The Sufi Compromise in the Person-Situation Debate in Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*

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Abstract:
Elif Shafak's novel *The Forty Rules of Love* depicts a very insightful account of Rumi's relationship with Shams of Tabriz, a Dervish who initiates Rumi to Sufism. One of the most important lessons that Rumi learns from Shams is not to fall prey to virtue ethicists. The main question addressed in this research is: how does Sufism interact with social psychology in *The Forty Rules of Loves*? More particularly, this study aims to examine the Sufi compromise between Aristotelian virtue ethics and situationism through a study of characters. This research concludes that while most characters' perceptions of one another are based on trait theory, Shams offers a new alternative to character analysis that achieves a happy medium between virtue ethics and situationism through a Sufi all-embracing message of love and tolerance.

Keywords: characters; interactionism; situationism; Sufism; the forty rules of love; virtue ethics

1. Introduction

Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* (2009) narrates two parallel stories: one embedded narrative about legendary poet and mystic Jalaludin Rumi and his companion Shams of Tabriz; in the past, and a frame narrative about Ella Rubinstein and her Sufi lover Aziz Zahara; in the present. Both stories are intertwined in a unique way. Through Shams' rules of love, which propose answers to complicated circumstances, the book provides guidance for love, tolerance, and serenity.

Indeed, Rumi has always fascinated the world with his Sufi philosophy of love that promotes harmony and peace. Rumi's inspirational relationship with Shams is full of lessons for humanity as a whole. What Rumi, the scholar, learns from Shams, the Dervish, prompts everyone to consider the issue of epistemic agency.

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This paper aims to examine the interaction between Sufism and social psychology through character analysis. The subject of conduct and action has always piqued the interest of academics from various fields. If we follow Aristotle's logic, our behaviors bespeak our virtue or vice, because character qualities are meant to predict our actions. On the other hand, if we adopt the situationist logic, character traits become worthless, as circumstances become more potent agents motivating our actions than character traits.

Through the notion of interactionism, social psychologists have recently found a middle ground between these two theories. According to this theory, characters' actions are defined by a combination of situational elements and character qualities, rather than solely by their traits, as virtue theorists believe, or solely by situations, as situationists argue (Mischel 2009, Reynold et al. 2010, McAdams 2006). Mischel (2009), for instance, opines that the best options for pursuing personality and social psychology are those which "bridge the classic partitioning most unnatural and destructive to the building of a cumulative science of the individual – the one that splits the person apart from the situation, treating each as an independent cause of behaviour" (289)

Shams of Tabriz succeeds in bringing this issue to light in the story, through his interactions with fallen characters and his struggle to bring out the best in them using Sufi teachings of love and tolerance. Elif Shafak also supports the interactionist approach using polyphonic narration to describe fallen characters' actions. By allowing the subaltern to speak, to use Spivak's words, Shafak allows fallen characters to speak for themselves so as to elicit empathy from the other characters as well as readers. By offering them this opportunity, Shafak argues for the flexibility of characters that can change over time as Desert Rose the harlot did.

This work mostly concerns itself with how Elif Shafak uses the story of Rumi and Shams to promote tolerance through a psychological character analysis. Through polyphony, Shafak gives voice to the most fallen characters to speak for themselves: Desert Rose the Harlot, Hassan the Beggar, Suleiman the Drunk, and the Killer. Each of these characters' names is coupled with a qualifier that follows them for the rest of their lives and implies an ethicist judgment declaring them cursed. Therefore, the central question of this study is: what psychological approach does the author use to depict characters? And how does this psychological theory interact with Sufism? To answer this question, the researcher used a qualitative research method using a psychological analysis of characters' actions, discourse, and representation to feature the interplay between interactionism and pedagogical Sufism through character analysis.

Shafak's work has produced a wave of scholarly studies since its release in 2009, the majority of which emphasized the topic of Sufism and love (Furlanetto 2013, Anjum & Ramzan 2014, Faiyaz 2019, Alhusseini & Hassan 2020, Sherwanin 2020, Salih & Al-Fayadh 2020). However, these works primarily focus on the theological aspect of Sufism and, to a greater degree, the tale of Rumi and Shams of Tabriz. Using psychological character analysis, this paper aims to broaden the scope of the study of Sufism and evaluate its impact on our daily actions and behavior. The main contribution of this paper is to highlight the pedagogical dimension of Sufism through a psycho-literary character analysis, and show that Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* is an excellent starting point for a psychological study on behavior.

2. Virtue Ethics vs. Situationism

Research on ethics has sparked a polemical debate on the significance of character, a concept that has gained a lot of traction among social psychologists, academics, and practitioners. The question of whether character development is a viable avenue for establishing ethics in social and legal arenas is at the heart of the character debate. Virtue ethicists think that if we are to thrive, we must develop praiseworthy character attributes such as honesty and kindness (Hursthouse, 1999: 185). Some virtue ethicists even claim that pursuing virtues is fundamental to living a good life (Hursthouse 1999; Zagzebski 1996; Baehr 2011)

Modern virtue ethicists draw heavily on Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* to debate the notion of virtue and character. In this work, Aristotle is primarily concerned with praxis; but only in a restricted sense of action that is deliberately chosen as it expresses the agent's preferential choice (*prohairesis*). Such action is valued and considered as the best or most appropriate thing to do (*dei*), in light of their perceptions of human virtue and vice; as what constitutes human happiness. Therefore, virtue theory emphasized an individual's character to achieve virtue rather than a set of rules that determine virtuous behavior. In other words, this means that if we focus on being good people, the right actions will follow naturally.

In order to illustrate what is good for man and what is the internal reward for virtue, Aristotle makes compelling arguments against equating that good with wealth, honor, or pleasure. He gives it the name *eudaimonia* that academics translated as "blessedness, happiness, and prosperity." (Macintyre, 2007: 148) Scrutinizing the Aristotelian meaning of the concept, Macintyre (2007) defines *eudaimonia* as "the state of being well and doing well in being well, of a man's being well-favored himself and in relation to the divine" (148).

A *eudaimonistic* life is one in which happiness is derived from achieving a difficult task.

Virtue is the middle ground between two extremes which Aristotle referred to as vices. Virtue occupies the sweet spot between the two extremes of excess and deficiency, and this middle ground is known as the golden mean. Aristotle notes that "moral virtue is moderation or observance of the mean […] as (1) holding a middle position between two vices, one on the side of excess, and the other on the side of deficiency, and (2) as aiming the mean or moderate amount both in feeling and in action" (Aristotle, 1906: 55).

Assume a person is walking home and encounters a mugger. What is the most courageous thing to do? Our first instinct is to think that a brave person would rush over and stop the mugging, because courage entails risking one's life for a good cause. However, a virtuous person, in the Aristotelian sense, would first take stock of the situation. If the person sizes up the mugger and believes he can safely intervene, then that is the courageous choice. But, if he assesses the situation and recognizes that intervention means putting himself and the victim in danger, then the courageous choice is not to intervene but to call for help instead. In *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle defines the courageous man as follows, "he, then, that endures and fears what he ought from the right motive, and in the right manner, and at the right time, and similarly feels confidence, is courageous. For the courageous man regulates both his feeling and his action according to the merits of each case and as reason bids him" (Aristotle, 1906: 82-83) courage is the golden mean between the extremes of cowardice, a deficiency of courage, and recklessness, an excess thereof. So, courage does not mean rushing headlong into danger, but a courageous person assesses the situation, recognizes his abilities and acts accordingly.

Whereas intellectual virtues, such as *phronesis* (judgment based on sound reasoning) are acquired through education, character virtues are skills that are developed by habituation. Along a similar line, Baehr (2013) opines that to be a virtuous person, traits must "be integrated into the person's character in a relatively deep, enduring, and personal way" (103). To put it another way, a virtuous person becomes virtuous by dint of good behavior. The virtues are then practiced as a habit, and they grow to represent an individual's soul disposition, or character.

Virtue ethicists provide adequate explanations of varied scenarios when situational circumstances influence the actions and behavior of individuals whose character traits are completely established of different situations regarding when and how situational pressures influence action and behavior of individuals whose character traits are fully formed. In this regard, Aristotle makes a fascinating distinction between *temperate*, *continent*, and *akratic* (incontinent) individuals. Defining these Aristotelian concepts, Bhuyan (2007)

notes that *temperate* people have natural or habitual desires that are focused toward what is good for them and for life in general. *Continent* people can make practical judgement, but they might also have irrational cravings that run counter to what they believe is correct. Despite this, they are able to regulate their irrational cravings. People who are *akratic* are those who are capable of making practical decisions but do not follow through on them. This type of failure of an agent who tries to act virtuously is referred to as akrasia (weakness of will). Perhaps the agent's ability to take on the judgment to action is obscured by the overwhelming possibility of some tremendous pleasure (Bhuyan, 2007: 60).

Aristotle understood virtue as a set of robust character traits that once developed will lead to predictably good behavior. The assumption that measures of traits should be able to predict behavior related to that trait with a reasonable degree of accuracy has provoked social psychological data-based critique. These data are made up of a wide range of experimental findings that claim to indicate that behavior is determined, to a large amount, by situations, and this has raised the person-situation controversy in modern social psychology. Hartshorne and May's (1928) significant examination of honesty and dishonesty among a large group of school students (over 10,000), which questioned beliefs about cross-situational consistency, was an important early influence for the situationist argument. Later experiments helped the development of the situationist account by posing new challenges to cross-situational consistency and traditional personality trait perspectives. Walter Mischel's (1968) *Personality and assessment* played a critical role in the development of the situationist perspective. Mischel (1968) concludes that "highly generalized consistencies the concept of personality traits as broad response predispositions is thus untenable" (146). Therefore, traits do not exist because behavior is too inconsistent across situations for individual differences to be characterized by traits. Mischel further comments that our common perceptions of individuals are wrong, and the assumption that behavior is largely predictable based on trait assessments has little consistency.

Scholars such as Gilbert Harman (1999), and J. Doris (1998) question the broad-based disposition of character trait based on the findings of social psychology experiments such as Stanley Milgram's (1963, 1974) experiment on obedience to authority, Darley and Latane's (1968, 1970) research on the "diffusion of responsibility" and the "bystander effect;" Isen and Levin's (1972) studies on helping behaviour; Darley and Batson's (1973) Princeton Theological Seminary study on helping behaviour; and the "Stanford Prison Experiment" conducted by Philip Zimbardo and colleagues (Zimbardo et al 1973; Haney, Banks & Zimbardo 1973).

Doris (1998) describes a situation, that happens to occur in *The Forty Rules of Love*, to subvert the Aristotelian idea that good character is "good and unchangeable" (1984: 1105b1), that the virtues are *hexeis* (a disposition that is permanent and hard to change). In this scenario, Doris (1998) invites us to imagine a flirtatious colleague inviting someone over for dinner while the guest's spouse is away. According to Doris, a person who believes in virtue may accept the invitation and anticipate that their moral character will keep them safe throughout the evening. Instead, a wiser person would see the dangers that could be present in the invitation and politely decline, preventing the possibility of being overpowered by the forces of the situation (Doris 1998: 516-17).

The most important situationist claim is thus that "behaviour is highly situation specific, not cross-situationally consistent" (Krahe, 1992: 29). "There is little consistency in behaviour", according to situationists, because "situational factors are seen as the most powerful determinants of behaviour" (Krahe, 1992: 29). As a result, the situationist approach directly contradicted traditional trait- and person-focused interpretations of personality, implying the need for a paradigm shift in how we think about personality and behavior. Harman (1999) promotes a very extreme kind of situationism, claiming that there is no reason to believe that persons have character qualities at all.

Traditional personality trait theorists in psychology were put to the test by the situationist onslaught. This resulted in a "confidence crisis" among personality researchers (Krahe, 1992: 38). Interactionism emerged as the most ambitious and promising solution in the midst of the divisive person-situation debate. As an approach to personality, interactionism views the individual's behaviour as "resulting from the reciprocal interaction between personal qualities and the features of the situation" (Krahe, 1992: 37) This recalls Lewin's (1936) famous formula that $B= f(P,S)$ (with B representing behaviour, P representing the person, and S representing the situation). In fact, interactionism is not a new approach, yet the growing rivalry between trait theorists and situationists presenting their respective theories as "competing, essentially incompatible, explanations of behaviour" (Krahe, 1992: 37) prompted theorists to revive the interactionist approach to move beyond the person-situation debate. Despite differences among interactionists over the specific details of interactionist theory, the "consensual core" of interactionism consists of the following four claims:

1. Actual behaviour is a function of a continuous process of multidirectional interaction or feedback between the individual and the situations he or she encounters.
2. The individual is an intentional, active agent in this interaction process.

3. On the person side of the interaction, cognitive and motivational factors are essential determinants of behaviour.
4. On the situation side, the psychological meaning of situations for the individual is the most important determining factor (Krahe 1992: 70-71).

Therefore, interactionism challenges any kind of argument for the separation between person and situation. Reynolds et al. (2010) note in this regard that "the person and the situation are an irreducible 'whole' that must be studied as the one continuously interdependent unit" (461). Thus, according to the interactionist theory, people and situations are continually exchanging and transacting with one another, and it is through this reciprocal exchange that character and moral behavior develop.

3. Interactionism and the Sufi Pedagogy in *The Forty Rules of Love*

A significant question might bother each reader at the end of a fictional story: Is my judgment of the virtuousness or evilness of characters valid and well grounded? Trait theorists, for instance, would help obstinate readers fix their judgment of a character as definitely valid and unchangeable. Situationists, on the other hand, would counsel readers to focus on the situational context of a character's behavior, advocating for a more tolerant assessment of a character's action. Interractionist theory, which seeks to bridge the gap between trait theory and situationism, has recently emerged as a more viable account of character, offering a compromise between virtue ethicists and situationists.

The purpose of this section is to push the boundaries of social psychology and philosophy into the realm of fiction. For social psychology researchers, Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* is fertile ground. Sufism is depicted as a pedagogy that teaches humanity how to control human relations in order to achieve peace and harmony.

The Forty Rules of Love is divided into two parts, the first of which is set in contemporary Massachusetts and follows Ella Rubenstein, a forty-year-old Jewish American housewife who finds temporary work at a literary agency. Her first task is to study and report on *Sweet Blasphemy*, a work of fiction written by an undiscovered novelist named Aziz Zahara. The second narrative consisting of Zahara's text, is set in thirteen century Anatolia, and depicts the transformation of Rumi from a great Muslim scholar to a mystic poet as a result of his relationship with Shams of Tabriz.

Highlighting the didactic aspect of Sufism, Elif Shafak notes that the main motive behind interweaving two narratives from two distant historical periods; the 13th and the 21st centuries, was "to show how the teachings are relevant in today's world. Therefore, it is not a theoretical Sufism that I was interested in.

But a living, breathing Sufism" (BN Magazine, 2010). Although Ella does not feel impressed by *Sweet Blasphemy*, the historical novel Michelle offers her to review, she feels bad and guilty following Michelle's remark, "Isn't connecting people to distant lands and cultures one of the strengths of good literature" (Shafak, 2010: 12).

Shafak features sinful characters in both stories, but encourages her readers to empathize with them through flashback accounts that explain their unethical behavior from a situationist perspective. In an interview with BN magazine (2010), Shafak states

> At the heart of literature, especially the art of storytelling lays the concept of "empathy". To learn to put ourselves in the shoes of another person. I like to tell the story of a Jewish American housewife in Boston is such a way that when a reader in Istanbul reads it she or he feels connected, and vice versa. A reader in Zurich might read the story of a dervish in Konya and feel a connection. These invisible bonds of humanity matter a lot to me.

Shafak emphasizes the potential for readers to make connections with characters who are going through similar situations. This claim could serve as an invitation to interpret characters' actions from a situationist perspective. Shafak's narrative technique might be the strongest argument for the Sufi compromise. She tells the story of Ella's love for Aziz through Rumi's Sufi bond with Shams. Rumi and Shams could be referring, here, to Aristotle's exemplars, whose virtuous choices and reputation become models that people mimic to attain virtue.

If Rumi is an exemplar of virtue, who could imagine him buying two bottles of wine in a tavern? If we examine this reality through the lens of virtue ethics, it is either a joke or a lie, since Rumi is not expected to enter a pub, let alone buy alcohol. Rumi obeys Shams into going in a tavern, stay there for a while, talk to people and buy two bottles of wine (Shafak, 2010: 226), as he conceived of this experience as a Sufi trial. Aware that this unethical behavior would ruin his reputation, Rumi is determined to achieve this tough task that would offer him *eudaimonia*. However, practically all characters, beginning with his son Aladin, evaluate his act as unethical because it does not correspond to what they predict from a Muslim scholar like Rumi. Rumi's actions, when viewed through an Aristotelian lens, indicate an excess of courage, or recklessness. As a result, if Rumi fails to strike a balance between the two extremes of cowardice and foolhardiness, he is unethical in the Aristotelian sense. This particular scene puts Rumi in the category of incontinent people who, according to Aristotle, go against reason as a result of some *pathos* (emotion, feeling). When distinguishing the continent man from the incontinent man Aristotle emphasized desire and reason: "the incontinent

man, knowing that an act is bad, is impelled to do it by passions, while the continent man, knowing that his desires are bad, is withheld from following them by reason" (Aristotle 1906: 210). Therefore, the incontinent man is passionate and irrational just like Rumi in the preceding scene.

Although Rumi's entrance inside a tavern convicts him from a virtue ethic stance; his motivation and the purpose (*telos*) of his act leads to virtue. When Suleiman the Drunk asks Rumi about the good thing in ruining one's reputation as Rumi does, the latter answers,

Well it depends on how you look at it. Sometimes it is necessary to destroy all attachments in order to win over your ego. If we are too attached to our family, our position in society, even our local school or mosque, to the extent that they stand in the way of Union with God, we need to tear those attachments down (Shafak, 2010: 240).

When Rumi meets Shams with the two bottles of wine, he asked him to buy, Shams used them to water "a climbing rose tree that stood thorny and bare in the snow" leaving only "a glassfull of wine at the bottom of the bottle" (Shafak, 2010: 245). Stunningly, the bare rose tree slowly came to life and even produced one rose that "revealed a lovely warm shade of orange" in front of delightful Rumi and Shams (245). Then, shams proposes a more provocative test to Rumi i.e., drink the second half of the glass of wine after shams drank the first half, and as Rumi shakily reaches for it, Shams flings it to the ground leaving Rumi perplexed. When Rumi asks Shams about why he sent him to the tavern to bring wine while not drinking it, Shams offers him Rule Number Thirty Two

> Nothing should stand between yourself and God. Not imams, priests, rabbis, or any other custodians of moral or religious leadership. Not spiritual masters, not even your faith. Believe in your values and your rules, but never lord them over others. If you keep breaking other people's hearts, whatever religious duty you perform is no good. "Stay away from all sorts of idolatry, for they will blur your vision. Let God and only God be your guide. Learn the Truth, my friend, but be careful not to make a fetish out of your truths (Shafak, 2010: 246).

The true value of this rule is highlighted in Shams' final piece of advice to Rumi to be careful not to make a fetish out of his truths. Using truths in plural indicates the plurality of valid truths one can have on the same issue. So, be it from a virtue ethicist viewpoint or situationist one, truths should not be accepted as absolute and fetish. The didactic worth of this rule is depicted through the rose that took the shades of orange when watered with wine. Shams combines "good" (the fruit of a tree) with "evil" (wine) in such a critical way that "evil" becomes the servant of "good". The result is shades of orange that

we can only see when good and evil meet. The meeting point between evil and good and the way they might promote goodness by diverting evil into a means to serve good puts down the virtue ethics theory. Shams' logic and teachings establish a new way of looking at individual behavior that transcends the person-situation debate and replaces it with a utilitarian principle that maximizes utility.

Rule 32 is also significant because it prompts us to reevaluate fallen characters in the novel so as not "to make a fetish out of our truths" (Shafak, 2010: 246). The virtue ethics hypothesis is invalidated by allowing for the reevaluation of fallen characters via Shams' logic. The scene of the wrong man in the wrong place is repeated throughout the novel. Shams of Tabriz, for instance, appears in a brothel, in one scene. In another scene, we encounter Desert Rose the harlot inside a mosque.

In the first section that is narrated by Desert Rose the Harlot, Shafak describes the hardships that Desert Rose has faced as a child. Her mother died in childbirth, leaving her orphaned at the age of seven. Her father's wrath fell on her baby sibling, as a result of her mother's death. Soon, Desert Rose's younger brother became the focus of his father and stepmother's fury. After the deaths of her father and stepmother, as well as the departure of her suspicious brother, Desert Rose communicates her loneliness in such a cathartic way

> I wish I could have prevented the tragedy […] And just like that, I was alone in the world. Unable to stay at home where I still sensed my mother's smell, unable to work at the bakery where disturbing memories hovered in the air. I decided to go to Constantinople to stay with an old spinster aunt who had now become my closest relative. I was thirteen (Shafak, 2010: 119).

On her trip to Constantinople, the carriage was stopped by a gang of robbers who, having found nothing to steal her, decided to sell her to the village's ailing leader, who had been convinced that "if he slept with a virgin, his illness would be transmitted to her and he would be clean and cured" (Shafak, 2010: 120). When Desert Rose escapes from the forest to the city hoping to start a new life, she found that the metropolis was worse

> It didn't take the city long to crush my spirits and ruin my body. Suddenly I was in another world altogether—a world of malice, rape, brutality, and disease. I had successive abortions until I was damaged so badly that I stopped having periods and could no longer conceive (Shafak, 2010: 120)

Desert Rose is perplexed as to why people say they despise seeing women prostitute themselves, yet make it difficult for a prostitute who wishes to repent and begin a new life? Desert Rose's inquiry on how receptive people are to the notion that prostitutes might become virtuous women is well grounded. The scenario in which Desert Rose is caught disguised as a man listening to the

great Rumi in a mosque perfectly reflects her concerns. Her decision to enter a mosque and listen to a Sufi scholar refutes the virtue ethics thesis that good behavior may be learned via habituation. Although Desert Rose the harlot spent her life prostituting, her evil habit does not slow down her eagerness to pursue virtue. Instead of acquiring virtue through habituation, she repents upon few simple talks with Shams of Tabriz. Desert Rose makes a powerful statement about those who recklessly add to the misery of people like her by refusing to rehabilitate and integrate them into society. Some individuals feed on the miseries of others, she says, and they are not happy when there is one fewer wretched person on the face of the globe. But, regardless of what they say or do, "I am going to walk out of this place one day," she affirms (Shafak, 2010: 116). Desert Rose not only appears to assault our cherished psychological conceptions of character traits, personality, and virtuous vs. wicked, but she also persuades the reader that virtue is not acquired via habituation, as the Aristotelian theory claims, but rather via a decision made and executed out of strong will.

Shafak provides the reader with Desert Rose's historical past in order to demonstrate how she became a harlot while also laying the groundwork for her rehabilitation. Faiyaz (2019) argues that Desert Rose epitomizes all those fallen men and women who suffer from injustices in their societies

> Desert Rose, a prostitute in the novel, is another example of society's injustice towards hapless underdogs and ill-fated women in particular. Elif has presented her case to highlight the atrocities of the hypocrites under the garb of honour and religion towards the less fortunates (Faiyaz, 2019: 27).

When Desert Rose is discovered in the mosque, and revealed as a whore, the people in the mosque gathered and chanted "lash the deceiver! lash the whore!" (Shafak, 2010: 122). Strangely, those who congregated in the mosque to praise the word of God are themselves the ones who dishonor God. Once and again, the peoples' habitual congregation in the mosque to learn morality from Rumi did not result in de facto virtuous behavior. The only one who is faithful to God's word is Shams of Tabriz who saves her from the rage-driven mob and invites her to repentance after she almost succumbed to her fate. Shams abides by Verse 125 in *Surah Nahl* that reads,

ادع إلى سبيل ربك بالحكمة و الموعظة الحسنة و جادلهم بالتي هي أحسن إن ربك هو اعلم بمن ضل عن سبيله و هو اعلم بالمهتدين

> Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them in the best of manners. Surely, your Lord Knows best the one who deviates from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path (The Qur'an, 16: 125).

This verse highlights the Sufi pedagogy of Shams who adopts a teaching/learning process through his exchange with Desert Rose. Trying to convince Desert Rose about the possibility to repent, Shams invites her to the way of God, using "wisdom and good instruction," by telling her the story of a prostitute who quenched the thirst of a panting dog by allowing it to drink water from her shoes (134). God was so moved by her kindness that he forgave her completely. Shams teaches Desert Rose that if the heart is bad, visits to temples, shrines, mosques, or churches may not be rewarding, but simple acts of kindness and giving undertaken with pure intentions may be more precious to God.

By condemning Desert Rose to infinite whoredom, all characters adopt an Aristotelian theory of virtue ethics that does not leave any other alternative to Desert Rose but to succumb to her fate. Shafak, on the other hand, offers a situationist reading of this fallen character, in order to support the Sufi pedagogy developed through the lens of teacher-disciple. Above all, Shams offers a more valuable option: a rehabilitative pedagogy that transcends the past to create a better future for all.

Another character that raises this person-situation debate is Ella Rubinstein. Ella is similar to Rumi in that her character traits predict the opposite of what she does in the novel's final chapters. In the prologue, Ella is introduced as a predictable character, "For forty years Ella Rubinstein's life had consisted of still waters— a predictable sequence of habits, needs, and preferences. Though it was monotonous and ordinary in many ways, she had not found it tiresome" (Shafak, 2010: 1). However, as soon as Ella starts reading *Sweet Blasphemy*, she becomes sidetracked from her household duties. Furlanetto (2013) draws an interesting parallel between Rumi and Ella in terms of character traits, "Both are described as rigidly disciplined characters, living lives with no margins for unpredictability, until they both encounter their 'Shams' and undergo a spiritual transformation" (205). Therefore, Sufism was the one factor that cracked the predictability criterion and allowed both characters to explore new options.

One day, Ella is so engrossed in reading an email from Aziz that she forgets to prepare breakfast, which she considers to be "the most important meal of the day" (Shafak, 2010: 91). Ella began to lose track of her regular routines as she approached forty, and she began to develop new priorities. In her list of resolutions before reaching forty, her assessment of her life, values, and beliefs is marked as half accomplished (Shafak, 2010: 113).

> Ella suspected that there must be something wrong with her. She was either too intrusive and pushy (with regard to Jeannette's marriage plans) or too passive and docile (with regard to her husband's flings). There was an Ella-the-control-freak and an Ella-the-hopelessly-meek. She could never tell

> which one was about to emerge, or when. And then there was a third Ella, observing everything quietly, waiting for her time to come (Shafak, 2010: 131).

The too invasive Ella and too passive and meek Ella could be regarded as a failure to reach the Golden mean between the two extremes in virtue ethics theory. Ella's actions in both instances, particularly her daughter's wedding arrangements and her husband's flings, reveal her lack of wisdom, which she ultimately gains through her teacher-disciple relationship with Aziz. The third Ella, who is waiting for her turn, is a more mature Ella who can settle difficulties without resorting to excessive emotions.

Ella's narrative begins on May 17, 2008 and ends on September 7, 2009. It takes her barely a year and a few months to go from a lady who "even changing her daily coffee brand was a major effort" (3) to a woman who abandons her family for her lover Aziz, and later decides to settle in Amsterdam after her lover's death in Konya. During her first encounter with Aziz in a hotel room in Boston, Ella feels embarrassed and guilty and her mind is overloaded with questions:

> Would they make love now? Should they? If they did, how could she look her husband in the eye afterward? But David never had any difficulty looking her in the eye despite his many flings, did he? And what would Aziz think of her body? What if he didn’t like it? Shouldn’t she be thinking about her children now? Were they asleep or awake watching TV at this hour? If they learned what she was about to do, would they ever forgive her? (Shafak, 2010: 302-303)

Ella's interior monologue reveals a high level of *phronesia* (practical wisdom). In this particular situation, Ella needs to regulate her passion to prove her virtue. At this level she fits well into the Aristotelian category of continent individuals who can make sound judgment despite the irrational desires that run counter to what they believe is correct. A moment later, with Aziz caressing her body Ella succumbed to her passionate love and "with that feeling she put her arms around Aziz, pulling him toward her, ready to go further. But he snapped his eyes open, kissed her on the tip of her nose, and pulled away" (Shafak, 2010: 304). Ella falls prey to *akrasia* (weakness of will) and is unable to act virtuously. Embarrassed, Ella asked Aziz if he does not want her, and *eudaimonistic* Aziz responds, “I don't want to do anything that would make you unhappy afterward” (Shafak, 2010: 304). In this scene, Aziz represents the Aristotelian category of *temperate* people who have natural or habitual inclinations that are directed toward what is beneficial to them and to life in general. This particular scene throws the situationist debate into disarray. Although Aziz and Ella experience the same feelings and are alone in a hotel

room, they react differently, one yielding to desire, the other to sound reasoning.

Aziz is a significant character who forces a rethinking of the person-situation argument. His transformation from a happy lover to a drug addict to a Sufi raises a lot of questions. Ella learns from Aziz that he was born in Scotland as Craig Richardson, and that he converted to Sufism during a professional journey in Morocco. After the death of his wife, Aziz spent "years into a life of drugs and debauchery" (Shafak, 2010: 227). Like Desert Rose, Aziz is a character who was rehabilitated and reintegrated into society through Sufism. Aziz recounts how he could not stop drugs despite knowing that "numbing the pain is not like healing it," and how he broke his promise to Master Sameed to never use drugs again (Shafak, 2010: 232-33). The fact that Aziz is unable to give up narcotics even in a sufi atmosphere refutes the situationist argument and supports the virtue ethics theory that habits are more binding than situations. However, just as Master Sameed compares Aziz to Shams of Tabriz, Aziz suddenly discovers that he does not want to go anywhere, "I was already where I wanted to be," he said, "all I need was to stay and look within." (Shafak, 2010: 234). The discovery of Shams of Tabriz becomes the catalyst of the transformation of Aziz, and this eliminates the possibility of using either a virtue ethicist or a situationist perspective to explain his quick turnaround. In an email letter to Ella, Aziz describes this cataclysmic moment in esoteric terms,

> Now, you are going to think I'm crazy. But I swear to God, at that moment I heard a rustle of silk in the background, first far off, then drawing nearer, and I saw the shadow of someone who wasn't there. Perhaps it was the evening breeze moving across the branches, or maybe it was a pair of angel wings. Either way, I suddenly knew that I didn't need to go anywhere. Not anymore. I was sick and tired of always longing to be somewhere else, somewhere beyond, always in a rush despite myself (Shafak, 2010: 234).

The power of the image that Aziz draws of this hallowed event in his life helps the virtue ethicist and situationist recognize that there are other variables that could contribute in interpreting an individual's behavior. Sufism reconciles virtue ethicists with situationists through a philosophy of love and tolerance, urging psychologists to seek rehabilitative methods for people labeled unethical due to their habits or situational problems.

What is interesting about the novel's characters is that they are all connected to Shams of Tabriz in some way. He is, as his name implies, the sun that brightens their lives in moments of desperation. Shams and other characters are prompted to talk of one of the 'rules'– the forty laws of love– in various settings throughout the novel. These nuggets of wisdom are strewn throughout the narrative, describing Shams' Sufi philosophy, which was passed

down to Rumi, and then to Aziz and Ella. These guidelines offer unexpected answers to judgment-based social challenges. Sufism gives a pedagogy that bridges the gap between situationism and virtue ethics. It offers both psychological theories and realistic solutions, to a debate that has centered on the "problem" rather than the "solution," by transcending judgment and focusing on rehabilitation.

4. Conclusion

The Forty Rules of Love features a cast of flawed characters who are transformed into good people thanks to Shams of Tabriz's Sufi teachings. The way these individuals' actions are depicted strikes a balance between virtue ethics and situationism. Some characters' actions can be justified using both theories, while others contradict virtue ethics, and yet others contradict situationism. What is common between the experiences of all characters, in their metamorphosis, is Sufism. In the end, all of the characters who were saved realized that they had been viewing themselves incorrectly through the society's eyes, and that it was only when they discovered that there is no "self" or "other" that they could live a *eudaimonic* life. In other words, the message of the novel is that in order to advance society and cleanse it of all impurities through love and a pure heart, change must begin at the individual level. As presented by Shams in the novel, the Sufi philosophy of love and tolerance interacts with virtue ethics and situationism in such a way that it does not validate one theory while discrediting the other. Sufism, on the other hand, recognizes both theories as true and has successfully completed a more difficult psychological task: the rehabilitation and integration of fallen personalities.

Shams offers a dramatic contrast between intellect and love in rule number four, which may sum up Sufi philosophy and how it works to progress psychological ideas. This rule differentiates between two types of judgments: rational and emotional. Sufism stresses the evaluative judgments entailed by emotions since they help us form a more complete image of a person. When Desert Rose tells Shams that she is "dirty" and no matter what she accomplishes, it will never be enough to save her, Shams assures her that she has a pure heart, and his emotional judgment overrules the other characters' intellectual judgments on Desert Rose's possible redemption.

Despite the fact that the forty rules of love proposed by Shams of Tabriz receive little attention in this research due to its focus on character analysis, these rules could be the subject of academic research in psychological theory and how they approach rehabilitation and reintegration. To sum up, Shafak deftly creates a new literary site for Sufism that expands the horizons of literary, religious, and social psychology interaction.

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