

Enchanted Objects & Mysticism

a critical reflection by
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“Everything's already been said, but since nobody was listening, we have to start again.”

— Andre Gide

In the beginning of the book “Enchanted Objects”, David Rose suggests four different possibilities of how future might look like based on the relationship between human beings and technology. The first possibility he points out is the “Terminal World”; the world in which individuals interact with technology through glass slabs and painted pixels. Devices in this world do not care about enchantment and are lacking personality. In the second future, technology interacts with us through “Prosthetics”. HUDs (Heads-Up Displays) and every other wearable technology falls into this group, in which technology helps humans to become superhumans by reinforcing their capabilities in various aspects. Rose further mentions “Animism” as the third probable future for technology interaction; the future in which we live with intelligent social robots and feel more attached to them because of their lifelike personalities. Lastly, a world full of “Enchanted Objects” is the fourth technology trajectory that he suggests; the world in which every ordinary thing has augmented and became extraordinary using emerging technologies; Things similar to what agent 007 had or magical objects from myths and fables. Rose, as one can guess from the title of his book, focuses more on this last trajectory and writes about how to turn this future to reality.¹ Nonetheless, this future which Rose discusses in his book, according to most Iranian mystics, was a reality long time ago, and science, centuries ago, was more advanced than it is right now and that is because humankind was more conscious about the truth of its real self.

Ostad Elahi (1895-1974), an Iranian mystic, philosopher, jurist, and musician, on the topics of jealousy and stinginess, explains that mankind has lost a great deal of its knowledge and discoveries due to these two weaknesses of man, jealousy and stinginess.² Ostad then provides examples of how people in past could know time, date, and weather without using any tools; or how they could say if a person lies or tells the truth just by looking into the person’s eyes; or how they have built a carpet like machine that could travel in whatever height with whatever speed by using its own power and the power that mankind had. Ostad Elahi believes that, during past centuries, mankind has faced severe spiritual decadence in addition to deterioration of morality. This could be the reason why technology could not reach to the level it was before; those days, one was more involved with spirituality and metaphysics

¹ Rose, D. (2015). *Enchanted objects: Innovation, design, and the future of technology*. New York, NY: Scribner.

² Elahi, N. A., & Elahi, B. (1978). *Asar-ol Haqq [Traces of Truth] (Vol. 1.0)*. Jeyhun. (P. 132)

and was more engaged with the other dimension of himself; which brings us to the concept of “Enchanted Selves”.

In past, first there were Enchanted Selves, selves who had acquired knowledge about unknowns of both this world and the other world, physics and metaphysics, terrestrial sciences and celestial sciences. These Enchanted Selves, then, would be able to bring enchantment into an object. In the future that Rose talks about, “enchantment” is limited to objects and cannot be transferred from the user to the object or vice versa, nevertheless, in the old days, enchantment of objects was tightly connected to the enchantment of the person using the object.

“Your Lord said to the angels, “I will create a mortal out of dry clay, formed from dark mud. When I have finished him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him”, and the angels all did so.”³

From what Quran describes about the creation of Adam, we can see that the element that enchants the dark mud, which has the lowest value and degree in the scale of creation, is nothing but the sheer spirit of God which is breathed into it and made it the noblest of all creatures before who the angels had to bow down. This is what makes us different than other creatures and is the origin of our celestial souls. This element which makes us who we are is the origin of human’s creativity and productivity.⁴ If we delve within ourselves seeking for our true selves, we then discover what the true enchantment is. That is when we can transfer our enchantments into other objects in order to facilitate our terrestrial lives so that we would be able to pay more attention to the celestial dimension of ourselves to reach perfection and pure consciousness.

Enchanting our selves comes before enchanting everyday objects. Once we find out who we are, where do we come from, what is our purpose, and where do we go after that, we have reached to the truth and we automatically step into the world of enchantment; This is the world of mysticism.

“Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.”

— Andre Gide

³ The Holy Quran, Surah Al-Hijr, No 15 – Verses 28 - 29

⁴ Elahi, N. A., & Elahi, B. (1978). *Asar-ul Haqq [Traces of Truth] (Vol. 1.0)*. Jeyhun. (P. 265)