

“VOLTAIRE’S BASTARDS”: A RESPONSE TO BASIT KOSHUL’S “STUDYING THE WESTERN OTHER...”

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Postmodernism took hold of the intellectual scene during the later half of the twentieth century. It was well before its occupying the centre stage, while Modernity held its sway, that, amidst an erosion of earlier cultural values as well as a blurring of the distinctive characteristics of the world’s traditional civilizations— giving rise to philosophic and moral relativism, multiculturalism, and dangerous fundamentalist reactions— many thinkers diagnosed these tendencies and suggested various remedies. Best among these were characterized by a foundational critique of the modern world coupled with a call for intellectual reform; a renewed examination of metaphysics, the traditional sciences, and symbolism, with special reference to the ultimate unanimity of all spiritual traditions; and finally, a call to the work of spiritual realization. It was in the wake of Postmodernism that we hear a sage saying the following:

... it should be pointed out that if the West needs the East, the latter also has need of the West— not of the West as such, of course, but of such few thinkers in the West as have managed to integrate their experiences of the modern world in a traditional and spiritual outlook that might, if one likes, be described as “oriental” or “mediaeval”. When in contact with the West, Orientals generally display an astonishing lack of suspicion and this can be explained by the fact that the modern world, while being a “necessary evil”, is not a normal possibility. Now the Western elite to which we are referring is endowed with a “discernment of spirits” and a sense of proportion that often are lacking in Orientals; the latter, however, today stand greatly in need of these particular qualities, not on the still uncontaminated soil of their own civilisation where they understand what

they are doing, but outside it in a chaotic world that violates every framework and insinuates itself everywhere.”²⁰²

Basit is an Oriental by lineage but living in the West and receiving his entire education in the Western Academic world has given him the opportunity to “integrate his experiences of the modern world in a traditional and spiritual outlook.” The recent outcome, his article “Studying the Western Other, Understanding the Islamic Self: A Qur’anicly Reasoned Perspective” has offered me the possibility to reconsider and re-evaluate certain settled convictions about the Enlightenment paradigm and the issue of the Western Other and to revisit the ‘half-truths’ that used to create obstacles to an appreciation of the point in question. I would have preferred to begin my response on a non personal note but since his article has held a mirror to my thinking and has challenged the mode of interpretation used for studying Modernity, I have been goaded into responding otherwise. It has changed the frontiers of my views on the matter and, in some cases at least, has pulled down the isolating walls that separated one perspective from another. The destruction of such walls may be an evil; but the virtues it helped to promote are indispensable and must be supported by other means. In what follows I have tried to explore these other means. But first let me mention a host of questions that assailed me during reading his article and think loudly about some of the premises which inform Basit’s vision and see if these lead to a few complications, at least from my lights.

Basit speaks of “the twin tasks of dissension and affirmation from within the reality of the modern world ”²⁰³ (Basit, p. 4) that Islam has to undertake for successfully “squaring of the circle.” As could be surmised from the general thrust of the argument in the article the reality of the modern world is equated with the Enlightenment paradigm and its social program that was “most consistently and systematically institutionalized in the modern, secular West.”(Basit, p. 9) Can we refer to the reality of the modern world as a monolithic whole or there is a need to differentiate between the conceptual shifts that distinguish Modernity from the Postmodern and “beyond-

²⁰² Frithjof Schuon,

²⁰³ Emphasis my own.

Postmodern”²⁰⁴ paradigms? According to my lights a distinction needs to be made on at least two counts; the obsessive concern with society that is a hallmark of Postmodernism as well as its radical departure from “Enlightenment philosophy’s categorically rejects the limited and relational character of the human mind/reason” and “enshrinement of reason” (Basit, p. 5, 21) espoused by the Enlightenment paradigm to a position that could be termed as “the collapse of faith in reason’s power, thus to hold court.”²⁰⁵ This would entail, for the obvious reason, that we take a different and perhaps more challenging set of “difficulties inherent” into consideration that arise with Postmodernism and its aftermath. I will have the occasion to say something more on this point later.

The same remark holds good for philosophy. “Concern with wisdom, illumination and the Divine” (Basit, p. 4) was shared by pre-modern religious traditions and classical philosophy and “philosophy as a means of “attaining wisdom” was seen as being inseparable from the choice of a particular way of life (Basit, p. 5).²⁰⁶ Both the Enlightenment paradigm and its Postmodern and beyond-Postmodern conceptual shifts profoundly differ from this shared vision of the entire pre-Modern world. They are, however, not similar in their disagreement, hence can not be subsumed under a single disclaimer. If the Enlightenment paradigm revolted against the pre-Modern in the name of a Promethean humanism resulting in an “enshrinement of autonomous human reason” and claimed that that there is an objective, universally applicable court of appeal that can adjudicate between worldviews, determining their

²⁰⁴ David Ray Griffin has termed it “reversionary Postmodernism”. See David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989.

²⁰⁵ Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000, pp. 133-142.

²⁰⁶ For a representative narrative, elucidating the long standing position of definition, function and purpose of philosophy in Islam, see M. S. Umar, (Comp.), “*From the Niche of Prophecy*”— *Nasr’s Position on Islamic Philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2000.

truth or falsity, Postmodernism is relativistic, nihilistic and signifies loss of faith in reason's power.²⁰⁷ This remark allows for a digression.

Some where, during the course of its historical development, western thought took a sharp turn in another direction. It branched off as a tangent from the collective heritage of all humanity and claimed the autonomy of reason. It chose to follow that reason alone, unguided by revelation and cut off from the Intellect that was regarded as its transcendent root.²⁰⁸ Political and social realms quickly followed suit. Autonomous statecraft and excessive individualism in the social order were the elements that shaped a dominant paradigm that did not prove successful.²⁰⁹ A few centuries of unbridled activity led Western philosophy to an impasse.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ A quick overview of the course of philosophy would elucidate the point. I have selected Huston Smith to make the point for me. "If logic isn't philosophy's essence (Quine) and language isn't either (Davidson), the question "what essence remains?" cannot be avoided. We can argue over whether "essence" is the right word here, but let us come to the point. The deepest reason for the current crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason—reason without infusions that both power and vector it—is helpless. By itself, reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working (as it necessarily must) with variables, variables are all it can come up with. The Enlightenment's "natural light of reason" turns out to have been a myth. Reason is not itself a light. It is more like a transformer that does useful things but on condition that it is hitched to a generator.

²⁰⁸ See Martin Lings, "Intellect and Reason" in *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, repr. (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1988, 57-68; F. Schuon, *Gnosis Divine Wisdom* London: J. Murray, 1978, 93-99; S. H. Nasr, "Knowledge and its Desacralization" in *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981, 1-64; Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 60-95. Also see his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000).

²⁰⁹ See René Guenon, "Individualism" in *Crisis of the Modern World*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981, 51-65. Also see Social Chaos" in the same document.

²¹⁰ For a few representative writings that indicate this situation, see "Scientism, Pragmatism and the Fate of Philosophy, *Inquiry*, No. 29, p. 278, cf. Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, loc. cit. p. 142, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004; Hilary Putnam, "After Empiricism" in *Behaviorism*, 16:1 (Spring 1988); Alasdair MacIntyre, "Philosophy; Past Conflict and Future Direction," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Supplement to 16/1, (September 1987); also see *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 59 (1986), and Kenneth Baynes et al., *Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

Commenting upon the situation, Huston Smith remarked, “the deepest reason for the crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason—reason without infusions that both power and vector it— is helpless. By itself, reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working, as it necessarily must, with variables, variables are all it can come up with. The Enlightenment’s “natural light of reason” turns out to have been a myth. Reason is not itself a light. It is more than a conductor, for it does more than transmit. It seems to resemble an adapter which makes useful translations but on condition that it is powered by a generator.”²¹¹ The nature and direction of these “infusions” is still being debated.²¹²

Clearly aware of reason’s contingency, medieval philosophy attached itself to theology as its handmaiden. Earlier, Plato too had accepted reason’s contingency and grounded his philosophy in intuitions that are discernible by the “eye of the soul” but not by reason without it. In the seventeenth century, though, responding to the advent of modern science with the controlled experiment as its new and powerful way of getting at truth, philosophy unplugged from theology. Bacon and Comte were ready to replug it at once, this time into science, but there were frequencies science still couldn’t register, so philosophy took off on its own.

Modern philosophy took off in the seventeenth century by declaring its independence from theology; Descartes set it on its course by dedicating it to the proposition that reason, its instrument, can stand on its own. An

²¹¹ Huston Smith, “Crisis in Modern Philosophy”, in *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1990; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004, p. 137.

²¹² Huston Smith has pointed towards the possibility of accepting these “infusions” from *Philosophia Perennis* or *Religio-Perennis*, the sapiential doctrines of mankind. See his “Two Traditions and Philosophy” in *Religion of the Heart— Essays Presented to Frithjof Schuon on his 80th Birthday*, (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1991, 278-296. In this regard also see F. Schuon, “Tracing the Notion of Philosophy,” *Sufism Veil and Quintessence* Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1985, 115-128; *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. Peter N. Townsend (New York: Harper and Row, 1975; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004.

A similar awareness could be discerned in the arena of politics, humanities, and social sciences. The impasse, though with different implications, was reached by the parallel paradigm of autonomous politics and social sciences which had refused to accept any “infusion” from a higher domain.

important reason for thinking that modernity has come to an end is that its faith in autonomous reason has now collapsed. Recent developments in beyond-Postmodern (or reversionary Postmodern) theology indicate that, finding the Modern (read Enlightenment) position untenable, it now claims that its reason should not be called autonomous and therefore Modern, for it insists that it is not autonomous: reason in their view must be supplemented by vision. But this augmented reason still continues to look Modern to my lights in claiming the power to winnow the visions that supplement it, accepting or rejecting them by the standards it imposes.²¹³

This brings us to the core issue of the shared ground. If Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernism are so radically apart on the question of reason and human rationality how can we safely speak of a shared ground? “Because of the Enlightenment’s rejection of the traditional religious/philosophical understanding of wisdom, illumination and the Divine human reason/mind²¹⁴ are left as the only shared ground²¹⁵ on which the dissenting voice and the dominant paradigm can relate to each other. Consequently, if the squaring of the circle is to be done as a dissenting voice from within the modern world then the following conditions will have to be met: a) human mind/reason be the court of appeal for all critique/complaints and b) human mind/reason be the foundation on which all principles are affirmed/stand.” (Basit, p. 7) All religious/wisdom traditions and almost all pre-modern philosophy drew a sharp distinction between ratio and intellectus inasmuch as the latter operates intuitively and directly and were unanimous that reason operated in the restricted region of the mind’s domain. Modernity, Postmodernism and, to a large extent,²¹⁶ beyond-Postmodern theology (or reversionary Postmodern) are at the antipodes of this view. I need not go into the details of the issue here as we are all well aware of the problem. The point I like to register is that it is difficult to see how, in the absence of a shared definition of reason and

²¹³ In this regard see the important debate between David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989.

²¹⁴ Emphasis my own.

²¹⁵ Emphasis my own.

²¹⁶ I say so because that which the beyond-Postmodern theology calls “*prebensions*” is what comes closest to Tradition’s “*intellection*”.

human rationality and with the collapse of faith in a universally applicable court of appeal, critiques/complaints could be addressed meaningfully and how the dissenting voice and the dominant paradigm can relate to each other?

Citing the examples of “squaring the circles in the past” in the case “of numerous non-Arab cultural configurations” (Basit, p. 8) he has mentioned the pre Islamic Arab civilization as well where “...the prophetic witness offers a revelatory affirmation of some of the real but dormant aspirations and potentialities at the very heart of its socio-cultural environment, whose emergence and maturation is being forestalled by neglect and forgetfulness.” (Basit, p. 9) The argument culminates in saying that “there has to be an Islamic affirmation of some of the deepest aspirations that are at the heart of the Enlightenment project.” (Basit, p. 9) According to my lights this seems to be a problematic analogy. No socio-cultural environment in the pre-Modern times had turned its back on Transcendence in the systematic way that characterized Modernity. The Arabs of the times of the Prophet had many dormant virtues and they had principles. Their principles were lacking in height, confined to the horizontal plane, without any consciousness of the relationship between human virtues and the Divine Qualities of which they are the reflections. None the less, human virtues cannot exist without their archetypes, which is another way of saying that in these men the apparently missing link was not absent but dormant; and inevitably the degree of dormancy varied from man to man. The prophetic witness triggered its awakening. It derives its legitimacy from the inherent principles and practice of the Islamic Tradition itself. Islamic Tradition, from its vantage point of being the summer-up, incorporated— obviously with alterations, amendments, abrogations and adaptations— the “Judeo-Christian” elements; especially the legal (or Shariite, in the technical sense of the word) aspects of the Mosaic code and the esoteric elements of the Christian message. These elements were brought to perfection in addition to the specifically Islamic aspects of the new faith in the Islamic revelation. This process, as it was accomplished on a purely vertical plane, had the stamp of divine sanction on it which distinguished it from any subsequent attempts that the Islamic community may had envisaged in the same direction. Nevertheless it had the significant role of setting the example for integrating ideas and symbols of pre-Islamic origin into the unitary perspective of Islam and its general

framework. This could not be the case of a mindset which is woven out of a rejection of Transcendence. Enlightenment paradigm rejected Transcendence or a certain interpretation of it that denied human reason its legitimate rights and refused to meet its demands. This is a question that defies neat solutions and needs further deliberations to which I would return later.

Let me begin with an important clarification because my observations noted above may have led the readers to believe that I see the Enlightenment paradigm flawed on all counts. That is not the case. I have voiced my reservations about one, albeit a fundamental and very important, aspect of the Enlightenment project. I will rely on Huston Smith to make the point for me.

A worldview is an inclusive outlook, and it is useful to distinguish its social, cosmological, and metaphysical components. The social component of past worldviews included, at times, justifications for slavery and the divine right of kings, while its cosmological components described the physical universe as understood by the science of the day— Ptolemaic astronomy or whatever. The contents of those two components obviously change, so are not perennial. The perennial, unchanging philosophy is metaphysical, or more precisely, ontological. It concerns such matters as the distinction between the Absolute and the relative, and the doctrine of the degrees of reality that is consequent thereon.²¹⁷

Following this threefold criteria I would like say a few words about the Metaphysical, Cosmological and Sociological achievements/shortcomings of Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernism, respectively. In doing so I am responding to Basit's assertion "it must be the case that the Enlightenment has two sides— one pointing to God and the other pointing away from Him." (Basit, p. 23) This is a very pertinent question because if the Enlightenment paradigm has its virtues and human virtues cannot exist without their archetypes how did Enlightenment come to possess these virtues without any consciousness of the relationship between human virtues and the Divine Qualities of which they are the reflections? Is that a phenomenon similar to

²¹⁷ David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 62.

the pre Islamic Arabia? Before we say anything on it let us have a brief overview of the Metaphysical, Cosmological and Sociological achievements/shortcomings of Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernism.²¹⁸

When we align these problems with the three²¹⁹ major periods in human history: the traditional period,²²⁰ the Modern period,²²¹ and Postmodernism,²²² it is obvious that each of these periods poured more of its energies into, and did better by, one of life's inescapable problems than did the other two. Specifically, Modernity gave us our view of nature,²²³ Postmodernism is tackling social injustices more resolutely than people previously did. This leaves worldviews— metaphysics as distinct from cosmology, which restricts itself to the empirical universe— for our ancestors, whose accomplishments on that front have not been improved upon.²²⁴ Let us shuffle the historical sequence of the periods and proceed topically— from nature, through society, to the Big Picture, tying each topic to the period that did best by it. Modernity first, then Postmodernity, leaving the traditional period for last.

COSMOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF MODERNITY

²¹⁸ I summarize it from Huston Smith, *Religion –Significance and Meaning in an Age of Disbelief*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002, pp. 11-22.

²¹⁹ For the present discussion I have left out the beyond-Postmodern paradigm and its conceptual shift.

²²⁰ Which extended from human beginnings up to the rise of modern science.

²²¹ Which took over from there and continued through the first half of the twentieth century

²²² Which Nietzsche anticipated, but which waited for the second half of the twentieth century to take hold.

²²³ It continues to be refined, but because modernity laid the foundations for the scientific understanding of it, it deserves credit for the discovery.

²²⁴ The just entered distinction between cosmology and metaphysics is important here, so I shall expand it slightly. *Cosmology* is the study of the physical universe— or the world of nature as science conceives of it— and is the domain of science. *Metaphysics*, on the other hand, deals with all there is. (The terms *worldview* and *Big Picture* are used interchangeably with *metaphysics* in the present discussion.) In the worldview that holds that nature is all there is, metaphysics coincides with cosmology. That metaphysics is named *naturalism*.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europe stumbled on a new way of knowing that we refer to as the scientific method. It centres in the controlled experiment and has given us modern science²²⁵ which adds proof to generic science by its controlled experiment. True hypotheses can be separated from false ones, and brick by brick an edifice has been erected from those proven truths. We commonly call that edifice the scientific worldview, but scientific cosmology is more precise because of the ambiguity of the word world. The scientific edifice is a worldview only for those who assume that science can in principle take in all that exists. The scientific cosmology is so much a part of the air we breathe that it is hardly necessary to describe it.²²⁶ Taught from primary schools onward, this story is so familiar that further details would only clutter things.

TRADITION'S COSMOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS

That this scientific cosmology retires traditional ones with their six days of creation and the like goes without saying. Who can possibly question that when the scientific cosmology has landed people on the moon?²²⁷ And there is another point. There is a naturalism in Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Islamic Cosmological doctrines and tribal outlooks that in its own way rivals science's calculative cosmology, but that is the naturalism of the artist, the

²²⁵ Generic science (which consists of careful attention to nature and its regularities) is as old as the hills— at least as old as art and religion.

²²⁶ Some fifteen billion years ago an incredibly compact pellet of matter exploded to launch its components on a voyage that still continues. Differentiation set in as hydrogen proliferated into the periodic table. Atoms gathered into gaseous clouds. Stars condensed from whirling filaments of flame, and planets spun off from those to become molten drops that pulsed and grew rock-encrusted. Narrowing our gaze to the planet that was to become our home, we watch it grow, ocean-filmed and swathed in atmosphere. Some three and a half billion years ago shallow waters began to ferment with life, which could maintain its inner milieu through homeostasis and could reproduce itself. Life spread from oceans across continents, and intelligence appeared. Several million years ago our ancestors arrived. It is difficult to say exactly when, for every few years palaeontologists announce discoveries that “set the human race back another million years or so,” as press reports like to break the news.

²²⁷ Our ancestors were impressive astronomers, and we can honour them unreservedly for how much they learned about nature with only their unaided senses to work with.

poet, and the nature lover²²⁸ not that of Galileo and Bacon. For present purposes, aesthetics is irrelevant. Modern cosmology derives from laboratory experiments, not landscape paintings.

POSTMODERNISM'S COSMOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS

With traditional cosmology out of the running, the question turns to Postmodernism. Because science is cumulative, it follows as a matter of course that the cosmology we have in the twenty-first century is an improvement over what we had in the middle of the twentieth, which on my timeline is when modernity phased into Postmodernity. But the refinements that postmodern scientists (it is well to say postmodern physics here) have achieved have not affected life to anything like the degree that postmodern social thrusts have, so the social Oscar is the one Postmodernists are most entitled to.²²⁹ Be that as it may, Postmodernism's discoveries (unlike modern discoveries in physics—the laws of gravity, thermodynamics, electromagnetism, relativity theory, and quantum mechanics, which continue to be used to make space shuttles fly and to help us understand how hot electrons behave in semiconductors) have concerned details and exotica.²³⁰

²²⁸ Of Li Po, Wordsworth, and Thoreau.

²²⁹ I need to support my contention that postmodern science does not measure up to modern physics in the scope of its discoveries. It says nothing against the brilliance of Stephen Hawking, Fred Hoyle, John Wheeler, Freeman Dyson, Steven Weinberg, and their likes to add that they have discovered nothing about nature that compares with the discoveries of Copernicus, Newton, Maxwell, Planck, Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr, Schrödinger, and Born. In molecular chemistry things are different. DNA is a staggering discovery, but—extending back only several billion years compared with the astrophysicists billions of *light* years—it does not pertain to nature's foundations. The fact that no new abstract idea in physics has emerged for seventy years may suggest that nothing more remains to be discovered about nature's foundations.

²³⁰ The billions of dollars that have been spent since the middle of the twentieth century (and the millions of papers that have been written on theories that change back and forth) have produced no discoveries that impact human beings in important ways. All are in the domain of the meta-sciences of high-energy particle physics and astronomy, whose findings—what is supposed to have happened in the first 10-42 seconds of the universe's life, and the like—while headlined by the media have no conceivable connection to human life and can be neither falsified nor checked in normal ways. This allows the building blocks of nature—

Outranking the foregoing reason for not giving the cosmological Oscar to Postmodernism is the fact that the noisiest postmodernists have called into question the very notion of truth by turning claims to truth into little more than power plays.²³¹ This relativizes science's assertions radically and rules out even the possibility of its closing in on the nature of nature.²³² As there are no neutral standards by which to judge these paradigms, Kuhn's thesis (if unnuanced) leads to relativism among paradigms that places Hottentot science on a par with Newton's. Kuhn himself phrased his thesis carefully enough to parry such relativism, but even taken at its best, it provides no way that science could get to the bottom of things. This demotes the whole enterprise of science as understood by Modernity, and in doing so provides a strong supporting reason for not giving Postmodernism the cosmological prize. It does better with social issues so now we discuss Postmodernism's achievements on the social front.

POSTMODERNISM'S FAIRNESS REVOLUTION

The magic word of Postmodernism is society. This is not surprising. With the belief that there is nothing beyond our present world, nature and society are all that remain, and of the two, nature has become the province of specialists.²³³ This leaves society as the domain that presses on us directly and the one in which there is some prospect of our making a difference. And changes are occurring.²³⁴ A quick rehearsal of some changes that have

particles, strings, or whatever— to keep changing, and the age of the universe to be halved or doubled every now and then. Roughly 99.999 percent of science (scientist Rustum Roy's estimate) is unaffected by these flickering hypotheses, and the public does not much care about their fate.

²³¹ According to this reading of the matter, when people claim that what they say is true, all they are really doing is claiming status for beliefs that advance their own social standing.

²³² The most widely used textbook on college campuses for the past thirty years has been Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and its thesis— that facts derive their meaning from the paradigms that set them in place— has shifted attention from scientific facts to scientific paradigms.

²³³ We seldom confront it directly anymore; mostly it comes to us via supermarkets and cushioned by air-conditioning and central heating.

²³⁴ Post colonial guilt may play a part here, and so much remains to be done that self-congratulation is premature.

occurred in a single lifetime makes it clear that social injustices are being recognized and addressed more earnestly today than they were by our ancestors.²³⁵

TRADITION'S SOCIAL SHORTCOMINGS

These signs of progress acquire additional life when they are set against the unconcern of earlier times regarding such matters. This is another way of saying what Basit has put forward in his question: "Why is it that the modern,

²³⁵• In 1919 the Brooklyn Zoo exhibited an African American caged alongside chimpanzees and gorillas. Today such an act would be met with outrage anywhere in the world.

- The civil rights movement of the 1960s accomplished its major objectives. In the United States and even in South Africa today, people of different races mix where they never could before— on beaches, in airline cabin crews, everywhere.

- In the 1930s, if a streetcar in San Francisco approached a stop where only Chinese Americans were waiting to board, it would routinely pass them by. By contrast, when (fifty years later) I retired from teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, my highly respected chancellor was a Chinese American who spoke English with a Chinese accent.

- No war has ever been as vigorously protested as was the war in Vietnam by United States citizens. When things were going so badly that military leaders advised President Nixon to use nuclear weapons, he declined because (as he said) if he did that, he would face a nation that had taken to the streets.

- The women's movement is only a blink in the eyes of history, but it has already scored impressive victories. Until long after the Civil War, American women really had no civil rights, no legal rights, and no property rights. Not until 1918 did Texas alter its law that everyone had the right to vote except "idiots, imbeciles, aliens, the insane, and women."

- Arguably, the most important theological development of the latter twentieth century was the emergence of the theology of liberation, with its Latin American and feminist versions in the vanguard.

- In an unprecedented move, in March 2000 the pope prayed to God to forgive the sins his church had committed against the people of Israel, against love, peace, and respect for cultures and religions, against the dignity of women and the unity of the human race, and against the fundamental rights of persons. Two months later, two hundred thousand Australians marched across Sydney Harbor Bridge to apologize for their treatment of the aborigines while the sky written word SORRY floated above the Sydney Opera House.

secular West has succeeded in institutionalizing these ideals with a degree of consistency than traditional Muslim society? “There is no reason to think that traditional peoples were more callous than we are, but on the whole they saw their obligations as extending no further than to members of their primary communities: Buddhism’s *dana* (gifts), Jesus’ “cup of water given in my name,” Islam’s “pure due” and their likes. Encountered face-to-face, the hungry were fed, the naked were clothed, and widows and orphans were provided for as means allowed, but there human obligations ended. Injustices that were built into institutions (if such injustices were even recognized) were not human beings’ responsibility.”²³⁶

Modernity changed this attitude. Accelerating travel and trade brought encounters between peoples whose societal structures were very different from one another, and these differences showed that such institutions were not like natural laws after all; they were humanly devised and could therefore be critiqued. The French Revolution put this prospect to a historic test; scrapping the divine right of kings, it set out to create a society built on liberty, equality, and fraternity. The experiment failed and the backlash was immediate, but its premise— that societies are malleable— survived.

MODERNITY’S SOCIAL SHORTCOMINGS

Modernity deserves credit for that discovery, and (if we wished) we might excuse it for its poor handling of its discovery on grounds that it was working with a new idea. The record itself, however, is by Postmodern standards, deplorable. Under the pretext of shouldering “the white man’s burden” to minister to “lesser breeds without the law,” it ensconced colonialism, which raped Asia and Africa, hit its nadir in the Opium Wars of 1841-42, and ended by subjecting the entire civilized world to Western domination.²³⁷

²³⁶ *Perhaps because for those institutions were considered to be God-given and unalterable. People regarded them in the way we regard laws of nature— as givens to be worked with, not criticized.*

²³⁷ David Hume is commonly credited with having the clearest head of all the great philosophers, but I (Huston Smith) read that somewhere in his correspondence (I have not

Having dealt with nature and society, let us turn now to the third inescapable issue that human beings must face: the Big Picture.

MODERNITY'S METAPHYSICAL SHORTCOMINGS

Modernity was metaphysically sloppy. Ravished by science's accomplishments, it elevated the scientific method to "our sacral mode of knowing" (Alex Comfort), and because that mode registers nothing that is without a material component, immaterial realities at first dropped from view and then (as the position hardened) were denied existence. In the distinction registered earlier, this was metaphysics reduced to cosmology.²³⁸ Modernity's Big Picture is materialism or (in its more plausible version) naturalism, which acknowledges that there are immaterial things— thoughts and feelings, for example— while insisting that those things are totally dependent on matter. Both versions are stunted when compared with the traditional outlook. It is important to understand that neither materialism nor naturalism is required by anything science has discovered in the way of actual facts. We have slid into this smallest of metaphysical positions for psychological, not logical, reasons.

POSTMODERNITY'S METAPHYSICAL SHORTCOMINGS

As for Postmodernity, it sets itself against the very idea of such a thing as the Big Picture. It got off on the right foot by critiquing the truncated worldview of the Enlightenment, but from that reasonable beginning it plunged on to argue unreasonably that worldviews (often derisively referred

been able to find the passage) he wrote that the worst white man is better than the best black man. What I can report firsthand is signs posted in parks of the international settlements in Shanghai, where I attended high school, that read, "No dogs or Chinese allowed." With a virgin continent to rape, the United States did not need colonies, but this did not keep it from hunting down the Native Americans, continuing the institution of slavery, annexing Puerto Rico and Hawaii, and establishing "protectorates" in the Philippines and several other places.

²³⁸ When Carl Sagan opened his television series, *Cosmos*, by announcing that "the Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be," he presented that unargued assumption as if it were a scientific fact.

to as grand narratives) are misguided in principle.²³⁹ Stated in the in-house idiom Postmodernists are fond of, worldviews “totalize” by “marginalizing” minority viewpoints. They are oppressive in principle and should be resolutely resisted. If hardcore Postmodernism were accurate in this charge one should stop in one’s tracks, but it has not proved that it is accurate—it merely assumes that it is accurate and rests its case on examples of oppression that, of course, are not lacking. What has not been demonstrated is the impossibility of a worldview that builds the rights of minorities into its foundations as an essential building block. There is irony here, for the very Postmodernism that is dismissing the possibility of a comprehensive humane outlook is working toward the creation of such through its fairness revolution—its insistence that everybody be given an equal chance at the goods of life. The deeper fact, however, is that to have or not have a worldview is not an option, for peripheral vision always conditions what we are attending to focally, and in conceptual “seeing” the periphery has no cut off. The only choice we have is to be consciously aware of our worldviews and criticize them where they need criticizing, or let them work on us unnoticed and acquiesce to living unexamined lives.

TRADITION’S METAPHYSICAL EXCELLENCE

Neither Modernity nor Postmodernism handled the metaphysical problem well. It is, of course, no proof that Tradition handled it better. The traditional worldview is so out of favour today that the only possible way to gain a hearing for it is to ease into it, so to speak, by suggesting plausibilities wherever openings for them appear. Describing the traditional worldview and defending its merits, therefore, comes close to being the object of an

²³⁹ *In The Postmodern Condition, Jean Francois Lyotard goes so far as to define postmodernism as “incredulity toward meta-narratives,” a synonym for metaphysics. The incredulity takes three forms that grow increasingly shrill as they proceed. Postmodern minimalism contents itself with pointing out that we have no consensual worldview today; “we have no maps and don’t know how to make them.” Mainline Postmodernism adds, “and never again will we have a consensual worldview, such as prevailed in the Middle Ages, Elizabethan England, or seventeenth century New England; we now know too well how little the human mind can know.” Hardcore Postmodernism carries this trajectory to its logical limit by adding, “good riddance!”*

entire book.²⁴⁰ I will not try to compress it into a page or two here. The present audience, I presume, agrees that with regard to the Postmodernism's religious alternative, we can speak of it in the singular and simply assume that a common metaphysical "spine" underlies the differences in the theologies of the classical languages of the human soul, the world's great religions. This is coupled with the claims of Tradition that people need worldviews, that reliable ones are possible, and that they already exist.

If mainline and polemical Postmodernism were to recede, the obsession with life's social dimension that they saddled us with would relax and we would find ourselves able to think ontologically again. An important consequence of this would be that we would then perceive how much religious outlooks have in common. For one thing, they all situate the manifest, visible world within a larger, invisible whole.²⁴¹ The further unanimous claim of religious cosmologies, though, finds no echo in science, for (being a value judgment) it is beyond science's reach. Not only is the invisible real; regions of it are more real and of greater worth than the visible, material world.

The inclusive, presiding paradigm for Tradition is the Great Chain of Being, composed of links ranging in hierarchical order from meagre existents up to the ens perfectissimum; and the foremost student of that concept, Arthur Lovejoy, reported that "most educated persons everywhere accepted [it] without question down to late in the eighteenth century."²⁴² To that

²⁴⁰ See Huston Smith, *Religion— Significance and Meaning in an Age of Disbelief*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002; Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth, The Common Vision of the World's Religions*, Harper San Francisco, San Francisco: 1992 (repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1984, 2002). Also see his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989 (repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002).

²⁴¹ This is of particular interest at the moment because currently science does the same. Dark matter doesn't impact any of science's detectors, and the current recipe for the universe is "70 parts cold dark matter, about 30 parts hot dark matter, and just a pinch for all the rest the matter detectable to scientific instruments." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 October 1992, A 16.)

²⁴² Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 59. Ernst Cassirer corroborates Lovejoy on this point: "The most important legacy of

endorsement, Ken Wilber has added that the Great Chain of Being is “so overwhelmingly widespread...that it is either the single greatest intellectual error ever to appear in humankind’s history— an error so colossally widespread as to literally stagger the mind— or it is the single most accurate reflection of reality yet to appear.”²⁴³

An obvious moral emerges from what has been said. If we run a strainer through our past to lift from each of its three periods the gold it contains and let its dross sink back into the sands of history what do we get? Modernity’s gold i.e. science is certain to figure importantly in the third millennium, and Postmodernity’s focus on justice likewise stands a good chance of continuing. It is the worldview of Tradition that is in jeopardy and must be rehabilitated if it is to survive. Being more specific, the present challenge to the Muslim world is reversed in the sense that it must learn to be tolerant of a world which threatens its very existence without losing its identity and the secularised West must learn the very difficult lesson that its Modern and Postmodern understanding of man and the world is not universal. Moreover, since religion does not acknowledge any principles higher than its own, not even the survival of the human race, if asked to establish peace, it will do so in its own way or not at all.

This brings me back to the initial question of the virtues of Enlightenment paradigm. Basit points out that “The Enlightenment break with traditional religion is as much tied to the affirmation of individualism, universalism and materialism as to the rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine” (Basit, p. 10) and “The Enlightenment affirmation of the dignity of the individual, equality before the law and the value of the material/profane world provides Islam with a unique opportunity to be an affirming witness from outside the modern world” (Basit, p. 11) and “This annual circling (Hajj) of the square is the Islamic affirmation of the irreducible dignity of the individual, the equality of all human beings before the law and the spiritual value of the material world and

ancient speculation was the concept and general picture of a graduated cosmos” (*Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 9).

²⁴³ Ken Wilber, “The Great Chain of Being,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 33 no. 3 (summer 1993), p. 53.

profane acts” (Basit, p. 11) “there are strong elective affinities between the Qur’anic notion of the human being as an individual, humanity on a universal level and the material/profane worlds and the Enlightenment ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism” (Basit, p. 13). This brings us face to face with certain questions: Did in any epoch ever a worldview (and its translation into practice) achieve these “Enlightenment ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism” without turning its back on wisdom, illumination and the Divine? If Islam succeeded in achieving these ideals without paying its price of rejecting Transcendence (Hajj being a palpable example) what was the saving grace? Moreover Hajj is an Abrahamic ritual predating Islam and the Jews only stopped visiting the outlying Meccan Tabernacle of God when the corruption of its custodians had brought crude idolatry to the sacred precinct. Is it true that early Muslim society and, before that, other human collectivities, had achieved these Enlightenment ideals without severing their roots? A negative inference also imposes itself. If these ideals could be achieved without the burden of “wisdom, illumination and the Divine” why bother? If human reason is not autonomous and it needs objective data to operate effectively, what provided the Enlightenment project with its “infusions” with its rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine? Iqbal’s “inductive intellect” (Basit, p. 12) is not relevant here as it proceeds in the presence of a revealed knowledge and within the parameters of a wisdom tradition. Do we commit a mistake when we attribute “rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine” to the Enlightenment paradigm? Is it only a reaction to the social side of the issue, the mixed bag of history that Modernity and, more resolutely, Postmodernity has manifested? As religions are worldviews or metanarratives— inclusive posits concerning the ultimate nature of things— its custodians cannot accept polemical Postmodernism’s contention that on balance they oppress. We have observed that “the magic word of Modernity and of Postmodernity is society.” Our present question bears on it, for it is almost entirely for their social repercussions that Postmoderns fault worldviews. In applying that measuring rod both Modernity and Postmodernity simply assume (they do not argue) that religion does more harm than good.²⁴⁴ Whether this concern with society of Modernity and of

²⁴⁴ That this runs counter to social science functionalism, which holds that institutions don't survive unless they serve social needs, is conveniently overlooked, but the deeper point is

Postmodernity is modern or instead modernly conceived, one can not be sure— the Stoics and Prophets were fairly good on the subject. But we cannot have enough of the concern itself.²⁴⁵

Basit continues: “This means that the circling of the square requires a rejection of the uncritical affirmation of tradition (or a particular school within tradition) just as the squaring of the circle requires a rejection of the blind negation of tradition by the zealots and the liberals” the Qur’anic critique of Islamic tradition for its failure to fully express key Islamic ideals in institutional form.” (Basit, p. 17) This is a task which, according to my lights, is innate to the Islamic tradition, its principle of movement. Do we require a reference to the Enlightenment paradigm to be alerted to its importance? If that is the case and we need awakening calls there is no problem with it.

The section dealing with “the Qur’anic treatment of Judaism and Christianity as informing the rationale underpinning the squaring the circle” (Basit, p. 17 *passim*) is very illuminating and I can not agree more. I would offer only a few brief comments. Firstly, with reference to what has been said about the “shared ground” earlier it should be pointed out here that the critique/affirmation of Judaism and Christianity is the case of two sister wisdom traditions which share the common ground of wisdom, illumination and the Divine with Islam. In the case of Enlightenment no such sharing on principles seems to exist. Secondly his reading of the Qur’anic texts would not please a large number of his coreligionists who are prone to making an exclusivist reading of the inclusivist verses of the Qur’an. The danger of excluding those who can only open up to religious Other on the basis of upholding the normativity of one’s own faith was vividly brought to light by the controversy over the book by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks. The manner in which Dr. Sacks was compelled by senior theologians in his own community to retract certain sentences from his latest book, *The Dignity of Difference*²⁴⁶ highlights well the intellectual challenge involved in reaching

that the vertical dimension— the way religion feeds the human soul in its inwardness and solitude— gets little attention.

²⁴⁵ For details see Huston Smith, “Postmodernism and the World’s Religions”, in this issue.

²⁴⁶ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference— How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London & New York, 2002)

out to the Other without alienating one's own community. I pray that Basit is spared that fate.

Basit has emphasised the need for “a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine” (Basit, p. 17) and accused perennialism and traditionalism of the “most egregious offence” of insinuating that “the Enlightenment is an absolutely unique phenomenon in human history in the sense that it has only one side and that side points away from God” and has emphasized the “most pressing demands of the day to face this paradigm squarely and engage with it constructively.” (Basit, p. 22) My assessment is rather different. It is not because I have deep sympathies or even affinities with some of them. I genuinely believe that the task of facing this paradigm squarely and producing “a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine” has been successfully done, to a large extent, by the authors of the same school.²⁴⁷ Moreover, the “Perennialists” (Universalist is a better denominator!) are not the only ones who criticize Modernity/ Enlightenment in this vein.²⁴⁸ This is also the verdict “beyond-

²⁴⁷ To prove my point I invite the readers to have a look at a few of the following works. Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. Peter N. Townsend (New York: Harper and Row, 1975; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004; S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*; Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000; Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters?* Harper and Row, 2002; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004 (as *Religion – Significance and Meaning in an Age of Disbelief*); David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989; Titus Burckhardt, *Mirror of the Intellect*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004. The Perennialists are, after all, not that bad either.

²⁴⁸ The criticisms we have in mind are well represented by the books cited by Lawrence E. Sullivan in his masterly study, *Icañbus Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 884-85. What he says in the passage leading up to the suggested reading applies also to Western perceptions of Islam: “One of the great disservices to our understanding of South American religions [read: Islam] has been the perception of tribal peoples [read: Muslims] as slavishly dedicated to an unchanging order revealed in the images of myth and handed down unquestioned and unmodified from one generation to the next.

This attitude accompanies the evaluation of ‘myth’ as a banal and inane narrative. Tribal peoples (representing ‘archaic’ modes of thought) childishly cling to their myths, infantile fantasies, whereas mature contemporaries jettison myths with the passage of ‘historical time’

Postmodern” or “reversionary Postmodernism” has passed on Modernity/Enlightenment paradigm. I will let David Ray Griffin make the point for me. David says, “Modernity paradigm, rather than being regarded as the norm for human society toward which all history has been aiming and into which all societies should be ushered— forcibly if necessary— is instead increasingly seen as an aberration. A new respect for the wisdom of traditional societies is growing as we realize that they have endured for thousands of years and that, by contrast, the existence of modern society for even another century seems doubtful. Likewise, Modernity as a worldview is less and less seen as The Final Truth, in comparison with which all divergent worldviews are automatically regarded as “superstitious.” The modern worldview is increasingly relativized to the status of one among many, useful for some purposes, inadequate for others.²⁴⁹

With the “Perennialists” and their ‘crime record’ out of the way we can now turn to “The need for “a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine” (Basit, p. 17). S. H. Nasr, a prominent Perennialist, has time and again argued for the need emphasizing the rational approach and mode of engagement. “Today in the West, as well as in the Islamic world itself, there is an ever greater need to study both the principles and manifestations of Islam from its own authentic point of view and a manner comprehensible to contemporary man, or at least to one who possesses sufficient intelligence and good intentions. Moreover,

and the entrance’ into ‘modernity.’ It would be fascinating to study these and other justifications proffered for avoiding a serious encounter with the reality of myth [read: Islamic thought) and symbolic acts.... This is not the place to carry out a history of the ‘modern’ ideas of myth and religion. It is enough to suggest that the Western cultural imagination turned away when it encountered the stunning variety of cultural worlds that appeared for the first time in the Age of Discovery. Doubtless this inward turn sparked the appearance of all sorts of imaginary realities. The Enlightenment, the withdrawal of Western thinkers from the whirling world of cultural values into an utterly imaginary world of ‘objective’ forms of knowledge, and its intellectual follow-up coined new symbolic currency. These terms brought new meanings and new self-definition to Western culture: ‘consciousness/ unconsciousness,’ ‘primitive/civilized,’ ‘ethics/ mores,’ ‘law/ custom,’ ‘critical or reflective thought/ action.’

²⁴⁹ David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. xi.

this needs to be achieved by using methods of analysis and description which are at once logical and in conformity with the Islamic perspective; for this latter places the highest value upon intelligence (*al-'aql*) and logic, which is inseparable from it, although of course the transcendent realities cannot be reduced to logical categories. This type of writing which can 'translate' Islamic teachings into a contemporary idiom without betraying it is very important not only for non-Muslims who wish to learn about Islam but most of all for young Muslims, who are now mainly products of modern educational systems.²⁵⁰

Demands of reason should be satisfied— both the Perennialists and the “beyond-Postmodernism” or “reversionary Postmodernism” agree, but where they part company is in defining reason and its role/function in creating “a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection....” Huston Smith makes the point in the following remarks. “Whitehead’s categories are demanding, but they *do* in the end fit into our three dimensional reason, from which it follows that to fit God into them is to position her inside our limited understanding. This translates into putting God in a cage. Religion must, to be sure, be intelligible in certain ways, but to try to make it *rationaly* intelligible, fully so, is to sound its death knell. (In keeping with Perennialists generally, I draw a sharp distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* inasmuch as the latter operates intuitively and directly.) It is to squeeze the *pneuma*— a word usually translated as *spirit*, but etymologically deriving from *breath* or *air*— out of it, leaving us with what someone has called “flat-tire” theology. I realize that my rejection of Whitehead’s “ontological principle” here will sound like mystery-mongering to process theologians, but, apart from the pejorative in the word mongering, I welcome the charge. *Vis-a-vis* most modern and postmodern theology, I side with Sir Thomas Browne, who complained in his *Religio Medici* that the religion he typically heard preached did not contain sufficient impossibilities, adding that

²⁵⁰ S. H. Nasr, “Introduction,” *Islamic Life and Thought*, Unwin, London, 1976; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2001, pp. 161-176.

it is “no vulgar part of faith” to believe things not only above but contrary to reason and against the evidence proper to our senses.”²⁵¹

In the present context we are concerned with the preliminary stage of removing obstacles which make it difficult or impossible for the mind to understand. Intelligence has its rights, and these have not always been upheld by the representatives of religion. Agreed. The mental faculties need to be appeased and re-assured; and to this end religion has no option but to sacrifice certain half truths, not to speak of mere suppositions and conjectures, which in the past were considered as powerful motives for loving God ‘with all thy soul and with all thy strength’ and a lack of which lead the Enlightenment thinkers to the revolt mentioned so often in this paper.²⁵²

I am also troubled by the thought that if Enlightenment could be considered as “a post-traditional expression of monotheistic ideals” (Basit, p. 11) and “the Enlightenment offered a more rational and comprehensible description of human will, human freedom and human consciousness than was possible prior to it” (Basit, p. 25) What kept Providence waiting so long to actualize its ideals and that only through an instrument which ostensibly rejected “wisdom, illumination and the Divine”? Basit’s assertion, according to my lights, needs a strict qualifier here. I would read it as “the Enlightenment reasserted a more rational and comprehensible description of human will, human freedom and human consciousness than was possible in its milieu.” According to my lights, it would be more accurate to say that Enlightenment was a case similar to that of Islamic science which influenced the West and provided it with foundations for its scientific enterprise but had a different trajectory in the West and resulted in a

²⁵¹ David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 81.

²⁵² St. Mark, XII, 30. In Deuteronomy VI, 5, to which this is a reference, the element ‘mind’ is not mentioned, which makes no fundamental difference since the mind is strictly speaking a psychic faculty, and is therefore implicit in the word ‘soul’. In St. Matthew, XXII, 37, on the other hand, the element ‘strength’ is absent which again makes no difference inasmuch as physical energy and endurance are dominated by the will, which is also a psychic faculty.

very different ethos.²⁵³ Deliberation on this aspect of the issue may give us insights about the two faces of the Enlightenment paradigm.

This entails that while correcting Enlightenment on its rejections and claims of autonomous reason and emphasizing the essential requirement of “vectored reason”, legitimate demands of reason should also be upheld. This does not mean— we add by way of a word of caution— that consciousness should be reduced to rationality alone i.e. discursive thought²⁵⁴ or reason severed from its transcendent noetic roots,²⁵⁵ since, to borrow the words of Iqbal, “The Total reality.....has other ways of invading our consciousness”²⁵⁶; there are “non-rational modes of consciousness”²⁵⁷; “there is the possibility of unknown levels of consciousness”²⁵⁸ and “there are potential types of consciousness²⁵⁹ lying close to our normal consciousness”.²⁶⁰

On the practical level we are dealing with a received body of thought and praxis which, despite the Postmodern critiques of its conceptual foundations, continues to hold its sway in many ways. By head count the West is still Modern. Not only that; Enlightenment, its “rejection of the notions of

²⁵³ S. H. Nasr, O’ Brian, (Eds.) “Islamic Science, Western Science— Common Heritage, Diverse Destinies” in *In Quest of the Sacred*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2001, pp. 161-176.

²⁵⁴ Which is, as if, a reflection of the Intellect on the mental plane.

²⁵⁵ In the words of Rumi, “‘aql i juz’i ‘aql ra badnam kard”, *Mathnawi*, (ed. Nicholson) Vol. III, p. 31, line, 8. Also see Vol. II, p. 352, line, 11, Vol. I, p. 130, line, 4.

²⁵⁶ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan/Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1989, p. 13.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 14.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 37.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 146.

²⁶⁰ How do these “other ways of invasion “relate to poetry”? Iqbal tells us that the questions that call for an intellectual vision of reality for their answers are, “common to religion, philosophy and higher poetry”. His complete statement reads as follows. “What is the character and general structure of the universe in which we live? Is there a permanent element in the constitution of this universe? How are we related to it? What place do we occupy in it, and what is the kind of conduct that befits the place we occupy? These are the questions that are common to religion, philosophy and higher poetry. But the kind of knowledge that poetic inspiration brings is essentially individual in its character; it is figurative, vague and indefinite. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit. p. 1.

wisdom, illumination and the Divine” and claims of autonomous reason, have perpetuated, in “reified/dogmatic assertions” (Basit, p. 27). We are dealing, not with Voltaire but, to use John Ralston Saul’s term, with “Voltaire’s bastards” responsible for dissolution of human values and the rejections mentioned above.²⁶¹

Karen Armstrong has a very pertinent remark in her chapter on “Enlightenment” in *A History of God*. Concerning Voltaire she observed:²⁶²

The philosophers of the Enlightenment did not reject the idea of God, however. They rejected the cruel God of the orthodox who threatened mankind with eternal fire. They rejected mysterious doctrines about him that were abhorrent to reason. But their belief in a Supreme Being remained intact. Voltaire built a chapel at Femey with the inscription ‘Deo Erexit Voltaire’ inscribed on the lintel and went so far as to suggest that if God had not existed it would have been necessary to invent him. In the *Philosophical Dictionary*, he had argued that faith in one god was more rational and natural to humanity than belief in numerous deities. Originally people living in isolated hamlets and communities had acknowledged that a single god had control of their destinies: polytheism was a later development. Science and rational philosophy both pointed to the existence of a Supreme Being: ‘What conclusion can we draw from all this?’ he asks at the end of his essay on ‘Atheism’ in the *Dictionary*. He replies:

That atheism is a monstrous evil in those who govern; and also in learned men even if their lives are innocent, because from their studies they can affect those who hold office; and that, even if it is not as baleful as fanaticism, it is nearly always fatal to virtue. Above all, let me add that there are fewer atheists today than there have ever been, since

²⁶¹ For a powerful argument showing the intimate links between reason and the dissolution of human values in the modern world, see John Ralston Saul, *Voltaire’s Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reasoning the West* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

²⁶² Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, Mandarin, 1993, pp. 352.

*philosophers have perceived that there is no vegetative being without germ, no germ without design etc.*²⁶³

Voltaire equated atheism with the superstition and fanaticism that the philosophers were so anxious to eradicate. His problem was not God but the doctrines about him which offended against the sacred standard of reason.

The question of reason in the Enlightenment paradigm and its subsequent reification could be read in a different light too. Schuon has remarked.²⁶⁴

In speaking of the great theophanies— Beyond-Being, Being and Divine Centre of Existence, or Self, Lord and Logos-Intellect— mention has also been made of the human intellect (this being referable to the Logos), which is ‘neither created nor uncreated’: it is thus possible, if desired, to distinguish a fourth theophany, namely, the Logos reflected in the microcosm; this is the same Divine Logos, but manifesting itself ‘inwardly’ rather than ‘outwardly’. If ‘no man cometh unto the Father but by Me’, this truth or this principle is equally applicable to the pure Intellect in ourselves: in the sapiential order— and it is only in this order that we may speak of Intellect or intellectuality without making implacable reservations— it is essential to submit all the powers of the soul to the pure Spirit, which is identified, but in a supra-formal and ontological manner, with the fundamental dogma of the Revelation.

Its degeneration is what is relevant to our present discussion. He says:²⁶⁵

When the Ancients saw wisdom and felicity in submission to reason, both human and cosmic, they were referring directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, to the one Intellect. The proof of this lies precisely in the fact that they linked reason to Universal Nature; *in practice many*

²⁶³ *Philosophical Dictionary* (tr. T. Besterman) London, London, 1972, p. 57.

²⁶⁴ Frithjof Schuon, *Dimensions of Islam*, Unwin, 1969; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1985, p. 76.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

*committed the error of reducing this Nature to human reason,*²⁶⁶ after having reduced God to Nature. This double reduction is the very definition of Greco-Roman paganism, or of the Greco-Roman spirit in so far, as it was pagan, and not Platonic; it may be added that only the Man-Logos or Revelation ‘resuscitates’ and gives full importance to reason,²⁶⁷ and only an exact notion of the Absolutely Real and of its transcendence gives a meaning to Nature.

It is not difficult to see where does Enlightenment stand in this perspective and the way it has to be redeemed! “Beyond-Postmodernism” or “reversionary Postmodernism” would also like to see the Enlightenment paradigm humbled in many ways and it insists on “reason supplemented by vision.”²⁶⁸ Its vision statement could be summarised in Griffin. David Ray Griffin concludes his statement, in *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, with a prophetic call for a new, postmodern science that will support rather than oppose theology. It is a bracing summons, but it rides a crucial oversight. To the extent that science moves in the direction Griffin wants it to, it will relax its effort to control and will content itself with trying to describe, because most of the things Griffin wants it to add to its repertoire—the immaterial, qualities, final causes, freedom, downward and divine causation—cannot be manipulated. There is nothing wrong with describing, of course, or anything sacrosanct about control. Quite the contrary; the most valuable aspect of Heidegger’s entire corpus is his analysis of the way Western civilization has drifted toward calculative reason and the disaster portended by that drift. The question is not whether we should correct this drift, as Griffin and Basit are both convinced we should; the question concerns division of labour and what Confucius called “the rectification of names.” I see “reversionary Postmodernism” as still wedded to the modern conviction that science is the privileged mode of knowledge. If this conviction be true, it stands to reason that all knowing should enter its camp. And so “reversionary Postmodernism” would have it: “science . . . means knowledge,” he Griffin us, so “even the modern boundary between science

²⁶⁶ Emphasis added.

²⁶⁷ This is the essence of Basit’s thesis in both of its negative and positive aspects.

²⁶⁸ See note 13 above.

and theology will ... be overcome.”²⁶⁹ Basit parts company with the “reversionary Postmodernism” at this point as could be surmised from his argument developed in his fine comparative study of Ghazali and Ibn Rushd on the issue of reason and revelation.²⁷⁰

On the question of “interpretation of the mythic Fall from Eden” (Basit, p. 22) it is difficult to see eye to eye with Basit. I do not see the Fall in the same light as presented here and my interpretation of Iqbal also departs from that of Basit. A few remarks would suffice at the moment. He says, “Fall... also made human culture, goodness, and faith possible.” (Basit, p. 23) Goodness is a different affair; but it made human culture and faith possible; faith by way of a compensation not an improvement. Qur’anic narrative is very clear that the Fall was a part of the Divine scheme and outward revelation necessitated in the wake of the Fall was not adequated to a higher state of consciousness, as Basit gives us to understand, but rather an adjustment to the needs of a fallen humanity. When the “vision is face to face”²⁷¹ there is no question of faith, naïve or otherwise. Expressions like “naïveté and lack of consciousness”, “instinctive appetite [and we can say naïve faith]” hardly make any sense in that context. Moreover, Iqbal is not the first to have noted the two sides of the Fall. The “fortunate sin” (flex culpa) “brings with it the possibility of a qualitatively different human affirmation of the Divine” but not a qualitatively better affirmation. Insisting on that would tantamount to denying the state of perfection that all religious traditions have unanimously looked back to and ignoring every thing that is implied in the idea of the Centre and the Origin dominating all pre-Modern civilizations.

²⁶⁹ See David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989. p. 49.

²⁷⁰ See Basit B. Koshal, “Ghazzali, Ibn Rushd and Islam’s Sojourn into Modernity: A Comparative Analysis.” *Islamic Studies*. Summer, 2004. Also see, S. H. Nasr, “Falsafey ka Mukhaalif Falasafi” (*Ghazzali— A Philosopher’s Critique of Philosophy*), *Iqbalīyat*, IAP, 1987, p. 126, 128

²⁷¹ Bible I Cor. 13. 12.

The formal world being made up of dualities, the Intellect, once it has been projected by virtue of its ‘fall’ into material and psychic substances, is split into two poles, the one intellectual and the other existential; it is divided into intelligence and existence, into brain and body. In the Intellect, intelligence is existence, and inversely; distinction of aspects does not in itself imply a scission. Scission occurs only in the world of forms.²⁷²

A comparison of Iqbal’s narrative of the Fall with Milton²⁷³ would yield interesting insights here but that would carry us too far afield. I am pressed

²⁷² Human life unfolds on three planes simultaneously, or rather, the *ego* is subject to three centres of attraction to which it responds in different ways, according to its own nature or value. We live at the same time in the body, the head and the heart, so that we may sometimes ask ourselves where the genuine is situated; in fact, the *ego*, properly speaking, the empirical ‘I’, has its sensory seat in the brain, but it gravitates towards the body and tends to identify itself with it, while the heart is symbolically the seat of the Self, of which we may be conscious or ignorant, but which is our true existential, intellectual, and so universal centre. It is, in a sense, the old triad *anima, animus, Spiritus*, with the difference however that *anima*—the ‘spouse’ of *animus*—is rather the vegetative and animal psychic entity than the body itself; but there is no clear line of demarcation here, since the body cannot be dissociated from its sensations, which in fact constitute our lower and de-centralized *ego*, with its downward drag and dispersive tendency.

The brain is to the body what the heart is to brain and body taken together. The body and the brain are as it were projected into the current of forms; the heart is as it were immersed in the immutability of Being. Body and brain are so to speak the heart exteriorized; their bipolarization is explained by the fact of their exteriorization.

²⁷³ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, Mandarin, 1993, pp. 352. “Coercing people to believe in orthodox doctrines seemed particularly appalling to an age increasingly enamoured of liberty and freedom of conscience. The bloodbath unleashed by the Reformation and its aftermath seemed the final straw. Reason seemed the answer. Yet could a God drained of the mystery that had for centuries made him an effective religious value in other traditions appeal to the more imaginative and intuitive Christians? The Puritan poet John Milton (1608–74) was particularly disturbed by the Church’s record of intolerance. A true man of his age, he had attempted, in his unpublished treatise *On Christian Doctrine*, to reform the Reformation and to work out a religious creed for himself that did not rely upon the beliefs and judgments of others. He was also doubtful about such traditional doctrines as the Trinity. Yet it is significant that the true hero of his masterpiece *Paradise Lost* is Satan rather than the God whose actions he intended to justify to man. Satan has many of the qualities of the new men of Europe: he defies authority, pits himself against the unknown and in his intrepid journeys from Hell, through Chaos to the newly-created earth, he becomes the first explorer. Milton’s God, however, seems to bring out the inherent absurdity of Western

literalism. Without the mystical understanding of the Trinity, the position of the Son is highly ambiguous in the poem. It is by no means clear whether he is a second divine being or a creature similar to, though of higher status than, the angels. At all events, he and the Father are two entirely separate beings who have to engage in lengthy conversations of deep tedium to find out each other's intentions, even though the Son is the acknowledged Word and Wisdom of the Father.

It is, however, Milton's treatment of God's foreknowledge of events on earth that makes his deity incredible. Since of necessity God already knows that Adam and Eve will fail— even before Satan has reached the earth— he has to engage in some pretty specious justification of his actions before the event. He would have no pleasure in enforced obedience, he explains to the Son, and he had given Adam and Eve the ability to withstand Satan. Therefore they could not, God argues defensively, justly accuse

Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate;

As if Predestination over-rul'd

Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree

Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed

Thir on revolt; not I: if I foreknew,

Fereknowledge had no influence on thir fault,

Which had no less prov'd certain unforesown ..

I formed them free, and free they must remain,

Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change

Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordaind

Thir freedom; they themselves ordaind that fall.

Not only is it difficult to respect this shoddy thinking but God comes over as callous, self-righteous and entirely lacking in the compassion that his religion was supposed to inspire. Forcing God to speak and think like one of us in this way shows the inadequacies of such anthropomorphic and personalistic conception of the divine. There are too many contradictions for such a God to be either coherent or worthy of veneration.

The literal understanding of such doctrines as the omniscience of God will not work. Not only is Milton's God cold and legalistic, he is also grossly incompetent. In the last two books of *Paradise Lost*, God sends the Archangel Michael to console Adam for his sin by showing him how his descendants will be redeemed. The whole course of salvation history is revealed to Adam in a series of tableaux, with a cinnebtary by Michael: he sees the murder of Abel by Cain, the Flosland and Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, the call of Abraham, the Exocus from Egypt and the giving of the Law on Sinai. The inad quay of the Torah, which oppressed God's unfortunate chosen people tar countries, is, Michael explains, a ploy to make them yearn for a more spiritual law. As this account of the future salvation of the world progresses— through the exploits of King David, the exile to Babylon, the birth of

to content myself with a quote which comes from a very different kind of book, *The Secret of Shakespeare*.²⁷⁴

Shakespeare, unlike Milton, has no illusions about the scope of reason. He knew that since reason is limited to this world it is powerless to 'justify the ways of God'. Milton may have known this in theory, but in practice he was very much a son of the Renaissance, very deeply under the spell of humanism. *Paradise Lost* cannot be called an intellectual poem. Milton portrays the next world by sheer force of human imagination. His God the Father, like Michelangelo's, is fabricated in the image of man; and the purely logical arguments which he puts into the mouth of God to justify His ways inevitably fail to convince us. Now Shakespeare also seeks to justify the ways of God to man. That is, beyond doubt, the essence of his

Christ and so forth— it occurs to the reader that there must have been an easier and more direct way to redeem mankind. The fact that this tortuous plan with its constant failures and false starts, is decreed in advance can only cast grave doubts on the intelligence of its Author. Milton's God can inspire little confidence. It must be significant that after *Paradise Lost* no other major English creative writer would attempt to describe 'the supernatural world. There would be no more Spensers or Miltons. Henceforth the supernatural and the spiritual would become the domain of more marginal writers, such as George MacDonald and C. S. Lewis. Yet a God who cannot appeal to the imagination is in trouble.

At the very end of *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve take their solitary way out of the Garden of Eden and into the world. In the West too, Christians were on the threshold of a more secular age, though they still adhered to belief in God. The new religion of reason would be known as Deism. It had no time for the imaginative disciplines of mysticism and mythology. It turned its back on the myth of revelation and on such traditional 'mysteries' as the Trinity, which had for so long held people in the thrall of superstition. Instead it declared allegiance to the impersonal 'Deus' which man could discover by his own efforts. Francois-Marie de Voltaire, the embodiment of the movement that would subsequently become known as the Enlightenment, defined this ideal religion in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764). It would, above all, be as simple as possible.

Would it not be that which taught much morality and very little dogma? that which tended to make men just without making them absurd? that which did not order one to believe in things that are impossible, contradictory, injurious to divinity, and panicious to mankind, and which dared not menace with eternal punishment anyone possessing common sense? Would it not be that which did not uphold its belief with executioners, and did not inundate the earth with blood on account of unintelligible sophism? . . . which taught only the worship of one god, justice, tolerance and humanity?

²⁷⁴ Martin Lings, *The Secret of Shakespeare*, Quinta Essentia, England, 1996, p. 178.

purpose in writing. But his justification is on an intellectual plane, where alone it is possible; and this brings us back to the theme of his plays, for the intellect is none other than the lost faculty of vision which is symbolized by the Holy Grail and by the Elixir of Life.

Here I would like to quote the leading Iqbal scholar of India, S. R. Farooqi, on the issue. Farooqi says:²⁷⁵

Under no pressure to rationalize, Iqbal is not much preoccupied with the Fall. Even his famous observation in the “Reconstruction” that the fall is “man’s transition from simple consciousness to the first flash of self consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream nature with a throb of causality in one’s own being” leaves Satan entirely out of the reckoning and is borrowed from St. Augustine without much critical examination. Cleanth Brooks quotes from Augustine’s City of God and states that “self consciousness” was the “knowledge conferred by the act of plucking and eating the fated apple”. Iqbal makes use of this argument to further his thesis of self-awareness.

Looking at the issue of the Fall from a Sufi perspective illustrates how Islamic anthropology and psychology are rooted in the divine attributes. A primary goal of the Sufis, after all, is to assume the character traits of God, or to actualize the divine form in which human beings were created. All the discussion of the “stations” that must be traversed on the path to God refer to the character traits that need to be brought out from latency. The models of the perfected divine form are the prophets, and the father of all the prophets is Adam himself. All the perfections, virtuous qualities, and stations that have come to be realized by human beings were already present in Adam. Understanding Adam’s story allows us to see how the mutuality of divine and human love brings about the full flowering of human possibility and actualizes God’s goal in creating the universe.

Since God is infinite, the possible modes in which the knowledge of His names can be realized are also infinite. This means that it is not enough for

²⁷⁵ For a perceptive analysis of the subject see, S. R. Farooqi, “The Image of Satan in Iqbal and Milton”.

the first human being to know God's names. Each of his children must also know the names in his or her own unique way. Only then can every potential of the original human disposition come to be actualized. One implication of this is that hell demands human existence in the world. Hell is nothing but a domain that is ruled almost exclusively by the names of wrath and severity, just as paradise is ruled by the names of mercy and gentleness. The fact that God is both All-merciful and Wrathful demands that both paradise and hell exist. Hence, Ahmad Sam'ani (died 1140) tells us, God addressed Adam as follows when He wanted to explain to him why He had to send him down out of paradise:276

Within the pot of your existence are shining jewels and jet-black stones. Hidden within the ocean of your makeup are pearls and potsberds. And as for Us, We have two houses: in one We spread out the dining-cloth of good-pleasure, entrusting it to [the angel] Ridwan. In the other We light up the fire of wrath, entrusting it to [the angel] Malik. If We were to let you stay in the Garden, Our attribute of severity would not be satisfied. So, leave this place and go down into the furnace of affliction and the crucible of distance. Then We will bring out into the open the deposits, artifacts, subtleties, and tasks that are concealed in your heart.

Basit concludes, "As a final word I'd like to explicitly articulate this logic. The logic underpinning both of the approaches offered above with respect to the ultimate goal of Islam in its encounter with the modern West is not to critique-condemn-replace but to redeem-reform-embrace."..... "In the final analysis if there is one unredeemable part of the Enlightenment tradition it is the fact that it allowed its critique of illumination, wisdom and the Divine turns into an outright rejection because of the reification of the critique..... To adopt the position that the Enlightenment tradition has to be abandoned in its entirety in response to its shortcomings is to exhibit the worst characteristics of that which one is critiquing and rejecting. This basically means that one has adopted the same attitude towards

²⁷⁶ For a detailed account of the Sufi hermeneutics of the issue see W. C. Chittick, "The Fall of Adam", *Sufism— A Short Introduction*, One World, Oxford, 2000.

the Enlightenment paradigm that the Enlightenment paradigm had adopted towards traditional religion and classical philosophy. This is not only a modernist move in the most negative sense, but also one that is unlikely to bear fruit. A more sane approach “albeit a more courageous, complex and nuanced one” and one that is built on scripturally (Qur’anicly) reasoned grounds is redeem-reform-embrace— an approach that will lead to enhanced understanding on the part of a troubled and alienated self, as a result of it critical but empathetic study of the alien other. (Basit, p. 26-28) While agreeing with him “to redeem-reform-embrace” I would offer the following remarks as my conclusion.

The view advocated by Basit could be termed as a Postmodernism, which in contrast to its deconstructive predecessor,²⁷⁷ be called constructive or revisionary. It seeks to overcome the Modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a Postmodern worldview through a revision of Modern premises and traditional concepts. This constructive or revisionary Postmodernism involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions. It rejects not science as such but only that scientism in which the data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our worldview.

The constructive activity of this type of postmodern thought is not limited to a revised worldview; it is equally concerned with a postmodern world that will support and be supported by the new worldview. A postmodern world will involve postmodern persons, with a postmodern spirituality, on the one hand, and a postmodern society, ultimately a postmodern global order, on the other. Going beyond the modern world will involve transcending its individualism,

²⁷⁷ Prone to assume that maps must be believed fanatically if they are to be believed at all, polemical Postmoderns condemn religions for fomenting disharmony. But it is useful here to refer back to a characteristic of post-modernity, which includes its being “paired with ethno-religious fundamentalism”. Postmoderns over-look that pairing. They do not perceive the extent to which their styles of thought (with the dangers of relativism and nihilism they conceal) have produced fundamentalism; which fundamentalism is the breeding ground for the fanaticism and intolerance they rightly deplore.

*anthropocentrism, patriarchy, mechanization, economism, consumerism, nationalism, and militarism. Constructive postmodern thought provides support for the ecology, peace, feminist, and other emancipatory movements of our time, while stressing that the inclusive emancipation must be from Modernity itself. It however, by contrast with premodern, emphasizes that the modern world has produced unparalleled advances that must not be lost in a general revulsion against its negative features.*²⁷⁸

This revisionary postmodernism is not only more adequate to our experience but also more genuinely Postmodern. It does not simply carry the premises of Modernity through to their logical conclusions, but criticizes and revises those premises. Through its return to organicism and its acceptance of nonsensory perception, it opens itself to the recovery of truths and values from various forms of Premodern thought and practice that had been dogmatically rejected by Modernity. This constructive, revisionary Postmodernism involves a creative synthesis of Modern and Premodern truths and values.

But to work out such a creative synthesis is a challenging task. I would conclude with three reminders. First, finding Enlightenment thought useful to Islamic thought does not mean following it blindly or swallowing it uncritically. Neither in intention nor in result are they Islamic thinkers. Second, the kind of appropriation Basit is proposing is possible just to the degree that various postmodern critical analyses are conceptually separable from the secular, atheistic contexts in which they are to be found. Finally, I hope that by now it is clear the very thin soup one finds in Postmodernism is not the only piety that one could call “postmodern”. Rather, some postmodern critiques open the door for a kind of Islamic thought that is robustly theistic and quite specifically Islamic. Perhaps one of the most important Islamic uses to which secular Enlightenment/Postmodernism can

²⁷⁸ From the point of view of deconstructive postmodernists, this constructive postmodernism is still hopelessly wedded to outdated concepts, because it wishes to salvage a positive meaning not only for the notions of the human self, historical meaning, and truth as correspondence, which were central to modernity, but also for Premodern notions of a divine reality, cosmic meaning, and an enchanted nature.

be put is to help contemporary Islamic thinkers sort the wheat from the tares in our own traditions. The Postmodern can lead back to the Premodern, or, more precisely, a critically appropriated Postmodernism can lead to a critical re-appropriation of Premodern resources.

The characteristic features of this epoch very definitely correspond with the indications supplied from time immemorial by the traditional doctrines when describing the cyclic period of which it forms a part; and this will at the same time serve to show that what appears as anomalous and disorderly from a certain point of view is nevertheless a necessary element in a wider order and an inevitable consequence of the laws governing the development of all manifestation. However, let it be said forthwith, this is not a reason for consenting to submit passively to the confusion and obscurity which seem momentarily to be triumphing, for in such a case there would be nothing else to do but to remain silent; on the contrary, it is a reason for striving to the utmost to prepare the way of escape out of this “dark age “, for there are many signs that its end is approaching, if it be not immediately at hand. This eventuality also is in accordance with order, since equilibrium is the result of the simultaneous action of two contrary tendencies; if one or the other could entirely cease to function, equilibrium would never be restored and the world itself would disappear; but such a supposition cannot possibly be realized, for the two terms of an opposition have no meaning apart from one another, and whatever the appearances may be, one can rest assured that all partial and transitory disequilibrium’s will finally contribute towards the realization of the total equilibrium itself.