and Shahab Ahmed (2015) for further discussions.

2 Muslim futures, so far, has enjoyed analysis mainly through other secular frameworks and epistemologies which are dominant in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, literature

In this article, I focus on Muslim futures in Berlin, where young Muslims with a migration background create a plethora of artworks in which they postulate a wide range of ethical dilemmas, ranging from systemic oppression (in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries), unequal wealth distribution, and neo-imperialism, to global public health and the consequences of climate change. These artists and authors are taking the lead in imagining and articulating alternative visions of the future. Rather than posing questions surrounding the accuracy or authenticity of faith, spaces are carved out for evocative mentions of spirit, play, and soul, with questions raised surrounding our worldly responsibility and accountability as humans, articulated through the vector of the arts. It is not about staking truth-claims that tread on theological or jurisprudential territory, but rather about wandering into the unknown, and tracing, capturing, and articulating one's progress as one does so. We can make most sense of this movement by engaging philosophical and Sufi frameworks of reference, for figuratively expressing knowledge and meaning of the unknown (which is the locus of the future) has been part and parcel of those intellectual traditions for centuries (Akkach, 1997; Corbin, 1969; Edgar, 2011). Thus, it is through these modalities of art that one can find overlooked approaches to understanding and situating this movement within a long line of engaging the imaginative to aspire to beauty in the ethical sense. As Thomas Bauer (2021) has aptly put it; considering the importance of for instance *adab* (literature) across the Islamic world, it is astonishing how little serious attention has been given to the study of literature (and other arts) as ways of understanding Muslim consciousness and subjectivity on European soil, and especially as an insightful way of locating pathways of Islamic meaning-making.

Therefore, rather than discussing art-pieces in depth in this article, I wish to take them as an entry point into shedding light on overlooked concepts of making sense of Muslim consciousness through standing still by the faculty that is imagination, the entity through which these artists have articulated their alternative visions of the future. I do so because the imaginative, as argued by Mittermaier (2021,24), is an entity which is not, according to secular frames of reference, "anchored in the individual subject, but instead refers to the intermediary realm between the spiritual and the material, the divine and the human, the dreamer and multiple Others, presence and absence". She continues: "it is more akin to a tuning-in" (ibid.). Tuning into realms that we cannot observe with our blind eye, but realms to which Muslims have submitted belief (for God resides in the Unseen – *al-ghayb*, which is the same

studies, and political science. Rather than competing with or opposing these works, which are rich and insightful, I merely aim to add to the discourse.

locus as heaven, hell, djinn, angels, and demons). The realm of the psychological, Vincent Crapanzo (2003) suggests, unlike in the secular imaginary, is not located within one individual, but is manifested elsewhere – outside, in other realms. Situating the imaginative process accordingly leads us to different understandings and conceptualisations of the ways in which these artists arrive at their articulation of these alternative futures, and complicate Muslim subjectivity accordingly – broadening the parameters of what it means to be Islamically inspired.

With the main theme of these art pieces comprising ethical dilemmas of sorts, all across a wide range of subjects and across different conceptualisations of time and space, and with Muslim futures having articulated itself as a movement free from oppression of any kind, we can find moral undertones colouring in the enterprise. In Islam, particularly in both *falsafa* (philosophy) and *tasawwuf* (Sufism), we can find ample discussion of engagement with the imaginative in order to motivate and inspire moral action.

Accordingly, I aim to explore how the entities of imagination (*khayal*), ethics (*akhlaq*), and beauty (*jamal*) are intrinsically linked. This dialectic in turn can aid us in a pursuit of understanding how the Islamic not only inhabits and inspires these creative endeavours within Muslim futures, but can situate its importance through a non-secular framework of reference. By situating Muslim futures as linked to the faculty of *khayal* and, in turn, to the concepts of *akhlaq* and *jamal*, this article calls for a complexification of the ways in which Islam is being made meaningful as a tradition that is lived, explored, experienced, and re-configured throughout time and space.

I start by unpacking and situating the faculty that is the imagination by surveying works by Ibn Sina, al-Farabi, Ibn ‘Arabi, and al-Ghazali, exemplifying these thoughts by referencing the artworks of a few European Muslim artists. As moral dilemmas are the key topic in a variety of artworks, I discuss the importance of the ethical and link this to its aesthetic modality through the vector of beauty. Finally, I bring all elements together in the last section, where I explore the importance of engaging the imaginative in order to articulate and aspire to a more beautifully sound tomorrow.

2 Imagination: *Allahu Khaliq* (Allah Is the Creator)

For what is impossible for the One who makes Everything Possible? Who Creates and Says ‘Be!’ And it is? How beautiful are we when we dream, far away from interpretations and standards from the outside? When we listen within ourselves, what do we long for? (Muslim Futures Berlin, 2024)

On a cold January evening in Berlin's bustling neighbourhood of Mitte, tucked away in an unassuming alley that opened into an industrial-style courtyard connecting several art installs, I attended the first exhibition on Muslim Futures art in Germany (and Europe). Curated and organised by Ouassima Laabich, a brilliant and inspiring project leader for *Superrrlab* (a German organisation focused on creating equitable futures) and funded by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, the main idea behind the project was captured poignantly in the question: "What happens when we create a space in which futures are imagined from a Muslim positionality?"

Walking into one of the art display rooms a visitor is greeted by a welcoming sign, which reads, continuing from the opening quotation at the beginning of this section: "Muslim futures is an expression of longing: the attempt to draw futures that exist simultaneously and also in contradiction. They are visions we can stand for today – they dissolve boundaries that exist far removed from norms and hegemonies".

It concludes evocatively, stating that within this process of longing and imagining: "I draw from the connections, between here and there, me and you, and the (in)visible".

Accordingly, this notion of a "Muslim positionality" is inherently attuned to both the (im)material and (ethe)real, infused with references to other realms from which inspiration is drawn. The artworks in Muslim futures seek to captivate, evoke, touch, and inspire through imagery, song, film, sculpture, and (spoken) word. They deal with the beautiful and the ugly, with humour, sarcasm, satire, and irony, with the sublime and the mundane, at times the profane. They aim to provoke, ponder, and explore, and everything beyond and in between. Often, the works at hand are inspired by a particular subset or idea from an Islamic(ate) past, before the advent of European colonial enterprises, with ideas of what once was hoping to inhabit a bit of what will become; the celebration of a connection to ancestry and heritage remain important points of inspiration here.

Islamically, the starting point of positioning the imaginative is that when one imagines, one is merely imitating what one already knows, has encountered, or has seen. It is therefore more akin to what Plato and Aristotle dubbed *mimesis*, the act of representing nature – mimicking our natural surroundings (Woodruff, 2015). Only God is the true Creator – *al Khaliq* – and every element in our imagination comes from an aspect, an event, an entity, that is already created; we are simply using these creations as inspiration points and notes – mimicking and appreciating divine creations through play and dialogue, mixing and matching (Chittick, 2011). Indonesian artist Pirous captured this succinctly when he stated that his art pieces are his "spiritual notes", his diary

entries into engaging the divine (George, 2008). Imagination is paramount when one creates art but, Islamically, it is also paramount for one's spiritual development, for it is believed that through our imaginations and dreams we tap into other realms connecting us to the divine. These other realms include the physical (the Seen) and the immaterial (the Unseen, *al-ghayb*), which are separated by the thin in-between veil of *barzakh* (Rahman, 1964; van Lit, 2017). According to Sufi-philosophers, another realm exists, '*alam al-mithal*, or the world of Mirrors/Suspended Images (van Lit, 2017; Corbin, 1969). It is here that we can connect with both worlds, and it is here that the faculties of spirit (*ruh*) and soul (*nafs*) reside. The spatial and temporal dimensions of this world are fleeting; the imaginary cannot be pinpointed and localised concretely, but rather forms a vector simultaneously connecting several time periods and physical realms. It is thus also the imaginative which we, as Ebrahim Moosa (2005) notes, share with our ancestors and with our descendants and, therefore, it is important to engage the imaginative in order to interact creatively with a wide plethora of intellectual and cultural traditions. In his famed *al-munqidh min al-dalal* (Deliverance from Error), al-Ghazali writes about the importance of dreams as a state of being in which a third eye opens and "in which the imaginative faculty is manifested" (McCarthy, 1999,73). Dreams are essentially the places and spaces where one gets to dwell and float in between these aforementioned realms, which function as mediators of sorts (Edgar, 2011; Azadpur, 2011; Mittermaier, 2011). Interpreting dreams, and thus assessing one's imaginative trajectories, has long been part and parcel of spiritual praxis amongst Muslims, for they reveal exchanges between the Unseen and the Seen that regular people can only tap into when they imagine and dream (only Prophets can do so when awake, as al-Ghazali notes in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*) (cited in Edgar, 2011; Mittermaier, 2011).

According to Mohammad Azadpur, however, for Ibn Sina (d.1037/428), a direct connection also exists between the imaginative faculty and the faculty that is the intellect, which is not a stage far beyond it: "... for Avicenna, the intellect disciplines the imagination in order that it can receive the influences of the Active Intellect and the celestial souls" (Azadpur, 2011,70). When the imagination is disciplined by its intellect, it is no longer susceptible to its animal desires and distractions, and begins to be "attentive to the intrinsic interestingness of the images and genuine feelings of pleasure and astonishment" (Azadpur, 2011,74). Azadpur writes:

in Provenance and Destination (*al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*), Avicenna describes this state of being: one then receives its inspirations, symbolizes them, and is enthralled by their sublimity: "The imagination then

begins to represent these intelligibles (radiated upon the soul by the Active Intellect) and depict them in the common sense at which time the senses perceive an indescribable grandeur and power that belongs to God". (Azadpur, 2011,74)

In other words, it is imperative for one's spiritual development to stand still at the emotional impact of the sublime. Al-Ghazali and other philosophers such as al-Farabi wrote extensively about the importance of linguistics and poetics and their ability to invoke this powerful emotional impact. Next to poetics, however, I would add all art forms as presented by the Muslim futurists in this exhibition, ranging from evocations prompted by a photo, a painting, a tapestry, a sound piece, an animated film, or a VR game. VRX artist Kadir Bagli and film director Nilgun Akinci made a short animated film titled *A Message to Your Heart*, appealing to the Sufi idea of *kalb-i-selim* (the pure heart/heart with a sound conscience). While displaying stunningly intricate and warm imagery, the subtitles read: "this kalb-i-selim nurtures virtues – truth, clarity, beauty, creating a tapestry of wisdom and insights. Can you feel this tapestry being woven within you?"

As a Muslim woman myself, looking at this short film evoked a plethora of emotions, questions, and imaginations of my own, as I was reminded of a concept that I had not encountered in a while. Ibn Sina discusses this, theorising that the soul responds psychologically (*nafsaniyyan*) rather than cognitively (*ma'rifiyyan*) (Black, 1989). This dialectic process of articulating one's imagination for others to behold invokes and speaks to a Muslim consciousness of sorts (as I understood and placed the artworks accordingly), through which others engage and to which they respond, thereby becoming an important medium for dialogue about futures.

As al-Ghazali wrote, the imaginative is imperative for the creative spirit of humanity to embark on the quest of obtaining *'ilm* (knowledge) and becoming inspired in how to pursue, in Rawlsian terms, the good life – or in Taha'ian terms,³ pay heed to the *amana* (covenant) with which Allah entrusted us humans to take good care of His creations (Hashas, 2015). Imagination therefore plays a key role in aspiring to moral action, a relationship I shall explore in the next section.

3 Referring to the work of Abderahman Taha.

3 Ethics, Beauty, and Imagination: *Allahu Jamil* (Allah Is Beautiful)

Allah is Beautiful, and He loves Beauty.

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD, narrated by Abdullah Bin Mas'ud,
Muslim in his Sahih, no. 131

In his *Book of Letters* (*Kitab al-Huruf*), al-Farabi (d.951/340) suggests that intellectual truths and prophetic insights (articulated by the [religious] lawgiver) that can aid “the multitude” on the path toward happiness become, “in their intellectual camouflage, attractive to the public” (Azadpur, 2011,69). As a result, the people’s imaginations become engaged intellectually (albeit in a sensory disguise) and they can be set on the path to virtue and wisdom (Azadpur, 2011,72). Azadpur explains that, for al-Farabi, imaginative representations “guide the person toward the condition of dialogical thinking (*mufakira*), in which the intellect engages the animal powers of the soul, leading to the attainment of practical and theoretical virtue” (73). This theory of imagination was based on Aristotle’s *De Anima*, and, as Nabil Matar (1996) argues, the definition of imagination was thus, for al-Farabi, predicated on its function to make prophetic insights and intellectual truths imaginable, thereby motivating one to [moral and spiritual] action. The purpose of making matters imaginable, described by al-Farabi as *mukhayyila*, is to impel the listener towards doing that thing which has been imagined (*khuyyil*) to him in a certain matter (either making him seek it or avoid it, withdraw from it or detest it, or any other action of harm or charity) regardless of whether what has been imaginatively made to appear (*yukhayyal*) is true or not. Clearly, the matter depends on what has been imagined (*khuyyil*) and not on what is real. (Matar, 1996,103).

The imaginative faculty is thus seen as an inspirational source to tap into order to expose limits and opportunities, enabling one to creatively overcome and challenge, to innovate and explore. Thinking about and reimagining Muslim futures in Europe is a culmination and expression of this trajectory. Moral concerns have underpinned the work of each of these futurists, ranging from issues of racism, politics of desire, and feminism, to contemporary debates surrounding belonging, historicization, and identity as Muslims in Europe. Addressing women’s politicized bodies, we see, in the paintings of Elif Celik, Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love, and Shahmaran, the ruler of the serpents of the underworld, “join the sexist depictions of Muslim women in 18th century Europe as orientalist harem representations” (Muslim Futures, 2024, mexhibition plaque). Before we imagine equitable futures for women, she argues, we need to reflect on women’s representations and self-images

throughout the histories of both the Middle East and Europe. Alongside being aesthetically pleasing, this painting articulates moral concerns that have persisted across time and space.

In light of recent scholarship on the underestimated connections between ethics and aesthetics in Islamic thought and experience, I argue that it is imperative to situate the concept of beauty (*jamal*) within discussions on imagining alternative Muslim futures, for it potentially functions as the standard and parameter by which we can valorise the project (Vasalou, 2022; Abou El Fadl, 2006; Murata, 2017). Beauty is not only perceived to be a purely aesthetic quality – it speaks to the kind of moral action that the imaginative work inspires one to pursue. It therefore serves as the connecting mechanism that locks in the other elements of ethics and the imagination itself. As José Miguel Puerta-Vilchez (2024,47) notes,

the fact is that the Quran, as a message that offers a new order for the cosmos and mankind's place within it, speaks in aesthetic terms of the universe and nature as well as of man and his works; and the Quran itself, as a revealed text, is conceived of as a beautiful and perfect work.

In her work on the teachings of Ruzbihan Baqli (d.1209/605), Kazuyo Murata (2017,1–3) refers to Edward Farley, a Christian theologian, who argues that this lack of appreciation for the role of beauty as an interpretive concept is in fact a key characteristic of post-modern societies, where the beautiful as a domain has been violently separated from its role in articulating ethical dispositions and instead has become part and parcel of the realm of art alone. Murata argues that the concept of beauty is a neglected dimension of Islamic thought, for traditionally, beauty “had a central place in the universe and human life ... the pursuit of the beauty at all levels (e.g. material, ethical, spiritual) [were] part and parcel of the life of a good Muslim” (ibid.). William Chittick (2011,11) writes that ethics, for Muslim philosophers, “is the study of character traits with the practical goal of beautifying the soul”. He notes that woman, like God, loves Beauty, for all beauty is a trace of God's beauty (for God is the Most Beautiful). Sophia Vasalou's work on al-Ghazali's ethics and the conceptualisation of beauty further demonstrates this notion. She illustrates how, according to al-Ghazali, the good and the beautiful are inherently connected to each other: “love of God is love of beauty, and virtue is one of the forms of beauty” (Vasalou, 2022,3). According to Vasalou, “moral virtue is the prime exemplar of intelligible type of beauty ... the admiration we experience towards outstanding moral exemplars, this suggests, has an aesthetic modality” (ibid.:3). Al-Ghazali, in his magnum opus *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, proposes

a pathway to God in which he explicates “the ethical and spiritual formation required to reach ultimate happiness, this being happiness in God” (3). This approach, as Vasalou shows, is essentially “an account of ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics rolled into one” (4). The idea and notion of the imaginative faculty plays a key part in engagement with this metaphysical element enshrined in this trinity, for it enables the seeker to interact and engage with that which cannot be seen, but which one has nonetheless submitted belief in (Divine Revelation), (Vasalou, 2022).

Through aesthetically imagining Muslim futures situated within ethical frameworks, the spiritual is engaged and the importance of obtaining and acting upon knowledge to eventually realise these imaginations (or prevent them from happening) is creatively articulated. Expressing ethical concerns through works of art can redirect conversations about the future. The beauty of art lies in the ability to invoke and evoke, to provide access to other realms, being a “reflection and conduit of transcendent beauty”, as Vasalou (2022,7) accurately suggests. As translated and interpreted by Wael Hallaq, Abderrahman Taha, as one of the most important Sunni thinkers alive today (named *Khalifat al-Ghazali*, successor to al-Ghazali, by his peers), has posited that Muslims should not ask why we should be moral, but *how*, for morality should be an inherent disposition of our innate state of being (*fitra*) (Hallaq, 2019). This question of how exactly we can be moral as humans who are responsible for taking care of each other and the planet that we inherited is re-centred within conversations about Muslim consciousness by invoking and addressing our consciousness through these artistic projects. Having *akhlaq* as its cornerstone and the realm of aesthetics as its articulation, the current emerging discourse of Muslim futures yields promising and telling narratives, thought experiments, and experiences. These should be taken seriously as expressions of contemporary Muslim subjectivity and Islam as a lived tradition that continuously seeks to renegotiate the perils of everyday contemporary life, cautiously venturing into unknown futures.

4 Conclusion: Spiritual Note-Taking on the Day after Coloniality⁴

In this article, I have attempted to take grappling with the immaterial, the divine, the invisible, as the starting point of my analysis. I have sought to situate and explicate the emerging arts movement that is Muslim futures first

⁴ Inspired by Moll, 2023: 756.

and foremost by delving deeper into particular elements in which this project has anchored itself: the connections “between you, me, here, there, and the (in)visible”. In line with Mittermaier’s (2011,23) suggestion, I have aimed to incorporate “the oscillation between immanence and transcendence”, to attempt to welcome that which we struggle to capture or see, by tuning in and visualising its patterns and traces.

This article thus represents a spiritual note of my own, for one can argue that knowledge production is not a one-way process or street: it is a dialectic process of sorts, an exchange between self, intellect, imagination, and a plethora of other faculties and entities outside of self. It is also an inherently creative process in which one seeks to make this dialectic intelligible and known to others.

With the future happening as we write, while these Muslim artists continue to articulate their desired or undesired modes of living and being as believers in Western-Europe during politically challenging times, I aim to continue to find approaches, designs, and narratives that aid one in becoming comfortable with welcoming the unknown. This is but one step in that direction, compiling and collecting spiritual notes as I attempt to make sense of how Islam emotionally impacts and alters the lives of its followers.

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