

# WHAT IS

#017

## It Is What It Is



**Fihi Ma Fihi**  
Acrylic on canvas board 50x40 cm  
(DEC 2020)

GoogleTrends shows that for the past five years, the phrase ***It Is What It Is*** is being increasingly used by people and is usually an answer to a question that cannot be adequately answered, hence broadening its meaning.

In some contexts it means *'fuck it'*, in another it means *"deal with it"* or *"forget about it"*; mainly situations that are less than ideal and that you cannot change, a sense of acceptance, frustration, helplessness. It is also an indication that the speaker is letting the thing exist in all its rich uniqueness without having to analyze it.

In Arabic culture and later in Persian with Rumi's Sufi Book Of Discourses, ***Fihi Ma Fihi*** (In It What Is In It), we find a deeper and more mystical meaning of ***It Is What It Is*** that I am starting to figure out. By the way, Arabs invented the idea.

Rumi says that since our main human quality is to look for significance in what we see only, our objective sight, we, therefore, cannot perceive the truth of a thing or a situation. To remedy this we should doubt what we see and rely on Vision and that only with Vision (and in this case Islam) we can perceive the truth of something.

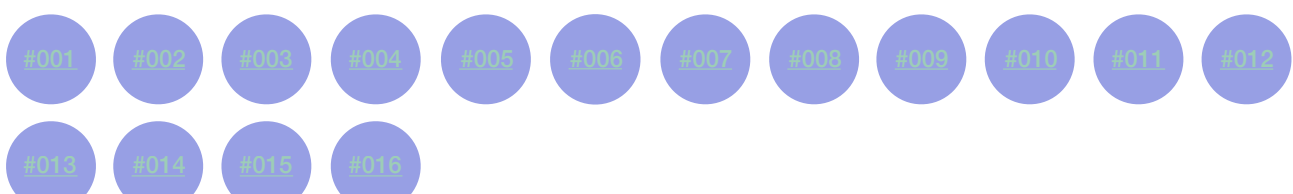
“Lord, show me things as they are.  
You show a thing as fair, and in reality it is ugly.  
You show a thing as ugly, and in truth it is beautiful.  
Show us everything just as it is,  
So that we will not fall into the snare.” (Prophet Mohamed)

*(Fihi Ma Fihi discourse 1/ Rumi)*

***It Is What It is***, with a Sufi perspective ergo takes the meaning of “Its quality is not visible.” As if the meaning of that thing we are seeing is hanging in special *states of potentiality*, which are states that could collapse to different actual states depending on which belief you are observing the thing. As an example, in Buddhism you might interpret a circle as Freedom, in Christianity, you might interpret the same circle as Infinity or in Islam as Unity or Sikhism as Love... This may seem like a simple phenomenon but it has profound implications for how we look at art and how we conceive the world we live in.

Dropping belief systems (religious, philosophical, ideological) as a painter enables me to continually re-conceptualize things in freer and creative ways without bestowing on them any kind of meaning. By letting things hang in an uncategorized state in my mind, I may offer the viewer a bona fide, and more nuanced understanding of it, which may lead to new insights and perhaps find hope in the darkest of situations.

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