

BEDIL IN THE LIGHT OF BERGSON

(An unpublished article of Iqbal)

Edited by:

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Introduction

Iqbal was a poet of immense erudition. He benefited from the literary and philosophical sources of the Orient and the Occident alike. His literary production mainly consists of poetry but he occasionally expressed himself in prose too. Apart from his two books¹ most of his speeches, statements and writings have also been edited in many volumes², but the possibility still remains that one may come across an unpublished statement or an article of the poet. It is my privilege to present here one such article entitled “Bedil in the Light of Bergson”. Written in the poet’s own hand-writing, the original article is preserved among the Iqbal material in the Iqbal Museum. I am indebted to Mr. Muhammad Suheyl Umar for drawing my attention to, and then helping me in obtaining the photocopy of, the article.

It would not be out of place if, before discussing the article itself, we briefly mention what Iqbal thought and wrote about the philosophy of Bergson and Bedil.

From his early days to the end of his life, Iqbal spoke very highly of the Poetry of Bedil (1664-1720) and his dynamic philosophy. He has mentioned Bedil more than once in his writings-both in his letters and statements, poetry and prose. reflections. In one of his letters to S.M. Ikram, praising his work on Ghalib, he frankly expressed his candid opinion about the influence of Bedil on Ghalib and said that inspite of all his efforts, Ghalib could not succeed in imbibing the spirit of Bedil,³ though he succeeded in imitating his

¹ The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, Bazmi-Iqbal, Lahore, 1964, and The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1986-

² For details see, Rafi ud Din Hashmi, Kitabiati-Iqbal, Iqbal Academy, 1978-

³ Bedil himself was well aware of the uniqueness of his style and spirit_ and so he had categorically warned those who intended to follow him:

style. In a letter to Mian Bashir Ahmed, Iqbal has emphasised the point that a comparative study of Ghalib and Bedil apropos of their poetry is necessary. In addition to this, it is also imperative to see how far the philosophy of life enunciated by Bedil impressed Ghalib and how far he (Ghalib) could grasp this philosophy.⁴ Iqbal was also of the opinion that both in and outside India the contemporaries of Bedil could not comprehend the theories of life enunciated by the poet. On another occasion, answering to a question of Mr. Majeed Malik, he expressed the opinion that Bedil's style could not gain currency in Urdu.

In his Stray Reflections - a conspectus of his early odd jottings based on the impressions belonging to his period of flowering - he pays glowing tributes to Bedil, as he does to so many other poets and philosophers, indigenous and otherwise. In one such "reflection" he says categorically:

"I confess I owe a great deal to Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil and Wordsworth. The first two led me into the "inside" of things, the third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals of poetry and the last saved me from atheism in my student days"⁵

Again under the title "Wonder", Iqbal compares what Plato and Bedil have said about it. He is of the opinion that the stand-point of Bedil and Plato about "Wonder" is opposed to each other. Thus runs the impression of Iqbal:

"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: To Plato wonder is valuable because it leads to our questioning of nature, to

بلند است آن قدر با آشیان عجز بیدل
کہ بے سعی شکست بال و پر نتوان رسید اینجا

⁴ Rooh-e-Makateeb-e-Iqbal, Abdullah Quraishi, Ed., Iqbal Academy Lahore, p.629-

⁵ "Stray Reflections", P.54-

Bedil, it has a value of its own, irrespective of its intellectual consequences. It is impossible to express the idea more beautifully than Bedil.”⁶

Iqbal is so enamoured of Bedil that he at times quotes his verses and lays bare certain features of his poetry and at times exhorts his friend Kishan Parshad Shad to edit the divan of Bedil.⁷ What impressed Iqbal most was not only the style of his poetry but also his life style. Comparing the mystic attitudes of Bedil and Ghalib, Iqbal had once remarked that “the mysticism of the former is dynamic and that of the latter is inclined to be static”.⁸

Not only in prose but also in his poetry, Iqbal has mentioned Bedil twice. In Bang-e-Dara, he proclaimed Bedil as **مرشد مذهب کامل** (the Perfect Mentor) in a poem entitled⁹ and inserted his famous couplet at the end of the poem:

باہر کمال اند کے آشفستگی خوش است
پر چند عقل کل شدہ بے جنوں مباح

In Zarb-e-Kalim, under the title “Mirza Bedil”¹⁰, the poet touches on the problem of the nature of the Universe and concludes by quoting a couplet from Bedil, which according to him beautifully throws open the gate of this “wonderland”. the couplet is:

دل اگر داشت وسعت بے
نشان بود این چمن
رنگ مے بیرون نشست از

⁶ . Ibid, P.83-

⁷ Rooh-e-Mahatib-e-Iqbal, P.144-

⁸ A. Anwer Beg: The Poet of the East 1961, P.202-

⁹ Bang-e-Dara, 19th Edition, 1959, P.277-

¹⁰ Zarb-e-Kalim, 11th Edition, 1963, P.121-

بسکہ میناتنگ بود

Now the question arises: why is Iqbal so much enamoured of Bedil? It is because both the poets hold a similar view of Reality. Though Iqbal, on some occasions, as is evident from the article under review, shows his differences with regard to the pantheistic attitude of Bedil, he praises him for his deep insight into the human mind. Again both the poets consider intuition to be a powerful and effective means of apprehending Reality. Both are of the opinion that the dry-as-dust rationalism does not work. They also share the unshakable belief in the potentialities of man and hold the view that man can move mountains and conquer not only the forces of nature but can also attain to the highest sublimities, ever dreamt of. Through a host of similes, metaphors and symbols, Bedil makes this point clear.¹¹ At places he unfurls the banner of human greatness and declares that the mount Sinai has borrowed its resplendence from his glow-worm (a warm and spiritualised human heart) while on other occasions he exhorts man to find out his potentialities which can only be discovered if he tears up the veil which hides the treasure from his eyes:

حیف نشگا فیتم پردہ دل
وانہ بودست مهر خرمن ہا
کدام رمزوچہ اسرار خویش را وریاب
کہ ہرچہ ہست نہاں غیر آشکار تونیست
ہر دو عالم خاک شد تابست نقش آدمی
امے بہار نیستی از قدر خود ہشیار باش
موج دریا در کنارم ازتگ وپویم پرس
آنچہ من گم کر دہ ام نایا فتن، گم کردہ ام

¹¹ On this favourite theme, Iqbal has composed hundreds of beautiful couplets to his credit-

اے طلب در وصل ہم مشکن غبار جستجو
آتشم گر زندہ می خواہی زپاننشان مرا
بحسن خویش نگاہی کہ در جهان ظہور
خطاب احسن تقویم داری از خلاق

The instances can, no doubt, be multiplied but I think these are sufficient to make clear the similarities of both the poets. The above verses remind one of what Iqbal has said on the subject in a similar vein. A few such verses are given below:

حسن کا گنج گرا نمایہ تجھے مل جاتا
تو نے فرہاد نہ کھودا کبھی ویرانہ دل
شاید اول شعور خویشتن
خویش را دیدن بنور خویشتن
آشنا اپنی حقیقت سے ہو اسے دہقان ذرا
وانہ تو، کھیتی بھی تو، باران بھی تو، حاصل بھی تو
آپہ کائنات کا معنی دیریاب تو
نکلے تری تلاش میں قافلہ ہائے رنگ و بو
عالم سوز و ساز میں وصل سے بڑھ کے بے فراق
وصل میں سرگ آرزو ہجر میں لذت طلب

از شریعت احسن التقویم شو
وارث ایمان ابراہیم شو

It is, perhaps, because of such similarities that both the poets share, to some extent, a common diction. It would be a very interesting study to discern a common diction of both the great poets but it is not the right place to attempt it. Suffice it to say that Iqbal was greatly inspired by his predecessor and it is owing to this inspiration that a diction similar to that of Bedil has naturally percolated down in his poetry. The combination of words such as (فیض شعور قافلہ رنگ وبو، آئینہ دار ہستی) etc. etc., makes it clear. Dr. Abdul Ghani in his book *Life & Works of Abdul Qadir Bedil* has given a long list of such combinations of words which in one way or another, have the impress of Bedilian style.

It is also interesting to note that both Iqbal and Bedil were much averse to those forms of mysticism which had deviated from its centre, freed itself from the divine Law and assumed the form of quite an independent "Tariqa". In "Bedil in the light of Bergson", Iqbal expresses his deep aversion to such mysticism and reacts strongly against it. He calls it Persian Mysticism which has hardly anything in common with the Islamic Sufism. In many of his writings Iqbal expresses his deep indignation against this plain aberration as is amply evident from his preface to the first edition of the *Secrets of the Self* and in his incomplete book on *Tasawwuf*, in addition to what he has said against it in his letters and in his poetry. As for Bedil he expressed his reaction against this kind of mysticism which he declared as something "meaningless".

در مزاج خلق بے کاری ہوس می پرورد
غافلان نام فضولی را تصوف کرده اند

But it does not mean that the tasawwuf brought forward by Bedil is wholly acceptable to Iqbal. Iqbal also objects to it at length and declares that in its ultimate analysis it is nothing short of the idea of “Descent” is much loved and propagated by the pantheistic sufis - and quite contrary to the spirit of Islam. It may, however, be left to the reader to decide for himself whether the tasawwuf of Bedil is pantheistic in essence or panentheistic as is insisted by some scholars of Bedil.

As to the birth-place of Bedil, Iqbal has mentioned him as “Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil of Akbarabad” in his article under discussion. In his famous “Lectures” he again expresses the same view¹².

Now as far as the birth-place of Bedil is concerned, various Tazhira writers have mentioned various places. Mir Qudrat-Ullah Qasim says that Bedil was born in Bokhara and Nassakh follows him in this regard. Khushgo is of the opinion that Bedil was born in Akbarabad while Delhi and Lahore have also been mentioned in this connection by Ali Quli Hidayat and Tahir Nasabadi respectively. May be because of such contradictory opinions, Iqbal picked Akbarabad to be the birth-place of Bedil. However it has now been established both from the internal evidences of Bedil’s poetry and from the writings of his contemporaries (the most reliable of his contemporaries being Mir Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami) that Bedil was born in what was known in the Buddhist Era as Patliputra and what is now known as Patna (Azimabad)¹³.

Perhaps enough of Bedil. We now turn to Bergson (1859-1941) who remained a favourite of Iqbal throughout his life and from whose writings Iqbal has gleaned considerably. It may be noted here that the theories of “Elan Vital” and “Intuition” amply propounded by Bergson in the last quarter of the nineteenth century gained a wide popularity in the first half of the twentieth century. The concepts of Reality put forward by Iqbal and Bergson have many common elements. Iqbal was much fascinated by the

¹² The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Ashraf, LHR, rep. 1968, P.B-

¹³ For a detailed study of the origin, birth-place and the early life of the poet, the reader is referred to Dr. Abdul Ghani’s book, op.cit., PP.4,31-

concept of Pure Duration propounded by Bergson and both in his poetry and prose Iqbal elaborated it force -fully. In the Secrets of the Self under the title "الوقت سيف" (Time is a Sword) Iqbal quotes Mohammad bin Idrees Ashshafiee who called Time as "the cutting Sword" and then proceeds to elaborate the theory of pure duration adding the ahadith **وقت الله** and

في مع الله وقت in support of the Real Time. He accosts those who are **لا تسبو الدهر** "Captives of tomorrows and yesterdays" and urges them to see a Universe that lies hidden in their hearts. Time, which these short-sighted people have taken for a straight line with nights and days as dots on it ¹⁴ is, in reality everlasting and indivisible:

باز با پیمانہ لیل و نہار
فکر تو پیمو و طول روزگار
تو کہ از اصل زمان آگہ نہ
از حیات جاوداں آگہ نہ

اصل وقت از گردش خورشید نیست
وقت جاوید است و خور جاوید نیست
وقت را مثل گمان گسترده
امتیاز دوش و فردا کرده

¹⁴ In the article "Bedil in the Light of Bergson", Iqbal has called the spatialised Time as "False, unreal time."

In the poem quoted above, Iqbal has not mentioned Bergson but it is clear from its contents that the concept of Time has been enunciated in the light of Pure Duration which is the corner-stone in the philosophy of the French philosopher.

In his preface to *Pyam-e-Mashriq* (1923), Iqbal has given us the tidings of a new world with a new man that is emerging out of the ashes of the old world. According to the poet a silhouette of this new man and the dim contours of this new world can be seen in the writings of Einstein and Bergson. In the same book,, Iqbal delivers a message from Bergson as "پیغام

"برگسون" in which the intentioned philosopher advises human kind to bring forward an intellect which has drawn inspiration from the heart because only - such intellect can comprehend the mystery of life. Now this is another name for intuition-the kernel of the Bergsonian Philosophy.

Intuition, according to Bergson, is a direct apprehension of Reality which is non-intellectual. In intuition all reality is present. It does not admit of analysis because in analysis all is over and past or not- yet. But what does this intuition bring to us? This has been answered pertinently by H. Wildon Carr. He says:

“What intuition does for us is to give us another means of apprehension by a fluid and not a static category; in apprehending our life as true duration we grasp it in the living experience itself and instead of fixing the movement in a rigid frame follow it in its sinuosities; we have a form of knowledge which adopts the movement.¹⁵

Now the question arises why did Bergson lay such a stress on intuition and how can he say that the Ultimate Reality of the universe is spiritual? The answer is that after deep observation and still deeper insight in to the phenomena of life, Bergson had reached the conclusion that the intolerant and haughty cult of science which was so prevalent and pervasive in his days

¹⁵ . The philosophy of Change, 1914, pp. 30,31-

and had pretensions of being all-knowing touched only the surface of the human self and could not fathom the depths of the ocean of the Universe. How very strange that all metaphysics had been thrown aside as “Fantasy” in his days while Bergson thought and, indeed, very rightly that science was ill-suited to grasp the Reality in its entirety and it could only be grasped with the help of intuition.¹⁶ He was of the view that a genuine metaphysics results from intuition and not from intellectual activity. He was of the opinion that it was the soul that brings the past to act in the present and is the only unifying factor between the past and the future. Hence the life a perpetual and unceasing flux. Bergson has elaborated this “unceasing flux” in the following, words:

“I find first of all, that I pass from state to state. I am warm or cold, I am merry or sad, I work or I do nothing, I look at what is around me or I think of something else. Sensations, feelings, volitions, ideas - such are the changes into which my existence is divided and which colour it 7 in turns. I change, then without unceasing.”¹⁷

This unceasing flux, this formidable impetus equally governs every living being and the whole of humanity, according to Bergson, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind with a view to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable hindrances. Apparently, it seems that the forces that hinder and thwart this unceasing flow of life are something foreign to it. For example matter may apparently be regarded as inimical to the spiritual reality and may thus be declared as something detached from it. Bergson’s *Elan vital*, however, does not admit of any such detachment or separation. In the article under discussion Iqbal has expressed the same view and almost exactly in the same way as the famous exponent of Bergson - Wildon Carr, has. Carr says:

“The spiritual reality, then, which philosophy affirms is not reality that is detached from and foreign to matter, superposed upon matter, or existing

¹⁶ The opening lines of the *Creative Evolution*, (The Modern library Edition) 1944, run thus: “The existence of which we are most assured and which we know best is unquestionably our own, for of every other object we have notions which may be considered external and superficial, whereas of ourselves, our perception is internal and profound,” Chapter 1, p. 3-

¹⁷ *Creative Evolution*, op.cit., p. 3-

separately from matter. It is not the assertion that there is a psychological reality, but that the one is the inverse order of that which is the other. Physics is, to quote a phrase of Bergson, inverted “Psychics”. The two orders of reality are not aspects, they are distinguishable and yet inseparable in an original movement, the absence of one order of beginning is necessarily the presence of other.¹⁸

And now something more about the article that is being introduced in the following pages: In “Bedil in the light of Bergson” what is astonishing are the striking similarities that Iqbal has discerned between the two master minds. Instead, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that these similarities are not circumscribed to Bedil and Bergson alone but can be found in Iqbal’s philosophy also. But it must also be noted that Iqbal has also his points of divergence. His familiarity with Bedil and Bergson is not one of unquestioning fidelity to them. He has, at points, very pertinently criticised the philosophy of both Bedil and Bergson and has posed very pungent questions with regard to the Sufi idea of “Descent” in case of Bedil and to the idea propounded by Bergson that intelligence is a kind of original sin and with a view to reaching the core of Reality one must revert to the pre- intelligence condition as Bergson insists. In a similar vein, Iqbal has raised serious questions as to the total validity of intuition.

In his lecture “The Revelation of Religious Experience”, Iqbal has paid homage to Bergson as well as criticised; him on certain points. For example, Iqbal is of the opinion that unity of consciousness has a forward looking aspect also which Bergson has totally ignored. Iqbal thinks that the error of Bergson consists in regarding pure time as prior to itself to which alone pure Duration is predicable. Some such objections taken together with those raised in the article under review, form almost a pithy critique of Bergson; much beneficial and intriguing for the students of philosophy.

In the article under review Iqbal’s attitude towards the sublimation of man is as pronounced as in his other writings especially in his poetry. He believes in self-fortification:

¹⁸ The Philosophy of Change, 1914, p. 185-

بخود خزیده و محکم چوکوهساران زی
چو خس مزی که هوا تیز و شعله بیباک است

He has lashed out severely on the idea of annihilation which according to him is the vice of all Persian Sufism. Discussing the sufi idea of “Descent” in the article under discussion, Iqbal is of the view that this idea is Manichaeism in spirit. Manichaeism, according to our poet, not only influenced Christianity but Islam also. He is of the opinion that the;

“Arabian conquest of Persia resulted after all in the conversion of Islam to Manichaeism and the old Persian doctrine of the self darkening of God reappeared in the form of the sufi idea of ‘Descent’, combined with an asceticism thoroughly Manichaeism in spirit.”

It is quite evident from the above extract that Iqbal thought the idea of “Descent” and “Asceticism” thoroughly Manichaeism in spirit and held the conquest of Persia responsible for the “conversion” of Islam to Manichaeism. It is strange that Islam, much stronger in spirit and culture, could have submitted to Manichaeism so much so as to undergo a Manichaeism conversion. It is a very debatable question. But this question aside, the interesting thing is that what Iqbal wrote in 1910 in his Stray Reflections about the Muslim conquest of Persia is diametrically apposed to the notion he expresses in the present article. He had written under the title “The Conquest of Persia”:

“If you ask me what is the most important event in the history of Islam, I shall say without hesitation:

The Conquest of Persia”. The battle of Nehawand gave the Arabs not only a beautiful country, but also an ancient civilization, or more properly, a people who could make a civilization with Semitic and Aryan material. Our Muslim civilization is a product of the cross-fertilization of the Semitic and the Aryan ideas---But for the conquest of Persia, the civilization of Islam

would have been one sided. The conquest of Persia gave us what the Conquest of Greece gave to Romans.¹⁹

The comparison of both the extracts given above not only makes manifest the contradictions but also shows that the present article might have been written much after 1910 and probably in 1916 or thereabout.

Although, to the question as to when the article under review was written, nothing can be said precisely, internal evidences, however, reveal that the article might have been written in 1916 or thereabout. My contention is that, in this article, Iqbal's opposing and rather indignant attitude towards Persian Sufism is reminiscent of his writings on the same subject during 1915-1917. Besides the preface and certain articles alluded to earlier, his letters to certain literary luminaries during the period also show his aversion to the Persian sufism. For example in 1917 he wrote to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi:

“Sufism is nothing short of an alien plant on the soil of Islam and nourished in the mental climate of the “Ajamites.”²⁰

¹⁹ Stray Reflections, pp.49-50-

²⁰ Iqbal Nama, Ashraf, Lahore, (Vold) p. 78-

2.2.21 & the night
of Bergamo.

Large white paper detail of Alvarado is a representation
and of the highest order - perhaps the greatest work that
the artist has produced since the days of the.

~~Franklin, perhaps before which one could say there
was an absolute and complete an acute opinion
and also ruthlessly direct on concrete and
experience with a view to disclose the presence of
the universal therein. Detail is a work ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{of} ~~the~~
analysis ^{is naturally} ~~is naturally~~ ^{is naturally} ~~is naturally~~ ^{is naturally} ~~is naturally~~
maintained. The work like the concrete one gently
and suggests the universal in it by mere looking
at its own subtle points of view.~~

1.15 - 1.15. 21. 21. 21.
" 1.15 - 1.15. 21. 21. 21.

"He was unable to see the faces of the Ocean"
O restless observer! then each closed their
eyes, where is the veil?"

again we have the poet's vision of the individual
(Jes. Alvarado) in the following way:

1.15 - 1.15. 21. 21. 21.
" 1.15 - 1.15. 21. 21. 21.

The Dawn is nothing more than a confused jumble
of scattered particles of light; yet we talk of it as
though it were something concrete, a distinct unity,
a substance. "The conditions (of life) in this wilderness
of a world, says detail, have fastened upon me like
the Dawn, the false charge of a concrete substance
which my nature does not admit."

But the most remarkable thing about Detail,
however, is the strikingly polyphonic character of

How far is this notion different from the one which he expressed in his *Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (1908) in which he had very vehemently repudiated this idea, propounded by E. G. Browne! It must also be noted that Iqbal's stay in Europe was a turning point in his life and after 1910, he constantly pondered over the question of Muslim revivalism and the concept of Self Iqbal has expressed elsewhere that he gave a serious consideration to the concept of 'Self' for at last fifteen years. He had at last reached the conclusion that one of the most potent factors in the decay of Muslim culture was the Persian mystic thought and practices that had entered the Islamic organism and had sapped its energies. This idea formed its final crystallization in 1915 when his book *The Secrets of the Self* was published for the first time and caused a lot of stir, Commotion, indignation, disparagement, and agitation among the traditional pantheistic sufi circles. The present article, especially the portion consisting of his criticism of Pantheistic Sufism, it seems, is the ramification of what he had written in *The Secrets of the Self* on the subject.

Lastly, it seems that once written in a running hand with much editing and pruning, the article was put aside and was never reviewed by the author. That is why there are certain omissions. A few spelling mistakes also crept into the text. We have given the missing words in the brackets and the spelling mistakes (not more than three or four) have also been corrected. At places it was deemed necessary to add some notes. These will be found at the end of the article.

In the end I would like to thank Mr. Mohammad Salim-ur-Rehman for his help in deciphering certain words that were not easily readable.

(Dr. Tehsin Firaqi)

Bedil in the Light of Bergson

Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil of Akbarabad is a speculative mind of the highest order, perhaps the greatest poet-thinker that India has produced since the days of Shaker.²¹ Shanker, however, is an acute logician who

²¹ Shankar Acharya - one of the greatest Hindu philosophers. He lived in the 9th century A.D. He died at the age of 32. He wrote the exegeses of Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Shrimad Bhagvat Gita

ruthlessly dissects our concrete sense-experience with a view to disclose the presence of the Universal therein. Bedil - a poet to whom analysis is naturally painful and inartistic deals with the concrete more gently and suggests the Universal in it by mere looking at its own suitable point of view:

"ز موج پردہ بروے حباب نتوان بست
تو چشم بسته اسے بے خبر نقاب کجاست"

"the wave cannot screen the face of the Ocean

O heedless observer, thou hast closed thine eyes, where is the veil"?

Again we have the poet's vision of the individual (Jiv Atma) in the following verse:²²

می کشم چو صبح از اسباب این وحشت سرا
تہمت ربطے کہ نتوان بست بر اجزاءے من

The dawn is nothing more than a. confused jumble of scattered particles of light, yet we talk of it as though it was something concrete, a distinct unity, a substance.

"The conditions (of life) in this wilderness of a world", says Bedil, "have fastened upon me like the Dawn, the false charge of a concrete combination which my nature does not admit."

²² In Kulliyat-e-Bedil (Selected), Al-Kitab, Lahore, 1978, the second line of the couplet runs:

اینجاست کہ عنقاتہ بال است مگس را

But most remarkable thing about Bedil is the staggeringly polyphonic character of his mind which appears to pass through the spiritual experiences of nearly all the great thinkers of the world - Bergson not excepted. And it is to the Bergsonian phase of his poetic thought that I want particularly to draw the attention of our students of Western philosophy. In our examination of Bedil's poetry, however, we should never forget the fact that it is unfair to expect a worked out system of metaphysics from a poet whose impatient mind cannot but pass over the infinitely varying aspects of an elusive Reality without undergoing the painful work of systematization. In Bedil the Bergsonian conception of Reality appears to be one among other views which the poet seems to try in the course of his spiritual development.

To Bergson Reality is a continuous flow, a perpetual Becoming; and external objects which appear to us as so many immobilities are nothing more than the lines of interest which our intellect traces out across this flow. They are, so to speak, constellations which determine the direction of our movement and thus assist us in, steering across the over-flowing ocean of life. Movement, then, is original and' what appears as fixity or rest in the shape of external things is only movement retarded, so to speak, by a mathematically inclined intellect, which in view of the practical interests of life, shows off the flow as something still. By its very nature this mathematical intellect can go over the surface of things only, it can have no vision of the real change from which they are derived. Thus the method of physical science, working with spatial categories does not and cannot carry us very far in our knowledge of Reality. Is one to catch a glimpse of the ultimate nature of Reality a new method is necessary and that method is intuition which, according to Bergson is only a profound kind of thought, revealing to us the nature (of) life, owing to the privileged position that we occupy in regard to it. This method discloses to us that the element of time, which physical science ignores in its study of external things, constitutes the very essence of living things, and is only another name for life. Thus the ultimate reality is time - the stuff out of which all things are made - a Becoming, movement, life and time are only synonymous expressions. But this time which Bergson calls 'Pure Duration' must be carefully distinguished from the false notion which our mathematical intellect forms of it. Our intellect regards time as an infinite straight line a portion of which we have traversed and a portion has yet to be traversed. This is only rendering time to a space

of one dimension with moments as its constitutive points. This spatialised time is false, unreal time. Real time or 'Pure Duration' does not admit of any statically conceived todays and yesterdays. It is an actual ever-present "Now" which does not leave the past behind it, but carries it along in its bosom and creates the future out of itself. Thus Reality, as conceived by Bergson is a continuous forward creative movement with opposites implicit in its nature and be-coming more and more explicit as it evolves itself. It is not a completed whole of which we can possess a complete system of truth.

Let us now trace the various steps of Bergsonian thought in the poetry of Bedil. It is, however, necessary to state here that Bedil wrote a good deal of prose and poetry. The present study is based on his *Dimon* alone (comprising almost thirty thousand verses) of which the present writer fortunately possesses a manuscript copy.

1) The first point to be noted is that our intellect can touch only the surface of Reality, it can never enter in to it. Bedil is never tired of emphasising this fact:-

موج و کف مشکل که گردد محرم
قعر محیط
عالمے بیتاب تحقیق است و
استعداد نیست

“The wave and the foam cannot see in to the depth of the ocean:

A whole world is restless for the knowledge of Reality,

Yet does not possess the necessary qualification”!

Physical science armoured with logical categories decomposes the Real with its conceptualization of it. It is only a kind of post-mortem examination of Reality and consequently cannot catch it as a living forward movement:-

این جمله دلائل که ز تحقیق تو گل کرد
در خانه خورشید چراغان نجوم است

“All these arguments which blossom out of thy

investigation are nothing more than tiny star-lamps in the lustrous residence of the Sun”

2) What then is the proper method for a vision of the Real? The poet says:

بیدل نشوی بے خبر از سیر گریبان
اینجاست که عنقاته پاگشت
مگس را

O Bedil; look within,

It is here that the ‘Anqa (a fabulous bird standing in Sufi terminology for a symbol of Reality) falls a victim to the fly”.

But how is this intuition to be achieved and what is its character? The answer of both Bergson and Bedil is exactly the same. This intuition is not a kind of mystic vision vouchsafed to us in a state of ecstasy. According to Bergson it is only a profounder kind of thought.

When M. Le Roy²³ suggested to Bergson that the true opposition was between intellectual thought and thought lived, Bergson replied - “That is

²³ Edmuned Le Roy (1870-1954) was a French philosopher of science, ethics and religion. He was deeply indebted to Bergson for his own thought. Le Roy took a pragmatic view of the nature of scientific truth, a view more or less shared by his contemporaries Bergson, Henri Poincare, E. Wilbois. He was of the view that genuine knowledge is a kind of self-identification with the object in its primitive reality, uncontaminated by the demands of practical need. Intuition, not discursive thought, is the instrument of such knowledge and

still intellectualism in my opinion”. “There are”, says Bergson two kinds of intellectualism, the true which lives its ideas and a false intellectualism which immobilises moving ideas into solidified concepts to play with them like counters”. True intellectualism, according to Bergson is to be achieved by eliminating the element of space in our perception of ‘Pure Duration’ just as physical science eliminates the element of time in its dealing with external reality. Bedil proposes exactly the same procedure when he says:-

"اے نگہت گل اند کے از رنگ بروں آ"

“O thou flower-perfume;

walk out of the world of colour”!

The word “colour” symbolises space in sufi-terminology. The sphere of externality is divided by the sufis as the world of colour and odour. The poet represents man as a wave of odour which typifies the subtle invisible movement of the world of consciousness and proposes to him that in order to have a glimpse of his real nature he ought to despatialise himself. Thus all that the intuitive method requires is an effort to get rid of space - which no doubt is an externally hard affair to our intellect whose natural bent is mathematical. Bedil employs another expressive metaphor to convey the above idea. He imagines life to be a river. So long as the surface of this river is perfectly calm and undisturbed the waves are as it were beneath the flow and covered by it as a garment covers the body. When, however, the wave emerges, it leaves the continuity of the flow, it spatialises itself and becomes comparatively immobile. Thus it divests itself of its flowing apparel and appears in its nakedness. The same applies to the eye - like bubble who by its emergence from the stream throws away its water-clothing and by sinking

the criterion of truth is that one should have lived it; otherwise according to Le Roy one ought not to understand it.

Le Roy was a notable exponent of H. Bergson on whose philosophy he wrote his famous book “New Philosophy -Henri Bergson (1913).

down again into the flow of the stream retrieves its lost apparel. The reader, I hope, will now be able to understand the following verse:

دریں دریا کہ عریانست یکسر ساز امواجش
حباب مابه پیراہن رسیداز چشم پوشیدن

“In this river (of life) where the waves emerge into nakedness,

“The little bubble of my life regains its lost apparel by closing its eyes”.

Or in Bergsonian language any apparent immobility or discreteness won back its lost place in the indivisible continuity of life by intuition.

3) The next question is, what is the revelation of this intuition?

The following verses will indicate Bedil’s answer to the question:

a)

"در طلب گاه دل چون موج و حباب
منزل و جاده پر دو را سفر است"

“In the domain of heart (i. e. life) both the road and the destination are like waves and bubbles, in perpetual motion”!

"ہستی روش ناز
جنوں تاز کہ وارد
می آیدم از گرد

نفس بوئے خرامے"

It is almost impossible to render the verse into English; I shall endeavour to explain the ideas embodied in it. The poet imagines human breath (the emblem of life) to be a mere! confusion of fine particles of dust which indicates that something has swept through the vast domain of existence leaving a dust confusion along its infinite line of advance just as (a) meteor leaves a trail of light along its fiery course. Thus human breath is gross matter compared to the subtlety of life and its restless confusion "savours of" the rapidity of the life movement in the universe.

c)

"سراپا و حشتم اما بناموس
سبک روحی
زچشم نقش پاچوریگ می دارم
سفر پنہاں"

The desert-sand is supposed to be always journeying though its progressive motion is invisible even to the eye of the foot-print, which is by its nature so closely associated with the sand (the Persian poets speak of the eye of the foot-prints). In the same way the poet tells us, the subtlety of the life-motion within us cannot be perceived. "I am wholly a tendency to run away; yet not to betray the subtlety of inner life, I keep, like the desert-sand my journey hidden even from the eye of the foot-prints.

d)

"بیدل از خویش بایدت رفتن
ورنه نتوان بآن خرام رسید"

“Bedil! you ought to move out of yourself if you wish to have a vision of the beloved’s graceful movement” i.e., it is by the power of Intuition that we have a vision of the movement of the Real.

e)

"جاءے آرام بو حشت
کدهء عالم نیست
ذرئہ نیست کہ سرگرم
ہوائے دم نیست
باعث وحشت جسم
است نفسہا بیدل
خاک تاہم نفس باد بودے
دم نیست"

“No rest in this wilderness:

every atom here is warmed up by a desire to run away:

Even the particles of the body owing to the association with life-breath have a tendency to disperse: What is man but dust associated with air”!

f)

"یک دو نفس خیال باز
رشته شوق کن دراز
تا ابد از ازل تباز ملک
خداات زندگی"

“Lose thy thought for a moment or two, prolong the thread of sympathy:

Then sweep freely from Eternity to Eternity

in God’s vast domain of life”!

i.e. it is in the moments of intuition that we are identified with the eternally rapid march of life.

From the verses that I have cited and explained above, it is perfectly clear that, according to our poet movement constitutes the essence of all life. It is, however, necessary to warn the reader against a misunderstanding which may arise from the necessities of language and the metaphors employed by Bedil. The form of his expression suggests that he does not regard movement as absolute, but always speaks of it as though it were a quality of some thing.

This, I understand, is not the right view of his position. If movement is supposed to be the essence of life, it is obvious that it must be regarded as original and absolute. Otherwise time would cease to be real. Movement thus regarded would be identical with time itself. And this is exactly what we find in a number of verses wherein the poet guards us against the idea of an unreal time which our mathematical understanding powders up (to use a Bergsonian expression) into moments. The distinction between real and unreal time is very clearly indicated by Bedil in the following two verses:-

"بنظم عمر که سر تا سرش روانی بود
خیال مدت موهوم سکنه خوانی بود"
"هرچه از مدت هست و بود است
دیر ها پیش خرام زود است"

“In the metre of the life-verse which is wholly a flow the idea of unreal time is nothing more than a hiatus!

“The time of the external world is only delays compared to the brisk movement (of life)”:

It is obvious from these verses that the words (روانی) and (مدت موهوم) in the first verse and (مدت هست و بود) and (خرام زود) in the second verse are meant only to bring out their distinction between Bergson's 'Pure Duration' and spatialised time. Real time according to our poet, is a continuous' flow, and its association with matter does not in any way approach the rapidity of its movement:

"نشد مانع عمر قید تعلق
تورفتار این پائے در گل ندیدی"

"The restrictions which association with a body imposes on us cannot obstruct the flow of life, only you do not see the movement of this prisoner of earth".

The poet further emphasises the continuousness and indivisibility of time in the following verses:

غبار ماضی و مستقبل از
جان تو مے جو شد
در امر و زاست گم
گرداشگافی دی و فردا را"

"The mist of Past and Future rises up from thy present;

Subject your tomorrow and yesterday to a searching analysis and you will find them lost in your today" :-

"زخود غافل گذشتی فال

استقبال زوحالت
نگه از جلوه پیش افتاد امروز
تو فرداشد"

“Your Present forebodes the Future only because you are not aware of yourself (your real nature). (The idea of a future) is nothing but the desire to see getting ahead of the thing seen”:

"فطرت سست پیے از پیروی وہم امل
لغزشے خورد کہ امروز مرا فرداشد"

“My sluggish nature, following unreal hopes fell down by a false step in such a way that my “today” was turned into “morrow”.

The idea underlying the last two verses is nearly the same. The poet tries a poetic solution of a psychological problem i.e. how we spatialise time and suggests that the idea of a “not-yet”²⁴ is either the mental fall of sluggish nature in its pursuit of false hopes, or a mere illusion of expectation engendered by our immobilization of what is in its nature mobile and

²⁴ Iqbal has spoken of this idea in his Reconstruction (pp: 59,6(1) also. He says, “The perfection of the creative self consists, not in a mechanistically conceived immobility as Aristotle might have led Ibn- e-Hazm to think. It consists in the vaster basis of his creative vision. God’s life is self-revelation; not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached. The not-yet of man does mean pursuit and may mean failure; the not-yet of God means unfulfilling realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process”.

creative. To Muslim thinkers the idea of an ever-creative Reality is not new. According to the theologians of Islam who conceived the deity as an Infinite personal power, the creative activity of God has not exhausted itself in the Universe. The Universe is not a complete whole, created once for all, it is not achievement but a continuous process. Thus our knowledge of it must always remain a useless achievement of truth as a perfect system is, in the nature of things, impossible to man and the potentialities of the Universe are known to God alone. Beyond the actual present, there is nothing. What we call "there" is only a "here" in disguise, says Bedil:

"پرچه آنجاست چو آنجاریسی اینجا گردد
چه خیال است که امروز تو فردا گردد"

"What is "there" becomes "here" when you reach it; likewise your today disguises itself in the form of tomorrow".

4) We now pass on to another important idea in the philosophy of Bedil. If the essence of things is an absolute movement, how is it that we find immobile solid things around us? Bergson's answer to this question is perhaps the most original that has ever been given in the history of thought. He tells us that in the very nature of the vital impulse as we find it manifested every where, there are two implicit tendencies, opposing and complementing each other- a movement forward and a movement backward represented by what we call instinct and intelligence in all living forms. The function of the backward movement is to immobilize the onward psychic rush, to drag it from behind like a brake as it were, and thus,- in view of its practical interests, to give it a static appearance. What we call matter or extension is not something detached from what we call spiritual reality. They are both opposing movements distinguishable but inseparable in an original movement. It is the practical interests of life to conceal its flow and see it as though it were a fixity or some thing still. For this purpose it develops along the course of its evolution, the organ of a selective intelligence which is

eminently fit for the task of veiling it and giving it the appearance demanded by practical interests. Thus the very thing which apparently retards the progress of life determines and guides the direction of its movement. Matter, then according to Bergson, is only life's practical vision of itself. Now Bedil takes exactly the same view of matter, though perhaps he is not fully conscious of the drift and meaning of this idea. The following verses will bear me out:

"تنزیه ز آگاهی ماگشت کدورت
جان بود که در فکر خود افتاد و بدن شد"

Our awareness turned the Absolute Purity into dust; the Vital impulse seeking its own interest thickened into body".

"جلوه از شوخی نقاب
حیرت افکنده است
رنگ صہبا در نظر ہا کار مینا
می کند"

“The flying sheen (of wine) has put on itself the veil of wonder, the colour of wine that appears as a goblet.”.

The word (حیرت) in the first half of the verse literally means wonder. Bedil, however, in view of psychological nature of the emotion of wonder, always uses it in the sense of motionlessness or arrest. All that he means is that the apparently inert matter that we see around us is not some thing foreign to Reality; it is like the flying sheen of wine, arrested in its flight, appearing to us as though it were a solid goblet enclosing the flow.

(iii)

حائے نیست بجولانگہ معنی، شدار
خواب پادر ره ماسنگ نشان می باشد"

“In the race-course of Reality there is no obstruction; even the benumbed foot (i.e. arrested motion) serves along this path as a milestone”.

In this verse, Bedil employs the very metaphor (i.e. milestone) which some of the Bergsonian writers have employed to illustrate their meaning. The poet means to say that the heart of Reality is perpetual movement; what appears to arrest or obstruct this motion serves only, as milestone directing further movement.

(iv)

گر تغافل می تراشد
گاه نیرنگ نگاه
جلوه را آءینه ماسخت
رسوا کرده است"

“It is our mirror (i.e. intelligence) which tells scandalous tales about the nature of Reality!

Now it reveals Reality as inattention (i.e. extension) now as vision”!

The words and in the first half of the verse symbolize matter and consciousness, body and soul, thought and extension; and the use of the former is especially happy in the verse; since it suggests the psychical nature of matter. Bedil means to say that the apparent duality which we find in the unity of Reality is due only to our way of looking at it. We see it through the spectacles of our intelligence which mars our act of perception and reveals a sharp duality nowhere existing in the nature of the Real.

(V) To the question why intelligence mars our perception of Reality, the poet’s answer is that it is because the intellectual act is wholly coloured by the practical interests of life:

”موج خیز فنا کوه و دشت یک دریاست
خیال تشنه لب ما سراب می ریزد“

The word فنا in the verse literally means annihilation in sufi terminology, however, the word means self-negation or absorption in the Universal self of God. Thus the word فنا is negation only from the standpoint of the individual self; from the standpoint of the Absolute being it is wholly affirmation: “In the ocean of the Absolute Being”, says the poet,” mountains and deserts form one continuous flow, it is our thirsty understanding that builds mirages in it”. The thirsty alone are subject to the optical illusion of a mirage, since the presence, of a crying practical interest i.e. satisfaction of the desire for drink, determines the character of their perception and makes the dry desert sand assume the appearance of a sheet of water. I think, however, that Bedil has failed properly to express the idea that the form and quality of our knowledge is determined by the practical interests of life. The poet ‘Urfi has a similar verse:

زنقص تشنه لبی وان بعقل خویش مناز
دلت فریب گر از جلوه سراب نخورد

“Do not be - proud of your power of discrimination if you are not deceived by the mirage; it is the want of intensity in your desire for water that has saved you from the illusion”.

Thus to ‘Urfi the character of our perceptual knowledge is wholly coloured by the presence or absence of a practical interest. Bedil, however, means to convey a much deeper meaning than ‘Urfi. The object of his attack is our conceptual knowledge-the mirror referred to in the verse cited in para (IV) which reveals a perplexing multiplicity of immobilities in the one continuous movement of life.

(VI) In another verse Bedil’s attack on conceptual knowledge is much more pointed. He orients the idea in much the same way as Prof. W. James who speaks of our “Verbalization of Reality”. Following the metaphor suggested by the word verbalization the poet tells us that it is our speech that turns the dynamic into the static and specializes it by a conceptual handling. He says:

تاخموشی دا شتیم
آفاق بے تشویش بود
موج این بحر از زبان
ماتلاطم کرده است"

“As long as silence reigned (i.e. as long as there was no verbalization of Reality) all was calm and un-disturbed, it is the tongue of man that has given a hot-bed of stormy waves to the ocean (of life)”.²⁵

²⁵ Iqbal was much enamoured of the dynamic vein of ‘Urfi’s poetry. He has quoted the same couplet in his “Lectures” (pp 52,53) while laying bare the inadequacy of Bergson’s conscious

To obtain a complete insight into the nature of reality, to see it as it is, we must cease to verbalise. As a source of knowledge all conceptualization is in the words of Prof. James, “a challenge in a foreign language thrown to a man absorbed in his own business”. The only course open to us is to identify ourselves with the life of reality. Through sympathy and actually to live its forward movement, Intelligence touches only the outer skein of reality, it is like the fisherman’s net which dips into the water but cannot catch the flow of it. Bedil, therefore, recommends silence or deverbilization of reality as a means of getting rid of the oppositions of life:-

“تاخموشی نگزینی حق و باطل باقی است
رشته را که گره جمع نسازد دوسرا است”

“So long as you do not resume silence, the distinction of appearance and reality will remain; a thread not tied by a knot must always have two ends”.

5) We have now to see whether Bedil’s view of reality gives us any promise of personal immortality as understood in Islam. Wildon Carr²⁶ raises this question from the standpoint of Bergsonian philosophy and says:-

experience. To Iqbal even our acts of perception are determined by our immediate interests and purposes.

²⁶ H. Wildon Carr (1857-1929) seems to have been a favourite writer of Iqbal. He has both translated and commented on the philosophical works of Bergson. He published two books on him: Henri Bergson and The Philosophy of Change both in 1911. The latter was his famous work on the fundamental principle of the philosophy of Bergson. He also translated Bergson’s Mind-Energy (1920). In addition to these he wrote on the philosophy of Benedetto Croce also.

He was a professor of philosophy in the University of London, King’s college. He was also president of the Aristotlean Society and a Fellow of the Royal Society of literature. He has numerous publications to his credit some of which have been mentioned above. His other important publications are Changing Backgrounds in Religion and Ethics (1927), The Free will Problem (1928), The Unique Status of Man (1928) and Leibnitz (1931).

His books The Philosophy of Change and The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce were found in the personal library, of Iqbal, now preserved in the Iqbal Museum.

“It is certainly impossible that the soul of an individual can exist as that individual apart from the body, because it is just that embodiment which constitutes the individuality. But it is quite possible to imagine, if we find it otherwise credible, that the miracle of a resurrection of the body may be a fact. Clearly it would be vain to seek in philosophy the confirmation of such a belief but also it would be beyond the sphere of philosophy to negate it... But there is one distinct ground of personal hope that this philosophy of change alone gives. We have seen that in the reality of ‘Pure Duration’ the past is preserved - preserved in its entirety. Now if this preservation of the past is a necessary attribute of ‘Pure Duration’, then may it not be that some means exists, some may think must exist by which life preserves those individual histories that seem to break their continuity at death? If it is not so there must be unaccountable waste in the universe, for almost every living form carries on an activity beyond the maturing of the germ and its transmission to a new generation. It would be in entire accordance with what we know if it should prove to be so, but we may never know²⁷”

It must, however, be remembered that if life is a psychic flow carrying on its own past within it, thus preserving its history it is clear that every forward creative step that life takes must be a new situation and can never be regarded as a mere repetition. I think then that the philosophies of both Bedil and Bergson negate the possibility of a resurrection of the body. Bedil is perfectly clear on this point and is not at all afraid of an inference which necessarily follows from the view of life he takes though it happens to be opposed to the teachings of Islam. He says:

"گل یاد غنیچه می کندوسینه می درد
رفت آنکه جمع می شدم اکنون نمی شود"

“The flower thinks of its bud-state and rends asunder its heart; could I revert to the bloom? Impossible now!”

²⁷ The extract has been taken from Wildon Carr’s book *The Philosophy of Change* (1914), pp. 194-195.

Having drawn the reader's attention to all the principal features of Bedil's thought, it is now time that I should proceed to a critical estimate of his ideas. I think the reader will agree with me when I say that a system of metaphysics worked out in detail cannot be expected from a man whose immediate interest is poetry rather than philosophy. But when we study Bedil's poems carefully we cannot fail to recognise that although his love of imaginative expression makes him impatient of logical analysis, he is fully conscious of the seriousness of his philosophical task. Considering his view of the nature of intelligence and the revelations of intuition, it is obvious that his poetry treasures up a great philosophical truth regarding the ultimate nature of reality, the details of which he orients in the spirit of a poet rather than a philosopher. The truth that we live forward and think backward, that the two opposing movements of thought and extension are inseparable in the original Becoming is sufficiently clear from his poetry, yet we find in it nothing of the great wealth of illustrative details, nothing of the practical attitude towards time-experience that characterises the philosophy of Bergson. In so far as the former point is concerned, I think, we cannot, in fairness, claim it for Bedil, since he is essentially a poet, but we are surely entitled to claim for him the latter. Bedil's poetry, however, falsifies the expectation. All conceptual handling of reality according to him is absolutely valueless. He counsels us not (to) fall a victim to the concrete, since the beauty of the mirror of life does not consist in its reflection:

"دل رانفریبی بفسو نہاے تعین
آرائش ایں آئینہ تمثال نباشد"

Is not the system of Bergson himself; he may be imagined to argue, a kind of conceptualization of reality? Are we not in the practical attitude towards reality, suggested by him, employing the same conceptualist intellect, which by its very nature decomposes and spatialises the original flux of things? Does the practical attitude of Bergson amount to anything more than the possibility of acquiring more profitable short-cuts, artifices and arrangements? Can empirical science give us anything more than this? If the two tendencies forward and backward, are implicit in the psychic flow and the real nature of life in its onward rush, why should we not reject the

schematic or diagrammatic representation of it altogether and centralize all our hopes in intuition alone? Have we to live in a Universe as it is, or a Universe constructed by intelligence and distorted in the construction? Bergson's practical attitude, though it may be more profitable to us as spatialised centres of life, is much less intellectual than the purely intellectual outlook of the older intellectualists: Both practical and intellectual outlooks on life feeding only on the outer husk of reality - which as a perpetual flow must always remain beyond their reach are equally futile as means of furnishing a complete insight into the ultimate nature of life. The difference between them is only one of degree and not of kind. The same aspect of our experience, far from giving us an insight into reality, is admittedly a veil on the face of reality....Why should we then follow this aspect and entertain any hopes about it? When it is admitted that our distributive experience has another aspect, i.e. the aspect of absolute continuity which reveals reality itself, then it follows that the highest knowledge is the work of intuition and not the result of patient observation however profitable. Rationalism and empiricism are equally worthless though the latter, by suggesting fresh artifices may extend the range of our hold on things and bring us happiness and comfort which can never justify our desire for the ultimate knowledge of the nature of reality. The highest ideal of man, then, is not to wade through the concrete expressions of reality - but to extinguish ourselves into its vast flow by conquering forces i.e. which sever us from it. "Only by getting rid of its immobility that the pearl can become one with the ocean out of which it has formed and severed itself".

"آسودگی از بحر جدا کرد گهر را"

Line of argument appears to be formidable; though, I am afraid it does not justify the kind of intuition which Bedil thinks it necessitates. A detailed examination of the various premises can which the inference of Bedil is based would be, in fact, a criticism of the philosophy of Bergson, and for such an undertaking it would be necessary to approach Bergson through the Romantic Development in Germany in the 19th Century and specially

through Ravaisson²⁸ who, it appears communicated the influences of Schelling to him. And even if we succeed in shaking the foundation of Bergson's philosophy, our success would not necessarily mean the refutation of the kind of intuition set up by Bedil, for the necessity of an intuitive kind of knowledge can be based, and I think, successfully, on the general consideration of the finiteness of all human knowledge which no body has ever denied. It may, however, be remarked that Bergson's view of human intelligence takes no account of the task that it has accomplished in the sphere of Religion, art and ethics. This argument in support of the spatialization of spirit as determined by biological considerations seems to take for granted that all the needs of man are fulfilled by a practical knowledge of matter, and it is this uncritical assumption which is obviously responsible for the low and inadequate view of man that he takes. It is not the experience of the engineer alone but the entire experience of man as man that could give us a complete revelation of the function of human intelligence. In his analysis! human knowledge Kant follows exactly the same procedure i.e. he assumed without criticism a certain function of the mind, yet we find Bergson accusing him of wrongly stating the problem and thus prejudicing the solution of it from the very beginning. As a matter of fact the whole argument which he directs against Kant applies with equal force to his own procedure. Bergson's argument is plausible only if we regard man as a piece of living matter which has continually to insert itself in an unfavourable environment working for its decay and dissolution. The history of man, however, shows that he is something more than the brute and his needs are sometimes such that he can

²⁸ Jean Gaspard Felix Ravaisson-Molien (1813-1900) was a French spiritualist and art historian. He received his philosophical training in Munich under Schelling.

The most influential of Ravaisson's publication was his "Report sur la philosophie en France au six Siecle" (1867). His purpose in this report was to show that there was a continuity in the French philosophical tradition and that French philosophers had always presupposed metaphysical principles that implied what he called spiritualism. He held the view that the phenomena of consciousness are never spatial or quantitative and to attempt to categorise them in these terms is to change their essential nature. Within the human soul are two powers of understanding and of activity which in their logical sequence give birth to will and when one asks what the will is seeking, the answer is that it seeks the good or God.

Bergson wrote on and benefited from the philosophy of Ravaisson. E. Le. Roy in his book *New Philosophy - Henri Bergson* has spoken very highly of Ravaisson's spiritualist realism and has quoted his prediction as to the emergence of a new era characterized by spiritualism.

easily sacrifice the matter in him for the satisfaction of those needs. But Bergson will probably reply to this contention that the so called higher demands of man are met by the intuitive vision. It is here that Bergson and Bedil come into real touch and it is, therefore, our chief concern to examine this claim of intuition. In the system of Bergson (I am using the word system carelessly; as a matter of fact Bergson's philosophy is not a system) intelligence is a kind of original sin, the commission of which resulted in giving life a distorted view of itself; and in order to see itself as it is, life must revert to its pre-intelligence state and put itself by a kind of regress, into the animal or plant consciousness or perhaps lower down into protozoa-consciousness where materiality reduces itself to almost vanishing point. Is such a regress possible to a form of life which has developed intelligence and clothed itself into matter? It would perhaps be possible to forms nearest to the original impulse of life, surely it is not possible to man who by developing a highly complex organism stands higher up in the scale of evolution. But assuming that we can, by an effort of sympathy, put ourselves just at the point where materiality emerges, what does this act of sympathy bring us? In Bergson's system all that it gives us is a mere hypothesis which we have subsequently to corroborate by an empirical study of the facts of Evolution. Thus understood it is nothing more than the flash of genius which sometimes suggests a theory when only a few facts are immediately before us. Bergson himself tells us that this intuition comes to us by a long and systematic contact with reality in all its concrete windings. It seems to me that Bergson's intuition is not at all necessary to his system and may easily be detached from it without injuring his main thesis which, on careful analysis, reveals itself as a kind of empiricism with a hue of Idealism not likely to last long. However, I have no objection to intuition in the sense of supplying us with workable hypotheses; the trouble begins when it is set up as a vision which would satisfy all the demands of our nature. With Bedil intuition is not so much as a source of knowledge as a mode of salvation from the storm and stress of life. Our poet appears to identify the Absolute psychic movement with God and proposes to transcend the painful limitations of a narrow individuality by a sink²⁹ into the Absolute. Obviously if intuition brings us salvation from the pains of life and sends us back to our truest life; the

²⁹ I have not been able to decipher what this word really is. It looks like "sink" but this is surely a very odd use of it.

highest task must be to make an effort and to turn this momentary dip into the Absolute into a permanent state. And what if intuitive vision becomes permanent? Does this super-conscious state mean the satisfaction of all our inner longings? Does it satisfy the whole of our complex personality? Action, knowledge, beauty and to a certain extent even the pleasures of sense ---all constitute the demands of our personality. Does the intuitive state open up to us new vistas for our multifarious activity? Does a prolonged or permanent intuitive state mean anything more than an absolute cessation of individual consciousness which, far from satisfying the needs of a complex personality destroys the very condition of these needs? To appeal to such a state is only another way of saying that the so-called higher demands of man are false and the only way to get rid of these false aspirations is to destroy the conditions of life which generates them in us. Such a view of human personality is simply revolting and amounts to nothing more than a philosophically reasoned out counsel of suicide to those whom the ills of life have driven to despair. But perhaps you will say the intuitive state does not destroy our individuality, it only expands its limits and transforms it into a much wider consciousness. Yes, perhaps it does expand us, but it expands us to breaking-point and robs us of the entire meaning of our life in as much as the supposed expansion is neither rational nor aesthetic nor active.

The history of man is a stern reality and the glory of human personality consists not in gradual self-evaporation but self-fortification by continual purification and assimilation. If God, as Bedil seems to teach is essentially life and movement, then it is not through an intuitive slumber, but through life and movement alone that we can approach Him. If, in any sense He has chosen to dwell within us and our personality is but a veil that hides Him from us, our duty lies not in demolishing the tiny dwelling He has chosen, but to manifest His glory through it by polishing its clay walls through action and turning them into transparent mirrors. The idea of annihilation is indeed the vice of all Persian sufism (the reader will please bear in mind that in my opinion Muslim sufism and Persian sufism are two different things) which has, for centuries been prevalent in the entire muslim world, and working as one of the principal factors of its decay. This type of sufism has soaked up the energies of the best muslims in every age, and has imperceptibly undermined the foundations of a revelational system of law which it regards as a mere device to meet the emergencies of communal life. It is supposed

that the movement towards pantheism originates in the creature's desire to make itself more intimate with the Creator. It is, however, not difficult to see that philosophically speaking the All of Pantheism is not more intimate with the individuals it includes and transforms into itself than the God of Monotheism with His creatures. My belief is that pantheistic idea is really a subtle force of decay cloaking itself apparently in the sweet and innocent longing for a greater intimacy with the Divine. In its ultimate essence it is a tendency generated by a people's decay, the tendency, that is to say to relax or drop the attitude of tension and take a sort of interminable furlough from the war-front of life.

But apart from the ethical consequences of Bedil's philosophy, we have yet to look at the philosophy itself from the standpoint of Islamic theology. If God is identified with life-movement as conceived by Bedil, it is obvious that he is a God in time i.e. the poet gives us a God with a history partly worked out and carried within himself and partly being worked out every moment. No conception of God would be more inimical to the notion of God as oriented in the Quran. And further what would the creation of a material universe mean from the standpoint of Bedil's metaphysics? Only the free creative activity of God momentarily interrupted by Himself, or in other words, God opposing his own free action so that He may distort Himself into a material universe. In words still more plain, the universe according to the sufism of Bedil is the self-degradation of God. Thus we are really brought back to the old hypothesis of the follower of the Persian prophet-philosopher Mani who held that the creation of the world was due to the Absolute light obscuring or darkening a portion of itself. The truth is that the thought of the world has never been able to rid itself entirely of the influence of the Manichaeian ideas. But in eastern and western thought Manichaeism still persists. The enormous influence that these Persian ideas exercised over the development of early Christianity is still visible in the philosophical systems of Europe e.g. Schopenhauer, Hegel and Bergson himself. Of the ancient religious systems of the world Islam alone purified the idea of God, but the Arabian conquest of Persia resulted after all in the conversion of Islam to Manichaeism and the old Persian doctrine of the self-darkening of God reappeared in the form of the sufi idea of "Descent" combined with an asceticism thoroughly Manichaeian in spirit. Leaving, however, these considerations we may further ask the sufi metaphysicians ---why should

God obscure His own light or descend into matter? To manifest His power and glory? Self- manifestation by self-degradation! strange way of looking at Him whom the sufis are never tired of calling the Beloved! If the object of God in creating the universe is held to be the revelation of his power and glory, the hypothesis of creation out of nothing seems to be much more reasonable than the absurd and monstrous idea of Descent. Moreover, if the tendency to free movement and the tendency to descend into matter were implicit in the nature of God and started, as these metaphysicians must hold, from a common point how can the two tendencies be regarded as opposing each other? Why should then the soul be regarded as prisoner of matter endeavouring to release itself from its prison by ascetic practices? And why should the one tendency be evaluated as higher or of greater worth than the other? Ethically speaking the sufi view of ‘Descent’ may serve as a basis for Epicureanism as well as Asceticism. And as a matter of fact there have been sufi sects referred to in Maulana Jami’s biography of saints³⁰ who led by the Mephistopheles³¹ in them have allowed themselves all the intensest pleasures of a Faust.

³⁰ Iqbal has referred here to Nafahat-ul-Uns min Hazarat-ul-Quds, being a celebrated biography of saints from the pen of maulana Abdur Rehman Jami, having short biographical notes on 554 saints and some 34 saintesses. The book was written on the request of one Nizam-uddin All Sher in 1478. Jami based the book on the famous “Tabaqat-al-Sufia (of Abdur Rehman Mohammad bin Hussain al Nisaburi) and added much to the original from authentic sources. The book includes a detailed preface which deals with the exposition of sufi terminology. Edward Browne in his famous Literary History of Persia has spoken of the book as a first rate “Tazkira”-almost equal in merit to Tazkiratul-Auliya of ‘Attar. Its language and style has been regarded the best persian prose of the 15th century. In 1859, the book was assiduously edited with a commentary on Jami and was published by the R.A.S.B., Calcutta. Recently, it has been edited by Mehdi Tauheedi Pur.

³¹A famous character of Marlowe’s The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus to whom and to Lucifer, Faust sold out his soul for the intensest pleasures of life. Mephistophilis (so it has been spelled in the book) is the villain of the tragic drama. He is one of the seven spirits of second rank among infernal rulers. In the beginning he is able to win Faust over. However, when Faust gives himself up to a life of sensuality, Mephistophilis abandons him and Faust realizes that he has become a damned soul for all time to come. The story of Faust was also dramatized by Goethe.

(For preparation of some of the notes, I have made use of The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vols. 4,7, Macmillan & Company & the Free Press, Who was Who, Vol. 3 Adams and Charles Black, London, and Jami (a book by Ali Asghar Hikmat).

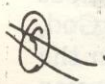
Such is the metaphysics of sufism and Bedil's idea of "Vitality seeking its own interest and becoming matter" is no more than the sufi idea of 'Descent' veiled in a more poetic expression. There were many among his contemporaries who, owing to the simplicity and nobility of his life looked upon him as a great saint but in so far as the content of his verse is concerned, he himself tells us plaintively that nobody ever listened to him and better so:-

There were many among his contemporaries

~~who regarded his poetic appearance~~
~~as a sign of his greatness. He was not far~~
~~from the truth when he said that he was~~
~~not a poet, but a man who had to be a poet.~~
~~He himself says: "The poet is~~
~~not a man who writes poetry."~~

وَمَا كُنَّا شَاعِرِينَ
 وَمَا كُنَّا شَاعِرِينَ

"My friend, never did justice to my utterances;
 the force of my verse has claimed everything
 its due."



→ It is owing to the simplicity & nobility
 of his life

looked upon him as a great thinker,
 and then others to be as doubt
 that he was a man of such a
 name of a very high character;
 when it is far as the content of
 his verse is concerned, he himself
 tells us plainly that nobody
 ever listened to him, other to him and
 better so.

"یاراں نرسیدند بداد سخن من
نظم چه فسوں خوانک کہ گوش ہمہ کرشد"

“My friends never did justice to my utterances;

The Magic of my verse has charmed every body into deafness”.