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Review Essay

MEMENTO MORI: EXISTENTIAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH¹

*Arief Subhan*²

Death is often understood as the antithesis of life, with ideas of our impermanence coming in diverse forms. The existentialists would argue that existence precedes essence; therefore, meaning is created, with both life and death conceptualized in accordance with the conscious self. For the believer in God, s/he would argue that essence precedes existence, implying that meaning is there for us to grasp and to embrace, both in this world and the assumed next. Such an 'essence' is one which pertains to divinity and its contingent awareness as well as expression. This article compares the ideas of death brought forward by existentialists with those elucidated by religionists.³ For the former, we shall engage with the French-Algerian philosopher Albert Camus and his notion of Absurdism. For the latter, we shall delve into the work of Titus Burckhardt, who touched upon concepts like annihilation of individuality (*fana'*) and a subsisting in/with the divine. Aiming to express this perennial subject's depth, examples from other faith systems will also be gleaned. We are not attempting a synthesis of the two frameworks; rather, we intend to draw attention to a shared human condition and its diverse views on death.

First and foremost, we must come to terms with the Absurdism

¹ This paper was presented at the British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS) Conference 2023 at the Aga Khan Institute, London (15th & 16th May), under the title 'When an Existentialist meets a Sufi: Similarities and Differences of Existential and Religious Thought on Death.'

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³ They are referred to here as anyone who adheres to a system of belief that involves a conception of God, a Godhead, or any metaphysical (and/or mystical) underpinning which governs the day-to-day.

brought forward by Albert Camus. In 'The Fastidious Assassins' (a re-translation of 'The Rebel', from '*L'Homme Révolté*'), Camus defines the Absurd as "that hopeless encounter between human questioning and the silence of the universe."⁴ It is a harrowing awareness of the universe's sheer indifference to human sorrow, with death a consistent theme. From here, whether life is worth living seems most urgent. Camus is not known to have advocated taking one's life in such dreadful circumstances, for "... the final conclusion of the absurdist process is, in fact, the rejection of suicide..."⁵ It seems rather peculiar to engage with the conclusion of a process (the absurdist stance, rejection of suicide) before the process occurs. However, it is precisely due to the focus on the end (death) that we can honestly think about and recognize the total worth of the beginning and the middle (life itself).⁶ From here, the Absurd is given meaning in relation to death, for without death, the Absurd is rendered null and void.

Camus' engagement with the Absurd requires the creation of a universal protagonist to which he gives the name, 'The Rebel'. "The rebel is a man who is on the point of accepting or rejecting the sacrosanct and determined to create a human situation where all the answers are human or, rather, formulated in terms of reason."⁷ Camus' acknowledgement of the sacrosanct should not come as a surprise, for his entire philosophy is dependent on its very *negation*. The refutation of God necessitates the repudiation of any related sacral elements. "When the throne of God is overthrown, the rebel realizes that it is now his own responsibility to create justice... and in this way, to justify the fall of God."⁸ Camus' 'doing away' with God

⁴ Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, trans., A. Bower (Penguin Books, 2008), 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Parallels can be drawn with Martin Heidegger's Being-Onto-Death. "As ways in which man behaves, sciences have the manner of Being which this entity – man himself – possesses. This entity we denote by the term '*Dasein*'." Authentic Being only happens when *Dasein* confronts its own temporality because it is perpetually (and without escape) on a journey towards its own demise. See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, 1962.

⁷ Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, 19.

⁸ Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, 25.

makes the pain and suffering attached to living more palatable since there is no divine authority, or supernatural power, to ascribe anger and blame too. With this perspective in mind, it is entirely up to the Rebel to make sense of the world bereft of any divine interference. For the existentialist, meaning is something which is acquired by way of relation to the Absurd. This is exemplified in Camus's posthumous novel *'Le Premier Homme'* (The First Man), when the protagonist, Jacques Cormery, stood at the tomb of his father (whom he has never met) while reading the two dates, '1885-1914', "and automatically did the arithmetic: twenty-nine years."⁹ "He (Jacques) was forty years old. The man buried under that slab, who had been his father, was younger than he."¹⁰ Jacques' heart was filled with the compassion that a grown man feels for an unjustly murdered child, for it was his father who had died in the Battle of the Marne in 1914.¹¹ The Rebel needs to make sense of such chaos; to continue living with a numbing awareness of this disorder.

Camus' expressions on the intricacies of existence were made against the backdrop of French colonial rule over Algeria (primarily 1939-1958). It was a turbulent period, a timeframe of strife and destitution among the Algerians. This period severely haunted Camus because it was a struggle that required justification in not only the mind, but the heart of someone who identified as both French and Algerian. Nevertheless, Camus condemns the reckless approach to death, where "a mind that is imbued with the idea of the absurd (sic) will doubtless accept murder that is fated; it could not accept murder the proceeds from reasoning."¹² This murder 'which proceeds from reasoning' is two-fold. On the one hand, it pertains to the well-structured policies of the French, justifying downright abhorrent rules, including limited education and work for the locals,¹³ (a sort of slow death) as well as the killing of insurgents. On the other, it is the

⁹ Albert Camus, *The First Man*, trans., David Hapgood (from the original *Le Premier Homme*) (Penguin Books, 2001), 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, 5.

¹³ For these policies, see Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer and edited by Alice Kaplan, 2013.

intense reasoning that one makes before deciding to end his/her life (which Camus is vehemently against). It can be inferred here that murder and suicide are of the same mould; a death made through reason, not fate (sans God).¹⁴

The reality of seeing the Algerians as merely a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves, pushed Camus, in-depth and rigour, to write on the quest for meaning not underpinned by any religious formulation. To rebel then implies moving from passivity and blind acceptance of fate to a more active role in asserting one's individuality in the light of shared ideals. Even though there is no metaphysical grounding that people stand on, it does not invalidate the fact that every single person is involved in the cycle of the Absurd; of living, of searching, and of dying. "When violence answers violence in a mounting spiral, undermining the simple language of reason, the role of the intellectual cannot be to excuse the violence of one side and condemn that of the other."¹⁵ Camus takes it upon himself to be this intellectual to remind those who have forgotten how to live truly. What matters is the action one takes to alleviate his/her plight, which is then extended towards society. In pushing this point further, Camus mentions, "there will be found here merely the description, in the pure state, of an intellectual malady. No

¹⁴ We are reminded of Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem. It is precisely due to reason devoid of any emotion— that is, of following orders from higher-ups – which allowed for Eichmann to facilitate the mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and 'killing sites' in German-occupied Poland. Jewish scholars, including Irving Greenberg, point out that the Shoah indicates a 'breaking of the Abrahamic Covenant' by God Himself. For a more detailed reading of ethics (or the lack thereof) during the Holocaust, see Ingrid Anderson, *Ethics and Suffering since the Holocaust: Making Ethics "First Philosophy" in Levinas, Wiesel and Rubenstein* (Routledge, 2016).

¹⁵ Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*, 28. Parallels can be drawn to René Girard's idea that violence begets violence. Through the judicial system, the possibility of private vengeance is minimized (that between individuals with individuals, as well as societies with societies). "Thus, public vengeance is the exclusive property of well-policed societies... Our penal system operates according to principles of justice that are in no real conflict with the concept of revenge." See R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans., Patrick Gregory (from *La Violence et la Sacré*) (Bloomsbury, 2013), 17.

metaphysic, no belief is involved in it for the moment."¹⁶

The core of the Camusian account of existence is hope. No matter how dire the circumstances may be, hope is that pillar of strength to pull a person back to his/her senses and to carve meaning and order in an apparently meaningless and chaotic world.¹⁷ Death then is a nadir to which meaning finds its resting place, "thus, like everything else, the absurd (sic) ends with death."¹⁸ At the core of our enquiry is that of personhood. What does it mean to be a person, and what are the necessary attributes that make up a 'person'?¹⁹ This epistemic category has to be established before proceeding any further. For the existentialist, any rendering of a 'person' is not based upon a transcendental postulation – like that of a soul – or any other form of 'rootedness' separate from the body and the physical world. It is purely ascertained by the senses and is tied to a thorough engagement with one's rationality and logic.²⁰ It is rather evident that we are creatures of interiority, with the capacity to think of ourselves as ourselves and "to occupy a first-person stance"²¹ The existentialist

¹⁶ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans., Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 4. The translation was originally published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1955. Originally published in France as '*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*' by Librairie Gallimard, 1942. Retrieved from: <http://dhspritory.org/kenny/PhilTexts/Camus/Myth%20of%20Sisyphus-.pdf>

¹⁷ In extension to this idea is the poetics of space introduced by Gaston Bachelard, cited in Edward Said's '*Orientalism*'. "The inside of a house... acquires a sense of intimacy, secrecy, security, real or imagined, because of the experiences that come to seem appropriate for it. The objective space of the house is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with... So, space acquires emotional and even rational sense through a poetic process, whereby the vacant reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here." See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Books, 2019), 55. Emotions and rationality are therefore intertwined in the process of meaning-making.

¹⁸ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 22.

¹⁹ In classical Greece, the primary sense of *psyche* (also grasped as 'soul') relates to the possession of life. If we are to accept, in this very moment, that we are alive, we will inevitably ask what it is to be alive. See John M. Rist, *What is a Person?: Realities, Constructs, Illusions* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

²⁰ In discerning truth and falsity, using one's own rationality could hinder one. *In culpa est animus qui se non effugit unquam* (That mind is at fault which never escapes from itself). Michel de Montaigne's reading of Horace, *Epistles*, I. xiv, 13. See Michel De Montaigne, *On Solitude*, trans., M. A. Screech, 2009.

²¹ J. Ganeri, *The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, and the First-Person Stance*

affirms that there is radical human freedom. Any joy and suffering depend on how one defines that particular joy and suffering. Thus, the existentialist asserts a realization that meaning is not a given but is a *givenness* that comes from him/herself. Within the existentialist context, the concept of the soul might be deliberated upon but is not taken as the foundation to which a person is defined and to which meaning can be attained. It is considered a superfluous thought that should not be deliberated upon further. Camus calls for a more modest attitude of mind, with its breakthrough being common sense.²²

We now proceed to a conceptualization of death brought forward by religionists.²³ Within this framework, there are typically two distinct notions of human finitude which ought to be considered, with the first being the cessation of ego-self, and the second, the death of the physical body. In his *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, Titus Burckhardt²⁴ indirectly engages with the subject of death through the lens of Sufism (also understood as Islamic mysticism)²⁵. To be distinguished from the exoteric or external Islam (*zāhir*), Sufism is the faith's esoteric or inward (*bātin*) aspect.²⁶ This inner dimension is broad but always refers to the tedious process of self-purification of the *murīd* (disciple or seeker). It is imperative to note that the

(Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

²² Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 5.

²³ Conversations and studies of religions have often been conducted in terms of explanation overriding proper understanding (for its own sake). Theorists of religion have often legitimized their methods because theirs is the sole approach in properly preserving, describing, representing, and evoking the 'believers' point of view' and the interiority of the religious commitment. See '*Religion and the Discourse on Modernity*' by Paul-François Tremlett (2008).

²⁴ Titus Burckhardt (1908-1984) was a leading member of the Perennialist School, a traditionalist framework of comparative religious thought emphasizing the primordial truths of various religious traditions. Other Perennialists include Frithjof Schuon, Martin Lings, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Burckhardt was initiated into the Darqāwīyya (a Sufi Order based in Morocco) in 1934.

²⁵ Parallels can be drawn to *The Kabbalah*, the Jewish mystical wisdom. See Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁶ T. Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008), 3.

aforesaid purification of the self comes through the learning one acquires by way of a *murshīd* (guide), whereby this wisdom is “something which is treasured and handed down from generation to generation (and) is central in the consciousness of those by whom it is received and transmitted...”²⁷ Since experience is crucial in the process of refining the ego for the sake of God, it thus necessitates a passing down of knowledge that is non-conventional, a form of wisdom that relates to the art of living and also *dying*. The dying referred to here is the annihilation of self (*fana*) in the presence of the divine. This is where and when the disciple is in contact with 'direct knowledge', thus becoming the conduit of God's divine names in this world of cause and effect. A more pristine reflection of God's names can only occur once the disciple is cleansed from the impurities that come with being part of the world, an accumulation of misdeeds and transgressions, and an attachment to Self. From here, it is of interest to note Burckhardt's comments on those who criticize (and in some instances, downright condemn) the Sufis of being able to attain God by the sole means of their own will:

"In truth, it is precisely the man whose orientation is towards action and merit - that is, exoteric - who often tends to look on everything from the point of an effort of will, and this arises his lack of understanding of the purely contemplative point of view which envisages the way first of all with knowledge."²⁸

Such descriptions and intimate experiences are not unique to Islam (through Sufism), as similar notions can be found in other religious traditions. Almost all Greek Christians emphasize the affirmation of Genesis 1:26-27²⁹. Our soul, or ‘personhood’ is created ‘in the image of God’; *imago dei*. Body and soul are typically conceived as two complementary entities which “constitute an

²⁷ H. J. Blackham, *The Human Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1953), 3. Blackham refers specifically to a humanist tradition here: “The *locus classicus* in Greek literature for a humanist ideal of life is the funeral oration of Pericles in Thucydides; this idealizes the consummation of a long political and cultural development” (p. 4). One may read it as a passing down of perennial wisdom that cuts across different conceptualizations of Truth.

²⁸ T. Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 13.

²⁹ K. Ware, ‘The Soul in Greek Christianity’ in J. C. Crabbe, ed., *From Soul to Self*, Routledge, 1999, 51.

undivided unity; neither can exist apart from the other, and any separation at death is no more than temporary.”³⁰ The 'direct knowledge' touched upon earlier is also present as an embodied spirituality espoused by Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça.³¹ "Our body's senses open us to the presence of God at the moment we are living."³² This implies that God can be 'grasped' in the here and now and that death is the bridge to a higher transcendental reality. The derivations mentioned above of divine presence and its attainment is also observed in the contact of the individual with God in Judaism, which is known as the *devekut*³³. This term brings a plethora of meanings based on its large, mystical semantic field. This field includes the imitation of divine 'behaviour', which, when developed further, culminates in the total fusion with God in life, and even more so, after death.³⁴

Regardless of the system of faith, the maxim *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of nothing, nothing comes) best describes the starting point for many religionists.³⁵ Within this structure, the concept of Absolute Necessary Being, an *ens realissimum*, is indicative that essence precedes existence. The principle of sufficient reason holds that “there must, then, be a sufficient reason for the world as a whole, a reason why something exists rather than nothing.”³⁶ God’s attribute of being eternal is counterposed to the mortal and finite nature of human beings, highlighting a difference that is referential to our place in this temporal world. From the perspective of Greek Christianity, any analysis of the human (both body and soul) is bound

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ José Tolentino Mendonça is a Portuguese theologian who earned a degree at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He has been the Vatican archivist and librarian of the Holy Roman Church since 2018.

³² J. T. Mendonça, *The Mysticism of the Present Moment: Embodied Spirituality*, Paulist Press, 2021, 7.

³³ M. Idel, ‘Universalization and Integration: Two Concepts of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism,’ in M. Idel & B. McGinn, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, 1999, 28.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 82.

³⁶ Ibid.

to seem fatally defective if it is not made in reference to God.³⁷ Due to the fact that the human soul is in God's image, it necessarily follows that the liberty conferred upon human beings is not an arbitrary sort of freedom.³⁸ We can authentically be free through *imago dei* if we exercise this freedom following God's will. There are stipulated obligations that need to be carried out with sincerity and humility. On the contrary, if one perpetually denies the will of God, one cannot be free, for s/he remains at the behest of the ego-self. This exercise in freedom will lead us to the point of reflecting divine love and compassion, which knows no bounds (*sans limites*).

Bernard of Clairvaux, a central figure among the Cistercians (a Catholic Order of monks and nuns), refers to union with God as primarily an affective, operational fusion of willing and loving, *unitas spiritus*, (and) not an ontological coming together of essence or substance.³⁹ Burckhardt expands on this point by saying that the Sufi, once realized, becomes aware of the unity of all beings, or – to put the same concept in negative terms – the unreality of all that appears separate from God.⁴⁰ To put it differently, our existence is a manifestation of God Himself, and we can do good works in this world because of the grace bestowed upon us. We borrow words from Michel de Montaigne, who said, "Their objective is God, infinite in goodness and power... Pains and afflictions are profitable to them, being used to acquire eternal healing and joy; death is welcome as a passing over to that perfect state."⁴¹ The suffering one experiences when alive will be vindicated after death if one realizes that the suffering was a form of purification for the soul that has been so debased. At its most fundamental, for religionists, death is seen as an invitation back to a universal reality, a state of being which removes the individual from the prison of his/her bodily senses (which tends to be occupied with categorization and

³⁷ K. Ware, 'The Soul in Greek Christianity,' 52.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ B. McGinn, 'Love, Knowledge, and Union Mystica in the Western Christian Tradition' in M. Idel & B. McGinn, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, 1999, 62-63.

⁴⁰ T. Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 12.

⁴¹ De Montaigne, *On Solitude*, 14-15.

compartmentalization and the differentiation between object and subject, vice versa).

We have explored the different ways death is conceived from both the existentialist and the religious points of view. Moving on, we shall now compare the two approaches to fathoming death. Both approaches have their respective merits and, perhaps, shortcomings (usually in terms of practice rather than theory). Nevertheless, the most evident similarity is that both are *non-defeatist* frameworks. Death is not a moment or an event to be feared, though it is not to be pursued for the sake of itself (suicide). Albeit dissimilar in their starting point, existentialists and religionists advocate a sense of duty to the self, which is then extended to humanity. Next, within both approaches, *death is a certainty* and cannot be determined spatially and temporally by the individual bound to experience it. The third likeness is that both frameworks necessitate death as a *cessation of consciousness at its primary level*. This primary level pertains to sense experience and the intellection of it by the mind. "It is the understanding the words, the knowing the meaning, which makes what you do an act of intellect."⁴² Death brings an end 'to the understanding', 'the knowing', and 'act of intellect'. Camus' pronouncement that "the world evades us because it becomes itself again"⁴³ is no longer available as a world, and for it to 'become itself again'. Sense experience comes to a grinding halt where and when life meets its opposite, death.

We now move on to the contrast, or differences, between both conceptions of death. Within the existentialist understanding of death, there is a strong desire to know the answers to one's facticity. From this point, it seems to be an inevitability to categorize, compartmentalize, and impose upon reality what one assumes to be right and just. The arbitrary nature of such judgements seems predicated upon Camus' 'reason to act', which stems from the notion that all human beings 'are in it together'. This 'reason to act' is dissimilar from the pure witnessing as avowed by the Sufis (as well as other ascetics and religionists). The imparting of one's

⁴² A. Kenny, 'Body, Soul, and Intellect in Aquinas' in J. C. Crabbe, ed., *From Soul to Self* (Routledge, 1999), 37.

⁴³ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 11.

individuality in the present moment is a clear break from the pure witnessing (without opinion or complaint) of the esoteric. Camus asserts that the rebel must break free from the previous mode of conduct, for "he rebels because he categorically refuses to submit to conditions that he considers intolerable..."⁴⁴ Thus, God in the flesh and blood of Christ (under the tripartite belief of many Christian denominations) becomes *imago hominins* (image of the man), a sort of anthropomorphism that subverts the sacred for an ironic reverence of the profane. Such a situation is the opposite of *imago dei*, as mentioned prior. It is the horizon of the profane that provides meaning for the existentialists. Existence, again, precedes essence.

How does one reconcile both approaches to death? Based on the ideas and examples, it is rather striking that both notions of death are identical in their peripheries. The core and how it is imagined and explained – that which constitutes the individual – is the fundamental difference to be observed. In contemplating the Absurd, Camus' excruciating pain is made more evident when the referential is always that of the sacred, a departure that he incessantly makes, forming the basis of his philosophy. "From this moment, every question, every word, is an act of rebellion, while in the sacrosanct world, every word is an act of grace."⁴⁵ This grace forms a truism within Sufism, with its expressions often holding the subtle balance between love and knowledge. An emotional category of expression integrates the religious attitude with ease and is the starting point to true spirituality. The language of love, an expression that resonates within the human being, makes it possible to enunciate the most profoundly esoteric truths without being at odds with dogmatic theology and rigid jurisprudence. Camus' apprehensions towards faith in God stem perhaps from a love lost and a denial of that love once it becomes incomprehensible in human terms. How can one suffer and expect to still be in love? For existentialists, suffering is seen as precisely the opposite of the love that one imagines God has for His creations, with such circumstances aggrandized by the loud silence of indifference. On this point, how can one blame Camus? How do we make sense of this apathy? However, perhaps most pertinent is our

⁴⁴ Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, 9.

⁴⁵ Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, 19.

usual conception of suffering and love as *all too human*. We require proof of divine mercy and providence. Nevertheless, the intoxication of and in love symbolically corresponds to states of knowledge that go beyond discursive thought.⁴⁶ True love does not require proof; *it is felt and accepted through absolute trust*.

We have highlighted the similarities and differences between the existential and religious perspectives on death, bringing attention to a perennial human condition. Having said this, such an attempt is far from exhaustive, as further deliberations seem necessary to grapple with such a pressing question. For the sake of brevity, considerations of death from non-Abrahamic faiths were not brought forward. Perspectives of human finitude from Eastern traditions would be a fascinating subject to be pursued at a later time. From here, one might say that this life is a burden, while another could claim it is a gift. Such is the nature of the human being, a creature that continues to ponder and seek and is always immersed within him/herself while simultaneously being so far removed from the core of his/her being. Through this ambiguity, we hope to focus on the similarities that bind us instead of the differences that have separated us for far too long.

⁴⁶ Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 21.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	
ء	ب	پ	پ	ز	ز	ز	ز	گ	—	g	g	g
ب	ب	ب	ب	ژ	—	—	ř	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	پ	پ	پ	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m	m
ت	ت	ت	ت	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ث	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ş	ş	ş	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḏ	ḏ	ž	ی	y	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	—	-a ²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al ³	—	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	—	—	—	—	—
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh	—	—	—	—	—
ڈ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	q	—	—	—	—	—
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	—	—	—	—	—

¹ – when not final

² – at in construct state

³ – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iy (final form i)	iy (final form i)
	و	uww (final form ū) uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	ev
	ی	ai or ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	ا	u	u or ū
	ا	i	o or ö
	ا	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. جھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

AL-SHAJARAH

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