Iqbal's Exit From Philosophy

The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam at the End of Metaphysics

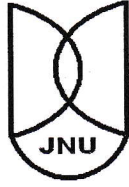Dissertation Submitted to

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First of all, I must thank my parents, Abba and Amma. Because of the tremendous love and care they have always bestowed on me, I have learnt how to be thankful to the world. Only the thankful man can bear to think on the immense debt we owe to existence.

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"It is not us, but time, time stirs

This quiet revolution in our universe."

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New Delhi, July 2016   **Huzaifa Omair Siddiqi**

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Introduction

Every system of thought necessarily engages with the narrative of the creation and evolution of the universe which can be called cosmology. My father had once related to me the narrative which constituted Islamic cosmology as it is recorded in tradition. God was supposed to have made the universe and everything in it in six days. After this work was done, He made three kinds of sentient beings: angels, jinn, and men. Angels were made of light– the same substance as that of God. Jinns were made out of fire. Men were made out of clay, or earth. When God had finally made Adam, the first man, he instructed the angels and jinns to bow down before him. The angels, being utterly subservient to God, did as they were told. The leader of the jinns, Iblis, refused. His argument was that the jinns and angels were made of greater stuff than the lowly earth which constituted the first man. For this rebellion, Iblis was banished, and he adopted the role of the Devil, or Satan. We can perhaps understand the reason behind Iblis's rebellion. If man was made of earth and jinns and angels were made of fire and light, then in any regular hierarchy the latter should be foremost. The constitution of the lowest as the highest is a revolutionary act– and it is thus that we should see Satan's rebellion as nothing more than a reaction, a counter-revolutionary impulse. Thus the creation of man does not just upset the ordered hierarchy of the universe, nor does it simply finish off creation.[1] What the creation of man signals is the groundlessness of sovereignty(God's command is deeply irrational and yet cannot be questioned) and the incomplete nature of the universe itself. Man is created not to complete the universe, to make it perfect, but paradoxically to make the universe incomplete, a non-All.[2]

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[1] Iqbal is immensely fond of citing this particular Quranic verse: "He adds to His Creation as He pleases: For Allah has power over all things"(35:1; translation by Yusuf Ali).

[2] Incompleteness in the quantum sense is not the same as the ordinary commonsensical conception of completeness and incompleteness. As Yutaka Tanaka writes in *Physics and Whitehead* "Einstein's concept of completeness of a physical theory implicitly presupposes the classical world where the relation of divisibility holds. In the quantum world where incommensurable (not mutually divisible) events exist, the very concept of completeness does not hold. Therefore, we must say that quantum physics is neither incomplete nor complete in the classical sense."(178) The great discovery engendered by the quantum revolution in physics was the rejection of both logical and physical atomism; both of which were premised on the concept of the whole made up of parts. In the quantum conception of incompleteness there can be no all-inclusive whole which can be described by the workings of its parts.
The simplest way to define the non-All in the Lacanian sense would be to give the example(used often by Lacan himself) that woman was the exemplary non-All. This he arrived at the logical proposition that

Jinns and angels are near to God by virtue of their very nature as beings of fire and light; man is corporeal, a body of clay, unable to immerse and lose himself in God's vastness. This is the true reason behind why God chooses man- because man refuses to become one with Him. The universe is thus incomplete, it is a non-All. Yet it is because of the fact that it is incomplete that it has a reason to continue existing.[3] This incompleteness is hence not contingent, but an essential necessity for existence.

This is the problem that Muhammad Iqbal made his own– the problem of the ontological incompleteness of the universe. This is the resultant necessity of the concepts of process, movement, dynamism and reconstruction in his thought. Iqbal expressed his understanding of the necessary incompleteness of the universe by way of the *khudi*, or Ego who is inassimilable within a greater Whole. This research takes up Iqbal's fundamental problem in a wholly different light to focus on the theologico-political problem which for him goes by the name of theocracy. It is theocracy which we will try to think here, through Iqbal's exit from philosophy and rejection of metaphysics, and his destitution of sovereign referents for action. It is this question of an anarchic theocracy which is of utmost importance in a time when theocracy has nothing more than a political motivation.[4] But it is not our intention to delineate the difference between profane and divine, like the thinkers of the messianic, Jacques Derrida and Jacob Taubes, in their critique of the theologico-political. With Iqbal, we move towards what he called a *reconstruction*.

Thus to regard the question of theocracy with the seriousness and rigour it deserves is our goal in this research. The problem that is formulated is simple– what is the nature of the theologico-political when it comes to theocracy as conceived of by Iqbal? What kind of conception of the political subject is required for such a problem? And the most important question, which has so wrongly been posed before. It has been

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woman is that which is not man. But, crucially, that which is not woman is not necessarily man. Hence there is a remainder in woman. Woman is thus a non-All because as a category it cannot be totalised.

[3] Refer to Ibn al-Arabi's thesis on the divine roots of love. For ibn al-Arabi, God lends the world existence because He loves it. Our existence is thus founded on our relative non-existence with respect to God; thus we only exist because we paradoxically have no complete existence. Refer to the third chapter of this dissertation for a deeper elucidation of this issue.

[4] The rise of the Islamic State or Daesh must be seen as an example of the virulently theologico-political tendencies of our age, where men decide that they will institute the rule of God. For this Iqbal had an unequivocal condemnation, writing that theocracy did not mean a state headed by "a representative of God on Earth who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility."(123)

posed so as to expose the world to its lack of foundation, to the abyssal nature of the political. It cannot be denied that one must unmask the political and reveal the abyss upon which it is based- the *ungrund*. But that is not our only task. Following Iqbal we must reject the mask, but only insofar as it is a mask. The question concerning the theologico-political seeks to reveal the abyss, but the question we are raising here is simple: what happens when we approach the semblance as that of semblance itself? What if it is not about simply revealing the abyss, but of retaining the concept of semblance after voiding it of its essential nature as semblance of something; revealing it rather as the semblance of nothing?[5] The question concerning theocracy therefore is not one of deconstruction, but that of reconstruction, a method which engages with the properly traumatic aspect of Nietzsche's proclamation of 'God is dead'; the trauma which deconstruction attempts to moderate with its postulation of a radical Otherness beyond the circles of the world.

Therefore our problem here is double– not just the problem of theocracy as it is revealed in Iqbal, but also the question of the method we must use as a tool, which is the method of reconstruction. We cannot understand Iqbal's thought without the method of reconstruction. Thus this dissertation does not just simply try to elucidate Iqbal's ideas on theocracy, but also is a means in developing a method for thinking. The two are not incidental: thinking is nothing more than method. It is thus that in a 'democratic' age we ask the question of theocracy; in this age of 'deconstruction' we ask the question of reconstruction.

Methodology

What is reconstruction? We well know that deconstruction, especially the messianic variety, is oriented towards what Jacques Derrida called the messianic without messianism, the *l'avenir* or the future (or democracy) to come. This method of thinking is intent on forcing the gap between the actual world of injustice and unjust laws, and the justice to come. Thus all those who speak of post-deconstructionist thought are fundamentally mistaken. There can be no post-deconstructionist thought, if only because the end of deconstruction can only occur with the arrival of the indeconstructible, which

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[5] This is Jacques-Alain Miller's formulation: that semblance is the mask of nothing. This claim must be read parallel to Gilles Deleuze's overturning of Platonism where the discourse of good and bad copies of the Idea give way to the simulacra which are copies without original.

is justice. And that is forever differed and deferred. Thus post-deconstructionist thought is unimaginable within the paradigm of deconstruction. If we are to actually think after or beyond deconstruction, within that paradigm, we must think in a quintessentially Hegelian tone. That is, deconstruction is itself what comes after deconstruction. Or rather, simply put, ~~deconstruction~~ is reconstruction itself, viewed from a different perspective. The question therefore is, how do we attain this new perspective? It is this shift in perspective which is of essential value here. This shift is attained through the Event. Deconstruction occurs when it discovers an exception to the totality. But the occurrence of this Event reveals that everything is exceptional, that there is no totality to be deconstructed. *There are only exceptions*. This is the imperative of an exit from philosophy and a restitution of wonder as enjoined upon us by Iqbal. Reconstruction is the voiding of deconstruction. It is not simply the realisation that the work is always already deconstructed, but that the work is always already inscribed with a gap- it is always already not wholly the work. This is the nature of process thought, which Iqbal hints towards. The universe is incomplete, God is a process. The universe exists only because of the minimal difference with itself. It is the inscription of this minimal difference into the universe that is mirrored in the minimal difference inscribed into God of whom it was said in a *hadith* that He was a hidden treasure (or as we can say, following Lacan, that God is for us humans a barred fullness). Reconstruction is not the overcoming of this gap, but rather it is the renewal of the gap in reality itself. It is as G.K. Chesterton would say, not the desire for the organic wholeness of the universe, which is pagan in nature, but the fragmentation of the universe, which heralds the coming of the promised salvation.

Simply put, reconstruction is the final step of deconstruction. It is the two step realisation that the justice to come is not complete, and also that this *justice has already always come.* We are always already saved and redeemed. Hence reconstruction is the final gesture, that instead of looking forward to the fullness of an always to come, spectral yet pure form of messianic justice, realises that this justice, (which is in itself incomplete) has already been delivered. It is now our responsibility to be faithful to it, to

reconstruct it.[6] Reconstruction is thus the supplement of deconstruction: its task is not the construction of structures, but rather the shoring up of ruins.

It is not coincidental that Giorgio Agamben writes that in Islam salvation precedes creation. It is only after we realise that we are saved, can we be able to create with meaning; in short be *poietic* and not just technical. It is only in this way that not just the future, but the past itself can be changed. The poietical is thus the true name for the excess over the political. This is why this research attempts to transform the question of the theologico-political into that of the *theologico-poietical.* It is the substitution of the question of sovereignty by the question of the "process of progressive change" where "God becomes a co-worker with him, provided man take the initiative."(*Reconstruction* 10*)* The theologico-poietical is thus oriented towards the endless and infinite process of reconstruction that is enjoined upon man when he confronts the properly traumatic nature of the infinitely incomplete universe that he *must* make home. With respect to this, we must keep in mind Martin Heidegger's discovery in the last years of his life. For Heidegger the question that must be raised now is the question of the phenomenology of the inapparent. The task of the theologico-poietical is thus but a development of this question. The imperative of the theologico-poietical is informed by the passage of that which, withdrawing from all phenomenality, leaves to us a remainder. It is that incomplete, indivisible remainder which is our world.[7]

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[6] Reconstruction is a re-construction because it offers a new model for freedom, which is very different from the traditional East-West binary where the East is a symbol for the blind subordination to fate while the West is the symbol of the individual's freedom to do whatever he wants. It is not about being subject to fate, or being creative or constructive of one's fate. Rather, reconstruction combines these two antagonistic movements without attempting to reconcile them. There is, firstly, a profound submission to one's fate, which is followed by an intense grappling, a reconstruction of the fate that one is subject to, until that fate itself is altered. What is of essence here is that fate cannot be altered unless one actually carries out the first step of believing that one is completely and utterly subjected to it. Refer to Jean-Pierre Dupuy's work on time which is of a similar persuasion, especially *The Mark of the Sacred.* Indeed Dupuy's project is very close to that of Iqbal's: as he says in the above book, "what if, quite to the contrary, the science of religion and the sciences of humanities are the one and the same?"(1)

[7] I use the term 'indivisible remainder' borrowed from Schelling's essay *Philosophical Inquiry Into the Essence of Human Freedom.* There Schelling uses the term to refer to that which "with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground. The understanding is born in the genuine sense from that which is without understanding. Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance. God alone—as the one who exists— dwells in pure light since he alone is begotten from himself"(29)

Iqbal, His Life and Age

Muhammad Iqbal was born on the 9th of November, 1877, in the Punjab region to parents of Kashmiri background, originally from Srinagar. His father, Nur Muhammad, was not formally educated himself, but was considered a sort of *unparh falsafi* or unlearned philosopher by his friends and colleagues. Iqbal was influenced by his father's Sufistic disposition. His father sent Iqbal to a traditional religious school or *maktab* for his primary education. It was there that he learnt Arabic, Persian and Urdu, as well as the essentials of faith and religion. He later studied at the Scottish Mission School, where he was first exposed to Western or English models of education. He completed his graduate studies at the Government College, Lahore, where he first met the distinguished scholar of Islam, Thomas W. Arnold. Under his tutelage Iqbal studied Arabic, English literature as well as philosophy. In 1905, he went to Europe to pursue further studies, where he studied law and philosophy in London as well as at Cambridge, after which he gained a doctorate from Munich University. In Europe he came into contact with the works of thinkers and poets like Goethe, Nietzsche, and Hegel, as well as the neo-Hegelians John McTaggart and James Ward. In 1908, Iqbal came back from Europe and was appointed as "the top most professor of philosophy at Lahore Government College"(Sevea 21)

The Indian subcontinent, as we know, was under the direct rule of the British Crown since the Revolt of 1857, and had been under indirect rule for almost another century. The Revolt of 1857 failed to dislodge the British from power, and resulted in the abolition of the Mughal Empire which had ruled over the most part of the subcontinent for more than three centuries. Muslims in the subcontinent, especially those from aristocratic backgrounds, felt that they had been emasculated and disempowered by their British rulers, and there was a widespread belief in a period of intellectual and cultural decline and stagnation. As W.W. Hunter said in 1871, the Muslims were a "race ruined under British rule."(145) In this changing political and intellectual context, many Muslim intellectuals began to discuss reasons behind this decline and stagnation, implicitly and explicitly contrasting Islamic societies with Western ones. Many of those Muslim intellectuals felt themselves forced to respond to Orientalist misconceptions of Islam and Islamic institutions. This response took two forms- one was the rise of the Deobandi movement, which started with the foundation of the Dar-ul-Uloom Madrasa at Deoband

in 1867. This Islamic seminary focussed on the creation of a community that would be knowledgeable of Islamic law and practice, with emphasis being placed on traditional sciences such as *tafsir, fiqh,* and the *hadith.* The other response was a desire to modernise Islam, to bring it into contact with modern European ideas and institutions. The Central Asian reformer Jamaluddin Afghani was a Muslim revivalist who believed in the importance of science, but as W.C. Smith has pointed out, he also "seems to have been the first Muslim revivalist to use the concepts of Islam and the West as connoting correlative-and of course antagonistic-historical phenomena"(49) It was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, a man whose sympathies were always in favour of the British, who laid the foundation for an Islamic modernism which was not antagonistic to what could be appropriated from Western civilisation and institutions. Sir Syed was also the progenitor of the Aligarh Movement, which led to the foundation of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, later to become Aligarh Muslim University. He was a firm believer in English education, against all opposition by the Muslim orthodoxy, and his efforts were extremely important in popularising Western models of education amongst Indian Muslims. His loyalty was always towards the British, and his religious views tended towards harmonising Revelation and Science. Of him, Iqbal writes, "we may differ from his religious views, but there can be no denying the fact that his sensitive soul was the first to react to the modern age".(*Speeches and Statements* 131) Iqbal himself benefited from both traditional and Western models of education. After his return from Europe in 1908, Iqbal was even more greatly struck by the social, economic, and most importantly mental destitution of the Indian Muslims. In the years that followed he actively began to compose poetry, and it was his spirited reading of his poem *Shikwa* or *The Complaint*, addressed to God, which brought him fame. It was in that poem, where he addressed God as *harjaee,* which brought the ire of the orthodox ulema upon him.[8] Iqbal had also taken up the modernist burden to a large extent and this is reflected in the poetry written in that decade, which usually took the form of an exhortation to Muslims to wake up from their stupor. It is hardly surprising that many of the more orthodox among the Islamic community were opposed to Iqbal's criticism of their medieval theological practices. In

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[8] *Harjaee* is usually a term for an unfaithful lover. It is a mild pejorative, implying that someone is promiscuous.

1924, he was issued a fatwa because he had translated the famous Sanskrit prayer, the *Gayatri mantra*, in his youth.[9] Confronted with such narrow-minded religionists, Iqbal searched for a new force which would enable Muslims to interpret their faith in the modern world. This led him to the problem of *ijtihad,* or free inquiry into the sources of Islamic law and life. Iqbal desired to write a book on this topic, which he tentatively titled 'Islam as I Understand it' with the implicit suggestion that "his personal opinion may be wrong"(Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing* 48). While this book was never written, Iqbal did write a series of lectures, which were delivered to audiences at the Universities of Aligarh, Madras and Hyderabad in 1928 and 1929. It was these lectures which were later published in book form as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Annemarie Schimmel is of the opinion that this is the "philosophical essence of Iqbal's work. He wanted to represent anew Islam, and the title is likely to bear an implied allusion to the *Vivification of the Science of Religion* Imam Ghazzali's great theological work…"(49)

It is by keeping this preliminary sketch of a background in mind that we shall be able to approach and introduce the project at hand- one which has as its strange title *Iqbal's Exit from Philosophy*. We have already seen how Iqbal remains one of the most controversial and contradictory figures of his time in the public imagination. This can be extended to the academic imagination as well. Hundreds of books, articles, pamphlets and reviews have been written on Iqbal and his philosophy, in languages ranging from Urdu to Italian. Mainly due to his political activism, Iqbal's name is wielded by various organisations with wholly divergent views. Iqbal Singh Sevea writes: "Supporters of democracy in Pakistan, opponents of democracy, socialists, groups advocating territorial and racial nationalism, sections calling for the Islamisation of Pakistan, virulent opponents of the Ahmadiyya movement, members of the same movement, and organisations which seek to promote their own interpretation of Islam, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, are amongst those who have sought legitimacy for their demands by claiming the support of Muhammad Iqbal."(24-25) If the study of Iqbal still exists in the

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[9] In response to that Iqbal composed the lines:
 Zahid-e-tang-nazar ne mujhe kafir jaana
Aur kafir ye samajhta hai musalman hun main
The translation of these lines is by Ayesha Jalal:
'The religious bigot considers me an infidel
And the infidel deems me to be a Muslim.'

Indian subcontinent, then most of it is used as a tool for whichever movement, organisation or community wishes to use his thought to legitimise their action. Iqbal's philosophical ideas are marshalled and organised in the service of a particular cause, to facilitate a certain mode of action. But can we disagree with such an approach? Was Iqbal not the foremost advocate for action over dry as dust reflection? Can anyone who has read his poetry not be astounded by the vital energy that it exhibits; the ideals of exertion, action, movement, construction, creation? Perhaps Iqbal, if he was still alive, would have disapproved of certain causes taking his name in vain, and perhaps he would have been delighted by certain others.

What we do know is that in the Preface to the *Reconstruction* he writes, "Classical physics has learnt to criticize its own foundations."(1) We know what he is referring to, even though obliquely–it is what Aristotle called meta-physics, that which is after or beyond physics. Aristotle, the astute thinker that he was, realised that the description of the realm of the physical needed to be grounded in something other than the physical itself. Metaphysics is thus that art of foundation, of ground. It is that source which is the necessary origin, as well as principle upon which the physical is based. For Aristotle the actuality of the physical could only be founded on the possibility of metaphysical.

In Reiner Schurmann's book *Heidegger on Being and Acting* we can see how these metaphysical principles operate across epochs as legitimating forces, whether they be the Idea of the Good, or God, or Reason. This dissertation would be an attempt to evaluate Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* as a work which endeavours to open up philosophy to a thinking that is not just concerned with the metaphysical. It is titled *Exit from Philosophy* because Iqbal's thought struggles to emancipate itself from the quest for ground which is characteristic of philosophy. But it is also not just research into how Iqbal abandons philosophy for religion, or discards it in favour of science, mysticism, or any other field.[10] This dissertation is dedicated to Iqbal as he attempts to open philosophy to what have long been considered its Others- religion,

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[10] Mysticism in English denotes something vague and obscure but in the Islamic tradition there is a strong, scientific study of the mystical experience or *tasawwuf* which required the painstaking recording of experiences and the methods with which they could be reproduced. The science of *tasawwuf* is a regular science with set laws and a full scheme in detail of experiences which can be reproduced, like other sciences, under set circumstances. Iqbal's lectures can be thought to advocate a renewed interest in the science of *tasawwuf* with respect to the latest scientific and philosophical discoveries.

mysticism, and even science. Iqbal himself was not a scientist, and perhaps did not even understand it as a scientist should. Yet he remained a man who believed in the scientific spirit– which for him was not just the exclusive property of science. For Iqbal, the scientific spirit consisted not in observing facts and collecting data and making hypotheses. The scientific spirit was that which eschewed abstractions and delved into the concrete experience, the things themselves.

Three French intellectuals have been my guide on the rocky and treacherous path of the making of one's own *meta-hodos* or method. Jacques Derrida's method of deconstruction revealed the problematic nature of the Western philosophical and metaphysical enterprise. Alain Badiou's conception of the subject and Event formed a paradigm and structure within which to place the revival of the subject or Ego in Iqbal. From Gilles Deleuze's 'buggery' of philosophers I learnt the importance of making a conventional thinker speak in a vastly different voice.

Though I use the paradigm of the event as conceptualised in Alain Badiou's work, especially *Being and Event* and the later books, it must also be stated that Martin Heidegger and Alfred North Whitehead too provided me with the necessary tools to conceive of the event as not just a rupture but also as foundational of being. In fact, more than even Heidegger and Badiou, it is Whitehead's conception of the event in a mode which straddles both philosophy and quantum physics which appealed to me because of its affinity with Iqbal's thought. This research has endeavoured to follow the work of these great philosophers and thinkers in order to strike out a new method, but within the constraints of both time and space it is perhaps only the preliminary movements that I have been able to accomplish here.

Iqbal had once said "nations are born in the hearts of poets, they prosper and die in the hands of politicians."(*Stray Reflections* 112) Though he was an activist intellectual and had even held posts as a member of legislative assemblies, Iqbal could never truly be called a politician. He remained, more than anything else, a poet, whose clarion call in the form of his poems pervaded the somnolent Indian society of that time. While this

research would concentrate more on his *Reconstruction* and other prose works such as *Stray Reflections* and *Speeches and Statements* yet it endeavours to read him not as a pure philosopher but as a poet, albeit a poet with a message. Yet if one thinks that Iqbal's message was straightforwardly evident to all and the issue can hardly be debated, one must keep in mind that he once said, *mera payam aur hai,*(*Kulliyat-i-Iqbal,* 114) or my message is different. Iqbal always lamented that he was misunderstood in his own time- and he even composed a quatrain which he wished would be his epitaph:

When I prepared myself to depart from this earth
Everyone said, 'he was our friend'.
But no one really knew this traveller,
What he said and to whom and from where he came.[11]

(*Kulliyat-i-Iqbal Farsi,* 1021)

If this dissertation reads Iqbal in a way that is strange and different from how others have read him, then it can hardly be considered a fault– for even years after his passing Iqbal still remains a stranger in our midst. This is not because he has been merely misunderstood; rather Iqbal remains a singular which cannot be subsumed under any universal, no matter how large. That itself was the crutch with which he walked on the paths of his thought. To respect his thought is not merely to assimilate it into the form of a new theory. It means to be open to welcome not just the neighbour, but more importantly the stranger, the outsider who comes not just as someone different but also as someone dangerous and destructive. It is this traumatic encounter with the stranger which this dissertation is dedicated to.

Chapters

The first chapter is entitled 'An Exit from Philosophy'. In it would be traced a certain trend in Iqbal's *Reconstruction* which can be seen as his reaction against the ossification of Islamic thought mainly due to the influences of Greek philosophy as well as Persian, Judean and Indian thought which had developed a 'Magian crust' over the

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[11] The translation is by Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal,* pg 1.

original Quranic teaching. I would attempt to show how Iqbal seeks a sort of Lutheran *destructio* to restore Islam to its former pristine purity and simplicity. Iqbal also reacted against Aristotle's fixed and static view of the universe and showed his predilection for a creative religious thinking over a reflective philosophical method as embodied in Kant. In this chapter I would therefore examine how Iqbal hoped to effect his exit from philosophy, which is not just a mere abandonment of philosophising but rather an opening up of thinking to philosophy's Others, religion, mysticism and science. This chapter would also try to lay down the parameters of the method of reconstruction and also explore Iqbal's reconceptualization of time following his intense engagement with the works of Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead. Thus we would arrive at the true significance of an exit from philosophy, which would properly be a traumatic event, as can be seen in Iqbal's engagement with the enigmatic figure of the mystic-martyr Mansur ibn al-Hallaj.

The second chapter entitled 'The Ego, Ijtihad and the Essence of the Poietical' would take off from this call for an exit from philosophy and try to reconstruct what such a project really entails. In it I would endeavour to deconstruct Iqbal's conception of the Ego and lay down certain conditions for the reconceptualization of the theologico-political in Iqbal. In this chapter I would introduce the term *ijtihad* which has been used in Islamic juridical and religious literature for centuries but for Iqbal becomes a term embodying the principle of movement in Islam. It is this mode of looking at *ijtihad* that we shall build up upon and find a way to conceive of the political without sovereignty, which I call the poietical. *Ijtihad* becomes a term for the orientation of the Ego towards the Event of revelation. This leads us into a re-visioning of Iqbal's political project of pan-Islamic unity which would always be virtual and never actual.

In the third chapter entitled 'The Theologico-Poietical, Or the the Loving Embrace of Finite and Infinite' we would proceed with this idea of the virtual Islamic community especially through the work of Bergson and Deleuze. This would lead us into a brief but profound engagement with the thinkers of the theologico-political, from Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson to Jacques Derrida and Jacob Taubes. Following this I would explore the thought of ibn al-Arabi, a great mystic of the thirteenth century, to understand the nature of both God and theocracy in Iqbal's thought. I would conclude this chapter

with the creation of a new concept called the theologico-poietical, which can briefly be thought as the continuous striving of finite and infinite Ego to reconstruct the universe. The nature of theocracy as conceived by Iqbal would hence be revealed to be the 'infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite', the poietical process where God and man become co-workers in the work of creation.

We would conclude this research with a short meditation on the concept of *telos* and look ahead to the future of the method we have been trying to conceptualise here. Perhaps it is not so much a philosophical method as it is a poietical one; the task that remains is still bound up with Heidegger's proclamation of the need for a phenomenology of the inapparent. We end our research focussed on the motif of the veil which both hides and shows; for it is this hiding and showing that constitutes the true demand of the theologico-poietical.

Notes on the Text

There are many editions of Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* in print. I have used the edition edited by M. Saeed Sheikh, published by Stanford University Press. This edition itself is a modified version of the 1934 Oxford University Press edition, with a few amendments to names that were misspelled in the original. I have used several translations of Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poems; each translation is accompanied by a footnote wherein can be found the name of the translator. I have followed a similar method for quotations of the Quran except when Iqbal himself cites it in his book; in those instances I have not appended the name of the translator.

Chapter 1: An Exit From Philosophy

Wonder, says Plato, is the mother of all science. Bedil (Mirza Abdul Qadir) looks at the emotion of wonder from a different standpoint. Says he:–

Nazakat ha ast dar aagosh meenakhana hasrat

Mashra barham mazn ta nashkani rang-i-tamasha ra*

To Plato wonder is valuable because it leads to our questioning of nature; to Bedil it has a value of its own irrespective of its intellectual consequences. It is impossible to express the idea more beautifully than Bedil.

-*Stray Reflections* 75

*(Fragilities are contained in the glasshouse of Wonder. Blink not the eye, lest the show might be over!)

We are familiar with the opening citation in Martin Heidegger's monumental work, *Being and Time.* Heidegger quotes a line from Plato's *Sophist* that is about *thaumazo*, the wonder that engenders philosophy, and asks, "Are we today even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression 'to be'?" (20) In a later text, *Basic Questions of Philosophy* Heidegger states that this wonder is inevitably lost in mere curiosity about beings, and not being as such. This loss of wonder is what ineluctably leads to the history of the forgetting of being.

The fragment cited above is from Muhammad Iqbal's notebooks, published as *Stray Reflections*. Those notes were probably written around 1910, according to his son Javid Iqbal. The poet cited, Mirza Abdul Qadir Khan 'Bedil' lived and wrote in Persian in Delhi in the seventeenth century. From the above fragment we can see how Iqbal criticised Plato for evaluating wonder solely based on its power to raise questions in the intellect. Iqbal read Bedil's couplet as evidence that we must let wonder be; that wonder has a value besides that of merely generating intellectual consequences. It is here that we can see Iqbal's desire to embrace wonder without transforming it into mere simple curiosity. But we can also see how fragile the glasshouse of wonder is, how devastatingly easy it could be to lose that sense of wonder. For Iqbal, if philosophy since Plato's time had miscarried, it was not in its failure to catch a glimpse of the wonderful, but a failure to understand how fragile the sense of wonder actually is. For Iqbal an exit from philosophy quite necessarily entailed a deeper understanding of wonder, and most

importantly the wonder generated by the experience of a mystic consciousness. The mystic consciousness, Iqbal writes, is not something unnatural or even supernatural. The mystic's experience on the contrary is quite a natural one, as is evinced by the vast amount of mystical literature that all regions of the world have produced throughout history: "the whole religious literature of the world, including the records of specialists' personal experiences, though perhaps expressed in the thought-forms of an out-of-date psychology, is a standing testimony to it. These experiences are perfectly natural, like our normal experiences."(*Reconstruction* 149-50) Since these experiences are perfectly natural, what Iqbal proposes in his lectures is also something quite straightforward: a serious, scientific study of the mystical consciousness.[12] In a way, the *Reconstruction* can be considered as a series of lectures which attempt to ground a serious approach to what may be called the proto-phenomenology of the mystic consciousness. Iqbal's formula that the mystical is the normal must be read in parallel with G.K. Chesterton's formula that the normal is the mystical, to fully illuminate the real import of the exhortation to wonder. Chesterton, the famous essayist and conservative Christian thinker, had famously written in his *Orthodoxy*

> I have often had a fancy for writing a romance about an English yachtsman who slightly miscalculated his course and discovered England under the impression that it was a new island in the South Seas… What could be more glorious than to brace one's self up to discover New South Wales and then realize, with a gush of happy tears, that it was really old South Wales. This at least seems to me the main problem for philosophers, and is in a manner the main problem of this book. How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it? How can this queer cosmic town, with its many-legged citizens, with its monstrous and ancient lamps, how can this world give us at once the fascination of a strange town and the comfort and honour of being our own town?(Introduction)

This is in effect the problem that we must tackle before we can truly understand Iqbal's call for an exit from philosophy: how can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet be at home in it? In this chapter we will endeavour to think the exit of philosophy as a serious problem *of* and *for* philosophy. As finite, rational beings we are

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[12] This is in itself nothing new or revolutionary in the realm of Islam. The science of *tasawwuf* is a regular science with set laws and a full scheme in detail of experiences which can be reproduced, like other sciences, under set circumstances. Iqbal's lectures can be thought to advocate a renewed interest in the science of *tasawwuf* with respect to the latest scientific and philosophical discoveries.

led to believe that thought itself must be both finite and limited to the sphere of the natural, empirical world we dwell in. The real issue however, which Iqbal and Chesterton endeavour to understand in their own separate ways is that there can be no firm and sure distinction between the mundane and the mystical, the natural and the supernatural. Even though we are finite beings, in our finitude we are exposed to what in effect transcends the finite world we dwell in. Iqbal's project thus led him into a difficult impasse, an impasse which took the monumental form of modern philosophy post the Kantian revolution. The primary import of Kant's philosophical revolution hinged on the basic division of the content of experience into two separate realms- the phenomenal and the noumenal. The phenomenal was that which could be grasped, or conceived in thought, while the noumenal eluded both thought and conceptualisation. An exit from philosophy was hence the difficult task of overcoming the limitation of philosophy engendered by Kant's three *Critiques*, a limitation which Iqbal succinctly describes as the simple "assumption that all experience other than the normal level of experience is impossible".(144)[13]

An Anti-classical Thinking: Iqbal and Nietzsche

The religious experience was paradigmatic for Iqbal, as it was not just the obverse of the normal level of experience, but rather *the* mode of experience that simultaneously normalised the mystical and mystified the normal. In Iqbal's eyes, the Quran as a holy book again and again endeavoured to create a sense of wonder about the world. In his lectures he quotes extensively from the Quran, especially the verses which speak of the signs of God on Earth:

> Assuredly, in the creation of the Heavens and of the earth; and in the alternation of night and day; and in the ships which pass through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the rain which God sendeth down from Heaven, giving life to the earth after its death, and scattering over it all kinds

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[13] The elucidation of this problem is not isolated to Iqbal and Chesterton alone. In point of fact we must realise that much of what goes by the name of Continental philosophy post-Heidegger has been concerned with an exit from philosophy, seeking to overcome the Kantian limitation of normal consciousness. Heidegger's break with his mentor and teacher Edmund Husserl must be seen in this light: as the eruption of a phenomenology which refused to limit itself to the normal level of consciousness. What else can we call Dasein's being-towards-death and anxiety if not the limit case of the Kantian normal experience? Yet as Heidegger does argue, this being-towards-death is not just normal, it is the utmost case of normality, the revelation of our 'ownmost possibility.'

of cattle; and in the change of the winds, and in the clouds that are made to do service between the Heavens and the earth- are signs for those who understand.(2:164)

Verily, in the alternations of night and day and in all that God hath created in the Heavens and in the earth are signs to those who fear Him(10:6)

As Iqbal goes on to say, "according to the Quran, the alternation of day and night is one of the greatest signs of God"(*Reconstruction* 58) as also that the "general empirical attitude of the Quran which engendered in its followers a feeling of reverence for the actual…"(11) For Iqbal this sense of reverence engendered by the visible universe, which he elsewhere said "the universe is nothing but a great symbol"(*Stray Reflections* 95) is what was diluted by the discovery of Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle, by the early Muslim scholars and thinkers. In his first lecture itself Iqbal advocates this hypothesis:

> As we all know, Greek philosophy has been a great cultural force in the history of Islam. Yet a careful study of the Quran and the various schools of scholastic theology that arose under the inspiration of Greek thought disclose the remarkable fact that while Greek philosophy very much broadened the outlook of Muslim thinkers, it on the whole obscured their vision of the Quran. Socrates concentrated his attention on the human world alone. To him the proper study of man was man, and not the world of plants, insects and stars. How unlike the spirit of the Quran, which sees in the humble bee a recipient of Divine inspiration and constantly calls upon the reader to observe the perpetual change of the winds, the alternation of day and night, the clouds, the starry heavens, and the planets swimming through infinite space…this is what the earlier Muslim students of the Quran completely missed under the spell of classical speculation. They read the Quran in the light of Greek thought. It took them over two hundred years to perceive that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical…
>
> (*Reconstruction* 3)

As a professed anti-classical thinker, it is no surprise that Iqbal was drawn towards a thinker whose work has all too often been classified as 'antiphilosophy', the German Friedrich Nietzsche. In the first decade of the twentieth century Nietzsche had become an extremely popular philosophical figure among the students of Cambridge. Iqbal was at Cambridge University from 1905 to 1908 and it is conjectured that he took up the serious reading of Nietzsche, who always remained a formative and pivotal influence on his thought, even finding his way into the *Javid Namah* as a character in one of the heavenly spheres. Nietzsche's voice was almost of the prophetic order for Iqbal, and in 1910 he lamented, "this great prophet of aristocracy is universally condemned in

Europe. Only a few have realized the meaning of his madness"(*Stray Reflections* 30) Nietzsche's repudiation of the philosophy of Plato was but part of his larger design of an attack against the very fundamentals of western metaphysics and as a consequence, Christianity itself. Martin Heidegger had best summed up Nietzsche's effect on the edifice of Western metaphysics as an 'overturning'; Nietzsche's thought itself was characterised as the "final stage", after which "other possibilities of metaphysics cannot appear".(*Question* 60) The death of God as announced by Zarathustra in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* precludes any attempt in the future of a possible resurrection. God is dead, and it is us who are responsible for this tremendous crime, this divine murder. Yet in a way it is not a crime, this murder of God, but an assassination, a coup which is nothing more than a revolution, an overturning. Nietzsche first made this revolutionary pronouncement "God is dead" in the book *The Gay Science* where the madman says "Whither is God? I shall tell you. *We have killed him*- you and I."(119) Heidegger read Nietzsche's proclamation as not just the last ritual that heralds us past the death of the Christian God, but also as the dissolution of the realm of the suprasensory world, the traditional Platonic realm of Ideas. To understand the implications of such a pronouncement, we should let Heidegger elaborate:

> This realm of the suprasensory has been considered since Plato…to be the true and genuinely real world. In contrast to it the sensory world is only down here, the changeable, and therefore the merely apparent, unreal world. The world down here is the vale of tears in contrast to the mountain of everlasting bliss in the beyond. If as still happens in Kant, we name the sensory world the physical in the broader sense, then the suprasensory world is the metaphysical world.
>
> The pronouncement "God is dead" means: the suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life. Metaphysics, i.e. for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end.(*Question* 61)

For Iqbal, as for Nietzsche, philosophy, metaphysics, and Platonism were three words for the same type of classical thinking. Iqbal believed that they had attached itself to, and been assimilated by, Islam even before the advent of colonialism, in the early centuries when the doctors of Islam enthusiastically perused the works of the Greek

masters. Thus it is hardly surprising that Iqbal followed Nietzsche's lead in his attitude

towards Plato. In his Persian epic poem, the *Javidnamah* he writes:

"PLATO, the prime ascetic and sage.

Was one of that ancient flock of sheep.

His Pegasus went astray in the darkness of idealism

And dropped its shoe amidst the rocks of actuality.

He was so fascinated by the invisible

That he made hand, eye, and ear of no account.

"To die," said he, "is the secret of Life:

The candle is glorified by being put out."

He dominates our thinking,

His cup sends us to sleep and takes the sensible world away from us.

He is a sheep in man's clothing." (631-641)

This Platonic and hence Greek domination of thought was not just a problem for

Europeans but also, crucially, for modern Muslim thinkers. Looked at from within the

framework of our study, Platonism's crucial error was to empty out the wonder that is an

inherent feature of the normal, sensible experience, and exile it into the realm of the

suprasensible Idea. To reverse Platonism, as Nietzsche thought of it, would entail the

abolition of the world of essences and hence also the abolition of the world of

appearances. The suprasensible world of essences or Ideas is the foundation of this world,

which is in its essence nothing but a copy of the original world of Ideas. With the

collapse of the suprasensible world we are also forced to confront the abolition of the

world of mere appearances, which leaves us with the spectacle of copies without

originals, or *simulacra.* This is Gilles Deleuze's great insight into the problem that is

Platonism: that the true force of the Platonic motivation initially develops from a

discrimination of "essence from appearance, intelligible from sensible, Idea from image, original from copy" but the real determination is revealed

> to do with selecting among the pretenders, distinguishing good and bad copies or, rather, copies(always well-founded) and simulacra(always engulfed in dissimilarity). It is a question of assuring the triumph of the copies over simulacra, of repressing simulacra, keeping them completely submerged…
>
> (*Logic of Sense* 266)

The repression of simulacra was essentially the main project of the school of thought which can loosely be called idealism, a vast and labyrinthine tradition in which most of the great minds of Christianity and Islam since Plato found themselves entangled in. This repression of simulacra was for Iqbal a product formed by the reaction of the logical Greek mind, oriented towards the One, when it was confronted with the multiple that refused to be reduced to a unity: "it is the inadequacy of the logical understanding which finds a multiplicity of mutually repellent individualities with no prospect of their ultimate reduction to a unity that makes us sceptical about the conclusiveness of (their) thought."(*Reconstruction* 5) Nietzsche's attacks on the palsied and paralysed systems of western theology and philosophy were echoed by Iqbal in his critique of neo-Platonic Islamic mysticism, whose "quest after a nameless nothing, as disclosed in Neo-Platonic mysticism–be it Christian or Muslim–cannot satisfy the modern mind, which with its habits of concrete thinking, demands a concrete living experience of God."(72) Sufi ascetism, as Iqbal wrote, with its emphasis on "the distinction of *zahir* and *batin*(Appearance and Reality) created an attitude of indifference to all that applies to Appearance and not to Reality."(119) The indifference of ascetic thought towards what was merely *zahir* was dangerous not just because of its world-renunciation, but also because it divested and emptied the concrete world of any significance in the larger scheme of things. For Iqbal the concrete world was a world of the fleeting play of appearances, but the crucial difference was that it did not refer to a deeper, more real world above(or below). This play of appearances was in itself all there is, and in foregrounding this aspect Iqbal had to highlight the importance and reality of time as a living force in the cosmos.

The Reality of Time and the Immateriality of the Universe

Platonism relied on a scale of values highest of which was the assumption of the hierarchy of the eternal and changeless over the ephemeral and changing. Iqbal's reversal of Plato was premised on a new hierarchy, where it was the ephemeral and dynamic that took precedence over the eternal and changeless. Going beyond Aristotle's critique of Plato, Iqbal asserted the reality of time while also pronouncing the immateriality of the material universe: "the universe which seems to be a collection of things is not a solid stuff occupying a void. It is not a thing but an act."(41) A true materialism of concrete thinking and concrete experience could only be possible in a universe considered as a constant, continuous and creative process. The materialism of Aristotle, premised as it was on bodies, and motion as a property of bodies could only lead to a weak conception of time as serial. Aristotle, unlike Plato, did believe in the reality of time, but only in a very constricted sense. Time was fixed into the schema of causality, which was the model of the action of bodies upon other bodies. In a way this also proceeds from Aristotle's negation of the true implications of wonder, and its degeneration into mere curiosity. Both Plato and Aristotle had emphasised that to understand anything we must first understand its cause. In his *Physics* Aristotle clearly states that the 'why' question is of paramount importance– we cannot have proper knowledge of a thing until we have grasped its why, or its cause. (194 b 17-20) Plato in his *Phaedo* had posed the challenge of an investigation into nature, to "to know the causes of everything, why each thing comes into being and why it perishes and why it exists"(96a 6-10) Aristotle placed himself into this tradition of asking 'why' and took it as a matter of finding a *cause* for the existence of beings.[14] In this challenge he was led by his understanding, evinced in his *Posterior Analytics* as that we can only have proper knowledge about something if we know its cause.(71b 9-11) He was led by this presupposition into the formulation of the

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[14] Meister Eckhart and Angel Silesius, two German mystic thinkers were perhaps the first to understand the damaging implications of the privilege accrued to the question of 'why'. Eckhart's proclamation in numerous sermons that the "just man acts without why"(239) and Silesius' line 'we should be like the rose: without why' can be thought to be the first signs of the anti-classical thinking manifesting itself in Europe. The true successor of Eckhart, as has been theorised by Reiner Schurmann, is Martin Heidegger of the twentieth century.

It would be apt to mention Raymond Geuss' book *A World Without Why* which follows up from this tradition. It is instructive that for Geuss too the form of poetry is the paradigmatic way in which to think a world without why.

four causes- material, formal, efficient and the final. Though Aristotle did not himself propose the existence of a first cause, the germs for the cosmological argument find their genesis in his thought; the argument itself was best formulated by Thomas Aquinas, from his readings of ibn Sina(Avicenna) and Aristotle. Proceeding from Aristotle's schema of cause and effect, especially the efficient cause, Aquinas argues

> In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God. (*Summa Theologica* Part I)

This, in its final form is the essence of the cosmological argument for the existence of God. That the Scholastics so readily accepted the ideas of God as the First Cause and the Unmoved Mover stems from their adherence to the concept of time as serial, and such a concept of time necessarily leads to a privileging and prioritisation of actuality over possibility. In serial time, the possible is related, or rather directed towards the actual; we can see in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that 'to be' always means 'to be actual'. Such a conception of actuality and possibility leads to the elision of the role of time in the consideration of being; beings are not observed in their *presencing* but in their complete and total *presence.* For a true break with a serial conception of time Iqbal needed a framework in which to think the possible without any consideration of its relationship towards the actual. Later on in this chapter we will discuss how Henri Bergson provided Iqbal with a structure in which to think the possible without considering it just an inexistent form of the actual.

Iqbal's severe criticism of the cosmological argument, both on its failure to adhere to its own logic, as well as by its propensity to negate the finite world as just a series of effects can be quoted here in full:

It is, however, obvious that a finite effect can only give a finite cause, or at most an infinite series of causes. To finish the series at a certain point, and to elevate one member of the series to the dignity of an uncaused first cause, is to set at naught the very law of causation on which the whole argument proceeds…the argument really tries to reach the infinite by merely negating the finite. But the infinite reached by contradicting the finite is a false infinite, which neither explains itself nor the finite which is thus made to stand in opposition to the infinite. The true infinite does not exclude the finite; it embraces the finite without effacing its finitude, and explains and justifies its being.(23)

Ghazzali, Kant and the Realm of the Mystical

Finitude is an unavoidable reality of the human condition. Thought, like life itself, is finite and of the order of passing away. The finitude of the mortal condition was supposed to be reflected back into thought as a category, especially to limit it to the knowledge of the finite, phenomenal world and restrict it from accessing the noumenal. This was Kant's major breakthrough in *Critique of Pure Reason* and Iqbal hails his mission as one that saved the theological from the tyranny of the rational. In a very important passage he compares the two great destroyers of the monumental edifices of pure reason, al-Ghazzali and Kant:

> Ghazzali's mission was almost apostolic like that of Kant in Germany in the eighteenth century. In Germany rationalism appeared as an ally of religion, but she soon realized that the dogmatic side of religion was incapable of demonstration…with the elimination of dogmatism came the utilitarian view of morality, and thus rationalism completed the reign of unbelief…(the) *Critique of Pure Reason* revealed the limitations of human reason and reduced the whole work of the rationalists to a heap of ruins. And justly has he(Kant) been described as God's greatest gift to his country. Ghazzali's philosophical scepticism which, however, went a little too far, virtually did the same kind of work in the world of Islam…(4)

Both Ghazzali and Kant, destroyers of the rationalists, had to agree, consistent with their principles, that there could be no possibility of the rational apprehension of God. Unlike Kant, Ghazzali

> finding no hope in analytic thought, moved to mystic experience, and there found an independent content for religion. In this way he succeeded in securing for religion the right to exist independently of science and metaphysics. But the revelation of the total Infinite in mystic experience convinced him of the finitude and inconclusiveness of thought and drove him to draw a *line of cleavage* between thought and intuition.(4)

This line of cleavage drawn between thought and intuition is something common to both Ghazzali and Kant in their limitation of finite thought to the finite world. In a way Iqbal's project is not so much an overcoming of the Kantian revolution as it is an overcoming of Ghazzali's drawing of the line of cleavage between thought and intuition.[15] At the heart of this project is hence a desire to disrupt the rupture itself; to integrate the two separated realms of thought and beyond-thought into a whole which is not a synthesis but rather a 'loving embrace' of finitude with the Infinite that is its real ground and condition. The dynamic nature of thought necessarily imbricates thought as its own self-movement in the act of knowledge and perception. The logical understanding attempts to reduce multiplicities into "generalizations based on resemblances, but its generalizations are only fictitious unities…"(4) Truly dynamic thought is always thought of the multiple, and in this it surpasses the fate of logical understanding which "is incapable of seeing this multiplicity as a coherent universe."(5) The reductive power of the logical understanding must be held up as a contrast to the true dynamic nature of thought which "in the very act of knowledge passes beyond its own finitude". Confronted with the multiple which cannot be organised and reduced into coherent whole, logical understanding must necessarily make way for the restitution of a mode of thought which is fundamentally premised on wonder as a crucial category of experience. There must be thought 'without why', but not without wonder. Kant, as it has been said, looked into the abyss that extends beyond rational thought and hesitated, before beating a hasty retreat.[16] For him it was important to draw a circle around the limitations of thought, to avoid any confrontation with the groundless abyss of the Infinite. Such a confrontation, he believed, would deprive man of his most fundamental possession, which was freedom.[17] Ghazzali

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[15] Iqbal was greatly influenced by Ghazzali. As Annemarie Schimmel has aptly pointed out, the title of Iqbal's book bears quite a resemblance to that of Ghazzali's great book, *The Vivification of the Science of Religion.*

[16] As has been said by Heidegger first, and Schurmann later. Refer to the latter's introduction to the book *The Public Realm.*

[17] As he writes in his *Critique of Practical Reason:* "Suppose, now, that in this matter nature had conformed to our wish and had given us that capacity of discernment or that enlightenment which we would gladly possess, or which some imagine they actually possess, what would in all probability be the consequence? Unless our whole nature were at the same time changed, our inclinations, which always have the first word, would first of all demand their own satisfaction, and, joined with rational reflection, the greatest possible and most lasting satisfaction, under the name of happiness; the moral law would afterwards speak, in order to keep them within their proper bounds, and even to subject them all to a higher end, which has no regard to inclination. But instead of the conflict that the moral disposition has

did venture beyond the limits of rational thought, but finding that the Infinite was unanalysable by thought, decided to mark off the borders. Beyond those borders, reason did not hold any sovereignty, which was just a roundabout way of asserting the sovereignty of reason in the realm of 'ordinary' experience. Iqbal's project of an exit from philosophy thus was complicated by being extricated within traditions which completely negated the infinite that was immanent in thought. His project necessarily involved a becoming infinite of the finite, or rather as he put it, the realisation that "the finitudes of thought…(are) incapable of limitation and cannot remain imprisoned in the narrow circuit of its own individuality."(5)

The Revivification of Islamic Thought

This accumulated weight of tradition, both Islamic and Western had both repressed and appropriated the true role of wonder in philosophy. The task of wonder could not be accomplished within the ambit of the legacy of a philosophy which was in its essence deeply limited by its fear and suspicion of the infinite abyss that both grounded and surrounded thought. In the colonised parts of India in the late nineteenth century, the advent of English education had led to the development of a class of individuals who attempted to reinvigorate the rationalistic outlook especially with regard to regressive religious practices. Thought, especially religious thought, in all the major religions of the subcontinent had become ossified and calcified, unable to open itself up to the modern developments in science, philosophy and politics engendered by the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution. Religious reformers were many, and their aim was to lay the fundamental ground for a rapprochement of religion and rationality, to view religion within the bounds of reason alone, a Kantian

now to carry on with the inclinations, in which, though after some defeats, moral strength of mind may be gradually acquired, God and eternity with their awful majesty would stand unceasingly before our eyes (for what we can prove perfectly is to us as certain as that of which we are assured by the sight of our eyes). Transgression of the law, would, no doubt, be avoided; what is commanded would be done; but the mental disposition, from which actions ought to proceed, cannot be infused by any command, and in this case the spur of action is ever active and external, so that reason has no need to exert itself in order to gather strength to resist the inclinations by a lively representation of the dignity of the law hence most of the actions that conformed to the law would be done from fear, a few only from hope, and none at all from duty, and the moral worth of actions, on which alone in the eyes of supreme wisdom the worth of the person and even that of the world depends, would cease to exist. As long as the nature of man remains what it is, his conduct would thus be changed into mere mechanism, in which, as in a puppet–show, everything would gesticulate well, but there would be no life in the figures."(152-3)

project if there ever was one. The need for this rapprochement can best be understood, among the Indian Muslims at least, as a desire to re-evaluate their tradition with respect to the superior Europeans. It was Ghalib, the great poet, who wrote a very poignant letter to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, deploring the degeneracy and decay of the Indians when contrasted to the power of the British:

> Look at the Sahibs of England- they have gone far ahead of our Oriental forebears. Wind and wave they have rendered useless. They are sailing their ships under fire and steam. They are creating music without the help of the mizrab. With their magic, words fly through the air like birds. Air has been set on fire…cities are being lighted without oil lamps. This new law makes all other laws obsolete, why must you pick up straws out of old time swept barns while a treasure trove of pearls lies at your feet?(*Ghalib* 28)[18]

Ghalib's wonder at the miracles of modern and science and technology echoes the deep sense of inferiority that most Indians felt while they were subjugated under the thrall of the technologically advanced Europeans. The Europeans could not just manipulate wind, water, and fire, but most importantly, words. The essence of their superiority, as Ghalib thought it, lay in their self-assertion of cultural superiority because of the rational character of their thought. Yet there was still a feeling, especially among the Indian Muslims, that their traditions were just as strong as those of the West, and that all they needed was an induction into the worlds of modern science, technology, and rationality. The most prominent and erudite of these Muslim reformers was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Iqbal, as we have seen, was like many other Muslim modernists and reformists in his desire to divest Islam of its medieval and orthodox trapping and open it to the modern, technological and scientific advancements that had been made. He was an inheritor of the movement which Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had already laid the foundation for in the nineteenth century, most notably with the foundation of the famous university at Aligarh. Sir Syed was in favour of both English education and a modern approach to religion as opposed to the traditional approach. According to Iqbal Singh Sevea,

> The Sayyid argued that Islam was in no way opposed to developments in modern knowledge or to the laws of nature and science. As Islam was a 'natural religion', nothing in Islam or the Quran could contradict the laws of nature, reason and science. The 'work of God' he argued, echoing Paine, could not be opposed to the 'word of God'.(98-99)

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[18] This letter was written in response to Sir Syed's request for Ghalib to write a chapter in his updated version of the *Ain-i-Akbari.*

Other Muslim reformists and modernists followed the principles of Sir Syed, and called for the Quran to be re-interpreted in the light of modern scientific knowledge. Sir Syed himself, in his commentary to the Quran, explained many of the supernatural phenomena in terms of modern understandings of science; the remainder of miracles and events which seemed opposed to a scientific perspective were explained as allegories or extended metaphors. Such a method of Quranic exegesis was driven by a need to posit Islam as a religion that was not essentially opposed to science and scientific progress. The exposition of such beliefs were usually a reaction to the view which the French Orientalist Ernest Renan had lent credence to in his lecture "Islam and Science" given to scholars at the University of Sorbonne in 1883. In that lecture Renan argued that Islam had not contributed anything to science and progress; that in fact most of the contributions that the Muslim world was supposed to have brought to civilisation were actually achieved despite the existence of Islam. Renan went on to deliver this crushing statement: "Such is this great philosophical ensemble, which is commonly called Arab, because it is written in Arabic, but in reality it is Greco-Sassanid. It would be more accurate to say Greek; because the truly fertile element of all this came from Greece."[19](6)

Sir Syed's brand of Muslim modernism lay in his desire to clear the misconceptions that the Western scholars and public were labouring under, while simultaneously bringing Islam as a religion in tune with modern scientific developments. In his lifetime he faced quite a lot of opposition to his perspectives on Islamic reform, with some going as far as to call him a *nachari* or naturist for equating God and Nature. Sevea says,

> In response to his critics naming him 'Hazrat Nachariya'(Sir Nature), the Sayyid declared himself
> shocked and stated that those accusing him of inventing a new Islam did not realise that he was
> merely going back to true Arab Islam: they were accusing him of inventing a new Islam through
> *ijtihad* when they themselves were failing to practise *taqlid* of Arab Islam.(100)[20]

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[19] It is quite ironic, but perhaps apt, that Iqbal premises his rebuttal to Renan by accepting rather than refuting his major point that the early Arabic philosophy was basically Greek in nature. Iqbal, however, believes that the Greek inheritance was not so much a fertile element as it was an obstacle to a true understanding of Islam by the early philosophers.

[20] *Taqlid* is an Arabic term in legal Islamic terminology which literally means to follow, as to follow a legal precedent.

Iqbal and Science

Iqbal himself has been accused by many of trying to interpret Quranic verses and doctrines through the lens of contemporary science. Writers like Dr. M.S. Raschid in his *Iqbal's Concept of God* have severely lambasted him for understanding the Quran as if it was a coded scientific treatise, as if the Quran sort of prefigures later scientific developments which can be read into it(retrospectively of course). Souleymane Bachir Diagne has most aptly characterised such an approach as 'scientism', going on to write that "this type of approach is built on free interpretations at the end of which one is flabbergasted to find in such or such a verse the very thing one has put there oneself, in the will to see at any price scientific anticipations in the Quranic text."(40) Raschid disapproved of such scientism, which he thought he found in abundance in Iqbal's work, because such an approach drastically relativizes the truth value of the Quran with that of a modern discourse–science; the inherent flaw in such a relativization is that science itself is in the process of continuous invalidation of its past theories. Raschid believed that Iqbal's scientism distorted the eternal message of the Quran; and therefore Iqbal's attempts at modernisation must be condemned by the wider Islamic world. Majid Fakhry, a historian of Islamic philosophy, also expressed his exasperation with such a trend in the thought of most Muslim modernists, especially Iqbal:

> By wedding the Islamic or koranic view of man and the world to the current phase of scientific development, as Iqbal particularly has done, the modernists make their second most dangerous error, since they stake the religious truth of Islam on the doubtful truth of a scientific phase. And if there is anything the history of scientific discovery teaches us, it is the ephemeral character of such scientific phases, whether associated with the venerable names of Aristotle or Ptolemy or modern pioneers such as Newton, Eddington, or Einstein.(368)

Both Raschid and Fakhry believed they were correct in accusing Iqbal of attempting to relativize Islam with modern science– but in doing so they are guilty of assuming Iqbal to be a mere successor to Sir Syed's strategy in his efforts to rejuvenate Islamic thought. It is true that like Sir Syed, Iqbal too wanted to go back to the pure sources of Arabic Islam. But unlike his illustrious forebear, Iqbal's project was not an attempt to reconcile the Divine revelation with modern scientific knowledge. Iqbal's challenge was to divest Islam from its various accretions over the years– and contrary to what Renan believed, Iqbal thought of Greek philosophy as one of the influences which

though beneficial to Islam in the beginning, had stultified its later intellectual growth. The idea for this project was suggested to Iqbal directly by his reading of the neo-Hegelian Oswald Spengler's monumental two volume work, *The Decline of the West.* Spengler's book brought about a veritable revolution in its approach to the question of world religion, with its emphasis on the fact that the models of most of the major religions were 'Magian', which briefly signified the existence of two antagonistic forces of good and evil. All Magian religions teach that good will ultimately prevail with the arrival of the prophesied saviour or messiah and the advent of judgment. Spengler's other presupposition was that cultures were insulated organisms and thus each was ineradicably different from the other, and continued to be so throughout history. Iqbal's *Reconstruction* can be read as a response to the challenge posed by Spengler's influential work– in it he expressly states "that a Magian crust has grown over Islam, I do not deny. Indeed my main purpose in these lectures has been to secure a vision of Islam emancipated from its Magian overlayings which, in my opinion, have misled Spengler."(114)

A *destructio* of Islam?

This desire to remove the hard, ossified crust of historical tradition in order to get to the core or the kernel is not a task unique to Iqbal. Rather as Clayton Crockett writes in his *Radical Political Theology*, the great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther had already used the word *destructio* in that sense, in his efforts to overcome the accumulated weight of Catholic tradition.(152) Crockett goes on to say that Heidegger's proclamation of the *destruktion* of ontology was directly drawn from Luther. Like both of these great German thinkers, Iqbal too conceived of a process analogous to *destructio* which would not be a simple shaking off of the tradition, but also inherently positive and conservative. It is this conservative aspect of this wholly radical thought-experiment which can, in some ways, explain the conservative political attitudes of all three great thinkers in their lifetimes– a conservatism that was also accompanied by a radical disjuncture from the inherited tradition. Many critics have thought they have seen more than just echoes of commonality between Heideggerian *destruktion*(as evinced in *Being and Time)* and Derridean deconstruction. However the former, unlike the latter, aims for more than just a

deconstruction of all past traditions without the hope for the production of a positive truth; as Heidegger says,

> this destruction is just as far from having the negative sense of shaking off the ontological tradition. We must, on the contrary, stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition, and this means keeping it within its limits; and these in turn are given factically in the way the question is formulated at the time, and in the way the possible field for investigation is thus bounded off. On its negative side, this destruction does not relate itself toward the past; its criticism is aimed at 'today' and at the prevalent way of treating the history of ontology. .. But to bury the past in nullity (Nichtigkeit) is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is positive; its negative function remains unexpressed and indirect. (*Being and Time* 44)

In Iqbal's lectures we thus do not find just a deconstruction of the received Islamic tradition–rather there is a process of removal of the calcified 'magian crust'. This removal of the hard crust is not followed by a simple retrieval of the core teachings of Islam; rather what happens now is a *reconstruction.* Diagne's book has a beautiful passage on how Iqbal effects this in his lectures. Here he talks about Iqbal's response to the famous Quranic verse of light, and how people like Fakhry have accused Iqbal of indulging in mere scientism over it. Diagne's words deserve to be quoted in full:

> On analysis, we can clearly see that here there is neither the idea of religious discourse anticipating that of science nor of the confirmation of the former by the latter. It is simply a case of knowing that today our situation is one of living in a world where the theory of relativity tells us something about light that can impart new depth to our way of understanding, which is to say of interpreting, the words that identify God with 'the light of the Heavens and of the earth'. In other words, what is expressed in the scientific reference is neither a simple inessential varnish, nor an 'intellectual imposture' that would seek to import scientific discourse by claiming to be unaware of the boundary that separates it from philosophy. It is the *reconstruction,* in the present of a state of culture that is also connected to a given arrangement of scientific knowledge, of our reading and interpreting tools and protocols of words that, thereby, remain living, which is to say open.(41)

Iqbal's critics like Fakhry and Raschid are correct in believing that Iqbal imports scientific concepts and terminology into his discourses on religion and philosophy. It is their belief that the realm of religion should be kept separate from that of science. Iqbal's lectures are a dazzling display of erudition and scholarship in both the religious as well as modern sciences, and it is indubitable that he mirrors the two discourses onto each other

to generate new readings and conceptualisations. Yet what Fakhry and Raschid do not realise is that Iqbal's interest in modern science is due to its specific tendencies towards the philosophical. For Iqbal in the discoveries of modern science we could find classical physics transforming itself into something akin to a philosophy of concepts. As he writes, "science does not care whether its electron is a real entity or not. It may be a mere symbol, a mere convention."(145) In a way, for modern physics the sub-atomic particles are just concepts which fill up the blank spaces in the conceptual system. It is this insight into the workings of modern physics, especially via the genealogy of science Iqbal provides in his fifth lecture, that makes his work of much more interest than a simple point to point correspondence of religion with science. In point of fact, Iqbal is even critical of science in many places, especially because the hypotheses of science do not provide a framework where man can actually put his own being at stake. "In so far as the ultimate nature of reality is concerned, nothing is at stake in the venture of science; in the religious venture the whole career of the ego as an assimilative personal centre of life and experience is at stake."(145) The task of the religious expert is to construct a framework in which everything can be put at stake; not just one's mortal life, but also one's immortal soul. It is this which is the sole determination for what Iqbal calls reconstruction— the reconstruction of religious thought necessitates a vital turn in the course of civilisation; a turn away from the 'as-if' nature of the 'vital lie' that science offers to regulate human conduct; and a turn towards the event which indelibly inscribes the believer with the force of faith and the promise of redemption.

Reconstruction and Deconstruction

Indeed, the force of reconstruction is provided by a human subject, or what Iqbal calls the Ego, putting everything at stake in its proclamation of belief. Reconstruction is a task which can only be taken up by a leap of faith, as something which is in itself nothing more than the unconditional taking of sides. In this way it can perhaps be opposed to Derridean deconstruction, whose task is to keep an ironic distance, to maintain the gap between the unconditional, spectral event of justice and its conditional worldly instantiations in the form of law. What deconstruction, especially in the form of Derrida's late ethical turn and John Caputo's assertion of radical Otherness, blinds us to is

something quite fundamental- the traumatic kernel of the voiding of divinity as expressed in Nietzsche's proclamation of "God is dead!" The promise of the radical Otherness, and the promise of an unconditional justice to come, do open us to the undreamt of possibility that the miserable reality we live in can be changed; that there is another world possible, and that the hope of salvation and redemption must be kept alive without regard to any ontological instantiations of worldly law. But what is lacking, in both Derrida and Caputo's accounts, is the proper religious passion, the stirring power of faith. G.K. Chesterton includes the triad of faith, hope, and charity as the Christian 'gay and exuberant virtues' while the pagan 'justice and temperance are the sad virtues'. He writes,

> the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity are in their essence as un- reasonable as they can be. As the word "unreasonable" is open to misunderstanding, the matter may be more accurately put by saying that each one of these Christian or mystical virtues involves a paradox in its own nature, and that this is not true of any of the typically pagan or rationalist virtues. Justice consists in finding out a certain thing due to a certain man and giving it to him. Temperance consists in finding out the proper limit of a particular indulgence and adhering to that. But *charity means pardoning what is unpardonable, or it is no virtue at all. Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all. And faith means believing the incredible, or it is no virtue at all.*(*Heretics* 61-2)[21]

All these three virtues, especially faith, are paradoxical, but as Chesterton goes on to write, "they are all three practical, and they are all three paradoxical because they are practical". It is this practical aspect of the paradoxical that reconstruction as a method must explore more fully than deconstruction could. In the end, as Chesterton writes, "we believe by faith in the existence of other people." [22](63) Belief in the Other itself is a matter of faith and a matter for faith, as Emmanuel Levinas would agree.

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[21] Derrida is perhaps much closer to the conservative Christian Chesterton than we would have suspected.
[22] Refer to Nikolai Bukharin's *Philosophical Arabesques,* where the materialist Bukharin debates Mephistopheles, who tempts him with the idea that the only way to pass from subjective sensations to belief in external reality is via a leap of faith. Bukharin can only dispel the demon with a desperate cry, "Hold your tongue, Mephistopheles! Hold your dissolute tongue!" This reveals that even a materialist reading must include in its ambit a suspension of the world as such.

The term reconstruction has been used in a recent series of books published from New York under the title of *SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought.*[23] David Ray Griffin, the editor of the series had tried to conceptualise reconstruction as a 'revision' of deconstruction. It would be useful for us to cite his views on reconstruction before we proceed:

> From the point of view of deconstructive postmodernists, this reconstructive postmodernism will seem hopelessly wedded to outdated concepts, because it wishes to salvage a positive meaning not only for the notions of selfhood, historical meaning, reason, and truth as correspondence, which were central to modernity, but also for notions of divinity, cosmic meaning, and an enchanted nature, which were central to premodern modes of thought.... It does not simply carry the premises of modernity through to their logical conclusions, but criticizes and revises those premises…This reconstructive postmodernism involves a creative synthesis of modern and premodern truths and values.(xvii)

Is this also the form of reconstruction we are trying to develop as a method in this dissertation? The answer would be both affirmative and negative. From within the paradigm of deconstruction (and we are within its paradigm) there can be no conception of post-deconstructive thought. This is because the end of deconstruction is also the awaited arrival of the justice to come, justice which is irreducible to law, justice which is the indeconstructible, unconditional condition of deconstruction.[24] The arrival of this justice to come is forever *differed* and *deferred*. If we are to think of reconstruction as a new method that comes after deconstruction, then we would be gravely in error. There can be no post-deconstruction, or even a criticism and revision of the premises of deconstruction. The justice to come is in effect unconditional and indeconstructible. Then what can be reconstruction? The answer would be made in a quintessentially Hegelian tone– deconstruction is itself reconstruction, looked at from another perspective. Deconstruction is itself what comes after deconstruction. Reconstruction is hence nothing

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[23] It is quite interesting that of the 32 titles already published in this series, a majority of them are dedicated to Whitehead. The book *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy* names as its most important figures Charles Peirce, William James, Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson and Hartshorne. Of the five, the middle three are probably the most cited figures in *Reconstruction of Religious thought.* Thus it is probably not coincidental that the editors of this series are drawing on the same figures as Iqbal did for the method of reconstruction.

[24] Derrida has declared an "emancipatory promise" and an "idea of justice" to be "irreducible to any deconstruction." Although this "ethical turn" in deconstruction implies its pulling back from a completely disenchanted universe, it also, Dews points out , implies the need to renounce "the unconditionality of its own earlier dismantling of the unconditional."(6-7)

more than deconstruction under erasure, or ~~deconstruction.~~ Reconstruction is ~~deconstruction~~ because of two major movements- it declares that the Event of justice to come has already come, and also that this justice is in itself *incomplete*.[25] The reconstruction of religious thought is not a mere philosophical exercise; it is the realisation of the Ego's immersion and inscription within the call of the event and its utmost responsibility towards fulfilling its emancipatory promise. Reconstruction is deconstruction, but from an incommensurably different perspective. Simply put, reconstruction is the final step of deconstruction- it is the two step realisation that even the justice to come is not complete, and also that this *justice has already always come.* We are always already saved and redeemed, hence reconstruction is the final gesture, that instead of looking forward to the fullness of an always to come pure form of messianic justice, we realise that this justice, which is in itself incomplete has already been delivered. This realisation is quite properly *traumatic*. Reconstruction is thus the response to the traumatic core of the Event; the traumatic core which has been somehow lost in the assertion of the figure of the weak Levinasian Other whose face beckons me to help him, reminding me of my infinite responsibility. For reconstruction it is the traumatic Other which must be put into focus, the *Muselmann* of the Nazi death camps, as has been theorised by Giorgio Agamben. It is highly significant that Primo Levi, a survivor of the Holocaust, called the *Muselmann* a 'faceless presence.' [26](90)

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[25] This is the erasure of the two major premises of deconstruction- that justice is always differed and deferred, and that the justice hoped for is spectral but complete.

[26]On this Zizek writes, "the Muselmann signals the limitation of Levinas: when describing it, Primo Levi repeatedly uses the predicate faceless, and this term should be given here its entire Levinasian weight. When confronted with a Muselmann, one cannot discern in his face the trace of the abyss of the Other in his/her vulnerability, addressing us with the infinite call of our responsibility. What one gets instead is a kind of blind wall, a lack of depth. Maybe the Muselmann is thus the zero-level neighbour the neighbor with whom no empathetic relationship is possible. However, at this point, we again confront the key dilemma: what if it is precisely in the guise of the "faceless" face of a Muselmann that we encounter the Other's call at its purest and most radical? What if, facing a Muselmann, one hits upon one's responsibility toward the Other at its most traumatic? In short, what about bringing together Levinas's face and the topic of the "neighbor" in its strict Freudo-Lacanian sense, as the monstrous, impenetrable Thing that is the Nebenmensch, the Thing that hystericizes and provokes me? What if the neighbor's face stands neither for my imaginary double/semblant nor for the purely symbolic abstract "partner in communication," but for the Other in his or her dimension of the Real? What if, along these lines, we restore to the Levinasian "face" all its monstrosity: face is not a harmonious Whole of the dazzling epiphany of a "human face," face is something the glimpse of which we get when we stumble upon a grotesquely distorted face, a face in the grip of a disgusting tic or grimace, a face which, precisely, con-fronts us when the neighbor "loses his face"?"(*The Neighbor,* 160-61)

Reconstruction offers a new model for both freedom and responsibility in the face of that which is faceless and hence properly traumatic. It is neither a blind subordination to fate(as Spengler thought Islam to characterise), nor is it a movement to create one's own fate. It is a radicalisation of the messianic expectation characteristic of deconstructive thought; rather than simply hoping for the messianic, apocalyptic opening that both saves and redeems, reconstruction submits to the fact that the apocalypse is inevitable and wholly catastrophic. But it is in the face of this inevitable catastrophe, confronted with the traumatic realisation that no god will save us, that reconstruction mobilises the Ego into changing its fate.[27]

Iqbal and Time

To return to Iqbal, what we must understand is his desire to affirm the possibility of reconstruction as part and parcel of his aspiration to exit from philosophy, into the opening created by a thinking which can quite seriously engage with the mystic consciousness. To do so Iqbal first and foremost carried out a radical reconceptualization of time divested of its serial, linear character. For Iqbal this reconceptualization of time was not just a philosophical necessity but also a religious injunction; as he quotes from a received tradition of the Prophet who said: 'Do not vilify time, for time is God'. (*Reconstruction* 8) Thus a re-evaluation of time is in essence not just a task for philosophy, but also a religious requirement for all those "who wish to reflect on the signs of God."(9)

It is in this way that we must understand Iqbal's re-evaluation of the concept of time: as a task that seeks to unleash the properly traumatic nature of time, freeing it from the bonds of mere causality and linearity. Freedom is not simply a liberating experience, it is more importantly a highly traumatic experience. It is only as a response to the trauma of finding oneself free that one can actually be creative in the true sense. The true force of Iqbal's poetry, as many critics have seen it, lies in his response to the disturbance that is properly God's abandonment of his people. His most famous long Urdu poem, the *Shikwa* or *Complaint* is a highly forceful lament and attack on God's betrayal of his own

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[27] It is this higher fatalism which is firstly a subordination to one's fate before rising up to change it that Iqbal calls submission.

people, the Muslims.[28] Iqbal's restitution of the concept of time was however deeply influenced by two major philosophers, Henri Bergson and Lord Alfred North Whitehead.[29] He needed their philosophical support to arrive at a conception of time that fulfilled two basic requirements- firstly that it liberate man from the fetters of predestination and concomitant fatalism, and secondly that it destroy time as causal and linear, opening up the space for a development of possibility without reference to actuality. Iqbal was also aware of another problem that also stemmed from Ancient Greece- the paradoxes of Zeno, which argued that time was unreal and movement impossible. Zeno's four paradoxes are well known to philosophers across the ages. Iqbal offers a solution to the first and third paradoxes, which were developed by school of Muslim thinkers known as the Ash-arites. According to this school of Atomism, "space, time and motion are made up of points and instants which cannot be further subdivided. Thus they proved the possibility of movement on the assumption that infinitesimals do exist-for if there is a limit to the divisibility of space and time, movement from one point of space to another is possible in a finite time." (29) For Iqbal, though such a solution to the paradox might even be logically correct based on its conception of infinitesimal time and space, yet it would not offer a way to break the stranglehold of serial time and predestination. To arrive at time as a free creative movement, he needed both Bergson and Whitehead to supply him with the crutches on which to support his thought.

Bergson, Iqbal and the Creativity of Time

Iqbal found affinities with Bergson's thought on time because the latter attempted to correct what he thought was a philosophical error since Kant. According to Bergson in his *Time and Free Will*, Kant had confused the categories of space and time in a mixture

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[28] Iqbal shocked the Muslims of his day by referring to God as *harjaee*, a term for someone who betrays, especially in love. It is commonly a mild pejorative, implying a promiscuous person.

[29] Perhaps in a later work we could investigate the influence of these two major thinkers, who have been almost forgotten in the mainstream academic tradition of Continental philosophy obsessed with Heidegger and sons. Their influence is pervasive, but almost always under the surface. Gilles Deleuze can be thought to be the only one who wrote about Whitehead and Bergson without condemning them as being trapped within Greek metaphysics(Whitehead was both a theist and an avowed Platonist, so it makes sense that he was ignored in a century which was decidedly anti-Platonic and anti-religion). It would be interesting to interrogate the most prominent triad of Continental philosophers living right now, Agamben, Badiou and Zizek, and see how their thought borrows from Bergson and Whitehead(via Deleuze, of course, who can be supposed to be the Janus faced figure that belongs both to poststructuralism and this new field that is just announcing itself in these three figures).

which resulted in the application of spatial metaphors to time.(76-77) The line or the circle, both of which are common figures used by various cultures to conceptualise the movement of time, was in Bergson's eyes an error that he sought to correct with his idea of the duration. Unlike serial time, the duration does not consist of a juxtaposition of events, thus there can be no sense of mechanistic causality in the succession of events. The duration, for Bergson, is not a quantitative multiplicity, which can be thought of as discrete and homogeneous. A quantitative multiplicity is prone to spatialisation because of the spatial character of the distribution of discrete points. Such is the serial view of time, he avers. Contrary to the quantitative multiplicity is the qualitative multiplicity, which he says is heterogeneous and temporal. In this heterogeneity there can be no juxtaposition– or there is juxtaposition but only in retrospect. This can be understood, for example, by feeling sympathy for someone who is hurt or in pain. The feelings that course through a person's mind can be variously designated as a feeling of superiority, pain, horror, etc. In such a case, we can see that though all the feelings are singular and distinguishable, they are also inter-penetrating and continuous, without being successive and in juxtaposition with each other. No feeling is the negation of any other; all are felt simultaneously and yet can be singled out individually.

It is this aspect of non-successive continuity of time which appeals most to Iqbal. "Existence in spatialized time is spurious existence"(32) he says. He takes up Einstein's theories of Relativity, as elaborated in the esoteric philosophy by the Russian thinker P.D. Uspenskiĭ in his book *Tertium Organum(*1912*).*[30] Iqbal's disagreement with Uspenskiĭ(and hence also Einstein) was in their conflation of space and time; or rather in their thinking of the time-sense as a 'misty' space-sense. Uspenskiĭ's argument was stated by Iqbal as being

> on the basis of our psychic constitution, to one-, two-, or three-dimensional beings the higher
> dimension must always appear as succession in time. This obviously means that what appears to
> us three-dimensional beings as time is in reality an imperfectly sensed space-dimension which in
> its own nature does not differ from the perfectly sensed dimensions of Euclidean space(32)

For Iqbal, such a conception of time as another, higher, dimension of space could lead to a notion of the future as not a happening, but a site or region which though unknown, was still located in a certain space and thus could theoretically be mapped out. Time as the

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[30] Iqbal misspells Uspenskiĭ as Ouspensky.

fourth spatial dimension could thus lend itself to the strengthening of the notions of fatalism and predestination which had paralysed the religious and social processes of the Islamic world for hundreds of years. To approach time as a free, creative movement would thus entail the destruction of the spatial metaphors that characterised time.

Change, without succession, was the core of Bergsonian thought. That time consisted of qualitative, nonsucccessive tenses was an idea whose influence can be seen even in the early Heidegger. The nonsuccessive nature of the three tenses of time characterised as past, present and future was of immense importance to Iqbal in escaping from the rigidity and homogeneity of serial time. Like Bergson, Iqbal postulated the appreciative self, which is open to time as duration, as opposed to the efficient self which considers time as serial. The appreciative self is covered up by the efficient self's absorption in the pursuit of external things; it is only when one sits down to meditate that the inner centre of experience is reached, which is where

> there is change and movement, but change and movement are indivisible; their elements interpenetrate and are wholly non-serial in character. It appears that the time of the appreciative-self is a single "now" which the efficient self, in its traffic with the world of space, pulverises into a series of "nows" like pearl beads in a thread.(39)

Iqbal accepted that in the world of common sense and space one cannot disavow serial time–however one must also realise the profounder nature of time as nonsuccessive change. Such a view necessarily led him into the same notion of the organic wholeness of time which is a prominent characteristic of Bergson's philosophy:

> (time) is not a string of separate, reversible instants; it is an organic whole in which the past is not left behind, but is moving along with, and operating in, the present. And the future is given to it not as lying before, yet to be traversed; it is given only in the sense that it is present in its nature as an open possibility.(40)

Such a notion helped Iqbal in freeing time from the chains of not just causality but also predestination and fatalism. Spengler, in his *Decline of the West* had claimed that Islamic religious thought was essentially fatalistic. By his appropriation of Bergsonian thought Iqbal sought to respond to Spengler and demonstrate the vacuity of his claims. In this way he could pave the way for an idea of time which would not be a mere repetition of homogeneous movements, but something indubitably original; such a notion of time would privilege and prioritise the major driving force of Iqbal's thought–creativity. For

him, "to exist in real time is not to be bound by the fetters of serial time, but to create it from moment to moment and to be absolutely free and original in creation."(40) This would accord with his dynamic conception of the universe as opposed to the traditional Aristotelian static universe. Such a universe would not be a thing which did not exist at one point of time and was created at another point of time–rather the "universe which seems to us to be a collection of things is not a solid stuff occupying a void. It is not a thing but an act."(41) This privileging of the possible over the actual is part of Iqbal's project to retrieve the lost sense of wonder, while at the same time emphasising its ephemeral nature. Iqbal does not hesitate to predicate change of God– for him 'change cannot mean imperfection'. God as changeless would be to conceive of him as "utter inaction, a motiveless, stagnant neutrality, an absolute nothing."(48) God's creative activity is unending and His vision has an infinite scope– it does not end with the accomplishment of a task or the realisation of an ideal. Iqbal was antithetical to this kind of teleological thinking-which he believed to be part and parcel of both the notions of serial time and predestination. The future does exist, but not in the shape of a possibility that would inexorably move into actuality. Rather Iqbal designated it the 'not-yet', going on to say that "the not-yet of man does mean pursuit and may mean failure; the not-yet of God means unfailing realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process." (48) But this makes us wonder, does this 'unfailing realization' not fall into the same teleological scheme which Iqbal is fighting against? If the infinite creative possibilities are unfailingly realized, then we end up at the same fatalism and predestination that Iqbal seems to be so antithetical to.

A Teleology *without* Telos

It is here that we come to Iqbal's one major disagreement with Bergson which is also the site for his only true innovation concerning time with respect to destiny or *taqdir*. Bergson had advocated nonsuccessive change, a qualitative multiplicity which inherently denied the teleological character of the movement of time. For him, "the portals of the future must remain wide open to Reality" which Iqbal accepts as a necessary condition for the idea of both freedom and creativity. He accepts that teleology could signify the working out of a fixed plan which in its mechanicity would annul all possibility of

creative movement and free action. A teleology with a fixed *telos* would thus be nothing more than a repetition of the dichotomy of the real and ideal which Iqbal had already rejected along with Nietzsche. Such a teleology would be a mere mimetic, real, representation of an already structured ideal scheme. In Reiner Schurmann's *Heidegger On Being and Acting* we can see an interesting thesis on the concept of *telos* which has so profoundly structured Western philosophy. Schurmann argues that all dominant conceptions of teleology proceed from Aristotle's conflation of the fields of pure fabrication(as in the architectonic arts) and politics/philosophy:

> Architecture is the paradigmatic art: the anticipation of end through which Aristotle comprehends the origin is observed most clearly in construction. The finished building is the achieved end, and achievement as process is ruled by the 'foreseen' end, by the finished aspect of the product as precognized. How, then, does *arche* dominate? In anticipating *telos*. Fabrication is the case in which anticipation of the end rules over becoming. The gist of Western philosophy is thus a metaphysics of handiwork (literally, of manufacture, of *manu facere*, making by hand) that traces the displacements of the idea. 'Archically' beheld in the vision of the artificer, the idea is then imprinted on available material, and lastly it offers itself to everyone's inspection in the finished artifact The "*telos* does not put an end to the thing; rather out of [the *telos*], the thing begins to be what, after production, it will be." (103-104)

Thus Aristotle's displacement of the concept of *telos* that was initially only applicable to the fabricating arts to all other realms of human activity led to the preponderance of the teleocratic scheme; such a scheme would be one where *telos* of the thing lies not in its completion, but in a desire for constant presence after completion. This can be best seen in the realm of architecture– the goal of the architect is not just to realise his idea as drawn in the building scheme, but also to actualise the idea and endow it with constant *presence*. The goal is not just the finished building, but the building as a finished thing which actualises the idea and brings it into the domain of constant presence.

God as the *telos* of all spiritual movement was anathema to Iqbal–we have already seen how he predicated change of God Himself, and also quoted Prophetic traditions which equated God with Time. God could not be thought of as constant presence in his thinking but as a creative movement–yet Iqbal subscribed to a certain teleological scheme, contrary to Bergson. This might seem, on the face of it, to be an almost insurmountable contradiction in his thought. To resolve this knot, we have to understand

Iqbal's sole addition to what is majorly a Bergsonian reading of time. I would like to call this an idea of *teleology without telos*. An extensive citation from Iqbal's lectures would make it clearer:

> From our conscious experience we have seen that to live is to shape and change ends and purposes and to be governed by them. Mental life is teleological in the sense that, while there is no far-off distant goal towards which we are moving, there is a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of values as the process of life grows and expands…the world-process, or movement of the universe in time, is certainly devoid of purpose, if by purpose we mean a foreseen end– a far-off fixed destination to which the whole creation moves. To endow the world-process with purpose in this sense is to rob it of its originiality and creative character. Its ends are terminations of a career; they are ends to come and not necessarily premeditated.(43-44)

We can see in this paragraph a certain idea struggling to express itself. While Bergson had disavowed teleological thinking, Iqbal realised that such a disavowal tended to take away the purposive nature of time. While he agreed with Bergson that a teleological conception of time would rob it of its creative possibilities, which exist only in their unpredictability, he was also struck by the fact that time flows, that it has a certain sense or direction. In the above paragraph we can see Iqbal dimly struggling with this purposive nature of time, which means a struggle to understand the nature of the *sense* of time. We take the word 'sense' here not in the common signification of meaning, but rather from its Indo-European root, which meant to travel, or to follow a path.[31] This directionality of time is what lends itself, in Iqbal's thought, to a certain *teleology without telos*. This kind of thinking cannot be subsumed under what has passed for as teleology, whether as historical, philosophical or religious. But it is not an a-teleological thinking as well. What can best characterise Iqbal's teleology without *telos* and differentiate it from a regular and normative teleological thinking? The best way to approach such an a-telic teleology is by understanding the difference between a goal and a process. For Iqbal, time is not oriented and directed towards the realization of a goal which is a thing, for example, Heaven in traditional religious Abrahamic beliefs. That would imply the arrival of a certain mode of constant presence which would be the apogee, the culmination of the universe as a finished product. An a-telic teleology is directed towards a creative process; such a process is boundless in potentiality but not in actuality. The creative process exists

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[31] The detailed etymology of sense can be found in Schurmann's book *Heidegger On Being and Acting.*

in its mode of coming into presence, or presencing, and not as a type of constant presence. The best example for such a creative process in the historical realm would be the production or generation of a new idea. One way of looking at this new idea would be as a thing, a product of its time, and this would serve to give it a type of constant presence throughout history from that specific historical moment. Another way of looking at this idea, and this is how Iqbal sees it, is to consider it not a product but as a process of producing. Looking at it as an act of coming to presence would be to consider it without attempting to fix it into a rigid scheme of possibility transforming into actuality. Not even the originator of the idea could foresee its possibilities–he might be able to anticipate some, but not all. Thus the idea has boundless, infinite potentialities, of which only some may be realised in time. Such a conception of the idea as a creative process prioritises the infinite potentiality that it bears within itself; it remains an infinite creative movement rather than a final arrival and staying in presence. Iqbal's teleology without telos can therefore be said to offer opportunities for an infinite, inexhaustible 'creative unfolding'.

We have already seen how thoroughly Iqbal was indebted to Bergson's concept of duration, and how he made a vital innovation to its existing structure. The question that remains is whether we find Iqbal's conception of time prone to the same criticism which Bergsonian duration has been subject to. Martin Heidegger had famously written in his *Being and Time* that Bergson's view of time remains within the horizon of Greek metaphysics and is not as radical a break as it was supposed to be.(39) One can see where the genesis of such criticism lies: for Heidegger time was necessarily disjointed and ecstatic. In Bergson's duration we do see a disavowal of the discrete and the serial nature of time, but in the end time remains organic and continuous; though it is not serial and successive, it remains a continuous span nonetheless. This should lead us to the conclusion that Iqbal's view of the organic wholeness of the world-process is also continuous, and hence still within the horizon of Greek philosophy he is trying to escape. This struggle to escape the horizon of Greek metaphysics is something he acknowledged himself, writing in his notebooks that "It seems to me to be impossible to get rid of metaphysics altogether."(*Stray Reflections* 32) But a teleology without telos must be looked at as an attempt to rid teleology of its defining feature while still retaining the

principle of movement and dynamism that is an integral part of time as both sensible and creative. It is this negative we must focus on, the lack implicit in the term teleology *without* telos. This term is a destitution of what is effectually the true essence of the teleological structure, that is, a movement towards completion. Teleology without telos reveals to us a teleology which is not just partially but fundamentally incomplete, devoid and destitute of its sole defining characteristic. This incompleteness must be understood in a radically new way, not within the paradigm of classical thought. Thus the orientation of a teleology without telos is a movement quite paradoxically driven by its own incompleteness. Such teleology is oriented towards its own *becoming teleology.* It is a never ending process which is set off in such a teleology. Process itself is revealed as driven by the engine of incompleteness. It is a fundamentally new perspective on the world which process thought, and the revolutionary discoveries of quantum physics revealed to Iqbal: that the world, which seems so complete to us, is at its most basic level, fundamentally incomplete, *and will remain so*.[32] This is essentially the traumatic core which reconstruction seeks to release: the realisation that there is no deeper, complete reality, that our semblance of ground is in effect groundless.[33]

Iqbal, Whitehead and the Event

Iqbal was quite influenced by process philosophy, especially that of Whitehead and his event based ontology. In fact after Bergson, Whitehead is the most cited philosopher in his *Reconstruction.* The continuity of time-spans can be held to be a Bergsonian inheritance, yet while reading the lectures we can see that it is not a simple continuity, as in Bergson, but one that is influenced by Whitehead's event based ontology. Iqbal cites a legend about a famous Sufi saint:

> The question of creation once arose among the disciples of the well-known saint Ba Yazid of
> Bistam. One of the disciples very pointedly put the common-sense view saying, "There was a
> moment of time when God existed and nothing else existed beside Him." The saint's reply was

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[32]Yutaka Tanaka writes: "In the quantum world where incommensurable (not mutually divisible) events exist, the very concept of completeness does not hold. Therefore, we must say that quantum physics is neither incomplete nor complete in the classical sense."(*Physics and Whitehead* 178)

[33] This is why proclamations like those of Tesla CEO Elon Musk who said recently that the universe could be a simulation like a video game must not be taken seriously. Such statements necessarily participate in the dangerous fallacy that our world is not real enough, and there is a *real* world beneath it that we are not aware of.

equally pointed. "It is just the same now", said he, " as it was then." The world of matter, therefore, is not a stuff co-eternal with God, operated upon by Him from a distance as it were. It is, in its real nature, one continuous act which thought breaks up into a plurality of mutually exclusive things.(53)

To understand what Iqbal means in this paragraph we would need to approach it through the event based ontology of Whitehead. Lord Alfred North Whitehead was at first a professor of mathematics at Cambridge, where he co-authored the monumental three volume *Principia Mathematica* with Bertrand Russell in 1910. Later on he developed an influential theory of relativity which was supposed to be an alternative to those of Alfred Einstein's. While Einstein's theories of General and Special Relativity were hailed as radical and revolutionary in their critique of the systems of classical and Newtonian physics, Whitehead believed that they had not been radical enough. According to him, the Newtonian model of the universe was an amalgamation of the Aristotelian concept of independent and isolatable substance, along with Cartesian dualism. Such a scientific model rested on the assumption that the immediate content of experience is that of the perception of matter confined to instantaneous and static moments. Such a theory, Whitehead claims, results in a bifurcation of Nature in two- that which is sensed, and that which is abstracted by science. Einstein's theory of Relativity, though an advance upon Newton's, is still prone to this bifurcation, according to Whitehead. His own claim can be briefly summarized as "nature is experienced in temporary slabs of becoming." (Bain 548) What Whitehead claims is a certain immanent method of understanding the relations between nature. He says, "Natural knowledge is a knowledge from within nature, a knowledge 'here' within nature and 'now' within nature, and is an awareness of the natural relations of one element in nature." (*Principles* 13) R.B. Haldane explains this as his acceptance of the "internality of relations to their relata, in a way that is not consistent with the doctrine of those New Realists who treat the relata as entities separate from relations that are external to them and self-subsistent."(*Reign of Relativity* 66) The most characteristic feature of nature for Whitehead is the passage of its events. While this passage might be construed in the same sense as Bergsonian time, that is not really the case. For Whitehead the fundamental feature of passage is what allows us to construe space and time, and the passage itself is the passage of *events*. An event is not a discrete happening, distinct from every other, but

rather has the basic characteristic of *extension* in the sense of extending over, being included or including other events. The essence of an event consists in its relatedness to other events.(Bain 549) However an event as such cannot be recognised in isolation– this is the crux of Whitehead's thinking, which is an attempt to reconcile both atomicity and continuity in nature. Though the event cannot be recognised in isolation as each event is by definition indiscernible from another, yet the relations between events are uniform:

> The structure (of the relation between events) is uniform because of the necessity for knowledge that there be a system of uniform relatedness, in terms of which the contingent relations of natural factors can be expressed. Otherwise we can know nothing till we know everything.(*Relativity* 29)

The event, in its fundamental nature of passage, appears and then is gone. What endures, according to Whitehead, is the *object.* The object is located within the event and has as its primary characteristic, endurance. The object is discrete, permanent, and endures in the event though the event itself has the characteristic of passage. "Without related objects, there can be no event"(26) says Whitehead; however the relations between objects are not uniform like the relations between events:

> "It is not the case that the analysis of the adjectives of appearance(objects) attached to the events within a limited field of nature carries with it any certain knowledge of adjectives attached to other events in the rest of nature, or indeed of other such adjectives attached to those same events."(64)

Thus we can see that Whitehead's theory of relativity attempts to avoid any conception of nature as purely objects or purely events, or in other words, as purely atomistic and discrete versus the purely continuous. Such a model does not assume the absoluteness of position but only relative positions– "What is a point to one man in a balloon with his eyes fixed on an instrument is a track of points to an observer on the earth watching the balloon through a telescope, and is another track of points to an observer in the sun…"(*Concept of Nature* 135) We can do nothing more than agree with Whitehead when he says

> "When you once admit that the points are radically different entities for differing assumptions of rest, then the orthodox formulae lose all their obviousness. They were only obvious because you were really thinking of something else."(135)

As Haldane explains, in classical physics events are named after the objects situated in them; the event sinks into anonymity behind the objects that endure, and thus it becomes the mere play of the object's relations. What this leads to is a theory of space that is actually a theory of the relations of objects, rather than being a theory of the

relation of events.(68) Such a theory of space is divorced from its relation with time–and what transpires in this model of classical and Newtonian physics is the forgetting of the event.

It is from here that we can proceed with Iqbal's re-evaluation of time. Though he agreed with Bergson on the whole regarding duration, his concept of the continuity of time spans was more indebted to Whitehead than to the French philosopher. As we have seen, this model is not one of a pure continuity, but rather one that reconciles continuity(in the form of events) with atomicity and discontinuity(in the form of objects). As Iqbal writes, "According to Professor Whitehead, therefore, Nature is not a static fact situated in an a-dynamic void, but a structure of events possessing the character of a continuous creative flow which thought cuts up into isolated immobilities out of whose mutual relations arise the concepts of space and time."(28) Iqbal showed a greater affinity with Whitehead's theory of relativity than Einstein's. In the latter's theory "time loses its character of passage and mysteriously translates itself into utter space."(106) Such an affinity inevitably stems from Whitehead's reconciliation of atomicity and continuity in his theory. This allowed Iqbal to formulate an organic wholeness to his conception of time which differed markedly from that of Bergson. While the latter had advocated duration as consisting of a qualitative multiplicity, Iqbal followed Whitehead in arguing for the endurance of the discrete in the qualitatively multiple. We are now in a better position to understand what Iqbal meant by quoting the Sufi saint Ba Yazid, and see how he managed to make the transition from a purely philosophical thinking to one that is shot through by, and open to, the questions of faith.

In the quotation of the Sufi saint Ba Yazid of Bistam we can see how Iqbal melded together the philosophy of Whitehead with the mysticism of a Sufi to clarify his own position on a matter of extreme religious importance. The event of creation, as we can discern by his use of the quote, is not one singular event in the far-off distant past; rather it is a multiplicity of continuous events extending over all the ages. He quoted this Quranic verse numerous times to support his claim that such a view is in consonance with Islam: "He(God) adds to His Creation what He wills."(35:1) Thus the universe is "not a block universe, a finished product, immobile and incapable of change."(8) The universe is radically *unfinished,* it is incomplete, and its very incompletion calls upon both man

and God to continue the act of creation *ad infinitum.* This is why reconstruction as a task is an infinite responsibility for man and God, who are enjoined by Iqbal to become 'co-workers' in this work of progressive change.

Whitehead's event based ontology, which propagates a continuous procession of "temporal slabs of becoming" finds its counterpart in religious thought in Islam, which encourages a dynamic vision of the universe. As Iqbal writes, "the teaching of the Quran…is neither optimism or pessimism. It is meliorism, which recognizes a growing universe and is animated by the hope of man's eventual victory over evil."(65) It is not just creation which is of an evental nature- rather the revelation of the Quran itself cannot be understood but as an event in the life of the believer. Iqbal quotes his own father, who used to say that "no understanding of the Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to the Prophet."(143) It can hardly be surprising to know that the Apocalypse and Last Judgment, which play such an important role in all three Abrahamic religions, is also given a different aspect in Iqbal. For him

> Hell, therefore, as conceived by the Quran, is not a pit of everlasting torture inflicted by a revengeful God; it is a corrective experience which may make a hardened ego once more sensitive to the living breeze of Divine Grace. Nor is Heaven a holiday. Life is one and continuous. Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality which 'every moment appears in a new glory'.(98)

Now we can see how Iqbal re-interpreted the three fundamental events of Creation, Revelation and Redemption. [34] They do not remain mere points in a single linear scheme of time, but are rather one and continuous, which does not however mean that they are the same. The relations between the three events are uniform, though it is impossible to make a distinction between them without having the standpoint of something that *endures.* And what endures in Whitehead's philosophy? The event itself has the nature of passage, it appears and is gone. But the object is that which endures through the passage of the event. For Iqbal, an understanding of the event of Creation, Revelation and Redemption *as* events cannot be achieved through the lens of Greek, or even modern, that is Cartesian philosophy. While the former emphasised the unreality of time, the latter focussed on the essential reality of the subject. For Iqbal time is

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[34] Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* can be read as a book structured around the triad of Creation, Revelation and Redemption.

necessarily real and uniform. Such thinking is quite decidedly Bergsonian. But we have already analysed the debt Iqbal owes to Whiteheadian thought in his conception of time, and we can say that with the inclusion of the concept of event Iqbal introduces points of disjuncture within the continuous flow of time, disjunctions which only appear to be so for the objects that are related to the events. Briefly, the discontinuities in the continuous flow of time are only actual for the objects that participate in the events. What we have overlooked is how Iqbal appropriates Whitehead's term, the object, as a conceptual form for his notion of the Ego. While many have maintained that Iqbal's concepts of Ego and Ego-hood correspond most closely to that of the subject, I would argue that on the contrary, Iqbal's Ego can best be summed up as an *object* in the proper Whiteheadian sense.[35] For Iqbal claiming that man is alone a subject and the world is composed of objects would amount to imposing a dualism that does not just privilege the rational animal, but also reduces the world that is in essence a world of wonders, to a mundane, ever-present reality. Such thinking would be contrary to the nondualistic view of the world enjoined in the Quran. Iqbal does not think the subject and its corresponding term, the object. Iqbal thinks of only the object– each and every object is an ego:

> Every atom of Divine Energy, however low in the scale of existence, is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of ego-hood. Throughout the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man. That is why the Quran declares the Ultimate Ego to be nearer to man than his own neck-vein. Like pearls do we live and move and have our being in the perpetual flow of Divine Life.(58)

From the singular atom, to the humble bee, to the massive mountain- each and every object is also an ego. All can endure the passage of events, and are necessary components to the event itself. But the human being is the one who has the greatest desire

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[35] Refer to Martin Heidegger's reading of Descartes in *Being and Truth* where he argues that with Descartes we come upon an inversion of the terms *objectum* and *subjectum*: "To begin with, let us note only this: *subjectum* originally designates precisely what we call an object today; and *objectum*, to the contrary, means in the Middle Ages what we grasp as represented and opposed to us in mere thought, what is intended subjectively in today's sense. But now, how could the word *subjectum* take on precisely the opposite meaning, so that it no longer means what lies at hand over against the I, but the I itself, and only this? If we have grasped the preceding account of Descartes's procedure, the answer cannot be difficult to reach. For under the spell of his method, Descartes seeks something that lies at hand as indubitable and that cannot be doubted away again. But this thing that lies at hand is the "I" of the doubter himself. Thus the I is a *subjectum* in the old sense. But now, because the I is not just any *subjectum*, but the fundamental thing that lies at hand, the *subjectum* receives the fundamental meaning of "I." The I is not only a *subjectum* simply, but also and for this very reason, the *subjectum* is originally "I." From now on, "subject" becomes the term for the I."(35)

to endure, and perhaps the only one who understands the importance of solidifying and strengthening the Ego with its resolve to persist and endure even in the face of God. "The Quran represents man as having accepted at his peril the trust of personality which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to bear" says Iqbal(70). Such a covenant made with God is not one that privileges man over the heavens and the earth, but rather makes him responsible to God for his promise. Such a responsibility is fraught with its attendant ills. Iqbal does not in any way imply that all men are equal in their degree of egohood. Rather he makes it clear that only a few will be able to strengthen their ego so as to fulfil the responsibility entrusted to them by God. The Ego as filling the conceptual form of the object is an important discovery by Iqbal, as it allows the continuous flow of real time to be disrupted by the event which is intimately related with the object. The disruption in the continuous flow of time is hence only a matter of concern and responsibility for the Ego-object. Only from the vantage point of inscription within the event can the Ego see what seems to be a continuous flow of time as being disrupted by the advent of the event itself. As he writes, from the standpoint of the Ego, "thought cuts up into isolated immobilities" what is in actuality a "continuous creative flow".(27)

The Event and Truth

In contrast to deconstruction and the tendencies of poststructuralist thought, we must apprehend the task of reconstruction as premised on the fundamental truth that there is Truth. There are not a multitude of truths, or alternative truths, or marginalised truths. There is only Truth from the vantage point of the Ego-object inscribed within the event, but this truth is not of the accessible mode, like knowledge. As Badiou puts it quite beautifully in his magisterial treatise, *Being and Event*, the subject finds itself *suspended* from the truth. Reconstruction is primarily a reconstruction of the category of Truth, as it appears in the form of the event. For Badiou there are four types of subjects- artistic, scientific, political and erotic. As an atheist, it is perhaps a moot point that Badiou does not consider the mystical experience as another, separate mode of the inscription of the subject by an event. Yet in his book on *St. Paul* Badiou confronts the mystical experience of St Paul, a "zealous Pharisee…(who) hears a mysterious voice revealing to him both the truth and his vocation."(17) This conversion, which takes place almost in a flash, like

a bolt of lightning; it is an event which is wholly incalculable, it "happened, purely and simply, in the anonymity of the road". What marks Paul out is an unshakeable conviction in his own destiny, a conviction which is visible in what he does not do:

> He does not go to Jerusalem; he does not go to see the authorities, the institutional apostles, those who knew Christ. He does not seek "confirmation" for the event that appoints him in his own eyes as an apostle. He leaves this subjective upsurge outside every official seal…turning away from all authority other than that of the Voice that personally summoned him to his becoming-subject.(18)

The truth of his experience cannot be doubted, and neither can it be confirmed. It is not just a matter of personal faith or experience, but crucially, a matter of the utmost political importance. For Paul, the experience is at once supernatural and utterly natural; that it is not a normal experience for Paul can be seen in the fact that he does not go back to his normal life; he becomes what Badiou calls a militant of faith. But it is also utterly natural, because he unreservedly accepts the unconditionality of the event that conditions the subject he now is. It is quite crucially a militant, political struggle that Paul now embarks on, because truth is not simply an illumination, but a process. That is why it requires more than the mystical experience- it necessitates the declaration of fidelity, *pistis,* which Badiou translates as conviction. The story of Paul is perhaps the most exemplary model of an exit from philosophy in the Western religious and metaphysical tradition. That Paul's conversion and life as the paradigmatic case of an exit from philosophy is also an extremely important question for and of philosophy can be seen in the list of philosophers who have engaged with him: from Hegel, August Comte, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger and Lyotard, to Badiou himself, and recently, Agamben. Paul's story has struck the imagination of philosophers and mystics across the centuries because it poses a question that is both traumatic and triumphant, a question that challenges the hegemony of philosophy as the abode of wisdom. What if truth is not generated within philosophical discourse, what if truth is paradoxically beyond philosophy, and thus the only task remaining to philosophy is to discourse on truth without generating it or possessing it, to provide the conditions for the coming of the truth that is always essentially unconditional?

Iqbal, Hallaj and the Exit of Philosophy

An exit from philosophy is utterly traumatic, not because it is the exit of something from philosophy, but the voiding of philosophy itself, an exit of philosophy itself from philosophy. That this is a properly traumatic realisation can be seen in Iqbal's change in attitude towards the famous Islamic mystic and martyr Hussein ibn Mansur al-Hallaj. Hallaj is one of the most well-known Islamic mystics and martyrs, having been beheaded in 922 A.D. for what was considered blasphemy. Hallaj was said to have pronounced the theopathic utterance *ana'l Haqq* which had been translated as "I am the Truth"[36]. This utterance has been received as a pantheistic one by many Sufi orders across the centuries. It has been considered a sign of the absorption of the unitive ego into the totality, the complete destruction and negation of personality in the face of the Divine. We can hardly be surprised by Iqbal's preliminary opinions on Hallaj in his *Development of Metaphysics in Persia* where he calls Hallaj 'hopelessly pantheistic' and a follower of "the true spirit of Indian Vedantism, exclaimed: I am God (*Aham Brahma asmi).*"(148) How can Iqbal, the one thinker who advocates the persistence of the individual Ego even in the face of the Divine, have anything else to say about what seems to be such a pantheistic metaphysics?

In Iqbal we can clearly see the influence of the Persian mystic Shahab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi who founded the Iranian school of Illuminationism.[37] At the end of his third lecture in the *Reconstruction* Iqbal contrasts religion and philosophy:

> But as I have said before, religious ambition soars higher than the ambition of philosophy. Religion is not satisfied with mere conception; it seeks a more intimate knowledge of and association with the object of its pursuit. The agency through which this association is achieved is the act of worship or prayer ending in spiritual illumination.(71)

The amount of illumination received by an individual made him qualitatively different from others, in Suhrawardi's system. Since every individual has different

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[36] *Haqq* is one of the 99 names of God, and hence it was believed that Hallaj was saying he is God. It was taken as his proclamation of divinity, and since this is an unforgivable sin in Islam, Hallaj was executed and his body thrown into the river.

[37] I am indebted to the work of Henri Corbin, known in the Western academy as the first translator of Heidegger, but better known in the Islamic world as a renowned scholar of the great mystics like Suhrawardi and ibn al-Arabi. His essay on Suhrawardi entitled "Mundus Imaginalis" reveals the importance of the interstitial dimension in Iranian thought.

amounts of illumination, there can be no ultimate reabsorption into one undifferentiated totality. On this Souleymane Bachir Diagne writes,

> Overall, even if we can see pantheistic aspects in Suhrawardi's illuminationist philosophy, it remains, for Iqbal, that it posits two affirmations that will be close to the principle of his own thought: *the world is something real and the human soul is a distinct personality.* In virtue of these affirmations, the illuminationist philosophy breaks with the metaphysics of a certain Sufism of the extinction of individuality in the Whole.(7)

It is in a similar vein that Iqbal quotes the example of the Prophet Muhammad on his *miraj* or ascension from the Quran. When he came face to face with God, it is written that "the eye did not waver nor yet did it stray."(53:17) We can have no disagreement with Iqbal being true to his own thinking in disavowing Hallaj's utterance as 'hopelessly pantheistic'. It would have been reasonable to expect Iqbal to condemn Hallaj's pantheistic metaphysics and move on. But as has been so pertinently pointed out by Annemarie Schimmel, Iqbal always remained obsessed with the figure of Hallaj. He appears more than a few times in his poems, especially in his magnum opus, the *Javid Namah* where he is an important character. How are we to explain this obsession with a figure who seems to be in all respects the contrary of what Iqbal expects his Ego to be? Iqbal's obsession with Hallaj betrays an initial fear of engagement which is mitigated by a realisation of one's unnatural attraction towards the unhomely. It is quite apposite that after the *Javid Namah* we suddenly see a change in Iqbal's attitude towards Hallaj. This manifests itself in the *Reconstruction* Iqbal in the form of a complete reversal with the earlier condemnation of Hallaj. He writes:

> The development of this experience in the religious life of Islam reached its culmination in the well-known words of Hallaj: 'I am the creative truth'. The contemporaries of Hallaj, as well as his successors, interpreted these words pantheistically; but the fragments of Hallaj, collected and published by the French Orientalist, L. Massignon, leave no doubt that the martyr-saint could not have meant to deny the transcendence of God. The true interpretation of his experience, therefore, is not the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and bold affirmation in an undying phrase of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a profounder personality. The phrase of Hallaj seems almost a challenge flung against the Mutakallimun.(77)

The figure of Hallaj is unhomely not simply because it is that of a man proclaiming himself God. It is unhomely, and hence traumatic because it is the spectacle of a man proclaiming to the world two simple words, *ana'l haqq,* I am the Truth. The

problem is not to decide whether Hallaj is speaking the truth or not; the real crux of the problem is that in Hallaj's voice, truth itself is speaking. It is a challenge to the *Mutakallimun,* the philosophers of Islam who received inspiration from Greek thought; for these philosophers Hallaj had to be executed, because by his simple pronouncement he attacked the very legitimacy of their interpretation of Islam through Greek thought. We, in the twenty-first century, might be surprised at the brutality with which they punished Hallaj for just two simple words, but we cannot imagine the traumatic encounter these two words constituted for the *mutakallimun.* It completely voided their legitimacy as seekers of truth and lovers of wisdom, for while they could only speak of the truth, Hallaj *was* the speaking truth. His execution must be seen as the punitive mechanism with which philosophy maintained its boundaries and legitimised both its methods and objectives. But the spectre of Hallaj could not be exorcised so quickly. Iqbal's reversal of attitude towards Hallaj is emblematic of an espousal of method that does not just go beyond philosophy(in the spatial sense) but also empties out philosophy, nullifies its claims to the generation of truth. Hallaj becomes one of those who affirm their own individuality in an act that is more than just self-affirmative but also *creative.* 'I am the creative truth' said Hallaj in Massignon's translation, but it would be more appropriate to take it as the voice of embodied truth proclaiming itself as such. I, the truth, am speaking.[38] The Ego becomes quite properly an object here, an object which is the voice of truth speaking, an object immersed and suspended from truth.[39] An exit from philosophy is thus properly concerned with this conversion, with this voiding of superficial 'subjective' personality(for example, Hallaj's personal idiosynscracies etc.) and its transformation into a real Ego-object, which affirms its 'reality and permanence' in a 'profounder personality'. It is not the affirmation of a bourgeois subjective personality that Iqbal is concerned with here, it is the affirmation of the Ego-object who discovers that his own subjective personality is inconsequential when compared to the process of becoming-subject inscribed by the event. . It is in this affirmation of Hallaj

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[38] Refer to Slavoj Zizek's reading of Denis Diderot's *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* in *Organs Without Bodies* where he channels Lacan to say that in Diderot's novel the vagina is a partial object which is the truth itself speaking.*(171)*

[39] Zizek writes that the subject is "a correlate of a(partial object), of an organ without body"(175) He writes, "subjectivisation refers to the 'whole person' as the correlate of the body, whereas the 'pure' subject refers to the partial object alone."

that we can see what spurred Iqbal to advocate an opening up of philosophy to regions of thought and experience that were supposed to be off-limits to it. As he writes,

> The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpens his will with the creative assurance that the world is not merely something to be seen and known through concepts, but something to be made and re-made through continuous action.(157)

It is here that we can see the philosopher Iqbal give way to the poet Iqbal, the thinker to the man of action. However we should not construe this as his disavowal of philosophy, but rather his act of opening it to methods that are beyond the limits set on philosophy by Kant and his successors. The best way to understand Iqbal's exit from philosophy would be achieved by his reading of these verses from Rumi:

> *Daftar soofi swaad-o-harf nisat*
> *Jaz dil aspeer mashl barf nisat*
> *Zaad danishmand? Aashaar-e-kalam*
> *Zaad soofi chisht? Aashaar-e-qadam*
> (The Sufi's book is not composed of ink and letters, it is not but a heart white as snow
> The scholar's possession is pen-marks. What is the Sufi's possession? Foot-marks.)

Rumi goes on to write (Iqbal's translation):

> "The Sufi stalks the game like a hunter
> he sees the musk-deer's track and follows the footprints.
> For some while the track of the deer is the proper clue for him
> but afterwards it is the musk-gland of the deer that is his guide.
> To go one stage guided by the scent of the musk-gland
> is better than a hundred stages of following the track and roaming about."

Iqbal comments on these lines:

> Although at present he follows only the footprints of the musk-deer, and thus modestly limits the method of his quest, his thirst for knowledge is eventually sure to lead him to the point where the scent of the musk-gland is a better guide than the footprints of the deer. This alone will add to his power over Nature and give him that vision of the total-infinite which philosophy seeks but cannot find.(73)

Philosophy is a vital stage in the progress of thought, but it is definitely not the last or final one. Iqbal does not claim to have discovered the next stage himself, but as a prophetic figure, he hoped to presage and encourage the minds of his time to prepare for the process of reconstruction. In an important book, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy,* Daniel Brudney explored how Marx eschewed and polemicized against philosophy right

from his earlier works, and not just in the famous statement from the *Theses on Feuerbach* "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it." Marx thought that the development of a structured system of *theoria* on which *praxis* could be fundamentally based was the solution to this need for change which could not be accomplished within the boundaries of mere philosophising. But as Schurmann has shown in his magnificent book, *Heidegger On Being and Acting,* any attempt to ground acting based on thinking is bound to participate in the metaphysics it might seek to deny. Iqbal's prophetic claim of an exit from philosophy is not premised on a foundation in a system of *theoria.* It is rather a reconstruction that takes as its principal example the creative aspect of poetry.[40] Action, praxis, or the question of the practical becomes a question of the poetical. It is in this way that we can understand Chesterton's enigma that the practical is the paradoxical: because the practical(and the political) in their deepest essence take the same form as that which is considered the exemplar of the impractical and un-political, the art that is properly called poetry. It was perhaps Heidegger who equated the foundation of a state, a properly political act, with the same status as that of the setting in place of truth in a work of art. In the second chapter we shall see how Iqbal's exit from philosophy effects a radical change in the conception of the political, and the political subject par excellence, the Ego. We shall try to reconceptualise the political with respect to our research and demonstrate how for Iqbal the political becomes an inseparable, crucial constituent of what may be properly called 'religion'.[41]

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[40] Is it a coincidence that all the great Continental philosophers, from Heidegger, to Sartre and Blanchot, to Derrida and Deleuze, find the true practitioners of philosophy not to be philosophers but poets and writers? From Heidegger's obsession with Friedrich Holderlin to Sartre and Blanchot's copious literary production, and of course the cult that is Kafka, can we not see a tendency of thought veering away from philosophy as system of methods that seeks to discover truth to literature as the true space for the setting in place of truth? It is hardly coincidental that nowadays philosophy departments across the world are focussing on the so called cognitive brain sciences, and real progress in thought is actually being generated from departments of English and literature. The exit from philosophy of philosophy has perhaps already been effected. It is only the philosophers who do not know this.

[41] It has often been stated that Islam is both a religion and a state. With Iqbal perhaps we could take the first steps in proclaiming that Islam is, in the conventional sense of the terms, neither a religion nor a state.

Chapter 2: The Ego, Ijtihad and the Essence of the Poietical

"The problem of ancient Indian thought was how the One became many without sacrificing its oneness. Today this problem has come down from its ethereal heights to the grosser plane of our political life, and we have to solve it in its reversed form, i.e. how the many can become One without sacrificing its plural character."
        (Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim Conference, 1932)

Iqbal proposes an exit from philosophy, but what is really his fundamental project? An exit is always an opening into something else, and a philosophical project is always a substitution of method. Iqbal's project entails the substitution of an ontology of substance by a phenomenology of substance becoming subject. For Iqbal the constitution of an ontology of substance is not feasible without the phenomenology of substance becoming subject(or rather Ego-object), since the former is always already imbricated within the development of the latter. This process is the transformation entailed in the propositions substance becoming subject, something becoming someone, what becoming who. This process is not just simply a generative procedure but also a poetic, hence wondrous process. But the Ego is not just the product of a poetic process; Iqbal also envisages it as a testament to the impossibility of the all-inclusive whole. Its irreducibility and ineffaceability are in stark contrast to the metaphysics of absorption, digestion, assimilation, consumption and annihilation which were the stuff pantheistic Sufism was made of. But the Ego as process lays bare a profound new insight which could only find its conceptual terminology after the scientific revolutions of Einstein and the discoveries of quantum physics. This is the difference between the incompleteness that is found at the subatomic level and the ordinary concepts of completeness and incompleteness. The importance and influence of Whitehead on Iqbal must be emphasised here. Process must take as its starting point the fundamental presupposition that objective reality is always incomplete. When Iqbal writes in an essay called *Bedil in the Light of Bergson:* "The Universe is not a complete whole, created once for all, it is not achievement but a continuous process" he is just stating the obvious: that the universe is non-All (as Lacan would say it). In this chapter it is our intention to proceed from this consideration into a more complicated and problematic area which is the relationship between the Ego and its world; which is also the relationship of the Ego with other Egos. The essence of these relationships can be in no way divorced from the political. But it is our contention that for

Iqbal the primary political relationship par excellence is the relationship between the finite Ego and the Infinite Ego or God. Thus our primary contention is that the theological is always already the political, even when it just consists of man and his relationship with God.[42] In this chapter we will try to lay the foundation for a serious and rigorous conception of theocracy as it is revealed in Iqbal's thought, especially through the exemplary site of the theologico-political, which is the Ego or *khudi*. Following the method which is similar to Whitehead's inversion of the classical physical relationship between object and event, we shall see how the Ego can be effectually both *mard-e-momin* or Man of Faith and a man of (political) action, finding orientation even in the era of the destitution of all sovereign referents at the end of metaphysics.

The Ego as Object

In the lecture included in *Reconstruction* called 'The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer" Iqbal offers a brief account of the generation of the human Ego from substance:

> Every atom of Divine Energy, however low in the scale of existence, is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of ego-hood. Throughout the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man. That is why the Quran declares the Ultimate Ego to be nearer to man than his own neck-vein. Like pearls do we live and move and have our being in the perpetual flow of Divine Life.(70)

Substance and the Ego are intimately related because the Ego is the highest degree of the expression of substance. As we have said earlier, the Ego is not so much a subject in the Cartesian sense as it is an object in the terminology of Whitehead. The irreducibility and ineffaceability of the Ego in the perpetual flow of Divine Life is imagined in the form of a pearl in a river by Iqbal. This is in stark contrast to the dominant conventions of Urdu poetry. The dominant image of the lover in the Perso-Urdu *ghazal* has always been that of the moth circling the flame.[43] The moth does not simply love the flame for its attributes, but it loves it because it is destructive. The moth burns with desire for the

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[42] It is thus that Islam as a religion has always been seen as inclusive of the political. As Zizek says, "More importantly even, this inscribes politics into the very heart of Islam, since the "genealogical desert" renders impossible to ground a community in the structures of parenthood or other blood-links – thence Islam's actuality."(*In Defense of Lost Causes* 115)

[43] *Parwana* is a word used for the lover gone mad with passion. It originally meant moth.

flame, and its desire is finally consummated when it is consumed in the fire and reduced to nothingness. Generations of poets in Urdu, Arabic and Persian had used these conventional images to represent the lover and his beloved. But Iqbal used images that were highly exceptional, and idiosyncratic to say the least. A few examples of these novel images were those of a pearl in the ocean, or a diamond buried under coal, and the atom that feels its light in the sun. These were hardly conventional images of the lover and its beloved. We might be tempted to believe that these were just minor modifications to an extant tradition by Iqbal, but in doing so we would be wrong. With Iqbal there is a poetic revolution announced in both Urdu and Persian, and as with all revolutions, it is as much a philosophical break and rupture as it is an aesthetic one. What engendered this radical shift of poetic imagery was a desire to disrupt the logic of the Whole and totality; a logic which could only think in terms of parts and the whole. To disrupt this logic it would not be enough to demonstrate that the Whole is impossible via the Ego which is an external excess; but only via the Ego which is an internal excess. Like the bone stuck in the throat, the Ego is what refuses digestion and assimilation into the organism. It is the assertion of its very existence even in the midst of what should absorb and annihilate it that marks a break from the earlier traditions. The piece of coal becomes a diamond under the tremendous pressure of the earth. The water drop consolidates itself into a pearl to avoid annihilation and absorption into the ocean. Iqbal took it upon himself to answer the philosophical enquiries of pantheistic Sufis. He paraphrases their questions as:

> How can the Infinite and the finite egos mutually exclude each other? Can the finite ego as such, retain its finitude besides the Infinite Ego? This difficulty is based on a misunderstanding of the true nature of the Infinite. True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity; and the moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite ego must be distinct, though not isolated from the infinite.(94)

Against this metaphysics of digestion and assimilation we can perhaps propose that Iqbal elucidates the ontology of the substance becoming the *objet petit a* in the Lacanian sense; the excremental, inassimilable partial object that refuses digestion within the body and in a way indicates how incomplete the body itself is. Like the partial object, the Ego is always already a surplus, an addition to the substance it arises from. With the generation

of the Ego from substance what transpires is a transposition of the cut from the epistemological dimension to the ontological dimension. The universe is the accumulation of all egos of a lower order *plus* the partial object, the Egos of a higher order. The thesis of the incompleteness of the universe that was proposed by Whitehead and quantum theory is not due to an epistemological error or limitation but an ontological reality. The universe is a whole made up of substance and substance becoming Ego; the universe conceived as substance, what classical physics called objective reality (planets, stars, atoms, electrons etc.) is always incomplete without the figure of the substance becoming Ego. The universe is thus always itself plus something, and that something is the Ego-object.

Iqbal and Descartes

Iqbal is putting forth a theory of subjectivity which is in its basic essence anti-Cartesian. The Cartesian project proceeds via a negation of all sensory attributes and a *subtraction* from the empirical world, in order to arrive at the certain foundation of the Ego as *cogito.* The Cartesian subject is produced by this subtraction of the empirical world of the senses by the method of doubt. One doubts everything, but then one cannot reasonably doubt that one is doubting. From doubt therefore we can proceed to the indubitable, which is the ground of one's own reality. The existence of the Cartesian subject is hence at the end of the method, indubitable and unquestionable. It is a construct that does not need further reconstruction. The pithy statement, I think therefore I am, is not just the conclusion of the method, but it is the method itself, as Bernard Williams has so ably pointed out.[44] The Cartesian subject is a product of a method whose prime apparatus is that of subtraction. The subject subtracts everything from the world he knows and lives in, until what remains is the indubitable, himself. The universe is thus postulated as an all-inclusive Whole, of which the subject is necessarily a part. Subtraction as an operation can only work in a whole which is the sum of its parts. But in Iqbal we come across a vastly different operation. Neither can the Ego subtract itself from its world, nor can the world be studied subtracted from the Ego. The former would

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[44] Bernard Williams' book *Descartes The Project of Pure Enquiry* is an analytical take on Descartes' method but it does provide us with an important point regarding the words *cogito ergo sum.* For Williams, it does not matter if we change the word *cogito* with any other verb, eg. sing, speak, walk etc. The form of the proposition itself is what makes thinking happen. Hence Descartes' pronouncement is not just simply performative, it is also formative in its very form and not just content.

lead to the kind of self-positing, self-grounding subject of which Fichte is the main proponent. The latter would lead us to the study of empirical objective reality which is hallmark of classical physics. Iqbal's operation is one of an impossible addition, an addition which does not result in a mathematical solution or resolution. That is why it is a philosophy of process and not of product. The Ego is essentially imbricated within its world, but is also unable to assimilate itself with it, to become a part among the whole. What we are left with is a new form of subjectivity, of substance becoming object. It is the Ego distinct from the whole and yet not isolated from it, a necessary part of the whole which is not complete, a universe which is in truly non-All.

The Ego and the Logic of Non-All

Iqbal's inversion of what was the fundamental form of the problematic in ancient Indian thought is an important index towards his thinking of the non-All nature of the universe. What was supposed by the ancient Indian thinkers to be primary, the undifferentiated One which manifests itself in the form of the multiple, is for Iqbal not simply given. It is the product of an operation. What is simply given is plurality or multiplicity. The problem therefore which Iqbal grapples with is not the uncovering of the One behind all the multiplicities but to bring together the multiple by an operation into a One without losing the plural character. To retain the plural character we have to transform our conception of the One itself, to render the One itself both secondary and also incomplete. It is not just solely a philosophical problem, but also a political problem. What Iqbal proposes goes beyond the mere platitudes of preserving difference and unity in diversity. We must keep in mind that his words are used in the context of the institution of a new Muslim majority state within India. What Iqbal is thus proposing is a binary logic which is not of the order of ones and zeros, but substitutes the logic of One for the logic of multiples. As Iqbal writes, "What then is matter? A colony of egos of a lower order out of which emerges the ego of a higher order."(84) Each ego is but a unity of a colony of egos, which are themselves formed of colonies of egos and so on. It is a philosophy of the multiple which Iqbal is attempting to illuminate here, perhaps drawing on Georg Cantor's theory of sets which was taken up and expanded upon by Bertrand Russell in the early years of the twentieth century. The unity of the Ego is not due to any

prior tendency to being one single individual but is rather due to an operation which we could liken to Badiou's 'count-as-one'. Iqbal says that the

> ego reveals itself as a unity of what we call mental states. Mental states do not exist in mutual isolation. They exist as phases of a complex whole, called mind. The organic unity, however, of these interrelated states or let us say *events*, is a special kind of unity. It fundamentally differs from the unity of a material thing; for the parts of a material thing can exist in mutual isolation. Mental unity is absolutely unique. We cannot say that one of my beliefs is situated on the right or left of my other belief.(79)

For Iqbal it is the 'unique interrelation of our mental states that we express by the word 'I'.' Thus the ego is the privileged site of reconstruction itself; of the positing of itself as a working unity of interrelated mental states. Iqbal goes to some lengths to differentiate his conception of the Ego from Ghazzali's 'simple, indivisible and immutable soul-substance…unaffected by the passage of time'. He follows the breakthrough engendered by the Kantian revolution to argue that "the 'I think' which accompanies every thought is…a purely formal condition of thought, and the transition from a purely formal condition of thought to ontological substance is logically illegitimate."(80) Thus the Ego is not a soul-substance or any other sort of substance. It is rather of the form of a tension, an antagonism: "the life of the ego is a kind of tension caused by the ego invading the environment and the environment invading the ego. The ego does not stand outside this arena of mutual invasion."(82) It is this antagonism which is fundamental to the constitution of the Ego as Ego. The Ego does not seek to reconcile the two antagonistic forces into a mutual unity and harmony. The antagonism itself is what constitutes the Ego, without the arena of mutual invasion we cannot have the Ego at all. In fact we can even say that the Ego is the arena of mutual invasion itself. Thus there is a dynamic violence at work here, a tension which rather than breaking apart the Ego is paradoxically constitutive of it. The operation Iqbal has in mind has nothing to do with the reconciliation of opposite antagonistic forces into a sublated, higher harmonious whole. It is on the contrary, a reconciliation with the fact that there is a fundamental antagonism between Ego and environment; and the Ego is itself the product of this antagonism. The further we follow Iqbal's tangled skein of thought the more we understand the influence Hegel had upon his thought. We had asked, what is the universe, and Iqbal answered it is itself plus the Ego. We ask what is the Ego, and Iqbal answers it

is the product of the mutual antagonism between Ego and environment(or universe). How are we to understand these paradoxical answers which take the strange form of (A=A+a)? What must be remembered is that we are no longer in the logic of the One that manifests itself as multiple. With Iqbal we are ushered into the dimension of the One that is not one, or as Lacan would have it, the barred One. It is the logic of the non-All that Iqbal tries to hint towards in his lectures, and his decisive point is that the universe and the Ego are both in this respect, non-All in nature.

Theism as a Bland Assertion?

The very intricacy of this problem has led to a lot of confusion even among the most astute readers of Iqbal. That is because Iqbal did not just conceive of the human being as an Ego, but also postulated that God Himself is also an individual self, or the Ultimate Ego. His adamant attitude towards retaining theism in his thought had perplexed many critics, who took his assertions at face value and misconstrued their radical import. Javed Majeed in his book *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity* writes,

> Iqbal's makeshift claim that, while no self could be part of another self, the individual self was itself a 'colony of egos'. It was only with this bland assertion that Iqbal could conceive of God as an individual self and remain faithful to his scheme of khudi, in which selves were irreducible and uneffaceable. It is this makeshift escape, in which God is both independent of and includes all other selves which at all times maintain their individuality, that is responsible for much of the confusion in Iqbal's position.(298)

This problem, or rather inconsistency, in Iqbal's thought seems to stem from his adamant attitude towards retaining some sort of theism, according to Majeed. Majeed seems to think that theism is the solution in favour of which Iqbal abandons the problem of the Ego halfway through, refusing to take it onwards to a conclusion which would be in essence, atheistic. The real issue here is a bit more complicated than Majeed thinks it to be. While it would be a reasonable project to critically analyse Iqbal's thought as limited by certain theistic traces which result in nothing but inconsistencies, we have a very different project in mind here. For us, theism and theocracy are not just makeshift solutions, 'bland assertions' which Iqbal makes in order to escape the tangled skein of a paradoxical problem. They are not efforts to cut the Gordian knot, rather they are the Gordian knot itself. Theism and theocracy are the problems which Iqbal is trying to come to terms with, the problems he is trying to lay out in his lectures and his poems. This does

not mean we should invalidate and reject Majeed's criticism of Iqbal, on the contrary we must use it as an entry point into Iqbal's inconsistencies and see how inconsistent they really are when looked at from a different angle. The Ego should thus be considered the exemplary site where the philosophical, theological, and political aspects of his thought get entangled together. Iqbal's theologico-political stance can only be considered through the reconstruction of the Ego not simply as a revolutionary political subject, but more importantly as the *mard-e-momin* or the Man of Faith. But juxtaposed with this mard-e-momin we must also keep in mind a fundamental question Iqbal raised in his *Stray reflections:* "For centuries Eastern heart and intellect have been absorbed in the question- Does God exist? I propose a new question- new, that is to say, for the East– Does man exist?"(152)

Majeed has obviously not taken into account the logic of the non-All in his criticism. It is quite a simple matter to turn his critique around to illuminate the fact that no self could be part of another self because no self, not even God, could be the all-inclusive Whole in which other egos lose their ego-hood. What Majeed does not understand is that his conception of the Ego is tending towards a simple, indivisible, immutable soul-substance which is exactly what Iqbal criticises in traditional Islamic theology, with the specific mention of Ghazzali. Such a material conception of the Ego would definitely be the cause of many absurd paradoxes and inconsistencies. But Iqbal's Ego is a unity of mental states, characterised by an antagonism which is neither simply external nor internal, but is rather the antagonism which takes the form of the struggle to define and delineate the internal from the external. Majeed may be mistaken in his critique, but he does point us in the right direction, towards the persistence of a devout, almost orthodox theism in Iqbal's thought. It is this theism which itself must be thought as the foundation of Iqbal's political project.

The R-econstruction of the Ego

Gilles Deleuze was the one who said, in the preface to his book *Empiricism and Subjectivity,* that humankind had the (regrettable) habit of saying I. His work is a testament to the task of the dissolution of this 'I' that speaks, and legitimises speaking. Javed Majeed has quite aptly pointed out that in England and Europe, this habit of saying

'I' was being questioned and deconstructed by philosophers, poets, and writers of the early half of the 20th century; conversely, in the colonies, poets and thinkers like Iqbal can be seen as almost reactionary in their obstinate desire to reify and reinstate the 'I'. The political and social contexts of course were completely different, which does go a long way in explaining Iqbal's(among others) insistence on personality, Ego, and selfhood. At the same time poets and writers like T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and others were attacking the sacrosanct site of the Ego. Postcolonial and anticolonial ambitions of course had a major role to play in this divergent trajectory of the colonial subject, who was a subject in every sense of the term. We can read Iqbal's call of '*khudi ko bulund kar'* as fitting in perfectly with the trend of this discourse which advocated resistance against the colonisers, freedom from subjection, and national integration and sovereignty. It would be erroneous for us to forget, even for a moment, that Iqbal was a poet of the Indian Independence movement, and one of its greatest thinkers, along with Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Tagore. Looking at his conception of the Ego and *khudi* we would perhaps be tempted to not just allot it a space among the major discourse, but also read the discourse into it. However that would bring us to one major stumbling block; an impasse which has never allowed Iqbal to become a legitimate political thinker like Gandhi, or even Ambedkar. Iqbal's conception of the Ego is not just accidentally a political discourse, but is deliberately constructed to be one. The movement of Pan-Islam found its greatest theoretical and philosophical support from the work of Iqbal alone.[45] Yet at the heart of this political project was a paradox that divested his thought of its conventional political application. He was always an advocate of the *bulund khudi* and *mard-e-momin* and later in life was also the first to propose a separate sovereign state for the Muslims of India. But later thinkers and politicians found that Iqbal had not just divested the Ego of political sovereignty, he had attempted to think the withering away of all earthly sovereignty even in his conception of theocracy. Theocracy, Walter Benjamin had said apropos a reading of Ernst Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia,* could have no political, but only a religious meaning. We are not aware whether Iqbal ever read the writings of Benjamin, or was familiar with his concept of a weak messianic power. For Iqbal, on the contrary, as

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[45] At the inauguration of the First Iqbal Summit in Tehran in 1986, after the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini had said that in his "conviction that the Quran and Islam are to be made the basis of all revolutions and movements" Iran was "exactly following the path that was shown to us by Iqbal".

we have already mentioned, the primary mode of the political was the religious relationship between man and God. Thus theocracy had a political meaning *because* it had a religious meaning; theocracy was the model of the theologico-political relationship par excellence.

The Ego after the Quantum Revolution

To understand Iqbal's transformation of the theological relationship into the primary mode of the political relationship we should not try to comprehend the relationship simply based on the two terms, the finite Ego and the infinite Ego. To understand this, we must first understand the import of the quantum revolution for modern thought. Whitehead's great scientific discovery, made simultaneously with those of Neils Bohr and Heisenberg was that we could not discount the role of the observer in the process of the scientific experiment. This was not due to the 'subjective' mind of the observer, but rather due to his necessary immanence within the field of knowledge. Both humans and their apparatus (such as electron microscopes) were immersed in the field which they thought they were observing from outside. What Whitehead claims is a certain immanent method of understanding the relations between nature. He says, "Natural knowledge is a knowledge from within nature, a knowledge 'here' within nature and 'now' within nature, and is an awareness of the natural relations of one element in nature." (*Principles* 13) R.B. Haldane explains this as his acceptance of the "internality of relations to their relata, in a way that is not consistent with the doctrine of those New Realists who treat the relata as entities separate from relations that are external to them and self-subsistent."(*Reign of Relativity* 66) In other words, we are always already part of what we are observing. This led Whitehead to an important juncture where he inverted the standard classical relationship where bodies were studied with respect to their acting and being acted upon. Classical physics was founded on the theory of the relations between objects; an event was named by the objects in it. This according to Whitehead and his great interpreter Haldane, was a grave error. Whitehead attempted to formulate a new theory of relativity because he thought Einstein's theories were also rooted in this classical error and were unable to think of the event. For Whitehead, the foundation of

modern physics and quantum theory could only be understood on the basis of the relations of events among themselves and also objects with their events.

The Ego and Event

The political must hence be understood as the relation of the Ego-object with the event. In many ways, Iqbal's thought can be considered quite close to that of a modern French thinker, Alain Badiou. Badiou, like Iqbal, reclaimed and revived the figure of the subject in his early book *The Theory of the Subject* and his masterpiece, *Being and Event.* Like Badiou, Iqbal must be understood as saying that not all individuals are Egos, but only some are. The process of becoming an Ego cannot be divorced from its response and responsibility to the Event which sends it an unconditional call asking for fidelity. Iqbal must be understood as saying that the Ego is not an Ego in itself, but only in relation to the Event. And what is this event? Before one becomes an Ego, one is immersed in the organic wholeness of social tasks and occupations. There is a semblance of organic unity and harmony, which also means a stable and inviolable hierarchy of existence. The Ego is the affirmation, the clarion call, which announces the break with this organic whole, disrupting its illusion of wholeness, thrusting itself into the non-All. It is here that we see the rationale of Iqbal's critique of pantheistic movements in Islam and pantheism in general. The pantheist is ideologically deceived into believing that he can immerse himself fully into the organic whole. For the pantheist Sufi, the world is just illusory; one must look past the multiple into the undifferentiated background of the One-substance, into which we are always already immersed. For this kind of Sufi, all that is needed is the realisation of the Oneness of Being for absolute absorption into the divine. But for Iqbal this is the great illusion, which is essentially a work of ideological production- that there is a deeper, more real reality behind the objects we see around us. For Iqbal the real illusion itself is that there is an illusion; the mistake the pantheist Sufis make is to believe that the profane world is illusory and conceals something deeper. It is like the story of Zeuxis and Parhassius, which is so often quoted by both Lacan and Zizek.[46] Apropos of

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[46] As it is quoted in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, "The contemporaries and rivals of Zeuxis were Timanthes, Androcydes, Eupompus, and Parrhasius. This last, it is said, entered into a pictorial contest with Zeuxis, who represented some grapes, painted so naturally that the birds flew towards the spot where the picture was exhibited. Parrhasius, on the other hand, exhibited a curtain, drawn with such

this we can see his citing of an anecdote concerning Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind, a prominent 16th century Indian mystic. A disciple came to the great Shaikh and told him of a mystical experience where he was wholly absorbed into the divine, concluding by saying that this was the highest mystical experience possible. The Shaikh strongly rebuked his disciple, saying that he had not yet passed one-fourth of the innumerable stations of the Qalb, and there were many other stages to be passed.(152) Iqbal by this citation quite clearly says that there is no undifferentiated background of the One into which we can wholly be absorbed. There is no All, or rather, as Kant's indefinite judgment would have it, there is a non-All. The ideal therefore should not be a premodern, pagan, pantheistic whole into which we can lose our identity and get assimilated into. What is real is the non-All nature of the universe, a universe that is barred from being All. It is only in this way that it can be a process and not a product. The universe is thus, following the formulation of Badiou, a substantial void of multiplicities.

It is in this way that we can arrive at the purpose behind Iqbal's inverted question, does man exist? The quantum revolution in physics had resulted in what can be best described as the 'dissolution of matter in a field of energies'.[47] The world is extremely chaotic and random at the quantum level, where paradoxical behaviour like that of Schrodinger's cat and the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle are considered normal. Preceding the quantum revolution in physics Whitehead had arrived at a philosophical point which can best describe the state of the world after the discovery of quantum physics- that the world is in itself chaotic and random, but it *seems* to be orderly and logical at our level of existence. Our perception of the world, and even our perception of ourselves as Egos are just semblances, but the difference is that this semblance conceals nothing; or rather it conceals the void that hides behind matter, the void which is the site of the 'dissolution of matter in a field of energies'. The real purpose behind Iqbal's question is not a social problem, or even an epistemological problem of knowing what is

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singular truthfulness, that Zeuxis, elated with the judgment which had been passed upon his work by the birds, haughtily demanded that the curtain should be drawn aside to let the picture be seen. Upon finding his mistake, with a great degree of ingenuous candour he admitted that he had been surpassed, for that whereas he himself had only deceived the birds, Parrhasius had deceived him, an artist."

[47] As Iqbal writes, "the universe which seems to us to be a collection of things is not a solid stuff occupying a void. It is not a thing but an act."

man. It is basically an ontological issue, which has only this to say: that the Ego is a semblance that conceals the nothingness which is the void that constitutes it. Personality is nothing more than the recognition of the abyss of personality, which must be countered by reconstruction.[48] In his *Javid Namah* Iqbal had famously written:

> Art thou a mere particle of dust?
>
> Tighten the knot of thy ego;
>
> And hold fast to thy tiny being!
>
> How glorious to burnish one's ego.
>
> And to test its lustre in the presence of the Sun.
>
> Re-chisel, then, thine ancient frame; and build up a new being
>
> Such being is real being
>
> Or else thy ego is but a ring of smoke!
>
> (*Reconstruction* 157)

We can supplement this reading of Iqbal with a joke which according to Zizek, Derrida was very fond of. This was an old Jewish joke about a group of Jews in a synagogue, who publicly admitted their nullity in the eyes of God. We quote this verbatim, as reported in Zizek's book *Less than Nothing*:

> First, a rabbi stands up and says: "O, God, I know I am worthless, I am nothing!". After he has finished, a rich businessman stands up and says, beating himself on the chest: "O God, I am also worthless, obsessed with material wealth, I am nothing…" After this spectacle, an ordinary poor Jew also stands up and proclaims: "O God, I am nothing…" The rich businessman kicks the rabbi and whispers in his ears with scorn, "What insolence! Who is that guy who dares to claim that he too is nothing!(11)

The point that Zizek is trying to make is that it is not enough to realise that one is nothing. To achieve the pure nothingness, one must already be something. What is even more important, Zizek says, is to realise that reality is always *less than nothing*, that the

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[48] As Zizek writes, this abyss of personality is what actually gives us our freedom, arguing for it within an atheist Christian framework: "It is only this unfathomable void which accounts for my freedom, as well as for my unique singularity which distinguishes me from all others: what distinguishes me are not my personal idiosyncrasies, the quirks of my particular nature, but the abyss of my personality—this is why it is only within the Holy Spirit, as a member of the body of the Church, that I can attain my singularity. This is how man is made "in the image and likeness of God": what makes a human being "like God" is not a superior or even divine quality of the human mind. One should thus leave behind the well-known motifs of a human being as a deficient copy of divinity, of man's finite substance as a copy of the divine infinite substance, of analogies of being, etc.: it is only at the level of person, qua person, qua this abyss beyond all properties, that man is "in the image of God"—which means that God himself must also be not only an essential substance, but also a person"(*Monstrosity of Christ,* 30)

structure of reality is of the order of Lacan's famous statement that truth has the structure of fiction. As Zizek writes, "reality has to be supplemented by fiction to conceal its emptiness".(11) Did not Deleuze make the same point in his scintillatingly perplexing work *The Logic of Sense*: that the existence of sense is conditional upon the existence of what he called the extra-Being, or the minimum of being of nonsense? The fact that the Ego is constituted by the void is a truth which needs as its necessary supplement a fiction. This fiction is what we may call *action*.

This is why for Iqbal the most important thing for the Ego is action. It is the fiction that maintains the truth about the Ego as constituted by the void. Once the fiction is lost in apathy or passivity, the Ego falls into the nothingness that is its very being. We can see why Iqbal's thought was directed as a clarion call towards those who were sunk into apathy and impassivity, burdened by the loss of individual identity, thrust into the void which is constitutive of identity per se.[49] His thought can be read as an anti-colonial reaction to the excesses of colonialism which resulted in large scale passivity, indolence, indifference and fatalism among the colonised peoples. Action, above all political action, was the only way to avoid sinking into the nothingness which was the true essence of the self. All his literary, political and philosophical output can be seen as testament to his desire to consolidate the semblance while simultaneously bearing witness to the void of its own existence.[50]

Bearing Witness

Bearing witness has always been a significant part of the Islamic tradition. The induction of a convert into the fold of Islam is performed by a simple ceremony where the individual recites the *kalima* in an act which is called the *shahada* or witnessing. It is not just the simple act of bearing witness to God's glory but also a performative utterance, the declaration, direction and creation of one's new existential identity as a Muslim. It is this amalgamation of the pure act of seeing with an act of being which Iqbal talks about in his last lecture:

> it is the human ego rising higher than mere reflection, and mending its transiency by appropriating
> the eternal. The only danger to which the ego is exposed in this Divine quest is the possible

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[49] Iqbal's first volume of poetry was entitled *Bang-e-dara* or the Caravan's Bell.

[50] To consolidate the semblance does not mean to stick to illusion. On the contrary, it means a realisation that semblance is all there is, there is nothing behind the veil. The veil that conceals nothing is hence not really a veil.

relaxation of his activity caused by his enjoyment and absorption in the experience…the ultimate aim of the ego is not to *see* something, but to *be* something.(156)

Souleymane Diagne has accurately described the desire of the self which

far from pursuing its own annihilation within the light of the Whole, affirms itself on the contrary, before God Himself. The desire to bear witness to one's own being – simply because to be is precisely to show oneself as a desire to be – is not extinguished in the divine Presence. Or rather, this desire to be needs, at its finest extremity, to have God Himself as its witness and its test, so to speak.(8)

However we should remember that in the Islamic and Christian religious vocabulary the words martyr and *shaheed* are exactly equivalent. *Shaheed* is both martyr and witness. With this in mind we must modify the argument that Diagne is making. What if the desire to *be* something even in the face of God is the pure model of the political relationship? If the Ego does not dissolve into nothingness when faced with God it is not because it is not constituted of the void, but rather because it does not relax and relinquish its activity. It does not cease to be a witness, it does not pause for breath even at the sight of the glory of God's face. This pause would result in its collapse into nothingness; but in its *shuhud* it continues its existence or *wujud.*[51] That this relationship is of a political nature can be seen from Iqbal's words in *Javid Namah* where he has Hallaj say "Submission is not passivity, on the contrary, it is a force; not every man has the zeal to surrender". Of this Diagne writes,

This force must be won, and it is so in the very movement of constitution of a personality that, no longer being dissolved in the back-and-forth between fear and hope, recognizes that the ego is, with itself, in a peace that Iqbal also considers to be a 'living assurance' in which its own will bends that of God: 'The true believer', he has Hallaj say, has a sort of understanding with God, and says to him ''We accord with you, so accord with us.' His resolution is the creator of God's determination, and on the day of battle his arrow is God's arrow'.(22)

This submission is completely opposed to any sort of fatalism. As Iqbal writes in *Gabriel's Wing,* "'Raise your ego to the point where before making your destiny', each time God first asks you, his creature: 'What do you think?'" The relationship that man and

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[51] We should keep in mind the relationship between *shuhud* and *wujud,* as has been pointed out by Annemarie Schimmel. *Wujud* has been translated as existence but it rather means both finding and that which can be found. Thus *shuhud* can be thought to be the finding of that which has to be seen, hence its relation with *wujud.*

God have is a purely political relationship, but how is this relationship forged in the first place? For that too Iqbal can help provide us with an answer.

Creative Evolution

Ideas of evolution had infected all forms of European thought in the late 19th century. Henri Bergson's book *Creative Evolution* was one of the foremost works to engage philosophically with the concept of evolution as something that found its ground in the *elan vital* or vital impetus of living beings. For Bergson evolution was only possible in the living world, not in the mechanistic conception of the universe as a gigantic machine. The most important idea of evolution advanced by Bergson was not just a disavowal of mechanicity, but a belief in the world of organisms as an open system. Science engaged itself with closed systems, while the study of life must of necessity engage with open systems capable of evolution. It is not as if Bergson denied the very existence of closed systems. Rather he posited that open systems do also exist, and to understand them is the very task of the philosopher. An open system was one where possibility was not restricted to its simple realisability. In a closed system, the forms of possibility could be known, and the possible was only different from the actual in that it lacked the property of existence. In the open system, the possible(which Bergson calls the virtual) is wholly unknown and unmappable, and it can only be realised as the virtual retroactively. This is due to the ability of evolution to be *creative.* It is important to understand this idea of creativity with respect to Iqbal, who borrows this term wholesale into his work. Indeed, it is almost impossible to understand Iqbal's *mard-e-momin,* which is his name for the singular individual, without the aspect of creative evolution as thought of by Bergson. Creativity, thus conceived by Iqbal is not an attribute of the individual as much as the individual is one of the ways creativity expresses itself in the world. Such a de-subjectivised creativity is extremely important in the conceptualisation of a non-sovereign Ego who at the same time remains a political (I will later call it poietical) being. In fact Iqbal points out that the Quran offers two terms for creation- *Amr* and *Khalq. 'Khalq* is creation, *Amr* direction' he writes, trying to highlight the importance of movement and directionality in the very act of creation. "The essential nature of the soul is directive, as it proceeds from the directive energy of God."(82) The creative activity of

God cannot be understood without a prior understanding of creation as both creative and directive. In a sense, creation is always imbued with direction or purpose.

Movement for Iqbal, thus, is both actual and virtual. Actual in the sense that refuting Zeno, Iqbal quotes Bergson and Bertrand Russell to argue that movement is essentially a reality. It is virtual in the sense that its possibilities always escape fixed determination. But we cannot stop at just these two senses of movement. There is also another- the hermeneutical. The imperative that movement must itself make sense is an important one for Iqbal. This does not mean that it should be teleological; rather as we discussed in the first chapter, it should be of the order of a teleology without *telos*. This would mean a purposive movement which legitimates itself, not by reference to a transcendental telos but by an orientation towards events in their moment of occurrence. A teleology without telos is a paradox because its only defining characteristic is the negative assertion that it is a teleology *without* telos. In a similar way to our understanding of the universe as non-All and incomplete, this teleology without telos is in itself incomplete, like the famous Lubitch joke Zizek is so fond of citing.[52] The very fact that it is without telos means that teleology is always already incomplete, there is no 'complete' teleology in itself. However this incompleteness is what paradoxically is the engine behind this teleology; what this teleology is oriented towards is the process of itself *becoming teleology*.[53]

Ijtihad

This principle of movement is given a strange name by Iqbal. He calls it *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is a common and ancient juridicial and hermeneutical concept in Islamic legal thought derived from the study of the Quran and Sunnah. Iqbal abstracts it from its juridico-legal context to imbue it with a specific meaning which is inherently the way of being of the Ego. To quote him:

> Eternal principles, when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which according to the Quran, is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, tend to immobilize what is essentially mobile in

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[52] In Ernst Lubitch's film *Ninotchka*(1939) we have a scene where the hero visits a café and asks the waiter for coffee without cream. The waiter replies, "Sorry, but we've run out of cream. Can I bring you coffee without milk?" Of this Zizek says, "What we encounter here is the logic of differentiality where the lack itself functions as a positive feature".(*Less than Nothing* 552)

[53] This operation can be thought to be similar to the phenomenological orientation towards the appearance of appearance itself.

its nature…what then is the principle of movement in the structure of Islam? This is known as *ijtihad*. The word literally means to exert. In the terminology of Islamic law it means to exert with a view to form an independent judgement on a legal question. The idea I believe, has its origin in a well-known verse of the Qur'an- "*and to those who exert We show Our path.*"(117-8)

In Islamic legal thought, of which Iqbal was a sincere student, ijtihad was basically of three kinds, first, complete authority in all matters of legislation, second, relative authority with respect to particular schools of law, and third, the power to decide on a special case which was completely new and undetermined by either the Qur'an, the Hadith, or the schools of law. Ijtihad in this context has unmistakeable connotations of sovereignty and decision, which do not seem to go well with Iqbal's idea of movement or the Ego. It is therefore unsurprising that while the term he uses is in a strictly legal mode in the sixth lecture, the spirit of ijtihad is more pervasive and infects all of his thought. It is ijtihad as exertion, not as a legal term, which is the basis for the constitution and reconstruction of the Ego. In this chapter we will try to read ijtihad as exertion, exegesis, and a point of excess; but also ijtihad as orientation and attunement to the Event. This would mean a severe dislocation of the term from its original context. Yet the dual meaning of ijtihad as exegesis and exertion is what is most important in the raising of the question of what is to be done, at the end of metaphysics, with the dissolution of the primacy of thinking over acting. Ijtihad, which embraces both acting and thinking, is the best term to aid a conceptualisation of the ethico-political imperative in the age of the withering away of sovereignty and the self-inflicted closure of metaphysics.

The most profound example of ijtihad in the sense we are using it can be found in the *miraj* or ascent of Muhammad. It brings us back to the fact of the matter that ijtihad is in effect the prime example of the political. Iqbal writes,

> Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.' These are the words of a great Muslim saint, Abd al-Quddus of Gangoh. In the whole range of Sufi literature it will be probably difficult to find words which, in a single sentence, disclose such an acute perception of the psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of 'unitary experience'; and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative.(99)

The prophet and the mystic can both ascend to the highest Heavens, but what differentiates the two forms of consciousness is that the former is a creative,

revolutionary, *political* figure. Iqbal writes that the prophet as a unique form of mystic consciousness "seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. In his personality the finite centre of life sinks into his own infinite depths only to spring up again with fresh vigour, to destroy the old, and to disclose the new directions of life."(100) The prophet is not simply a mystic, but a revolutionary mystic. While Iqbal mentions that the prophet has a creative or constructive aspect, he forgets to highlight that his return is destructive as well.[54] Properly speaking then, the creativity of the prophetic figure is always reconstructive.

Thus we can see that the prophet's return to earth does not just have religious ramifications, but the religious dimension is in itself inseparable from the political dimension. The religious and the political cannot so easily be discriminated from each other. The essence of this form of the political is foundational, or as Iqbal says, creative. That is why we would prefer to use the term *poietical* rather than political to describe this process; it is not simply a re-ordering of the political landscape but rather a complete disruption, a foundation and reconstruction of the system as such. I borrow this term from Reiner Schurmann who uses it in his dazzling analysis of Heidegger called *Being and Acting*. Heidegger has said that a "way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state"(60) in his essay *On the Origin of the Work of Art*, highlighting that the institution of a new political order is in a way a creative, poietic act. The poietical we shall use here as the foundational mode of the political, where the creative aspect or *poesis* most associated with poetry and the arts comes into the sphere of the political, in a foundational act which is simultaneously destructive and reconstructive.[55]

Deen and *Mazhab*

There are four major schools of Islamic legal thought, all of which were consolidated in the first few centuries after the death of the Prophet. They were all founded by Imams and are named after them- Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi'i. These

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[54] Refer to the Quranic tale of Abraham and his destruction of the idols in the Kaaba.

[55] P.B. Shelley and G.K. Chesterton can be taken as two mutually opposite authors who also hint towards the immense poetic power of the foundation of a new state and institution of a new order. Shelley in his *A Defence of Poetry* writes "poets … are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society."

are the major Sunni schools; the Shias do not believe in the authority of these figures and have their own schools. The Hanafi school of law is the most prominent one in India and is the basis for the Muslim personal law as written in the Indian Constitution regarding marriage and inheritance of property. The schools of law that Muslims follow are called *mazhab* as contrasted to the notion of religion which is called *deen*[56]. In his important book, *Islam A Challenge to Religion,* the prominent Islamic scholar and Quranist, Ghulam Ahmed Parwez argued that Islam is a protest against all religions in the old sense of the term. Thus *deen* is not the same as religion, which is a doctrine or dogma in the old sense. That would, properly speaking, be *mazhab. Deen* would then be a way of living in conformity with the revelation of the Quran. But as Iqbal writes, citing a well known tradition,

> When Ma'adh was appointed ruler of Yemen, the Prophet is reported to have asked him as to how he would decide matters coming up before him. " I will judge matters according to the Book of God," said Ma'adh. "But if the Book of God contains nothing to guide you?" "Then I will act on the precedents of God." "But if the precedents fail?" "then I will exert to form my own judgement." The student of the history of Islam, however, is well aware that with the political expansion of Islam systematic legal thought became an absolute necessity…(*Reconstruction* 118)

Iqbal goes on to say that the four prominent Sunni schools became sacrosanct, and their pronouncements untouchable, and he lists a few historical reasons as to why that was so. It was his belief that the concept of ijtihad was ruled out of the reckoning as no one was supposed to be as competent as the early jurists; the conservative Muslims of later ages

> focussed all their efforts on the one point of preserving a uniform social life for all the people by a jealous exclusion of all innovations in the law of the Sharia as expounded by the early doctors of Islam. Their leading idea was social order…but they did not see, and our modern Ulema do not see, that the ultimate fate of a people does not depend so much on organization as on the worth and power of individual men.(120)

What Iqbal is hinting at, is the transformation of Islam as *deen* into Islam as *mazhab*; from a word that means 'Way' to a word that signifies 'Law' in all its power, authority and permanence. The Law needs its officials and bureaucrats, judges and

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[56] It would be very interesting to go into the enigmatic etymology of *deen* but due to paucity of time this could not be accomplished. It has been conjectured that *deen* comes from the ancient Zoroastrian word *daena* which was itself derived from the proto-Indian-European word *dhemna* which meant milch cow. However there are alternative etymologies as well, which are drawn from the Hebrew Bible.

executioners- that is why the role of the priest or the Ulema has consolidated itself in Islam. As Parwez writes, 'there is no place for priests in *deen*'(*Islam* 217). The idea of Islam as a *mazhab* would necessarily entail the idea of Law. Law would dictate the basis for any, and all action; it would generate a rigid social order, and bring people together. But it would stifle individuals- "in an over-organized society the individual is altogether crushed out of existence"(120) as Iqbal says. For Iqbal, one of the ways to not look at the Quran was as a foundation for the Law. He categorically states, "The Quran, however, is not a legal code." Islam, as *deen* was a contrast to both Judaism and Christianity, the first with its deeply entrenched 'spirit of legality' and the second with its 'ideal of other-worldliness'. As a way of life, it necessarily encapsulated the theological relation of man with God as the paradigmatic model of the political, by which the social relation of men with other men was regulated and defined. It is from here that we can embark on the fundamental question of the political which somehow slips under, and is elided in these comments, while still troubling our work as a whole.

The Essence of the Poietical

The simplest way to begin a consideration of the political would be to take up the being that is political, the political subject. It can be thought that after all our argumentation, perhaps we can come to a conclusion that the Ego is the political subject par excellence, and an analysis of its condition of being-together would improve our understanding of the political in Iqbal's thinking. It would be reasonable to suppose that since all individual Egos are considered equal, since none have any authority over the other, that the best model for a coming together would be the agreement to a social contract of sorts. Such an agreement would be, if modelled out, a flattening, as there can be no higher, transcendental authority which legitimises the rule of the sovereign, whoever he may be. Legitimacy would be an internalised force, proceeding from within the body-politic itself. Such a system would most likely resemble democracy, rather than any other form of government. But we would be surprised to hear Iqbal say "the state in Islam is a theocracy."(122) How does this, which hitherto remained unforeseen in Iqbal's vision of the perfect society, become such an imminent possibility? Does it not violate the flattening out which is the expected result of the coming together of individual Egos in the formation of a political organization?

When we begin an analysis of the political with respect to the political subject, we are necessarily reduced to an irresolvable paradox in Iqbal's work. Commentators and critics over the past few decades have failed to understand Iqbal's vision of the political because they made the mistake of attempting to build it up from his idea of the political subject. There might be many affinities with the Ego and the political subject as conceptualised by theorists from all political traditions. Yet the Ego is not simply a political subject, it is not even a religious subject. That would imply that the Ego is a construct; when we have already clarified earlier that the Ego is the site of reconstruction itself, the arena where creativity(both of the form of *amr* and *khalq*) manifests itself. What this means is that the Ego is in itself not fully complete. It is a process, and hence its existence is not that of a holistic substantial entity but one of 'the desire to bear witness to one's own being'(Diagne). This basically means that the Ego is not fully included in the ambit of Being. The lack that is inscribed into the universe as non-All is also doubly inscribed into the Ego. This shifts the focus from its political essence to its processual existence. It does not matter what the Ego is, or even what it does. What matters is the process which acts in, by, and through the Ego- a process, which we will call ijtihad. To understand Iqbal's vision of the political we have to see it, not as a collection of political subjects, but as the manifestation of a process, paradigmatic of which is the Ego's relationship with God. Ijtihad is the poietical process which occurs at the limit of the political; when the Ego is confronted with the groundless void of its existence in the presence of God and must make a decision to reconstruct itself, lest it fall back into the void that it already always is. What ijtihad as poietical process accomplishes is the utter emptying out or *kenosis* of earthly sovereignty because sovereignty becomes an integral part of the relationship of finite Ego and infinite Ego and remains isolated and confined within just that singularly incommensurable relationship. This is why Gandhi's idea of *swaraj* or self-rule cannot really be approximated or compared with Iqbal's call for the withering away of all earthly sovereignty. For Gandhi we should be our own sovereigns, but for Iqbal the only situation where sovereignty arises is with respect to the relationship between finite Ego and infinite Ego, not between finite Egos, and definitely not with the finite Ego's sovereignty over its own self.

In his brilliant book, *Heidegger On Being and Acting,* Reiner Schurmann read the philosopher Martin Heidegger as a thinker of the withering away of sovereignty. For Schurmann, with the advent of Heidegger's thought we could finally announce our age to be one of the withering away of all epochal principles which had structured acting on the basis of thinking. He explicated an 'economy of presencing' in which acting could no longer be legitimised by thinking which was measured against an eternal principle or *arche.* With the loss of the *arche* we enter into a technological era which is in essence an-archic; both thinking and acting hence become an-archic, and enduring principles give way to *oikonomia.* This anarchy does not mean the anarchy of power rather "Economic anarchy is opposed to the anarchy of power as lawfulness is to lawlessness, as thinking is to the irrational, and as liberty is to oppression."(290) The law does exist, but it no longer has a stable foundation, whether in sovereign or people. Schurmann writes, "what makes the law is *phuein,* unstable presencing." Domination of man by man is according to Schurmann just the manifestation of an 'original hubris' which is the 'domination of *phuein* by *principia*'. The politics of sovereignty, in its history and essence, has always been *tragic. Phuein* which is the event of presencing has always been dominated by *principia* or principles which structure the understanding of the event. Schurmann argues that Heidegger's primary aim was to deconstruct all references to the first, to the One that structures and legitimates all worldly processes, whether that One be God, Reason or any other sovereign. Schurmann reads the injunction to let beings be as lying at the core of Heidegger's thought.

In the first chapter we have already seen Iqbal's unshackling of wonder, which according to him is the prime injunction in the Quran. Such a deconstruction proceeded on the basis of the reality and virtuality of time as a horizon upon which to consider being. The imperative to wonder, without letting that wonder degenerate into mere curiosity, was not just part of the Quranic ethos, but also put forth by Heidegger and Schurmann. Wonder is in essence wonder at *phuein*, the appearance of presencing itself. Iqbal, as we have seen, is already a thinker of mobility, change, evolution, and creativity. Like Schurmann's Heidegger, he too believes in the emancipation of *phuein* from *principia.* But the way he formulates this emancipation is completely different. What we will argue now is that while the form in which Iqbal postulates his idea is the same as

Schurmann, in content it has slight, though significant variations. Schurmann, like Heidegger, is a Christian atheist thinker. Both of them were of the Roman Catholic persuasion at one point of time. Heidegger studied theology at Freiburg, and was going to be a priest; Schurmann was a man of the cloth, a Dominican who came to Washington to teach theology at the Catholic University of America. This brief biographical background is important to understand the background of their atheism- as Oswald Spengler said in his *Decline of the West*, there are no atheists in general, but only atheists of a particular religion. The atheistic philosophy of both Schurmann and Heidegger is hence oriented by a deep understanding of Christianity, especially Catholic Christianity. Their deconstruction of metaphysics leaves unspoken the word 'western', which another prominent thinker, Jacques Derrida never fails to use himself. It is not our argument that both these thinkers are local thinkers, or can only be situated in a particular context. That their work has far greater implications than just a deconstruction of Christianity and European philosophy and metaphysics since Plato is something that goes without question. However what must be kept in mind is that Iqbal's project is not the same as theirs, for many reasons which I shall elaborate later on. Iqbal is a theistic thinker, but his idea of God is at heart an anti-classical one, vastly different from the Christian, or philosophical conception that proceeds from Plato onwards. Iqbal would probably agree with Heidegger's rejection of the Christian God as *summum bonum* or the Supreme Being. But he would still remain a believer in the 'God of Abraham', the God who led the Israelites out of Egypt and gave to Moses the Torah, Jesus the Bible, and Muhammad the Quran. Iqbal would not be a believer in the God who was the real Father of Christ, or even the Judaic belief in God as the symbolic paternal figure. For Iqbal the Islamic ideal of God was one which eschewed all paternal relationship, whether actual or symbolic.[57] This is why Iqbal can proclaim that with the death of Muhammad began the era in human

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[57] Zizek: " In contrast to both Judaism and Christianity, Islam excludes God from the domain of the paternal logic: Allah is not a father, not even a symbolic one – God is One, He is neither begotten nor a begetter. There is no place for a Holy Family in Islam. This is why Islam emphasizes so much the fact that the prophet, Muhammad, himself was an orphan; this is why, in Islam, God intervenes precisely at the moments of the suspension, withdrawal, failure, "black-out," of the paternal function. What this means is that God remains thoroughly in the domain of impossible-Real: he is the impossible-Real outside father, so that there is a "genealogical desert between man and God." This was the problem with Islam for Freud, since his entire theory of religion is based on the parallel of 'God' with 'father'."(*In Defense of Lost Causes,* 115)

history which marked a move away from an idea of God as a paternal, legitimating function; an era when "all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man."(101)

For Schurmann, after the withering away of the epochal principles and the advent of the era of technology, all that would remain is the *oikonomia* of presencing- which is an-archic. Without thinking to legitimise acting, all one could do was to attune oneself to the mutual event of presencing, and this attunement was according to Schurmann, 'poetic'. In his own words,

> the economies, since they assign each thing its site or world, can be called 'poetic' or better 'poietic'. They order the *topoi* the places, where each phenomenon is what it is. Action, too is to be understood in this topological sense. The universal and necessary conditions for action reside in the constellations as they come about and undo themselves.(303)

We have defined the Ego most prominently as the reconstruction of itself, associating it with creativity and evolution. In the light of Schurmann's words, we can reformulate this definition to state that the Ego is first and foremost, *poietic* in the original sense of the Ancient Greek word *poiesis* as distinct from *techne*. The mode of being of the Ego is hence poietic, and ijtihad is not just exertion but also orientation and attunement. But what is one oriented towards? Schurmann names it the event of presencing. We shall see, how for Iqbal, the event's name is of extreme importance; and how the naming of the event is what allows him to continue being a theist and most importantly a Muslim. What for Schurmann and Heidegger is the event of presencing, is for Iqbal the event of Revelation. For all three what is of utmost importance is the relation to the event, not as a constant, enduring presence, but the presencing of presence itself. Iqbal's difference from Schurmann lies in the fact that for him, the event of Revelation is the originary event, and ijtihad is the struggle, the exertion, that is necessary for the Ego to be faithful to the event in its passage.

The Event and Religion

Iqbal's thinking on the question of the event was deeply influenced by that of Alfred North Whitehead. The characteristic feature of the event was passage. Events took place through objects; while objects endured, events occurred and passed. Classical physics had been founded on the theory of the relations between objects; an event had been named after the objects in it. This according to Whitehead, and his interpreter

Haldane, was erroneous. The foundation of modern physics must be laid by the theory of the relations of events. In classical physics what transpired was the anonymity of the event; it sank into anonymity behind the object. Such a theory of space was necessarily divorced from any serious consideration of time. The forgetting of the event thus goes hand in hand with its anonymity, with the lack of a name. To remember the event, one must name it; such a name would not be the name of the objects in it. The naming of the event is thus extremely significant in the ontology of Whitehead. Without a name the event remains anonymous; only objects exist. Following Whitehead we can proceed onto a thinking which does not satisfy itself with the mere relations between objects, in the physical sciences, and the relations between subjects in the human sciences. It is now understandable why Iqbal rejects the model of politics which is based on the relation between subjects in the realm of intersubjectivity, for a vision of the political based on the relation between events. Yet this event must be named, for what is an event without a name? What Schurmann named the event of presencing, Iqbal calls the event of Revelation. We shall see how this very act of naming changes the formal imperative the event has upon the Ego.

In the seventh lecture, entitled "Is Religion Possible?" Iqbal quotes an unnamed Muslim Sufi, conjectured by some to be his own father, as saying "no understanding of the Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to the Prophet."(143) By this quotation, Iqbal suddenly lays bare an entire field of possibilities– which are not just restricted to exegetical and hermeneutics of the Quran as a text. The stress that Iqbal chooses to place is not on the understanding of the text as by Muhammad, but on the event of the revelation itself. In the Islamic tradition, both mystical and orthodox, such an event can take place in three modes, either by internal inspiration, or externalised through the figure of a prophet, or finally, by God revealing Himself, but from behind a veil.

Ijtihad therefore should not be thought to be just a method of reading the Quranic text and the greater Islamic corpus, which includes the Hadith, schools of law, and other texts. Ijtihad is in essence an orientation towards the event of revelation, which Iqbal believes is accessible to each and every believer, in any of the three modes mentioned above. Religion as mysticism is not just the denial of the real world and empirical facts.

Ijtihad is the struggle to orient oneself to the event, and it is in attunement to this event that a social organization can be achieved. The Ego is defined by its fidelity to the event. This is the third stage of religion, which is vastly different from the first two stages as Iqbal defines it:

> Broadly speaking, religious life may be divided into three periods. These may be described as the periods of 'Faith', 'Thought' and 'Discovery'. In the first period religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of that command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence in so far as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned. Perfect submission to discipline is followed by a rational understanding of the discipline and its ultimate source of authority. In this period religious life seeks its foundation in a kind of metaphysics-a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view. In the third period metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the Ultimate Reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness.(143)

The originality of Iqbal's thought does not lie in his delineation of the various stages of religious life. It lies in his postulation and situation of the event. Common schemes of political organisation either function by referring to an external entity (God, Nature, Cosmos) to legitimate the functioning of the group by analogy or mimesis; or they refer to internal processes held to be common to all, such as Reason, or conscience. Both forms of legitimisation are essentially metaphysical, and hence, going by Iqbal's distinction, of the second stage of religious life called 'Thought'. Iqbal's originality does not lie in the conceptualisation of the personal event in the life of the believer. That was already in force in Christianity, with its interiorisation of sin, grace, and epiphany. Such an understanding would make the event a wholly personal, subjective experience. If Iqbal mentions the law here, he does not mean human law, or even Divine command. Both of them would rather belong to the first two stages of religion. The law that is in force in the third stage is neither subjective, nor objective. It is a method of orientation to the *passage* of the event of revelation. The necessity of ijtihad is made clear here- it is not just a rereading of the Quran in the light of modern science and knowledge, as many Muslim

reformers were wont to do. The "work of reconstruction…has a far more serious aspect than mere adjustment to modern conditions of life."(142) Ijtihad is a struggle, an exertion, to respond to the changing constellation of the event. The originality of Iqbal's thought lies in his conception of the law with respect to personal experience. In this way, the law is divested of the legitimising force of external authority, but in the process, it does not receive the stamp of subjective reason or rationality. The enlightened individual does not become the maker of the law. This personal religious experience is the time when the Ego discovers an attunement; but this attunement is not the attunement of the internal law to external law. Rather, the attunement itself is the law.[58]

Ijtihad and the Ego

The orientation of the Ego towards the event is ijtihad. The essential error that constitutes what we know as politics lies in the extraction of an eternal law or principle from the event by the Ego. That would entail being false to the event in its essence, because the event's primary defining characteristic is passage and not endurance. For Iqbal, fidelity to the event cannot be possible without understanding that it has the fundamental characteristic of passage. Ijtihad is therefore a constant struggle to orient the Ego towards the event. This orientation itself is creative and *poietic.* As Iqbal writes, "every act of a free ego creates a new situation, and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding."(98) Iqbal's focus on the individual illuminates the primacy of 'poietics' over politics in his thinking. As Schurmann said, the reign of Law, which founds all politics, is itself founded on the belief of the eternal nature of the state, and hence unreality of time. All law proceeds on the assumption that the state, unlike man, is immortal, free from the subjection of time. But poietics, creativity, and evolution, are not just oriented towards time, but are quite necessarily constituted by the fact of its reality

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[58] It is here that we can quote Iqbal's exact words on the prophetic model of law: "The prophetic method of teaching according to Shah Wali Allah, is that, generally speaking, the law revealed to a prophet takes especial notice of the habits, ways, and peculiarities of the people to whom he is specifically sent. The prophet who aims at all-embracing principles, however, can neither reveal different principles for different peoples, nor leaves them to work out their own rules of conduct. His method is to train one particular people, and to use them as a nucleus for the building up a universal Shari'ah. In doing so he accentuates the principles underlying the social life of all mankind, and applies them to concrete cases in the light of the specific habits of the people immediately before him. The Shari'ah values (*Ahkam)* resulting from this application (eg. Rules relating to penalties for crimes) are in a sense specific to that people; and since their observance is not an end in itself they cannot be strictly enforced in the case of future generations."(136) Iqbal here postulates that we should learn from the method of the Prophet rather than simply take the community he led as a model for our modern day societies.

and passage. There can be laws which govern politics, but men have never been able to devise the laws which governed poetics, or creativity, or evolution. This is not to reject the very category of law, but rather to reclaim it in a much more radical sense as being infected by time in its very essence.

Iqbal and Nationalism

Iqbal's major grouse with nationalism and the nation-state can be better understood as his inability to tolerate its far-fetched claim of eternal existence, unconcerned with the reality of time. The Hindu nationalists of the Indian Independence Movement postulated that India had been a united country for millennia, and it would persist as such for an infinite duration of time. Political consolidation was thus centred around the belief in the nation as object, rather than the nation as event. Such politics, centred as it was around an eternal principle, could never appeal to Iqbal. "The division of mankind into races, nations, and tribes…is for the purposes of identification only"(77) he said, completely divesting the nation of its political dimension.[59] The Ego could never really belong to the nation as a political entity, not only because of its existence as a point of excess, but because of its rejection of the political essence of law in favour of the poietic essence of law. The citizen of even the most enlightened democratic nation is

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[59] In fact we can see in David Graeber's *Debt* a short historical note on how the early Islamic societies had a deep and utter mistrust in the political, insulating even the market(or the economy) from political interference. For Graeber, Ghazzali is an important figure in the development of the free-market ideal because of his attitude towards gold: "Aristotle had argued that gold and silver had no intrinsic value in themselves and that money was therefore just a social convention, invented by human communities to facilitate exchange..he(Ghazzali) took it even further, insisting that the fact that a gold coin has no intrinsic value *is* the basis of its value as money, since this very lack of intrinsic value is what allows it to "govern", measure, and regulate the value of other things. But at the same time Ghazzali denied that money was a social convention. It was given to us by God."(298) We can see here a movement deeply rooted in Islamic tradition which divests the political of any authority over the economic; but more importantly we can see how the foundation of the market which is the symbol of all value is based on a void, the lack of intrinsic value. Ghazzali's further comparison of money with the role of prepositions in a sentence offers us a perfect example of how meaning is itself founded on what is in itself meaningless. As Graeber says, money as symbol in Ghazzali has no qualities of its own, but its value is maintained only by its constant motion. This is where we can see Iqbal's proximity with Ghazzali's thought. Constant motion is necessary to avoid falling into the void which is the foundation of all existence. But like Ghazzali, Iqbal too maintains that this void is not a social convention but the truth of reality. It is in this spirit that we should look at the Islamic prohibition on usury: not solely because of the social problems it gives rise to, but also because it restricts the flow of money, denying it from the constant motion which is what actually gives it value. Usury, or lending money at interest is illegitimate in the same way that sovereignty in Islam cannot be an earthly prerogative. In both endeavours it is presumed that one can create something out of nothing, whether it is money through interest or sovereignty through decision.

subject to the law decided upon by the sovereign. The anarchy that Schurmann and Iqbal envisage, in their different ways, is not simply the anarchy where the individual is free to decide what is to be done. That would not solve the problem of sovereignty at all- since now the individual would become his or her own sovereign lawmaker. Anarchy in its purest form is not the absence of law, but the absence of *arche* or structuring principle. As Schurmann says, it is not an a-nomy, but an eco-nomy. [60]It is founded on the understanding that phenomenon available to experience can suddenly slip into a different mode of appearance, and that our understanding of the phenomena can never be ultimate. Thus the anarchic law, the eco-nomy, is the law of the *oikos* or the dwelling place, and hence specific to a *topos.* This law is poietic, and not political, in the traditional sense, as it is constantly changing, constantly creative.[61] The attunement of the individual, the Ego, is thus a mode of constant struggle to orient oneself, which is nothing more than ijtihad. We can also see why the Ego is not sovereign, like the liberal individual, or the Gandhian *swaraj*. The Ego is not sovereign, as it does not make its own laws, but only attunes itself

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[60] We can actually insert an important comment here- that following P.B. Shelley's *Masque of Anarchy* we can say that anarchy is already in power, just wearing the mask of Law. As Shelley wrote,
And many more Destructions played
 In this ghastly masquerade,
 All disguised, even to the eyes,
 Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.
Last came Anarchy:
 he rode On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.
And he wore a kingly crown;
 And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw—
"I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!"
[61] Refer to *Physics and Whitehead* where renowned quantum physicist David Ritz Finkelstein writes on his reading of Whitehead and what he learnt from his conception of physical laws:
"I have gone through four stages of separation from the concept of fixed universal law:
1. Polynomy: When I began to teach physics, I told my students that physics was the search for the laws of nature.
2. Mononomy: After I read more of Einstein, I taught that physics was the search for the Law of Nature. I thought this was an inspiring insight.
3. Anomy: Then I suspected that there is no law.
*4. Panomy: Now I think that there actually is a law, an evolving law like Newton's rather than an absolute one like Laplace's, and all there is is that law."(*183*)*

to the event. It does not construct its world, but is only *witness* to its constant and ubiquitous reconstruction.[62]

Iqbal was a thinker of the singular individual, but also a thinker of unity. As we have already seen, his political thought was focussed against the ideology of nationalism, which for him was problematic on many grounds. One of the primary reasons Iqbal was distrustful of the call for a sovereign nation-state was because it united only to divide. A territorially defined nation-state would not just be a geographical reality but also a political reality; it would divide the allegiance of Muslims, on the basis of nation, and not unite them across borders on the basis of belief. Islam's main thrust was to realise a semblance of human unity, which transcended borders of race, caste, language, and ethnicity. In a lecture delivered at Aligarh College in 1910, Iqbal had said that the Muslim community had a 'peculiar conception of nationality'. He went on to say, "it is not the unity of language, or country, or identity or economic interest that constitutes the basic principle of our nationality."(Sevea 147) The basic principle was a shared belief in the unity of God, or *tauhid,* and the concept of prophethood, or *risalat.* The coming-together of Muslims would thus be based on their shared belief in the divine, and the unity of the *millat* would be composed by a common belief in the unity of God. This is the commonly held view regarding Iqbal's idea of the *millat*, which has been elaborated most recently by Iqbal Singh Sevea in *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal.*

Such a model of pan-Islamic unity can be seen as proceeding from an atomicist conception of the Muslim subject, coming together to form a community with other, similarly minded Muslim subjects. What pre-exists the *millat* is the Muslim, and it is only formed by the atomic congregation of the believers of *tauhid* and *risalat.* In that way, we can hardly discover any difference between Iqbal's idea of the *millat* and European nationalism- since they both are formally and structurally the same. They both tend to discover a certain base level of consensus among individual subjects, and bring them together as a unitary body. It becomes ever more difficult to understand why Iqbal was against the logic of nationalism when he himself utilised the same underlying logic to

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[62] We must reiterate the extreme closeness of the words shuhud and wujud, as has been pointed out by Annemarie Schimmel. Witnessing or *shuhud* is not a passive experience, but is related to *wujud* or finding. It is thus an active witnessing, a witnessing of what must first be found and brought into the sphere of witnessing.

construct his idea of pan-Islamic unity. Such unification would also proceed on the erasure of differences, just like the ideology of nationalism. Sevea writes, "this emphasis on Muslim law and thought as important aspects of Muslim culture is reflective of an attempt to base the unity of the *millat* on a single high culture of Islam rather than on local diverse practises."(151)

While the above reading of Iqbal might seem to portray to us a political ideology that is formally similar to nationalism but only differs slightly in its content, we have to keep in mind the conclusions that we had drawn about the Ego, ijtihad, and the poietics of the event. The reading advanced by Sevea, among others, is nuanced and thoroughly well-researched, but the method he employs is limited by its conception of the political. While he sees Iqbal as a political thinker, we have already tried to differentiate his thought as being more poietic than political. The fundamental misreading that Sevea makes is in his conception of the Ego as the basic unit of the constitution of the *millat* or community; the political would thus be conceived as the external relations of the Egos to themselves. This is quite a traditional and time-honoured way of considering the sphere of the political. Yet as we have consistently argued here, taking up thinkers like Whitehead, Heidegger, and Schurmann, Iqbal does not think the Ego for its own sake, but for the sake of the event. The aim of the Ego is not that of coming-together with other Egos, but in being *witness* to the event of revelation. That is what constitutes the struggle of ijtihad, which is a poietic struggle to orient, and attune, oneself to the event. This event, as we have already understood, is formally similar to the event of presencing. The wonder which the Ego feels at being witness to the event is not just a mystical wonder, but also deeply religious. Iqbal's thought attempts to bring together religion as mysticism, and depart from a conception of religion as ritual, or religion as dogma. Therefore both *tauhid* and *risalat* are not dogmas or doctrines, but rather an experiental state of consciousness which the Ego attains because of ijtihad, which is fidelity to the Event. Politics needs the subject, and is the relation between subjects. But the Ego is not, strictly speaking, a subject, but an object in the Whiteheadian sense. The nation-state is founded on the relation between subjects, but Iqbal's *millat* is not founded on the inter-relationship of the Egos. The *tauhid* and *risalat* would be very meagre forms of political togetherness, most obviously because they do not foster a sense of inter-relationship

between subjects. Differences of language, identity, race, caste and others are bound to overcome the fragile sense of togetherness that results from belief in a common God. This last observation has been used as a critique of Iqbal's ambitious pan-Islam project, but such a critique underestimates the philosophical depth and profundity of Iqbal's belief in unity. For Iqbal the relationship between Egos is hardly of importance. What matters is the relationship of the Ego to the event of revelation; but this event is never singular, fixed, present, and constant. It has the characteristic of passage. Therefore the Ego is bound to reconstruct itself again and again with the changing nature of its relationship to the event. It has to attune itself, and not fall into fixity, immobility, and stasis. The community of such Egos is not really a community in the sense of a conglomeration of subjects. In that case it is not political in the way traditional definitions of the political community operate. The essence of the political, as Carl Schmitt would have it, is the distinction between friend and enemy. Going by this definition, Iqbal's idea of the *millat* is not a political community at all- since it does not intrinsically seek to divide humanity into nations that are either friends or enemies. But it is political in a larger sense because what Islam attempts to do is to force the decision upon the Ego, which is in essence a religious decision- is God the friend or the enemy?

Thus the primary thrust of Iqbal's thought is to unify, through the realisation that God considers the Ego His friend. That is why Iqbal writes, in a sentence which sums up in a nutshell his idea of peace-"it is the Infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite".(88) The unity that he envisages is not the conglomeration of subjects, to form a whole, but a call for attunement to the event, and a realisation that the Egos collectively are the Friends of God. Iqbal makes a subtle distinction between unity and the whole, which is the basis for his understanding of the *millat* in his Presidential address of 1932, as can be seen in his widely publicised debates with the Maulvi Hussain Madani, a supporter of the theory of Indian nationalism. For Iqbal, the true political problem is not the preservation of the whole (the nation) through and in its parts(citizens). That is the problem posed by the ideology of nationalism, which Iqbal quite explicitly rejects. The real problem, for Iqbal, is the preservation of unity among multiplicity. Objects can be unified into a whole only in closed systems, but not in the open, creative, evolving system as envisioned by Iqbal. The reality of time, and the actuality and virtuality of movement

and reconstruction deny the very possibility of a closed political system. The open community that Iqbal visualises is a united community only *virtually*, not actually. In the third and final chapter we shall take up the concept of virtual unity and see how it fosters the pure form of possibility embodied in evolution of a poietics and not simply politics of the community. This would require taking up the concept of unity itself, which is central to both Islamic religious thought and Iqbal, and look at in contradistinction to the Whole. This would aid us in looking at Iqbal's thought in the light of the theologico-political, and evaluating how much he himself is a theologico-political thinker. It is there that we would try to raise the problematic question concerning theocracy, as elaborated by Iqbal in his lectures. It would be our task, in the light of the above findings, to attempt the conceptualisation of a radical, anarchic theocracy without earthly sovereignty.

Chapter 3: The Theologico-Poietical, Or the Loving Embrace of Finite and Infinite

"My friends often ask me, "Do you believe in the existence of God"? I think I am entitled to know the meaning of the terms used in this question before I answer it. My friends ought to explain to me what they mean by "believe," "existence" and "God", especially by the last two, if they want an answer to their question. I confess I do not understand these terms; and whenever I cross-examine them I find that they do not understand them either."(*Stray Reflections* 19*)*

In *Empiricism and Subjectivity,* Gilles Deleuze defined the task of philosophy, not as the "resolution of a problem, but the elaboration, *to the very end,* of the necessary implications of a formulated question."(106). He goes on to say that "it is a matter of knowing *whether the question which presents things in such a light is good or not, rigorous or not.''* For Iqbal as we can see from the above citation, the task of thinking is not to provide an answer, but to better formulate the question. It is not a simple matter of inquiring whether one believes in the existence of God, but rather the rigorous task of laying the foundations and conditions before one can formulate the question in the best way possible. Hence it is not just putting things to question, but also the simultaneous formulation of the question itself. In a similar fashion, this dissertation's purported task was to put Iqbal's political theology into question; but it was realised, quite early on, that such a question could only be formulated in a way entirely different from those already put to great thinkers of the Western tradition such as Kierkegaard, Schmitt, Heidegger and others. The first two chapters tried to lay out certain conditions and foundations for the question to be asked– conditions which Iqbal himself was aware of while pursuing his own fundamental project. In this chapter, we would proceed by attempting to understand the *virtual* nature of the unity of the Islamic community that Iqbal envisions. It is only then can we move on to the question of the method of thinking which we have been trying to develop here, which we have named reconstruction. To approach the question of the theologico-political which for Iqbal is ineluctably imbricated within the question of the possibility of religion and the necessity of a radical theocracy, can only be done keeping the method of reconstruction in mind.

The Actual and the Virtual

Deleuze's use of the terms actual and virtual stems from his reading of Bergson's most important work, *Matter and Memory*. Bergson's ideas on the actual and virtual developed from his understanding of the relation between memory and perception. In that book Bergson analysed the internal mechanism of psychical action and posited the unity of three processes, namely pure memory, memory-images and perception. Further elaboration of these processes would take us beyond the scope of this research; yet what we need to know is that the relation between memory and perception could be likened to that of an image in the mirror, and the actual object in front of the mirror. The object can both be touched, hence acted upon, and act itself. Thus it would be 'pregnant with possible actions'. But even though it is pregnant with possibilities, it is still an *actual* object. The image, on the other hand, is *virtual,* as though it resembles the object it cannot obviously act in the same way. Yet even though it is not actual, the image is fully *real*. What this discourse of virtuality achieves is a bifurcation of the category of the possible inherited from Aristotle. For Aristotle, the possible was never real, only the actual was real. But now, we can see that both the virtual and the actual are equally real. Bergson goes on to write:

> Our actual existence then, whilst it is unrolled in time, duplicates itself all along with a virtual existence, a mirror-image. Every moment of our life presents two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and memory on the other. Each moment is split up as and when it is posited. Or rather, it consists in this very splitting, for the present moment, always going forward, fleeting limit between the immediate past which is now no more and the immediate future which is not yet, would be a mere abstraction were it not for the moving mirror which continually reflects perception as a memory.(181)

The past, therefore, does not follow the present but co-exists with it; it is no longer a matter concerning the realisation of the possible but rather, as Deleuze would have it, the actualisation of the virtual. "This distinction between the virtual and the actual corresponds to the most fundamental split in time, that is to say, the differentiation of its passage into two great jets: the passing of the present, and the preservation of the past" he says, in his essay *The Actual and the Virtual*. Iqbal too writes, "life is not change, pure and simple. It has within it elements of conservation also…this is only another way of saying that life moves with the weight of its own past

on its back…"(132) We have already determined that for Iqbal the constitution of the unity Islamic community was a result of the processes of ijtihad and reconstruction. The unity of such a community could not be actual, but only virtual in the sense that it would be subject to the process of the actualisation of the virtual. This distinction between the virtual and the possible is highly significant for Iqbal, as it simultaneously affirms the reality of the existence of the Islamic community while still disallowing its actual existence as an all-encompassing whole. Such a community would be caught in what Deleuze calls the infinite circuit of the actual and the virtual. For Deleuze the quintessential representation of the idea of the virtual is best embodied in Jorge Luis Borges' story 'The Garden of the Forking Paths'. The story is about a Chinese philosopher called Tsu'I Phen: "In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives, he chooses one at the expense of others. In the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pên, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them… In Ts'ui Pên's work, all the possible solutions occur, each one being the point of departure for other bifurcations", writes Borges(83). The virtual hence becomes the process for the simultaneous affirmation of all incompossibilities. In the *Fold,* Deleuze takes this idea of the virtual to its limit, destituting the Leibnizian idea of the harmonious world by envisioning a 'chaosmos', which is testament to the irresolubility of the dissonances of the world into a harmonious whole.[63]

The Islamic Community

In the second chapter we had argued that the Ego's ijtihad lay in its being witness to the event of revelation in its passage. Here, having followed out the idea of the virtual to its limit, we may come to believe that dissonance, and disharmony, not attunement, is what results when we try to resolve the discord of the virtual into an actual whole. Iqbal was always suspicious of this attempt to resolve the differences of multiplicities by recourse to a unitary mode of being; what would result was not harmony but dissonance. The problem of looking at Iqbal's idea of the unified, united Islamic community through the lens of the formal-structural logic of nationalism or racialisation is only a problem when it is looked at as an actual unity. This involves a consideration of the community as an actual, existent *being*, when for Iqbal the Islamic community is always a *process*, and

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[63] Chaosmos is a term Deleuze himself borrowed from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake.*

hence always incomplete in the sense we have been using the word. Actual unity is the unity of existent beings, while a virtual unity is the unity of the process of the actualisation of the virtual. The Islamic community is not of the order of the Derridean *l'avenir*, but rather it occupies the split between the "immediate past which is now no more, and the immediate future which is not yet"(*Matter and Memory 181)*, a split which is not so much the site of the present as the presencing of the present. This split is not simply a split in the Islamic community, rather the split is itself the Islamic community. This antagonism is inscribed within the community itself. As Iqbal says, the ideal of Islam was "to furnish a model for the final combination of humanity by drawing its adherents from a variety of mutually repellent races, and then transforming this atomic aggregate into a people possessing a self-consciousness of their own."(133) Such a community would not attempt to reconcile the internal antagonism between 'mutually repellent races' but rather would be a reconciliation with the very fact and existence of antagonism. In a sense it would be a process and not simply an 'atomic aggregate'. The idea of the Islamic community as process seems to quite closely resemble Iqbal's idea of God as Process(which was a result of his deep indebtedness not just to Quranic scripture but also Whitehead's process theology). Such a consideration might help in the formulation of the theologico-political question, founded as it is on the concept of analogy. Yet what remains to be determined is whether Iqbal considers the unity of the Islamic community to resemble, or be analogous to that of the unity of God, as best exemplified in the Quranic verse called *al-Ikhlas.* Can we analogically relate the unity of the Islamic community to that of the *tauhid* or the unity of God?

        In his long Persian poem, *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi* translated as *Mysteries of Selflessness,* Iqbal focussed on the ideals of the community, the Islamic ethic, and the relationship between self and society. In one of its penultimate sections, titled 'And there is not any equal to him', while describing God's unparalleled nature, Iqbal seems to create analogies between God and the ideal Islamic community. The ideal Islamic community is a reflection of God's peerless nature and thus we seem to see Iqbal using the operation of mimesis and analogy which is such an integral part of a theologico-political conception of the state. However, the image that Iqbal uses is quite revealing as to his real intent:

This heart attached to God,

What is its nature? On a mountain-top

A tulip blowing, that hath never seen

That hath never seen the trailing border of the gatherer's skirt;

The flame is kindled in his ardent breast

From the first breaths of dawn; heaven suffers him not

To loose him from her bosom, deeming him

A star suspended, the uprising sun

Touches his lips with dawn's first ray, the dew

Bathes from his waking eye the dust of sleep.(couplets 1020-24, transl. Arberry)

Javed Majeed has a brilliant analysis of these lines, which according to him reveal Iqbal's staunch and unwavering belief in the matchless nature of God. His analysis deserves to be quoted in full:

> This picture of a single tulip on a mountain top at dawn derives its intensity from that singleness. The visual power of the image relies on the tulip's solitariness, thrown into sharp relief against the background of the mountains. But what makes the image so startling as well as powerful is the lack of any interaction with the sociological context which dominates the rest of the poem. This is further reinforced by the tulip's location in the sublime heights of the mountain range. The analogical correspondence between God's nature and the society of pan-Islam breaks down, and the image of a peerless uniqueness unravels itself from the sociological dimension of the poem as a whole...it is as though we have returned for one lyrical moment to the solitary and transcendental splendour of *khudi*, shared by the human self and God alike, which cannot always be equated with, or translated into, pan-Islam, or indeed any other community.(75)

The analogy between the unity of the Islamic community and the unity of God, or *tauhid* is thus broken and destituted by Iqbal at the moment of its utmost possibility. The operations of analogy, homology, mimesis, or even resemblance, are hopeless and destitute when they come to the matchless splendour and glory of God. With this we arrive at the crux of Iqbal's thought– it is the point where Iqbal decisively turns away from the question of sovereignty and the theologico-political as it has traditionally been raised in Western thought. This difference and deviation is not a personal choice, but stems from a fidelity to the deepest sources of Islamic thought and belief which Iqbal holds himself indebted to. Sovereignty is God's alone; it cannot be shared in by man, and neither is it delegated to man. Kings, rulers, tyrants and despots might believe that their sovereignty is analogous to God's, but Iqbal, staying true to the source of Islam,

pronounces the end of all earthly sovereignty that legitimises itself by analogy, delegation, resemblance, or mimesis to that of God's sovereignty over the universe. He famously writes that with the death of Muhammad a new epoch is inaugurated, which is the epoch where "all personal authority claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man".(101)

Political Theology and its Critiques

Before we begin to elaborate upon Iqbal's understanding of the question concerning the theologico-political, we would need to briefly survey the responses to Carl Schmitt's formal inauguration of the field of political theology in his seminal book *Political Theology*. Since Schmitt, the great German jurist and legal thinker published his seminal work *Political Theology* in 1922, a time when Iqbal was still alive and writing, the theologico-political problem has become one of immense importance in contemporary philosophy. Schmitt himself was a counter-revolutionary thinker who had affinities with the National Socialist or Nazi party, but his philosophical works open up for modernity a new way of conceptualising the political. In his debate with Hans Blumenberg, Schmitt stuck to his standpoint of a common structural affinity between modern forms of the state and earlier Christian theological perspectives. For him, the political was merely the secularization of theological concepts. Critical debates over the past century have evolved, from those between Schmitt and Erik Peterson over monotheism and the triune nature of the Godhead, to Jacob Taubes' invocation of St. Paul and Kierkegaard against Schmitt, to Jacques Derrida and his conception of sovereignty destitute of sovereign referent, as well as Reiner Schurmann's withering away of all sovereign principles. However brilliant these analyses, debates, arguments and counter-arguments might be, they are unable to be devolved into a universal theory of political theology which can be applied to a particular case, such as the Islamic theory of state, for example, though that does not mean it has not been attempted. Political theology as a whole is both Greek and Judeo-Christian, but it fails in its specific application to an Islamic context. This survey of the contemporary responses to Schmitt is of vital importance in laying the foundation for us to differentiate between Iqbal's pronouncement and those of the above-mentioned thinkers of the Western tradition. In fact, the problem generated by this break is what is of utmost concern to us, not merely

because we seek to think the theologico-political differently, but also because we need to think difference differently. The incommensurable difference that Iqbal conceives of is in its own way, incommensurably different from those conceived by Peterson, Kierkegaard, and even Taubes. To think this difference differently we need to not step out of the Western tradition, but rather take a step back, and this is exactly what Iqbal does. Here it would be apt to keep in mind that the major departure effected by Iqbal from this critique of Schmitt is the appropriation of the traditional Islamic concept of God as both incomparable(*tanzih*) and similar(*tashbih*) to man.[64]

Not difference, but analogy is what founds and grounds the concept of the political in Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology.* The political can only be thought as that evacuated space, that *kenosis* which is the limit of the legal order- beyond which there is only the realm of decision. Schmitt calls this limit situation the state of exception- and in his own cryptic words, "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception."(5) It is not the exception which defines the sovereign, nor the sovereign who defines the exception. Rather both sovereign and exception are constituted and constructed at the moment and instance of decision itself. Decision is not the operation of the expression of power or sovereignty, it is the instant of scission or the break from the constituted legal order; the suspension of the normative order of generality in favour of the state of exception. It is the moment of excess, the break, the point of disjuncture and disjointing which separates the general from the exception; yet this exception is not just the moment of the destitution

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[64] The elucidation of this point can be found in ibn al-Arabi's book *The Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries* and William C. Chittick's books *The Sufi Path of knowledge* and *The Self-Disclosure of God*, both of which are based on ibn al-Arabi and include numerous translations of his works. In the latter book Chittick writes: "*Tanzih* derives from the root *n z h*., which means to be far away from, to be untouched by, to be free from. Hence *tanzih* means to declare or to affirm that something is far away or free from something else. In other words, *tanzih* is to declare that God transcends any attribute or quality possessed by His creatures. *Tashbih* derives from the root *sh.b.h.*, which means to be similar or comparable. It signifies declaring or affirming that something is similar to something else; to compare, to liken. Hence *tashbih* is to maintain that a certain similarity can be found between God and creation… For the Shaykh, incomparability and similarity derive necessarily from the Essence on the one hand and the Level of Divinity on the other. Since the Essence is unknowable and incomprehensible, nothing is comparable to It. But since the Essence in respect of being a god assumes all sorts of relationships with the creatures, those relationships-known as names and attributes-can only be grasped through our knowledge of creation. By knowing these relationships we gain real knowledge of God; this knowledge is *incomplete and partial*."(69, my italics) This discourse of incomparability and similarity can be fertile ground for the exploration of the problem of the phenomenology of the inapparent.

of the given legal order, but also the instant where the legitimacy of a new legal order is instituted once again. The legitimacy of the new legal order is not derived from its legality, but from its founding moment, the state of exception, which is always already in excess of the law as posited in the new legal order. Legitimacy exceeds legality, it is in excess of the law, yet it also founds and grounds that very same law. Schmitt's problem was how to ground this legitimacy of the sovereign's decision on the exception, a decision which superseded and was incommensurable to, the endless discussion and deliberation of secular-liberal parliamentary democracy. The political was not the realm of rational debate and pragmatic negotiation- it was rather the space for "intense passion" as Schmitt called it, quoting Kierkegaard. This intense passion could only be generated at the point of the decision on the opposition of friend and enemy, which for Schmitt was the true concept of the political as the realm of strife.

To return to the significance of the operation of analogy, we must quote Schmitt's momentous proclamation: "the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology."(36) For Schmitt, political power can only be understood on a theological basis, on the model of God's creation *ex-nihilo*, which signifies the creation of something which is not subject to already existing law. God's decision to make the world is a sovereign decision, and the analogy with the figure of the earthly sovereign cannot be missed out in this instance. Like God's decision to create the world, which is the condition of possibility of its very existence, the exceptional sovereignty of decision structures the condition of possibility of the political. For Schmitt the exceptional is not important in itself, but only insofar as it illuminates, reveals, and clarifies the general:

> A Protestant theologian who demonstrated the vital intensity possible in theological reflection in the nineteenth century stated: "The exception explains the general and itself. And if one wants to study the general correctly, one only needs to look around for a true exception. It reveals everything more clearly than does the general. Endless talk about the general becomes boring; there are exceptions. If they cannot be explained, then the general also cannot be explained. The difficulty is usually not noticed because the general is not thought about with passion but with a comfortable superficiality. The exception, on the other hand, thinks the general with intense passion.(15)

For Schmitt difference in itself is hardly of any significance because it cannot lay the ground for a new legal order, it cannot found the concept of the political. Difference, as

expressed in the state of exception, must be appropriated and re-appropriated into the realm of the general, as the founding moment of the legitimacy of the legal order; a legitimacy which in itself exceeds both knowledge and law. This legitimacy is hence, no longer of the realm of the purely secular. It is, as Schmitt picturesquely characterises it, of the order of secularized theology: "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."(36) The fundamental possibility of the legitimacy of sovereignty is premised on what is tacitly presupposed without question– on the dominant monotheistic and mono-archic tendency of the West, a tendency which deeply structures, informs, and plays within all modern conceptions of the political. Schmitt marshals Kierkegaard– the unnamed 'Protestant theologian' in the above citation, in his attempt to skirt the discourse of identity and difference with reference to the operation of analogy. It is not that Schmitt does not recognise the difference between the Divine sovereign and the earthly sovereign, rather he quite pragmatically and calculatingly transforms the question of difference into a question of analogy. It is not Schmitt's concern whether the Divine and the mortal are incommensurably different, but rather whether they have the same functional position in their systems. Schmitt's genius lies in his ability to think what he knows to be incommensurably different analogously, and analogously in such a way that the difference is subsumed by and consumed within the operation of the analogy. This is why he cites Kierkegaard, the thinker of the 'exceptionality of the singular decision' without naming him, so as to legitimise the general by the exception, the analogy through the emptying out of difference. The exceptional, which is entirely different from the general, hence becomes the site for not just the suspension of the normative general order, but also the necessary ground for its renewed re-positing. This operation of analogy is what neutralises the destitution of earthly sovereignty as conceived of by Kierkegaard, and transforms it into the constitution of the world-legitimising force of the sovereign.

Schmitt's rendition of the operation of analogy can be seen to derive its full force and power from his conception of the translation of God into man in the form of Jesus Christ. Political theology as a concept can only stand when one understands theology in its original, Christian sense. Before we proceed onto Erik Peterson's trenchant critique of Schmitt in "Monotheism as a Political Problem", we must read, even if briefly, his short

essay "What is theology?". There Peterson passes a brusque, yet powerful restriction: "There is no theology among Jews and pagans. Theology *exists* only in Christianity and only under the presupposition that the incarnate Word of God has spoken."(10) If theology is a speaking of God, then "a real speaking of God exists only meaningfully with Christ. Only with him does the usage to speak 'of' God have that decisive ambiguity, in which it expresses not only that he says something 'about' God, but that when he says something 'of' God, what is said of God is at the same time said *by* God."(8) Where Schmitt saw an analogy and likeness of God(as incarnate in Christ) to man, Peterson saw an incommensurable difference. It is this which founds his short but momentous monograph, "Monotheism as a Political Problem", which was such a powerful attack on Schmitt's political theology that it took him thirty-five years to come up with a suitable response.

The prefatory note to this monograph needs to quoted in full, if only to offer a glimpse into Peterson's idea of the difference between what was vulgarly known as monotheism and the triune nature of the Christian Godhead:

> The European Enlightenment preserved nothing of the Christian belief in God except 'monotheism', a result as dubious in its theological substance as in its political consequences. For Christians, political involvement can never take place except under the presumption of faith in the triune God. This faith transcends Judaism and paganism, 'monotheism' and 'polytheism'. The internal problematic of a 'political theology' based on "monotheism" needs to be brought to light. May St Augustine, whose impact has been felt in every spiritual and political transformation of the West, help with his prayers the readers and the author of this book!(68)

The monograph is a highly detailed and scholarly deliberation on 'monarchy' and 'monotheism' which proceeds by a consideration of the early Christian thinkers and theologians like Tertullian, Origen, Celsus, Eusebius and Augustine among others. The last paragraph of the text is worth quoting in full, not just because of its stringent refutation of Schmitt's political theology but also because of its relevance to the fundamental project of Iqbal:

> Monotheism as a political problem had originated in the Hellenistic transformation of the Jewish faith in God. Insofar as the God of the Jews was amalgamated with the monarchical principle of the Greek philosophers, the concept of the divine monarchy at first acquired the function of a political – theological propaganda formula for Jews. This political – theological propaganda was taken over by the Church in its expansion into the Roman Empire. It then met up with a concept of

pagan political theology, according to which the divine monarch indeed reigned, but the national gods had to rule. In order to counteract this pagan theology, tailored to fit the Roman Empire, it was asserted from the Christian side that the national gods could not rule at all, because national pluralism has been suspended by the Roman Empire. In this sense Pax Augusta was then interpreted as the fulfilment of the Old Testament eschatological prophecies. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the divine monarchy was bound to founder on the Trinitarian dogma, and the interpretation of the Pax Augusta on Christian eschatology. In this way, not only was monotheism as a political problem resolved and the Christian faith liberated from bondage to the Roman Empire, but a fundamental break was made with every 'political theology' that misuses the Christian proclamation for the justification of a political situation. Only on the basis of Judaism and paganism can such a thing as a 'political theology' exist. The Christian proclamation of the triune god stands beyond Judaism and paganism, even though the mystery of the Trinity exists only in the Godhead itself, and not in Creation. So too, the peace that the Christian seeks is won by no emperor, but is solely a gift of him who 'is higher than all understanding'. (104–5)

The first sentence of the above citation is one we will return to, not just because it highlights the political problem of monotheism, but that it focuses on the 'Hellenistic transformation of the Jewish faith in God.' This is the major problem which Iqbal seeks to grapple with throughout the entirety of his *Reconstruction*, namely, how to retrieve and reconstruct an Islamic monotheism unsullied and untouched by the amalgamation of God with the 'monarchical principle of the Greek philosophers'. But to return to Schmitt and Peterson, we can see here the latter's positing of a profound question which took Schmitt nearly thirty-five years to respond to. The true *spirit* of Christianity, as embedded in the concept of the Trinity, disallows any notion of its embodiment in the profane order of the political. This is an iconoclastic injunction which seems even stricter than the traditional Second Commandment, as it quite clearly states that Godhead's triune nature is inassimilable to not just a graven image, but any form of profane, worldly manifestation. There could be no analogy between the earthly monarch and the divine Monarch. As Peterson writes, citing Gregory of Nazanius' *Third theological Oration*:

> There were three opinions about God: anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy. The first two assumptions unleashed disorder and revolt in God, and ultimately dissolution. Christians…confessed the monarchy of God. To be sure, not the monarchy of a single person in the Godhead…but the monarchy of the triune God. This conception of unity had no correspondence in the created order. With such arguments, monotheism is laid to rest as a political problem.(103)

Even after three decades, Schmitt's response, which took the form of a book, *Political Theology II,* was unable to address the fundamental problem of the difference of God from His creation as expressed in Peterson's words that 'the mystery of the Trinity exists only in the Godhead itself, and not in Creation.' As has been elaborated earlier, even though Schmitt nominally thought of the exception, he could only think of it in terms of a discontinuity which generated continuity, a difference which was only useful to clarify and legitimise the same. The operation of analogy was the site of both difference and similarity, the point of rupture which also transformed itself into a re-positing of the legality of the political situation. It is not Schmitt's inability to think the difference between man and God that is the issue, but his indifference to that difference. For Schmitt the difference between the theological and the political is subsumed by the transition from theology to political theology:

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.(36)

Difference is subsumed by analogy- and this has the result of a schema of totalisation where even the act of pronouncing something apolitical becomes political. As Schmitt says in his Preface to the second edition of *Political Theology II*, "We have come to recognize that the political is the total, and as a result we know that any decision about whether something is unpolitical is always a political decision, irrespective of who decides and what reasons are advanced. This also holds for the question whether a particular theology is a political or an unpolitical theology."(2) Refusing to participate in the political is also a political statement. What is paramount is the distinction between friend and enemy– and neither theology nor religion can escape from the clutches of this fundamental strife. It is here that we can see Schmitt's fundamental thrust in its nakedness– it is not the secularization of the theological as much as it is the insertion of the ramifications of the fundamental strife between the decision on friend and enemy into the realm of theology and religion. For Schmitt there can be no conception of the 'outside' of the political. The state of exception itself is turned in on itself, in its drive to legitimise and constitute a new normative order.

It is with the task of thinking the 'outside' of politics that we must now turn to two other respondents to Schmitt- Jacob Taubes and Jacques Derrida. For Taubes, Schmitt is an 'apocalyptic counter-revolutionary' who sees in the coming of the apocalypse an adversary which must be 'subjugated and suppressed'. Taubes, as an eschatological thinker, advises Schmitt to open himself to the apocalyptic, messianic, bursting asunder of the world, which would mean a renunciation of the belief that redemption is a historical fact. Taubes writes, "it is imperative to beware of the illusion that redemption happens on the stage of history. For every attempt to bring about redemption on the level of history without a transfiguration of the messianic idea leads straight into the abyss."(*Cult to Culture* 9). In Schmitt's totalitarian concept of the political, even the apocalypse occurs on the world-historical stage, which drives Taubes to desperately write, "You see what I want from Schmitt – I want to show him that the separation of powers between worldly and spiritual is absolutely necessary. This boundary, if it is not drawn, we will lose our Occidental breath. This is what I wanted impress upon him against his totalitarian concept."(*Paul* 103) It is this difference which Taubes wants to impress upon Schmitt, a difference which cannot be subsumed under any operation of analogy, since God is wholly and absolutely Other; and the apocalypse is not a historical event in time, but the breaking of the linear scale of history. For Taubes what matters is a withdrawal, a foreclosing of the possibility of deriving earthly sovereignty on the basis of a divine foundation. Like Kierkegaard's Christ, Taubes too conceives of the de-legitimation of all earthly sovereignty, a messianic awaiting which is of the order of Walter Benjamin's "nature is messianic by reason of its total and eternal passing away."(*Theologico-political Fragment)* It is the institution of a difference which can have no other effect than the destitution of all earthly sovereignty. In a similar way, it is a thought of difference which drives Derrida's response to Schmitt. In *The Gift of Death* Derrida attempts to think at the limit of thought; he tries to think the incalculable *l'avenir* or 'to-come'. This *l'avenir* follows the logic of Schmitt in being an exception, but Derrida takes up Kierkegaard, the very same Protestant theologian who Schmitt cites, to deconstruct the legitimacy of the sovereign in favour of the affirmation of the 'messianic' exception. Such a messianic exception is non-sovereign, because it is not foundational of any earthly *nomos* or legal order, but is rather the disruption, the *kenosis* or emptying out

of all earthly sovereignty.[65] In Derrida's words, it is *justice*, which is incommensurable to law; justice which is indeconstructible and which defers and differs the eschatological moment. It is this possibility of justice which opens up the world from the closure that is sought to be inflicted upon it by Schmitt's totalitarian concept of political theology. Derrida's work is an affirmation of *differance* which intensifies both difference and deferrence; an affirmation of the excess of justice over law and the thinking of the 'outside' of the political. The imperative of this irreducible, intensely passionate difference is the transience of the earthly order, the *nomos*, not with the intent to found a new order but to expose the world to its lack of foundation. This is for Derrida a waiting for the *l'avenir* or the incalculable approach of justice to-come, which is unconditional forgiveness and care for the Other.

There is No Profane World: Islam as 'Submission'

The purpose of such a survey was not just expository or elucidatory but also occupies a methodological significance because it is revelatory of our desire to break from the Western tradition of the critique of Schmitt's theologico-political, which has tended towards what is called deconstruction. What this survey revealed to us was not just the critiques in their historical chronology, but also the methodology of the critiques– all of which proceeded on the irreducibility and intensity of difference. To think with Iqbal on the theologico-political we must therefore not just think differently, but think difference differently. It is only by following the method, or the path laid out by Peterson, Derrida and Taubes, can we grasp how Iqbal remains a thinker of the impossibility of the theologico-political even when he says things like "all is holy ground" and "there is no such thing as a profane world" which seem to be completely contradictory to their

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[65] It would be apt here to quote G.K. Chesterton who in his *In Defense of Detective Stories* writes these radically orthodox lines, which almost tangential to Derrida's point, demonstrate the tremendous potential of orthodoxy: "While it is the constant tendency of the Old Adam to rebel against so universal and automatic a thing as civilization, to preach departure and rebellion, the romance of police activity keeps in some sense before the mind the fact that civilization itself is the most sensational of departures and the most romantic of rebellions. By dealing with the unsleeping sentinels who guard the outposts of society, it tends to remind us that we live in an armed camp, making war with a chaotic world, and that the criminals, the children of chaos, are nothing but the traitors within our gates. When the detective in a police romance stands alone, and somewhat fatuously fearless amid the knives and fists of a thieves' kitchen, it does certainly serve to make us remember that it is the agent of social justice who is the original and poetic figure; while the burglars and footpads are merely placid old cosmic conservatives, happy in the immemorial respectability of apes and wolves. The romance of the police force is thus the whole romance of man. It is based on the fact that morality is the most dark and daring of conspiracies. "

formulation of the intense separation of the divine from the profane. In point of fact, Iqbal was a pronounced critic of Turkey's decision to separate Church and State, lamenting that

> The Turkish Nationalists assimilated the idea of separation of Church and State from the history of European political ideas. Primitive Christianity was founded, not as a political or civil unit, but as a monastic order in a profane world, having nothing to do with civil affairs, and obeying the Roman authority practically in all matters. The result of this was that when the State became Christian, State and Church confronted each other as distinct powers with interminable boundary disputes between them. Such a thing could never happen in Islam.(123)

In this short comment we can see Iqbal's insight into the *spirit* of early, monastic Christianity, which is also something thinkers like Peterson and Taubes would focus on later; the latter with respect to the figure of St. Paul as revealed in the Letter to the Romans. Yet we also see a drastic reversal, which completely overturns the basic assumption of these thinkers. According to Iqbal, there could be no separation of Church and State in Islam, because, and this was important, *there could be no profane world*. Religion is not, in Iqbal's conception of it, a retreat from the *nomos* of the earth into the desert of monasticism and asceticism, but a grappling with the world, an intense, creative impulse which is deeply involved in the very process of the worlding of the world.

This pronouncement has the immediate effect of derailing our perceived assumptions regarding Iqbal's belief in the impossibility of any political theology. How are we to conceive of his denial of political theology when he cannot condemn the profane world, when he refuses to patiently and desperately await the arrival of a forever differed and deferred messianic justice to come? It is important, at this juncture, to quote one of Iqbal's most dense, complex, and convoluted statements on religion from the lectures:

> In Islam it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another. It is not true to say that Church and State are two facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalysable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies.(122)

We are suddenly and silently thrust into the midst of a discourse where the terms we were so glibly using, difference and self-sameness, are transformed into something completely other. The urgency and possibility of deconstruction, which we thought had been driving Iqbal's thought so far, suddenly dissipates in the form and presence of the indeconstructible. Difference is no longer external, but deeply interiorised, for what is the

duality of Church and State in this single unanalysable reality of Islam? Difference is not simply a dualistic appearance, which varies according to the perspective of the observer, for Iqbal categorically states 'it is not true to say that Church and State are two facets of the same thing'. The difference between Church and State is presented here as an unanalysable unity which still differs from itself; the gap, the cut is transposed from outside into the system itself. The external opposition, between Church and State, is transformed and transposed into the internal antagonism of Islam with itself. But this antagonism is not apparent in itself. It is only visible when one changes one's perspective. Islam is for Iqbal what justice is to Derrida; but we can only understand what this means when we think of 'Islam' with its original meaning of submission.[66] Submission then, for Iqbal, is what justice is for Derrida. In his essay entitled "Force of Law", Derrida had put forth the idea of justice as indeconstructible. Responding to the question of why deconstruct, Derrida had stated that deconstruction is not simply a way of reading, a literary-philosophical exercise in the slippages and stoppages of language. It was not simply an ethical task either, but a gestural performance that oriented itself to the excess over the calculability of ethics; a supplement which was no more than the always-already excess of an ethics grounded in (moral) law. Justice is indeconstructible because it is not subject to the question of 'why'; as soon as justice has to justify itself, as soon as it has to subject itself to calculation and calculability, the difference between deconstruction and metaphysics disintegrates and collapses. Justice is indeconstructible because it is incalculable; it is unconditional forgiveness. There can be no justice which is conditioned. Hence, justice is always to-come, it is always "the messianic promise of total redemption", the "indeconstructible condition of deconstruction".

In his book, *Dis-Enclosure,* Jean Luc-Nancy had famously written in the essay entitled 'Deconstruction of Christianity', "The structure of origin of Christianity is the proclamation of its end."(149) going on to say that:

> Christianity, then, is not proclamation as a predisposition in one way or another of the end; in it, the end itself is operative in the proclamation and as proclamation, because the end that is proclaimed is always an infinite end. This is what truly makes up Christianity, what constitutes, as

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[66] Islam comes from *aslama* which means submit to God. It is hence not a submission to anything calculable, which is *istislam.* It is a submission to what is properly incalculable, or God.

the theologians say, the "kerygma" of Christianity, that is, the essence, the schema of what is proclaimed, the schema of the proclamation. What is Christianity? It is the Evangel. What is the Evangel? It is what is proclaimed, and it is not texts. What is proclaimed? Nothing. Marcel Gauchet was attentive, as Nietzsche had been, to the thinness of the four Gospels: almost nothing.(150)

Nancy's book does not so much as demonstrate a deconstruction of Christianity as it reveals how deconstruction is possible only because these religious categories(Judaism and Christianity) deconstruct themselves. The void at the heart of the Evangel, which is the proclamation of nothing, is what makes possible deconstruction; the void which is the result of *kenosis* or self-emptying of God, which is the void-of-divinity. For Nancy, the emptied out God is not the *deus absconditus,* but the god

whose absence in itself creates divinity, or a god whose void-of-divinity is the truth, properly speaking. (One might think of Eckhart's phrase: "I pray to God that he make me free of God," or again of Harawi imitating Hallaj: "No one really bears witness to the one God 'that he is one.'') In its principle, monotheism undoes theism, that is to say, the presence of the power that assembles the world and assutes this sense. It thus renders absolutely problematic the name god-it renders it non-signifying-and above all, it withdraws all power of assurance from it. Christian assurance can take place only at the cost of a category completely opposed to that of religious beliefs: the category of "faith," which is faithfulness to an absence and a certainty of this faithfulness in the absence of all assurance. In this sense, the atheist who firmly refuses all consoling or redemptive assurance is paradoxically or strangely closer to faith than the "believer." (36)

The absence of God is what deconstructs Christianity as a monotheism, what destitutes the Christian believer and makes the atheist paradoxically closer to faith than him. Thus Christianity is deconstructible, and self-deconstructing, but why is it that Iqbal cannot let Islam(which is also nominally a monotheism, though Nancy does not dedicate more than a few paragraphs to it in the entire book) be subject to deconstruction, even self-deconstruction? What is the hidden secret, the hidden treasure of Islam as accomplishing both the fulfilment, fullness, and end of religion which we have not yet understood in our research? For Iqbal, this is intimately connected with the issue we raised in the first chapter, which is an exit from philosophy and the end of metaphysics. Beyond the two categories of 'faith' and 'thought' which Iqbal believed to be the first forms of religion lies the category he called 'discovery'. Islam is neither faith, in the Christian sense, nor thought in the philosophical sense. It is a process of discovery which results in the mystical religious experience, which is in itself incommunicable. But the

result of that mystical religious experience, is not other-worldliness or dissolution into a greater self, which the Sufis call *fana.* The mystical force of religion is oriented towards only one thing and that is submission. This submission itself is what is the heart of Islam, and this is why for Iqbal it is the religion of reconstruction. This submission is not of the order of normal consciousness. Iqbal criticises Kant for postulating that the thing-in-itself can never be accessed by reason. He writes, "Kant's verdict can be accepted only if we start with the assumption that all experience other than the normal level of experience is impossible."(144) In a fragment collected in *Stray Reflections*, commenting on Nietzsche's death of God thesis, Iqbal writes

> Nietzsche thinks that belief in God makes man feeble. The wisdom of Islam consists in exploiting the idea of God in the interest of Man, and transforming him into a source of power for the *Tauhid* of Islam means absolute freedom from fear and superstition in actual life. *A mere intellectual belief in God does not count for much in Islam*.(154)(my italics)

It is in the perusal of these two citations that we can find in a nutshell, Iqbal's fundamental problem with Western philosophy as embodied in both its greatest philosophical and antiphilosophical figures, Kant and Nietzsche. According to him, "the question of religion as a form of higher experience…demands our serious attention"(146); attention which it has not received throughout the entire history of modern western philosophy. It is this question which Iqbal tries to formulate in the most rigorous way possible, and the central focus of his question on religion as higher experience is submission. Submission we can understand, but submission to what? It is here that we arrive at Iqbal's profound affinity and disaffinity with Derrida. Submission is not a submission to something, but a submission to that which is incalculable. One can only submit to that which calls for an infinite amount of submission, a submission beyond the capability of man, a submission without *force*. Such submission is without compulsion, it is submission to that which always excludes its own presentation or manifestation, and as Nancy writes beautifully, excludes even "its own valorization as much as its own presencing."(41) It is an infinite, unconditional submission which God calls for, and this submission itself cannot be put to question, just like justice itself cannot be asked for justification. The moment one submits for some purpose, the moment one

submits, subject to calculation and calculability, the submission degenerates and disintegrates into mere subjection. As Iqbal has al-Hallaj say in his *Javid Namah:*

> The business of true men is resignation and submission;
>
> this garment does not suit the weaklings.

Diagne writes on this aspect of submission as explained to the poet-narrator by Hallaj:

> It is once again Hussein ibn Mansur al- Hallaj, a representative of this Sufism of self-affirmation, who, in the Book of Eternity, is given the task of speaking the true meaning of fate and that of the notion of submission which, along with that of peace, is constitutive of the meaning of the term Islam itself. 'Submission' he explains to the poet, 'is not passivity, on the contrary it is a force; not every man, however, he says, 'has the zeal to surrender'. This force must be won, and it is so in the very movement of constitution of a personality that, no longer being dissolved in the back-and-forth between fear and hope, recognizes that the ego is, with itself, in a peace that Iqbal also considers to be a 'living assurance' in which its own will bends that of God: 'The true believer', he has Hallaj say, has a sort of understanding with God, and says to him ''We accord with you, so accord with us.' His resolution is the creator of God's determination, and on the day of battle his arrow is God's arrow'.(22)

Submission in itself is a task which is 'the business of true men'. It is not an eschatological, apocalyptic, or messianic demand. Submission is an earthly task, a task not for angels, but for men, because only men can understand the significance of a submission without conditions, an unconditional letting be. That is why there can be no profane world, only a world which is the site of man's submission to God. That is why Iqbal can quote the Hadith and write, "All is holy ground. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it: 'the whole of this earth is a mosque'."(123) It is in the same vein that he can write, "it is in this sense alone that the state in Islam is a theocracy, not in the sense that it is headed by a representative of God on earth who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility."(123) Theocracy is the rule of God, and the state in Islam can only be a theocracy because humans can only submit to God, and to nothing else. What the nature of this theocratic state is, with respect to the research we have carried out up till now, we will explore a bit later. What is most pressing, at this juncture is the question of submission itself, which is in essence nothing more than the question of *love*. We cannot approach this question of love without recourse to two great Sufi masters, both of whom influenced Iqbal in different ways, ibn al-Arabi and al-Hallaj.

Iqbal quotes a cryptic line from ibn al-Arabi which goes, 'God is a percept, the world is a concept'.(144)[67] It is from this little sentence that we can draw out the true foundation behind Iqbal's turning away from the god whose *kenosis* or whose absence creates divinity, and his refusal to espouse only the cause of a justice to-come. God for ibn al-Arabi is an object for perception, but exceeds conceptualisation, that is, He cannot be grasped by the intellect, knowledge, or thought. Such a God is not of the order of Being, he can be perceived not in his Reality, but only, as ibn al-Arabi writes in quite a poetic manner, from behind a veil. Since God cannot be conceptualised or grasped by thought, this means that He is no longer within the ambit of Being or existence.[68] In the twentieth century had Wittgenstein had famously written "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"(Proposition 7). Yet as Zizek has shown, what we cannot speak of we can still show, or see.[69] Thus there is no absence of God, the void-of-divinity, but rather the utter *fullness* of God. But as ibn al-Arabi says, This fullness is not a constant presence, availability or accessibility; rather it is best exemplified by the image of the *hidden treasure.[70]*

Ibn al-Arabi and the Divine Roots of Human Love

Ibn al-Arabi was the author of a book which collected together the important sayings of the Prophet, and one of his most beloved Hadith was the one which went: "I was a hidden treasure and I loved (*ahbabtu*) to be known; so I created the creatures and made Myself known to them; so they knew Me." There is a whole collection of mystical literature which stems from this hadith itself. We will stick with ibn al-Arabi for now,

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[67] This sentence in a nutshell encapsulates the gist of Iqbal's exit from philosophy- from a philosophy of concepts to a philosophy of percepts. God cannot be conceived, but God can be perceived. In a way, Iqbal is trying to usher in a phenomenology of the mystic consciousness.

[68] Refer to Parmenides 'thinking-speaking-Being is the same'. That which cannot be thought, is not.

[69] Refer to the first section of the first chapter called 'What Cannot be Said Must be Shown' of the book *Less than Nothing.* There he writes that contrary to Elie Wiesel's claim that there could be no novel about the Holocaust, the only way we can represent the Holocaust is through literature(or rather fiction). The documentary form would just neutralise the traumatic import of the event; it is only in the form of a fiction that we can apprehend it. "When truth is too traumatic to be confronted directly it can only be accepted in the guise of a fiction." Zizek continues to say that the truth no longer depends on faithful reproduction of facts. What makes a report of trauma true is its very factual unreliability, confusion and inconsistency. He goes on to write that "In a Hegelian way, the problem is here part of the solution: the very deficiencies of the traumatized subject's report on the facts bear witness to the truthfulness of his report, since they signal that the reported content has contaminated the very form in which it is reported."

[70] We should keep in mind that this hidden treasure is not pure presence, but barred presence, as Lacan would say, the barred One, or $

and see how this fullness of God as a hidden treasure opens up the question of love, which is the very reason for the existence of creation. It is submission as love which opens up for us the question of difference once again, and we can see how and why Iqbal could not accord himself with the Judaic idea of incommensurable difference between the worldly and divine. This is not to say that God and mortals are not incommensurably different for Iqbal, but that he approaches this problem very differently, not just through the idea of justice, but more importantly through the idea of submission as love.[71] In fact, it is through love that we can actually think difference even more intensely than through justice, and even lay down the conditions for unconditional justice; love itself is only true when it is love of the different. Secondly, love is not just love of the different, it is generated only on two conditions, both of which are inextricably bound up with each other. The first is the recognition of the existence of an incommensurable difference between self and Other, a difference which in no way is sought to be transcended, removed, or sublated. The second is the urgent need to identify with the Other as different, to respond to the Other's difference, without bringing the issue back to the same old question of the self-same. It is in this way that true love is the greatest earthly manifestation and symbol of the existence of the tension and torsion that occurs within difference. Love is not solely divine, but also a quintessential human attribute. Indeed, as William Chittick writes in his essay on ibn al-Arabi called "The Divine Roots of Human Love":

> He(ibn al-Arabi) points out first that love is a divine attribute, and he lists several of the Qur'anic verses in which God is the subject of the verb 'to love'. Fourteen of these verses mention those whom God loves and another twenty-three mention those whom God does *not* love. In every case, the objects of God's love or lack of love are human beings. Indeed, the Qur'an associates love only with human beings among all creatures. Hence love is a key term if we are to understand what differentiates human beings from other created things. Most other divine attributes - such as life, knowledge, desire, power, speech, generosity, justice, mercy, and wrath - have no necessary connection with the human race.

More than even justice, love is that which is common between the Divine and mortals, between the Creator and his creation, and hence is always already part of the

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[71] Since God is both incommensurable(*tanzih)* and similar(*tashbih)* we can see why love, and not simply justice, are important.

poietical relationship. The question of love is given such importance by ibn al-Arabi that he places it on par with the question of Existence, or *wujud.* Indeed ibn al-Arabi is of the belief that love is what gives rise to the persistence of Existence itself. For him, love has many similarities with *wujud,* the most obvious being its indefinability. He says, at the beginning of his chapter on love in the *Futuhat al Makkiya:*

> You should know that known things can be divided into two sorts. One sort can be defined, and the other sort cannot be defined. Those who know and speak about love agree that it is one of the things that cannot be defined. A person recognizes it when it abides within himself and when it is his own attribute. He does not know what it is, but he does not deny its existence. (II 325.13)

Love's existence cannot be denied, just as one cannot deny that there is Being or *wujud.* We have a simplistic idea of love as a relation between two (conscious) beings. But the great Shaykh ul Akbar ibn al-Arabi begs to differ. His radical and groundbreaking thesis is that love exists, but the object of love, the beloved, does not.

> Many mistakes may occur in love. The first of them is that people imagine that the object of love is an existent thing... In fact, love's object remains forever nonexistent, but most lovers are not aware of this, unless they should be knowers of the realities. (II 337.17)

The ontico-ontological difference between Being and beings, as thought of by Heidegger, was the fundamental difference, a difference incommensurable in its vastness and foundational in its existence. Yet in ibn al-Arabi's thesis on the existence of love and the non-existence of the beloved, we are suddenly thrust into the shadow of a thought which attempts to think pure difference, or a difference without terms. The difference between being and non-being is brought up in the context of a relation(or non-relation) which seeks to identify being with non-being. The significance of love becomes important when we see ibn al-Arabi write on its creative aspect:

> It is characteristic of the beloved to be nonexistent, and necessarily so. The lover loves to bring the nonexistent thing into existence, or for it to occur within an existent thing. (II 332.10)

He quotes the hidden treasure hadith and writes, "God's words, 'I was a Treasure' affirm the immutable entities... They are mentioned in His words, *'Our only speech to a thing [when We desire it, is to say to it "Be", and it is']* [16:40]." (II 232.12)

Explaining ibn al-Arabi's usage of the hadith, William Chittick writes:

> The hadith of the Hidden Treasure tells us that God created the creatures out of His love to be known. Hence love is the motivating force of creation. The creatures that He creates are the objects of His love. They are, in themselves, nonexistent immutable entities. Hence the objects of God's love are nonexistent. God's love is true love, the source of all love. It follows that love, by definition, is directed toward the nonexistent, or, to use the Shaykh's terminology, 'attaches itself' (*ta'alluq*) to nonexistence, that is, takes nonexistence as its object. If love is directed toward the nonexistent, and if love is the source of all God's creative activity, it follows that nonexistence exercises power throughout existence. In other words, the whole universe is rooted in nonexistence and depends upon nonexistence to exist. All activity of all things in the universe stems from God's love. And all the loves and desires of the creatures follow in the pattern of God's love, which is to say that they also are directed at nonexistence. Hence, nonexistence itself is the root of all creation. The Shaykh writes,
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>> "We maintain that every effect exercised upon an existent thing belongs to the nonexistent thing. The ultimate goal is nonexistent. That is why it is correct for the seeker to seek it. No one desires what is existent. Thus the nonexistent goal exercises effects in bringing things into existence. In other words, the nonexistent thing is the cause of God's bringing into existence whatever He brings into existence." (IV 431.8)

Thus true love is the love of God (who is the most Real) for the non-existent 'immutable entities' that are creation. God, that is *wujud,* loves these immutable entities, but the object of His love is always non-existent. Therefore he loves, and keeps loving, so as to lend existence to the non-existent. As Chittick said above, 'the whole universe is rooted in nonexistence and depends upon nonexistence to exist'. Can we see here a shadow of Hegel's proclamation that the universe moves 'from nothing, through nothing, to nothing'? Thus the very foundation of this universe is its necessary non-existence. Its being is founded, paradoxically, on its non-being; being arises and depends on the void. Love is the desire to bring the non-existent into existence, and hence it is the foundation for the Creation of the universe. But the non-existent will never gain existence, as ibn al-Arabi goes on to write. And it is this impossibility of gaining existence that somehow translates into the persistence and continuance of the universe as creation. The reading of the Hidden Treasure hadith by ibn al-Arabi thus reveals to us a new dimension for thought, which follows in the proper Hegelian mode- that God is not a priori a hidden

treasure, but only becomes what it is, after the insertion of creation, and human subjects into the void. That is, only retroactively does God becomes the Hidden Treasure he always already is.

Such a digression through the work of this great European mystic(for ibn al-Arabi was born in Spain and spent much of his life in Europe before emigrating to Arabia) was not just informative, but instrumental in our understanding of love as the foundation of creation. Nancy had famously written on the aspect of creation *ex nihilo* as

> creation entails a relation of alterity and contingence(if 'God' there is *no reason* why he creates). The idea of creation *ex nihilo*, inasmuch as it is clearly distinguished from any form of production or fabrication, essentially covers the dual motif of an absence of necessity and the existence of a given without reason, having neither foundation nor principle for its gift.(24)

ibn al-Arabi's answer would be that there is truly no reason but one- that of love; love which exceeds reason, love which is neither relation, nor non-relation. It was instrumental for us to understand, through ibn al-Arabi, that there can be no general attempt of a deconstruction of monotheism, not simply because Islam differs from Christianity(in fact, on the question of love, there are more parallels than differences) but because the language of such deconstruction looks forward to justice and not also to love. Reconstruction is the method which lays down the one condition for unconditional justice- which is love. This is not love as a vague, vapid category which we are so conditioned to understanding it as. Rather it is love as the exemplary poietical relationship between finite and infinite Egos. The finite Ego cannot love every other finite Ego, as Iqbal aptly realises, but it can be just towards them. But this justice can only be fulfilled on the condition of love between finite Ego and infinite Ego. For Iqbal Islam provides a perspective which highlights that there can be no justice without the orientation towards the event of God's self-disclosure. The difference between a deconstructionist approach and this is simple. The former conceives of God as the name for a radical Otherness which is forever inaccessible and emphasises the need to maintain the gap that separates us from the radical Other. The latter conceives of God's self-disclosure as always already inscribing us within the call of the Event; it is up to the Ego to reconstruct itself in the light of God's love so that it can actualise the always virtual existence of justice. In a nutshell, it is the difference between Heidegger's famous phrase 'only a god can save us

now' and Caliph Umar's pronouncement on the death of the Prophet, 'the Book of God is sufficient for us'. Both are rooted in eschatological and apocalyptic discourses, both arise from an intense and profound contemplation and meditation upon death. But while Heidegger's statement expresses a profound, melancholic hope given to despair, Umar's public proclamation embodies an intense, exultatory hope which stems from the faith of love. Heidegger opens us up to the possibility of the *creativity of eschatology*; Umar to the possibility of an *eschatology of creativity*.[72] It is here that we should take recourse to the contemporary philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, a major respondent to Schmitt, with a quote from the last chapter of his book *The Signature of All Things* where he writes:

> Islamic theology…at once distinguishes and joins redemption and creation, the 'imperative'(*amr)* and 'creation'(*khalq),* prophets and angels. According to this doctrine, there are two kinds of work or praxis in God: the work of redemption and that of creation. To the former correspond the prophets, who serve as mediators to affirm the work of salvation; to the latter correspond the angels, who mediate the work of creation. The work of salvation precedes in rank that of creation, hence the superiority of the prophets over the angels.(107)

Agamben elucidates the significance of this eschatology of creativity, by pointing out the decisive fact that in this conception,

> redemption precedes creation in rank, that the event that seems to follow is in truth anterior. It is not a remedy for the fall of creatures, but rather that which makes creation comprehensible, that which gives it its meaning. For this reason, in Islam, the light of the Prophet is the first of all beings…it is instructive that in Islam and Judaism the work of salvation, while preceding in rank the work of creation, is entrusted to a creature. This confirms the paradox…that the two works are not simply separate, but rather persist in a single place, where the work of salvation acts as a kind of a priori that is immanent in the work of creation and makes it possible.(107-8)

Thus we can see that the work of reconstruction is effected by a change of perspective towards the work of deconstruction. This change in perspective can only occur when one realises two things. The first is that the awaited Event of justice to come has already arrived, but that justice is itself incomplete and non-All, or in other words it is

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[72] The creativity of eschatology is that wherein the anticipation of the end(whether it be apocalyptic, messianic, or the form of messianic without messianism) is itself the foundation of a radical Openness which is creative of a possibility without actuality. Here possibility cannot be simply reduced to actuality but is always in excess. Eschatology is hence creative in its aspect. In the eschatology of creativity we see the opposite movement–a movement which takes us to the limits of creativity itself; a thinking on how creativity is itself eschatological and hence part of the movement towards justice.

a process. The work of reconstruction is to be faithful to the Event. Since salvation precedes creation, we are already saved and redeemed, and thus what we must realise is that very fact. That is only possible through reconstruction, which is the reconstruction of this incomplete justice. Thus it is not only the future that can be changed; quite radically, as Walter Benjamin and G.K. Chesterton would agree, it is most of all the past that has to be changed. Reconstruction can be thought of as similar to Benjamin's idea of divine violence especially where justice cannot be divorced from its antinomy, violence. It is what Zizek would call, repeating Hegel, the reconciliation of opposites which is in effect nothing more than the reconciliation with the fact of the irremediable opposites.

To return to ibn al-Arabi, we can see that this eschatology of creativity proceeds on the precedence of love over existence. In Sufi terminology, the disciple is called *murid* or the desirer, and his desire should be directed towards God alone. But one can love only that which is non-existent, hence can we say that God is also non-existent? Ibn al-Arabi affirms this necessary atheism, which is also implicit in the *kalima*, because, as he says,

> In our view, the object to which desire attaches is nonexistence. You already know that knowledge of God is desired by the servant, and you know that no created thing can gain knowledge of God as He knows Himself, even though creatures have the desire to achieve that. As long as the servant stands in this station, he is inseparable from desire's property, that is, attachment to the nonexistent thing.
>
> Knowledge of God, as we have said, cannot exist, so the property of desire is more complete in the servant of God than in someone who perceives the object of his desire. Hence desire is true desire only when it is attached to an object that cannot be perceived. Desire itself remains qualified by existence only so long as its object is qualified by nonexistence.
> If the desired object were to be found or established, then the property of desire would disappear. If the property disappeared, desire itself would disappear. It follows that desire will never disappear from us, because its object can never be achieved. (II 522.4)

The *murid* has dedicated himself to finding God. But God, if he can be sought, can be conceptualised and perceived. This God is not God, but only the self-disclosure of God. Chittick says, "God in Himself can never be found, and the object of the seeking does not exist, since only the God who can never be found by the creature has true *wujûd*." Ibn al-Arabi had written, "What the seeker seeks and the desirer desires is

only knowledge of Him, witnessing of Him, or vision of Him. All of these are *from* Him. They are not He Himself." (II 663.9) These Folk of God, as they are called, are not philosophers but lovers. They are similar to Iqbal's conception of the Ego in its *ijtihad,* as they too seek orientation towards the event, which for them is nothing more than the self-disclosure of God whose manifestation is but a signature of His nonmanifest nature. Chittick beautifully explains the state of the Folk of God, the desirers, seekers and *murids:*

> If God in Himself cannot be sought, then what are the seekers seeking? What have the Sufis been singing about in their poetry if not love for God? The Shaykh replies that they are loving and seeking not God in Himself, but the God that they can encompass and embrace. They cannot embrace God in Himself, but they can embrace God as He shows Himself to them. But that God is not *wujûd*, but rather the radiance of *wujûd*, the self-showing of *wujûd*. What people gain from this seeking is their own benefit… those whom the Shaykh calls the 'gnostics' or the 'Folk of God' - make no attempt to seek Him, since He is unattainable. Rather, they seek their own benefit, and their own benefit is 'felicity' (*sa'âda*), that is, the everlasting vision of God in this world and the next. As the Shaykh puts it, 'God cannot be attained through seeking. The gnostics seek their own felicity, not God' (IV 443.1). In other words, what they seek is the joy of participating with full awareness in the never-ending creation of the universe, the never-ceasing process whereby God loves the nonexistent things and brings them into existence… The Folk of God know that they can never attain to their Beloved and hence that they can never know their Beloved. Their Beloved is nonexistent in relation to them and will remain forever nonexistent, and this for them is the source of the greatest joy and felicity, for it requires that they leave nonexistence and enter into existence continually and forever. All creatures love by their very nature. The difference between the Folk of God and ordinary people is that the latter think they know what they love. In fact, their true beloved remains forever nonexistent and inaccessible, and hence it can never be known. They are ignorant of their own ignorance.

Iqbal's conception of the Ego has multiple connections with ibn al-Arabi's Folk of God, primarily in its play between selfishness and selflessness(*khudi* and *bekhudi)*. The play between existence and non-existence is what gives rise to the necessity of creation in ibn al-Arabi's thought; the play between *khudi* and *bekhudi* in Iqbal's thought, gives rise to the Ego. But we must make an even more significant point here, which goes to the crux of what Iqbal calls theocracy. We have been trying to think difference as such, and that led us to oppose the Taubesian reading of the incommensurable gap between divine and

mortals. What ibn al-Arabi accomplishes is something much more radical than the postulation of a radical Otherness which is always inaccessible. It is no more an orientation towards God that is at the crux of the problem, but an orientation to the gap between the divine and mortals. It is this gap, this difference which must itself be thought, without any particular terms which differ. In essence, as a monotheist, ibn al-Arabi understands that this gap itself, this hidden treasure, this pure difference without terms, is what the Folk of God must be oriented towards. This radical difference is what Zizek calls "the difference of the One with regard to itself,the noncoincidence of the One with itself, with its own place"(*Puppet* 23) In a true monotheism, as Zizek says, God is the gap as such. This is why the Islamic doctrine of faith, the *kalima*, is *la ilaha illallah,* there is no god but God. It is not just the affirmation of the Oneness of God, but rather a negation which paradoxically affirms; this method inscribes the gap into the body of the One itself, alerting us to the fact that this One is not simply one like us, or rather the Unity of God is the most profound problem for thought.[73]

Affirmation and Submission

We might ask why the paradox of affirmation and submission is not sought to be resolved by Iqbal. The resolution of paradox would be the task of philosophy, a task dictated to it by logic and reason. Such a perspective would look at the paradox only as the possibility of its resolution or irresolution. But for Iqbal, the wonder of the paradox is in its ability to makes us wonder in the first place; such wonder must not be dissipated and dissolved in the quest for a rational answer. As we reflected in the first chapter, we must let wonder be. Thus the paradox of the affirmation of the Ego born out of its submission (through love) to the inaccessible God whose gift of self-disclosure is the world must be considered without regard to a solution; it must be considered as a *question*. Philosophy

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[73] In the Surah Ikhlas of the Quran, God is not called simply unitary, but '*ahad*', or that which is not followed by any other. As pointed out earlier, the One God is not simply one, He is One, a number which is not followed by any other number. Is this infinity? But infinity in the classical sense is an infinity of Ones. Rather we should follow Lacan and leave it with saying it is a One which is not simply One. It is obvious that Iqbal could not broach this in the Indian society of that time. Unlike in Christianity, where the paradox is of the Mystery or the Triune in One Nature of God, in Islam the most simple concept, that of unity, is a major mystery. As we have been repeating incessantly, in Islamic thought the normal is itself the problem. There is nothing but exception, the Law itself is a transgression against the pre-order that preceded the natural world.

has to be considered in its primordial aspect of love of wisdom, love which is oriented towards the non-existence of its object. Such love is also at the heart of Iqbal's conception of the unitive experience of Islam:

> In the higher Sufism of Islam unitive experience is not the finite ego effacing its own identity by some sort of absorption into the Infinite Ego; it is rather the Infinite passing into the *loving* embrace of the finite. As Rumi says, 'Divine knowledge is lost in the knowledge of the saint! And how is it possible for people to believe in such a thing?'(88)(my italics)

It is in this context that we must see Iqbal's shift in stance with respect to the great saint and martyr al-Hallaj. The translation of Hallaj's *ana'l haq* as "I am the Creative Truth" by Louis Massignon was taken up by Iqbal to refute the charges that Hallaj could be thought as a pantheist. For Iqbal, Hallaj, in his later life, became a very pivotal figure, the one whose affirmation of individuality was not just self-affirmative but also, more importantly, *creative*. This creativity was in effect nondualistic. As Iqbal approvingly quotes ibn Hazm, "the language of the Quran makes no difference in the act of creation and the thing created."(55) This slippage of grammar, which refuses to make a difference between the act and the thing, makes all the difference, destituting, simultaneously, both creator and creation in favour of the process of creation.[74] This process is nothing other than the very self-disclosure of God. The event of revelation, towards which the Ego attempts to orient itself by ijtihad, is in other words nothing more than the event of the self-disclosure of God. But this is not simply a divine, or mystical experience, with echoes of religious beatitude, elation and salvation. The event must not be seen as something otherworldly, transcendental, abnormal and extraordinary, as it usually is in religious literature of all ages and countries. Iqbal says, "these experiences are perfectly natural,

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[74] This is another problem which Iqbal might help us in: the indifference of Semitic,(and other) non Indo-European cultures to the question of Being. This was pointed out by Heidegger very early on in his work, but was taken as a slight by non- Indo European scholars who hastened to point out how Being was thought in their traditions as well. This must be challenged- the question of Being is an Indo-European problem which stems from the verb 'to be' in all their languages. This verb does not occur in most other language families. Hence we must follow Levinas and understand 'to be' as 'to be in the place of, and inspite of the Other'. As has been pointed out by Kent Palmer, 'being' in English has four different roots. Thus we can see how important it is to European philosophy, and also how destructive it is. With the philosophy of recent philosophy of Badiou we can see a transformation of Being into Event, and the return of the Void which is at the heart of other traditional thinking like Buddhism, Taoism, and Islamic Sufism. In many respects this is a much more profound line of enquiry which has been blocked off due to excessive focus on Being.

like our normal experiences…the view that such experiences are neurotic and mystical will not finally settle the question of their meaning or value."(150) He then goes on to write something which orthodox Muslims might find irreverent, and even blasphemous:

> It does not matter in the least if the religious attitude is originally determined by some kind of physiological disorder…Muhammad, we are told, was a psychopath. Well if a psychopath has the power to give a fresh direction to the course of human history, it is a point of the highest psychological interest to search his original experience which has turned slaves into leaders of men, and has inspired the conduct and shaped the career of whole races of mankind…a psychopath is an important factor in the *economy* of humanity's social organisation. His way is not to classify facts and discover causes: he thinks in terms of life and movement with a view to create new patterns of behaviour for mankind…a careful study of his method, however, shows that he is not less alert than the scientist in the matter of eliminating the alloy of illusion from his experience.(150)(my italics)

The event of revelation is not a wondrous, mystical revelation of God directly to the believer. As ibn al-Arabi clearly said, it is impossible for mortals to witness God in his reality. Thus the event is just the self-disclosure of God, which in other words is the coming to presence of what is. The event is originary, because it is what lets being be, in their multiple modes of being and presencing. Reiner Schurmann writes of Heidegger,

> To the traditional philosophical wonder, Why is there being rather than nothing? Heidegger answers with the simple *there is*. Such an answer not only flies in the face of any quest for explanation, but it amounts to an option for the fortuitous, for the unstable. Explanations operate by recourse to some immutable referent, a cause or a condition; but to say 'there is' presencing amounts to espousing what is mutable in its shifting constellations.(130)

The very nature of the event as a 'shifting constellation' is what engenders the struggle, the ijtihad that reconstructs the Ego as Ego. Heidegger's answer to the traditional question of philosophy manages to deconstruct the very need of an explanation for Being. *There is presencing,* and this espousal of flux and change, a world without why, is also what Iqbal, through ibn al-Arabi, tries to gesture towards. God as *wujud* is non-existent in relation to his lovers, the Folk of God. But what differentiates them from the others is that the non-existence of God is their greatest source of joy and felicity. They do not care to achieve union with God, all that matters to them is that 'that they leave nonexistence and

enter into existence continually and forever', and what is this if not their orientation, through love and ijtihad, to the originary event itself?

What is Theocracy?

It is now that we are better prepared to look at the question of theocracy again. Theocracy is simply put, nothing more than the rule of God. We have already noted how Iqbal categorically condemned the appropriation of the shield of theocracy by despots and dictators; and how he refuted the existence of any personal authority among mortals, which claimed a supernatural(divine) origin.[75] Then how is this rule of God to be effected in the world, if not through mortals, if not through the exercise and existence of earthly sovereignty? Such a radical theocracy, without earthly sovereignty can only exist if there exist what Iqbal calls the Egos and ibn al-Arabi the Folk of God. It is in the Ego's struggle to orient and attune himself with the shifting constellation and economy of the event, where we can find the rule of God implementing itself. The virtual unity of the Egos, which we can call by the name of the Folk of God, is the process of attunement to the economy of the event of presencing. This rule of God is not the exercise of His sovereignty over the world, or even His act of creation. It is a continuous process of co-creation, where God is not just supremely transcendent, but also a co-worker with man in this act of creation. As Iqbal writes, "And in this process of progressive change God becomes a co-worker with him, provided man take the initiative."(10) This radical anarchic theocracy is unlike any other earthly exercise and operation of *kratos.* It is in

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[75] It is thus that Iqbal writes to R.A. Nicholson, published in the translation of *Asrar-e-Khudi* in 1915"Thus the Kingdom of God on earth means the democracy of more or less unique individuals, presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth." This early view of Iqbal encompassed a messianic belief in the coming of a *na'ib* or viceregent who would be "the completest Ego, the goal of humanity, the acme of life both in mind and body; in him the -discord of our mental life becomes a harmony. This highest power is united in him with the highest knowledge. In this life thought and action, instinct and reason become one. He is the last fruit of the tree of humanity, and all the trial of a painful evolution are justified because he is to come at the end. He is the real ruler of mankind; his kingdom is the kingdom of God on earth. Out of the richness of his nature he lavishes the wealth of life on others, and brings them nearer and nearer to himself. The more we advance in evolution, the nearer we get to him." Iqbal gradually distances himself from this view, as early as 1916 where he writes in an article called 'Muslim Democracy' that "the democracy of Islam did not grow out of the extension of economic opportunity; it is a spiritual principle based on the assumption that every human being is a centre of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character". While in the earlier view democracy was the first stage towards the theocracy of the *na'ib*, in 1916 Iqbal postulates that every human has the potential to be the *na'ib* and in the *Reconstruction* we can see the culmination of this process: that no human can have any personal authority over any other which claimed a divine origin.

effect the result of what we had called *teleology without telos* in the first chapter. It is an infinite, endless work of reconstruction with God. It is not based on domination, power, or hegemony, but on love, which is not just the love for creation, but the love of the process of creation. It is this which binds together the finite and Infinite in a loving embrace; an embrace which is at the core of an anarchic theocracy without mere politics. We have become accustomed to the infiltration of every sphere of the world by politics, and more recently, by the return of the political. It was Schmitt who sublated the political into the realm of the theological; but it is Schurmann who offers us a way out of this political game with no exit- with his concept of the *poietical,* a concept which we must modify in the light of our own research. An anecdote from ancient Greece would help us to understand the difference between the political and the poietical better. Two painters, Zeuxis and Parhassius, competed against each other to determine who could paint the most convincing illusion. Zeuxis painted a bowl of grapes that was so real that birds tried to eat them. Parhassius painted a curtain on the wall of his room which was so convincing that Zeuxis asked him to remove the curtain so he could see the painting behind it. Zeuxis had painted an illusion so convincing that birds were fooled into believing they were real grapes; the image was taken to be the real thing. In Parhassius' painting, on the other hand, the illusion lay in the very fact that the viewer thought the painting itself was just a veil which concealed the hidden truth.[76] The political corresponds most closely to the former, the poietical to the latter. The political puts forth legitimacy as something well-grounded when in fact this is but an illusion; legitimacy is always groundless, proceeding from the groundless void of decision. The poietical puts forth a more profound epiphany: the destitution of the belief that semblance is always semblance of something. In the poietical we are brought into the uncomfortable proximity of the realisation that semblance is the mask of nothing.[77]

Theocracy is poietical because it does away with all manner of grounding of legitimacy. There is only the groundless void of the unmanifest which it offers, a *kratos* based on a semblance which is the mask of nothing, a simulacrum which is a copy

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[76] This is the key formula of J.A. Miller: Semblance is the mask of nothing.

[77] We had approached this problem in the first chapter through Deleuze's crtitique of Platonism where he said that Platonism involved the repression of simulacra and the privileging of copies. The political is about copies, good or bad, the poietical is about simulacra.

without original. The orientation towards the event by the Ego or the Folk of God is an orientation towards what remains unmanifest in manifestation. The manifest is but the mask of the unmanifest, and this unmanifest will always remain unmanifest, leaving behind a residue, a remainder and withdrawal from manifestation as ibn al-Arabi so profoundly discovered. The task of philosophy, as Heidegger saw it in the last years of his life, was to develop a phenomenology of the inapparent. That this was also realised by Iqbal can be seen in his frequent citation of the Quranic verse translated as "God is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Unmanifest".(57:3) But would this task be that of the philosopher? Perhaps as a poietical task it would most properly be the task of the poet.[78] This is the reason why Iqbal is a poet first and philosopher only secondarily. Poetry is semblance, but it is most properly the semblance of nothing. [79] Plato had written that no one should take poetry to be true, but as Heidegger said, poetry(and art) is the clearing where occurs the setting-in-place of the truth. Rather than revealing the truth hidden behind manifestation, the poietical reveals the truth of manifestation: that the manifest is only the mask of the unmanifest which forever remains a withdrawal and sheltering from all phenomenalization.[80]

It is hardly a co-incidence then, that the thinker we have taken into consideration for this dissertation, a thinker who is also a thinker of the impossibility of the theologico-political, is perhaps one of the greatest poets of the last century. Immanent in his refutation of the theologico-political lies his strident affirmation of what we, who have no better words for it, can call the *theologico-poietical.* It is with his exit from philosophy, and his forbearing regarding the end of metaphysics, that we can step out of the shadow of the question of political theology into the question of the theologico-poietical. The theologico-poietical is the creative relation(or non-relation) between the Egos and the manifestation of what remains always unmanifest, or God. Its essence is the traumatic

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[78] This is also why Iqbal writes, "Art is a sacred lie" in *Stray Reflections.*

[79] We can better understand Coleridge's call for a willing suspension of disbelief when juxtaposed with this.

[80] We should not be confused with Kant's phenomena and noumena here. The unmanifest is not the thing-in-itself, rather it is what is most properly not a thing, or *nothing.* The relationship between noumena and phenomena is that the noumena is the inaccessible essence of phenomena. While here, the manifest is the mask of the unmanifest; the unmanifest is not the essence of the manifest as it most properly has neither Being nor existence.

realisation that the Ego can never attain its Beloved.[81] Yet this trauma itself is the foundation of the persistence of the ecstasy of existence via the method of reconstruction. This dissertation, in effect, had only been oriented towards the construction, consolidation, elaboration and pursuit of necessary implications of this question, to *the very end.* But in the end, it is but a gesture we can be thought to have made here, a gesture which, in memory of Iqbal, points us towards the promise of the reconstruction to come.

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[81] Except as it is stated in Islamic tradition, through an external agent, or prophet, through internal inspiration, or through a vision of God from behind a veil. The last case is extremely significant: even the greatest saints and prophets could not see God unveiled. Refer to the story of Moses and the miraj of Muhammad. Moses wished to see God, but when God finally revealed Himself, Moses fainted at the sight. It is a matter of great debate over the centuries whether Muhammad actually caught a glimpse of God behind the veil. Iqbal does not seem to think so, however.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of our research, it would be proper for us to meditate a while on the concept of end itself, and especially how this concept almost always participates in a teleological narrative. We would not hesitate to translate the *telos* of our lives as either the goal or the end we are oriented towards. Such a translation elides over one important detail– that telos is not just the goal towards which the process tends, it is also the completion, culmination, and fulfilment of the process. Telos is thus both the *end* towards which teleology moves, and also the *end* of teleology as process. With telos we come close to an understanding of the fundamental posture of the ancient Greeks: as a desperate struggle oriented towards discovering the sense of the ending. It is thus quite instructive that the last of the ancient Greek institutions to survive in translation in the corporate body-politic of Rome was the post of the augur who always looked back to the tradition of the great Oracles at Delphi. The augur, like the oracle, was not just someone who looked into the future, but fulfilled a role that was not just interrogative but hermeneutical. He did not simply claim to know fate; he claimed to know how to make sense of fate. The world was pervaded by meaning in the form of signs that seemed unreadable to the common man but could be read and interpreted by those who had been trained to recognise them. In the entrails of a sheep one could find inscribed the fate of a battle or the future of a young Emperor. Thus the world was a great sign, a symbol that was ontologically complete and rational. It was only an epistemological failure on part of man that he could not understand its signs.

It is Iqbal's rebellion against this classical mode of thought which makes him both a restless thinker and a thinker of the restless. For him even heaven is not a holiday, a state of bliss and peace: "Every act of a free ego creates a new situation, and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding."(98) It is this mode of thought, which we can perhaps designate anti-classical, that necessitated the development of the concept of a teleology without telos. The ontological limitation of the universe itself is the problem that we have attempted to approach through this reading of Iqbal. In the light of this realisation there spring other problems which necessitate a re-visioning and reconstruction of the paradigms that we dwell in. Thus reconstruction is not just a requisite for our methodological assumptions but also revolutionises our very conception

of the political and more importantly lays bare the importance of the poietical. In a way this dissertation has focussed on laying the ground and formulating the conditions for a deeper understanding of the form of the poietical. It is our belief that the literary is the foundational form of our being-together. This is why the shift is required from the theologico-political to the theologico-poietical. If we stay with Schmitt we remain embedded within a discourse which takes as its paradigm God's act of creation ex-nihilo. It is a discourse of decision which is in its deepest essence apocalyptic and catastrophic. If one can create something out of nothing, then one can also make something into nothing. That the true power of sovereignty lies in the ability to decide on death has been pointed out quite brilliantly by none other than Jacques Derrida in his seminars on *The Death Penalty.* But in the theologico-poietical we move towards a different paradigm. It is the paradigm most widely respected in Islamic tradition: that God made the universe from *la min shay* or not-something, and not as in the dominant Christian tradition, ex-nihilo.[82] In that sense, the creation of the universe is not a process of creation out of nothing, but a *reconstruction* of the not-something into something. The poetic, too, in its fundamental nature is also a reconstruction. T.S. Eliot understood this all too well; this is why he wrote in his famous essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" that "whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past." Every poem that is written is not just a reconstruction of what has passed in "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer" onwards but also a reconstruction of the extant tradition itself. As Eliot wrote,

> what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.

This is why Eliot ends the quintessential poem of Modernism, *The Wasteland* with the words "These fragments I have shored against my ruins"(line 430).

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[82] Refer to H.A. Wolfson's brilliant analysis of the development of this idea among the Muslim theologians in his book on *The Philosophy of the Kalam.*

Reconstruction can only be the reconstruction of what is and always will be fragmentary. It is not oriented towards the construction of structures, but towards the shoring up of ruins. This is why reconstruction is properly traumatic and hence also a crossing out of deconstruction. It is the construction of what can only be called ruins, the propping up of what is already always deconstructed in itself.

This dissertation has attempted to raise the question of theocracy in the era of the dominance of democracy. Theocracy is a terrifying word, bringing to mind the images of despots legitimising their domination over the populace by recourse to a religion which is nothing more than absolute, tyrannical law. Perhaps we need not even imagine these images, when we can access them through Twitter, Facebook, or Google. The Islamic State or ISIS is perhaps the latest in the series of openly theocratic state structures. The axiom that Islam is both a religion and a state is one that is parroted by commentators and critics from all sides of the political spectrum, who do not apprehend Iqbal's great breakthrough- that Islam is neither a religion nor a state.[83] Thus this dissertation has attempted to wrest theocracy not just from the hands of those wishing to institute theocratic rule but also from the hands of institutionalisation; from the grasp of the state itself. Theocracy the way Iqbal conceived of it was not the foundation of a sovereign state, but rather the consolidation of the virtual unity of the Egos, or those whom following ibn al-Arabi we called the Folk of God. This collective is fundamentally an anti-statist collective, and it is perhaps only from within this paradigm that we can wage the struggle against the ideologies of terror and consumerism, both of which are just manifestations of what Heidegger called the essence of technology.

This brings us to the last point that we may make here. What is the future of the new field that we have attempted to open up here? Is it a mode of the study of religion and philosophy? Is its proper space the space for philosophy, politics, literature or something altogether different? Is it the foundation for an inter-disciplinary mode of study that incorporates literature, politics, and philosophy as three coeval components to

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[83] Ghulam Ahmed, the famous Pakistani Quranist and Iqbal scholar is perhaps one of the few who has truly understood Iqbal's attitude towards the state and 'religion'.

dissect the problems of the world? Or is it rather the preparation for the opening towards that which forever remains unmanifest even in manifestation?

Perhaps the new field that we have endeavoured to open here is not as new or novel as we think it to be. The field that prepares itself for the study that Heidegger called the phenomenology of the inapparent is not a field for professional scholars, professors, or academics. Perhaps it is a field for thinkers, poets, writers; and people who we might call, without any pejorative intent, religious. Thus the work of reconstruction is not primarily the work of a scholar, but most essentially the work of a poet. To conclude our ruminations on our research, we must quote a couplet by Bedil which expresses in two lines a complexity of thought which perhaps this entire dissertation has not been able to approach:

> The flickering outline of my being behind the veil
>
> The mirror of your thought made manifest.[84]

A future phenomenology of the inapparent must take as its theme the figure of the veil which shelters the withdrawal from all phenomenality. In our world it is the poietic which is the essential site of that which both hides and shows; that which in its hiding is melancholic and in its unconcealing full of mirth. It is thus that we can surmise that the poietic is above all the manifestation of what we may call the utter shyness of being.[85]

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[84] The original Persian couplet is

"Dar pardah bood suurat-e-moheem-e-hasteem

Aainah khayal tu afshane raaz kari"

[85] G.K. Chesterton writes, in his inimitably magnificent style, at the conclusion of his *Orthodoxy* "Joy, which was the small publicity of the pagan, is the gigantic secret of the Christian. And as I close this chaotic volume I open again the strange small book from which all Christianity came; and I am again haunted by a kind of confirmation. The tremendous figure which fills the Gospels towers in this respect, as in every other, above all the thinkers who ever thought themselves tall. His pathos was natural, almost casual. The Stoics, ancient and modern, were proud of concealing their tears. He never concealed His tears; He showed them plainly on His open face at any daily sight, such as the far sight of His native city. Yet He concealed something. Solemn supermen and imperial diplomatists are proud of restraining their anger. He never restrained His anger. He flung furniture down the front steps of the Temple, and asked men how they expected to escape the damnation of Hell. Yet He restrained something. I say it with reverence; there was in that shattering personality a thread that must be called shyness. There was something that He hid from all men when He went up a mountain to pray. There was something that He covered constantly by abrupt silence or impetuous isolation. There was some one thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that it was His mirth."(Conclusion)

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