**Outline of Annemarie Schimmel’s *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam***

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| **1** | **I Sacred Aspects of Nature and Culture** |
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| **2** | **Inanimate Nature** |
|  |  |
| 2 | Stones and rocks |
| 3 | Gems |
| 4 | Mountains |
| 5 | Earth and dust |
| 6 | Water |
| 6 | Springs and fountains |
| 7 | Water of life |
| 7 | Ocean, waves and foam |
| 8 | Rain |
| 9 | Deluge (flood) |
| 9 | Rivers |
| 10 | Fire |
| 10 | Burning Bush on Mount Sinai |
| 11 | Candles |
| 11 | Lightning and thunder |
| 11 | Wind |
| 12 | Light |
| 13 | Sun |
| 14 | Moon |
| 15 | Stars |
| 16 | Planets |
| 16 | Sky |
| 16 | Colours |
|  |  |
| **17** | **Plants and Animals** |
|  |  |
| 17 | Trees |
| 20 | Gardens |
| 20 | Plants and flowers |
| 20 | Wild rue, roses (gul), violets, tulips |
| 21 | Animals |
| 21 | Animal skin |
| 22 | Pigs and pork |
| 22 | Gnats |
| 22 | Bees |
| 22 | Ants |
| 23 | Spiders |
| 23 | Moths |
| 23 | Cows |
| 23 | Lions |
| 24 | Cats |
| 24 | Dogs |
| 24 | Camels |
| 24 | Donkeys |
| 25 | Horses |
| 25 | Buraq (from the Mi’raj) |
| 25 | Serpents, snakes and dragons |
| 26 | Birds |
| 26 | Soul birds |
| 26 | Nightingales (bulbul) |
| 26 | Falcons |
| 26 | Doves |
| 26 | Storks |
| 27 | Roosters |
| 27 | Peacocks |
| 27 | Parrots |
| 27 | Swans and ganders |
| 27 | Hoopoe (hudhud) |
| 28 | Crows and ravens |
| 28 | Mythical birds (Huma, ‘Anqa, Simurgh) |
| 28 | Kindness to animals |
| 28 | Eschatological peace (the lion and the lamb) |
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| **29** | **Man-made Objects** |
|  |  |
| 29 | Swords, weapons and armour |
| 30 | Rods and wands |
| 30 | Flags and banners |
| 31 | Mirrors |
| 33 | Idols |
| 33 | Coins |
| 33 | Paintings and pictures |
| 35 | Woven fabrics (tomb-covers) |
| 36 | Garments, clothes |
| 37 | Ihram (pilgrimage dress) |
| 37 | Hijab, Burqa (veil) |
| 38 | Headgear (taj, turbans) |
| 39 | Garments, robes and hems as a metaphor |
| 41 | *Notes* |
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| 47 | **II Sacred Space and Time** |
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| 48 | **Sacred Space** |
|  |  |
| 48 | Caves |
| 49 | Houses |
| 50 | Thresholds |
| 50 | Doors and gates (bab) |
| 51 | High and low seats (throne vs. ‘place of the sandals’) |
| 51 | Centre of the house |
| 51 | Carpets and rugs |
| 51 | Baths |
| 51 | Citadel, fortress, stronghold (metaphor) |
| 51 | Mosques (masjid, jami’), pulpits (minbar), minarets, niches (mihrab) |
| 53 | Burial places, tombs, shrines (maqam, dargah) |
| 56 | Other sacred places |
| 56 | Mecca and Medina (al-haramayn; the two sacred places) |
| 57 | The Kaaba |
| 57 | Qibla |
| 59 | Medina |
| 61 | Jerusalem |
| 61 | Right and left side |
| 62 | East and West |
| 63 | Hahut, Lahut, Jabarut, Malakut, Mithal, Nasut (worlds/realms) |
| 63 | Road, way, (straight) path |
| 64 | Pilgrimage (hajj) |
| 65 | Muhammad’s Night Journey (Isra Mi’raj) |
| 65 | Journeys of the soul |
| 65 | Seven Valleys |
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| 66 | **Sacred Time** |
|  |  |
| 67 | Lunar calendar |
| 67 | Hegira |
| 67 | Lunar years |
| 67 | Nawruz (Persian New Year) |
| 67 | Lunar months |
|  |  |
| 68 | Feasts |
| 68 | ‘Id ul-Fitr (end of Ramadan) |
| 68 | ‘Id al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) |
| 68 | Ramadan (fasting; sawm) |
| 69 | Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Might) |
| 69 | Laylat al-Milad (Birth of Muhammad; Mawlid) |
| 69 | Laylat al-Bara’a (Mid-Sha’ban) |
| 70 | Shia sacred days |
| 70 | Muharram (Martyrdom of Husayn) |
| 72 | Saints’ anniversaries (‘urs) |
| 72 | Other special days |
| 73 | Days of the week |
| 73 | Auspicious days |
| 74 | Hours |
| 74 | Linear time and cyclical time |
| 74 | Arcs of ascent and descent |
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| 76 | **Sacred Numbers** |
|  |  |
| 76 | Odd numbers and even numbers |
| 76 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 40, 72, 99, 1001 |
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| 83 | *Notes* |
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| 89 | **III Sacred Action** |
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| 90 | Inherited values and traditions |
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| 90 | **Via Purgativa (Purification)** |
|  |  |
| 90 | Customs for protection against evil spirits or the Evil Eye |
| 91 | Noise |
| 91 | Fumigation |
| 91 | Scents |
| 91 | Salt |
| 91 | Drawing a circle or walking around a (sick) person |
| 92 | Tying knot and loosening them again |
| 92 | Gestures (Hand of Fatima) |
| 92 | Henna (mehndi), turmertic and betel |
| 92 | Little boats of straw |
| 93 | Removing one’s shoes |
| 93 | Pilgrim’s dress (Ihram) |
| 94 | Covering the head and hair (women and men; veils, caps, fez, turbans, prayer caps) |
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| 94 | **Purification** |
|  |  |
| 94 | Sweeping shrines |
| 94 | Washing sacred buildings and shrines |
| 95 | Ritual purity |
| 95 | Purification by fire (includes alchemy) |
| 95 | Ablutions (water) and full bath (wudu and ghusl) |
| 97 | Blood |
| 97 | Tears |
| 98 | Abstinence |
| 98 | Nightly superogative prayer |
| 98 | Asceticism |
| 98 | Ramadan (fasting; sawm) |
| 99 | Animal sacrifice |
| 100 | Self-sacrifice |
| 100 | Hair shaving |
| 100 | Circumcision |
| 101 | Offering and distributing flowers and sweets |
| 101 | Alms-giving (zakat) |
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| 102 | **Via Illuminativa** |
|  |  |
| 102 | Intention (niyya) |
| 103 | Touching a sacred object or saintly person for blessing (baraka) |
| 103 | - Hands, peacock feathers, kissing, breathing |
| 104 | Music and dance (wirling dance in Sufism) |
| 104 | Ecstasy |
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| 105 | **Via Unitiva** |
|  |  |
| 105 | Love and union with God |
| 107 | Eating and drinking blessed food and drink |
| 107 | Communal meals |
| 107 | Wine and intoxicating drink as a metaphor |
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| 109 | *Notes* |
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| 113 | **IV The Word and the Script** |
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| 114 | **The Word – About God, and from God** |
|  |  |
| 114 | Recitation |
| 114 | Popular religious songs |
| 115 | Repetition and rhyme |
| 116 | Dhikr (recollection of God) |
| 116 | Arabic language |
| 117 | Translation and commentaries of the Qu’ran |
| 117 | Islamic literature in other languages |
| 119 | Inspiration (ilham) |
| 119 | Divine revelation (wahy) |
| 119 | Interpretation and translation |
| 119 | Ninety-nine most beautiful Names of God and the greatest Name of God |
| 120 | Dhikr (recollection of God) |
| 121 | Personal names and titles (children, converts, rulers) |
| 122 | Divination (Qur’an, Mathnavi of Rumi, Divan of Hafiz) |
| 123 | Dreams |
| 124 | Astrology |
| 124 | Revelation and teachings of Muhammad |
| 125 | Mythology |
| 125 | Creation |
| 125 | Adam and Eve |
| 126 | Building of the Kaaba |
| 126 | Kerbela (martyrdom of Imam Husayn) |
| 126 | Pilgrimage, prayer and fasting |
| 126 | Last judgment (the Books, the Scales, the Bridge, the Mahdi, the second coming of Jesus) |
| 126 | Muhammad’s heavenly journey (isra mi’raj) |
| 127 | Demythologization and rationalization |
| 127 | Saga’s, fairy tales, fables, legends, proverbs and poetry |
| 129 | Hadith |
| 130 | Oral instruction |
| 130 | Esoteric interpretation |
| 131 | Madrasa (theological colleges) |
| 131 | Use of paradoxes and riddles |
| 132 | Ta’lim (theoretical dictation by the Shiam Imams) |
| 132 | Khutba (sermons) |
| 133 | Allegories |
| 133 | Shahada (profession of faith; seven words, twenty four letters) |
| 134 | Knowledge (‘Ilm) and wisdom (‘irfan) |
| 135 | Shari’a (Islamic law; ‘ulama, imams and mujahids) |
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| 135 | **The Word to God** |
|  |  |
| 135 | Greetings (as-salamu ‘alaykum) |
| 136 | Blessing and cursing |
| 137 | Oaths and vows |
| 137 | * Children’s names, meals, tomb covers, little rags hanging in trees or window grills |
| 138 | Exorcism (zar ritual) |
| 138 | Invocations (takbir: Allahu Akbar) |
| 138 | Ablutions (purification with water) |
| 138 | Prayer |
| 138 | Forgiveness |
| 139 | Call to prayer (adhan) |
| 139 | Ritual prayer (obligatory prayer, salat, namaz) |
| 140 | Community prayer (congragational prayer) |
| 141 | Rak’a (17 cycles of bodily movements, like standing, genuflexions and prostration) |
| 142 | Supererogatory prayers |
| 143 | Praise of God (Subhan Allah) and hymnic poetry |
| 145 | Personal prayers (du’a, munajat) |
| 147 | Dhikr and tasbih (repeating short prayers or phrases) |
| 149 | Silence |
|  |  |
| 150 | **Sacred Scripture** |
|  |  |
| 150 | The Koran (Qur’an) |
| 151 | Letters, pen, tablet |
| 152 | Adjad system (numerical value of letters) |
| 152 | Unconnected, disconnected or isolated letters of the Koran |
| 152 | Talismans, amulets and tomb covers etc. |
| 153 | Arabic alphabet |
| 154 | Calligraphy |
| 155 | The Well-preserved Tablet (lawh mahfuz; Koran 85:22) |
| 155 | The illiteracy of Muhammad |
| 156 | Alteration of the Torah and the Gospel |
| 156 | Audio recordings of the Koran |
| 156 | I’jaz (unsurpassible style of the Koran) |
| 157 | Other aspects of the Koran |
| 157 | Suras or verses with special blessing (baraka; Fatiha, Sura 36 Ya Sin, the Throne verse (2:255), Sura 122) |
| 158 | Khatma (a complete recitation of the Koran) |
| 158 | Abrogated verses in Islamic law |
| 158 | Copying and printing the Koran |
| 158 | Reverence for copies of the Koran (mushaf) |
| 159 | Compilation of the text of the Koran (caliph ‘Othman, r. 644-656) |
| 160 | Arrangment by length of the Suras (long to short) |
| 160 | History of Islamic exegesis (interpretation) |
| 161 | Tafsir (conventional) and ta’wil (esoteric interpretation) |
| 165 | Translation |
| 165 | Hadith (Divine words revealed outside the Koran) |
| 168 | Secondary literature (poetry, philosophy etc.) |
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| 169 | *Notes* |
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| 177 | **V Individual and Society** |
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| 178 | **The Human Being** |
|  |  |
| 178 | Dual nature of man (spiritual and material) |
| 179 | ‘Abd (slave, servant), the highest station of man |
| 180 | The Perfect Man (al-insan al-kamil) in Sufism |
| 180 | The story of creation (Adam and Eve) |
| 180 | Spirit (ruh) and soul (nafs) |
| 181 | The body (carries power (baraka): |
| 181 | - Hair, beard, nails, nose, breathing, saliva, perspiration, blood, head, feet, eyes |
| 183 | Purification after losing ‘power’ |
| 184 | The heart, a pure mirror |
| 184 | Spirit and soul |
| 184 | Parents |
| 184 | Family, fathers, mothers, children |
| 185 | Caliphate (Sunni Islam) |
| 186 | Imamate (Shia Islam) |
| 186 | - Twelver Shia and the Hidden Imam |
| 186 | ‘ Ulama (lawyer-divines in Sunni Islam) |
| 186 | Mujtahid (clerics in Twelver Shia) |
| 187 | The Prophet Muhammad |
| 187 | Two kinds of prophets: nabi (receives a revelation) and rasul (must preach the message) |
| 187 | Illiteracy and sinlessness of the prophet |
| 188 | Twenty-eight prophets mentioned in the Koran |
| 188 | Muhammad as the ‘Seal of the Prophets’ (khatam an-nabiyyin) and the Paraclete (from the Bible) |
| 188 | Descendants of Muhammad (sayyids and sharifs) |
| 188 | Non-acceptance of new revelations (e.g. Babi-Bahai movement and Ahmadiyya) |
| 189 | The spiritual station of Muhammad |
| 192 | Asceticism |
| 192 | Meditation and dhikr |
| 192 | Saints (shaykhs, pirs etc.) |
| 194 | Praying at tombs, shrines and graves |
| 195 | Imam ‘Ali and Imam Husayn |
| 196 | Martyrdom |
| 196 | Renovators (mujaddid) |
| 197 | Position of women in Islam |
| 197 | Polygamy, marriage, divorce |
| 198 | Prominent women in the Koran and in the Islamic world |
| 199 | Veils |
| 200 | Other aspects |
|  |  |
| 201 | **Society** |
|  |  |
| 201 | Umma (the community) |
| 202 | The middle way |
| 202 | Ijma’ (consensus) |
| 203 | Jihad (striving in the way of God) |
| 203 | Umma is not limited to nation or state |
| 204 | Right government |
| 204 | Non-Arab converts (mawali) |
| 204 | People of the Book (Jews, Christians, Sabians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists) |
| 205 | Jihad (striving in the way of God) |
| 205 | Non-Arab converts (Jews, Christians, Sabians, Zoroastrians) |
| 206 | Jihad |
| 206 | Legal schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’I, Hanbali) |
| 208 | Sunni and Shia Islam |
| 212 | Sufism |
| 213 | Guilds (futuwwa) |
| 214 | Islam in non-Muslim majority countries |
| 214 | Interfaith dialogue |
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| 215 | *Notes* |
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| 219 | **VI God and His Creation; Eschatology** |
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| 220 | God |
| 220 | Fate and predestination |
| 221 | Aspects of God: Creator, greatness, beauty, wisdom, will, justice, truth, mercy and love |
| 223 | God’s transcendence and immanence |
| 223 | God in the Koran |
| 225 | Hidden treasure |
| 225 | Unity of Existence (wahdat al-wujud) |
| 225 | Oneness of God |
| 225 | Other aspects of God (including His majesty (jalal) and beauty (jamal)) |
| 227 | God’s Creation (including emanation, ‘Be! and it is’, change, signs (ayat), duality, polarity) |
| 229 | The meaning of this world |
| 229 | Angels (including the four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Israfil, ‘Azra’il) |
| 232 | Djinn (spirits) |
| 232 | Iblis (Satan) |
| 233 | Death |
| 234 | Day of Judgment/Resurrection |
| 237 | Paradise and hell |
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| 239 | *Notes* |
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| 243 | **VII How to Approach Islam** |
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| 244 | How to view traditional religion in modern times |
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| 256 | *Notes* |
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