IQBAL REVIEW

Journal of the Iqbal Academy, Pakistan

October 2006

Editor

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

IQBAL ACADEMY PAKISTAN

Title	:	Iqbal Review (October 2006)
Editor	:	Muhammad Suheyl Umar
Publisher	:	Iqbal Academy Pakistan
City	:	Lahore
Year	:	2006
Classification (DDC)	:	105
Classification (IAP)	:	8U1.66V12
Pages	:	220
Size	:	14.5 x 24.5 cm
ISSN	:	0021-0773
Subjects	:	Iqbal Studies
	:	Philosophy
	:	Research

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ON THE TELEOLOGY OF PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

Mulla Sadrā's primary philosophical project is to map out the path of achieving the soul's perfection. His several well-known contributions to the philosophical vocabulary, such as the "systematic Ambiguity" *(tashkīk)* of existence and "substantial motion," were all developed to explain how the soul enters into this world through corporealization and departs from it by way spiritualization. His remarkably detailed investigations of the modalities of after worldly experience simply illustrate his desire to explain the full range of possibilities that are open to the human soul. In order to grasp the role of perception in his overall project, it is necessary to understand the end toward which perception is directed and the nature of its final fruition. The soul perceives by nature, so much so that perception enters into its very definition. In and of themselves, however, the varieties of perception possessed by the animal soul do not suffice for the achievement of human perfection, though perception remains an essential attribute of the soul. Human efforts to cleanse perception of distortion play a key role in the soul's unfolding. The most important concept here is probably *tajrīd*, "disengagement", which designates the act of freeing perception from its entrancement by embodied and materialized forms and training it to focus on the forms in themselves, that is, the forms in their intellective existence, where they are innately disengaged and "separate" (*mufāriq*) from every trace of material existence. The final goal is the transmutation of perception through the full development of the acquired intellect. Then the soul will be able to perceive the forms for what they truly are on all planes of existence, including the endless worlds of the afterlife.

In modern philosophy, the word *perception* typically designates physical sensation. Earlier philosophers often dealt with the concept in much broader terms, as would he expected from the original meaning of Latin word *percipio*. So also the Muslim philosophers spoke of perception– using the Arabic word *idrāk*– in an exceedingly broad sense. For them, perception denotes

apprehension and obtaining knowledge by any agent, from animals to God, and on any level, from physical sensation to intellectual vision.

In the philosophy of Mulla Ṣadrā, the concept of perception plays a crucial role both in the explanation of the nature of existence and in the analysis of the goal of human life. This follows naturally from the fact that his philosophy is oriented toward "psychology" in the pre-modern sense. In other words, he attempts to provide an overview of the human self in all its ramifications and to map out the way for the self to achieve the highest of its own possibilities, possibilities that are rooted in its ability to perceive.

Perception

At the end of the first of the four books of the *Asfār*, Ṣadrā provides definitions for some thirty words that are employed in discussing the modalities of knowledge *(ʿilm)*. He lists "perception" as the first of these words. In defining it, he begins with its literal sense. As any Arabic dictionary will tell us, it has a variety of meanings, such as attaining, reaching, arriving, catching, grasping, comprehending, and discerning. Ṣadrā writes:[1]

Idrāk is encounter [*liqāʾ*] and arrival [*waṣl*]. When the intellective potency arrives at the quiddity of the intelligible and attains it, this is its perception in this respect. In philosophy, the meaning intended by the word coincides with the literal meaning. Or rather, true perception and encounter is only this encounter, that is, perception by knowledge. As for bodily encounter, it is not really an encounter. (*Asfār* 3:507, 323.31)

Before going any further, we need to allude to some of the issues raised

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[1] I provide page references both for the nine-volume edition of the *Asfār* (Ṭabāṭabāʾī edition, *which* began appearing in Qum in 1378/1958-59), as given on the CD-Rom "Nūr al-Ḥikma 2" (Qum: Computer Research Center of Islamic Science; and for the lithograph edition (Tehran: 1282/1865-66); in the latter case, I also provide the line number. Since the lithograph edition is only partially paginated, I follow the pagination established by M. Ibrāhīm Āyātī in *Fihrist-i abwāb wa fuṣul-i kitāb-i Asfār* (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1340/1961). The latter has also been published in S. H. Nasr, *Yād-nāma-yi Mulla Ṣadrā (*Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1340/1961), pp. 63-106.

by this definition. Like all Muslim philosophers, Ṣadrā analyzes the human self in terms of faculties. However, the Arabic word for "faculty" is *quwwa*, which is also the word for "potentiality" as contrasted with "actuality." Given that every faculty is at the same time a potentiality, *quwwa* can better be translated as "potency." Its dual meaning is especially important in Ṣadrā's writings, because his analysis of the human soul depends precisely on seeing it as a grand potentiality that encompasses every other potentiality designated by the names of the faculties.

In this definition of perception, Ṣadrā means by the "intellective potency" the power and potential of the self to know something. When this power reaches an object, it moves from potentiality to actuality. The degree of actuality that it achieves is one of the most basic issues that needs to be addressed.

In the definition, Ṣadrā says that through perception the intellective potency arrives at the "quiddity" (or *māhiyya* "whatness") of a thing. In other words, when perception takes place, we come to know "what" the object of perception is. The fact that perception entails knowing a thing's quiddity is emphasized in the second word that Ṣadrā defines in his list of technical terms–*shuʿūr* or "awareness." Awareness, he says, is to perceive something without "achieving fixity" (*istithbāt*), that is, without ascertaining the thing's whatness.[2] He adds, "Awareness is the first level of the arrival of knowledge at the intellective potency. It is, as it were, a shaky perception. That is why it is not said about God that He is 'aware' of a thing" (3:508, 323.34), though it is said about Him that He "perceives" things.

The thing that is perceived is an "intelligible," that is, an object known to intelligence. The intelligible is called the "form" (*ṣūra*) of the thing, in the Aristotelian sense of the word form. Hence it is contrasted with the thing's "matter" (*mādda*), which is unintelligible in itself. The only things we can truly

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[2] Ṣadrā does not use the term *quiddity* here, but he does allude to it by his use of the term *istithbāt*, or "achieving fixity." This word derives from the same root as *thābita*, "fixed," as in the term *ʿayn thābita*, the "fixed entity" made famous by Ibn al-ʿArabī and often discussed by Ṣadrā. In both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ṣadrā the term is taken as a synonym of quiddity.

perceive and know are forms, not matter.

Finally, in this definition ṣadrā insist that true *idrāk*– that is true attainment, reaching, arrival, and encounter– pertains to knowledge and not to the body. This reminds us that real perception of things can only take place if an intelligent agent encounters an intelligible object. Every bodily attainment can only be fleeting and evanescent. So also, any modality of perception that is in any way sullied by the body's materiality will be deficient in certain basic ways, because the form will be obscured both by the means of perception and by the existential situation within which it is perceived.

Levels of Perception

In the same list of important terms, ṣadrā provides another definition that can help us understand the final goal of perception. This term is *dhihn* or "mind." He writes, "The mind is the soul's potency to acquire knowledges that have not yet been attained" (515, 325.35).

In keeping with the general Graeco-Islamic view of things, ṣadrā understands the human soul or self to have many powers and faculties and many corresponding levels of actualization, beginning with the plant and animal levels. The soul actualizes itself by perceiving what it has the potential to perceive. The soul's goal in its existence is to move from potential knowing to actual knowing. When its potential knowledge becomes fully actual, it is no longer called a "soul" but rather an "intellect," or an "intellect in act." In ṣadrā's view, then, the human soul's potential to achieve actual knowledge is called the "mind."

The mind comes to know things through perception. "Perception" is simply the name given to the act whereby the soul comes to know, whatever the object may be. If we look at perception from the side of the perceiver, it has four basic varieties. In each case, the mind encounters the "form" of a thing– that is, its quiddity or intelligible reality– not its matter. However, the circumstances are different in each sort of encounter. These circumstances pertain both to the instrument that perceives and to the modality of the perceptible's existence.

The first level of perception is sense-perception (*ḥiss*). At this level the perceived form exists in matter, and the perceiver finds the form in modes of material embodiment. These modes are basically the Aristotelian accidents, such as quantity, quality, time, place, and situation. In its external existence as a thing, the form is inseparable from such accidental attributes, and it is precisely these attributes that allow us to perceive it with the senses. As for the matter through which the form exists, it can never be perceived in itself, because it represents the furthest and darkest reaches of existence, a realm that remains almost entirely unintelligible.

The second level of perception is imagination (*khayāl, takhayyul*), which is the perception of a sensory thing, along with all its characteristics and qualities, in the same way that it is perceived by the senses. Unlike sense-perception, however, imagination perceives the thing whether or not the thing's matter is present to the senses.

The third level is *wahm*. The medievals translated this Arabic word as "*estimatio*," but modern scholars have reached no consensus as to what exactly it means and how it can be appropriately rendered into English. I translate it as "sense-intuition" in order to suggest its intermediary status between intellect and the senses. According to Ṣadrā, it is the perception of an intelligible meaning while attributing the meaning to a particular, sensory thing. In sense-intuition, the soul perceives the universal, but within a particular, rather than in the universal itself.

The highest level is intellection (*taʿaqqul*), which is the perception of something in respect of its quiddity alone, not in respect of anything else.[3]

What distinguishes the levels of perception boils down to the degree of "disengagement" (*tajarrud*), a term of fundamental importance in Ṣadrā's writings. *Tajarrud* is another word concerning whose translation modern scholars have not agreed. Most commonly, it has been translated as "abstraction," a word that thoroughly obscures its basic meaning.[4] A

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[3] *Asfār* 3:360-61, 290.27
[4] The basic problem with "abstraction" is that the word totally loses the sense of the intensification of existence and reality that takes place as the degree of disengagement

"disengaged" thing is not only free and quit of matter, but it also dwells in a domain of intensified existence and consciousness. In Islamic philosophy in general, few concepts have been more significant than "disengagement" for describing the ultimate goal of the human quest for perfection. In the purest sense, disengagement is an attribute of God, the Necessary Existence in itself, since the Necessary Existence has no attachment to or dependence upon anything other than itself. More specifically, disengagement is the attribute of the intellect that is able to see things as they actually are, that is, without their entanglement in the obscurities .f imagination and sense-perception.[5] It is also the essential attribute of the forms or quiddities that the intellect perceives.

According to Ṣadrā, the four levels of perception need to be differentiated in terms of the degree of disengagement reached by the perceptibles.

The first level, that of sense-perception, can be understood in terms of three conditions (*shart*) that determine its nature: First, the matter is present at the instrument of perception, which is to say that the soul perceives the thing externally in its material embodiment. Second, the thing's form is concealed by the perceived qualities and characteristics. ʿThird, the perceived thing is a particular, not a universal.

On the second level– imagination– the perceptibles are disengaged from the first of the three conditions, material embodiment, because there is no need for the external presence of the thing.

On the third level, sense-intuition's perceptibles are disengaged both from material embodiment and from the object's specific qualities and characteristics.

On the final level, the intelligibles are disengaged from all three

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increases. Cf. my discussion of the word in *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[5] ."As for sensory perceptions, they are contaminated by ignorance. Attaining them is mixed with failure to find, for sense-perception attains only the outward side of things and the molds of the quiddities, without their realities and their inward sides." (*Asfār* 3:367, 292.14)

conditions, because the intellect perceives only universals.[6]

ṣadrā concludes his discussion of the levels of perception by saying that the four levels can be reduced to three, because imagination and sense-intuition both pertain to the intermediary domain between intellect and the senses.[7]

Levels of Existence

The three basic levels of perception– sense-perception, imagination, and intellection– correspond exactly with the three worlds that are found in the external realm. These are the world of bodies, the world of imagination, and the world of intellect. Discussion of levels of perception is inseparable from discussion of levels of existence. If there were only one level of existence, there would be only one sort of perception. And indeed, this is precisely the view of much of modern philosophy. Reducing perception to sensation follows from the elimination of the imaginal and spiritual domains from serious consideration.

In talk of levels of existence, what is meant by "existence" is possible existence, or formal and delimited existence, not Necessary Existence. Existence in itself– Arabic *wujūd*– is the ultimate reality of all things, and, as such, it lies beyond the worlds and beyond the levels. In itself, existence remains forever unattainable, imperceptible, and unknowable. However, it deploys itself in degrees of strength and weakness. We come to know it indirectly by perceiving it in various conditioned modalities. The higher the realm of existence, the more it is disengaged from matter and from the conditions and characteristics of things. Correspondingly, the perception that pertains to the higher levels is more intense and more direct.

Each level of existence is typically called a "world" (*ālam*), and the sum total of the levels is known simply as "the world," or, as we can also translate it, "the cosmos" or "the universe." Discussion of worlds is plainly a discussion of knowledge and perception. In Arabic, this point is brought

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[6] *Asfār* 3:361-62, 290-91.
[7] *Asfār* 3:362, 291.

home by the word *ʿālam* itself. It derives from the same root as the word for knowledge, *ʿilm*. The lexicographers tell us that its primary designation of "world" is "that by means of which one knows." Thus, the "world" as a whole is a realm that is defined and designated by the fact that it can be an object of knowledge. So also, each world or level within the whole is defined by the type of perception that makes it the object of knowledge. The fact that there are three basic modes of perception derives from the fact there are three basic knowable realms.

One of Ṣadrā's more detailed exposition of the worlds comes in a chapter of the *Asfār* called "On the divisions of the sciences," that is, the "knowledges," or the modalities of knowing. There he explains that the reality of knowledge goes back to "formal existence," which is the realm of existence within which forms appear to perception. He then says that formal existence has three divisions– complete, sufficient, and deficient. Complete existence is the realm of the intelligible forms and the disengaged intellects. Sufficient existence is the realm of souls, also called "the world of imagination." Deficient existence is the domain of the sensory forms, which are "the forms that endure through matter and are attached to it" (3:501, 322.10).

Having described the three levels of formal existence, Ṣadrā then speaks of a fourth level, that of bodily matter, which undergoes transformation and renewal at every instant. Because bodily matter is immersed in nonexistence, possibility, contingency, and darkness, it is unknowable, even if it is called by the name "existence." As examples Ṣadrā cites time and movement.[8]

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[8] For a division of the worlds into three in terms of the soul's three "perceptual configurations" (*nasha'at idrākiyya*), see *Asfār* 9:21, 826.18. In discussing these four domains of existence, Ṣadrā continues by explaining that they are four worlds, and each is one of the divisions of knowledge, because at each level the known forms pertain to a different domain of existence. Then he describes the sorts of "possible perceptibles" that pertain to each while also clarifying what he means by dividing the first three levels into complete, sufficient, and deficient: "The first sort of perceptible is 'complete' in existence and knowability. These are the intellects and the intelligibles. Because of the intensity of their existence, luminosity, and limpidness, they are quit of bodies, apparitions, and numbers. Despite their manyness and

In explaining the differentiation among these four domains, Ṣadrā tells us that they differ in terms of the intensity and weakness of their existence. The stronger a thing's modality of existence, the more disengaged it is from the transient world of matter. The more disengaged it is, the more intelligible it is, because it is more purely itself. In each of the realms lower than the world of completeness and intellect is immersed to some degree in the muddiness and obscurity brought about by multiplicity, dispersion, separation, and confusion.[9]

Presence

The key to understanding Ṣadrā's concept o perception is his concept of

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their plentifulness, they exist through one, all-gathering existence.... The second is the world of celestial souls, disengaged apparitions, and quantitative images. These are 'sufficient' through their essence and their intellective origins because, by means of their conjunction with the world of divine forms that are complete in existence, their deficiencies are mended and they are affiliated with them. Third is the world of sensory souls, the lower spiritual realm [al-malakūt al-asfal], and all forms sensible in act and perceived by the tools of awareness and the organs, which also belong to the lower spiritual realm. These are deficient in existence as long as they pertain to this world. However, they may be elevated beyond this world and become disengaged from it–as far as the world of disengaged apparitions– by following along with the human soul's climb to it.

Fourth is the world of bodily matters and their forms, which are transient, disappearing, transforming, and undergoing generation and corruption." (3:502-3, 322.12)

[9] In one passage, Ṣadrā explains that the obscurations from which people need to disengage themselves in order to achieve the intellection of a thing are "alien accidents" (aʿrāḍ gharība). He writes, "The alien accidents from which the human needs to disengage himself in intellecting a thing are not the quiddities and meanings of the things, since there is no contradiction between intellecting a thing and intellecting another attribute along with it. In the same way, the [alien accidents] from which one must disengage oneself in imagining something are not their imagined forms, since there is no contradiction between imagining something and imagining another guise [hayʾa] along with it. Rather, the preventer of some perceptions is certain modalities of the existent things. This preventer is dark and accompanied by nonexistences that veil their own absent affairs from the perceptual means. An example is being [kawn] in matter, because the situational matter necessitates the veiling of the form from perception unconditionally. So also is being in sensation and imagination; these also may prevent intellective perception, because they also are a quantitative existence, even if the quantity [miqdār] is disengaged from matter. But, the intelligibles existence is not quantitative existence, because it is disengaged from the two realms of being and stands beyond the two worlds." (Asfār 3:36, 291.9)

existence. It needs to be kept in mind that the English word *existence* is not an adequate translation of the Arabic *wujūd*, nor will the situation be any better if use the term "being" instead of "existence." One important dimension of the discussion of *wujūd* that is immediately lost to sight in translation is the fact that the word itself demands consciousness and perception. The literal meaning of *wujūd* is "finding" and "being found," and this meaning was much stressed in the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers, with whom Ṣadrā was thoroughly familiar and from whom he often quotes.

However, it is not only the Sufi theoreticians who insisted that existence demands consciousness and awareness. Even a straight Hellenophile philosopher like Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. ca. 610/1213), who had no connection with his younger contemporary Ibn al-ʿArabī and who wrote most of his works in Persian, makes use of this double significance of the word *wujūd* to divide existence into two basic realms.[10] The first of these realms is "being" (*hastī*) without consciousness and awareness. The second is being along with "finding" (*yāft*). Moreover, Baba Afḍal uses Persian *yāft* or "finding" not only as a synonym for *wujūd* in its higher sense, but also as a synonym for perception (*idrāk*). He explains that the realm of mere being appears to us through inanimate objects, while the world of finding and perception appears in the realm of souls and intellects.

Once we remember that perception and finding are already implicit in the word *wujūd* as employed by many of the philosophers, we see that any attempt to reduce existence to mere "being there" seems obtuse. Rather, existence in the full sense is not only that which is there, but also that which finds what is there. The more intensely something is there, the more intensely it finds. The fullest degree of existence is found in the fullest degree of presence, perception, and consciousness.

In a short gloss on the meaning of perception, Ṣadrā says, "Perception is

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[10] Lest we think that Baba Afḍal's works, mostly written in Persian, w re unknown to Mulla Ṣadrā, we should remember that Ṣadrā translated one of them into Arabic. This is *Iksīr al-ʿārifīn*, a translation of *Jāwidān-nāma*. See the introduction to my edition and translation of *Iksīr al-ʿārifīn*, forthcoming.

the existence of the perceptible for the perceiver" (*al-idrāk ʿibāra ʿan wujūd al-mudrak liʾl-mudrik*).[11] In the light of the dual meaning of the word *wujūd*, this can also be translated as, "Perception is the perceptible's being found by the perceiver." In several similar glosses on the word, ṣadrā often replaces the word *wujūd* with the word "presence" (*ḥuḍūr*) or "witnessing" (*mushāda*),[12] both of which are terms with long histories that can throw light on how he understands the nature.[13]

"Presence" is the opposite of "absence" (*ghayba*), and it is practically a synonym of "witnessing." ṣadrā sometimes divides the universe into two basic "perceptual" (*idrākī*) domains, that is, the world of life and knowledge, which is the realm of intellects and souls, and the world of death and ignorance, which is the realm of inanimate bodies.[14] (These are of course equivalent to Baba Afḍal's "finding" and "being.") When ṣadrā makes this division, he is likely to employ the Qurʾānic terms for these two realms, that

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[11] 8:40, 732.31; cf. 8:165, 764.3; 8:251, 785.31.

[12] For example: "Perception is the presence of the perceptible for the perceiver" (4:137, 377.6). "Perception consists of the existence of something for something else and its presence for it" (6:146, 635.11). "Perception consists of the existence of a form present at an existent thing whose existence belongs to itself" (8:163, 764.3). "Perception is nothing but the soul's regard [*iltifāt*] toward and its witnessing the perceptible" (6:162, 573.22).

[13] The discussion of "presence" in the context of perception is directly related to the issue of two sorts of knowledge often discussed in later Islamic philosophy –"presential" (*ḥuḍūrī*) and "obtained" (*ḥuṣūlī*), The fact that "presence" is synonymous with "witnessing" is typically ignored in the secondary literature, and this helps obscure the connection with the whole issue of "witnessing in the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers. For them, witnessing is synonymous with "unveiling" (*kashf*) and "direct seeing" (*ʿiyān*). Moreover, it is also a synonym of *wujūd* when this term is used to designate the highest possibilities of human perception, as in the common expression *ahl a-kashf wa ʾl-wujūd,* "the folk of unveiling and finding." On Ibn al-ʿArabī's use of these terms, see my *Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

[14] He goes on to point out that these two designations –the absent and the witnessed – pertain to our limited, this-worldly point of view, in which the intellect has not been actualized in its full splendor. In actual fact, he says, the after world is more intense in its existence than this world, and everything more intense in existence is also more intense in presence, witnessing, and manifestation. "Every stratum of the Gardens that is more intense in quittance from this cosmos and grater in disengagement from and elevation beyond matter is more intense in manifestation and greater in gathering" (6:152, 571.20).

is, the "absent" (*ghayb*) and the "witnessed" (*shahāda*). The "absent" is everything that we do not ordinarily perceive. The "witnessed" is everything present to our senses.

When we ask if it is possible to perceive and witness the "absent" world, the philosophers will reply that of course it is. We do so precisely by perceiving those things that the senses are unable to grasp. However, in order truly to perceive the realm of absent things, we need to strengthen our perceptual faculties and to learn how to see through the darkness of the corporeal and sensory realm into the domain that lies beyond it. The absent realm must come to exist for us and to be *found* by us. In other words, it must come to be *present* in the self and be *witnessed* by it.

Perception, then, is a mode of existence, or it is existence itself, which is precisely "presence"– being there and being found. Perception is the existence of the perceived object within the perceiver. It follows that in perceiving both the external and the internal worlds, the degree of perception coincides with the degree of existence. To perceive something more directly is to participate in existence more fully.

Mental Existence

When ṣadrā says that perception is for the perceptible "to exist" or "to be found" within the perceiver, he clearly does not mean that the thing exists in the same mode internally as it does externally. He explains that when the mind perceives something, it comes from potentiality to actuality, and this actuality of the mind is the presence of the thing's intelligible form in the mind. This presence is called "mental existence" (*wujūd dhihnī*), an expression that we can also translate as "mental finding." However, as long as the soul remains the soul and has not become an intellect in act, the soul's mode of perception and existence is weak, and everything that is perceived and exists within the soul is even weaker. ṣadrā writes that because of this weakness, the specific acts and traces that are ordered upon the soul and come into existence from it have the utmost weakness of existence. Or rather, the existences of the intellective and imaginal forms that come into existence from it are shadows and apparitions of the external existences that emerge

from the Creator, even if the quiddity is preserved in the two existences. Hence the traces that are ordered upon the quiddity in the external realm are not ordered upon it in respect of [its existence in the soul]....

This existence of a thing upon which traces are not ordered while it emerges from the soul in this modality of manifestation is named "mental" and "shadow" existence. The other, upon which traces are ordered, is named "external" and "entified" existence. (1:266, 65.271)

In short, the things perceived by sense-perception exist with a true existence in the mind, but their mental existence is a shadow of their external existence. However, as the soul gradually actualizes its potency to know the higher realms, the objects that it perceives undergo a corresponding increase in intensity. At the stage of true intellective perception, the intellect that perceives is identical in existence and consciousness with the forms that are its perceptible.

The Potency of the Soul

Perception takes place within the soul– *nafs*– a word that means literally "self." Discussion of self or soul begin at the level of plants and extends to the highest reaches of human perfection. The human soul can be described most simply as "all the potencies" (8:221, 777.31). By this ṣadrā means that the rational soul is "the one that perceives with all the perceptions attributed to the human potencies" (ibid.). The human soul, in other words, is pure potency, and as such it has no actuality. The actuality of the soul comes about through perception. When the soul perceives something, the thing comes to exist within the soul in the appropriate mode of existence, and the soul itself comes to actualize in itself the corresponding mode of mental existence.

The goal of human existence is to bring the soul's potentiality into actuality. At the beginning of its creation, the human self is empty of the knowledge of things. In contrast, other things are created with actualized knowledge of things, and this fixes them in their specific identities. Since the human soul is created knowing nothing, it has the potential to know

everything. It is this characteristic alone that allows it to be transmuted into an intellect in act.

God created the human spirit empty of the realization of things within it and [empty] of the knowledge of things.... Had He not created the human spirit for the sake of the knowledge of things as they are, the spirit would necessarily be, at the first of its created disposition [*fiṭra*], one of those things in act, and it would not be empty of all...

Although at first ... the human spirit is a sheer potency, empty of the intelligibles, nonetheless it is proper for it to know the realities and become conjoined [*ittiṣāl*] with all of them. It follows that true knowledge [*ʿirfān*] of God, of His spiritual realm [*malakūt*], and of His signs [*āyāt*] is the final goal. . . . Knowledge is the first and the last, the origin and final goal. (3:515-16, 326.2)[15]

Perception actualizes a potential knowledge of the soul. Actuality demands activity, and Ṣadrā tells us that those philosophers who have spoken of perception as the soul's becoming imprinted with the perceptible have missed the real nature of perception, because perception is much closer to activity and actuality than to receptivity.

'The relation of the perceived form to the knowing essence is the relation of the made thing [*majʿūl*] to the maker [*jāʿil*], not the relation of indwelling [*ḥulūl*] or imprinting [*inṭibāʿ*]. (8:251, 785.32)

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[15] One might object that the human soul is not in fact a "pure potentiality," because it is born with instincts or innate knowledge. I think Ṣadrā would reply by reminding us that what we call by names such as "instincts" do not pertain to the human soul, but rather to the vegetal and animal souls. It is true that there can be no human soul without a vegetal and animal soul, but the discussion of unlimited potential pertains strictly to the human soul, not to other dimensions of human existence. The "humanness" of the human soul is precisely that point where human beings are indefinable and unfixed and, by that very fact, capable of becoming all things.

Relative to its imaginal and sensory perceptibles, the soul is more similar to an innovating actor [*al-fāʿil al-mubdiʿ*] than to a receptive dwelling place [*al-maḥall al-qābil*]. (1:287, 70.35)

In his discussion of vision, ṣadrā provides a specific example of how the soul comes into act through perception. After rejecting the theories of the natural scientists, the mathematicians, and Suhrawardi, he writes, Vision takes place through the configuring of a form similar to the thing, by God's power, from the side of the world of the soulish, spiritual realm. The form comes to be disengaged from; the external matter and present to the perceiving soul. The form endures through the soul just as an act endures through its agent, not as something received endures through its receptacle. (8:179-80, 768.8)

Having said this, ṣadrā extends the argument, showing that vision is one instance of the general rule in perception, which is that the perceiver conies to be unified with the perceptible. This is the same principle that he demonstrated previously under the rubric of "the unification of the intellect and the intelligible" (*ittiḥād al-ʿāqil waʾl-maʿqūl*), which he considers one of the cornerstones of his philosophy. He is especially concerned to prove this principle because Avicenna and his followers had denied it.

What we demonstrated concerning the unification of the intellect and the intelligible applies to all sensory, imaginal, and sense-intuitive perceptions. We called attention to this issue in the discussions of the intellect and the intelligible. We said that sense-perception in an unqualified sense is not as is well known among the generality of sages, who say that sensation disengages the very form of the sensible thing from its matter and meets it along with its surrounding accidents; and, in the same way, that imagination disengages the form with a greater disengagement.[16]

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[16] Compare this passage: "When the soul perceives the universal intelligibles, it witnesses them as intellective, disengaged essences. But this is not by the soul's disengaging them and its extracting [*intizāʿ*] their intelligible form from their sensory form– as is held by the majority of the sages. Rather, it takes place through a transferal that belongs to the soul– from the sensory, to the imaginal, to the intelligible; and through a migration from this world

Rather, perception in an unqualified sense is obtained only from the Bestower's[17] effusion of another, luminous, perceptual form through which perception and awareness are obtained. It is this form that is sensate in act and sensible in act. As for the existence of the form in matter, it is neither sense-perception nor a sensible. However, it is among those things that prepare the way for the effusion of that form. (8:81, 768.10)

Thus, the perceptible is a form that is effused upon the soul by God. Investigating Ṣadrā's elucidations of the theological implications of this statement would demand another study, so here it is sufficient to understand that God's effusion of the form actualizes the soul's potential to know. In coming forth from potency to act, the soul gains a mode of mental existence that coincides with the external existence of the perceived thing. The known thing is precisely the intellective or imaginal form, and the form's presence to the soul is its mental existence within the soul, an existence that is identical with the existence of the soul itself, since there is no plurality of existences in the soul. Rather, the soul's consciousness of the form is the same as the form's existence for the soul. In mental existence, perception and existence are one thing. It follows that, as Ṣadrā frequently tells us, the perceived object is always of the same kind as the perceiver. Through touch, taste, and vision the soul perceives objects that are of the same kind as itself, for these objects are the forms of the touched, the tasted, and the seen things actualized in the soul.[18]

When Ṣadrā says that the soul is "all the potencies," he means that the human self is an unlimited potential for knowing. The soul's good lies in its actualization of its potential, and this potential cannot be circumscribed. The soul, as Aristotle says at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, yearns for

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to the afterworld and then to what lies beyond it; and through a journey from the world of bodies to the world of images, then to the world of the intellects." (*Asfār* 1:289-90, 71.18)

[17] "Bestower" (*wāhib*) is one of the divine names. More usually, Ṣadrā employs the phrase "Bestower of the forms" (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*), and it is clearly this that he means here. This is a common philosophical designation for God, and it is equivalent to the Qurʾānic divine name *muṣawwir*, "Form-giver."

[18] *Asfār* 1:387, 96.7; 8:160, 763.10; 8:253, 786.13; 8:301, 798.27.

omniscience, because its potential is precisely to perceive all things.[19] But all things can be found only in pure intellect, where they subsist as intellective forms. Thus the highest stage of perception is for the soul to become an intellect. In other words, the soul comes to perceive in the fullness of its own capacity, and it comes to exist in the fullness of actual finding. Once it realizes the station of full perception and full existence, all things are present to it in act. This is to say that all things are present to the intellect in the clarity of their real, intellective existence, not in the obscurity of their sensory and imaginal existence.

When the soul becomes an intellect, it becomes all things. Right now also, it is unified with everything that it has made present in its own essence– I mean the forms of those things, not their entities that are external to it. This does not require that the soul be compounded of those external affairs, nor of those forms. Rather, the more perfect the soul becomes, the more it becomes a gathering of things and the more it gains in the intensity of its simplicity, because the truly simple thing is all things, as has been demonstrated. (*Asfār* 8:253, 786.16)

It needs to be remembered that for Sadrā, existence is primary, and quiddity is secondary. The quiddities are what Ibn al-ʿArabī calls the "fixed entities," and they are "fixed" because they never change. What changes is formal existence,

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[19] The reason that the soul is potentially all things is that it is an image of existence per se. This, in philosophical terms, is the meaning of the saying, "God created Adam in His form [ṣūra]." Ṣadrā employs some of the standard theological language in this explanation f the soul's nature: "The Author [al-bārī] is the creator of the existents, both the innovated and engendered [i.e., the spiritual and corporeal]. He created the human soul as an image [mithāl] of His Essence, His attributes, and His acts –for He is incomparable with any likeness [mithl], but not with an image. Thus He created the soul as an image of Him in essence, attributes, and acts, so that knowledge of it would be a ladder to knowledge of Him. He made the soul's essence disengaged from engendered beings, spatial confinements, and directions. He made it become the possessor of power, knowledge, desire, life, hearing, and seeing. He made it possessor of an empire similar to the empire of its Author. 'He creates what He' desires 'and chooses' [Qurʾān 28:68] for the sake of what He desires. However, although the soul derives from the root of the spiritual realm, the world of power, and the mine of magnificence and ascendancy, it is weak in existence and endurance, because it has fallen into the levels of the descent, and it has intermediaries between it and its Author." (*Asfār* 65.22, 1:265-66)

which undergoes intensification and weakening. The levels of perception are differentiated by the weakness or strength of the existence to which they correspond. In ṣadrā's words, only when existence reaches the level of "the simple intellect, which is entirely disengaged from the world of bodies and quantities, does it become all the intelligibles and all the things, in a manner more excellent and more eminent than the things are in themselves" (3:373, 293.32).

At each level of perception, the soul disengages perceptible things from matter and the other conditions of the ontological levels. Even sense perception necessarily disengages the perceptible, because the external matter does not enter into the soul. But, when the soul disengages the perceptible, simultaneously it becomes disengaged from the conditions of the lower worlds. The movement from sense-perception, to imagination, and then to intellection is a movement from frail existence and weak perception to strong existence and intense finding. Every time the soul actualizes its own potential through knowing, it gains in the strength of its existence, and when it becomes an intellect in act, it has gained full and everlasting existence.

ṣadrā is critical of the expositions of the earlier philosophers concerning the meaning of "disengagement." His rejection of their positions helps explain why "abstraction" is not a proper way to translate the term into English.[20] He writes:

> The meaning of disengagement in intellection and other perception is not as is well-known– that it is the elimination of certain extraneous things [*zawā'id*]. Nor is it that the soul stands still while the perceptibles are transferred from their material substrate to sensation, from sensation to imagination, and from it to the intellect. Rather, the perceiver and the perceptible become disengaged together. Together; they withdraw from one existence to another existence. Together they re transferred from one configuration to another configuration and from one world to another

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[20] In criticizing the earlier philosophers on the issue of disengagement, ṣadrā no doubt wanted to avoid the severe criticism leveled against the concept by Ibn al-ʿArabī. See, for example, Chittick, *Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 346-47. Compare the critique of the philosophical position quoted from Ibn al-ʿArabī's disciple, ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, in Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 222.

world, until the soul becomes an intellect, an intellecter, and an intelligible in act, after it had been potential in all this. (*Asfār* 3:366, 92.1)

Contrary to what was thought by some of the earlier philosophers, disengagement does not imply a rejection of the body. This is because the essential reality of the body is formal, not mater al. The more the soul is strengthened, the more the body's intellective form in is intensified and the more its existence is consolidated. Ṣadrā writes:

Among the things that are necessary to know is that here [in this world] the human is the totality of soul and body. These two, despite their diversity in way station, are two existent thing that exist through one existence. It is as if the two are one thing possessing two sides. One of the sides is altering and extinguishing, and it is like the branch. The other side is fixed and subsistent, and it is like the root. The more the soul becomes perfect in its existence, the more the body becomes limpid and subtle. It becomes more intense in conjunction with the soul, and the unification between the two becomes stronger and more intense. Finally, when intellective existence comes about, they become one thing without difference.

The affair is not as is supposed by the majority–that, when the soul's this-worldly existence alters into the afterworldly existence, the soul withdraws from the body and becomes as if naked, throwing off its clothes. This is because they suppose that the natural body–which the soul governs and acts upon freely by an essential governance and a primary free-activity–is this inanimate flesh that is thrown down after death, but it is not like this. Rather, this dead flesh is outside the substrate of free-activity and governance. It is like heaviness and dregs that drops down and is expelled from the act of nature, like filths and other such things. Or, it is like the hair, fur, horns, and hooves that are obtained by nature external to her essence for external purposes. This is like a house. A man builds it not because of existence, but to repel heat and cold, and for the other things without which it is impossible to live in this

world. But, human life does not pervade the house.[21] (9:98, 846.8)

Conclusion

We have now discussed ten basic points that should be sufficient to clarify Ṣadrā's overall depiction of how perception moves from the lowest to the highest level by a process of disengagement. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Perception is to gain knowledge of a thing by encountering its quiddity, which is its form or intelligible reality.
2. There are four basic levels on which perception occurs, though these can be reduced to three: the senses, imagination, and intellect.
3. The levels of perception are defined by the intensity of perception's disengagement from matter.
4. The three basic perceptual levels correspond exactly with the three basic worlds that make up the cosmos.
5. The reality of existence is inseparable from the reality of knowledge and perception, so the levels of existence are identical with the levels of perception.
6. The mental existence of the perceptible is a shadow of the external existence of the things, except in intellective perception, where intellect and the intelligible have become one through an existence that is permanent and everlasting.
7. The human soul comes into existence empty of knowledge and

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[21] Compare this passage: "In short, the stale of the soul in the level of its disengagement is like the state of the external perceptible when it becomes a sensible thing, then an imaginalized thing, then an intelligible thing. It is said that every perception has a sort of disengagement, and that the levels of perception are disparate in respect of the levels of disengagement. The meaning of this is as we said: The disengagement of the perceptible does not consist of throwing off some of its attributes and leaving others. Rather, it consists of the alteration of the lower, more deficient existence into the higher, more eminent existence. In the same way, the human's disengagement and transferal from this world to the other is nothing but the alteration of the first configuration into a second configuration. So also, when the soul is perfected and it becomes an intellect in act, it is not that some of its potencies–like the sense perceptual –are stripped from it and that others – like the intellective– remain. On the contrary, as the soul is perfected and its essence elevated, the other potencies are likewise perfected and elevated along with it." (*Asfār* 9:99-100, 846.18)

actuality, so it has the potential to perceive all things. Perception is the soul's actuality and activity.

8. The more intensely the soul perceives, the more intensely it exists. The more intensely it exists, the more it takes on the attribute of the simple reality of existence that gives rise to all things.

9. The soul's disengagement of things through perception is at once its own disengagement through the intensification of existence and consciousness.

10. The soul's disengagement does not involve shucking off the body, but rather transfiguration of the body and all bodily perceptible.

In conclusion, we can see that for Sadrā, the final goal of perception is for the human self to see things as they really are. This can only occur when the soul actualizes its unlimited potential to know. This potential is the ability to perceive all things dwelling on all levels of formal existence. The potential can be turned into actuality through a gradual disentanglement, disengagement, and separation (*mufāraqa*) from all embodiment and materiality and a return to the intelligible reality of the soul, which is nothing but the intellect in act, or the intelligence that perceives all things as they actually are in existence itself. This does not mean that the soul will no longer have any connection with the things of the external world. Rather, it means that it will have come to perceive things clearly, wherever they may be the levels of existence. It will no longer fall into the nearsightedness of perceiving the forms as anchored to the various locations in which they become manifest to the perceiver, locations in which the forms appear through the dark glass of sense-perception and imagination. Having perceived self and all things for what they are and having found itself to be one with all things, the soul attains to its final goal.

SEEING, KNOWING, BELIEVING: IQBAL ON FAITH IN THE MODERN WORLD

Basit Bilal Koshul

ABSTRACT

The modern secular definition of scientific knowledge and the medieval Muslim definition of religious knowledge are both radical departures from the letter and spirit of Qurānic teachings. Both of these degenerate understandings of knowledge lead to the ossification of the human mind and spirit. For Iqbal, once this happens then the road is wide open to the justification and perpetuation of all sorts of injustices, corruption, and evils in the name of "science" and/or "religion". Iqbal poignantly describes the relationship between a degenerate definition of knowledge and evil in the world in chapter five of *Reconstruction*. The article argues that the modern secular definition of scientific knowledge is a negation of the first part of the *shahāda– Lā ilāha illAllāh*. A knowledge claim that does not see its origin in the supra-rational domain and does not see itself as a sign pointing towards the supra-rational domain implicitly (but obviously) claims the status of Godhood for itself. Any knowledge claim put forward by any human being must be amenable to rational, logical, (i.e. "scientific") critique. Both the individual making a "religious" knowledge claim that cannot be subjected to "scientific" critique and the individual accepting such a knowledge claim, implicitly reject the finality of Muhammad's prophethood. The insights Iqbal has offered regarding the critique and correction of the modern understanding of scientific knowledge and the traditional understanding of religious knowledge lead to the conclusion that: there can be no proper understanding (let alone practice) of the *shahāda* in the absence of such a correction and critique of "knowledge".

riting in the earlier part of the 20th century, Iqbal was acutely aware of the Wfact that modern society was facing a crisis of faith. Like many of his contemporaries he spent a great deal of time investigating the root cause of this crisis. As the title of the very first chapter of *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* indicates, Iqbal saw an intimate relationship between

the modern crisis of faith and modernist epistemology. In the chapter titled "Knowledge and Religious Experience", Iqbal tries to articulate an epistemology that, on the one hand, meets the critical rigour of modern philosophical and scientific thinking, and on the other hand, attempts to account for the reality and verity of religious experience as not only a possible, but also the most subtle and reliable source of knowledge. Iqbal's proposed epistemology is rooted in the Qurʾānic narrative and the interpretation of this narrative by the "more genuine schools of Sufism." He combines the insights garnered from a study of these "religious" sources with his first-hand understanding of modern philosophic and scientific thought to recover and re-present an understanding of "knowledge" that is a companion to "faith" rather than its adversary. In the following pages, Iqbal's project will be placed in its historical setting and described in more detail with respect to its critique and correction of traditional religious and modernist scientific epistemology.

The Setting

Practically all the leading Western thinkers at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century recognized the fact that modern society was facing an existential crisis of faith. For some this was a very healthy development and the harbinger of a golden era in human history (i.e. Freud). For others this development was a deeply disturbing reality that presaged the onset of tragic and terrifying events in the near future (i.e. Jung). Even though there were some dissenting voices, the demise of religion was seen as a positive development by most of the leading Western intellectuals in the beginning of the 20th century. This attitude was based on the claim that the scientific way of knowing (or scientific epistemology) had proven itself to be far superior to the religious way of knowing (or religious epistemology). It was assumed that "faith commitments" were incompatible with "disinterested objectivity"– and it was only detached, disinterested investigation of phenomena that could lead to accurate and reliable knowledge claims.[22] Since religion was based on faith

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[22] The definition of "knowledge" as being the product of complete disinterested objective inquiry is related to "quest for certainty" (in the words of John Dewey). This quest for certainty was a passionate obsession of Enlightenment intellectuals in the aftermath of Descartes' "thought experiment" that posited the existential priority of doubt before all else.

claims/commitments and science required detached objectivity,[23] the cultivation and progress of one required the disintegration of the other.

This antagonistic view of religion and science was accepted as a given not only by the "secular" or "modernist" circles in university settings. The medieval definition of religion and spiritual experience accepted in traditionalist religious circles further reinforced this antagonism. Medieval religious thought defined religiosity as the acceptance of a particular interpretation of certain dogmatic theological claims, combined with leading a life according to a particular interpretation of certain legal obligations. Any "disinterested" or "detached" analysis of the inherited traditional interpretations was seen as a dangerous move towards irreligiosity and any critical analysis of these interpretations was seen as a manifestation of irreligiosity. This is another way of saying that *taqlīd* was the accepted norm

The quest for this peculiar type of personal, objective certainty finds no equivalent in the religious tradition and is the idiosyncratic product of "the Cartesian Anxiety" according to Bernstein. Och's summarizes Bernstein's description of the origin of this anxiety in these words: "this hyperbolic need to know is associated, not with the human condition, but with a particular psychosocial condition in the modern West: associated with the absence of strong social bonds and functional traditions and thus, with the compensatory desire to salve the individual consciousness with rational certainty as substitute for relationship, behavioural purpose, and love." P. Ochs, "The Emergence of Postmodern Jewish Theology and Philosophy" in *Reviewing the Covenant: Eugene Borowitz and the Postmodern Renewal of Jewish Theology*. Eds. Peter Ochs and Eugene Borowitz. (New York, NY: SUNY Press, Albany, 2000) p. 6.

[23] This dichotomous view of the relationship between religion and science, engendered by Enlightenment thought, found its most forceful 19th century critic in Nietzsche. While largely ignored, and even when noted still ignored, Nietzsche's critique still awaits an adequate response from the proponents of Enlightenment thinking. More specifically, in the context of the present discussion, Nietzsche took the Enlightenment intellectual tradition to task for its claims of having produced a (scientific) method that could produce objective knowledge. Speaking of the foundations on which "scientific" knowledge rests, he notes: "it is still a metaphysical faith upon which our faith in science rests– that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine." *The Gay Science*, #344. In short, Nietzsche is saying that the claim that science produces true objective knowledge is a statement of faith that cannot be justified on objective, rational grounds.

regarding issues of *ʿaqīdah* and *fiqh*.[24] The quest for spiritual enlightenment was seen as being practically divorced from concerns with all given reality.[25] This disregard for the given reality was so profound that the seeker's own personhood was seen as an obstacle that had to be overcome in order to attain spiritual enlightenment. This is another way of saying that *fanā fillah* was seen as the ultimate goal of the spiritual quest. An uncritical acceptance of received tradition, combined with seeing no spiritual worth in engagement with the given material reality characterized the dominant understanding of religion in traditional Muslim society at the beginning of the 20th century. If there was no room for critical thought/analysis in religious thought and if spiritual enlightenment (the ultimate goal of religiosity) saw no value in material reality, then it was indeed the case that the progress of science required the disintegration of religion.

The self-definition and self-understanding of religion and science, as articulated by the leading proponents of each, was such that the two were placed in an antagonistic relationship with each other.[26] The root cause of

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[24] See Iqbal's discussion of *ijtihād* with respect to "the principle of movement in the structure of Islam", the title of chapter 6 in *Reconstruction*. On the historical factors responsible for the replacement of the practice of *ijtihād* by the practice of *taqlīd*, see pages 118-123.

[25] While Iqbal acknowledges the fact that "the more genuine schools of Sufism" have best expressed and articulated the nature and evolution of "religious experience in Islam" (Iqbal, xxi), he sees their latter day descendents (i.e. the dominant modes of Sufi thought in his own day) as having become ossified and stagnant. He attributes this ossification and stagnation in "ascetic Sufism" (in contrast to the "more genuine schools of Sufism) to the former's emphasis on purely speculative thought based upon (or leading to) the acceptance of a radical division between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*. On the alliance between rationalism and speculative Sufism and the resultant disregard for the given concrete reality, see *Reconstruction*, pp 118-20.

[26] The fact that this "antagonistic relationship" is actually based on the exact same dichotomizing, modernist logic is detailed by Ochs in a paper presented at the 1999 meeting of the Society for Scriptural Reasoning, titled "The Rules for Scriptural Reasoning". Ochs posits that Scriptural Reasoning seeks to interrupt the pattern of inquiry engendered by two "antagonistic" poles of reasoning: (a) secular modernism and (b) religious orthodoxy— because both of these poles are based on an Enlightenment dichotomizing logic. He states: "One pole is *secular modernism*: the tendency to reason by reducing all subjects of study according to certain simple conceptual patterns or models of reasoning. This pole may also be labelled *secular universalism*. While this is a pole of modern academic reasoning in general, it is also engendered as a specific mode of classical liberal religious thought, which tends simply to apply the a priori form of secular ethical universalism to the terms of various

this antagonism was the claim/understanding that religious knowledge was incompatible with critical inquiry and scientific knowledge was incompatible with faith commitments/claims.[27] In other words religious knowledge rejected the defining characteristic of scientific inquiry (critical, objective analysis of material reality) and scientific knowledge rejected the very foundations of religion (faith claims/commitments.) The relationship between this self-understanding of religion and science at the beginning of the 20th century and the resultant crisis of faith is quite apparent. For Iqbal any genuine attempt to address the modern crisis of faith required that this self-understanding on the part of the two camps be rectified. In other words an alternative epistemology had to be formulated in order to arrest the decline of religious faith.

It speaks to Iqbal's personal genius and intuitional gifts that he utilizes resources from within each of the two traditions (i.e. the religious and the scientific) to demonstrate the flaw in their respective understanding of "knowledge". Going all the way back to the sīrah of the Prophet and then citing the works of leading spiritual masters in the Islamic tradition, Iqbal demonstrates that critical inquiry is not only a part of the religious quest, it

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scriptural traditions. The second pole is *anti-modern [religious] orthodoxy*. It simply will not do to allow such orthodoxy to arrogate to itself the definition of 'traditional religion'. A religious orthodoxy that defines itself by negating the leading aspects of secular universalism thereby endorses the dichotomous logic that underlies that universalism. Such reactionary orthodoxy gradually redistributes the terms of classical scriptural religion according to this dichotomizing logic." The paper can be viewed on the following web-site: www.etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/ssr.

[27] Nancey Murphy has argued that both the modern liberal and modern fundamentalist interpretations of religion have produced equally inadequate responses to the epistemological challenge posed by modern science and philosophy. This is basically due to the fact that both responses have been articulated within the parameters set by modern philosophical discourse. She details this argument in her book: *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press Int. 1996). This observation by Murphy supports Ochs' contention that both modern liberal religious thought and modern orthodox (fundamentalist) religious thought "gradually redistributes the terms of classical scriptural religion according to [modern] dichotomizing logic".

may be its most crucial component.[28] He also cites a variety of Qurʾānic passages which demonstrate that the Qurʾān sees sensual engagement with and critical reflection on the material reality in the world of nature to be an essential component of an individual's spiritual growth.[29] Conversely, Iqbal cites the work of Bergson and Whitehead (Iqbal, 2) to demonstrate that the attempts of modern science to completely divorce rationality from faith is a misguided adventure that does great injustice to the issue at hand. Iqbal cites Whitehead as saying that "the ages of faith are the ages of rationalism" and he cites Bergson as noting that the intuition is only a higher type of intellect. It is worth repeating that in critiquing and correcting the accepted religious and scientific understanding of knowledge, Iqbal utilizes resources from within the very tradition that he is critiquing/correcting. While it is not the purpose of the present presentation to delve into Iqbal's methodology, the foregoing comments serve as precursors to the following discussion on his specific critique of the medieval religious and modern scientific definitions of "knowledge".

Correcting the Religious Definition of Knowledge

Iqbal notes that distrust of the world of the senses and disregard for the non-human world of nature is a defining characteristic of classical Greek

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[28] See Iqbal's discussion of the Prophet's observation of the Jewish youth Ibn ṣayyād, as recorded in *Saḥīḥ Bukhārī* and Ibn Khaldūn's analysis of the mystic experience. *Reconstruction*, p. 13f.

[29] See Iqbal's discussion of the "affirmation of spirit" sought by Christianity and the way this differs from the affirmation of the same sought by Islam. *Reconstruction*, p. 7. The discussion begins with the observation that in the case of Islam: "the affirmation of spirit sought by Christianity would come not by the renunciation of external forces which are already permeated by the illumination of spirit, but by a proper adjustment of man's relation to these forces in view of the light received from the world within." Then Iqbal quotes a number of Qurʾānic *āyāt* that evidence the import of the sensual, material world of nature in the human quest to gain spiritual enlightenment. After quoting the relevant *āyāt*, Iqbal notes: "No doubt, the immediate purpose of the Qurʾān in this reflective observation of Nature is to awaken in man the consciousness of that of which Nature is regarded a symbol. But the point to note is the general empirical attitude of the Qurʾān which engendered in its followers a feeling of reverence for the actual and ultimately made them the founders of modern science. It was a great point to awaken the empirical spirit in an age which renounced the visible as of no value in men's search after God." (p. 11.)

philosophy. In their attempt to understand the origin, nature and fate of the human being the Greek philosophers posited that one needed to study only the human being and the human world. For them study of the non-human world contained nothing of any significant value in the human attempt at self-understanding. This disregard for the non-human world is best expressed by Socrates. Contrasting Socrates' attitude with the Qurʾānic narrative in this regard, Iqbal notes:

> Socrates concentrated his attention on the human world alone. To him the proper study of man was man and not the world of plants, insects, and stars. How unlike the spirit of the Qurʾān, which sees in the humble bee a recipient of Divine inspiration and constantly calls upon the reader to observe the perpetual change of the winds, the alternation of day and night, the clouds, the starry heavens, and the planets swimming through infinite space! (Iqbal, 3)

This disregard for the world of nature on the part of Socrates was taken further in the work of Plato. For Plato the human senses could be easily fooled and therefore could not serve as reliable sources of knowledge. This point was further affirmed by Aristotle. Once again, the Greek attitude towards human sense perception is at odds with the Qurʾānic narrative:

> As a true disciple of Socrates, Plato despised sense-perception which, in his view, yielded merely opinion and no real knowledge. How unlike the Qurʾān, which regards 'hearing' and 'sight' as the most valuable Divine gifts and declares them to be accountable to God for their activity in this world. (Iqbal, 3).

If the study of the world of nature was of no practical use in the human quest for knowledge and if human beings could not trust their sense perception as they are trying to acquire knowledge then the question emerges: how is knowledge to be attained? The response was a method of speculation pioneered by Plato and Aristotle and later detailed and developed by the Hellenic thinkers (i.e. the stoics, epicureans and most notably Plotinus). While there are almost countless disagreements as far as the details are concerned, a fundamental characteristic of this method is that it shunned

the study of the material/real in its attempt to understand the spiritual/ideal. This method eventually found its way into Muslim religious life beginning with the translation of the Greek philosophical corpus into Arabic in the 9th century CE and after the fall of Baghdad in 1258 became the defining characteristic of Muslim intellectual life. Iqbal notes that ascetic Sufism (in contrast to the "more genuine schools of Sufism") "gradually developed under the influences of a non-Islamic character, a purely speculative side" (Iqbal, 119)– and the contribution of Hellenic thought was quite considerable in this regard. The schools of ascetic Sufism consciously shunned sensual engagement with the material and social reality in the quest for spiritual enlightenment. This attitude fostered a virtual disregard for the real/material in the Muslim's quest to understand the spiritual/ideal. Iqbal describes the consequences of the spread of speculative thought among the Muslim intellectual elite in these words:

> This spirit of total other-worldliness in later Sufism obscured men's vision of a very important aspect of Islam as a social polity, and offering the prospect of unrestrained thought on its speculative side, it attracted and finally absorbed the best minds in Islam (Iqbal, 119).

The disregard for the real/material and the spread of speculative thought in medieval Muslim thought was combined with a static view of life and disregard for the dynamic aspect of human existence. The dichotomy between the real/material and ideal/spiritual was complemented and reinforced by a dichotomy between temporal flux and eternal immutability. Looked at from within the tradition, it is indeed the case that the fundamental teachings of Islam are based upon eternal and immutable principles. But at the same time the Qurʾān stresses the fact that temporal flux provides invaluable insights into the true nature and meaning of these eternal, immutable principles. This temporal flux manifests itself in a variety of ways; the constant alteration of night and day, the changing fortunes among individuals and nations, the change of seasons, the different stages in the human being's biological development, etc. Iqbal posits that from the Qurʾānic perspective all of these temporal changes in the material domain of existence contain are the *āyāt* of the eternal, spiritual domain of existence.

Iqbal notes that while the spiritual basis of life is rooted in the eternal, its manifestation takes place in the temporal flux/change of the material world. The relationship between temporal flux (which is imperfect and flawed) and the eternal immutable (which is perfect and without blemish) is complementary not mutually exclusive. Iqbal describes the complementary nature of this relationship, and the dangers of viewing the relationship in mutually exclusive terms, in these words:

> The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile, in its life, the categories of permanence and change. It must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. But eternal principles when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Qurān, is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, tend to immobilize what is essentially mobile in its nature. (Iqbal, 117).

Iqbal posits that a Qurānic understanding of the relationship between the temporal and eternal manifested itself in Muslim intellectual life in the practice of *ijtihād*– which is the "principle of movement in the structure of Islam." (Iqbal, 117). He goes on to give a more detailed description of *ijtihād*:

> The word literally means to exert. In the terminology of Islamic law it means to exert with view to form an independent judgement on a legal question. The idea, I believe, has its origin in a well-known verse of the Qurān– 'And those who exert We show Our path'. (Iqbal, 117f.)

While the practice of *ijtihād* was a defining characteristic of early Muslim intellectual life, this practice practically ceased by the end of the Abbasid period. The formulation, formalization and institutionalization of the four accepted legal schools of thought brought the practice of *ijtihād* to an end. There was unanimity among the four schools that only the original founders of the schools were competent enough to carry out *ijtihād* in its widest sense. After the founders had exposited the fundamental principles of Islamic jurisprudence, only relative *ijtihād* could take place within the confines of

those principles. By rigorously defining the boundaries within which legal thought could legitimately take place, and definitively setting one domain of legal thought beyond critical scrutiny (i.e. issues related to the founding principles of the schools of jurisprudence), the medieval doctors of law severely delimited the "principle of movement in Islam". Iqbal posits that this delimitation "seems exceedingly strange in a system of law based mainly on the groundwork provided by the Qurān which embodies an essentially dynamic outlook on life". (Iqbal, 118). For Iqbal, the practical end of *ijtihād* among Muslim scholars signals the formalization of the conceptual divide between the temporal and the eternal. The dynamism of the temporal domain of reality became irrelevant for an individual's understanding of and relationship to the eternal/spiritual domain of reality.[30] The stagnation of Muslim society in the medieval period is in no small part the result of this attitude– an attitude that was fully entrenched in Muslim society at the dawn of the Islam's encounter with modernity.

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[30] Contemporary Christian and Jewish scholarship has also dealt with the religious/theological implications of the temporal vs. eternal dichotomy. Robert Jenson has argued that many of the debates in Christian history surrounding the Christian understanding of God stem from an attempt to discuss the issue within the framework of the temporal vs. eternal dichotomy. He goes on to posit that this dichotomy is actually a result/category of Greek philosophy (which in his view is another name for pagan theology.) See chapter 6, "Of One Being with the Father" and chapter 13, "The Being of the One God" in *Systematic Theology: The Triune God*. (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997). Vol. 1.

David Weiss Halivni has argued that medieval rabbinic thought reached a consensus that that the entirely of the *halakah*, in all of its details (and perfection), was revealed to Moses at Mt. Sinai. This position, while accepted by individual Jewish thinkers in the pre-medieval period, is a novel development in Jewish intellectual history. Halivini argues that the medieval claim is actually the manifestation of medieval Jewish thought's attempt to come to terms with the temporal vs. eternal dichotomy of Greek philosophy. See, *Revelation Restored: Divine Writ and Critical Responses*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

Along with making the aforementioned observations, both Jenson and Halivni, go on to detail the deleterious effects of the attempt to discuss religious/theological issues strictly within the confines of classical philosophical categories. Like Iqbal, they note that for the most part the internalization of the Greek intellectual ethos was done subconsciously by classical and medieval religious thinkers. They go on to note that a critical analysis of traditional religious thought– made possible by the tools of analysis of modern academic inquiry– is needed in order to recognize and correct these deleterious effects.

For Iqbal, religious thought, as expounded by its leading proponents in late 19th century/early 20th century, suffered from some serious shortcomings. On the one hand traditional Muslim spirituality was defined by speculative thought and disregard for the material world of nature. On the other hand traditional Muslim legal thought and practice was defined by *taqlīd,* to principles formulated centuries ago and disregard for historical changes that had taken place since then and the historical contingencies that existed in the present. On both accounts the defining characteristics of medieval Muslim religiosity ran contrary to the teachings of the Qur̄ān. The speculative nature of medieval Muslim spirituality ran counter to the Qur̄ānic attitude towards the material world of nature. The *taqlīdi* nature of medieval Muslim legal thought and the end of *ijtihād* ran counter to the Qur̄ānic attitude towards time and temporal flux.[31]

Correcting the Scientific Definition of Knowledge

Iqbal acknowledges the fact that there is a difference between religion and philosophy (as asserted by modernist philosophy) in the very opening paragraph of *Reconstruction*. Philosophy is based on a purely rational method of free inquiry that suspects all authority. Religion is based upon the feeling/experience of faith. While this difference between the two does exist, Iqbal notes that;

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[31] While Iqbal has offered a philosophical/historical critique and correction of medieval Muslim thought, Malek Bennabi has offered a similar critique and correction of the "post al-Muwahhid man" from a sociological/historical perspective. Writing these particular words in 1949, Bennabi notes that collectively speaking Muslim society's head in stuck in 1369. For Bennabi 1369 is the year of the historical "point of inflexion– that marked the reversion of Muslim values into non-values– somewhere towards the epoch of Ibn Khaldun" (Bennabi, 12). This inflexion/inversion was the culmination of the process that began with the rupture at Siffin (in 37AH) where a crack initially appeared in the dynamic and authentic Islamic synthesis of "man, soil and time". This crack that would eventually develop into a full blown rupture with the fall of the Muwahhid dynasty in North Africa in 1369, during the lifetime of Ibn Khaldūn. While the approaches of Iqbal and Bennabi may be different, one more focused on philosophy and the other more on sociology, their analysis overlaps considerably. See, Bennabi's *Islam in History and Society.* Translated by Asma Rashid. (Islamabad, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute, 1988). Asma Rashid has written a paper detailing the close affinity between the ideas of Iqbal and Bennabi titled, "Iqbal and Malek Bennabi" in *Iqbal Centenary Papers* (Lahore, Pakistan: University of the Punjab, 1977), Vol. II.

it cannot be denied that faith is more than mere feeling. It has something like a cognitive content, and the existence of rival parties – scholastics and mystics – in the history of religion shows that idea is a vital element in religion. (Iqbal, 1).

For Iqbal, it is a great mistake on the part of modern philosophy to assume that all elements of religious thought are completely devoid of cognitive elements. The modernist division between religion and science is rooted in the Enlightenment assertion that (religious) faith is devoid of all (scientific) reason/rationality. Some modernist thinkers have gone so far as to assert that Religion and religious thought are manifestations of the irrational *par excellence*, while scientific inquiry is most authentic and complete manifestation of rationality.[32] Iqbal challenges this assumption by noting that historically speaking religion learned to value reason/rationality long before modern science. He states:

In view of its function, religion stands in greater need of a rational foundation of its ultimate principles than even the dogmas of science. Science may ignore a rational metaphysics; indeed it has ignored it so far. Religion can hardly afford to the search for a reconciliation of the oppositions of experience and a justification of the environment in which humanity finds itself. (Iqbal, 2).

At this point Iqbal quotes Whitehead as saying "the ages of faith are the ages of rationalism". While religious faith has historically cultivated (and been

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[32] This point was crudely (but forcefully) articulated by Ludwig Feuerbach, in the middle of the 19th century, through a skilful synthesis of 18th century French rationalist/positivist thought and 19th century German Hegelian philosophy. While others had offered a similar analysis of the issue, Feuerbach is a key figure in the modernist critique of religion because he skilfully synthesizes what came before him and lays the groundwork for what was to come after him. The critique of religion offered by Marx and Freud can be seen as specific applications of Feuerbach's general theory. The two parts of his introduction to *The Essence of Christianity* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1957) are titled "The Essential Nature of Man" and "The Essence of Religion Considered Generally". The introduction emphasizes the man vs. God, and reason vs. revelation dichotomies, presents arguments based on them, and sets the tone for all that is to follow– and implicit in this dichotomous discourse is the religion vs. science dichotomy.

cultivated by) rationality, "to rationalize faith is not to admit the superiority of philosophy over religion". (Iqbal, 2). This is due to the fact that;

> Religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action. It is the expression of the whole man. Thus, in the evaluation of religion, philosophy must recognize the central position of religion and has no other alternative but to admit it as something focal in the process of reflective synthesis. (Iqbal, 2).

The real difference between science and religion is not that the one is based upon reason and rationality, while the other is completely devoid of it. For Iqbal the real difference between the two is that one primarily employs reason to study particular segments of Reality, while the other primarily employs intuition to facilitate an holistic encounter with Reality. This suggests that the relationship between reason and intuition (and by extension between science and religion) is not one of mutually exclusivity or antagonism, but rather of mutual complementarity. But this complementarity is not to be mistaken for "sameness". While Iqbal asserts that there is a rational dimension of religious thought/faith, just as there is a rational dimension of scientific thought, he is also cautious in carefully identifying the distinguishing features of the two.[33] Iqbal notes:

> Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. The one fixes its gaze on the eternal, the other on the temporal aspect of Reality. The one is present enjoyment of the whole of Reality; the other aims at traversing the whole for exclusive observation. Both are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. Both seek visions of the same Reality which reveals itself to them in accordance with their function in life (*Ibid*).

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[33] John Henry Newman, a contemporary of Feuerbach, offers a description, very similar to that of Iqbal regarding the relationship between faith and reason. Three famous sermons he gave at Oxford University are titled: "Faith and Reason, Contrasted Habits of Mind," "The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason," and "Implicit and Explicit Reason." These sermons, along with others, have been collected under the title *Oxford University Sermons*.

At this point Iqbal affirms Bergson's assertion that intuition is only a higher kind of intellect.

Just as it is a mistake to differentiate religion from science by asserting that one is completely divorced from rationality while the other is the perfect manifestation of rationality, it is mistake to assert that science and religion are different because one is concerned with the study of concrete experience while the other is unconcerned about it. Both religion and science are fundamentally concerned with the study of concrete experience. The difference is that higher religious thought seeks critical and careful study of a type of concrete experience that lies outside the domain of the natural and social sciences. Iqbal notes that the Qurān identifies the *fuʾād* or *qalb* (i.e. the spiritual heart) as being the interpreter of sense experience and also an "organ" of perception that is the recipient of supra-sensual experience. This "organ" brings human beings into contact with a domain of experience that is not open to the sense organs, but which is nonetheless just as real and concrete as that which is experienced by the sense organs. Speaking of the *fuʾād/qalb*, Iqbal notes:

> It is, according to the Qurān, something which 'sees', and its reports, if properly interpreted, are never false. We must not, however, regard it as a mysterious special faculty; it is rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part. (Iqbal, 13).

Just because sense perception, in the ordinary sense is not involved in that which is experienced by the *fuʾād/qalb* does not mean that the experience of the *fuʾād/qalb* is any less real or concrete. Speaking of the experience of the *fuʾād/qalb*, Iqbal notes;

> Yet the vista of experience thus opened up to us is as real and concrete as any other experience. To describe it as psychic, mystical, or supernatural does not detract from value as experience. The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. (*Ibid*).

Just as there is degree of similarity and difference in the role/place of rationality in religious thought and scientific thought, there is a degree of similarity and difference regarding the religious and scientific encounter with concrete experience. To assert that one is primarily concerned with concrete experience and the other disregards it, as posited by Enlightenment philosophy, is to misunderstand the issue. Iqbal sums up the matter in these terms:

> Religion is not physics or chemistry seeking an explanation of Nature in terms of causation; it really aims at interpreting a totally different region of human experience– religious experience– the data of which cannot be reduced to the data of any other science. In fact, it must be said in justice to religion that it insisted on the necessity of concrete experience in religious life long before science learnt to do so. The conflict between the two is not due to the fact that one is, and the other is not, based on concrete experience. Both seek concrete experience as a point of departure. (Iqbal, 20).

To the degree that religious faith contains elements of rational thought and values critical analysis of concrete experience, it shares important characteristics with scientific thought. To overlook these similarities and assert that religious knowledge is fundamentally different from scientific knowledge is to misunderstand the issue at hand. From Iqbal's perspective modern scientific thought ignores these similarities at its own peril. The obsession of modern science with a segmented study of the material/temporal has caused it to lose sight of the fact that the material/temporal is in fact a pointer or sign evidencing the spiritual/eternal. In failing to recognize that which the material/temporal is pointing towards, actually evidences the lack of understanding about the meaning and significance of the material/temporal. The implications of this failure are simultaneously far reaching and intimately personal. This is expressed by Iqbal in poetic verse in his poem *"Zamāna-i-Ḥāḍir kā Insān"* (Modern Man) in *Ḍarb-i-Kalīm*.

Conversely, to assert that knowledge of spiritual and religious realities can be had after turning one's back on the material and temporal is to

fundamentally misunderstand the nature of spiritual and religious knowledge. Iqbal's critique and correction of the medieval Islamic understanding of religious/spiritual knowledge is summed up in poetic verse in the poem "Sufi Sey" (To the Sufi) in *Ḍarb-i-Kalīm*.

A Final Word

In sum, the modern secular definition of scientific knowledge and the medieval Muslim definition of religious knowledge are both radical departures from the letter and spirit of Qurānic teachings. Both of these degenerate understandings of knowledge lead to the ossification of the human mind and spirit. For Iqbal, once this happens then the road is wide open to the justification and perpetuation of all sorts of injustices, corruption, and evils in the name of "science" and/or "religion". Iqbal poignantly describes the relationship between a degenerate definition of knowledge and evil in the world in chapter five of *Reconstruction*. Without going into a detailed discussion of the chapter, it is sufficient in the present context to point out that the modern secular definition of scientific knowledge is a negation of the first part of the *shahāda– Lā ilāha illAllah*. A knowledge claim that does not see its origin in the supra-rational domain and does not see itself as a sign pointing towards the supra-rational domain implicitly (but obviously) claims the status of Godhood for itself.[34] The medieval Muslim definition of religious knowledge is a negation of the second part of the *shahāda – Muhammadur rasūl Allah*. Speaking of the finality of prophethood, Iqbal notes:

> The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man (Iqbal, 101).

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[34] This is the case from a philosophical point of view, not just a religious point of view. Paul Tillich has described "God" as "the ultimate concern". A person may very well claim to be an "atheist" but he/she still has a "God" because all human beings have an "ultimate concern" that their life is centred around. This "ultimate concern" is whatever the individual places his/her final hopes in and whatever it is that he/she hopes to attain as a sum total of their efforts, suffering and sacrifices in the world. See chapters one and two in Tillich, Paul, *The Dynamics of Faith* Harper Torchbooks: New York.

After Muhammad (upon him be peace) any knowledge claim put forward by any human being– even if it is a "religious" knowledge claim (actually, especially if it is a "religious" knowledge)– must be amenable to rational, logical, (i.e. "scientific") critique. Both the individual making a "religious" knowledge claim that cannot be subjected to "scientific" critique and the individual accepting such a knowledge claim, implicitly reject the finality of Muhammad's prophethood.

Iqbal powerfully sums up the intimate relationship between seeing, knowing and believing in the following words:

> The birth of Islam…is the birth of the inductive intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot forever be kept in leading strings; that, in order to achieve full self-consciousness, man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qurʾān, and the emphasis it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality. Iqbal, 101).

Given what insights Iqbal has offered regarding the critique and correction of the modern understanding of scientific knowledge and the traditional understanding of religious knowledge, the following conclusion can be drawn on the issue: there can be no proper understanding (let alone practice) of the *shahāda* in the absence of such a correction and critique of "knowledge".

THE RECONSTRUCTION AS A COMMENTARY ON JAVĪDNĀMA

Khurram Ali Shafique

ABSTRACT

The article offers a few observations on the relationship between two major works of Iqbal *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930/34) and *Javīdnāma* (1932) and explores the question as to whether Iqbal meant *Reconstruction* to be a form of commentary on his major work *Javīdnāma*. It is argued that if these two works were read in the light of each other it not only yields deeper insights into Iqbal's worldview and ideas but some of the problematic areas in *Reconstruction* can also be resolved with the help of their corresponding passages in *Javīdnāma*.

The author argues that there are many reasons why *Reconstruction* should be considered as a commentary on *Javīdnāma,* and not the other way round. The first is Iqbal's own insistence that *Javīdnāma* was his life's work. Secondly, *Javīdnāma* is a masterpiece of narrative art whereas *Reconstruction* is a series of lectures. It is possible to treat a set of lectures as a commentary on a masterpiece of narrative poetry while it would make a very incongruent study if we were to reverse the relationship. Thirdly, the medium of lecture provides more room for discussion and diversions than the confines of a narrative poem, therefore it seems quite proper to derive the more coherent picture of Iqbal's worldview from *Javīdnāma* but use the lectures for elaborating its various aspects.

qbal called *Javīdnāma* (1932) his life's work. He wrote this great epic poem at the same time when he was also working on the second most important of his books, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930/34). Sadly, it seems that no attempt has ever been made at finding a direct relation between these two books although even a most superficial comparison would yield some striking features and make it a worthy question to consider whether Iqbal meant *Reconstruction* to be a form of commentary on his major work *Javīdnāma*.

To begin with, both books have the same number of chapters. In *Reconstruction*, there are seven lectures whereas in *Javīdnāma* there are seven stations in the spiritual journey in the search of immortality– Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Beyond the Skies. Each station is designated to a separate chapter and thus the book has seven chapters. *Reconstruction* has the same number of chapters. If we compare the two books, we find that each chapter of the first book corresponds to the same chapter in the second book.

For instance, the first chapter in *Javīdnāma* is about the Moon, which stands for intuition, inspiration and revelation– these three being represented in *Javīdnāma* by, respectively, Vishvamitra, Sarosh and the Valley of the Prophets– and the same topic is restated in the very title of the first chapter of *Reconstruction,* which is, 'Knowledge and Religious Experience.'

The second station is Mercury, which has something to do with social change through the application of the revealed guidance as well as about discovering new ideals within the Qurān. Correspondingly, the second chapter of *Reconstruction* is titled, 'The Philosophical Test of Religious Experience.'

The third station is Venus where Iqbal and Rumi engage in the refutation of the false idols of the ancient days as well as new and old tyrants who claimed to be demigods; and the third chapter in *Reconstruction* is 'The Concept of God and the Meaning of Prayer.'

The fourth station is Mars, where an ideal world is presented with individuals who have perfected their egos and attained the strength to survive after death; the fourth chapter in *Reconstruction* is 'Human Ego–its Freedom and Immortality.'

The fifth station is Jupiter, where the spirits of Ḥallāj, Ghālib and Quratul ʿAin Ṭāhira explain why they have chosen to remain in perpetual movement rather than settling down in paradise; Devil also makes his appearance in the same chapter and yearns for a human being who could defeat him. This

station corresponds to the fifth lecture in *Reconstruction* where 'The Spirit Muslim Culture' is defined as anti-classical.

The sixth station is Saturn, where the decadence and inertia of the Eastern world, especially India, is lamented. The sixth lecture in *Reconstruction* is 'The Principle of Movement in Islam,' which offers us Iqbal's views on *ijtihād*.

The last chapter of *Javīdnāma* begins with a description of Nietzsche stranded between the universe and the world beyond– as a representative of the new mindset born in the post-enlightenment era of the modern history. In the climax Iqbal meets God. Compare this with the title of the last chapter in *Reconstruction*, 'Is Religion Possible'?

It may be interesting to remember that the last lecture was written and delivered after the completion of *Javīdnāma*. It seems that Iqbal left an important clue for us by closing this last chapter on a passage from the opening section of *Javīdnāma* (the terrestrial prologue). Below this passage, at the very end of *Reconstruction,* is mentioned the name of the source. Hence the very last word in *Reconstruction* is, quite amazingly, "*Javīdnāma.*"

One may ask why *Reconstruction* should be considered as a commentary on *Javīdnāma,* and not the other way round. There are many reasons for that. The first is Iqbal's own insistence that *Javīdnāma* was his life's work. Secondly, *Javīdnāma* is a masterpiece of narrative art whereas *Reconstruction* is a series of lectures. It is possible to treat a set of lectures as a commentary on a masterpiece of narrative poetry while it would make a very incongruent study if we were to reverse the relationship. Thirdly, the medium of lecture provides more room for discussion and diversions than the confines of a narrative poem, therefore it seems quite proper to derive the more coherent picture of Iqbal's worldview from *Javīdnāma* but use the lectures for elaborating its various aspects.

This is an initial observation on the relationship between the two books. It would be a great contribution to the study of Iqbal if these two works were read in the light of each other. I am offering these observations to print, hoping that other scholars would take up the task especially to see if some of

the problematic areas in *Reconstruction* can be resolved with the help of their corresponding passages in *Javīdnāma*.

VIEWS OF THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS AND PHILOSOPHERS ON OMNISCIENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

(PART -I)

Dr Abdul Hafeez Fazli

ABSTRACT

It has been commonly understood that Divine knowledge, even though eternal and inclusive of foreknowledge of free human actions, does not restrict human freedom. But the philosophers and theologians both in the Muslim and the Judaeo-Christian tradition have pointed out that apparently the doctrine of Omniscience of God does not cohere with the doctrine of freewill of man. The present research is an attempt to examine different formulations of the problem as well as solutions attempted by Christian theologians/philosophers. I have observed that Saint Thomas Aquinas' formulation of the doctrine of omniscience in an absolutist manner (known as Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience) makes it incoherent with the concept of human freedom. History of Christian thought on this problem is basically formulation and reformulation of this doctrine in different ways. I agree with Swinburne that there is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will, if the traditional doctrine of Omniscience is accepted, that the basic fault lies in its absolutist approach. Swinburne asserts that it is contrary to Biblical teachings as well. On the base of my understanding of 'Islamic View of Omniscience and Human Freedom' I believe that the correct formulation of the concept of Omniscience must include an indeterminate aspect concerning free choice of a human action.

Omniscience is generally considered to be a necessary characteristic of an absolutely perfect being. But is this concept coherent? In the western philosophical tradition, at least three main problems have been identified concerning the coherence of this Divine Attribute. First problem relates to

the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with Immutability. As restated by Professor Norman Kretzman, it runs as follows:

(1) A perfect being is not subject to change.

(2) A perfect being knows everything.

(3) A being that knows everything always knows what time it is.

(4) A being that always knows what time it is, is subject to change.

(5) A perfect being is subject to change.

(6) Therefore, a perfect being is not a perfect being. Finally,

therefore,

(7) There is no perfect being.[35]

Religious people often claim that man is, at least in some sense, free to do what he chooses to do. But if God as an Omniscient being foreknows everything, how can man be free? Is it possible for man to go against infallible Divine Foreknowledge? The second problem identified in this context is: how is Divine Omniscience compatible with human freedom?

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35 Kretzmann, Norman. (1966) Omniscience and immutability, in: Baruch A. Brody (Ed.) (1974) *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach,* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 366. (Norman Kretzmann is the Susan Linn Sage Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Cornell University.) Brody has reprinted this article from *The Journal of Philosophy* 63 (1966).) The problem was formulated by St Thomas Aquinas in the first part of his *Summa Theologia* but, as stated by Brody in his Introduction to Part-III, Professor Kretzmann has re-emphasised and reformulated this problem in his own words. *Ibid.,* p.334. Professor Kretzmann states as a footnote that "the principle of Immutability is regularly supported by one of two arguments (i) *From Supreme Excellence*: A perfect being is a supremely excellent being; thus any change in such a being would constitute corruption, deterioration, loss of perfection…(ii) *From Complete Actualisation*: A perfect being is a being whose capacities for development are all fully realised. A being subject to change, however, is in that respect and to that extent a being with an unrealised capacity for development, a being merely potential and not fully realised, a being in a state of process and not complete; hence not perfect…The principle of Immutability is a thesis of orthodox Christian theology, drawn from Greek philosophy…" *Ibid.,* p. 366.

The third problem concerns the compatibility of Divine Omniscience with Eternity. Eternity, as Immutability has been considered to be the necessary characteristics of the Omniscient being in Christianity. In the history of Western philosophy, St Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) formulates the first and the second problem,[36] whereas the third problem is formulated by Boethius (c.480-524).[37] Since my basic concern in this article is with the problem of the compatibility of Divine Omniscience and human freedom, I shall confine myself to the second problem and touch the first and the third ones only if so needed.

St Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 14, 13, 3 states the second problem in two versions. First version shows that if man is supposed to be free, God cannot be considered to be Omniscient. The purpose of the second version is to show that if God is supposed to be Omniscient, man cannot be proved to be free. Hence: incompatibility of Omniscience and human freedom.[38] The first version runs as follows:

Whatever is known by God *must* be; for whatever is known by us *must* be, and God's knowledge is more certain than ours. But nothing which is

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36 Brody, Baruch A., (ed) (1974) *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach,* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall) 335. Brody in his introduction to Part-III states that one version of this problem is found in St Augustine but is clearly fallacious. Aquinas reformulates this problem which is presented as 2nd version of his formulation in this article.

37 Boethius (c. 480-524) wrote his *De Consolatione Philosophiae* when he was in the prison waiting for the execution of his death sentence. It consists of five books. It is in the fifth i.e. last book that Boethius discusses the problem of man's free will and God's Foreknowledge and attempts to show that the doctrines are not inconsistent. Minio-Paluello, Lorenzo. (ed) s. v. (1962) Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus, in: *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

38 Kenny, Divine foreknowledge and human freedom, in: Brody, (ed) (1974) *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An Analytic Approach,* 405. (Article is actually a revised version of a paper read at Liverpool in 1960 and afterwards published in Anthony Kenny, (1969). Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays (New York: Double Day). Reference given in this para from *Suma Theologiae,* actually reads "Ia, 14, 3, 3" which is not correct. The correct reference is *Suma Theologiae,* "Ia, 14, 13, 3". Cf. Anderson, James F. tr. (1963) *Treatise on God,* (translation of some selected parts of Part-I from *Suma Theologiae* by St Thomas Aquinas), (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall) 93.

future and contingent *must* be. Therefore, nothing which is future and contingent is known by God.[39]

St Thomas uses the word 'contingent' as synonymous to 'not causally determined.' No causally determined action is a free action. Thus free human actions are contingent events. St Thomas himself states this position.[40] As far as his position with respect to Divine Foreknowledge of contingent events is concerned, he states that "God knows all things, not only those actually existing but also those within His Power, or the creature's, and since some of these are future contingents to us, it follows that God knows future contingent things." St Aquinas distinguishes two aspects of contingent thing: as *it is in itself* i.e, in the present, and as *it is in its cause* and in this way it is considered as future. Aquinas asserts that "God knows all contingent things not only as they are in their causes, but also as each one of them is actually in itself." He also holds that God does not know contingents successively, but simultaneously because God's Knowledge as His Being is eternal and eternity being simultaneous whole comprises all times. "Hence it is manifest that contingent things are infallibly known by God."[41]

Aquinas states the Second Version of this problem in his *Summa Theologiae*, in the following words:

…every conditional proposition wherein the antecedent is absolutely necessary must have an absolutely necessary consequent. For the relation of the antecedent to consequent is like that of the premises to the conclusion: and from necessary premises only a necessary conclusion can

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[39] Kenny, Divine foreknowledge and human freedom, in: Brody, 405. Kenny almost reproduces this problem in Aquinas's own words. Cf. Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* Objection 3 of 13th, Article 93.

[40] *Ibid.*, 405.

[41] Anderson, James F. tr. *Treatise on God,* pp. 93-4. William Ockham (c.1290-1349) thinks that the problem of God's foreknowledge and future contingents arises for Christian theology as a result of its acceptance of the philosophical claim that some things are both future and contingent. Adams, Marilyn McCord. / Kretzmann, Norman. (Eng. trans. with intro. & ann. 1969) Translators' introduction in: William Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, (New York: Meredith) 3.

follow,…But this is a true conditional proposition: 'If God knew that this thing will be, then it will be'; for God's knowledge is only of true things. Now the antecedent of this conditional proposition is absolutely necessary, both because it is eternal and because it is signified as past. Hence the consequent also is absolutely necessary. Therefore, whatever is known by God is necessary; ...[42]

Brody[43] presents the following restatement of the above problem:

(A) Everything that has occurred is now necessary;

(B) Suppose that a man does A at some future time;

(C) Then God already has known that he will do A;

(D) So it is necessary that God has known that he will do A;

(E) It is necessary that if God has known that he will do A, then he will do A;

(F) Therefore, it is necessary that he will do A;

(G) But then he did not do A freely and he had no free will concerning his doing A.[44]

Let us examine the solutions offered for these versions of the second problem.

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[42] Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* 1a, 14, 13, 2, p. 93.

[43] Baruch A. Brody is the Leon Jaworski Professor of Biomedical Ethics and director of the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy at Baylor College of Medicine. He is also a professor of philosophy at Rice University and director of the Ethics program at the Methodist Hospital.

[44] Brody, ed. (1974) *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An analytic Approach*, 335. Brody takes this formulation of the problem from the writings of Jonathen Edwards. But he gives no reference to any specific writing. This seems to be a restatement of the problem formulated by St Aquinas at Objection 2 of 13th Article of his *Suma Theologiae* as mentioned above.

Solutions to the First Version:

St Thomas recognises two difficulties in this problem. First difficulty relates to the meaning of first proposition in the above argument. Second difficulty relates to the status of *necessity* to be attached to a past-tensed proposition. Concerning the first difficulty he provides a long answer part of which, as presented by Kenny, runs as follows:

The proposition '*whatever is known by God must be'* can be analysed in

two ways. It must be taken as a proposition *de dicto* or as a proposition *de re...*

As a *de re* proposition, it means:

Of *everything* which is known by God, it is true that *that thing must be.*

So understood the proposition is false.

As a *de dicto* proposition, it means:

The proposition 'whatever God *knows* is the case' is necessarily true.

 So understood, the proposition is true.[45]

As is obvious, in the former sense the proposition claims the necessary occurrence in future of what is known by God in the past or in the present. In the later sense it relates to God's past or present knowledge of a present state of affairs.

Raymond Bradley & Norman Swartz in their *Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy* observe that according to Thomas Aquinas a *de dicto* modality meant "the attribution of a modal property to a *proposition* as in the proposition: It is possible that Socrates is running." Whereas "by a *de re* modality is meant the attribution of a modal property to

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 405; Cf. Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* question XIV, art. 13, reply to objection 3, p. 95.

an *individual* as in the proposition: Socrates is possibly running." They observe that "the above distinction reflects accurately the uses of modal expressions in natural language" and the authors find nothing troublesome about it. However, some philosophers do not agree with this view.[46]

The Second difficulty identified by St Thomas, as stated by Kenny, runs as follows:

In any true conditional proposition whose antecedent is necessarily true, the consequent is also necessarily true. That is to say, whatever is implied by a necessary proposition is itself a necessary proposition.

The following is clearly a true conditional proposition: 'if it has come to God's knowledge that such and such a thing will happen, then such and such a thing will happen.'

The antecedent of the conditional, if it is true at all, appears to be necessarily true: for it is in the past tense, and what is past cannot be changed. What has been the case cannot now not has been the case. Therefore, the consequent is also necessarily true.

Therefore, whatever is known by God is a necessary truth. [47]

St Thomas's solution to this difficulty, as stated by Kenny, runs as follows:

God is outside time: God's life is measured not by time, but by eternity.

Eternity, which has no parts, overlaps the whole of time;

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[46] Bradley, Raymond/ Swartz, Norman (1979) *Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 237.
[47] Kenny, *Ibid.*, p. 407; Cf. Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* question XIV, art. 13, objection 2, p. 93.

Consequently the things which happen at different times are all present together to God.

An event is known as future only when there is a relation of past to future between the knowledge of the knower and the happening of the event.

But there is no such relation between God's knowledge and any contingent event: the relation between God's knowledge and any event in time is always of simultaneity.

Consequently, a contingent event, as it comes to God's knowledge, is not future but present; and as present it is necessary; for what is the case, is the case, and beyond anyone's power to alter.

Hence, we can admit that what is known to God is a necessary truth; for as known by God it is no longer future but present.

But this necessity does not destroy contingency: for the fact that an event is necessary when it happens does not mean that it was predetermined by its causes.[48]

Kenny differs with Aquinas concerning the above solution of the second difficulty. He finds following flaws in Aquinas's solution.

i. Foreknowledge relates to God's knowledge of free human actions, and Divine Omniscience relates to God's knowledge of all objects be it things, events, concepts or propositions or whatever. Since "St Thomas insists that no-one, not even God can know contingent events", Kenny observes that the above solution "forces us to deny not only God's foreknowledge, but also God's Omniscience. For the statement that God's knowledge is outside time must mean, if anything, that no temporal qualifications (eg, 'now', 'then', etc.,) can be attached to God's knowledge.[49]

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[48]*Ibid.*, p. 407; Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* p. 93-4.
[49] *Ibid.* p. 409.

ii. Kenny further observes that "the whole concept of timeless eternity, the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically incoherent. For simultaneity as ordinarily understood is a transitive relation. If A happens at the same time as B, and B happens at the same time as C, then A happens at the same time as C... But on St Thomas's view, my typing of this paper is simultaneous with the whole eternity. Again, on this view, the great fire of Rome is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Therefore, while I type these words, Nero fiddles heartlessly on.[50]

Kenny not only makes plain the flaws in the above solution, but also offers a solution of his own. Let us first determine the real point as contained in the second difficulty. It states:

[i.]   What is implied by a necessary proposition is itself necessarily true.

[ii.] But from 'it has come to God's knowledge that such and such will be the case' it follows that 'such and such will be the case'.

[iii.] But, 'it has come to God's knowledge that such and such will be the case' is necessarily true.

Therefore, if God knows the future, the future is not contingent.[51]

If we substitute 'such and such will be the case' with '*p*' the above formulation becomes:

X. What is implied by a necessary proposition is itself necessarily true.

Y. But from "it has come to God's knowledge that *p* .it follows that *p*".

Z. But, "it has come to God's knowledge that *p*" is necessarily true.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 409.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 409. Numbering of premises mine. Cf. Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* question XIV, art. 13, Objection. 1, 93.

Therefore, if God knows the future, the future is not contingent.[52]

Apparently it seems undeniable that what follows from a necessary proposition is itself necessary. It also appears irrefutable that 'it is the case that *p*' follows from 'it has come to God's knowledge that *p*'. But what about the third premise? Is it true, for all substitutions for "*p*"? Kenny observes that this last premise is based on Aristotelian principle that all propositions in the past are necessary. Kenny differs with Aristotle and, for that matter with Aquinas too, concerning the validity of this principle in its different senses. Kenny examines the premise in question, in the perspective of the following different senses of *necessary truth*: i) Necessity of present- and past-tensed propositions, as Aristotle thought,[53] in a way in which future-tensed propositions are not, compared to the sense in which logical truths are necessary. ii) Necessity of past-propositions, if they are necessary at all, as something *eo ipso* incompatible with freedom. (iii) Contrast of the past- and present-tensed propositions with the future-tensed propositions with the purpose of discovering any sense of necessity, if there is any, which is not shared by future-tensed propositions. Kenny rightly observes that there seems to be no reason to maintain that "It has come to God's knowledge that *p*" is a necessary truth. He observes that "even if "necessary" is given the weak interpretation of "true at all times", there seems no reason to believe the Aristotelian doctrine that past- and present-tensed propositions in *materia contingenti* are necessary."[54] Regarding God's Omniscience Kenny observes that "it does not at all imply that whatever we substitute for "*p*" in "God knows that *p*" is true. ... In fact, God's knowledge will only be necessary where what He knows is necessary (*i.e.* is logical truth)... But by definition, a contingent proposition– such as a proposition reporting or contradicting a free action– is never a necessary truth. Hence the argument which we are considering has no tendency to show that human freedom and divine foreknowledge are incompatible."[55] Thus Kenny differs with St Thomas's interpretation of this Aristotelian principle in the solution in question.

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[52] *Ibid.*
[53] According to Aristotle, necessity applies only to true past and present propositions, not to future propositions of contingent facts. Ibid., p. 410.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 411.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 413.

Kvanvig[56] seeks to answer the objection that 'God's past beliefs about events that lie in the future are, because past, also necessary' through the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' facts. Marilyn McCords Adams and Alvin Plantinga[57] had brought out the explications of this distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' facts. William Haskers criticises this distinction and observes that "just what is it about the proposition, 'God knows that *p*', that makes this a 'soft fact'? Is it that God's *individual essence* entails the property of Omniscience, and therefore the truth of what God believed? Or is it the word 'God' which appears in the quoted sentence, connotes or implies essential Omniscience? If the former the entire distinction between the 'hard' and the 'soft' facts collapses."[58]

Solutions to the Second Version

i. St Thomas's solution to this problem rests upon his idea that God's knowledge is not temporal in the way that our knowledge is. God is outside of time, in eternity, and everything is eternally present to God. As a result, what God knows is the present-tense proposition that the man is doing *A*, and not the future-tense proposition, and there is no reason why it must be contingent.[59]

ii. Brody states that Professor Kenny suggests that we ought to deny (A) and, therefore, (D). "He urges that there really is no way in which what has occurred is now necessary, and that the whole problem rests upon this illusion."[60]

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[56] Jonathan Kvanvig Ph D, Professor and Chair, University Of Notre Dame.

[57] Dr Plantinga received his M A degree in 1955 from the University of Michigan and his Ph D from Yale University in 1958. From 1963 to 1982 he taught at Calvin College and then at the University of Notre Dame. He is author of the following books: (1967) *God and Other Minds*; (1974) *The Nature of Necessity*; (1974) *God, Freedom and Evil*; (1980) *Does God Have a Nature?*; (1992) *Warrant: the Current Debate*; (1992) *Warrant and Proper Function*.

[58] Hasker, William. review of Kvanvig, Jonathan L. (1986) The Possibility of an All-Knowing God. in (January 1989) *The Philosophical Review*, pp. 125-127.

[59] Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* (general answer to objections in art. 13), p. 94.

[60] Brody, ed. (Introduction to part-III) in: *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An Analytic Approach*, 336.

iii. Brody states that Professor Prior[61], suggests that we ought to deny (C). "The trouble with this argument, as he points out, is its assumption that if at some future time he does A, then it was already true that he will do A and that therefore God knows it. If we drop this suggestion as Pierce[62] suggested, then (C) will not follow from (B) and the argument collapses."[63]

iv. Brody observes that "both of these possible solutions rest upon views about the relation between time, reality, and truth. One cannot simply adopt one of them without considering its implications for a whole host of related logical and metaphysical issues."[64]

Doctrine of Omniscience and its Formulations

The problems, and for that matter their solutions, concerning the compatibility/incompatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom always presuppose some certain concept of Omniscience and some certain concept of Human Freedom. It is the implications of these concepts which manifest themselves when they are formulated into propositions, and propositions into arguments. The concepts are the building blocks of propositions and propositions, the building blocks of arguments. A concept can be self-inconsistent or inadequately formulated. It may be that incompatibility of two concepts arises from the self-inconsistency or inadequate formulation of one or the both concepts. Owing to such considerations it seems necessary to examine the different formulations of the doctrine of Omniscience and the doctrine of Free Will at the hands of philosophers to critically examine the coherence & consistency of their basic concepts. Let us first examine the formulations of the Doctrine of Omniscience.

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[61] Arthur (A N) Prior (1914-1969) was one of the foremost logicians of the twentieth century. He made contributions both to the history of logic and to modern formal techniques. A significant achievement was the foundation of tense logic. He also made important contributions to intentional logic, particularly in the influential posthumous work.

[62] Charles S. Pierce (1839-1914), American Philosopher and Polymath.
[63] Brody, (introduction to part-III) in: _Readings in the Philosophy of Religion_… p. 336.
[64] _Ibid._, 336.

1. **Traditional Formulation**

It seems quite intuitive to think that what is meant by the concept of Omniscience is that God knows everything. Again, quite naturally the question which occurs to us is: what are the things which are known to God? A common answer can be that God knows everything that is true. There is nothing that is true and He is unaware of it. And it is also intuitive to believe that He does not make mistakes about what is true or not. But truth or falsity is the property of propositions. It means that a being is Omniscient if He knows all true propositions. But knowledge is defined as justified true belief. So Omniscience means that God justifiably believes all true propositions. This is what is known as Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience.[65] Aquinas is the first to formulate this doctrine. Kvanvig expresses this doctrine in the following way:

> O: A being B is Omniscient = df B justifiably believes that p if and only if p is true.[66]

St Anselm (1033-1109) has already given this traditional doctrine a deep philosophical tinge by asserting that 'God is essentially omniscient'. But 'if God is essentially omniscient', He simply could not be mistaken about anything, i.e. He has infallible knowledge. This implication raises certain problems regarding God's knowledge of the future. Notwithstanding these problems Kvanvig is of the view that the traditional construal of the doctrine of Omniscience, according to which God knows all true propositions, is quite proper. In his book *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God,* he tries to defend the logical consistency of the traditional construal of this doctrine. However, he prefers reformulation of this doctrine in the hands of Molina (1535-1600)[67] and observes that a Molinistic account of Omniscience and

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[65] Anderson, tr. *Treatise on God,* pp. 93-4. See note 6 above.

[66] Kvanvig, Jonathan L. (1986) *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God,* (England: Macmillan Press), p. 33. Kvanvig says that an interesting feature of this definition is that it allows an Omniscient Being to believe false propositions, so long as the Being also, and justifiably, believes their contradictories.

[67] Luis de Molina, Spanish Jesuit, one of the most accomplished and learned figures in the 16th century revivalist movement. He published a doctrine on predestination, grace, freewill, etc. The basis of this doctrine is what is called his concept of *scientia media*. The general

essential Omniscience, combined with traditional construal of Omniscience as knowledge of all truths, is adequate for such an account implies that an Omniscient being knows everything there is to know without requiring that such a being be causally responsible for the actions of persons. Hence such an account does not imply that human beings are not free. According to this Molinistic account to say 'that a being is omniscient' is not simply to say that 'such a being exhibits 'maximal cognitive perfection'. Since no being could be God without being maximally perfect with regard to Omniscience, we ought also to affirm that God exhibits maximal cognitive perfections other than Omniscience. Hence, God not only knows all truths, He is intimately aware of His Own Self and is as intimately acquainted with the natures of every other thing in the universe as He can be.[68] He further observes that these properties are also possessed *essentially* by God: no matter how the world might have turned out, God would have been maximally cognitively perfect. Kvanvig claims that the Molinist account of God's foreknowledge provides an explanation of how God knows what will be done freely and also how God can have this sort of knowledge essentially. He asserts that there is no incompatibility between the two unless God could not be essentially Omniscient.

The main features of the theory i.e., the Molinist account as explicated by Kvanvig are that it explains:

i) How God knows the future without its being determined in any manner whatsoever. The intuitive idea of the theory is that there are true statements about what a person would freely do, if he were in certain circumstances. Kvanvig calls this set of true statements as 'conjunction of claims' and says

consensus is that "scientia media" was a phrase not simply used, but coined by Molina. *Scientia media* is the way by which God explores and knows with absolute certainty what the human 'free will' will infallibly do by its own innate liberty if it be placed in such or such circumstances. Molina presented this doctrine in an attempt to reconstruct Thomist doctrine. According to Aquinas a future free action is known by God by virtue of His decree for it cannot come into existence unless God decrees its existence. Molina considers this doctrine a subversion of human freewill and tries to find a means whereby God knows a future free act before and independent of Divine decree. *Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics*. ed., (1908), s.v. "Molina".

[68] Kvanvig, *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God*, p. xiv.

that there is a 'maximal conjunction' of claims of this sort that correctly state what each of us would do in certain circumstances. And since God knows these 'maximal subjunctives of freedom' He knows the future.

ii) But the question is how does God know these 'maximal subjunctives of freedom'? Kvanvig observes that "in the standard semantics for such subjunctives, any subjunctive is true because of similarity relations between various possible worlds and the actual world. Such a theory may be adequate regarding subjunctives of freedom as well."

iii) Conceiving a possible objection to this theory that 'there is no actual world before God creates it' Kvanvig says that the concept of 'actual world' is confusing one and the objection is based on a confusion of the above notion. His argument is: "Since it is impossible that there be no actual world, it is impossible for there not to have been an actual world before creation." It seems as if Kvanvig is of the view that the actual world is from all eternity.

iv) Kvanvig conceives another objection, rather a more serious one, "which centres on the possibility of two worlds sharing exactly the same history and yet being such that in one, a person acts in one way, and in the other, he/she acts in another way. The difficulty is in determining which of these words is most similar to the actual world." Kvanvig's answer to this objection is that "there is only one way for the standard semantics to solve this problem, and that is to hold that individuals have basic natures which explain the truth of the subjunctives of freedom in question." [69]

v) And if this response by the standard semantics fails it would not mean that the Molinist view presented here has failed; it would only mean that it is the 'standard semantics' that is in danger because the semantics are developed to account for what are intuitive truths. If a view of theory construction comes out to be such that one has to discard intuitive truths because they do not fit in the theory developed on that view, that view of theory construction is necessarily false. [70]

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 167.
[70] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 168.

Hasker observes that Kvanvig discussing the concept of *middle knowledge* (i.e., a pre-creative grasp of what creatures would freely do if placed in appropriate circumstances) states that the subjunctives of freedom are contained in the *essences* of created individuals. But of course I neither freely chose nor am I responsible for what is contained in my essence. As Maryline Adams and Plantinga all clearly see, the notion that subjunctives of freedom are contained in one's essence, is fatal to certain other concepts of his theory, the theory of middle knowledge.[71] However, Kvanvig claims that the Molinist account of God's foreknowledge provides an explanation of how God knows what will be done freely and also how God can have this sort of knowledge essentially. He asserts that there is no incompatibility between the two unless God could not be essentially Omniscience.

The traditional account of the doctrine of Omniscience is mostly centred around the propositional view for it supposes that a being can be Omniscient by knowing all true propositions. Propositional view is a reductionist view for it only takes propositions as the objects of intentional attitude. But now further discussions have been arisen on the base of theories concerning our awareness of ourselves and others. Though Kvanvig attempts to defend the adequacy of the traditional doctrine of Omniscience, he does not accept its reductionist bias and challenges it on the base of issues surrounding what has been called *de re* and *de se* awareness. Kvanvig says that in a considerable recently published literature, it has been asserted that the propositional view of literature is inadequate, and the reason is that it is reductive one. The propositional belief is a *de dicto* belief, and a claim is made that "there is also *de re* and *de se* belief. The *de re* belief is belief with a thing as the object of belief. For example, it is one thing to believe that the proposition the tallest spy is a spy is true; and quite another thing to believe of the tallest spy himself that he is a spy. Finally, it is perhaps one thing to believe of a person in the mirror that his pants are on fire; and quite another to be aware that that person is oneself and to believe of oneself (*de se*) that one's own pants are on fire. So there is a suggestion here that one cannot know everything there is to know if one is limited to propositions as the objects of one's awareness."[72] He says that two ways have been suggested by the proponents

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[71] Hasker, review of *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God*, pp.125-27.

[72] Kvanvig, *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God*, p. xiv.

of the propositional view to meet this objection:

i)   Some of the proponents of the reductionist view have suggested that a different kind of reductive account in which the object of intentional attitudes is a property, not a proposition, ought to be accepted.

ii)   The others have suggested that "the propositional account can still be defended if it is supplemented with additional features which imply that some propositions are *private propositions*: they are propositions which only some persons, at only some times and only some places, can access."[73]

Kvanvig finds neither of the alternatives as acceptable. He observes (1) that the fault with the *property theory* is that it cannot properly explain what it is to conceive one's own non-existence. Hence the property theory is inadequate. (2) As far as the doctrine of private propositions is concerned, (i) Kvanvig claims that though there are strong reasons to deny the strict identity between beliefs of different persons about the same experience, yet it is intuitively obvious that there is such an identity. (ii) He also argues from theological point of view for rejecting the possibility of private propositions. He observes that God knows us better than we know ourselves; but if the possibility of private propositions is accepted, there is a sense in which we know ourselves best of all.

Kvanvig offers a way to avoid this view of private propositions through a distinction between *direct* and *indirect* grasping which entails, as we shall see, the rejection of a dyadic theory of belief in place of a triadic theory of belief.[74] He also suggests that it is the meaning of the sentence used to

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-67. Kvanvig says that Chisholm (Roderick M. Chisholm, 1917-1999, late Professor of Brown University) dilating on the question that does a Propositional Theory imply Private Proposition, claims that each person knows directly and immediately certain propositions that imply his own individual essence. What he draws from this as a corollary is that no one knows any proposition that implies the individual essence of anyone else. Analysing the matter Chisholm presents a theory of *de se* awareness which involves two distinct features: i) it abandons the propositional view and, ii) it posits an order of awareness from self-awareness to other-awareness. Kvanvig observes that by "accepting the distinction between *direct* and *indirect* grasping and by refusing to posit contingent first person propositions, we can avoid both the problem for Chisholm's property theory and the

express the proposition in question which provides the ground to this distinction between directly & indirectly grasped propositions. Because, as Kvanvig observes, it is the meaning of some terms that tie us in more intimate way to certain features of the world. He further says that the distinction between *direct* and *indirect* grasping is not something difficult to understand; it is quite intuitive "that we bear a special relation to ourselves which we bear to nothing else; that we are more intimately associated with what is here and now than to what was then or what is or what was there." The way the theory of Omniscience suggested by Kvanvig captures this connection is by claiming that there are some propositions "that we grasp *directly* by virtue of being expressed by sentences which refer in an especially immediate way to oneself, the present moment, and the present place." He further says that when such sentences "are used to pick out individuals other than ourselves, times other than the present, and spaces other than the local, such propositions are more remote and distant to our conceptual apparatus– we only grasp such propositions *indirectly*."[75]

Let us study Kvanvig's argument through which he draws the above conclusions.

Concerning range of knowledge for an Omniscient Being, Kvanvig observes that it seems quite intuitive that in order for a being to be Omniscient, He must know about all spatial regions; but the being in question also must know about all temporal regions i.e. in addition to the present, the Omniscient being must also know the past as well as the future. Articulating the same view in technical terminology he observes that "in order for a being to be Omniscient, the being in question must have *maximal*

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purported problem of private propositions for the propositional view of the objects of intentional attitudes." Kvanvig offers a new propositional theory which affirms the following principles concerning the nature of propositions that: i) propositions are necessary beings composed of properties which are bearers of truth-values; and, ii) that the contents of the intentional attitudes of believing and knowing are propositions. The attitudes of believing and knowing are directed towards propositions. Belief is a triadic relation between an intentional attitude, a proposition, and a particular manner of accessing the proposition. The particular feature of the theory that enables us to avoid the problem of private propositions is the distinction between direct and indirect grasping.

[75] Ibid., 170.

knowledge" and discusses the question of the possibility of a *maximal knower*, i.e. "are there special problems that limit any possible knower in such a way that the concept of a maximal knower is incoherent?"[76]

As is obvious, the concept of a maximal knower seems to ascribe the same status to future as to past. But can we allow the future the same status as the past? Kvanvig identifies issues regarding the knowledge of future having two aspects: metaphysical & epistemological. The issues regarding the metaphysical aspect of the knowledge of future arise from the ontology of future. The epistemological questions deal with the possibility of knowing the future events.[77] Concerning the issue of the reality of future, Kvanvig sees two further points of note:

a) The ontological question of the reality of future involves the objection that the future cannot be real because if it were it would be present, not the future. Kvanvig is of the opinion that the future is real. He thinks that there are strong intuitions which support the view that the future can be the object of knowledge and other *intentional attitudes* and that it must be known in order for a being to be Omniscient. He thinks that if it can be shown that there is no good argument for denying connection between Omniscience and knowledge of the future, it can be considered a sufficient reason in favour of the view that Omniscience requires knowledge of the future.[78] It is with this purpose in his mind that he examines the argument offered by Swinburne and others.

b) That the issue of the reality of future should be kept distinct from the issue about whether the future is determined or not. These are two different issues and should not be confused with each other. Kvanvig conceives four possible standpoints concerning these issues. He observes that one can hold that i) the future is both not real and yet determined; one can also believe that ii) some parts of the future are real and yet indeterminate iii) that the future is both real and determined; and, iv) the

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[76] Ibid., 4.
[77] Ibid., 1.
[78] Ibid., 1- 2.

future is not real and undetermined.[79]

Let us take the first point to discuss in detail:

Kvanvig does not attempt to show that God can know the future, rather he tries to show that unless a being does know the future, that being cannot be Omniscient. In order to defend his view he examines two attempts to deny this claim. The first of these attempts is a metaphysical claim made by Geach[80] 'that since the future is not real, it cannot be known'. The second attempt to deny Kvanvig's claim is "an epistemological attempt, a version of *limited scepticism* about the future presented by Swinburne. This attempt is directed at showing not that there is no Omniscient being, but rather that we need a new understanding of Omniscience– a limited version of the doctrine of Omniscience."[81] Let us first examine Geach's anti-realism concerning the future as presented by Kvanvig.

Geach thinks that there are no truths about future. The apparent knowledge of the future is really only knowledge of the present tendencies of things. He says that "the future consists of certain actual trends and tendencies in the present that have not yet been fulfilled."[82] This is his *anti-realism* of the future. Geach also "holds *anti-deterministic* view of the present tendencies of things when he claims that "what was going to happen at an earlier time may not be going to happen at a later time because of some action taken in the interim."[83] However he does not claim his anti-realism about the future to be based on his indeterminism of the present tendencies. Kvanvig thinks that Geach rightly recognised that the two views were logically independent but observes that Geach's thought suffers from a

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[79] Concerning the second of these Kvanvig observes that "some philosophers argue that some sort of determinism follows from allowing that the future is real. Even so, at least this much is true: the claim that the future is real is not the same claim as that the future is determined; hence it must be shown that there is an entailment relation between the two..." *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[80] Peter Geach is one of the foremost contemporary British philosophers. His areas of interest are the history of philosophy, philosophical logic, the theory of identity, and the philosophy of religion.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

confusion of these views.

Kvanvig says that if we assume that objects of knowledge are propositions, Geach's view amounts to enabling him to translate any proposition apparently about the future into some other proposition which is not about future. Kvanvig construes Geach's reasons for rejecting realism about future into the following propositions:

1.   Propositions apparently about the future are propositions about what is going to be the case.

2.   Propositions about what is going to be the case obviously refer to the present, not the future.

3.   If (1) and (2) are true, then there are no propositions about the future.

4.   If there are no propositions about the future, then the future is not real.

5.   Therefore, the future is not real. Geach says that one might claim that there are two different senses of 'is going to be' so that (2) can be read as either:

(2a)   Propositions about what is *really* going to be the case obviously refer to the present, not the future.

<div align="center">or</div>

(2b)   Propositions about what is going to be the case *if not prevented* obviously refer to the present, not the future.

Geach claims that the notion of '*prevention*' cannot be explained without appeal to the notion of 'what is going to happen'. Kvanvig differs with him and claims that this notion can be clarified in another way. He also asserts that Geach is confusing the two senses of 'is going to be the case', and that

his response to the objection is inadequate.[84]

Kvanvig concludes that the future is real, and that in order to be Omniscient, a being must know about it. Kvanvig also criticises Swinburne for his denial of foreknowledge for an Omniscient Being.

Before we turn towards Kvanvig's observations and his criticism of Swinburne's limited doctrine of Omniscience, let us study Swinburne first.

Richard's Swinburn's Criticism of the Traditional Doctrine of Omniscience:

Swinburne argues that there is essential incompatibility between God's Omniscience and free will, if the traditional doctrine of Omniscience as formulated by Aquinas is accepted. According to Swinburne this incompatibility can have two aspects:

i) that there is an incompatibility between God's Omniscience and human free will;

ii) that there is an incompatibility between God's Omniscience and His Own free will;

The first objection if valid would show that man does not have free will; and the second objection if valid would show that a person could not both be Omniscient & Perfectly Free. The argument purporting to show an incompatibility between divine Omniscience and human freedom runs as follows:

If God is Omniscient then he foreknows all future human actions.

If God foreknows anything, then it will necessarily come to pass.

But if a human action will necessarily come to pass, then it cannot be free.

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[84] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Augustine's solution to this objection is that human actions may be free even if they come to pass by necessity. Whereas Aquinas says that although it is true that 'necessarily' if God foreknows anything, then it will come to pass', it is false that 'if God foreknows anything, it will necessarily come to pass'. Only the latter yields the conclusion that man does not have free will.[85]

Discussing and criticising Aquinas, Swinburne gives the following understanding of the concept of Omniscience:

> A person P is Omniscient at a time t if and only if he knows of every true proposition about t or an earlier time that it is true and also he knows of every true proposition about a time latter than t, such that what it reports is physically necessitated by some cause at t or earlier, that is true.[86]

On this understanding of the concept of Omniscience, P is Omniscient if he knows about everything except those future states and their consequences which are not physically necessitated by anything in the past; and if he knows that he does not know about those future states. Hence God is Omniscient in the attenuated sense, and this of course has resulted from His Own choice. Swinburne feels that Bible, or at any rate the Old Testament, contains implicitly the view that God is Omniscient only in the attenuated sense.

The God thus postulated brings about all things which exist (or permits them to exist) and in so doing knows what He brings about and knows what that will lead to, so long as He has brought about things which physically necessitate certain effects. Yet to maintain His freedom, He limits His knowledge of His own future choices.

Turning towards Swinburne, Kvanvig observes:

1. Swinburne is not anti-realist about future. He does not claim that there are no truths about the future, as does Geach. He simply holds that the knowledge of future free actions of individuals is not possible for anyone, even for an Omniscient being, otherwise they will not be free

[85] Swinburne, Richard, (1977), *The Coherence of Theism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press) pp. 167-68.
[86] *Ibid.*, p 175.

actions at all.

2. Swinburne does not think it necessary for a being to know all of the future, (*i.e.,* including foreknowledge of future free actions of human beings), to be Omniscient. He thinks that this lack of knowledge on the part of an Omniscient being, does not impair His claim of Omniscience.

3. These restrictions on what an Omniscient being must know in order to be Omniscient, does not arise from any metaphysical position concerning the ontology of future; they arise as a result of Swinburne's sceptical views about the possibility of foreknowledge of future free actions hence from a purely epistemological concern.

4. Swinburne believes in the *indeterminacy view of freedom* i.e. free actions of men, although influenced, are not necessitated by other agents or prior states of the world.

5. Swinburne argues that if persons are free then they are able to do otherwise than they actually do. Then no being *B* could be Omniscient in the traditional sense unless as a matter of fact no person ever chose to make *B*'s beliefs false. On the *Indeterminacy View* of Freedom, it will be a mere fortunate coincidence, and a theist would never claim God to be Omniscient in this uncertain way.

6. Swinburne does not suggest that we should discard the doctrine of Omniscience, he only recommends a better formulation of the doctrine. From the precedent of divine attribute of omnipotence where theologians such as Aquinas have been careful to explain omnipotence, not as the ability to do anything, but as the ability to do anything logically possible,[87] Swinburne suggests that on similar lines an account of Omniscience can be developed not as knowledge of everything true, but as knowledge of everything true which is logically possible to know. He thus rejecting 'the traditional doctrine of omniscience' formulates a '*limited doctrine* of omniscience' in the following words:

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[87] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

A person P is Omniscient at a time *t* if and only if he knows of every true proposition about a time later than *t*, such that what it reports is physically necessitated by some cause at *t* or earlier, that is true.[88]

Swinburne claims that this doctrine preserves both the freedom of human actions and the Omniscience of God. Criticising this limited doctrine of Omniscience Kvanvig observes:

1. That the basic supposition in Swinburne's thesis is the claim that knowledge of free actions of human beings is impossible. The reason is that if such knowledge were *possible*, but not *actual*, Swinburne would be forced to discard his view that there is an Omniscient being. Given that, a question naturally arises as to whether there is any good reason for thinking that such knowledge is impossible.

Kvanvig argues: given that Swinburne has admitted that true beliefs about the future are possible, he must maintain that the condition of justification which is necessary for a true belief to acquire the status of knowledge cannot be satisfied. So a being who had all true beliefs about future free actions would be quite lucky. Such a claim may influence the justification for the beliefs in question in two ways: i) that the element of luck would taint any belief about what a free individual will do; ii) that the problem of luck only affects, not all, but a maximal set of such beliefs so that only some of the members of the set of true beliefs are epistemically secure enough to be justified, but not the entire set. Kvanvig observes that Swinburne holds it only in the first sense and only the first sense can fit in with his move to his limited doctrine of Omniscience.

2. That Swinburne has made the emphasis on luck, the basis of his move from 'the traditional doctrine of omniscience' to 'the limited doctrine of omniscience' so he must defend this move; and that he can defend this move only by showing that the luck in question spreads over every possible belief about any possible free action. He says that to show that his emphasis on luck is true because whole collection of such beliefs cannot be held, will not be sufficient for this purpose. The question is not

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[88] *Ibid.*, p. 175..

to show that the whole collection of such beliefs cannot be held true on the basis of luck, but to show that it is true of every possible belief. Kvanvig claims that only in the later case, Swinburne's doctrine of Omniscience is proved.[89]

3. Kvanvig says that Swinburne's thesis that justified beliefs are not possible regarding future free actions, can be defended in three ways:

i) The first is to affirm an infallibilist conception of justification. Kvanvig shows that to affirm this is simply a mistake "for if believing all and every truths about the future would be an accidental or lucky coincidence at best, God could not have the sort of evidence that guaranties the truth of what he believes."[90]

ii) The second way to affirm the above thesis is by affirming God's essential Omniscience i.e. "in order for a being to be God, He must not only know everything there is to know, but He must also be incapable of not knowing what there is to be known."[91] This approach presupposes that a) God must be incapable of error i.e. no being is worthy of the title 'God' unless that being is infallible; b) and that at least He will not know the free actions of human beings for the knowledge of such actions can only be contingent and does not abort the possibility of mistake. Thus He must be essentially Omniscient, not just Omniscient; and in this sense of Omniscience a being cannot be required to know what free actions any individual will perform. Kvanvig also rejects this argument.

iii) The third and the final way, according to Kvanvig, to defend the claim that God need not know what free individuals will do in order to be Omniscient, is that future free actions have characteristics which prevent any individual from knowing that they will occur. According to Swinburne, a perfectly free individual is an individual who is not influenced in his choices by any causal factors, so he claims that

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[89] Cf., *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

justified beliefs about the future free actions of such an individual are impossible. Kvanvig says that this argument, if sound, may give some reason to discard the traditional construal of Omniscience and accept Swinburne's limited doctrine in place; but it is not sound.[92]

4. The fundamental intuition in Swinburne's account is that an Omniscient being need only know all that can be known, rather than all that is true. Swinburne argues for this from the analogy with the doctrines of omnipotence. Kvanvig claims that this analogy is not justified: "The analogy intended to support a limited doctrine of Omniscience is between feasible tasks and knowable truths and between unfeasible tasks and unknowable truths; but the analogy is crucially defective. Whereas an unknowable truth is still a truth, an unfeasible task is not a task at all."[93]

From all this discussion Kvanvig draws the following conclusions:

i) That the reasons given by Swinburne for accepting his 'limited version of the doctrine of omniscience' are really the reasons for accepting the 'traditional doctrine of omniscience'.

ii. His limitations are inadequate because the limitations imposed by the traditional doctrine are only apparent whereas the limitations imposed by limited version of the doctrine are real limitations on the knowledge of the being in question.

iii. A being must know all truths in order to be Omniscient, and that includes knowing truths about the future free actions of human beings.

Let us turn to the third problem relating Foreknowledge and Eternity.

The concepts of Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom are also discussed in the perspective of the notion of God's Eternity. The Christian theological tradition has identified at least two senses of the notion of God's Eternity. First, that God is eternal is to say that the life of God has unending

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[92] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 19.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

duration. God always has and will exist. This is the concept of 'Everlastingness'. Second, to say that God is eternal is to say that God is 'Timeless'.

The both of these alternatives have implications of their own. For example, if God is 'Everlasting' (rather than 'Timeless') the doctrine of divine omniscience implies determinism. But if God is 'Timeless', he cannot be omniscient at all. For, according to this doctrine, God is not only 'out there' and apart from the world of temporal objects and happenings, God is 'out there' and removed from *time* altogether. Thus, in this sense the doctrine of divine omniscience presents the most complete and strong assertion of divine transcendence.[94] Let us observe in some detail, the implications of the predicate 'eternal' in this sense.

The concept of divine 'timelessness' includes "that God exists outside the stream of time; that his actions are timeless, though they have their effects in time; that his thoughts and reactions are timeless, though they may be thoughts about or reactions to things in time; his knowledge is timeless, though it includes knowledge of things in time; that there is no temporal succession of states in God." Put in a different way we can say "that God has his own time scale; that there is only one instant of time on the scale; and everything which is ever true of God is true of Him at that instant. In a sense, however, that instant of time lasts forever." Most of the great Christian theologians from Augustine (354-430) to Aquinas taught this doctrine and best known exposition of this doctrine occurs in the 6th century Christian philosopher Boethius. His most quoted definition of eternity is that it is "the complete and perfect possession at once of an endless life."[95] Concerning omniscience Boethius held that:

> If God is infallible and if God knows the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance, then no human action is voluntary;

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[94] Pike, Nelson. (1970), *God and Timelessness*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), pp. ix-x. "A corresponding set of problems and issues also arise as a further implication concerning the logical relations between 'eternal' and 'omnipotent' and the logical relations between 'eternal' and 'person'." *Ibid.*, p. x. Nelson Pike is Professor UCI Department of Philosophy.
[95] Swinburne, *Ibid.,* p. 216.

At least some human actions are voluntary;

Either God is not infallible or God does not know how human beings will act prior to the time of action.

Boethius opts for the second alternative. He argues in the following manner:

To know something before it happens requires that one's cognitions be located in time relative to the thing in question;

A timeless being could not have temporally located cognitions.

A timeless being cannot know the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance;

God is timeless; therefore He cannot know the outcome of human actions in advance of their performance.[96]

Swinburne thinks that though this doctrine provides Boethius with a neat solution of the problem of divine foreknowledge that since all times are present to God, God can just as easily see our future acts as other men can see present acts, there is no evidence for this doctrine of divine timelessness in Christianity before Augustine, nor is there any evidence in the Old Testament for it. He thinks that "like the doctrine of His total immutability, the doctrine of timelessness seems to have entered Christian theology from neo-Platonism, and there from Augustine to Aquinas it reigned. Duns Scotus seems to have rejected it and so did William of Ockham."[97]

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[96] Pike, *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[97] Swinburne, *Ibid.*, p. 217. Ockham thinks that "the problem arises for Christian theology as a result of its acceptance of the philosophical claim that some things are both future and contingent. Ockham takes it to be part of Christian doctrine that God has infallible knowledge of future contingents." Ockham attempts to develop a view regarding truth and future contingents to solve the problem. "Fatalism is a view whatever happens must happen of necessity and whatever does not happen of necessity does not happen at all Thus fatalism denies that any events, actions or states of affairs are contingent…Many philosophers,

Swinburne thinks that the reasons for which the scholastics put forward the doctrine of timelessness were poor on two counts. First that it would provide backing for and explanation to the doctrine of God's total immutability. However, to Swinburne, this view seems to be mistaken. After all why should the theists advocate God's total immutability? The second reason is that it allowed them to maintain God's omniscience in the very strong sense. However, Swinburne does not think the doctrine of omniscience in the above sense (i.e. in the sense that it includes knowledge of future free actions of human being) to be undetachable part of theistic tradition. He further observes this doctrine to contain inner incoherence and also to be incompatible with most things which theism wish to uphold. Therefore, no need to incorporate the doctrine of timelessness to theism.[98]

(To be continued in the next issue)

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including Aristotle, have thought that this highly implausible conclusion could be deduced from apparently impeccable principles of logic. In his *De interpretatione*, Chapter 9, Aristotle argues for this conclusion… The central point in Ockham's replies to these arguments is to preserve the Doctrine of God's universal foreknowledge in the face of apparent need to deny that every singular proposition is either determinately true or determinately false in the special case of singular future contingent propositions." Adams, Marilyn McCord./ Kretzmann, Norman. (Eng. trans. with intro. & ann. 1969) translators' introduction, in: William Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, pp. 3-13. Marilyn M. Adams is Horace Tracy Pitkin Professor of Historical Theolgy and Norman Kretzmann is *Susan Linn Sage Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Cornell University*.

[98] Swinburne, Ibid., pp. 219-20.

THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Ahmad Raza

ABSTRACT

This paper makes a theoretical critique of the concept of scientific knowledge. The classical conception of scientific knowledge has been discussed and analyzed in the first section. In the second section, emerging conception of the scientific knowledge has been explored. The author hopes to show on the basis of veritable critique from different philosophers of science as well as scientist (Kuhn, 1967, Polanyi, 1983, Prigogine, 1984), that the structure of scientific knowledge, the way it is interpreted and legitimized, is not only shaped by the personal and cultural orientations of its practitioners but also by the larger cultural context, in which it is carried out.

Key words: structure, scientific knowledge, classical, tacit and dissipative structures.

1. Classical Conception of Scientific Knowledge

Liberty, fraternity and equality, were the catchwords which inspired the dawn of the "Reign of Man" in 1789 and unleashed the profound creative energy which have since transformed our world to an unrecognizable extent. Man's ideas of the self and the world around him were completely metamorphosised. The "temple of reason" was resurrected with a political revolution in France and consequently a new form of social and philosophical life took shape, in fact a new power of mind was realized by man, the power of science. Subsequently, the natural philosophy which emerged, questioned the Medieval and Renaissance conceptual legitimacy of notions such as authority, self-image, knowledge and reality. The dissolution of old structure of perception was replaced by new method of understanding the world and its constituents. This new method of knowing was galvanized by Galileo, Kepler and Newton. The characteristic features of this method

were abstraction (rational constructions), universality (generalization), observation (experimentation) and domination (control) over nature (natural world) by man.

This was the time from which, onward, civilization entered into democratic consciousness of itself and its constituents (man and culture), and autocratic notions of truth and knowledge were abandoned forever. The logical consequence of this tremendous cosmological shift, though, appears to be simple yet contains in it profound capability to influence the traditional perceptual structures and value systems of human societies. This new found capability to understand, observe and question the nature, structure and growth of the world, universe and it's manifestations, in a non-religious way, and then formulate rational explanations/interpretations of human existence and physical reality, constitutes the core of this classical method of knowing the world.

The enthusiasm which bewitched every thinking being of the18[th] & the 19th century Europe was the subtle understanding of the near perfect rationality of the behaviour of nature, universe and the human society. This sense of profundity was the product of the power of this new method of knowing, the infallible belief in the systematic palpability and universal validity of the natural world (and the laws thus formulated to describe its various aspects), consolidated with the conceptual tools of observation, abstraction and experimentation. The scheme, which thus emerged, perceived reality/nature as an object, an automaton to be analyzed in bits and pieces, to find out its eventual universal structure. It was operated upon, slashed, atomicised and reduced to minimum physical and mathematical terms.

The knowledge, or more appropriately scientific knowledge which then crystallized, became a kind of apparent truth, self-contained and self-poised, which consistently, and at times harshly, separated being from becoming, man from nature, progress from values and matter from mind. The grammar of this new methodology was thus; that the universe (and human societies included) was viewed as a big automaton, a machine, behaving in a deterministic timeless and ordered fashion.

Change, process, growth and time-oriented activity were banned in the new found crystal palace of physics and mathematics. Thus, what, Prigogine and Stengers term as the "mechanistic world-view",[99] triumphed over other forms of knowledge and conceptualizations of reality in the new cosmology of things. This triumph of mechanistic world-view was necessitated and supported by the rise of factory civilization. Alvin Toffler has pointedly underscored the historic coincidence between the rise of factory civilization and the triumph of mechanical *weltanschauung*, in his foreword to *Order out of Chaos*. He says "Mechanistic view coincided with the rise of factory civilization, and divine dice-shooting seems hardly enough to account for the fact that the age of the machine enthusiastically embraced scientific theories that picture the entire universe as a machine".[100]

Henceforth, the succeeding generations of scientists focused their energies to discover new universal "laws of nature" to be revered with awe and enforced through the selective manipulation of scientific institutions as a sacred creed, not to be challenged and questioned, to the exclusion of all other modes of scientific inquiries from this privileged status. So much so that the theoretical constructions of physics and mathematics became the criterion of scientific knowledge.[101] This attitude of selective manipulation of scientific knowledge and its related fields of inquiries was even reflected to minute levels of study. For example, the studies of certain type of phenomena and facts were suppressed and discouraged on the behest of prevalent "scientific fashions" in the institutions, and scientists (who is a kind of seeker after new facts, new phenomena, new truths), were reluctant to indulge into such studies for fear of being dubbed as backward.[102] So it seems

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[99] Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos* (William Heinemann Ltd. London 1984), pp.l-86.

[100] *Ibid*, Alvin Toffler, Foreword, pp. xiii.

[101] Cf. Ilyas Prigogine & Isabella Stengers pp. 79-99, Chapter-III, which is significantly captioned as "Two cultures", which illustrate the historical development of "Mechanistic" "World-view" and it's rejection of other modes of inquiries and their claims to be scientific.

[102] Cf. Michael Polanyi writes in his *Personal knowledge* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, reprint 1983), p. 138, "But there is unfortunately no rule, by which to avoid the risk of occasionally disregarding thereby the evidence which conflicts (or seems to conflict) with the current teaching of science. During the 18th century the French Academy of Science stubbornly denied the evidence for the fall of meteorites which seemed massively obvious to everybody else *Ibid.*; see also footnote to p. 138.

that the values which motivated the quest for an empirical-rational construction of the natural world were at times negated by the autocratic ambitions of the scientific institutions.

Science (and knowledge produced by its technique) is a social activity, rooted in the historical experience of mankind, inspired and influenced by the peculiar cosmological-philosophical convictions and emotional idiosyncrasies of individuals who subscribe to its methodology, and larger social context in which this activity is going on. Be it Galileo and Kepler, Newton or Einstein, Heisenberg and Boltzman, their quest for a reasonable description of nature and reality reflects their own prejudices, choices and the prejudices and choices of their age, in which they happen to find themselves situated and tormented. Their interpretations of the structure of reality are constrained by their times and traditions; in short a vision of nature underlies their conceptual frameworks.[103]

Newtonian world-view of science also presented "a vision of nature that would be universal, deterministic and objective in as much as it contains no reference to the observer, complete in as much as it obtains a level of description that escapes the clutches of time."[104] This vision of nature/reality, in which nature appears to be a silent and mutant version of an ancient city, man is a spectator, an alienated being, surrounded by objects and tools which, he has to master at any cost (even at the cost of his soul). Lonely, dehumanized and trapped in his quest for simplicity, objectivity, man experienced himself, as a Kafkan character, the consequence of his double alienation, from his soul and from nature.[105] This sense of alienation and

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[103] Cf. Paul Feyerabend, Against Method (Verso books, London, 1986, 6th Edition), especially pp. 299, 301 & 302 in which he has dealt beautifully about the politics of scientific knowledge, tyrannies of scientific institutions, selfishness of individual practitioners of science, and taboo reactions very similar to taboos reactions in primitives, evoked when basic ideas are challenged.

[104] *Ibid.*, Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers p. 213.

[105] This would not be out of context to point out various types of philosophical responses to this feeling of alienation and dehumanization created by science and technology. For example, M. Heidegger and his guest to an 'authentic being', J.P. Sartre, his stress an choice, will and Albert Camus, his concept of commitment, active resistance, and rebellion to overcome this abysmal alienation of man. And several other forms of 'Existentialism' ranging from Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers & Paul Tillich etc. All these philosophies in one way

dichotomy resulted from an over– confidence in the healing power of scientific knowledge and technological advancement, which was, intact, not a pure revelation of human mind but an equally treacherous path to self-knowledge, like of which man has traversed earlier in history. The dichotomised consciousness became so entrenched that, Prigogine has to remark in a critical tone,

> For ancients, nature was a source of wisdom. Medieval nature spoke of God. In modern times nature has been so silent that Kant considered that science and wisdom, science and truth, ought to be completely separated. We have been with this dichotomy for the past two centuries.[106]

2. Tacit Component, Dissipative Structures and Anything Goes?[107]

"We now understand that we live in a pluralistic world"[108] and "for humans, reality is embedded in the flow of time."[109] Similarly any attempt to describe scientific knowledge in an impersonal and objective way, which is devoid of tacit component of scientist's participation and emotional involvement in the act of knowing is barren and doomed to wither away.[110] Laplacean ideal of scientific knowledge and the "philosophic movement guided by aspirations of scientific severity has come to threaten the position of science itself, a passion for achieving absolutely impersonal knowledge presents us with a picture of the universe in which we ourselves are absent".[111] The varied studies in what Prigogine terms as the "science of complexity"[112] has exposed the insufficiency of traditional epistemological assumptions of Newtonian conception of knowledge, and which is

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or other reject the rationalism, domination and mechanization of man's power of freedom, choice, commitment and participation in the act of knowing and changing the world and his destiny.

[106] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, p. 99.

[107] Cf. Michael Polanyi p. 67, Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, and Paul Feyerabend, pp;99.

[108] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, pp; xxvii

[109] *Ibid.,* p. xxix.

[110] Cf. see Michael Polanyi, his illumination discussion on the significance of intellectual passions and their role in the act of knowing and scientific creativity, pp. 142-174 & 184-202.

[111] *Ibid.,* Michael Polanyi pp; 142.

[112] *Ibid.,* pp; 131 especially chapters V, VI & IX, Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers.

characteristically reflected in the "Laplacean delusion"[113] Quantum mechanics, biological sciences and thermodynamics have produced new conceptual orders vis-à-vis man's understanding of diverse evolving languages, at his disposal for the description of the structure of physical reality as well as living world. "No single theoretical language can exhaust the physical contents of a system. Various possible languages and points of view about the system may be complementary."[114] Classical world of timelessness, order and reversibility, which is described by an "objective observer" does not hold ground anymore. "The choice once makes about what he observes makes an irretrievable difference in what he finds. The observer is elevated from "observer'" to "participator". What philosophy suggested in times past, the central features of quantum mechanics tells us today with an impressive force. In some strange sense this is a participatory universe.[115] The classical vision of nature "is undergoing a radical change toward the multiple, the temporal, and the complex"[116] and in addition to deterministic processes, there must be an element of possibility involved in some basic processes, such as, for example, biological evolution or the evolution of human cultures.[117] Classificatory and hierarchical theoretical language of classical world is now replaced and at times enriched by new set of concepts, describing more accurately our changing conceptualizations of reality. New concepts such as fluctuations, creativity, irreversible processes, active self-organization of matter, commitment, participation in the act of knowing, plurality of perspectives, are extensively employed by contemporary scientists and philosophers to describe the structure of scientific knowledge. It seems now that man is no more a passive subject receiving only sensory data of an all-powerful universal reality and organizing them into an "economy of thought"[118] into descriptive tools and in the service of some awesome external reality, rather, his act of knowing is "dwelling in and breaking out"[119] of his experience of reality, a kind of active participation, facilitated by these

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[113] *Ibid.,* Michael Polanyi, p. 141.

[114] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers p. 225.

[115] Quoted from; J.A. Wheeler's article 'Genesis & Observership in University of Ontario's series in philosophy of science. Butt. R and Hintikka J. Eds (Boston, Mar. 1977).

[116] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigoglne & Isabelle Stengers, p. xxvii.

[117] *Ibid.,* p. xxvii, ff.

[118] *Ibid.,* Ernst mach quoted in Ilya Prigoglne & Isabelle Stengers pp. 53, 54.

[119] Ibid; Personal knowledge, by Michael Polanyl p. 195.

conceptual tools, an engagement in the form of a "dialogue with nature"[120] and not its enslavement or being enslaved; in short, he is a "macroscopic being embedded in this physical world.[121]

The contemporary advances in the methodologies to understand the structure of scientific knowledge are as diversely constituted as the varied temperaments of their respective designers, reflecting the multiplicity of descriptive languages and the inherent complexity of conceptual explication. This is because they are motivated by different kind of intellectual passions. Similar is the case with scientist who is engaged in the production of scientific knowledge in the first place. Ranging from Popper's conjectures and refutations (falsificationism) to Lakatos methodology of research programs, to Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism to Polanyi's personal knowledge to Prigogine's science of complexity, all of these demonstrate the theoretical diversity vis-à-vis, the "wealth of reality"[122] which each one of them is trying to describe in his own style and grammar.

Knowledge (and the scientific knowledge, whose structure they are describing) is no more a pure activity but a human activity which reflects in its development the power and limitations of human condition. Furthermore, it is also doubtful whether a universalistic and singular status could be accorded to scientific knowledge in the history of human culture.[123] However, two aspects emerge quite clearly from these diverse methodologies; firstly, if one follows a certain type of methodological rule for understanding the nature, structure and growth of scientific knowledge, he is bound to end up with barren analysis. Secondly, man is involved in this process of acquiring new understanding, if knowing the structure of nature and reality. In fact, this endeavour is not impersonal and objective, as some would like to see it, rather it is a voyage of intimate encounters with reality,

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[120] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigoglne & Isabelle Stengers, pp; xxvvii, title of the preface to their book.
[121] *Ibid.,* p. 301.
[122] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigoglne & Isabelle Stengers p. 225.
[123] Cf. Paul Feyerabend, Against Method. Verso books, London p. 296, read also with it p. 244-261, 1986) in which he discusses the difficulties entailed by the methodologist by adopting a puritanical attitude towards science and following of strict rules to describe knowledge.

of "intellectual passion"[124] of "unjustified (and unjustifiable) anticipations"[125] of "irreducible plurality of perspectives on the same reality"[126] (or perhaps a different reality, a new reality), of "anything goes."[127]

Therefore, it is evident that the sort of knowledge, which the philosopher of science is trying to describe with his conceptual tools cannot be confined within a single methodological language. Simultaneously, the sort of knowledge, which is produced by "skills"[128] called scientific, appears to be of one of the models of communicating with reality and displays a structural-logical quality different from other modes of knowledge production conditions of man. Furthermore this mode of knowledge production may have different tactical variations within its functional fields of inquiry, motivated by strategies of differing philosophical and moral overtones of its own practitioners (scientists). Then, how can a methodologist generalize scientific knowledge as a paradigm case for all forms of human knowledge? How can he plead the case of "scientific rationality" as a model of human rationality and reduce the multiplicity of other modes of human inquiry such as arts, religious experience and myth, which are required to follow methodological constructions and rules of a rationality, whose nature, structure and sources are entirely different from these human activities? Therefore, one has to consider, if one has to have a satisfactory answer to above questions, the actual development of science in the human societies, its grammar, culture and history. Only then a true sense of its claims and *raison d etre* to which it is demanding such a forceful attention can be ascertained. This becomes more obvious, when one looks at the theoretical/conceptual apparatus employed by the scientist in the description of physical reality, and which is used for the production of scientific knowledge.

It does not happen in ivory-towers, the formulation of hypothesis, construction of theories, tools of observation, experimental devices, testing and acceptance of concepts, and discoveries of new laws and phenomena are

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[124] *Ibid.,* Michael Polanyl, p. 132, chapter 6, part-II.
[125] Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations (RKP-London 1969) pp; vii, Preface.
[126] *Ibid.,* Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, p. 225.
[127] *Ibid.,* Paul Feyerabend, p. 27-28
[128] *Ibid.,* Michael Polanyl, pp. 49 & 54-59.

governed by the prevalent rules of the game, by doing "normal science,"[129] by prejudices, by propaganda, by tactics and by intimation. This situation is further constrained and escalated by the profound cosmological as well as ideological idiosyncrasies of its practitioners.[130] All those conditions collectively influence the growth and definition of scientific knowledge. In short, one has to research the historical grammar of scientific knowledge in action, for understanding its nature and structure, as practiced by its professors and not by the terms, rules of logician or methodologist.[131] Therefore, any methodology of scientific knowledge which overlooks the cultural-historical context of or what Feyerabend aptly terms, as the "cosmology" underlying the scientists theoretical constructions, and conversely imposing rules for doing good science or laying down criteria for what is scientific and what is not, losses touch with the culture of scientist; and the larger culture of humanity in which he is situated. It reduces science "the great system of utterances which try to evoke and impose correct mode of feelings"[132] on the scientist's mind and his activity (scientific inquiry) to mere logic chopping, and conceptual purity, which is meaningless and devoid of social significance. Described in strict rules (and rationalities) scientific knowledge, assumes a confrontational posture towards other modes of knowledge acquisition or else denigrade them. This is what has created deep cleavages in the cultural life of modern man. Why? The answer lies in technology, which is a facade of modern scientific knowledge and has become so powerful a business in the hands of its practitioners and the institutions which support the entire enterprise in the name of R&D. That is why Feyerabend, in his harsh polemical style dub this professional business class of scientists as "human ants who excel in the solution of tiny problems but who cannot make sense of anything transcending their domain of competence".[133] Simultaneously, this seems pertinent to remark that the teaching of scientific theories as a factual cosmology of the time, not to be

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[129] A well known concept of Thomas Kuhn concerning the development of scientific knowledge. See, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.1967.

[130] Cf; Paul Feyerabend, pp; 146-161 (and chapters 6 to 10) in which he has given a vivid description of Galileo's method and how it eventually overcomes Aristotelian science of his time.

[131] *Ibid.,* Paul Feyerabend, pp. 244-261 who has made an excellent exposition of this aspect.

[132] *Ibid.,* Michael Polanyi, p. 133.

[133] *Ibid.,* Paul Feyerabend, p. 188

questioned, challenged or replaced by other (different) cosmologies (which possesses its own rationality & history) and its enforcement by powerful state apparatus, media and popular propaganda, constitute a medieval attitude of blind following of an infallible authority (which is perhaps vice versa). This attitude is to be overthrown if scientific knowledge has to become a cherished asset, in addition to other domains of humanity's culture. Liberation of human society from this business-like and infallible attitude of science and scientist, philosophy must come forward to create a sense of commitment and participation in scientist's view of the world, so as to facilitate a humanistic growth of scientific knowledge.

From Newton to Prigogine, science (and scientific knowledge) has travelled a long and treacherous path to man's self-knowledge and discovery of the languages which universe speaks, and is some what similar to Mao Tse Tung's political Long March in 1930s. The classical notions of the world have been transformed altogether into new conceptual frameworks. A universe which was a symbol of peaceful automaton, timeless, orderly, obeying mathematical laws, now appears to be, after basic discoveries in quantum mechanics, thermodynamics and bio-sciences, in a state of flux, multiplicity, complexity and temporality, trapped in fluctuations, disturbances, disequilibrium and time-oriented activity. Time creates us and the new structures of cosmos. It is more than a clock-work type of reality, static and determined. The role of passions, emotions and participation in the act of scientific discovery has now firmly been established. "A scientific theory is akin to a work of art"[134]

Scientific knowledge is no more superior to other modes of knowledge acquisition rather it should complement other domains of human experience such as myth and religious experience. It is "one of the many instruments man has invented to cope with his surroundings"[135] and consequently not infallible. Dichotomic consciousness of 18th & 19th century scientific world–view has been replaced by a sense of being part and parcel of this world and its eventual destiny. This feeling of involvement in the life of cosmos was

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[134] *Ibid.,* M. Polanyi, p. 184
[135] Ibid; Paul Feyerabend, pp;217

intuitively captured by Mir Taqi Mir, a classical Urdu poet of the 18th century Mughal India in one of his couplet. He goes on to say:

Breathe in slowly, this mirror-like cosmos

Is a work delicate and subtle.

THE CREATIVE FEMININE PRINCIPLE IN IBN AL-ʿARABĪ'S SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

(PART-I)

Ayesha L. Saeed

ABSTRACT

Analysis of Ibn al-ʿArabī's concept of the feminine principle of existence reveals that this principle is inclusive of the following metaphysical concepts: "Universal Soul," the "*barzakh*/ Imaginal World," the "Breath of the All-Merciful," "Universal Nature" and the "Real through Whom Creation Takes Place." The significance of the feminine principle of existence becomes clear when its role is studied in juxtaposition with the role of the masculine principle of existence, the "Universal Spirit." The conclusion drawn is that the feminine principle of existence is inherently creative as it has within its nature, both the attributes of receptivity and activity in order to create something new. The feminine principle is essentially creative as it receives the activity of the masculine principle of existence, for God's creative power to become manifest through the interaction and activity that is thus generated within its "Womb". The focus of the present article is to highlight the creative aspects of the feminine principle of existence in Ibn al-ʿArabī's school of thought.

n this day and age when a lot of confusion is found regarding gender Irelationships in the contemporary world, and especially in the Muslim world, it is important to analyse traditional interpretations of the meaning of the terms "masculine" and "feminine." The reason why something of value can be learnt from the great saints and sages of the past is that they depended on the knowledge gained from the revealed scriptures, sayings of the prophets and their own meditative practices, for developing clear and in-depth understanding of such fundamental concepts.

What do the terms "masculine" and "feminine" mean? What are the concepts hidden behind these term's obvious meanings? Why does the Qurān state that God made pairs/couples of everything in creation?

"And of everything We created a pair" (Qurān; 51:49). If that is the case, what differentiates the male from the female at the cosmic scale as well as at the human/microcosmic scale? How do these two principles interact at the cosmic level and how are they meant to interact at the microcosmic level of the human being? What part is played by these principles in the process of creation? Are both necessary for creation to take place? Are both principles as creative as each other? What is taught in the scriptures regarding the significance of these two principles? How have some of the greatest of Islamic thinkers interpreted the role these two principles play in the process of creation at the cosmic and human level? Is the feminine principle predominantly creative and if so why and how? What is the role of the masculine principle in the process of creation? Although it is nearly impossible to answer these questions briefly, an attempt had been made to tackle these questions as concisely and as is possible within the confines of an article.

Islam has its own prism from which reality is viewed, including the reality of the masculine and the feminine principle at play in the cosmos. According to Islamic sapiential tradition these two principles are understood to be the manifestations of God's names of Majesty and of Beauty, respectively. In symbolic fashion, they represent all the polarities found at various levels of existence.[136]

Within their inner selves, men and woman have the same configuration. Irrespective of the outer configuration, the masculine principle of the spirit and the feminine principle of the soul exist in both.[137] Differences exist between individuals depending on the extent to which they have polished both the masculine and feminine principles present within their personalities.

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[136]Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam. A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought,* Albany: State University of New York, 1992. p. 69.

[137] Bakhtiar, *Sufi Expressions of the Mystic Quest,* p. 21.

The aim of life, according to Islamic spirituality, is to allow the soul within the human configuration to follow its true nature so that it submits to God's will and then ascends and subsist in the spirit. The macrocosm already reflects this reality as Universal Nature is already feminine in its submissiveness (*muslim*) towards the active/masculine Will of the Universal Spirit.

> Of everything in *wujūd* there is a couple, for the perfect human being, and the cosmos through the perfect human being, are in the form of the Real. The couple are the male and the female, hence an actor and the one acted upon. Thus the Real is the actor and the cosmos is something He acts upon, for it is the locus within which the reception of activity becomes manifest through the forms of the engendered qualities that come upon it one after another, such as movement and stillness, or coming together and becoming separate, or such as the forms of the colours, the attributes and relations. [138]

The active and receptive principles are understood to correspond to the concept of the masculine and feminine principles as clearly elucidated in the works on Ibn al-ʿArabī and his school by William Chittick and Sachiko Murata. Following the ground-breaking work of Murata on the topic of *The Tao of Islam*, where the author makes an extensive and comprehensive case for relating the gender relationships in traditional Islamic thought with the principles of harmony espoused in the philosophy of the yin and yang in Chinese cosmology, this article goes on to focus on the predominantly creative function of the feminine principle in the Ibn al-ʿArabī's school of thought.

Clarity can be achieved regarding creativity within human beings by looking at the way Ibn al-ʿArabī interpreted the manifestation of the masculine and feminine principles at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels of reality. Ibn al-ʿArabī's works and the works of his followers are

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[138] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyya*, IV 132.17. Cf. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*. p. 175.

particularly useful in this respect.[139] It becomes important to note that the concept of creativity can never be understood without understanding the dynamics of the interaction that is found between the masculine and feminine principles of existence.

Ibn al-ʿArabī believes that the feminine principle of existence corresponds to the realm of the Universal Soul or Tablet at the macrocosmic level, as opposed to the Pen, which signifies the masculine principle of the Spirit. He writes:

> A supra-sensory intelligible marriage takes place between the Pen and the Tablet, and leaves a visible, sensory trace…. The trace that was deposited in the Tablet was like the sperm that is ejaculated and set within the womb of the female. The meanings deposited within the celestial letters that become manifest from that writing are like the spirits of the children deposited within their bodies.[140]

For Ibn al-ʿArabī the masculine principle is the active principle that exercises an effect and the feminine principle is the receptive principle that receives activity and in turn produces an effect of its own. What is produced is a result of the interaction of the receptivity and activity within the feminine principle. Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Pen as the masculine principle which corresponds to the "World of the Command" exercising an effect on the Tablet. The Tablet corresponds to the "World of Universal Nature/Cosmos" is the feminine principle receiving the effect for the purpose of creation. Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the symbolism of the "father" and "mother" to signify these two principles.

> Everything that exercises an effect [*muʾaththir*] is a father, and everything that receives an effect [*muʾaththar fīh*] is a mother. This is the general rule

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[139] Sachiko Murata's book *The Tao of Islam* is essential reading for a detailed study of this aspect of Ibn al-ʿArabī's school of thought.

[140] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* I 139.29. Cf. Murata, *Tao.* p. 153.

of this chapter. That which is born between the two from the effect is called a son [*ibn*] or a child [*muwallad*].

The spirits are all fathers, while Nature is the mother, since Nature is the locus of transmutations. When the spirits turn their attention towards the pillars the elements which are receptive toward change and transmutation, the children the minerals, plants, animals, and jinn become manifest in Nature. The most perfect of these is the human being.[141]

Therefore the feminine principle is not just a passive recipient of activity, instead it interacts and is active in relation to what it receives to produce, create or give birth to something new. While activity is the predominant character of the masculine principle, and receptivity the predominant character of the feminine principle, both receptivity and activity are part of the creative nature of the feminine principle. The reason being that the activity of producing something new after receiving an effect from the masculine principle is inherent in it. In fact Ibn al-ʿArabī believes that the Essence, which is the Source of all creativity is feminine because it contains both the active and receptive principles of existence.[142]

Ibn al-ʿArabī views creativity within human beings from the standpoint of *al-khayāl*, creative imagination and *al-himma*, the creative power of the heart to impress images and ideas on the cosmos. This power can be raised through prayer, invocation, meditation and knowledge to such a level that it becomes the isthmus through which God's creative imagination is channelised. For most people fantasy and daydreams are the extent to which their *himma* leads them to, but for the folk of God well versed in meditation, the images in their imagination become consonant with divine imagination and find expression in objective reality.[143] *Himma* is defined as, "Aspiration," which is

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[141] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* I 138.17 (Y 2,309.2). Cf. Murata, *Tao.* p. 145.

[142] For a detailed discussion of the feminine nature of the Essence see Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, last chapter.

[143] Iyer, *The Seals of Wisdom from the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* p. 24.

the power of concentration through which the seeker focuses on the Real.[144] Ibn al-ʿArabī explains how the folk of God reach this level of spirituality:

> Thus they incline toward seclusions and formulas of remembrance so as to praise Him in whose hand is the sovereignty [Qurʾān 36:83]. Once the soul is purified and the natural veil between it and the World of Sovereignty is lifted, there becomes impressed in the soul's mirror all the knowledges imprinted in the forms of the World of Sovereignty.[145]

When a person has developed his/her *al-himma* to this extent, he or she is able to perform miracles, which Ibn al-ʿArabī terms "the breaking of habits," such as those performed by Khiḍr.[146] Ibn al-ʿArabī believed that this power could also become the cause of malicious magic if, it is practiced by those who are unable to rid themselves of egoistical tendencies, and are without the guidance of a spiritual master.[147]

When *al-himma* is concentrated, it can leads to the creative transformation of the soul from its attachment to the corporeal world to its ascent into the spiritual world. In Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophy, the person who is able to raise this creative power of *al-himma* to the highest level is the *insān al-kāmil*, the perfect human being.[148] This perfect human being is a *barzakh*, an isthmus that separates and links God and the cosmos. The *insān al-kāmil* is the person who actualizes his or her own archetypical reality through the use of his or her *khayāl* and *himma*.

The method used for manifesting creativity in Sufism is the remembrance, invocation and getting to know the Divine order as it is present in a hidden reality within all entities and forms of the cosmos.[149] Knowledge of the Divine order includes knowledge and awareness of the creative masculine

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[144] Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God.* p. 317.

[145] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* II 48.17. Cf. *Self-Disclosure,* p. 318.

[146] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* II 48.17. Cf. *Self-Disclosure,* p. 318.

[147] Iyer, *The Seals of Wisdom from the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* p. 24.

[148] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* II 48.17. Cf. *Self-Disclosure,* p. 318.

[149] *Sufi Expressions.* p. 6.

principle and the creative feminine principles of existence that are reflected within the spirit and soul of human beings, respectively.

Creativity understood in this manner aims to remember and invoke this hidden archetypical reality while acting on a form so that what is hidden becomes manifest. In other words, it aims for the actualization of this hidden reality either in an external form such as any object of art, or an internal form such as that of the soul, which is spiritualized through this creative process.[150] Creativity in this sense, aims to invoke the divine archetypical realities of things so that they are manifested within different forms and through their manifestation the One Creator can be glorified.

Moreover another result of creativity when it is expressed in this manner is that the correspondence between the human spirit and soul and the Divine Source from which they originates becomes known. Through this creative process involving *al-khayāl* and *al-himma*, human beings can come to know their own hidden realities.

The Creative Feminine Principle and the *Barzakh* / The World of Creative Imagination

Understanding the concept of *barzakh*/ the world of creative imagination in Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophy highlights the fact that creativity and the whole creative process cannot be regarded from the viewpoint of only the active masculine principle. Instead, it becomes clear that both principles, i.e. masculine and feminine, are required for any creativity to take place.

Within God's cosmos human beings have been granted a special status, that of a microcosm, reflecting the ontological realties that are found in the macrocosm. The human spirit corresponds to the realm of the macrocosmic spirit (Pen/First Intellect), the human soul or imagination corresponds to the realm of the macrocosmic soul (Tablet/Universal Soul) or Imaginal World (*barzakh*) and the human body corresponds to the realm of the macrocosmic

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[150] *Sufi Expressions*. p. 6.

material universe because only the cosmos in its entirety and the human being are forms of the name of Allah.[151]

Barzakh is an intermediate reality between any two realities. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes about two types of *barzakhs*. The first one, the macrocosmic *barzakh*, "Nondelimited Imagination" or "Unbounded Imagination" (*al-khayāl al-muṭlaq*) is *existence per se* because it is everything that comes into existence between the "Sheer Being" of God and "nothingness".[152] The other is the "delimited imagination" or "bound imagination" (*al-khayāl al-muqayyad*) also known as the imaginal world that is present as an intermediate reality of the soul between the spiritual world and the corporeal world.[153]

Most of the time when Ibn al-ʿArabī talks of imagination he is referring to the "bound imagination."[154] "Bound imagination" can be divided into two further types of imaginations: "contiguous" (*muttaṣil*) and "discontiguous" (*munfaṣil*). "Contiguous imagination" stands for the soul and the faculty of imagination in the human microcosm whereas "discontiguous imagination" stands for the realm of the soul, which lies as an intermediate realm between the spiritual realm and the corporeal realm.[155]

Furthermore, sometimes Ibn al-ʿArabī also uses the word imagination in the sense of the "faculty of imagintion" which is one of the attributes of the soul, along with memory, reason, and reflection.[156] At some instances Ibn al-ʿArabī clearly distinguishes among the meaning of the word imagination that he employs but most of the times he discusses imagination in general terms or in such a way that the context reveals the meaning of the term that he is employing.

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[151] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt*, II 326.26, II 385.8. Cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. p. 297. From now on this book will be referred to as SPK as this is the abbreviation for the book given by the author himself.

[152] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* IV 393.10. Cf. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, p. 332.

[153] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* IV 393.10. Cf. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, p. 332.

[154] Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*. p. 332

[155] Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*. p. 332

[156] Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*. p. 332.

The Qurān states, "It is He who let forth the two oceans… between them a *barzakh*" (Qurān 25:53). The *barzakh* is the isthmus between the two oceans. It is the in-between reality, which allows for an interconnection between two separate and distinct realities such as heaven and earth. Heaven and earth in Sufi and philosophic terminology denote the spiritual and material worlds. The *barzakh* connects and forms an avenue for the permeation of the spiritual world into the material world and vice versa.

Ibn al-ʿArabī believes the *barzakh* to be "the world of imagination", the avenue from whence all creativity takes place. He calls it *alam-ul-mithal* or *alam-ul-khayāl* where God's quality of brining all opposites together in a "coincidence of opposites" (*jamʿ al-aḍdād)* manifests itself.[157]

Imagination needs and possesses strength in order to bring two opposing realities together therefore the world of *barzakh* manifests the divine quality *al-qawi*, *"the strong"*. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes, "One of the effects of strength is the creation of the world of imagination in order to make manifest within it the fact that it brings together all opposites (*al-jamʿ bayn al-aḍdād*). It is impossible for sense perception or the rational faculty to bring together opposites, but it is not impossible for imagination."[158]

Higher level of spiritual awareness brings about higher awareness of and engagement with the world of creative imagination. One of the qualities that distinguishes ordinary human from the prophets and saints is the awareness and alertness that the latter display towards the realm of "creative imagination", the *barzakh* which connects them to the spiritual world from this material existence. Human rational faculty and sense perception are not capable of fathoming the spiritual world on their own without the help of the realm of imagination.

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[157] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* IV 325.2. Cf. Chittick, *SPK.*, p. 116.

[158] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* IV 325.2. Cf. Chittick. *SPK.*, p. 116.

All polarities come together in "the realm of imagination", even the polarity between "Sheer Being" and nothingness. The reality of this *ʿālam al-barzakh* is that it is all comprehensive and all-powerful.[159]

This "coincidence of opposites" is particularly striking in *existence per se* which ambiguously brings together God and that which is not God. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains this ambiguity of existence through the Qurʾānic verse revealed after the famous battle of Badr, "You did not throw when you threw, but God threw" (Qurʾān 8:17). Muslims won the battle after the Prophet had thrown a handful of sand in the direction of the enemy. Ibn al-ʿArabī believes that this Qurʾānic verse reveals that in actual fact God is the reality behind all appearance. The Prophet's reality is a *barzakhī*/ imaginal reality,[160] which is primarily a feminine reality as its predominant characteristic is to receive the activity of God, just like, the reality of everything in the cosmos. Ibn al-ʿArabī comes to the conclusion that existence is He/Not He. He states, "There is none in Being/existence but God".[161]

God's creativity has both an active/masculine and a receptive/feminine dimension. The Qurʾān states that when He wills for a thing to be created, (Qurʾān 16:40) He says to it, "Be" and it is thereby created. Form the angle of God's will, creativity, has a masculine dimension and from the angle of receiving the command *(amr)* of God and manifesting that which God is creating, creativity displays a feminine dimension. Without receptivity there would be no creation. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains this concept in the following way:

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[159] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* II 312.23, 31. Cf. Chittick. *SPK*, p. 121.

[160] It is to be noted that the terms "imagination" and ïmaginal" are not to be understood in their modern day meaning of "fancy" or "flights of the mind, beyond reality." Instead, Ibn al-ʿArabī believes that the *barzakhī*/ Imaginal realm or "world of Imagination" is an extremely powerful realm that denotes the "realm of the soul." This realm is closer to the spiritual realm and therefore more "real" than the corporeal realm. The reason being that the corporeal realm is entirely dependent for its existence on the spiritual and imaginal realms of reality.

[161] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* II 216.12. Cf. Chittick. *SPK.*, p. 114.

That is why, concerning the divine existence-giving, the Koran has come with "word," which is masculine, and "desire," which is feminine, for God gave existence to the cosmos from a word and a desire. Thus it became manifest from a masculine and a feminine noun. He says, *Our only word to a thing*-"thing" being the most indefinite of the indefinites, while "word" is masculine-*when we desire it*-"desire" being feminine-*is to say to it "Be!," so it comes to be* [16:40]. Thus engendering becomes manifest in the desire from the word, but the Entity is one, without doubt.[162]

A *barzakh*, which literally means "isthmus," is something that separates and is an intermediary between two things. Although one of its function is to separate, but it has another function that of combining and bringing together the qualities of the two things it separates. When we study the nature of all things in the cosmos, we realize that each one of them is a *barzakh*. Everything that is present in creation is placed in between two aspects of reality. "There is nothing in existence but *barzakhs*, since a *barzakh* is the arrangement of one thing between two other things…, and existence has no edges (*ṭaraf*)".[163] Existence itself is a *barzakh* situated between Sheer Being and Nothingness.

The Arabic word that Ibn al-ʿArabī uses for the concept of existence is *wujūd*. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The Real is identical with *wujūd*.".[164] *Wujūd* is the word used by Ibn al-ʿArabī to mean, not just "existence', or "being" but also "finding" and "awareness." "In actual fact *wujūd* is identical with the Real, not other than He."[165]

Wujūd when referring to God represents the true and actual reality of God. Following the example of Muslim Peripatetic philosophers he uses the term *wājib al-wujūd*, Necessary Being to refer to God's *wujūd*.[166] The word is used metaphorically when it refers to anything other than God. Categorically

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[162] *Futuḥāt* III 289.1. Cf. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*. p. 176-177.

[163] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* III 156.27. Cf. Chittick. *SPK*., p. 14.

[164] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* I 328.250. Cf. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure,* p 12.

[165] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt* III 566.30, Cf. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure,* p 12.

[166] Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 12.

speaking only God has *wujūd* and others do not exist. It is only God Who has knowledge and awareness of all things, is found in all things and finds Himself in all things. God lends *wujūd* to all creatures. They have existence only through Him.

On the other hand non-existence is an integral quality of everything other than God. All things that have been created have no claim to existence in themselves. God brings them into existence through His own *wujūd*. Therefore creativity takes place when God lends His *wujūd* to all of creation. In itself everything other than God is characterized by non-existence. God is the Ultimate Creator Who creates everything through His Own *wujūd*. Everything in existence displays the characteristics of its *barzakhi* reality, He/ Not He, for although it has found existence, in its root, it has no existence whatsoever of its own.

Ibn al-ʿArabī alludes to this realm of existence/ the *barzakh* as the feminine principle through whom creativity takes place, in a number of ways. For example, when he discusses the four elements of air, water, earth, and fire, which constitute the pillars of the cosmos, he alludes to the feminine aspect of their existence because they have an active and a receptive dimension. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

God has made each of the four pillars both producer of effects and receptive towards effects. The root of this in the divine knowledge is His words, "When My servants question thee about Me-surely I am near, I respond to the call of the caller when he calls to Me." [Qurʾān, 2:186] When anything in the cosmos is receptive towards effects, this derives from the divine response. As for the divine root of the active, that is obvious to everyone. We call attention to something only when most people may remain heedless of it.[167]

Ibn al-ʿArabī is aware that the majority of the people remain unaware of the reality that the feminine characteristic of receptivity, which in turn also has the power of creative activity, is as much a divine characteristic as the

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[167] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt*. II 453.16. Cf. Murata, *op.cit.,* p. 208.

masculine characteristic of activity. Most Muslims have no doubts regarding the fact that all activity in the cosmos is God's activity, but very few are aware that all receptivity is God's receptivity as well.

The Sharīʿah maintains the "patriarchal" conception of God, which is necessary for everyone, but for those who seek nearness of their Lord, the "matriarchal" conception of God in following the spiritual path, the ṭarīqah becomes a must.[168] The seekers start becoming aware of God's response to their calling. Their innermost desires, through the power of *himma* start materializing. Their nearness to God is strengthened and their very prayers start becoming creative for they are with that aspect of God, which is proclaimed in the verse, "I respond to the call of the caller when he calls to me." [Qurʾān 2:186]

Ibn al-ʿArabī's works and the works of his followers provide ample evidence that all of existence displays the feminine characteristics of God's mercy. *Wujūd* or existence, which is known as "Unbounded Imagination" (*barzakh*) is receptive to all properties that are manifested within it. Therefore in its essential receptivity, existence is feminine. Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, who is one of the most well known interpreters of Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophy writes:

> God is called "All-Merciful" in as much as He spreads His non-delimited *wujūd* over the things that become manifest through His manifestation. For Mercy is *wujūd* itself, and the "All-Merciful" is the Real in as much as He is a *wujūd* spread over everything that becomes manifest through Him and inasmuch as He possesses through His *wujūd* the perfection of receptivity towards every property in every time and in accordance with every level-properties that rule over every state.[169]

God's Mercy through whom the whole of existence came into being is a feminine characteristic, which encompasses everything in creation.

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[168] Murata, *op.cit.,* p. 208.
[169] Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān fī taʾwīl umm al-Qurʾān,* p. 382. Cf. Murata, *Tao.* p. 206.

"Sheer Being" as The Creative Masculine Principle and "Manyness of Knowledge" as The Creative Feminine / Principle.

The polarity, which caused the beginning of the process of creation, is the one found between God as "Sheer Being" (*al-wujūd al-maḥḍ*) and "nothingness". A relationship made possible by the macrocosmic *barzakh* that stands between the two. This *barzakh* is called a variety of names by Ibn al-ʿArabī, including the "Supreme Barzakh" *(al-barzakh al aʿlā),* "Non-delimited Imagination", the "Cloud" "the Breath of the All-Merciful", the "the Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place", "Nature", and the "Reality of the Perfect Man".[170] It is to be distinguished from the microcosmic *barzakh*, or the imaginal world, which is present between the spirit and the body.

> When the Real brought the cosmos into existence, He opened up His Form within the "Cloud" (*ʿamā*), which is the Breath of the All Merciful, i.e. the Real through whom takes place the creation of the levels and entities of the cosmos.[171]

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Cloud is identical with the Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place (*al-Ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi*) and with the Breath of the All-Merciful. He believes that it is the "Real" because it is identical with the Breath, which in itself is hidden within the Breather.[172] Thus the Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place is the feminine principle of existence because it is manifesting the feminine characteristic of God's Mercy.

Ibn al-ʿArabī believed that the Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place is the Lord of the Throne who encompasses everything in creation. God in this aspect of the Supreme *Barzakh* and the Real Through Whom Creation

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[170] Chittick, *SPK,* p. 125.

[171] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* II 391.33. Cf. Chittick, *SPK,* p. 133-134.

[172] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* II 310.25. Cf. Chittick, SPK, p. 134

Takes Place manifests the feminine principle of receptivity without which nothing would come into existence. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> That within which the existence of the cosmos has become manifest is the Real; it becomes manifest only within the Breath of the All-Merciful, which is the Cloud. So it is the Real, the Lord of the Throne, who gave the throne its all-encompassing shape, since it encompasses all things. Hence the root within which the forms of the cosmos become manifest encompasses everything in the world of corporeal bodies. This is nothing other than the Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place. Through this receptivity, it is like a container within which comes out into the open (*burūz*) the existence of everything it includes, layer upon layer, entity after entity, in a wise hierarchy (*al-tartīb al-ḥikamī*). So it brings out into the open that which had been unseen within it in order to witness it.[173]

It is to be noticed that The Real Through Whom Creation Takes Place is the feminine/receptive principle of existence and it is likened to a "container" within which takes place the existence of all creation.

Though the concept of *tawḥīd* in Islam upholds God to be one and only one, but everything other than God is two or more. This is an important realization for understanding the significance of the creative, masculine and creative, feminine principles in Ibn al-ʿArabī's school of thought. The *Ikhwān al-ṣafā* stress the three Qurʾānic verses which point to "two of every kind". God commanded *Noah* that he must in the Ark: transport "two of every kind" (11:40).

> Everything below God is "two of every kind", since He is the One, the Unique, the Everlasting, "who did not give birth and was not born" (112:3).[174]

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[173] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futuḥāt,* II 563.19. Cf. Chittick, SPK, p. 134.

[174] *Ikhwān al-ṣafā,* Jamiat al-jamia, ed. Arif Tamir, Dār Maktaba al-Ḥayāt, p. 79.

Muslim authorities distinguish between God in His Essence as the God that is beyond human understanding and God who has *relationships* or *relations (nisba)* with His creation. Relationships *(nisba)* and duality, including the duality of the masculine and feminine principles of existence have to be taken into account as soon as we conceive of the reality of God as Divinity and his cosmos. Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> Once God has created the cosmos, we see that it possesses diverse levels and realities. Each of these demands a specific relationship with the Real. Examples of these intelligible qualities include creation, provision, gain, loss; brining into existence, specification, strengthening, domination, severity, gentleness.[175]

The relationship that each of these levels and realities demand from God fall under either the masculine/Majestic/active qualities of God or the feminine/Beautiful/receptive qualities of God.

At the deepest level the undifferentiation and Oneness of God is the "Sheer Being" *(al-wujūd al-maḥḍ).* "Sheer Being," in Islamic thought is described as that which makes others manifest while not manifesting itself.[176] Like spiritual "Light" which allows us to see other things but remains invisible in itself. "Sheer Being" *(al-wujūd al-maḥḍ)* is unseen in itself while it manifests the realities of all things, other than itself.[177] It possesses activity in Its Oneness in relation to the receptivity of the manyness of creation. Therefore Being *(wujūd)* is predominantly a masculine quality as through activity, it manifests the existence of all other than itself.

The cosmos is predominantly feminine in character for it is the locus of activity ie, it receives the activity of Being. Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 695/1296) belongs to Ibn al-ʿArabī's school as he was the follower of Ibn al-ʿArabī's stepson ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274). He explains the

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[175] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* 111 441.31. Cf. Chittick, SPK. p. 66.

[176] Mutata, *op. cit.,* p. 66

[177] *Ibid.*

masculine and feminine principles of existence as follows, "Activity *(fāʿiliyya)* pertains to oneness, and receptivity *(qābiliyya)* pertains to manyness".[178]

"Sheer Being" can be compared to pure light as compared to everything else in creation which is a mixture of light and darkness. Apart from the quality of "Sheer Being" God has the quality of possessing all knowledge of all his creation. Farghānī observes that existence is governed by these two principles: The Oneness of being and the Manyness of knowledge *(kathrat al-ʿilm)*. He says: "Both the Oneness of Being and the Manyness of knowledge through its objects are attributes of the Essence in respect of It's non-delimitation and nonentification."[179]

"Sheer Being" is totally undifferentiated and so it is One, whereas knowledge pertains to many things and therefore it is differentiated.[180] Therefore, Being is the masculine quality and divine knowledge is a feminine quality. It is with the interaction and relationship between these two qualities of God that the whole creation comes into existence.[181]

Though the "Sheer Being" is the active quality, without the complementary quality of Manyness of knowledge, nothing in creation could have come into existence. In reality both these principles refer to levels *(martaba)* or presences *(ḥaḍra)*, which can be distinguished only theoretically but cannot be distinguished ontologically. Both these principles pre-exist in the Essence of God at the level of the Unity of All-comprehensiveness *(maqām al-jamʿ)*.[182]

Before the level of Divinity we have the level of the Unity of all-Comprehensiveness, where the Oneness of Being and the Manyness of

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[178] Maktab al-Sanāʾī, Cf. *op. cit.,* p. 66.

[179] Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī,*. p. 345. Cf. Murata, *Tao*, p. 67.

[180] Murato*, op. cit.,* p. 67.
[181] Murato*, op. cit.,* p. 67.

[182] Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī,* p. 344. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 67.

Knowledge are identical with each other…Within this Presence, oneness and manyness, Being and Knowledge, entification and nonentification are all identical with each other and with the Essence, without any kind of separation or distinction.[183]

In order to understand why the feminine and masculine principle of existence were differentiated and why creation took place when God in His Essence was absolutely Self-contained and undifferentiated, we will turn to the tradition of The "Hidden Treasure." Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to this tradition often, to elaborate his views.

The Ḥadīth of the "Hidden Treasure"

In the beginning there was only God and nothing else existed beside Him. Al-Bukhari quotes this *hadith*: "God was and there was nothing other than He." [184]

At this stage the names and attributes of God are only possibilities or virtualities inherent within His Oneness. They are indistinguishable attributes within the Unity of God. God is Alive, Desiring, Knowing, Powerful etc., and each of these names apply only to the One Reality as yet. There is no multiplicity; there is no creation at this point.

Muslim cosmologists often quote the following *hadith* to explain the reason for creation. David, the prophet, asked God, "Why didst thou create the creatures?" He replied, "I was a hidden treasure and I wanted [literally "loved"] to be known. Hence I created the creatures so that I might be known".[185]

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[183] Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 344. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 67.

[184] Bukhārī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ,* "Tawhid", 22. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 7.

[185] Not found in the standard *Hadith* texts but found in many Sufi references Ibn al-ʿArabī writes that it is "sound on the basis of unveiling (i.e. mystical vision), but not established by way of transmission" *Futuḥāt* II 399.28.

The jewels that were hidden within the Divine chest of hidden treasure were the names and attributes still undifferentiated from the Unity of All comprehensiveness (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*). Names such as Alive, Desiring, Knowing, Powerful, Merciful, Vengeful, Wrathful, Loving, Hearing, Seeing and so on are present within God but are not manifest and not distinguishable from God Himself. These names, at this stage are identical with God and with each other. Therefore the Forgiving is identical with the Avenger, the Merciful with the Wrathful and the Gentle with the Severe. But in order for these names to become known and distinguishable from one another, God created the cosmos.

All of creation is a *tajallī* (manifestation) of God and He created it so that He may be known. Muslim scholars interpret the *hadith* of the Hidden Treasure with regard to the two active and receptive principles that come into play as soon as creation taken place. Rumi interprets this *hadith* as follows:

> God says, "I was a hidden treasure, so I wanted to be known". In other words, "I created the whole of the universe, and the goal in all of it is to make Myself manifest, sometimes through gentleness and sometimes through severity". God is not the kind of king for whom a single herald would be sufficient. If all the atoms of the universes were His heralds, they would be incapable of making Him known adequately.[186]

Gentleness here mentioned, is a feminine quality and severity is a masculine quality. Aḥmad Samʿānī alludes to the Hidden Treasure, when he stresses the polarity present within the names and attributes of God. He especially mentions the polarity between gentleness and severity, beauty and majesty under which most Muslim authorities divide and classify the different names and attributes of God. Again, these names of majesty and beauty fall under the masculine and feminine characteristics. Samʿānī *says*:

> O dervish! He has a gentleness and a severity to perfection, a majesty and a beauty to perfection. He wanted to distribute these treasures. On one

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[186] Rūmī, *Fīhi mā fīhi* Edited by *B*. Furuzanfar Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1969. Cf. Chittick, p. 48

person's head He placed the crown of gentleness in the garden of bounty. On another person's liver He placed the brand of severity in the prison of justice. He melts one in the fire for majesty. He caresses another in the light of beauty.[187]

The attributes of God, which fall under the general masculine characteristics are, severity (*qahr*), wrath (*ghaḍab*), justice (*ʿadl*), anger (*sakhaṭ*), vengeance (*intiqām*), holiness (*quddūs*), invincibility (*jabarūt*), inaccessibility (*ʿizza*) and magnificence (*kibriyāʾ*) and other such qualities denoting God's incomparability with the whole of creation.[188] The followers of the philosophic tradition of *Kalām* and those who advocate the strict observance of the laws of *Sharīʿah* usually concentrate and give stress to these majestic qualities of God which bring home the message of the absolute Transcendence of God with regard to the cosmos. God is completely other than the cosmos and therefore the place of the human being in creation is to believe in and acknowledge this total separation from the transcendental *Allah*. Their place is to submit (Islam) peacefully to the will of God, with the fear and awe of God in their souls.

This attitude of fear and awe of God reflects *tanzīh* ie, incomparability and transcendence of God. But within the Islamic spiritual tradition, God's similarity to His creation has also been stressed and is known by the concept of the *tashbīh* (similarity). The qualities that are in line with similarity are beauty (*jamāl*), mercy (*raḥmah*), bounty (*faḍl*), forgiveness (*maghfirah*), nearness (*qurb*), good-pleasure (*riḍā*), pardon (*ʿafw*), gentleness (*luṭf*) and love (*maḥabba*).[189]

The Sufis have developed their own advance spiritual psychology, according to which the human response to the masculine, majestic (jalālī) and the overpowering qualities of God is fear (*khawf*), awe (*hayba*) and contraction (*qabḍ*). In the same manner the human response to the feminine, gentle and

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[187] Samʿānī, *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asmā al-malik al-fattāḥ,* Edited by N. Mayil Hirawi. Tehran: Intisharat-i Ilmi wa Farhangi,. 1368/1989 p. 17. Cf. *Tao.* p. 61.

[188] Murata, *Tao*, p. 69.

[189] Murata, *Tao*, p. 69.

beautiful qualities of God are hope (*rijā*), intimacy (*uns*) and expansion (*basṭ*).[190]

It is at this juncture that the interplay of feminine and masculine qualities can be shown to manifest complex, creative, yet harmonious relationships. With regard to the masculine majestic qualities of God, the human response is expected by the *Sharīʿah* to be full of submission, receptivity and peaceful resignation to the Active will of Allah. The whole concept of Islam, in its aspect of submission to Allah, denotes an attitude, which is essentially feminine in nature. The overriding quality that is stressed by the proponents of *Sharīʿah* is the feminine character trait of submission.

On the other hand, the Beautiful and Gentle qualities of God are qualities that empower the heart and spirit to actively seek nearness (*qurb*), intimacy (*uns*) and expansion (*basṭ*). Once the human being has achieved nearness and intimacy through submission (Islam) he or she is clothed in the robes of the vicegerent of God in the cosmos.

With regard to the King the vicegerent is always submissive and so follows the feminine character traits but with regard to the whole of the cosmos he/she has been given the power to govern, to display the masculine, active, majestic, character traits. Therefore the one individual, who has been invested with the vicegerency, displays both the feminine and masculine character traits as can be evidenced in the description of the perfect spiritual master by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā:

> Through these two wings, the shaykh deviates from the straight path and also goes straight. Sometimes the attributes of beauty disclose themselves to him, that is, bounty, mercy, gentleness, and generosity. Thus he is immersed in intimacy. Sometimes the attributes of majesty disclose themselves to him, that is, power, tremendousness, magnificence, inaccessibility, chastisement, and intense assault. Then he is immersed in awe. Sometimes the attributes mix, so he witnesses both intimacy and awe. The attributes mix only when

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[190] Murata, *Tao*, p. 69.

the Divine Essence discloses itself, since the Essence is the mother of the attributes, bringing all of them together.[191]

It may be pointed out that these relations are never hard and fast. The polarities inherent in the feminine and masculine character traits get intermingled in the whole interplay of the cosmos where God's wrath can very well be hiding His Mercy and God's Mercy could well be veiling His Majesty.[192]

In Islamic jurisprudence and the tradition of *Kalām* most of the stress is laid on *tanzīh* i.e. the quality of human distance from God and the appropriate human response of fear and awe. In Sufism and other Islamic branches of knowledge emphasis is laid on *tashbīh* (similarity) between God and the cosmos and the quality of "nearness after distance, or nearness along with distance. God is seen as primarily near and secondarily far. The goal of submission and servanthood is to re-establish the right relationships so that distance and nearness can play their proper roles".[193]

ʿAlī Hujwīrī (d. ca. 456/1072) establishes the importance of the contrasting qualities of intimacy and awe, feminine and masculine character traits respectively. In his famous treatise on Sufism called the *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* he explains that awe is the correct attitude for the soul as the soul emerges from the darker, lower and ignorant aspect of the human beings, whereas intimacy is the correct attitude for the spirit as the spirit emerges from the luminous, higher and enlightened aspect. He writes:

> The authority of awe rules over the soul and its caprice. It annihilates our mortal nature. But the authority of intimacy rules over the inmost mystery and nurtures knowledge. Hence through disclosing Himself in majesty, the Real annihilates the souls of His friends. Through disclosing Himself

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[191] Kubra, *Die Fawa'hih al-Gamal des Nagm ad-Din Kubra*. Edition and study by F. Meir. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957, 46.]

[192]. For a more detailed analysis of the interrelatedness of the feminine and masculine character traits, see Sachiko Murata's, *The Tao of Islam*, p. 70.

[193] Murata, *Toa*, p. 70.

in beauty, He causes their inmost mysteries to subsist. Hence, those who were people of annihilation placed awe first, while those who are masters of subsistence preferred intimacy.[194]

God is the One Creator whose active will lead to the creation of the whole of the cosmos. The cosmos with respect to God is totally dependant on God and displays the feminine quality of receptivity and submission (*islām*). The Qurān explains, "To God prostrate themselves all whose are in the heavens, and every creature crawling on earth… (16:49). "To Him is submitted everyone in the heavens and the earth" (3:83). But within the cosmos God displays his creativity by creating pairs of every kind. And it is through these pairs or polarities, masculine and feminine, active and receptive that the creation is an ongoing process. Therefore creativity can be said to have a masculine and a feminine dimension. In fact both these dimensions are necessary for any creativity to place just as in the human realm a male and female are necessary for completing the creative reproductive process. Similarly in all other dimension the active and receptive principles interact for creativity to take place.

The Creative Feminine Principle and the Breath of the All-Merciful

God's name Allah is considered as the supreme and all comprehensive name in Islam. All names refer back to it. But the Qurān also says, "Call upon Allah, or call upon the All-Merciful whichever you call, to Him belong the names most beautiful" (Qurān 17:110). This verse mentions the all-comprehensive name of Allah and by placing the name All-Merciful alongside the name of Allah it alludes to the fact that the name All-Merciful is all-comprehensive as well. Another verse in the Qurān verifies this reality: "My mercy embraces all things" (Qurān 7:156).

For Ibn al-ʿArabī and his school the Breath of the All-Merciful is the substance of creation, the pure mercy out of which all creatures are constituted. He quotes two *ḥadīth* reports to verify this concept: "Do not

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[194] Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb,* pp. 376-77.

curse the wind for it derives from the Breath of the All-Merciful!" and "I find the Breath of the All-Merciful coming to me from the direction of Yemen".[195]

Ibn al-ʿArabī points out that in both instances the world *nafs* points to a kind of *tanfīs* (a word which comes from the same root) which means to air, to comfort, to cheer up, to relieve and to remove sorrow.[196]

All existent things in the creation are the words of God emerging from the Breath of the All-Merciful. Ibn al-ʿArabī illustrates this point:

> God says, "Our only speech to a thing when we desire it" – here "Our speech" refers to the fact that He is a speaker (*mutakallim*) – "is to say to it 'Be!'" (16:40). "Be!" is exactly what He speaks. Through it that to which He says "Be!" becomes manifest. Thereby the entities become manifest within the Breath of the All-Merciful, just as letters become manifest within the human breath. The thing that comes to be is a specific form, like a form painted upon wood.[197]

Therefore all of existence can be perceived as the articulation of the words of the Breath of the All-Merciful. With respect to the Breath, which precedes creation, the Breath is the active, masculine creative principle, which brings things into existence. But with respect to the fact that the thing comes into existence and is differentiated by manifesting the Breath as an articulated reality ie, a word and a specific form, the Breath displays the feminine characteristic of receptivity. Without this feminine aspect of the Breath of the All-Merciful, no creation would take place.

All things in the cosmos are the words of God that receive their being

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[195] First *hadith:* Ibn Māja, Adab 29, Aḥmad II 268, 409, 518; V 123; Cf. Tirmidhī, Fitan 65, Abū Dāwūd, *Adab* 104; Aḥmad, 11 437. Second *hadith:* Aḥmad, II 541.

[196] Lane gives *nafas* as a synonym for *tanfīs*, citing the above *hadiths* as examples (*Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. *nafas*). Chittick, *SPK,* p. 127.

[197] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt al makkiyya*, II 401.29. Cf, Chittick, *SPK*, p. 128.

from God's own Breath. All of creation displays its feminine aspect by its receptivity and utter dependence upon God's mercy. "Existence itself is a mercy for every existent thing".[198]

The Creative Feminine Principle and the Supreme Barzakh/ Universal Nature:

The articulated words of God result in the creation of all that is, including the Supreme *Barzakh*/ Universal Nature. Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses Universal Nature as a reality that is primarily receptive. He places Nature in a polarity with the Spirit, which is primarily active and masculine in essence. He makes it clear that this active dimension of the Spirit is inseparable from the receptive dimension of Nature. The activity of the Spirit finds a means of expression in the receptivity of Nature. Just as the relationship between the Creator and creation is reciprocal for without creation there would be no Creator, similarly Nature has an effect on the Spirit. The realm of the Spirit is also known as the world of Command (*ʿālam-al-amr*). Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

A woman in relation to a man is like Nature in relation to the Divine Command, since the woman is the locus for the existence of the children, just as Nature in relation to the Divine Command (*al-amr al-ilāhī*), is the locus of manifestation for the entities of the corporeal bodies. Through Nature they are engendered and from it they become manifest. So there can be no command without Nature and no Nature without command. Hence engendered existence depends upon both… He who knows the level of Nature knows the level of the woman, and he who knows the Divine Command knows the level of the man and the fact that the existence of all existent things other than God depends upon these two realities.[199]

Nature, compared to the woman is contrasted with the Spirit, compared to the man, provides the Macrocosmic Womb within which all corporeal bodies originate, are brought into existence and nurtured.

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[198]Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* II 281.27. Cf. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 130.

[199] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* III 90.18,28. Cf. Chittick, *SPK*, p. 141.

Ibn al-ʿArabī employs the terms wife and husband to explain the underlying relationship between Nature and the World of the Command.

> When a natural form that has the receptivity to be governed becomes manifest and when a particular soul becomes manifest governing it, the form is like the female, while the governing spirit is like the male. Hence the form is the wife while the spirit is the husband.[200]

Human beings are permeated by the qualities of both the masculine principle i.e. the world of the command or spirit and the feminine principle i.e. the world of the soul or Nature. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains how these two principles interact in the context of the male principle being represented by the father and the female principle being represented by the mother. "The spirits are all fathers, while Nature is the Mother, since it is the locus of transmutations"[201] Ibn al-ʿArabī believes that Nature is the "highest and greatest mother, (*al-umm al-ʿāliyāt al-kubrā*)"[202] through whom the birth of everything in the cosmos takes place, whereas she herself remains unseen. The Supreme *Barzakh* is also called by various other significant names or synonyms, such as the Reality of the Perfect Man and Muhammadan Reality. Both these synonyms point to the predominantly receptive feminine attribute of submitting to the active masculine World of Command or World of Spirit. The Reality of the Perfect Man and the Muhammadan Reality are realities that are completely submissive (*muslim*) to the Will and Command of Alalh. But within the attributes of Universal Nature/ the Universal Soul/ the Reality of the Perfect man and Muhammadan Reality is also the attribute of being active and therefore masculine with respect to everything else in creation because everything else in creation is submissive towards it

The Creative Feminine Principle and the Macrocosmic Womb

According to a certain perspective, the father who is the symbol of the spirit has a greater claim upon the child (human being), than the mother, due

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[200] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* III 99.7. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 211.

[201] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futhuha,* I 138.29. Cf. Chittick, *SPK,* p. 142.

[202] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* I V 150.15. Cf. Chittick, *SPK,* p. 140.

to the spirit's ontological pre-eminence.[203] But the Islamic perspective emphasizes loving kindness, honour and respect for the mother to the extent that the mother is given a higher place of reverence in human relations even than the one given to the father.[204]

The mother epitomizes the nurturing, loving, caring, affectionate, merciful, forgiving, gentle, beautiful and creative qualities of God, on earth. In fact, the mother represents Universal Nature, the earth, and the Macrocosmic Womb, which was created by God for the creation of everything in existence.

This aspect of giving the mother or the Macrocosmic Womb/Nature a higher status in Islam is a point of great significance for it is here that Islam parts company with those religious belief systems, which condemn this world and Nature as inherently bad and evil. From the Islamic perspective Nature with all its bounties, is inherently good. This earth and this body is the locus of manifestation of God's own names and qualities, therefore it is a divine gift. Marriage is also inherently good for it allows the masculine and feminine principles inherent in both the man and the woman to interact harmoniously with each other. The marriage relationship is meant to be creative not only at the level of procreation but also at the psychological and spiritual level.

The mother has a claim over human loving kindness and regard, in some respects, greater than the claim of the father as expressed in the following famous *hadith*:

Someone once asked the Prophet, "Among people, who is most deserving of loving kindness *(birr)*?" He answered, "Your mother". The questioner asked, "After her, who?" He replied, "Your mother". He asked "After her, who?" He said, "Your mother. Then your father".[205]

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[203] Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 213.
[204] Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 213.
[205] Muslim, *Birr* I, Bukhārī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Adab 2;* Tirmidhī *Birr* I, Abū Dāwūd*, Adab* 120*;* Ibn Māja*, Adab* I*,* Aḥmad V 3,5.

The rights of the mother have been given their due significance by the Prophet's great-grandson, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn:

> The right of your mother is that you know that she carried you where none carries anyone, she gave to you that fruit of her heart that which no one gives to anyone, and she protected you with all her organs. She did not care if she went hungry as long as you ate, if she was thirsty as long as you drank, if she was naked as long as you were clothed, if she was in the sun as long as you were in the shade. She gave up sleep for your sake, she protected you from the heat and cold, in order that you might belong to her. You will not be able to show her gratitude, unless through God's help and giving success.[206]

Ibn al-ʿArabī believed that women could attain the highest of spiritual stations even to extent of becoming the pole *(quṭb)*. The pole *(quṭb)* in Islamic spirituality is the supreme spiritual governor of the age, around whose axis the universe rotates and upon whom the actual existence of the cosmos depends. The pole is the perfected human being who reflects God's attributes and names so perfectly that he or she is given the vicegerancy of the universe. Ibn al-ʿArabī states:

> Women share with men in all levels, even in being pole… If the only thing that had reached us concerning this matter were the words of the Prophet, "Women are the likes of men," that would be enough, since it means that everything to which man can attain – stations, levels or attributes – can also belong to any woman whom God wills just as it can belong to any man whom God wills.

> Do you not notice God's wisdom in the extra which He has given to the woman over the man in the name? Concerning the male human being, He says *mar,* and concerning the female He says, *mara,* so He added an *a* or an *at* in contradistinction– to the name *mar'* given to man. Hence she has a degree over the man in this station, degree not possessed by him, in

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[206] ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, *The Psalms of Islam: al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya.* Translated by Chittick. p. 287.

contradistinction to the degree given to men in the verse, "Men have a degree above them" (2:228). Hence God blocked that gap [alluded to in the verse] with this extra in *mar'a.* [207]

In Islam there is an emphasis laid on observing the rights of "womb relatives". Even the word womb *(raḥm)* has been derived from the same linguistic root as the word *raḥma* which means mercy and which is God's intrinsic quality. "My Mercy encompassed all things" (7:156), are the words of the Qurʾān. The womb is the receptacle where the young originate and are nurtured until they are mature enough for birth. In Arabic, this word also means kinship, a blood tie or a close family relationship. *Raḥma* signifies mercy, compassion, pity, tenderness and attentiveness towards someone whom one favours. It is the natural inclination of loving tenderness, which a mother displays towards her child.[208]

The relationship between mercy and womb is obvious from the linguistic and symbolic connection between *raḥma* and *raḥm.* There are four different *ḥadīth* reports of the Prophet Muhammad that uphold the connection between God's Mercy and the womb. For our purpose we look at the womb as the macrocosmic receptacle where all creativity takes place. It is the aspect of God's creativity that highlights the feminine principle inherent within the creative process. For without God's all-embracing mercy nothing would be created.

The womb present within the woman is a perfect microcosmic reflection of the Macrocosmic Womb of Nature that encompasses all of existence. Every single entity from the depths of which another entity originates and emerges is a womb. From this perspective it becomes obvious that everything in the universe is present within a womb, before its birth or creation. The Macrocosmic Womb symbolizes the all-embracing dome of God's mercy and is synonymous with the *barzakh* reality. Just like the dome of the mosque symbolically nurtures and envelopes the spiritual aspirations

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[207] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt,* III 89.22. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 183.

[208] Murata, *op. cit.*, 215.

of Muslim worshipers, the dome of God's macrocosmic Mercy i.e. Nature, becomes the receptacle for the manifestations of God's names and attributes.

The relationship between God's Mercy, the Macrocosmic Womb, Nature and the creative feminine principle, becomes apparent through the following four *ḥadīth* reports regarding the "womb":

1. God said, "I am God and I am the All-Merciful. I created the womb and I gave it a name derived from My own name. Hence if someone cuts off the womb, I will cut him off, but if someone joins the womb, I will join him to me".[209]
2. God created the creatures. When He finished with them, the womb stood up and seized the All-Merciful by the belt. The All-Merciful said, "what is this?" It replied, "This is the station of whoever seeks refuge from being cut off". God said, "Indeed it is. Will you not be satisfied that I join him who joins you and cut him off who cuts you off?" The womb replied, "Yes, I will". God said, "Then that is yours". [210]
3. The womb is attached to the Throne and says, "If someone joins me. Let God join him, but if someone cuts me off, let God cut him off". [211]
4. The womb is a branch of the All-Merciful. God said to it, "When a person joins you, I will join him, but when a person cuts you off, I will cut him off".[212]

Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī gives a detailed commentary on the *ḥadīth* reports of the womb given above. He does not believe that these *ḥadīth* reports emphasize, only the importance of family relationships. The significance of family ties is definitely implied, yet the *ḥadīth* reports *have* symbolic meanings pointing to certain cosmological realities. Three of these four *ḥadīth* reports *are ḥadīth qudsī*, i.e. the Prophet is quoting the words of God Himself.

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[209] Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal I 191, 194.

[210] Muslim Birr 16; Bukhārī, Tafsīr sura 47, Tawḥīd 35; Aḥmad II 330, 383, 406.

[211] Muslim, Birr 17; Aḥmad II 163, 190, 193, 209]

[212] Bukhārī, Adab 13, Tirmidhī, Birr 16; Aḥmad I 190, 321; II 295, 382, 406, 455, 498.

Qūnawī, in his commentary on these *ḥadīth* reports, identifies the womb with nature and with the verse of the Qurʾān: "The All-Merciful sat upon the Throne. (20:5). This verse is interpreted by Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers (including Qūnawī) to mean that God, who is Being *(wujūd)* envelops the universe through His All-Merciful Breath.[213]

Qūnawī interprets the *hadith* of the womb in the following manner:

Womb" is a name for the reality of Nature… The womb in "attached to the Throne" in the respect that in the view of those who verifying the truth, all existent corporeal bodies arte natural, while the throne is the first of these corporal bodies. Reports of the *Sharīʿah* have come concerning this fact, and the unveilings of the perfect human beings all give witness to its correctness.

The womb is a "branch of the All-Merciful" because mercy is identical with existence, since it is mercy that "embraces all things". Nothing embraces all things except existence, since it embraces everything, even that which is called "non existence".[214]

The word "withness" *(maʿiyya)* has been taken from the Qurʾān where God says about Himself, "He [God] is with you wherever you are (57:4) whether in the spirit or in the body. God's Presence covers all levels of reality, even the level of the Macrocosmic Womb. Qūnawī uses the *hadith* of the womb to give evidence for the Islamic belief of holding this corporeal world, marriage, the marriage act and reproduction, in high esteem.[215]

Before the birth into this world, the human spirit is undifferentiated from its one source. When the spirit enters the body, only then, it becomes distinct, differentiated, separate and individualized. The body or the corporeal realm is feminine in its characteristic of receptivity towards the spirit.

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[213] Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth*, no. 20. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 221

[214] Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth,* no. 20. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 221.

[215] Murata, *op. cit.,* p. 221.

Only after this separation and individualization, can the spirit have knowledge and awareness of itself and others, since things become known through their opposites. It is through the opposition between heaven and earth, light and darkness, existence and non-existence that each of these opposite entities is recognized and identified.

The whole body of Nature, the Macrocosmic Womb manifests God's Hidden Treasure. Rumi mentions this same concept when he says: "The body did not exist and I was a spirit with thee in heaven; between us was none of my speaking and listening".[216] Speaking and listing takes place between entities that are separate and are aware of each other. Without being born into the natural sphere, which is the sphere of the feminine "womb", the spirits remain in a state of non-awareness. It is only when they are sent to this world that "The birds of consciousness… realize the worth of union with God and to see the pain of separation from Him".[217]

Human beings are capable of becoming God's vicegerents on earth due to their two fold nature, one of which is immersed in the spiritual world and the other is immersed in the corporeal world. Human beings have greater knowledge and awareness due to the fact that they replicate, in microscopic form, the macroscopic nature of the ultimate reality, in both its spiritual, active, invisible masculine aspect as well as its corporeal, receptive visible and feminine aspect. Qūnawī writes that the perfect human beings actualize their barzakhi realities by honouring the "womb" which represents the feminine principle of imagination.

> To "join the womb" is to recognize its position and to honour its measure… Through the natural configuration and the characteristics, faculties and instruments that God placed within it, the human being brings together both spiritual and natural characteristics, properties and perfections. Through this bringing together, he is able to seek access to the realization of the *barzakh* reality that encompasses the properties of necessity and possibility. Thereby his conformity [with the Real] is perfected and his parallelism [with Him] is established. He becomes

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[216] Rūmī, *Diwān,* 19132. Cf. Chittick, SPL. p. 70.
[217] Rūmī, *Diwān*, 7192-94 Cf. Chittick, SPL. p. 70.

manifest of the Divine Presence and the form of the whole cosmos, both outwardly and inwardly. So understand! These are some of the properties of its joining that can be mentioned.[218]

From the above passage it becomes clear that the human reality reflects the *barzakh* realty. The *barzakh,* as has been discussed before, is the creative realm which brings all opposites together and which is the source of all creativity and creation. It is only when male and female, light and darkness, existence and non-existence join in the *barzakh* reality that something new comes into being. The active, masculine spirit is as essential as the receptive feminine body for the creation of anything to take place. The body is as essential, holy and good as the spirit, for without it the spirit finds no existence, no manifestation. Qūnawī explains the significance and meaning of "cutting off" the Womb:

> The cutting off, concerning which God says that, "He will cut off him who cuts it off", takes place through belittling the womb, ignoring its position, and disregarding its rights. The person who disregards its rights and belittles it has disregarded God and ignored the specific characteristics of the names that God has deposited within it, names in respect to which it is supported and related to God.[219]

Qūnawī makes it clear that to consider the Womb, which represents the creative feminine principle of life and Nature, "dark" and "opaque" is to belittle it.[220] He believed that this attitude of irreverence towards Nature springs from an ignorance of the true significance of this highly important aspect of life. Nothing can emerge into existence without the Womb. The spirit can find no expression unless it manifests itself through a receptive body. All entities in their receptivity exhibit the feminine principle of the Womb or Nature.

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[218] Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth*, No. 20. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

[219] Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth,* No. 20. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 221-222.

[220] Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth,* No. 20. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 221-222.

Nature is predominantly feminine and receptive in character and therefore it is "attached to the Throne" in the *hadith* of the Womb. Qūnawī explains that the "Throne" mentioned in the verse "The All-Merciful sat upon the Throne" (Qur'ān 20:5) represents Universal Nature, the first of the world of material bodies and it envelops and governs everything.[221]

If anyone "cuts himself" off from the Womb, the world of nature and his own natural configuration, he is cutting himself off from God's Mercy. But, if anyone joins the Womb, has an attitude of respect and reverence for Nature and learns to live harmoniously with his/her own natural configuration, he/she will join God. Joining God means to become proximate to God and to become a witness of God by being able to discern God through God's constant and creative self-disclosures. By having a true understanding of how the active, masculine spirit manifests itself in the Womb of nature in a constant process of creativity and new creation, the human being starts to witness God.[222]

The feminine macrocosmic principle that emerges out of God's "*raḥma*" (Mercy) is called the "*raḥm*" or Womb.[223] This Macrocosmic Womb is the macrocosmic world of Nature, which is the reality upon which the witnessing of God depends not only on this earth but also in the next world. God is the Ruler over all levels of reality. He rules the reality of this world of corporeal bodies and forms through His Throne. Therefore, it is impossible to witness Him in this world unless we witness Him within the locus He chooses to manifest Himself.

This locus is the Macrocosmic Womb, the world of Nature within which He chooses to manifest Himself. Therefore, all witnessing of God depends upon a true understanding and due respect accorded to the "Womb". God is a ruler, even over the level of reality of the next world. Witnessing of God in the next world will also be possible only through remaining joined to the

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[221] Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
[222] Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
[223] Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

"womb" and witnessing Him through whatever locus He discloses Himself in.[224]

The correct attitude towards God is to be always a Muslim. A Muslim is one who submits to God and who is ever receptive towards God. Therefore, with respect to God Muslims are taught to inculcate their feminine, submissive, receptive characteristic but with respect to becoming the vicegerent of God on earth, they are encouraged to inculcate the masculine active characteristics. Thereby they can become conscious participants of the multidimensional creative process of life.

The true aim of life for human beings according to Islamic spirituality is to become the perfect human being/ *insān al-kāmil*. The full range of *wujūd's* potential is manifested through the reflection of the divine attributes in the perfect human being. This means that human beings have a function in the cosmos that is far greater than is ordinarily thought. It is a transcendental function, and the actual reason for their creation. The cosmos depends upon the perfect human beings for the actualization of *wujūd's* myriad attributes in the realm of manifestation. The cosmos was brought into existence so that the full manifestation of God's attributes takes place through the perfect human beings.

As God's representative or deputy, the perfect human being is the substitute for God in creation. The perfect human being displays the characteristic of being a perfect intermediate reality within the greater intermediate reality (*barzakh al-barzakh*) of divine Imagination. Ibn al-'Arabī writes about this quality of the perfect human being in the following way:

Hence everyone in the cosmos is ignorant of the whole and knows the part, except only the perfect human being. For God *taught him the names, all of them* [Qurʾān 2:31] and gave him the all-comprehensive words, so his form becomes perfect. The perfect human being brings together the form of the Real and the form of the cosmos. He is a *barzakh* between the Real and the cosmos, a raised up mirror. The Real sees His form in the mirror

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[224] Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth,* No. 20. Cf. Murata, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

of the human being and the creation also sees its form in him. He who has gained this level has gained a level of perfection more perfect than which nothing is found in possibility.[225]

By bringing together "the form of the Real and the form of the cosmos" the perfect human being becomes the perfect "isthmus" linking the feminine realm of the Macrocosmic Womb with the realm of the Universal Spirit. The creativity inherent in the Divine realm is fully actualized in the human form of the perfect human being and the creativity inherent in the human form is fully actualized by a union and subsistence in the Divine realm by the perfect human being. To reach the status of perfect human being/*insān al-kāmil* the creative transformation of the feminine principle of the soul through "joining the Womb" is necessary so that illumination and subsistence in the Spirit can take place. In other words no human being can become perfect unless he/she allows for the creative interaction of both the feminine and masculine principles of existence within their human configuration so that the human soul finds illumination and subsistence in the everlasting spiritual realm. Only and only due to the fact that the perfect human beings are able to reflect these two realities in a perfect manner both at the microcosmic level of existence and at the macrocosmic level of existence, that everything in creation finds existence.

(To be continued in the next issue)

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[225]*Futuḥāt*, III 397.3. Cf. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*. p. 249.

THE QURʾĀN AND ḤUDŪD LEGISLATION IN THE PAKISTANI SOCIETY: –SOME REFLECTIONS

Dr. Shahzad Qaiser

ABSTRACT

The Divine is perfect but our interpretations have been so imperfect. Again, one of these historical imperfect interpretations has been to include *irtidād* (apostasy) in the category of *ḥadd*. Apostasy is qualitatively different from treason and cannot be considered as an offence. It is the free choice of a person to accept or repudiate Islam. There is no compulsion in religion. We must be courageous enough to accept that our human interpretation of the Divine has been manifestly in error on many accounts. It is high time to realize that we are not pleasing God but appeasing ourselves by becoming oblivious of the spirit behind the forms. The need of the hour is to revisit the Qurʾān and frame *Ḥudūd* laws in consonance with the will of Allah.

The legislative vigour of a society is measured in proportion to its responsiveness to the needs of the common man. We need to be highly committed about alleviating the sufferings of humanity. Islamic spirituality teaches us that it is by sharing the sufferings of people that we tend to serve Allah. But this primordial vision can only be realized when our religiosity gets transformed into spirituality.

Islam is in conformity with the Nature of things. It does not super add anything but reveals the fundamental nature of the human receptacle. Every thing in the heavens and the earth is subservient to Allah. All things, willingly or unwillingly, are absolutely subject to His inexorable law. He is the Absolute Sovereign whose 'disobedience' in principle is not possible since 'disobedience' to Him is again a given possibility of His universal will and there can be nothing over and above it. Man, in exercise of his freedom, chooses for or against his ideal human nature, which is identical with obeying or disobeying Allah and His Prophet. In other words, there is supreme

identity and simultaneity in realizing the will of God, following His Prophet and living in consonance with one's ideal human nature.

The bounds of Allah are in the ultimate interest of man. They are not superimposed but arise from the inner depths of his being. Any person who transgresses these bounds, in fact, transgresses against his own self. Thus, in obeying Allah and His Prophet, one essentially obeys the laws of being. In other words, he realizes the genuine demands of his own higher self. It is pertinent to note that Allah has imparted knowledge regarding the effects of man's ideas, feelings and actions on his self. A set of ideas, feelings and actions integrates human personality and is called good while another set of ideas, feelings and actions disintegrates human personality and is called evil. Thus, good and evil are in reference to the integration and disintegration of human personality, respectively. Iqbal says: "A wrong concept misleads the understanding; a wrong deed degrades the whole man, and may eventually demolish the structure of the human ego … Life offers a scope for ego-activity, and death is the first test of the synthetic activity of the ego. There are no pleasure-giving and pain-giving acts; there are only ego-sustaining and ego-dissolving acts. It is the deed that prepares the ego for dissolution, or disciplines him for a future career."[226] The Qurānic concept of crime and punishment takes its roots from the ultimate nature of the self– individual and societal– for community is the society of selves. Allah forbids all that is harmful to the human both in his inwardness and outwardness. He does not wreak vengeance on man when he commits crime but prescribes punishment essentially as a corrective measure for the healthy development of his individuality. This reformatory factor coupled with a certain element of deterrence is instrumental in saving the social fabric of human society as well. This is precisely the reason that a greater significance is attached to confession. A person who confesses his crime and undergoes punishment, as a consequence, essentially saves his own soul and creates a positive impact on society. However, such an ideal situation is not always possible. A person may commit crime and refuse to confess. In such cases, the accused is brought to the doors of justice. It is not vengeance but Divine mercy that the criminal is punished for the wrong he has committed, so that the

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[226] Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh Lahore, Pakistan; Institute of Islamic Culture, p. 146.

disintegrating effects on his personality are effaced and he succeeds in achieving an integrated personality and thereby saving the structure of his ego from breaking down. Punishment is likened to the treatment of a sick soul. If the sick soul is not treated in this world, then it will have to undergo a more painful process of treatment in hell, which is the ultimate occasion of corrective experience. Allah and his Prophet enjoin justice not merely for the sake of it but for the ultimate benefit of man. Thus, love is the edifice on which is built the Islamic concept of crime and punishment.

The phenomenon of crime and punishment is dynamic and integral to a society. But the real thing is to bring structural changes in a society by establishing the values of freedom, equality and justice. A society bereft of real changes cannot even sustain functional adjustments. All forms of human oppression– religious, political, economic, social and cultural– tend to enter the process of legislation in a very subtle way. The individual and class interests successfully struggle to find a heaven in the codes of law. Reason has its inherent limitations in discovering the ultimate interest of man. It is intellect (the faculty having direct knowledge of the transcendent), which reaches the heart of reality. Reason can only see perfectly in the light of intellect (revelation or *waḥy* in the religious sense). The Divine law thus, rises above the vested human interests and limitations of reason and directly captures the ultimate nature of things. It ends the exploitation of man over man. It identifies with Truth itself.

The Qurʾān is both immanent and earthly. It is neither a penal code nor a code of criminal procedure. The Qurʾān bestows knowledge of the universal principles and, among other things, integrates family and social life. One can understand the significance of this point against the perspective of Christianity, which makes a sharp cleavage between spirit and matter or between the church and the state. The purpose of including certain offences and punishments in the Qurʾān is not an end in itself but is a means towards incorporating the interactive life of a community in the realm of all pervasive spirituality. Iqbal says:

The primary source of the Law of Islam is the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān, however, is not a legal code. Its main purpose…is to awaken in man the

higher consciousness of his relation with God and the universe. No doubt the Qurān does lay down a few general principles and rules of a legal nature, especially relating to the family – the ultimate basis of social life. But why are these rules made part of a revelation, the ultimate aim of which is man's higher life? The answer to this question is furnished by the history of Christianity which appeared as a powerful reaction against the spirit of legality manifested in Judaism. By setting up an ideal of other-worldliness, it, no doubt, did succeed in spiritualizing life, but its individualism could see no spiritual value in the complexity of human social relations....Thus, the Qurān considers it necessary to unite religion and state, ethics and politics in a single revelation.[227]

It is exceedingly imperative to bear in mind that the Qurānic concept of rightness and wrongness is final and is permanently, universally and absolutely binding on all generations. The Qurān discerns between sinful and virtuous actions. It further declares certain sins as crimes. No age, within the Islamic system, can change the wrongness of offences such as *zinā* (adultery including the shade of fornication), *sarqah* (theft), and *qadhaf* (falsely accusing a person of unlawful intercourse) into rightness or remove these from the list of punishable acts or penal offences. In other words, no generation can change the concept of sin as enunciated by the Qurān. However, it can extend its scope in the light of changing requirements by the principle of analogy. This is the essential meaning of *Ḥudūdullah* (bounds of Allah). However, the Qurān does not term every sin as a crime or a penal offence. The Qurān, for example, considers *shurb al-khamr* (drinking wine) as *ithmun kabīr* (grave sin)[228] and in another verse declares every type of *ism* (sin) as *harām* (forbidden)[229] thereby forbidding drinking of wine by implication but it does not declare it as a crime. It leaves for the community to carry out legislation in consonance with the spirit of the Qurān and the requirements of the times.

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[227] *Ibid.*, pp.131-132.
[228] Qurān, 2:219.
[229] *Ibid.* 7:33.

It is necessary to understand Qurʾānic methodology in dealing with different shades of an offence. The Qurʾān demonstrates the essential meaning of an offence and leaves its other shades to be determined, obviously in light of its prototype, in consonance with the necessities of the times. It talks of adultery, for instance, but does not delve on rape. The Ḥudūd law, on the other hand, resorts to miscarriage of justice by failing to maintain the subtle distinction between adultery and rape. It must be borne in mind that rape is qualitatively different from voluntary sexual intercourse and it has to be treated differently in all its aspects.

Islamic legislation in all its dimensions is both principled and pragmatic. The Qurʾān always manifests principled stance but with due considerations to the social and cultural realities of a society. The quintessence of the Qurʾān has always to be kept in view while endeavouring on the legislative process. Heavens provide unified concepts and the earth provides multiple precepts. Legislation in Islam is building a bridge between the heavens and the earth.

The Qurʾān is eternal but its expression is temporal. It is timeless but it has been revealed in time. The Prophet belonged to the Arabian culture, which had its own set of values. The Qurʾān kept all those values intact that were in consonance with the law of things and only brought changes in those that were inconsistent with the essential reality. It brought the greatest transformation in the history of man by integrating the elements of permanence and change. It is our failure to integrate these elements in a unified whole that is creating complexity in our individual and social life.

It is to be borne in mind that the traditions of the Prophet having a legal import are not binding on future generations because they are changing, particular and provisional. They are the reflections of the actual conditions of a society. They mirror the concrete situations of life. Each generation has its own unique set of conditions and its vocation is to use the most efficacious piece of legislation in order to promote rightness and curb wrongness in consonance with the law of things. Thus, each society, like the Arabian one, can legitimately legislate according to its own special requirements without regressing into any form of imitation. Iqbal says:

The prophetic method of teaching, according to Shāh Walī Ullāh, is that, generally speaking, the law revealed by a prophet takes especial notice of the habits, ways and peculiarities of the people to whom he is specifically sent. The prophet who aims at all embracing principles, however, can neither reveal different principles for different peoples, nor leave them to work out their own rules of conduct. His method is to train one particular people, and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal Shari‘at. In doing so he accentuates the principles underlying the social life of all mankind, and applies them to concrete cases in the light of the specific habit of the people immediately before him. The Shari‘at values (*aḥkām*) resulting from this application (e.g. rules relating to penalties for crimes) are in a sense specific to that people; and, since their observance is not an end in itself, they cannot be strictly enforced in the case of future generations. It is, however, impossible to deny the fact that the traditionists, by insisting on the value of the concrete case as against the tendency to abstract thinking in law, have done the greatest service to the Law of Islam. And a further intelligent study of the literature of traditions, if used as indicative of the spirit in which the Prophet himself interpreted his Revelation, may still be of great help in understanding the life-value of the legal principles enunciated in the Qurān. A complete grasp of their life value alone can equip us in our endeavour to re-interpret the foundational principles.[230]

The traditions of the Holy Prophet including those that have a legal import have to be understood in their real sense. They manifest the earnestness of the Prophet to transform his spiritual vision in concrete cultural terms. It is incumbent upon every generation to take its light from the Qurān and solve its problems accordingly. This is essentially the meaning of following the Sunnah. It never means merely a ditto copy of the Arabian culture. Otherwise, it shall tantamount to missing the very spirit of the Sunnah. Thus, we have to distinguish between the universal elements of the Sunnah and the relative elements that were exclusive to the Arabian community in a certain spatio-temporal reference. And, we have to study these objectively since a number of things have been falsely imputed to the

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[230] Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh Lahore, Pakistan; Institute of Islamic Culture, pp.136-137.

Prophet in the course of history. It is our duty to critically scrutinize the historical record and not assent to it as part of faith. Since we are accountable to Allah for holding each and every belief, therefore it is within our right to know whether a certain thing was actually said or done by the Prophet and what was the real purport of his saying or action. We must interpret the Sunnah in consonance with the genius of the Qurʾān. We need to realize that an uncritical acceptance of the past including belief in the finality of Schools has not only kept the Law of Islam stationary but has also compounded our problems.

The application of the legal principles to concrete situations brings out the dynamic aspect of Islamic law. But it, at the same time raises a number of issues as well. The jurists' dichotomy between ḥadd and taʿzīr is being used to deal with the varying situations arising in Muslim societies on the spectrum of time. If conclusive evidence of adultery, for example, is not coming forth, then it is conveniently transferred to the realm of taʿzīr with a corresponding change of mode and quantum of punishment. This understanding of ḥadd and taʿzīr has created insurmountable problems. We have constantly to take the sense of the Qurʾān in view while dealing with everything including legislative matters. We need to construe ḥadd as dealing only with the nature or ingredients of an offence and taʿzīr as dealing solely with the mode and quantum of punishment. The former is relatively universal and permanent while the latter is particular and changing. Thus, both ḥadd and taʿzīr as fundamental aspects of Islamic legislation manifest legislative unity and oneness.

The ultimate question that arises in our context is that is it piety to glorify Ḥudūd laws as such or piety consists in understanding the essential nature of law for solving the problems of our community? And we must sincerely concentrate on bringing a creative transformation in our society and raise the moral consciousness of our people to curb criminal activity. All attempts to go against the spirit of the times prove nugatory. We have to understand the Islamic concept of crime and punishment in its wholeness. It is the principle of Ijmāʿ or Consensus that can, ultimately decide the road to be taken by a

Muslim society. Our primary concern is regarding wrongful entry through back doors? The Qurʾān symbolizes rightful entry through front doors.

The ambiguity of *Ḥudūd* legislation has mainly arisen, as we have seen, due to the fact that these laws have not succeeded in maintaining the distinction between the universal and the particular. They have not succeeded in manifesting the real essence of the Qurʾān and have been enforced in contravention of the temporal context or actual conditions of our society. How can anything succeed, in our times, in utter disregard to modern sensitivity, which is equally a mode of Allah's Manifestation? It is our duty to legislate by integrating the vision of the Qurʾān and the concrete realities of the times. Each generation has an inherent right to legislate for itself keeping in view the broader framework of the Qurʾān.

The clerics were instrumental in the enactment of *Ḥudūd* laws, 1979 in obliviousness of the spirit of the Qurʾān and the ground realities of the times. Such regressive human interpretation of the Divine has faltered both in principle and in its practical ramifications. It maintains an uncalled for distinction between offences under *ḥadd* and offences under *taʿzīr* whereas all offences fall under the category of *ḥadd* and there is no dichotomy between them as such. There is enough evidence on record to prove the magnitude of cruel injustice it has brought to the Pakistani society especially to women. It has become oblivious of the spirit of the times too by depriving women of their right to evidence. There are also numerous anomalies in *Ḥudūd* laws like the meaning of adulthood and valid marriage, which are merely human interpretations and can be rightly understood according to the cultural traditions of a community. The instrument of *tazkiyah-al-shuhūd* of witnesses as an essential requirement for imposing *ḥadd* punishment has been made so stringent that it envisages a more difficult, if not impossible, set of conditions. Furthermore, our administrative system of justice, in the process of administering justice, has created difficulties in the lives of so many simple and innocent citizens. The enactment has also failed to do justice with the non-Muslims who have been forced to submit in varying degrees to these laws.

The Divine is perfect but our interpretations have been so imperfect. Again, one of these historical imperfect interpretations has been to include *irtidād* (apostasy) in the category of *ḥadd*. Apostasy is qualitatively different from treason and cannot be considered as an offence. It is the free choice of a person to accept or repudiate Islam. There is no compulsion in religion, says the Qurʾān.[231] A man can enter and leave the fold of Islam at his will. There is no spiritual significance of compelling a person to remain within the pale of Islam by using the instruments of inducement or threat. Renunciation of a religious faith is no crime. An apostate is entitled to all those rights, which are enjoyed by non-Muslims in an Islamic state. However, if the apostate resorts to treason then, like any other non- Muslim or Muslim citizen who commits treason, the State is authorized to punish him in correspondence to the quantum of his crime. We must be courageous enough to accept that our human interpretation of the Divine has been manifestly in error on all these accounts. It is high time to realize that we are not pleasing God but appeasing ourselves by becoming oblivious of the spirit behind the forms. The need of the hour is to revisit the Qurʾān and frame *Ḥudūd* laws in consonance with the will of Allah.

Man should strive for a crime-free human society by genuinely practicing the higher values of life permeated by the universal principle of love. Our primary concern should be with the health of a society and not with its sickness. Sickness is an accidental affair and need not be blown out of proportion. The absence of health constitutes sickness. Why not take measures to increase the health of a society?

The legislative vigour of a society is measured in proportion to its responsiveness to the needs of the common man. We need to be highly committed about alleviating the sufferings of humanity. Islamic spirituality teaches us that it is by sharing the sufferings of people that we tend to serve Allah. But this primordial vision can only be realized when our religiosity gets transformed into spirituality.

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[231] Qurʾān, 2:256.

IQBAL AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Dr. M. Maroof Shah

ABSTRACT

The problem of evil is arguably the most difficult problem for all theistic worldviews. Modern age is characterized by the extreme obtrusiveness of evil and it could well be argued that it is the changed perception or cognizance of evil that differentiates modern humanist secularist worldview from the traditional religious worldviews.

The painful problem of evil that is really the crux of theism, as Iqbal says,[232] has been the most notorious problem for all theologies, especially for the monotheistic ones. It has been a canker in the heart of theism. All religion is an attempt to respond to this problem. All philosophy (defined as meditation on death) and all religions (defined in salvific terms) and all great literature and art may be seen as attempts to respond to the existence of evil. Paradoxically, it is religion's starting point and first noble truth (especially of Eastern religions) as well as canker in its heart; its doom according to certain critics of theism. Buddhism and Christianity are especially preoccupied with this problem. Hellenist– Christian sense of the tragic colours the world view of the West. The characters of Prometheus, Faustus, and Sisyphus are all variations on the theme of evil. The notions of surrender and peace– the defining features of Islam– have this problem in the background. The doctrines of Karma, rebirth and fatalism or *qismat* have been formulated to reckon with the evil. The problem of suffering, waste, death, meaninglessness, absurdity has been a central problem for great literature. No exoteric theology has been able to provide a really convincing answer for everyone.

The problem of evil is arguably the most difficult problem for all theistic worldviews. Modern age is characterized by the extreme obtrusiveness of evil

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[232] Iqbal, M., *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* Ed. and Annot. by Mohammad Saeed Sheikh, Adam Publishers and Distributors, Delhi, 1997. p. 64).

and it could well be argued that it is the changed perception or cognizance of evil that differentiates modern humanist secularist worldview from the traditional religious worldviews. The problem constitutes perhaps the foremost challenge to traditional theology in modern times. Any attempt to secure a rational foundation for religion in modern times must seriously reckon with the problem. And theodicy has becomes notoriously difficult job for any theologian in modern times. Christianity has been especially hit hard by modern critiques of theodicy. It has responded by radically modifying or reconstructing itself. Most of these modern Christian theological appropriations of the problem of evil are guilty of the great sin of heterodoxy. The traditional Islamic approach that tackles the problem from a very different perspective which is not conditioned by the Hellenic– Christian– Nietzschean sense of the tragic element, although fully equipped to deal with the problem in its own ways, has, however not been fully brought into light. Modern Muslim theologians have paid very little attention to the problem. It is only Iqbal, who among the great modern Muslim religious thinkers has tried to reckon with the problem in the contemporary idiom, albeit in heterodoxical manner. His whole philosophy of Ego and love could be interpreted as a response to the problem of evil in the broader sense. His hope in the ultimate victory of good over evil is essentially religious solution to this problem which Iqbal believed on faith but could not logically and rationally prove. Present paper attempts to evaluate Iqbal's approach to the problem of evil in the light of major modern criticisms of theism and theodicy. Perennialist philosophy will be kept in the background to evaluate Iqbal's position vis-à-vis evil.[233] Our focus will be primarily on Iqbal's major philosophical work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, where he has systematically treated the problem of evil. However major themes of his poetry that have a bearing on his approach to the problem of evil have not been ignored either.

On some occasions especially in the earlier life, Iqbal seems to have been simply bowled over or defeated by the problem. He saw life as a futile passion in almost Sartrian sense and any idea of cosmic or ultimate purpose

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[233] The foremost exponent of the perennialist-traditionalist approach is the Swiss mystic and sage Frithjof Schuon. He presents the traditional Islamic approach to evil in his writings like *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy, Dimensions of Islam, Christianity/Islam*.

rejected. (*sarāpa afsāna wa afsūn hey zindagī* he cried); he found belief in *Ahriman* more logical than the belief in *Ahurmazd* as his letters to Atiya Faizi show. He couldn't excuse God, even in his mature years for creating such an evil and imperfect world and indicted him on this or that account. Nietzschean vein in Iqbal makes his approach very unorthodox. Will to power, eulogization of strong and the powerful, critique of what they called slave morality of Christianity, advocacy of superman, praise of *Iblis* and many related aspects of Iqbalian (and Nietzschean) thought show his heterodox appropriation of problem of evil. Melancholic strain and suppressed pessimism of some of his most beautiful poems like *"Lāla-i-Sahra", "Eik-Shām", "Tanhāyī", "Taswīr-gham"*, deconstruct his usual meliorism and his celebration of life. Iqbal as a poet can't escape the conclusion that suffering or evil can't be explained away and that tragic sense of life is irrefutable.

Iqbal seems to be grappling with classical Epicurean formulation of the problem of evil and then tries to answer it.[234] Epicurus' famous formulation

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[234] In this classical epicurean formulation problem is almost insoluble. Theodicy becomes almost impossible. Here lies the crucial error of modern philosophers of religion and theologians. Schuon calls it bad metaphysics and this is especially discernible in their approach to theodicy. Schuon's following critique of epicurean reasoning and formulation may be quoted here: "Epicurean reasoning is based on certain ambiguities concerning the very notion of "evil", "will" and "power". In the first place, will and power are inherent in the Divine Nature, which is absoluteness and Infinitude; this means that God is neither capable not desirous of what is contrary to His Nature on pain of contradiction and hence of absurdity. It is impossible, because it is absurd, that God should have the power to be other than God, to be neither absolute not infinite, to be altogether inexistent; and He cannot will that which, inasmuch as it is contrary to Being, is outside His Power. God is all powerful in relation to the world, His creation or His manifestation; but Omnipotence cannot act upon the Divine Being itself, given that this Being is the source of that Omnipotence and not the reverse. *(Islam and the Perennial Philosophy* (World of Islam Festival Publishing Company,1976 p. 167)….Epicurean reasoning is the almost classical example of a faultless operation of logic which lacks the data that its content requires; it discuses "evil" but fails to realize that evil is by definition evil only in one respect and not in another, as is proved in advance by the fact that there is no absolute evil and that evil is never a substance; it discuses "God" but fails to realize that God, being infinite, includes in His Nature the seed of an unfolding that necessarily involves an element of contradiction by the very fact of His Infinitude; and it discuses "power" and "will", but fails to recognize that the Divine Nature is the Subject of these and not their object, which amounts to saying that these two faculties, although they are unlimited by virtue of Divine Limitlessness and when directed towards contingency, are

of the problem as quoted by Hume runs as follows: Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able, then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?[235]

Evil for Iqbal isn't just privation of good, absence of good or a mere shadow. There is something terribly positive about it. He considers it as hard and painfully hard fact. He doesn't take the challenge to theism lightly.[236] He considers it a very serious problem to be addressed by anyone who tries to philosophically justify Islamic conception of God[237].. He quotes Nauman who so pithily puts the case of evil in relation to theism.[238] He then proceeds to reconcile "the goodness and omnipotence of God with the immense volume of evil in His creation" without minimizing in any way the magnitude and severity of the problem. He doesn't hide the blemishes in God's creation unlike many theologians to exonerate God[239] or to refuse to see evil in all its horror.[240] He says "The course of evolution, as revealed by modern science,

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nevertheless limited "at the Summit" by Divine Absoluteness, which no will or power can modify. (*Islam and the Perennial Philosophy,* p. 168).

[235] Hume,David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion.*

[236] Iqbal, *The Reconstruction* p. 64.

[237] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[238] Nuaman's following words have been quoted by Iqbal in *Reconstruction* p64-65from his *Briefe uber Religion,*"We possess a knowledge of world which teaches us a God of power and strength who sends out life and death as simultaneously as shadow and light, and a revelation a faith as to salvation which declares the same God to be father. The following of the world God produces the morality of the struggle for the existence and the service of the father of Jesus Christ produces the morality of compassion and yet they are not two gods but one God. Somehow or the other their arms intertwine. Only no mortal can say where and how this occurs."

[239] Iqbal's boldness is unique and unprecedented in the history of Muslim philosophy in this connection. His poem "Dialogue between God and Man" in *Payam-i-Mashriq*, (*Message from East*) is illustrative in this context. He has exalted man and belittled God in almost all comparisons he has made between God and man. In his earlier years he had found it more rational to believe in *Ahriman* than *Ahurmazd* (see his letter to Atiya Fayzee dated 17, July 1909 in this connection).

[240] Iqbal doesn't fully recognize all the diverse manifestations of evil and dubs all of them under the general heads of suffering and wrong doing. Moral evil isn't just subsumable under the head of wrong doing. The dark reality of sin is left out of the picture, so poignantly portrayed by Christian theologians and such writers as Dostoevsky. Thousand kinds of suffering and pain that plague our human saga-enumerated by great tragedians of the world and great pessimist philosophers such as Schopenhauer and religious souls such as Buddha

involves almost universal suffering and wrongdoing. No doubt, wrongdoing is confined to man only. But the fact of pain is almost universal, though it is equally true that men can suffer and have suffered the most excruciating pain for the sake of what they believed to be good. Thus the two facts of moral and physical evil stand out prominent in the life of Nature".[241] Iqbal doesn't ignore either physical, metaphysical or moral evil. However it is with moral evil that he is most concerned. He even seems to reduce physical evil to moral evil.[242] Iqbal's response to the problem of moral evil has been usually understood in a very limited sense of his concept of *Iblis*. But the problem of moral evil is very complicated and has many dimensions. Concept of evil principle (Satan or *Iblis*) doesn't encompass the whole issue.

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get marginalized in Iqbalian account of the problem. Not all physical evils are reducible simply to pain. This is important, as McClosky notes, for it means it is both inaccurate and positively misleading to speak of the problem of physical evil. Such critics of theodicy as McClosky have argued that no one 'solution' covers all these physical evils, and that physical evils create not one problem but a number of distinct problems for the theist. Also it needs to be pointed out that even without the discovery of evolution the problem of evil was problem. The horizon of the problem extends far wider than Iqbal thinks.

The terrible reality of Sin (or *zulm* in Qur'anic vocabulary) so acutely and poignantly portrayed by the Qur'an in its description of hell's tortures – Iqbal appears to sidestep.

[241] Iqbal, M *Reconstruction* p. 64.

[242] Many theists have argued that the problem of physical evil is reducible to the problem of moral evil and even this has been conceded by such critics of theism as Mackie.. Iqbal too appears to use this strategy. This tactic makes the next move possible in meeting the critics of theodicy and arrive at complete solution to the problem of evil i.e., trying to argue for the compatibility of free will with absolute goodness. Iqbal's philosophy of ego and his valorisation of struggle and fight against evil so that ego is strengthened and his identification of obstructing forces alone makes real moral good realizable in the world are attempts in this direction. Pain is a goad to action. Life moves on and ego ascends to perfection through the driving force of what he calls as world pain. It is physical evil that fuels the engine of evolution and leads ultimately to emergence of higher egos. However it is precisely this reduction of physical evil to moral evil that is problematic. McClosky has forcefully argued against this reduction of physical evil to moral evil. He argues that physical evils create a number of distinct problems which aren't reducible to the problem of moral evil. Further the proposed solution of the problem of moral evil in terms of free will (Iqbal also proposes it) renders the attempt to account for physical evil in terms of moral good, and the attempt thereby to reduce the problem of evil to the problem of moral evil, completely untenable. See McCloskey's paper "God and Evil" in *Philosophical Quarterly* (10), 1960 for detailed treatment of this point.

Iqbal rejects some proposed solutions and approaches to the problem of evil which include positing relativity of evil or its unreality. Thus all *privatio boni* arguments are rejected by him as Jung rejects them in his *Answer to Job*. The *privatio boni* arguments posit evil as not something positive or different or independent principle and marginalize it as only an absence of good. Buddhist approach is the exact opposite. Buddha lifts existence of evil to the status of first noble truth and defines happiness (although this mayn't be equated with good) as cessation of pain which he sees as the norm, the first principle. However this Buddhist approach is also rejected by Iqbal. He doesn't see sufficient warrant for Schopenhaurian pessimism (which, in a way, represents crude appropriation of Buddhist approach). Browning's optimistic faith is also seen as not fully warranted in Iqbalian perspective. Iqbal also appears to reject what has been called as Means and Ends approach which advocates the presence of forces that tend to transmute it and thus be a source of consolation to us.[243] This functionalist approach which is seen in the writings of Richard Swinburne, John Hick and others is unacceptable to him on the grounds that it doesn't explain all evil. However, at other places in his third lecture "The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer" and his fourth lecture "The Human Ego – His freedom and Immortality" he uses the same argument in his apology for hell and arguments for immortality and ego's onward march and development as the supreme end for which all the obstructions involving pain and suffering are a means. For the heaven of immortal or permanent egohood, hell may be necessary as a "corrective experience" or means. We need to say yes to all the attendant or accompanying ills and be patient "under ills and hardships"[244] for accepting the supreme objective or end of "trust of personality" or "true manhood". [245]His interpretation of Adam's fall uses the same "Means and End approach". He says, "The only way to correct this tendency (Faustian tendency of Adam for getting Occult knowledge) was to place him in an environment, which however painful, was better suited to the unfolding of his intellectual faculties"[246] and "intellectual evil is an indispensable factor in

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[243] Iqbal,M *Reconstruction* p. 64.
[244] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[245] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[246] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

the building up of experience".[247] This is just one example of Iqbal's inconsistent logic that he uses while dealing with the problem of evil.

Iqbal also rejects the Christian conception of original sin and fall of Adam. Iqbal interprets biblical Fall as rise of Adam and birth of self consciousness. He sees man's first act of disobedience as "the first act of free choice"[248]. Parodying the Christian conception he says "Nor does the Quran regard the earth as a torture hall where an elementally wicked humanity is imprisoned for an original act of sin".[249] Although this rationalist humanist modernist understanding and critique of Christian doctrine by Iqbal could itself be challenged by traditionalist perennialist interpretation of religion, Christian theologians and many others. Iqbal's rejection of this possible solution problematizes his own solution as he can't opt for any traditional religious explanation, be that of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or even Islam according to perennialist authors like Schuon. Buddhist solution to the problem of evil that involves doctrine of no-self or dissolution of ego is completely rejected by Iqbal. Preservation and development of ego is the *raison de'tre* of Iqbal's whole philosophy despite tremendous difficulties on traditional religious or metaphysical, psychological and historical grounds (against this view) that Iqbal is obliged to surmount. Sufi approach to the problem of evil that invokes similar Christian and Buddhist notions is also rejected by Iqbal as he conceives his concept of self in sharp opposition to Sufi conception of the same.

Traditional Islamic approach as represented by Ghazzali (in his *Ihya, especially the shapter titled "*Evils of the World*"*) takes our fallen condition seriously and doesn't praise world of matter in Iqbalian (which is in almost secular theological perspective) manner and sees this world or world of matter as something evil due to its separation from God who alone is good, is also unacceptable to Iqbal. Classical theism, as represented by Ghazzali that conceives supreme principle as Eternal consciousness, knowing but not including the world is rejected by Iqbal in favour of panentheism that conceives God as Eternal– Temporal consciousness, knowing but also

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[247] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[248] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[249] *Ibid.,* p. 68.

including the world.[250] Classical theistic solution to the problem of evil encounters various difficulties as many philosophers of religion have argued with great force and it is perhaps for this reason that Iqbal is led to take recourse to panentheism. Iqbal doesn't accept *Ash'arite* theological approach that overemphasizes Divine Will and its capricious character, leads to a kind of fatalism and denial of much of human freedom. Iqbal is willing to qualify divine omniscience and freedom in order to safeguard human freedom. But free will defence of theism as a response to the problem of evil has many limitations and Iqbal is susceptible to all those objections that have been raised against it.

Iqbal's own defence of theism against its detractors who base their criticism on the grounds of problem of evil assumes mainly two lines of argumentation: 1) "We can't see all the picture" argument 2) Free Will Defence. However, both of these strategies suffer from serious limitations and these will be discussed now.

"We can't see all the picture" argument has many contemporary defenders, prominent among them being Alston. Hamlet tells Haratio that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy". Though we might find it hard to see why there is evil in a world made by God, there might be a reason. Iqbal invoking similar line of argumentation says "We can't understood the full import of the great cosmic forces which work havoc and at the same time sustain and amplify life because "our intellectual constitution is that we can take only a piecemeal view of things".[251] Reducing the great and difficult problems of theodicy to just an issue between optimism and pessimism Iqbal proceeds to declare that it "can't be finally decided at the present stage of our knowledge"[252]. William P Alston argues that "the magnitude or complexity of the question is such that our powers, access to data, and so on are radically insufficient to provide sufficient warrant for accepting the thesis that God could have prevented

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[250] For pantheistic appropriation/interpretation of Iqbal's thought see Reese and Harthshone's *Philosophers Speak of God* who have devoted a whole chapter to Iqbal. Authors have argued that panentheistic answer to problem of evil is more convincing than the classical theistic answer.

[251] Iqbal, M *Reconstruction,* p. 65.

[252] Iqbal, M *Reconstruction,* p. 65.

many instances of evil without thereby losing some greater good."[253] Alston argues that "our cognition of the world, obtained by filtering raw data through such conceptual screens as we have available for the nonce, acquaint us with only some indeterminable fraction of what there is to know"[254] but this argument, like the argument of Iqbal, proves only a negative thesis that evil and good God aren't necessarily contradictory but what is needed in establishing a case for optimism or meliorism. Both are unable to do that and just hope for victory of good over evil in future. However Iqbal doesn't concern himself with the question how present evil could thus be negated or wiped out; how past pain could be obliterated. Future victory of good over evil as Iqbal hopes for and believes in (and is unable to philosophically prove or argue) will still not do away with the existence of past unmerited suffering. Dostoevsky's Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov* rebels against God precisely for this reason. He is unable to accept any scheme of things which requires putting innocent children to torture. This is true of Camus in *The Plague* also. Given the veracity of Iqbalian concept of ego and individual immortality, it is very difficult to conceive how our this-worldly record of pain and evil could be cancelled or annulled.

Most common theistic response to the problem of evil is what is commonly referred to as Free Will Defence, according to which even Omnipotent God can't ensure that free people act well and much evil is explicable in terms of God allowing for the possible consequences of freedom which in itself is a great good. While this argument has been advocated from many quarters in the past, a contemporary philosopher who argues forcefully along these lines is Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga develops this argument in many works, especially in his *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford, 1974. Iqbal justifies Fall of Adam (along with its attendant or accompanying evils) on the grounds of exercise of free will. For him goodness is only possible by "self's free surrender to the moral ideal and arises out of a willing cooperation of free egos. A being whose movements are wholly determined like a machine can't produce goodness"[255] but "the freedom to choose good

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[253] Quoted by Brain Davies in his edited work, *Philosophy of Religion: Guide and Anthology,* Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 576.

[254] *Ibid.*, p. 577.

[255] Iqbal, M *Reconstruction,* p. 68

involves also the freedom to choose what is the opposite of good"[256]. Freedom is the basic attribute of Iqbal's ego. Ego and his freedom are worth all the great cost of evil that may accompany them. God chose to limit His own freedom for the sake of human freedom. But free will defence could, at best, explain only moral evil – other kinds of evil are left unexplained. Although Christian doctrine of original sin caters to even animal pain in the world, Iqbal has no explanation for evil in the non-human world. He doesn't extend consequences of Adam's first act of disobedience to non-human world; sufferings of innocent children are also left unexplained by this way of argumentation. There is also the existence of physical pain that Iqbal's free will defence leaves uncatered for. It may also be argued that freedom isn't goodness, nor a condition for it. Freedom is not such a great good in itself to be worth the world-pain.[257] How can we justify this freedom which necessitates an ocean of tears? Existentialist valuation of freedom that Iqbal seems to approve produces many side effects. Ordinary man is too weak to be free and enjoy the heaven of freedom. He dreads it. He wants some escape in "bad faith". He is too weak to resist the temptations of *Mara*. Most men choose to be disbelievers paying no gratitude to God. Satanic question mark on man's excellence and angelic irreverent scepticism (in the story of genesis in the Qur'an) seems to have been vindicated. Satan, concedes *Sura Sheba* (V.20) found true his judgment about a rebellious humanity. Impressive record of human vices, human folly, infidelity, waste and irresponsibility seems to vindicate the Satanic reservations about Adam and his descendents. Most people deserve hell due to their *kufr* or ingratitude to God. Human history, from Cain onwards is mostly bad news. A careful examination of moral record has, both in religious and secular perspectives sometimes inspired unredeeming pessimism. Man has great capacity to resist grace and actively desires to thwart God's purpose. Attainment of virtuous destiny which requires the patient struggle, the hard climb (Quran 90:11) is very difficult for most men. There persists within human nature that inner, regrettably often dominant tendency to evil, the fruits of which are gathered in the Quranic world of unheeded messengers and the sombre ruins of the subverted cities. All this shows the poor record of human freedom as Shabir

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[256] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[257] McCloskey, among others, has critiqued free will defence on this point. McTaggert in his Some *Dogmas of Religion* subjects free will defence to a searching critique on the same point.

Akhter has noted in his *A Faith for All Seasons* (Ch. 8 *"The Riddle of Man".*) (London, 1990) This freedom has produced more evil than goodness. It has also been argued that omnipotent and infinitely wise and good God could have created us as more or wholly predisposed to good rather than evil. He could have foreseen consequences of giving man this great boon of freedom which has proved more often than not a bane rather than (*amanah*) a boon. The Qur'an says that man foolishly accepted the trust of personality. But Iqbal forgets this qualifying clause of Qur'an in his interpretation of such verses.

While this free will defence can be critiqued on many ground on its own terms, there are some additional points also to be considered First is that it may explain moral evil but not all evil; there are many other levels and kinds of evil-like evil in the animal world and the suffering of innocent children (which Camus and Dostoevsky's Ivan highlight) and physical pain. There is not just moral wickedness and consequent hell to be justified. Secondly it may also be argued that freedom is neither goodness, nor a condition for it. Freedom is not worth the world-pain. So great an evil is too big a cost for any gift of freedom. Damned be this freedom which necessitates an ocean of tears. Existentialist valuation of freedom that Iqbal seems to approve produces angst and bad faith. Man is too weak to be free and enjoy heaven of freedom. Freedom is too big a burden a yoke, in itself for most of men. Some moments of free choice may lead one to hell in this or the other world. Man is too weak to resist the temptations of *Mara*. Buddhahood or salvation, as *Dhammapada* and all the religious traditions assert is very difficult to get, most people are condemned to hell or rebirth (and later option Iqbal rejects) so only hell remains and though it may be interpreted as a purgatory or as 'Mother' as Quran calls it in (101:9) but still this worldly hell, pricks of conscience and criminal's and sinner's guilt are still too heavy a price for the bone of freedom and the resultant goodness. It may be hell to choose and to be free Although Sartrain answer to this is that we have no choice; we are condemned to be free and not choose itself and we should be allowed not to be; Hamlet be allowed to take arms against the slings of outrageous fortune and Ivan allowed to respectfully return the ticket to God. For Iqbal man has already accepted, chosen, through the metahistorical event of covenant with God, the crushing burden (*amanah*, as the Qur'an calls it) of free choice and trust of personality. "The Qur'an represents man as having accepted at his

peril the trust of personality which the heavens the earth, and the mountains refused to bear" (33:72). Iqbal's answer to the next question "Shall we, then, say no or yes to the trust of personality with all its attendant ills?" i.e. could suicide or loss of self as in *nirvana* of Buddha be an option is yes and rejection of later option. Despite Iqbal's failure in providing any plausible philosophical/ meta-historical basis for this covenant (he takes it for granted) and also why and how we could answer the man who says he is ignorant of this covenant and thus should be allowed to disown it, Iqbal still proceeds to answer the above mentioned question in the affirmative, leaving ordinary and weak man no way for escape. When the first premises itself is not established how can one jump to the consequence of that premises. Iqbal is quite aware that heaven or justifying the trust or faith of God in man is not the prerogative of common or ordinary men; all men are not entitled to immortality – man being only a candidate for immortality. If Iqbal's concept of self is correct, then it appears that all men are not even candidates for immortality. The finite centre of experience, the unity of mental states, as Iqbal conceives ego many men lack (insane, schizophrenic, idiot men do not have this self) which is a prerequisite for being a candidate for immortality. Children or those who die very young are thus also short listed. Many persons who do not rise above animal level due to very hard conditions of life or some other reason; who have no time to cultivate a ego or win a personality, being always preoccupied with winning a bread or shelter, are also not candidates for immortality. It is also a moot point whether Buddhists who do believe ego to be illusory and thus refuse to win it or cultivate it, could be considered, in Iqbalian paradigm, candidates for immortality. Mystics and Sufis because of their denial of ego principle too have lost the prerogative of winning immortality as they have opted for suicide themselves.

Iqbal has taken a very precarious position with regard to the problem of evil. All traditional religions invoke such notions as sin, grace, fall, redemption or salvation. Iqbal has hardly any use for such notions. His demythologizing approach misses the profound significance of such religious notions and symbols. He takes the modern humanist rationalist project as essentially valid and argues for theism within this framework. This is the root cause of his problems. Modern man denies reality of sin and fall; he feels no need of grace and salvation. He is anthropocentric rather than theocentric.

He has too sanguine an estimate of man and his goodness. *Iblis* is a fiction for him. In his pride he may deny the reality of evil. And paradoxically it is God who needs to be exonerated and defended against evil rather than man who is required to take it seriously and win his salvation. Onus lies on God rather than on man vis-à-vis evil. This is the modern man's unpardonable sin, a perversion. Perennialist authors reject whole modernist project as great perversion, as second fall, as sin. Although this may be going too far and there is possible religious appropriation of Renaissance project as Tillich and others argue but the fact remains that it is very difficult to make sense of the problem of evil within that framework.

Without the crucial notions of Beyond Being and Impersonal Absolute and even "rebirth" and *maya* it is very difficult to account for evil, as perennialist authors like Schuon argue. Buddhist insight into the nature of evil which aren't incompatible with monotheistic perspective of Islam, as Schuon in his *Treasures of Buddhism* and *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy* argues need also to be appropriated for satisfactory solution to the problem of evil. Nietzsche too offers some brilliant insights into the nature of evil and there have been Buddhist attempts at appropriating them. Iqbal too offers some brilliant insight here and there which if properly understood could open a new vistas for understanding evil. Iqbalian insight that there is no pleasure or pain giving acts; only ego sustaining and ego destroying acts is typical Nietzschean and even Buddhist in tone. Heaven and Hell aren't final resting places but both need to be transcended. Onward march of ego knows no destiny. Categories of thought and of pleasure and pain don't apply to ego and our appreciative self. We aren't here to seek pleasure and avoid pain but must win our egohood or soul in this vale of soul making which appears vale of tears only for obdurate pessimists. Buddha is triumphant over evil in this world. His practical approach to the problem of evil rather than speculating on its metaphysical significance is displayed by Iqbal also. Iqbal isn't a scholastic thinker or an advocate of God like Milton who justifies ways of God to men. Man's concern is to win immortality through his own efforts and this is emphasized by Iqbal as by all traditional religions.

Iqbal has a unique way to deal with the moral evil. For him traditional theological notion of sin is of no account (Nietzsche's reading of Jesus' central judgment concurs with this). Guilt, confession and repentance he

knows not. This is despite the fact that God's Fore knowledge and even Omnipotence is restricted by Iqbal to safeguard man's freedom and responsibility. Supreme end as ego cultivation justifies even "sinful" acts for Iqbal. Sin is not alienation from some abstract transcendent God but from our own deeper self. His is almost Whitmanian celebration of life. Anything which obstructs life is sin and evil and it will need to be fought even in heaven. Hell is not a torture pit made by revengeful God according to Iqbal. This implies man commits no "sin" which would be revenged by God, even sin of sins, original sin of Adam is excused or explained away by Iqbal.

Iqbal's is the only significant and worth reckoning endeavour to deal with the problem of evil in modern Muslim philosophy from a modern view point. He has almost no predecessors in this regard. The classical Muslim theological debates on this difficult problem hardly throw light on the modern formulations of the problem. It is no wonder that Iqbal's attempt suffers from many inadequacies. But the question is who in the history of theology or scholasticism (apart from Sufism as Valiuddin has cogently argued in his *The Qur'anic Sufism* and practitioners of traditionalist metaphysics such as Schuon. Present author has presented Sufi and perennialist approach to problem of evil in his forthcoming work *Justifying God's Faith in Man: Iqbal's Reformulation of Islamic Theodicy*, being published by Indian Publishers and Distributors, Delhi), has provided any really satisfactory solution to this problem? It is also a fact that modern knowledge (especially the discovery of evolution, psychological and sociological determinism and rediscovery of man's original sin) has put new challenges to classical attempts of dealing with this problem. Iqbal has however not given the requisite attention to this problem. Iqbal did consider this problem more important in his earlier years, especially when he wrote *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. Later in life Iqbal had to attend to different problem and he, like most of Muslim philosophers, was not preoccupied or obsessed with the problem. The Hellenic and Christian-Nietzschian sense of the tragic element, so acutely portrayed by Christian paintings remains foreign to Muslim (Iqbalian) sensibility.

Iqbal, like Tolstoy's peasants, believes in *faqr*. Ego's onward march goes on without complaint of hardship and pain. He is "patient under hardships" as Iqbal appropriates Qur'anic verse to characterize human becoming. He is

co-worker of God in creative work. He does not feel Sartrain nausea in his sojourn to life eternal. In Whitmanian and Oshoian sense he blesses the existence and is at peace with God given life which is always worth living for a Muslim as he is the one who has submitted or surrendered to Existence's or God's call of saying yes to existence, to becoming with all its pain and waste and nausea. Islam emphasizes innocence of becoming as self will merges with God's will. There is no resentment against the "given". However, the Qur'an is pessimistic regarding man's willingness to surrender or submit to God. Very few indeed are Muslims, most are disbelievers, transgressors, ignorant, not paying thanks, who deny their selves and thus they are to go to hell. God has given man freedom not to be, not to recognize value of ego, value of soul-making. Qur'an declares "Man is indeed in the loss" excepting only those who believe and do good But very few count us believes and doers of good in the Qur'an. Religion ensures that man will recognize his disbelief or his failure to win ego and then work for winning it (religion uses terms salvation for it) But Iqbal's eschatology being based on Muslim exoteric theological sources (ignoring estoteric dimension of Islamic eschatology which is similar to other traditional religious eschatologies (which ensure universal salvation) as traditionalist perennialist authors argue. Within the modernist humanist context which colours Iqbalian reading of Islam to some extent there is no satisfactory solution to life's enigmas including the enigma of evil. Evil as sin hardly exists for it. Evil as God's creation (God attributes creation of evil to Himself in the Bible (Calvin so full heartedly accepts it) and the Qur'an (Muslims affirm in what is called *iman-i- mufassal* that good and evil are from God) is not acceptable to humanistic sensibilities of Iqbal (Jung goes to the extent of making Satan part of God in reaction to this). God's goodness is not goodness in the ordinary sense of the word. Modern man hardly knows what is good and what is evil. God's ways defy his expectations. Satan was not originally created evil. God is not only transcendent but also immanent. God is totality of being, as Tillich says. Spinoza and Ibn Rushd do not find much difficulty with the problem of evil. This has to be understood. Theology is always anthropocentric, even good and evil are defined with respect to man the measure of all things (and even here man is identified with his self and not Spirit). God and enlightened man are beyond good and evil. Buddhism emphasizes this fact (Nietzsche took it from Buddhism). Everything falls in perfect harmony if we conceive God and universe as unity as Ibn Rushd

argues. We or desiring egos (extinction of which is aim of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism) want to dictate terms to God. We do not want to surrender to God (who is totality of being containing what we call both good or evil) We impose our categories on existence. We mould the image of good God (all theism succumbs too readily to this *shirk*) in our own image. God can be seen only through God's eyes, as Meister Eckhart siad and God can be perceived only when we leave ourselves behind as Bayazid Bistami said. Even the most sublime theism is unable to relinquish anthropomorphism. Iqbal's anthropocentric and anthropomorphic tendencies are too evident to be discussed in detail. And he has to pay the price.

Iqbal's faith in life or ego despite all its defeats in this tough world, coupled with his dynamism make things a bit comfortable to him. Tagore's following observations in *Sadhana* represent Iqbalian position also "…. Evil is ever moving; with all its incalculable immensity it does not eventually clog the current of our life… when science collects facts to illustrate the struggle for existancde that is going on in the animal world red in tooth and claw'. But in these mental pictures are give a fixity to colours and forms which are really evanescent …. Life as a whole never takes death seriously. It laughs, dances and plays, it builds, hoards and loves in deaths face. Only when we detach one individual fact of death do we see its bleakness and become dismayed… within us we have hope which always walks in front of our present narrow experience, it the undying faith in the infinite in us.. it sets no limits to its own scope, it dares to assert that man has oneness with God… if existence were an evil, it would wait for no philosopher to prove it. It is like convincing a man of suicide, while all the time he stand before you in the flesh. Existence itself is here to prove that it can not be an evil" This is ego's answer to Schopenhauer and Maari. Ego and love conquer everything according to Iqbal.

Love has been most potent antidote to poison of evil. It is the redeeming element, the grace, the hope and thus an answer to the corrosive effects of evil. In a world where there is neither joy, nor peace, nor certitude, nor help for pain, love alone can sustain us. *Ishq* dissolves evil but then one can hardly accommodate it in the philosophy of ego, despite Iqbal's belief in the contrary. Sufism has cogently demonstrated that self and Self aren't synonymous and thus there is no escape from time, from suffering or

possibility of Self realization or vision of God in dualistic personalistic philosophy of ego. However Iqbal is himself a Sufi, at least in some of his great poetic moments and there with the sword of love he defeats evil.

Nature or ruthless logic of evolution, as history of mankind shows and anthropological evidence also fortifying it, hardly cares or favours preservation of ego. Individual's self-multiplication which Iqbal, like Shakespeare in sonnets, sees as one way of ego preservation, is denied to many individuals. This "collective immortality" does not guarantee or mean individual ego's immortality which is the real concern of Iqbal's own philosophy of ego. The "mutual conflict of opposing individualities" which constitute "the world pain"[16] as Iqbal himself concedes darkens the career of life, though it may illuminate it for a chosen few. Superman, not man, can bear the trust of personality as Iqbal understands it. Ordinary average men in strictly Iqbalian terms are not eligible candidates for immortality. To preserve ego and thus enter the Kingdom of Heaven as Iqbal visualizes it is not the prerogative of ordinary mortals. Preserving ego is in itself a painful act and for most people it is itself a hell. To be born, as an ego and trying to preserve it against heavy odds (classical and especially modern literature shows numerous concrete examples of this fact) is greatest misfortune as Maʻrri, Schopenhauer, Hardy and Buddhist and Hindu philosophy and indeed all mysticism asserts and this is true for most ordinary mortals. Very act of suicide, taking arms against the slings of fate by choosing not to be, despite all the forces of instinctual "life's irresistible desire for a lasting dominion, an infinite career as a concrete imdividual"[17] speaks volumes against Iqbal's proposed heaven as a state of perfected and integrated ego) as an answer to problem of evil. For Iqbal Buddha did not find his way to heaven. What a judgment on the whole eastern religious consciousness!. Since mystics of all religions (even most of theistic mysticism leads to practical Sufistic dissolution of ego) do not consider winning an individual, separate personality or ego as a legitimate goal, they fail to be admitted to immortal Kingdom of Heaven! Mystics are in hell! This absurd conclusion follows from all personalistic individualistic ego centred humanist or anthropocentric philosophies and Iqbal's can't be an exception. *Akhirat* or other worldly oriented thrust of all religions and mysticism, and their refusal to be trapped or too much involved with ceaseless becoming, with the realm of impermanence or *maya* (without concept of *maya*, some difficult metaphysical

problems of traditional religion, including Islam, as Schuon explains in *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, can not be solved) and the realm of time and ever changing life all these points can not be squared with Iqbal's divinization of time and advocacy of becoming. Traditional religion considers world to be separated from God, "it involves a partial and contingent aspect of badness because, not being God despite its existence, it sets itself against God or is a would be equal of God; as this is impossible as all phenomena and ultimately he world itself– are touched by impermanence"[18] So world can not be good. Crucial notion of Beyond Being is necessary for religion for its solution to problem of evil (Iqbal does not concede this).[258] Why is man exposed to evil?

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[258] I quote Huston Smith, a perennialist, at length, to explain this perennialist approach to problem of evil which posits absolute/Beyond Being rather than personal God as the First Principle. He writes about religious conception of Absolute, "Because in the west the word God tends to be tied to his/her/its personal aspects, it is perhaps better to speak of the Absolute, to widen the screen. The personal dimensions of the divine are not unreal, but they are not inclusive. They are caught up and assume this place in the abysmal infinity of the Godhead which our rational minds can no more fathom than a two dimensional mind could fathom the nature of a sphere, The trans-rational depths of the divine are accessible, but by reason only abstractly and with anomalous residues; kataphatic theology inevitably produces paradoxes analogous to the ones that turn up on two-dimensional maps of our three-dimensional earth. Only in the inclusive light of intellective discernment can these paradoxes be resolved. Such intellective knowing requires more than thought – It requires that the subject be adequated to its object according to the dictum that "only like can know like".

The infinite aspect of the Absolute provides the solution to the problem of evil. That finitude exists is beyond question, for here we are as witnesses. The infinite must include the finite – include it paradoxically, of course, as something outside the infinite which by definition is impossible. So ontological gradations are required, that between the finite and the infinite being the one that is most imporant. When these gradations are considered in the mode of value or worth, they produce distinctions between better and worse and open vistas onto the primitive view of evil.

Esse qua esse boum est; being qua being is good; evil is the relative absence of good in the way shadow is the relative absence of light. The issue is subtle, but a sentence by St. Augustine points to, the direction in which the traditional argument proceeds: "I no longer desired a better word, because I was thinking of creation as a whole: and in the light of this more balanced discernment, I had come to see that higher things are better than lower, but that the sum of all creation is better than the higher things alone". (*Confession*, VI, xii, 19). Not to affirm that point is to complain about the admittedly inferior while essentially noble condition that is ours. How noble it can come to be seen is life's open – ended

Schuon answers "precisely because he is he handiwork, not the Principle, which alone is good, he can neither be, nor experience, good alone … In a certain sense, the function of evil in the world is to serve as a reminder that "God alone is good"; otherwise the world would be good… It is in any case naïve to accept the idea that everything would be perfect if only man no longer suffered or no longer committed crimes, since the average man of "the dark age" [whom Iqbal makes to dwell in primitive heaven until birth of self-consciousness i.e., his fall] even if his moral behaviour be correct is far from representing a pure good [as Iqbal thinks] and the way he views both good and evil is on a level with his decadence, that is, it has nothing to do with man's ultimate interest".[259]

Iqbal's version of Islamic theodicy hinges heavily on his understanding of the notion of freedom of will. Retrospectively we can ask whether the freedom was worth the great risk that God undertook in giving it to man. Iqbal's basic assertion which amounts to his reformulation of Islamic theodicy is that God in having taken this risk of giving freedom to choose good against evil to man shows His immense faith in man and that it is for man to justify this faith. Onus really is on man, not God. This is the fundamental insight of all traditional religions and this is what modernist critics of theodicy and theism and Western pessimist absurdists like Camus don't concede. Religion ensures that man has to willly nilly justify this faith. The sole purport of religious doctrines of karma or emphasis on orthopraxy, reincarnation and hell and apocatastasis is to drive home this point. Man can't be left unaccounted, or evil can't have the final say. Man will not be allowed to untrue to his own Self and be unheedful of his ultimate purpose, of his ground of being. He can't be allowed to live life inauthentically or devoid of care, to use Hedeggerian phrase. God is true to his purpose whether men know on not, as the Qur'an says (and Iqbal quotes it). However it must be pointed out that from the perspective of personalist philosophy of Iqbal it is hard to see how all this will come to be /or is realized. It is only from the perennialist mystico-metaphysical approach that one could easily

question.(Smith, Huston (1990). "Primordialist Claim" in *God Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western.* Ed. Robert E. Carter, Paragon House:New York
[259] Schuon, F., *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy,* World of Islam Festival Publishing Company,1976 p. 171)

see how all this is accomplished. Western absurdists and many a critics of theism forcefully point out limitations of personalist and exoteric theological approaches to evil.

Iqbal is led to profoundly differ from orthodox Islamic position vis-à-vis evil. He rejects any idea of redemption on, assumedly, Qur'anic grounds. This ignores Muslim conception of prophet as redeemer (*shāfi*). There is a scope for grace within Islamic framework and yet Iqbal has no room for it. He has too much faith in man's independent and self-sufficient capacity for salvation. However he knows this that ordinary mortals are incapable of sustaining a strong ego and only Superman is really capable of winning immortality. If man is only a candidate for immortality and very few people have strong egos (if we go by the tough criteria of Iqbal himself) then most men are denied individual immortality. Yet the Qur'an promises everyone immortality (although it does not grant heaven). Iqbal's hell and heaven are not traditional Islam's hell and heaven. Iqbal's heterodoxy in this context is attributable to his not cognizing or accepting the traditional Islamic approach to the Fall, Sin, *Iblis* and afterlife. Iqbal's heterodox appropriation of evil is also one of the factors responsible for his modernist interpretation of religion. Ghazalian approach to the question of evil, which represents traditional Islam, is in sharp contrast to Iqbalian heterodox approach to evil. Yet Iqbal's approach is highly significant and cannot be ignored for its originality and bold appropriation of modern science and philosophy of religion. Modern man who has been conditioned by certain factors not fully appreciated by traditionalists will find Iqbal worth reckoning.

However to be fair to Iqbal it must be pointed out that one could well read him as a Sufi. His position at many places especially in his great poetry, comes close to what traditionalist perennialist position implies. Iqbal has been interpreted in traditionalist or Sufi terms. It is also true that at many places he self deconstructs his own position that he maintains in *Reconstruction* which is more or less coloured by theological and philosophical dualism and comes close to Unitarian vision of Sufis. Occasionally he redefines ego from Sufistic framework of Self. In his later days he had come very close to orthodox Sufi position that solves problem of evil so admirably. Iqbal's Sufi inheritance crops up here and there in his philosophical writings also. He rejects exoterism in no uncertain terms although he had reservations in

accepting traditional Sufism as esoteric dimension of Islam. Despite his many heterodoxies he does emerge as the worthy disciple of Rumi. Despite his theological and philosophical orientation he remains at bottom a metaphysician. Iqbal could well be exonerated from many a charges if we read closely his poetry and in that light interpret his prose works such as *Reconstruction,* especially his post *Reconsrtuction* works. In the sublime *Javid Nama* problem of evil doesn't disturb our sage. His sensibility remains the Eastern one despite the Western cloak that he seems to have worn (he self avowedly saw through the Western spectacles as modern Western philosophy had become part of his very conceptual framework). It is hard to reconcile Iqbal of the *Reconstruction* with Iqbal, the poet of the East despite some serious attempts of Iqbalian scholars such as Suheyl Umar to prove the contrary. It is undeniable that Iqbal has contradictions and holds many widely divergent theses in the same breath. A perennialist reading of Iqbalian thought as attempted by Shahzad Qaisar and by the present author in his forthcoming works shows this so clearly. Present author has argued the case for incompatibility elsewhere. Iqbal's concept of appreciative self and pure duration non– successional change and thus eternity deconstructs his own avowed chronocentricism. Despite seeing Love as beyond all determinations and change and becoming he as a philosopher tries time and again to uphold time and divinize it. As a poet he does want to transcend time (e.g. in his poem 'Mosque of Cordova' and many verses scattered throughout his poetical works) He wants to defy time through Love and art. He sees, as many others (philosophers, mystics and prophets of religion have seen) time's and especially serial time's mechanizing effect as evil and regards prayer as an escape from this mechanizing evil effect of time. Solution to the problem of evil becomes very difficult if time is divinized and its reign accepted even in heaven and Iqbal knows this but he has other compulsions to see time as a question of life and death for Muslims. His concept of *faqr* appropriates insights of Buddhist (or mystical) approach. He is essentially situated in the timeless moment of eternity and thus beyond the realm of becoming, of impermanence or suffering. With his Gabreilic wings he soars high in the empyreal realms, partaking of eternity and singing the songs of Self with gay abandon. Nothing can contain our bard in his great moments of mystical ecstasy and he appropriates whole universe with all its contradictions in that that vital act that he calls *iman.* Iqbal seems to transcend all binaries and dualisms, all time infected thought constructions,

and the whole dominion of time and the phenomenal world where alone reigns evil and sorrow. Time and space (the realm of becoming and change) are *butan i wahm-o-guman.* The secret of the *khudi (sirri-i- nihaan)* is none other than transcendence of all things relative in the timeless vision of Absolute (*la illaha illallah*). In fact there is no other to Self. Universe doesn't confront God as the other. World is the revelation, the manifestation of God rather than creation out of nothing according to Iqbal's pantheistic appropriation of the Qur'anic narrative of genesis. *Khudi ki zad main hay sari khudaie* If one carefully builds on these and similar insights of Iqbal his theodicy could well emerge as very significant contribution and its heterodoxical elements (highlighted in this study because it focuses primarily on his *Reconstruction*) could be appropriated in a more or less orthodox Sufi framework.

Authentic religious vision faces the issue of existence of evil (it emphasizes not just the existence of suffering but the suffering of existence) squarely without blinking or head-in-the sand approach. It does not marginalize it; it does not show it in less bleak colours. It may even highlight this and make it central issue as in Buddhism. It does not refuse to shed tears (Prophet SAW wept more and laughed less) for the difficulties ordinary man encounters in his journey to heaven. Religion and its salvific dimension is geared towards the solution of the problem of evil. It takes our fallen condition (i.e., suffering of existence) as something given or far granted and proceeds to take us back to paradise. Key notion of surrender and submission to Reality in Islam shows the depth and maturity of religious approach to evil. Promethean revolt and Faustian transgression are rejected as naïve and facile attempts to evade and deny what can not be evaded or denied, the Rock of Truth. Resisting the innocence of becoming will create only resentment and that creates all anguish. Absolute stillness on our part in encounter with the God is what solves this problem. Refusing to appropriate the whole universe in one great vital act is what is *kufr* or disbelief according to Iqbal (and Islam). Yes-saying to the reality of time (which is identified with God in a sacred tradition) is the authentic Islamic approach. Iqbal's greatness is evident here. Sometimes he gives such brilliant interpretations as to encompass everything; all problems would appear to disappear. He encompasses even God and that is the *Iman.* Only he remains, no "other" is there to create a hurdle in his onward march. Evil loses its meaning. As there is no "other" for God, encountering Him from a distance, so speak, as Iqbal

says, and thus many difficult theological problems get a solution. Similarly, on such supreme moments, all "others" disappear before *khudi*.

This reminds us of the enlightened Sage or Buddha or mystic who enjoys a sort of lordship in the whole universe and even gods come to bow before him. God's function in ego's ascension (*miraj*) is to be the witness of the power and glory of ego. He becomes heir to eternity and thus not susceptible to evil or corruption. It is a moment of supreme bliss when ego through this vital act (*iman*) conquers space and time and gets a station where categories of good and evil are transcended (as in stations of the mystic). How profound Iqbal can be in facing the ultimate questions "the greatest trial for the ego" and achieving "supreme bliss" of heaven and thus conquer evil is seen in those verses from *Javid Nama*.

> *Art Thou in the state of 'life, death, or 'death in life' invoke*
>
> *the aids of three witnesses to verify thy 'station',*
>
> *The first witness is thine own consciousness*
>
> *See thyself, then, with thine own light*
>
> *The second witness is the consciousness of another ego-*
>
> *See thyself, then, with the light of an ego other than thee*
>
> *The third witness is God's consciousness-*
>
> *See thyself, then, with God's light*
>
> *Consider thyself as living and eternal as He!*
>
> *That man alone is real who dares-*
>
> *Dares to see God face to face!*

What is 'Ascension' only a search for witness

Who may finally confirm thy reality-

A witness whose confirmation alone makes thee eternal

No one can stand unshaken in His Presence

And who he can, verity he is pure gold.

Art thou a mere particle of dust?

Tighten the knot of thy ego/ And held fast to thy tiny being!

How glorious to burnish one's ego

And to test its lustre in the presence of the Sun!

Re-chisel, then, thine ancient frames and build up a new being

Such being is real being

Or else they ego is a mere ring of smoke

POLITICAL THOUGHT OF IQBAL AND CONTEMPORARY: ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali

ABSTRACT

This paper comprises sections. In the first section, his views on the importance and relevance of faith, his methodology of the study of Islam, spirituality, and ethical ideals of Islam are explored and assessed. In the second section, his political thought is presented. This is followed by the conclusion.

Introduction

Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of Islam, made certain observations in his writings such as the following:

The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam.[260]

We heartily welcome the liberal movement in modern Islam.[261]

The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to re-interpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life, is, in my opinion, perfectly justified.[262]

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[260] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1994), p.7.
[261] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[262] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

I am sorry that Muslims have never recognized the modernity of Qur'an.[263]

the idea of Universal Imamate has failed in practice……The idea has ceased to be operative and cannot work as a living factor in the organization of modern Islam.[264]

I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interest of India and Islam.[265]

Based on such observations of Iqbal, a few scholars who wrote on the development of Islamic thought in modern age concluded that Iqbal was either a modernist Muslim thinker or a Muslim nationalist.[266] They, therefore, associated him with the tradition of modernity and so-called modernism in Islam. They thought Iqbal was a staunch supporter of modernity and Muslim nationalism in the Muslim world. However, this writer, based on an exploration and a close examination of his thought, reached to a different conclusion. It is, therefore, argued here that to consider Iqbal as a modernist and a Muslim nationalist is to do a great injustice to him. The fact is that Iqbal belongs neither to the tradition of traditionalists and reformists nor secularists and modernists. Hence, the aim of this paper is to refute the unfounded conclusion that Iqbal was a modernist and a Muslim nationalist.

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[263] Iqbal has said this in one of his letters which is quoted here by Chawdhry Muzzaffar Hussain, "Khutbath ka Asal Mauzu" [The main Theme of Lectures by Iqbal], Iqbaliyyat [*Iqbal Review*] (January—March, 1997), p.34.

[264] Mohammad Iqbal, op. cit., p.158.

[265] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[266] See for example, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr who said, "Much like other Islamic modernists, Iqbal found the ideal polity in the early history of Islam," in "Iqbal's Impact on Contemporary Understandings of the Islamic Polity", Iqbal Review, vol. 42, no. 4 (October 2001), p. 19; Javid Iqbal also made similar statement, 'Although Iqbal was a critic of western civilization, he was not opposed to modernity' in " Modern Indian Muslims and Iqbal," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences,* vol. 14, no. 1, (1997), p. 36; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Modern Reformist Thought in The Muslim World* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1982); Abdullah al-Ahsan, *Ummah or Nation? Identity Crisis in Contemporary Muslim Society* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1992).

Iqbal demonstrated in his thought an evolutionary process. In spite of this, it is contended that he rightly deserves a place in the tradition of Islamic Revivalism that is the most important tradition of Islam that stands for the revival of Islam and Islamic civilization.[267] In our view Iqbal stood as a revivalist and struggled hard throughout his life since 1905 until his death for the revival of Islam and Islamic civilization. He wrote:

Now, along with the renaissance of Muslim communities, the renaissance of Islam also is needed. I pray to God Almighty that He, for the sake of his beloved, the Prophet, peace be upon him, produces such an interpreter among Muslims who gets at the 'lost wisdom' once more and offers it to *ummah*. Our demise is not near at hand. The Qur'an still holds on.[268]

Nevertheless, the revival of Islam and its civilization to Iqbal is absolutely necessary for peace, security and prosperity for the entire mankind in this modern age. No one, therefore, he contended, should misunderstand in any way that the revival of Islam is either a backward step or against the interest of humanity; rather, it is for the survival of humanity as humanity. The Islamic revivalistic trend in Iqbal's thought can be easily gleaned through an exploration of his views on spirituality, ethical values of Islam, and his critical insights into the ideologies of democracy and nationalism, his views on the institution of *Khilafah* and the need for *Ijtihād* and the necessity of Islamic political system. An exploration into all these areas and his political thought will help us to unfold all false understandings about Iqbal and reveal the fact that to Iqbal, the modern west and western thought have lost the credibility to claim the leadership of mankind for they failed to guide mankind to achieve peace, security and prosperity. Hence, Iqbal contended that to fill up this gap of leadership, Muslims should come forward. For this purpose, at the very outset, they must realize that they first need to understand clearly the weaknesses of Western thought on one hand and on the other the spiritual and moral force of the teachings of Islam. A brief study of Iqbal's political thought, in fact, provides an empirical evidence to the fact that he

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[267] I think this was the reason that John L. Esposito realized the position of Iqbal rightly and included him in his book on Islamic resurgence entitled, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, pp. 175-190.

[268] Chawdhry Muzzaffar Hussain, "Khutbath ka Asal Mauzu" [The main Theme of Lectures by Iqbal], Iqbaliyyat [*Iqbal Review*] (January–March, 1997), p. 35.

endeavoured for the revival of Islamic civilization. He argued that unless mankind submits itself to the teachings of God, and accepts Islam as the way of life, it cannot achieve the noble goals of peace, security and prosperity.

This paper comprises sections. In the first section, his views on the importance and relevance of faith, his methodology of the study of Islam, spirituality, and ethical ideals of Islam are explored and assessed. In the second section, his political thought is presented. This is followed by the conclusion.

FIRST SECTION: IQBAL'S VIEWS ON FAITH, METHODOLOGY OF IQBAL'S THOUGHT, SPIRITUALITY AND ETHICS

Faith: The Basis of Life

Iqbal, an idealist-realist philosopher-thinker, penetrating deeply into the conditions of his time, realized that the cherished goals of humanity—peace, security, prosperity, equality, justice, liberty, rule of law, harmony, and peaceful co-existence, once elaborated and practiced by Islam, were being destroyed by the communities of the modern world of both the East and the West. Instead of peace and harmony, one observes chaos and conflict. On the eve of 1938, in his message broadcasted from the Lahore Station of the All-India Radio, Iqbal expressed his disenchantment with the modern dominant political tradition largely because of its irrational and illogical insistence on the denial of spirituality, acceptance of materialism, its ties to capitalist economics, and its lack of a meaningful conception of the so-called democratic community. He echoed, in fact, the view of Bertrand Russell and said that scientific civilization is, no doubt, a good civilization but it is by itself not sufficient; increase in knowledge and skills should be accompanied by an increase in wisdom. For Russell and Iqbal, wisdom means the right conception of the ends of life. Both believed that this is something which science in itself does not provide. They, therefore, concluded that the progress of science by itself is not enough to guarantee any genuine progress.[269] For Iqbal the conditions of his time manifested an empirical

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[269] Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. xxix.

evidence for this truth identified by Russell. He, therefore, made the following statement in the court of humanity:

> The modern age prides itself on its progress in knowledge and its matchless scientific developments. No doubt, the pride is justified. Today space and time are being annihilated and man is achieving amazing successes in unveiling the secrets of nature and harnessing its forces to his own service. But in spite of all these developments, the tyranny of imperialism struts abroad, covering its face under the masks of Democracy, Nationalism, Communism, Fascism and heaven knows what else besides. Under these masks, in every corner of the earth, the spirit of freedom and the dignity of man are being trampled underfoot in a way to which not even the darkest period of human history presents a parallel. The so-called statesmen to whom government and leadership of men was entrusted have proved demons of bloodshed, tyranny and oppression. The rulers whose duty it was to protect and cherish those ideals which go to form a higher humanity, to prevent man's oppression of man and to elevate the moral and intellectual level of mankind, have in their hunger for dominion and imperial possessions, shed the blood of millions and reduced millions to servitude simply in order to pander to the greed and avarice of their own particular groups. After subjugating and establishing their dominion over weaker peoples, they have robbed them of their possessions, of their religions, their morals, of their cultural traditions and their literatures. Then they sowed divisions among them that they should shed one another's blood and go to sleep under the opiate of serfdom, so that the leech of imperialism might go on sucking their blood without interruption.[270]

Iqbal further continued saying:

> As I look back on the year that has passed and as I look at the world in the midst of the New Year's rejoicings…the same misery prevails in every corner of man's earthly home, and hundreds of thousands of men are being butchered mercilessly. Engines of destruction created by science are

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[270] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, edited by Syed Abdul Vahid (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1992), pp. 373-374.

wiping out the great landmarks of Man's cultural achievements. The governments which are not themselves engaged in this drama of fire and blood are sucking the blood of the weaker people economically.[271]

Iqbal then raised a pertinent question:

Do you not see that the people of Spain, though they have the same common bond of one race, one nationality, one language and one religion, are cutting one another's throats and destroying their culture and civilization by their own hands owing to a difference in their economic creed?[272]

According to Iqbal this single event demonstrates clearly that 'national unity' is not a 'very durable force.' He asserted that only one unity is dependable, the unity of brotherhood of man, which stands above race, nationality, colour or language.[273]

Hence, he argued that:

as long as this so-called democracy, this accursed nationalism and this degraded imperialism are not shattered, so long as men do not demonstrate by their actions that they believe that the whole world is the family of God, so long as distinctions of race, colour and geographical nationalities are not wiped out completely, they will never be able to lead a happy and contended life and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialize.[274]

Iqbal believed that the phenomena described above are only "premonitions of a coming storm, which is likely to sweep over the whole world." According to him it is the natural result of a "wholly political civilization" which has always perceived man as a "thing to be exploited and not as a personality to be developed and enlarged by purely cultural forces."

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[271] *Ibid.*, p. 374.
[272] *Ibid.*, p. 375.
[273] *Ibid.*
[274] *Ibid.*

He further asserted that the peoples of Asia, particularly, are bound to rise against the acquisitive economy which the West has developed and imposed on the nations of the East. The people of Asia, according to Iqbal, cannot comply with modern Western capitalism with its undisciplined individualism any more.[275] He felt, therefore, that only faith which he himself represented recognizes the worth of the individual, and disciplines him to give away his all to the service of God and man. He maintained that its possibilities are not yet exhausted. It is a historic fact that in the beginning, faith played a revolutionary role in human societies by challenging, altering, and often smashing the old but irrational values, customs, habits, and opinions of the peoples. He believed that faith can still create a new world where the social rank of man is not determined by his caste or colour, or the amount of dividend he earns, but by the kind of life he lives, where the poor tax the rich, where human society is founded not on the equality of stomachs but on the equality of spirits, where an Untouchable can marry the daughter of a king, where private ownership is a trust and where capita cannot be allowed to accumulate so as to dominate the real producer of wealth.[276]

Iqbal rejected the harshly critical argument of Marx who thought that faith was "the heart of the heartless world" and reasoned that by submitting to God, people were placing their creative power outside themselves, a tendency according to Marx that would only prolong their willingness to be dominated by each other and by capital. Iqbal held totally a different view. For him the essence of religion is faith, and faith which has a cognitive content is the source of creative energy.[277] For humanity to be genuinely liberated, he maintained, there is no other way except to surrender itself to the faith, for faith in true God would induce in humanity the spirit of free man who is able to see himself as the sole, creative, and responsible power over world's affairs. He, therefore, reminded his people and told them that they should come forward to save humanity from the destruction of capitalism and liberalism. But they should not forget that at this stage of history what they needed first was to realize that the superb idealism of their own faith, however, needed emancipation from the medieval fancies of

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[275] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[276] *Ibid.*, p. 213.
[277] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 1.

theologians and legists. Iqbal asserted that at the moment his people, spiritually, were still living in a prison house of thoughts and emotions, which during the course of centuries they had woven around themselves. And let it be further said to the shame of us—men of older generation—that we have failed to equip the younger generation for economic, political and even religious crisis that the present age is likely to bring. In this background, he argued that the whole community needed a complete overhauling of its present mentality in order that it might again become capable of feeling the urge of fresh desires and ideals. They have not recognized the inner force of their faith and they have long ceased to explore the depths of their own inner life. The result is that they have ceased to live in the full glow and colour of life, and are consequently in danger of an unmanly compromise with forces which, they are made to think, they cannot vanquish in open conflict.[278]

Keeping these limitations of Muslims into consideration, Iqbal urged them to struggle to bring a constructive change in the society. He said: "He who desires to change an unfavourable environment must undergo a complete transformation of his inner being. God changeth not the condition of a people until they themselves take the initiative to change their condition by constantly illuminating the zone of their daily activity in the light of a definite ideal. Nothing can be achieved without a firm faith in the independence of one's own inner life. This faith alone keeps a people's eye fixed on their goal and saves them from perpetual vacillation. The lesson that past experience has brought to you must be taken to heart. Expect nothing from any side. Concentrate your whole ego on yourself alone, and ripen your clay into real manhood if you wish to see your aspirations realized. Remember! The flame of life cannot be borrowed from others; it must be kindled in the temple of one's own soul."[279] He, therefore, told Muslims that no obstacle should stop them from marching forward to save humanity from self-destruction. He said "I am quite sensible of the difficulties that lie in our way, all that I can say is that if we cannot get over our difficulties, the world will soon get rid of us."[280]

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[278] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 213.
[279] *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214.
[280] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Methodology of Iqbal's Thought

This was the realization and background in which the ideas of Iqbal were developed. He wanted on one hand to liberate his people from intellectual slavery of the so-called modern scientific thought and ideologies and on the other to create confidence among them on their own Islamic perspective to life and society by way of scrutinizing their own heritage and sources. He suggested a fundamental principle that so far as human thought is concerned it should be studied critically, and with regard to the understanding of the Divine sources, he was of the opinion that the Qur'an is the authentic Divine source. It should be understood based on the principles in the Qur'an, which have been identified by commentators of the Holy Book. Here, he was open for any alterations and modifications of knowledge. So far as the collection of Traditions are concerned, he was of the opinion that it should be approached critically. Iqbal further argued that for the understanding of the Divine sources or the Reality, we need to depend upon all possible ways and means. In this way he refuted the claims of rationality and empiricism as the only sources of knowledge respectively. His method was a combination of all those means which are useful for the understanding of Reality. He also did not discard personal inner experiences of individuals as a means of knowledge. He contended that all possible means of knowledge are in need of each other for they seek visions of the same Reality. Our reasons, senses, perceptions, intuitions, inspirations and mystic experiences all play a role according to their functions in our life.[281] Based on this Iqbal, therefore, decided to show them the sound spiritual and logical basis of Islamic thought by way of elaborating the logical weaknesses of the modern political thought and eradicating the dogmatic and fatalistic attitude of his own people. He argued that his convictions were not the result of any reactions to the modern political thought or the result of pessimistic understanding of his heritage, rather his convictions were the result of a comparative study of world religions and ideologies on one hand and the critical study of legacy of Islam on the other. He argued that a search for such spiritual principles which could be the basis of social organization must be based on a comparative and critical study of all currents of thoughts, philosophical and religious.

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[281] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 3.

To achieve this goal Iqbal suggested that one should adopt a critical and comparative approach. According to him a student of spiritual principles must be scientific in his approach. It is not because he does not have faith in religion or revelation but because his aim is to approach the subject from a thoroughly human standpoint, and not because he doubts the fact of Divine Revelation as the final basis of human organization.[282] To search for spiritual principles, Iqbal said: "I propose to look at Islam from the standpoint of the critical student."[283] Furthermore, a philosophical and scientific discussion of some of the basic ideas of Islam would be helpful towards a proper understanding of the meaning of Islam as a message to humanity.[284] Based on this approach he finally reached to the conclusion that Islam is the only way of life that can guarantee peace, security and prosperity. He said: "I have given the best part of my life to a careful study of Islam, its law and polity, its culture, its history and its literature. This constant contact with the spirit of Islam, as it unfolds itself in time, has, I think, given me a kind of insight into its significance as a world-fact."[285] He further said: "I hope more than twenty years long, study of the world's thought has given me sufficient training to judge things impartially."[286]

Spirituality: The Essence and Basis of Life

In the light of Iqbal's insights into the history of civilizations and based on his own experience and observation of realities around him, he realized that the lack of spirituality is the root cause of all chaos and crisis. He, therefore, concluded that spirituality is the essence and basis of life. Due to this, it seems to us that his restless soul was in search of those fundamental principles which may guarantee peace and harmony in man's life on this earth. He, therefore, contended that all religious, philosophical and scientific understanding of man about the origin and development of life which denies the spiritual basis of life cannot be the solid basis of human development simply because the whole history of mankind reveals the fact that life in

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[282] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 30-31.
[283] *Ibid.*
[284] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p.8.
[285] Mohammad Iqbal in *Speeches And Statements of Iqbal,* edited by Shamloo, (Lahore: al-Manar Academy, 1948), p. 3.
[286] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 100.

nature is not material but spiritual. He, therefore, rejected all religions and ideologies, both classical and modern, which do not accept the spiritual basis of man's material life. To Iqbal, who was by profession and training a lawyer, Islam, as being the religion of all mankind and the source of spirit and matter, appears to be the only alternative to civilizational development for it provides both guidance and law, the *Shariah* law, which is the most authentic and realistic law which is most suitable for modern societies. He, therefore, believed that if mankind follows this, self-destruction can be avoided and the world can be kept under control from chaos and crisis which are dominant features of the modern world, and consequently develop peace and security for all. With this perception, he developed his political thought based on three fundamental parameters, namely, spirituality, ethical and political ideals of mankind. To explore in detail the political thought of Iqbal, we need to make a thorough investigation into these parameters.

Iqbal's contention is that from the point of view of Islam, life is essentially spiritual and the essence of Islam is also spiritual. To support his contention, he raised a fundamental question at the very outset: Why do we need a spiritual basis for our life? He answered that this spiritual basis is indispensable for a meaningful social life. He asserted that there is no social life without spiritual understanding of life as such. It is with this reason that Iqbal differs from Nietzsche who did not see any spiritual purpose in the universe.[287] Iqbal seemed to be in search of spirituality that can provide "a purely psychological foundation of human unity" and human unity "becomes possible only with the perception that all human life is spiritual in its origin." Hence, he realized that there is an integral relationship between spirituality and human organization and unity. More than that the sense of spirituality for him is a source "creative of fresh loyalties without any ceremonial to keep them alive, and makes it possible for man to emancipate himself from the earth."[288]

Based on this, he found in the fundamental principle of Islam, *Tawhid,* the foundation of world unity. Iqbal asserted that according to this principle God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life. And loyalty to God virtually amounts

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[287] Ibid. p. 242.
[288] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 146.

to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature.[289] Islam, as a polity, is only a practical means of making this principle a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind. It demands loyalty to God and denies all other deities who claim loyalty. Islam as a social polity generates the spirit of freedom. The essence of *Tawhid*, as Iqbal conceived it, as a working idea is equality, solidarity, and freedom. The State, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization. The ultimate reality according to the principles of *Tawhid*, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity.[290] The spirit, therefore, finds its opportunities in the natural, the material and the profane. All that is profane is, therefore, sacred in the roots of its being. The mere material has no substance until we discover it rooted in the spiritual. There is no such thing as a profane world as it was understood in modern Western philosophical thought. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of spirit. Iqbal further argued that "the State according to Islam is only an effort to realize the spiritual in a human organization."[291] In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. It is the invisible mental background of the act which ultimately determines its character. According to Iqbal an act is temporal or profane if it is done in a spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life behind it; it is spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity. Iqbal maintained that Islam "is a single unanalyzable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies. It is wrong to say that in Islam it is the same reality which appears as the Church looked at from one point of view and the state from another. It is not true to say that the Church and the State are two sides or facets of the same thing …suffice it to say that this ancient mistake arose out of the bifurcation of the unity of man into two distinct and separate realities which somehow have a point of contact, but which are in essence opposed to each other."[292] Iqbal pointed out that the truth, however, is that matter is spirit in space-time reference. The idea of the separation of matter and spirit and, therefore, the separation of Church and State is completely an alien idea

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[289] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[290] *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
[291] *Ibid.*, p. 155.
[292] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

to Islam. The fact is that Primitive Christianity was founded, not as a political or civil unit, but as a monastic order in a profane world, having nothing to do with civil affairs, and obeying the Roman authority practically in all matters. The result of this was that when the State became Christian, State and Church confronted each other as distinct powers with interminable boundary disputes between them. Such a thing could never happen in Islam; for Islam was from the very beginning a civil society.[293] Iqbal, therefore, believed that "Politics have their roots in the spiritual life of man…that Islam is not a matter of private opinion. It is a society, or if you like, a civic church."[294] As Iqbal saw it, Nietzsche did not believe in the spiritual purpose in the universe. To him there was no ethical principle resident in the forces of history. Virtue, Justice, Duty, Love all were meaningless terms to him. The process of history is determined purely by economical forces and the only principle that governs is 'Might is Right.' It must be noted that Karl Marx and Nietzsche borrowed this materialistic interpretation of the historical process from the left wing followers of Hegel and accepted it without criticism. They, however, drew absolutely opposite inferences from this interpretation. Karl Marx predicted that power would eventually fall into the hands of the proletariat by the sheer forces of historical causes. The proletariat, therefore, wrest by force the power from the hands of the rich and imposed upon the world a new social order. Nietzsche, on the other hand, said that it is the superior man who has been robbed of power and he should assert himself and tell the inferior to remain where he should be, i.e., hewers of wood and drawers of water. However, the truth is, Iqbal contended, that this materialistic interpretation of the historical process has marred the teachings of both Karl Marx and Nietzsche. It has done more harm to the teachings of Karl Marx.[295]

Iqbal believed that Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam God and the universe, spirit and matter, Church and State are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit

[293] *Ibid.*, p. 155.
[294] Mohammad Iqbal in *Discourses of Iqbal* edited by Shahid Hussain Razzaqi, (Lahore: Sh. Ghulam Ali and Sons, 1979), p. 84.
[295] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 242-243.

situated elsewhere. To Islam matter is spirit realizing itself in space and time. He asserted that Europe uncritically accepted the duality of spirit and matter probably from the Manichean thought. According to Iqbal Europe's best thinkers realized this initial mistake, but her statesmen indirectly forced the world to accept it as an unquestionable dogma. It was, then, this mistaken separation of spiritual and temporal which has largely influenced European religious and political thought and finally resulted practically in the total exclusion of Christianity from the life of European states. The result was a set of mutually ill-adjusted states dominated by interests not human but national.[296]

According to Iqbal Islam does favour the idea of division of work but this Islamic idea of the division of religious and political functions of the state must not be confounded with the European idea of the separation of Church and State. The former in Islam is only a division of functions as is clear from the gradual creation in the Muslim state of the offices of *Shaykh al-Islam* and Ministers; the latter is based on the metaphysical dualism of spirit and matter. Christianity began as an order of monks having nothing to do with the affairs of the world; Islam was, from the very beginning, a civil society with laws civil in their nature though believed to be revelational in origin.

The metaphysical dualism on which the European idea is based has borne bitter fruit among Western nations.[297] Iqbal believed that the great evils from which humanity is suffering today are evils that can be handled only by religious sentiments; that the handling of those evils has been in the great part surrendered to the State; that the State has itself been delivered over to corrupt political machines; that such machines are not only unwilling, but unable, to deal with those evils; and that nothing but a religious awakening of the citizens to their public duties can save countless millions from misery, and the State itself from degradation.[298] He said: "In the history of Muslim political experience this separation has meant only a separation of functions, not of ideas. It cannot be maintained that in Muslim countries the separation of Church and State means the freedom of Muslim legislative activity from

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[296] Mohammad Iqbal in *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
[297] Mohammad Iqbal in *Discourses of Iqbal,* op. cit., p. 251.
[298] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

the conscience of the people, which has for centuries been trained and developed by the spirituality of Islam. Experience alone will show how the idea, if it is put in practice by a right kind of leadership in a proper environment, will work in modern times. We can only hope that it will not be productive of the evils which it has produced in Europe and America."[299] From this point of view Islam is both religion and polity, State and Church. They are integral to each other. He further elaborated:

> I have already indicated to you the meaning of the word religion as applied to Islam. The truth is that Islam is not a church. It is a state conceived as a contractual organism long before Rousseau ever thought of such a thing, and animated by an ethical ideal which regards man not as an earth-rooted creature, defined by this or that portion of the earth, but as a spiritual being understood in terms of social mechanism, and possessing rights and duties as a living factor in that mechanism."[300]

In fact, for Iqbal "religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man."[301]

Is religion a private affair? Would we like to see Islam as a moral and political ideal, meeting the same fate in the world of Islam as Christianity has already met in Europe? Is it possible to retain Islam as an ethical ideal and to reject it as a polity in favour of national polities, in which religious attitude is not permitted to play any part? According to Iqbal these are the questions which have become of special importance in the contemporary age where both spirituality and ethics are rejected from the domains of state and politics.[302]

Ethical Ideals of Mankind and Islam

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[299] *Ibid.*

[300] Mohammad Iqbal in *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 14.

[301] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit, p. 2.

[302] Mohammad Iqbal in *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal,* op. cit., p. 8.

Iqbal concluded that if life in nature is spiritual then it must be ethical. Hence, he examined the ethical ideal of human society in the light of the teachings of Islam. Life, according to Islam, is one single unit, i.e., the unity of life is a fact. This is the logical consequence of the spiritual origin of life. This proposition is followed by another, that life, in reality, is both ethical and political in its origin. It, therefore, needs both ethical and political ideals. Based on this premise Iqbal developed his ethical and political ideals which are integral to one another. A careful discussion of ethical and political ideals, as Iqbal put it, requires a thorough understanding of the nature of the universe and man. Therefore, Iqbal believed that Islamic ethical ideals are based on two important propositions namely, the nature of universe and man. He made intellectual efforts to understand the true nature of universe and man in the light of the teachings of God.[303] Iqbal, as a philosopher and thinker, did not develop his understanding of the nature of man and universe based on his own reason and sense perception. Rather, as a principle of his methodology he adopted an approach to make the fundamental teachings of God as the basis of further thinking and reflections. He, therefore, developed his thought in the light of God's teachings for he clearly understood that the understanding of the true nature of man and universe is simply beyond the human faculties of reason and sense perception.

According to the first proposition, Islam looks upon the universe as a reality and, consequently, recognizes as reality all that is in it. Sin, pain, sorrow, struggle, are certainly real, but Islam teaches that evil is not essential to the universe; the universe can be reformed and the elements of sin and evil can be gradually eliminated. All that is in the universe is God's and the seemingly destructive forces of nature become a source of life, if properly controlled by man, who is endowed with the power to understand and to control them.[304] Iqbal maintained that these and other similar teachings of the Qur'an, combined with the Qur'anic recognition of the reality of sin and sorrow, indicate that the Islamic view of the universe is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Islam believes in the efficacy of well-directed actions; hence, from the standpoint of Islam all human efforts must be directed towards

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[303] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 32.
[304] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

scientific discovery and social progress.[305] If this is the reality, then what is really the obstacle towards the spiritual and ethical development of man and his society? As an answer to this question, Iqbal said: "Although Islam recognizes the fact of pain, sin and struggle in nature, yet the principal fact which stands in the way of man's ethical progress is, according to Islam, neither pain, nor sin, nor struggle. It is fear to which man is a victim owing to his ignorance of the nature of his environment and want of absolute faith in God. The highest stage of man's ethical progress is reached when he becomes absolutely free from fear and grief."[306]

The central proposition, as Iqbal explained, which regulates the structure of Islam, then, is that there is fear in nature, and the object of Islam is to free man from fear. This view of the universe indicates also the Islamic view of the metaphysical nature of man. If fear is the force which dominates man and counteracts his ethical progress, then, as Iqbal conceived it, man must be regarded as a unit of force, an energy, a will, a germ of infinite power, the gradual unfolding of which must be the object of all human activity. He further asserted that the essential nature of man, then, consists in will, not in intellect or understanding.[307] This is the reason that differentiates Iqbal from others' opinions on the issue of education and contended that the aim of education, as wrongly understood by many, is not the training of the intellect, rather it is the training of the willpower of an individual. He said: "Education, we are told, will work the required transformation. I may say at once that I do not put much faith in education as a means of ethical training– I mean education as understood in this country.[308] I venture to say, that the present system of education in this country is not at all suited to us as a people. It is not true to our genius as a nation, it tends to produce an un-Muslim type of character, it is not determined by our national requirements, it breaks entirely with our past, and appears to proceed on the false assumption that the ideal of education is the training of human intellect rather than human will."[309] This is the reason that Iqbal considered the immense amount of money spent every year on education as a waste for it is

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[305] *Ibid.*

[306] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

[307] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[308] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[309] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

based on Western and secular philosophy of life in which there is no place for God and His guidance for the construction of social life.[310] Instead of this, he suggested that Muslims must have, in order to be truly themselves, their own schools, colleges and universities, based on their own philosophy of education, keeping alive their social and historical traditions, making them good and peaceful men of character and creating in them the free but law-abiding spirit which evolves out of itself the noblest types of political virtue.[311]

With regard to the ethical nature of man, the teaching of Islam is different from those of other religious systems and modern ideologies. Iqbal believed that according to the tenets of Islam man is essentially good and peaceful—a view explained and defended, in our own times, he contended, even by Rousseau—the great father of modern political thought. In his view the possibility of the elimination of sin and pain from the evolutionary process and faith in the natural goodness of man are the basic propositions of Islam, as in modern European civilization, which has, almost unconsciously, recognized the truth of these propositions in spite of the religious system with which it is associated. He emphasized that ethically speaking, therefore, man is naturally good and peaceful. Metaphysically speaking, he is a unit of energy, which cannot bring out its dormant possibilities owing to its misconception of the nature of its environment. Against this, if anyone understands that man is basically wicked, as understood by Hobbes, then Iqbal said, he must not be permitted to have his own way; his entire life must be controlled by external authority, as Hobbes claimed. But for Iqbal this will lead instead to elimination, to the further consolidation of and control by priesthood in religion and autocracy in politics. Sometimes, it may come in disguised forms such as liberalism, individualism and so on. The ethical ideal of Islam is to disenthrall man from fear, and thus to give him a sense of his personality, to make him conscious of himself as a source of power.[312] This idea of man as an individual of infinite power determines, according to the teachings of Islam, the worth of all human action. That which intensifies the sense of individuality in man is good, that which enfeebles it is bad. Virtue is

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[310] *Ibid.*

[311] *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

[312] *Ibid.*, p.36.

power, force and strength; evil is weakness. Give man a keen sense of respect for his own personality, let him move fearless and free in the immensity of God's earth, and he will respect the personalities of others and become perfectly virtuous[313] Why, then, certain forms of human activity, e.g., self-renunciation, poverty, slavish obedience which sometimes conceals itself under beautiful name of humility and unworldliness–modes of activity which tend to weaken the force of human individuality–are regarded as virtues by certain religions, and altogether ignored by Islam? Iqbal answered this question by saying that, no doubt, some religions glorify poverty and unworldliness; however, Islam looks upon poverty as a vice, and says: 'Do not forget thy share in the world.' The highest virtue from the standpoint of Islam is righteousness which is defined by the Qur'an in the following manner:

> It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayers towards East and west, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God And the last day and the angels and the scriptures and the Prophets, Who give the money for God's sake unto his kindred and unto Orphans and the needy and to strangers and to those who ask and For the redemption of captives; of those who are constant at Prayer, and of those who perform their covenant when they have Covenanted, and behave themselves patiently in adversity and In times of violence. (2:177)

Islam transmutes the moral values of ancient world, and declares the preservation, intensification of the sense of human personality to be the ultimate ground of all ethical activity. Man is a free responsible being; he is the maker of his own destiny and his salvation is his own business. There is no mediator between God and man.[314] Islam rejects all those doctrines which proceed upon the assumption of the insufficiency of human personality and tend to create in man a sense of dependence, which is regarded by Islam as a force obstructing the ethical progress of man. The development of human individuality is the principal concern of Islam.[315] According to Iqbal, individual personality is the central fact of the universe and that personality is

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[313] *Ibid.*, p.37.

[314] *Ibid.*, p.38.

[315] *Ibid.*

the central fact in the constitution of man. This personality is the bearer of Divine trust. The nature of man, therefore, in spite of his constitutional shortcomings is not hopeless. On the other hand, it has the quality of growth as well as the quality of corruption; it has the power to expand by absorbing the elements of the universe of which it appears to be an insignificant part, it has also the power of absorbing the attributes of God, and thus attain to the vicegerency of God on earth.[316]

Iqbal asserted that Nietzsche did not at all believe in this spiritual fact of human personality. According to Nietzsche all this spiritual understanding of man about himself is a fiction. Iqbal further contended that it might appear true if someone looked at man from a purely intellectual point of view; this in fact manifested a methodological shortcoming of the Western thought. This was also the reason that caused Kant to reach to the same conclusion that God, immortality and freedom are mere fictions though useful for practical purposes. The views of Nietzsche and Kant, however, are refuted by the inner experience, as Iqbal maintained it, because we know that the human personality grows and expands by education. The question here is not whether human personality is a substance or not. The real question here is whether this weak, created and dependent personality can be made to survive the shock of death and thus become a permanent element in the constitution of the universe. Iqbal answered that the human personality could be made permanent by adopting a certain mode of life and thereby bringing it into contact with the ultimate source of life.[317] According to Iqbal the concept of man in western political thought is purely materialist and a biological product; whereas for him man is the product of moral and spiritual forces.[318]

Based on this understanding, Iqbal argued that briefly speaking, a strong will in a strong body is the ethical ideal of Islam. This strong willpower stimulates sufficient strength of character to oppose those forces which tend to disintegrate the social organism to which he belongs. One should understand that in the great struggle for existence it is not principally number which makes a social organism survive. Character is the ultimate source of

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[316] *Ibid*, pp. 238-239.

[317] *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

[318] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

man, not only in his efforts against a hostile natural environment, but also in his contest with kindred competitors after a fuller, richer, ampler life. The absence of this understanding will be the source of decline. The decay of this spirit of religion combined with other causes of a political nature will develop in him a habit of self-dwarfing, a sense of dependence and, above all, the spirit of laziness.[319]

Iqbal further argued that from this point of view an illiterate shopkeeper deserves a greater respect for he earns his honest bread and sustains sufficiently his family than a graduate of high culture, whose low, timid voice betokens the dearth of soul in his body, who takes pride in his submissiveness and depends on others. Islam, therefore, rejects the sense of dependence which undermines the force of human individuality. Iqbal argued that economic dependence, in fact, is the prolific mother of all forms of vice. For him, power, energy, force, physical strength, constitute the law of life.[320] Islam always gave importance to the conditions of life and made due poor tax (*zakath*) as an obligation along with charity and endowments to improve the economic and general living conditions of people and continuously inspire the followers to fight against poverty.

Iqbal also emphasized that in the eyes of Islam there is no special privileged class. It is the masses who constitute the backbone of a nation; they ought to be better fed, better housed and properly educated. No doubt, life is not bread and butter alone; it is something more. It is a healthy character reflecting the national ideal in all its aspects.[321] Hence, the ideal of education, as Iqbal said, is not the training of human intellect rather the human will for education is a means through which we create men of will and determination who are, in a true sense, concerned for the welfare of an individual and society. Furthermore, Iqbal argued that the spirit of Islam is not afraid of its contact with matter. Indeed, he said, the Qur'an says: "Forget not thy share in the world." It is, therefore, not difficult for anyone

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[319] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[320] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
[321] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

to understand that the progress of a materialist outlook is only a form of self-realization.[322]

Iqbal understood clearly that Islam, "as an ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity, i.e., a social structure regulated by a legal system and animated by a specific ethical ideal --, has been the chief formative factor in the life-history of mankind. It has furnished those basic emotions and loyalties which gradually unify scattered individuals and groups and finally transform them into a well-defined people."[323] He maintained that Islam, as a people-building force, has worked at its best and has the potentials to work presently and in the future. The structure of Islam as a society is almost entirely due to the working of Islam as a culture inspired by a specific ethical ideal.[324]

SECOND SECTION: POLITICAL IDEALS OF MANKIND AND ISLAM

For Iqbal the political ideals of any community must be subordinate to the spiritual and ethical ideals of that community. In the case of Islam and Muslims, the political ideals are integral to the spiritual and ethical ideals of Islam. The Muslim community is, therefore, bound to elaborate its political ideals in the light of the teachings of Islam. The Muslim community is also supposed to develop its political system according to the political ideals of Islam. Hence, the political system is neither isolated nor outside the framework of spiritual and ethical ideals. Iqbal at a time when the whole world was rushing towards the secular nation state, pleaded for a state which was deeply rooted in spiritual and ethical ideals. In other words, Iqbal genuinely stood in favour of the Islamic state. In fact like Muhammad Asad and Mawdudi, Iqbal also explained systematically the need for an Islamic state. He also refuted scientifically the false foundations of secular systems.

Iqbal developed his views upon the premise that Islam basically is a religion of peace and prosperity. He said: "It has been said, by the critics of Islam, that Islam is a religion which implies a state of war and can thrive only

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[322] Mohammad Iqbal in *Discourses of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 249.
[323] Mohammad Iqbal in *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 4.
[324] *Ibid.*

in a state of war."[325] He asserted that Islam is essentially a religion of peace and prosperity. Therefore, all forms of political and social disturbances are condemned by the Qur'an in the most uncompromising terms.[326] There is no doubt about it; however, the question is how far the injunctions of the Qur'an were practically upheld by the followers of Islam throughout the history? Iqbal did not provide a detailed answer to this question. He only contended that Islam does not tolerate any kind of political and social disorders. They are severely denounced by the Qur'an. The Qur'an considers them equal to evil and destruction (*fasad*). For this purpose, all sorts of secret and violent activities of political and social nature of unrest are condemned. At the political level, Iqbal said, "the ideal of Islam is to secure social peace at any cost." All methods of violent change in society are condemned in the most unmistakable language.[327] In all Islamic teachings unity, peace, harmony and prosperity are emphasized. However, it does not mean that kingship or any other kind of tyranny or dictatorship is allowed or any ruler is accepted for forever. Iqbal pointed out that Islam provides certain principles for the guidance in the management of communal affairs. What principles ought to guide them? What must be their ultimate object and how should they be achieved? These questions are answered by Iqbal. He contended that polity in Islam is not something undesirable. It is integral to Islam as "Islam is not merely a creed rather it is something more than a creed, it is also a community, a civilization. The membership of Islam as a community is not determined by birth, locality or naturalization; it consists in the identity of belief."[328] Iqbal, therefore, argued that the expression of 'Indian Muslim,' however convenient it may be, is a contradiction in terms since Islam in its essence is above all conditions of time and space. Nationality in Islam is a pure idea; it has no geographical basis. But inasmuch as the average man demands a material centre of nationality, the Muslim looks for it in the holy town of Makkah, so that the basis of Muslim nationality combines the real and the ideal, the concrete and the abstract.[329] In the eyes of Iqbal the best form of government for such a community would be democracy, the ideal of which is to let man develop all the possibilities of his nature by allowing him

[325] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal,* op. cit., p.46.

[326] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[327] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[328] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[329] *Ibid.*

as much freedom as practicable. But the freedom of the individual as a unit is subordinate to the interests of the community as an external symbol of the Islamic principle.[330]

However, in the discussion on democracy it cannot be ignored that a few Muslims as well as Western scholars are quite critical about the Western philosophy of democracy. Some of them argue that the Western form of democracy gives all sorts of freedom to individuals which destroy certain good qualities of man particularly those which are approved by religion and those which go against the nature of man and, consequently, he becomes permissive in nature and does not follow any guidance from God or morals except the dictates of his own desires. Hence, a pertinent question arises here: From the above statements of Iqbal on democracy, can it be concluded that Iqbal has accepted democracy in its totality? Absolutely not. Iqbal did not stand with the Western form of democracy. Instead, he elaborated on his own understanding of democracy. By asserting that legitimate political power comes from people who are free from influences, Iqbal made an important contribution to the development of democratic thinking. His theory, subsequently, refuted the concept of the separation of Church and State. In fact, as Iqbal put it, the democracy of Europe, overshadowed by socialistic agitation and anarchical fear, originated mainly in the economic regeneration of European societies. But the democracy of Islam did not grow out of the extension of economic opportunity, it is a spiritual principle based on the fact that every human being is a centre of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character. Out of the plebeian material, Islam has formed men of the noblest type of life and power. Iqbal argued that this democracy of Islam was an experimental refutation of the ideas of Nietzsche, who abhorred the 'rule of the herd' and hopelessness of the plebeian and based all higher culture on the cultivation and growth of an aristocracy of Superman.[331]

Iqbal further argued that humanity needs three things namely, a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human

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[330] *Ibid.*
[331] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

society on a spiritual basis. The modern Western thought has achieved some progress in this direction but in its totality it failed to guide mankind towards the path of peace, security and prosperity. Iqbal asserted that materialistic democracy, for example, is the best example of the failure of the Western thought. He observed that democracy in the West never became a living factor of life. In fact, "the idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich."[332] He, therefore, urged the Muslims of the modern age to come forward "to construct the social life in the light of the ultimate principles of Islam, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam."[333]

In the context of the ideal of individual freedom, democracy, then, is the most important aspect of Islam which is regarded as a political ideal.[334] By referring to the event of the election of the first Rightly-guided caliph, he elaborated his idea of individual freedom. He said in the process of election, the idea of universal agreement is, in fact, the fundamental principle of Islamic constitutional theory. Iqbal maintained that Abu Bakr, the first Rightly-guided caliph was universally elected by the people. But, Umar, the second Caliph himself had the opinion that it was done in a hurry. Therefore, Umar held the view that the hurried election of Abu Bakr, though very happy in its consequences and justified by the need of the time, should not form a precedent in Islam for, as Umar is reported to have said that an election which is only a partial expression of the people's will is null and void. It was, therefore, understood by Iqbal that political sovereignty *de facto* resides in the people and that the electorate by their free act of unanimous choice embody it in a determinate personality in which the collective will is individualized without investing this concrete seat of power with any privilege in the eye of the law except legal control over the individual wills of which it is an expression.[335] Furthermore, to maintain the spirit of universal franchise, some more measurements were adopted by Umar, as such: He committed his trust,

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[332] Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 179.

[333] *Ibid.*, p.180.

[334] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 51.

[335] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

before he died, for the selection of his successor to seven electors—one of them being his own son, with the condition that their choice must be unanimous, and that none of them must stand as a candidate for the Caliphate. It will be seen, from Umar's exclusion of his own son from the candidature, how remote the idea of hereditary monarchy was from the Islamic political consciousness.[336]

For a deeper understanding of Iqbal's concept of democracy and ultimately the constitution of the Islamic political system, we need to look into two fundamental propositions as elaborated by Iqbal, as shown below.

1. Legal Sovereignty: In Iqbal's concept of democracy, Legal Sovereignty does not belong to the people. It resides with God. He said: "The law of God is absolutely supreme. Authority, except as an interpreter of the law, has no place in the social structure of Islam." Islam is totally against personal authority. It regards it as inimical to the full development of human individuality. Iqbal argued that at the higher stage of civilization the idea of personal absolute authority does not seem to be workable. The demand of people for a fundamental structural change in the government of personal authority seems to be indispensable by way of the introduction of the principle of election. For Iqbal, there was no doubt that people have the right of election of their representatives but both people and representatives have to work within the framework of the law revealed by God called the *Shariah* law. From the point of view of the *Shariah* law, Church and State are not two different identities; they are the same.[337] He stated that "according to the law of Islam there is no distinction between the Church and the State. The State with us is not a combination of religious and secular authority, but it is a unity in which no such distinction exists. The Caliph is not necessarily the high-priest of Islam; he is not the representative of God on earth. He is fallible like other men, and is subject, like every Muslim, to the impersonal authority of the same law. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself is not regarded as absolutely infallible by many theologians. In fact, the idea of personal authority is quite contrary to the spirit of Islam…."[338] Iqbal further

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[336] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

[337] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

[338] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

observed that a Muslim is free to do anything he likes, provided he does not violate the *Shariah* law. The general principles of the *Shariah* law are believed to have been revealed; the details, in order to cover the relatively secular cases, are left to the interpretation of professional jurists. It is, therefore, true to say that the entire fabric of Islamic law, actually administered, is really judge-made law, so that the jurist performs the legislative function in the Islamic constitution. If, however, an absolutely new case arises which is not provided for in the law of Islam, the will of the whole Muslim community becomes a further source of law.[339]

As stated earlier even the chief executive, the Caliph of Islam, is not an infallible being; mechanisms are developed to regulate his authority for there is no particular precedence against it; rather, incidents are there in favour of regulating the office of the institution of the Caliph. Like other Muslims he is subject to the same law; he is elected by the people and is deposed by them if he goes contrary to the law of God or against the universal principles of good governance.[340]

Furthermore, according to Iqbal, "From a legal standpoint, the Caliph does not occupy any privileged positions. In theory, he is like other members of the Commonwealth. He can be directly sued in an ordinary law court. The second Caliph was once accused of appropriating a larger share in the spoils of war, and he had to clear his conduct before the people, by providing evidence according to the law of Islam. In his judicial capacity he is open to the criticism of every Muslim."[341] On the issue of hereditary rule, Iqbal categorically rejected it. For him neither the divine wisdom nor rationality approves kingship or feudalism. Iqbal, therefore, argued that the elected Caliph has no special right to appoint or nominate anyone as his successor particularly from his family. If he does for any special cases, then it is imperative for the community to confirm his appointment by the consent of the people. He contended: "The Caliph may indicate his successor who may be his son; but the nomination is invalid until confirmed by the people. Out of the fourteen Caliphs of the House of Umayyad, only four succeeded in

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[339] *Ibid.*

[340] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[341] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

securing their sons as successors. The Caliph cannot secure the election of his successor during his own life time" (p. 65). Iqbal further argued that whenever this principle was ignored, a majority of scholars and people strongly protested against the behaviour of the Caliph.[342] He said, "If the Caliph does not rule according to the law of Islam, or suffers from physical or mental infirmity, the Caliphate is fortified. He is deposed and his deposition is confirmed by the people."[343]

The question whether two or more rival Caliphate can exist simultaneously is discussed by jurists. Iqbal also addressed this issue. After considering various views of the jurists, Iqbal concluded that only one Caliphate is desirable. However, he further held that there is nothing illegal in the co-existence of two or more Caliphates, provided they are in different countries. This view is certainly contrary to the old idea of Rightly-Guided Caliphate, yet in so far as the present Muslim Commonwealth is governed by an impersonal authority, i.e., law, in his opinion, this position seems to be quite tenable. Moreover, as a matter of fact, two rival Caliphates have existed in the Muslim history for a long time.[344]

However, he argued that in the light of experiences and circumstances one should think and decide about the existence of one or more Caliphate. No one single formula is workable. What is desirable, ideally speaking, is the establishment of the universal Caliphate. To be more realistic one should understand that at present the universal Caliphate has taken the place of the Commonwealth of the Muslim countries because "the idea of Universal Imamate has failed in practice. It was a workable idea when the Empire of Islam was intact. Since the break-up of this Empire, independent political units have arisen. The idea has ceased to be operative and cannot work as a living factor in the organization of modern Islam. Far from serving any useful purpose it has really stood in the way of a reunion of independent Muslim States."[345] The only alternative left for the political unity of Muslim countries is this: "In order to create a really effective political unity of Islam,

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[342] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[343] *Ibid.*
[344] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
[345] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 158.

all Muslim countries must first become independent; and then in their totality they should range themselves under one Caliph. Is such a thing possible at the present moment? If not to-day, one must wait."[346] Due to the absence of the effective universal Caliphate and the practical realities, he accepted as a reality the emergence of a modern state with the understanding that Muslims will make it Islamic as it is their collective duty. He said: "For the present, every Muslim nation must sink into her own deeper self, temporarily focus her vision on herself alone, until all are strong and powerful to form a living family of republics. A true and living unity is not so easy as to be achieved by mere symbolic overlordship. It is truly manifested in a multiplicity of free independent units whose racial rivalries are adjusted and harmonized by the unifying bond of a common spiritual aspiration. It seems to me that God is slowly bringing home to us the truth that Islam is neither about Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members."[347]

For Iqbal the Caliphate and the office of the Caliph are two different things. The former represents the system of government and the nature of the state whereas the latter represents the office of the chief executive. The names and forms, for Iqbal, are not important for they are not universal, rather relative. What is more important is the establishment of an Islamic political order with a constitutional government on the basis of the consent of the people for it is obligatory for Muslims who constitute a majority in a particular country. For those Muslims who live and stay in other places in any other forms of state and government, the establishment of their own model of government and state is not necessarily as important as the Muslims that form a majority of the community. Based on this understanding he claimed that the Muslims of India must demand for a separate state where they can establish their own form of state and government. He also argued that in the changing circumstances, it is not obligatory for Muslims to insist on the so-called names of the Muslim state and chief executive. The Caliph and the Caliphate, for example, in a universal form at present are not possible. Therefore, Muslims should not insist on this issue. To be realistic

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[346] *Ibid.*, p. 159.
[347] *Ibid.*

they should accept local states such as Egypt and Indonesia wherein they must establish the Islamic political system as elaborated above with the sole aim of realizing the ideals of Islam.

At this stage one more point needs clarification, as it is understood by certain authors out of its context. Iqbal did appreciate the use of power of *Ijtihād* in the Muslim world particularly by the people of Turkey in around 1922–24 in the area of socio-political thought. According to Iqbal, who was a staunch supporter of *Ijtihād*, among the Muslim nations it was Turkey which alone had shaken off its dogmatic slumber, and attained self-consciousness.[348] He supported the right of intellectual freedom in the changing circumstances. It is indispensable to achieve a synthesis of ideal and reality which entails a keen intellectual and moral struggle. He argued that the growing complexities of a mobile and broadening life would bring new situations and challenges suggesting new points of view that will necessitate fresh interpretations of fundamental principles which require their application in an ever changing world. If we neglect this, Iqbal said, it is equivalent to have a succession of identical thoughts and feelings which is to have no thoughts and feelings at all. Only new thoughts and fresh interpretations guarantee the right kind of development. Hence, Iqbal, on one hand, rejected mechanically repeated old values and traditions of the Muslim world in general and, on the other, appreciated the efforts of Turkey in creating new values. There he saw signs of a new life. A life which has taken a step to move, change, and amplify, giving birth to new desires, bringing new difficulties and suggesting new interpretations. It was this sense and spirit of *Ijtihād* which was welcomed by Iqbal.[349] It is, therefore, totally wrong to conclude that Iqbal approved the abolition of the Caliphate on the same grounds as those elaborated by Mustapha Kamal.[350]

Quite contrary to the above conclusion, what we observe is that he out rightly rejected several *Ijtihādic* opinions of the people of Turkey and considered them erroneous. On the issue of the relationship between religion and state and the place of religion and state, Iqbal took a different position.

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[348] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 162.
[349] *Ibid.*
[350] Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, Islamic Book Trust, KL, 2001, p. 88.

The view of the Nationalist Party that the supreme interest of the Party lies with State and not religion was refuted by Iqbal. Iqbal considered erroneous the claim of the Party that the State is the essential factor in national life which determines the character and function of all other factors.[351] Discussing about this claim of the Nationalist Party, Iqbal stated: "Personally, I think it is a mistake to suppose that the idea of State is more dominant and rules all other ideas embodied in the system of Islam."[352] He refuted this point at length on the ground that according to the Qur'an the ultimate Reality is spiritual. The State according to Islam is only an effort to realize the spiritual essence in a human organization.[353]

Iqbal further asserted that the "truth is that the Turkish Nationalists assimilated the idea of the separation of the Church and the State from the history of European political ideas."[354] He said: "Such a thing could never happen in Islam; for Islam was from the very beginning a civil society…The Nationalist theory of State, therefore, is misleading inasmuch as it suggests a dualism which does not exist in Islam."[355] He maintained that Islam is a harmony of idealism and positivism; and, as a unity of the eternal verities of freedom, equality, and solidarity, it has no fatherland. As there is no English Mathematics, German Astronomy or French Chemistry, so is there no Turkish, Arabian, Persian or Indian Islam. Just as the universal character of scientific truth engenders varieties of scientific national cultures, much in the same way the universal character of Islamic verities creates varieties of national, moral and social ideals. Modern cultures based on national egoism is only another form of barbarism; this is true as we have seen in our own time after the September 11, 2002 attack at the twin towers in New York, in the form of American war against Afghanistan and Iraq. For Iqbal this is the natural outcome of an over-developed industrialism through which men satisfy their primitive instincts and inclinations. He regretted that unfortunately during the course of history the moral and social ideals of Islam have been gradually de-Islamized through the influence of local character, and unIslamic superstitions of Muslim nations. These ideas today

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[351] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 153.

[352] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

[353] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

[354] *Ibid.*

[355] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

are more Iranian, Turkish, or Arabian than Islamic. Moreover, the emergence of kingdoms in the Muslim world further overshadowed or rather displaced the social and political ideals of Islam.[356]

Iqbal was always critical of the general materialist outlook adopted by Turkey for it is inimical to Islam. Commenting on the abolition of the old dress or the introduction of the Latin script Iqbal categorically stated that it was a serious error of judgment.[357] On the subject of the adoption of the Swiss code with its rule of inheritance, Iqbal said, it was another serious error which has arisen out of the youthful zeal for reform excusable in a people furiously desiring to go ahead.[358] To avoid such kind of serious *Ijtihādic* mistakes, Iqbal suggested that in a new elected assembly the *Ulama'* should play a prominent role. He said: "The *Ulama'* should form a vital part of a Muslim legislative assembly helping and guiding free discussion on question relating to law. The only effective remedy for the possibilities of erroneous interpretations is to reform the present system of legal education in Muslim countries, to extend its sphere, and to combine it with an intelligent study of modern jurisprudence."[359] However, he was fully aware of the difficulties which are indispensable in the process of the formation of new theories and development of new institutions. But he considered them as part of *Ijtihād*. For him the process of *Ijtihād* is bound to pass through the most critical moment in history. It may sometimes, if we are not vigilant, he asserted, become a source of confusion and disintegration. However, it does not mean that due to this kind of unavoidable problems we can ignore the need for *Ijtihād*.

What is the mechanism according to Iqbal to avoid problems in the process of *Ijtihād*? He suggested the idea of collective *Ijtihād* under the supervision of qualified scholars of Islam. If we do not find measures to check on the youthful desire of those who are enthusiastically determine to think afresh for a forward march we would definitely make big mistakes as committed by Turkish reformers. He said: "Further, our religious and

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[356] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[357] Mohammad Iqbal in *Discourses of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 249.
[358] *Ibid.*, p. 250.
[359] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 176.

political reformers in their zeal for liberalism may overstep the proper limits of reform in the absence of a check on their youthful fevour…It is the duty of the leaders of the world of Islam today to understand the real meaning of what has happened in Europe, and then to move forward with self-control and a clear insight into the ultimate aims of Islam as a social policy."[360]

Therefore, the acceptance of the 'modern' state by Iqbal does not mean that he has accepted a secular state or a state free from the guidance of the Law of God. Elaborating on the concept of *Ijtihād* and how it should be done in modern times, he also emphasized the importance of the role of consensus of the people in specialized areas such as law. In this way he showed his emphasis on the participation of people and on the need of God's guidance for social and political organization in modern times. He considered *Ijma'* (consensus), the third source of Islamic Law, the most important concept of Islam both as legal as well as political concept which fulfils the most important obligation of the idea of consultation in the socio-political matters of community of believers. *Ijma'* for Iqbal was not only a legal principle but the mechanism of the principle of consultation. It is, however, strange that this important notion throughout history remained practically a mere idea, and did not assume the form of a permanent institution. Possibly its transformation into a permanent legislative and political institution was contrary to the political interests of the kind of absolute monarchy that grew up in the Muslim world immediately after the fourth Rightly guided caliph. This mistake should not be repeated, but rather be rectified by way of encouraging the formation of a permanent assembly which might become the means of consensus of the people on both legal and political issues.

It is important to point out here that Iqbal introduced his own idea of the Caliphate or Imamate not as a state but as an institution which can be vested in a body of persons or an elected Assembly due to the changing circumstances instead of in a single person.[361] He, therefore, approved fully the idea of legislative assembly and parliament as the forum for *Ijma'*. The formation of assembly and parliament for Iqbal is necessary for consensus but this formation should not take the same line as it has taken in modern

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[360] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[361] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

nation states both in the west and in the east. He, therefore, suggested that the constitution of assembly or parliament must reflect the spiritual, ethical and even political ideals of Islam. Assembly for him is the only possible form through which a community can reach to a consensus, which is the most important political ideal. This will secure contributions to legal and political matters from laymen who happen to possess a keen insight into the affairs of the community. In this way alone we can stir into activity the dormant spirit of life in our legal and political system, and give it an evolutionary outlook.[362] Here, the purpose of the consensus is to interpret and explain the law of God. In cases where there is no clear guidance from the Law through consensus, the assembly will enact a new law. This will guarantee the continuous growth of socio-political and legal system of Islam in space and time context. To avoid any confusion regarding the nature of the constitution of assembly and parliament, Iqbal clearly suggested that it must not reflect the nature of modern assemblies. Present assembly members do not manifest the knowledge of the teachings of Islam, nor are they fully aware of modern realities. In his opinion such an assembly will make grave mistakes in their interpretations and judgments related to socio-political and legal matters. To avoid erroneous judgments and decisions, he suggested that we should adopt necessary measures, for example, other than the elected members of the assembly, we should nominate the *Ulama* and experts of various areas. The *Ulama* should play a dynamic role as a part of a Muslim legislative assembly. They should supervise free discussions on questions relating to the law.[363]

Iqbal also discussed the importance of the office of the Caliph. He argued that in the changing circumstances, the Caliph can be called by any other name, because the name for him is not as important as the qualifications of a Caliph. He, therefore, enumerated the qualifications of the Caliph and ministers in detail and this implies that Iqbal was a strong supporter of the qualifications of a caliph. He also emphasized the need for the qualifications even for an ordinary member of the assemblies and parliaments elected by the people. This is necessary because these are the institutions of states which are based on Islamic spirituality. In other words these states, for Iqbal, are ideological states and represent Islam as an Ideology which has a programme

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[362] *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
[363] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

of action to raise the standard of life by way of raising the quality of life. Of course these qualifications are relative and can be altered and modified according to the circumstances. Another important aspect of the process of election as identified by Iqbal is related again to the qualifications of the candidates. They should be identified as candidates by people who are comparatively more knowledgeable than ordinary people in the society. People should give their consent in favour of candidates who are well-respected by the elite group of the society not on the basis of a class but rather as the true followers of divine teachings.[364] He said, "Just as a candidate for the Caliphate must have certain qualifications, so, the elector also must be qualified. He must possess: 1. Good reputation as an honest man. 2. Necessary knowledge of State affairs. 3. Necessary insight and judgment."[365] This is necessary because these are the representatives of the people who run this ideological state and government of the Muslim community. Therefore, they must possess good conduct in accordance with the law of Islam. All executive and administrative staff particularly at the higher levels such as Prime Minister and Ministers and other higher officials of the government must possess the same qualifications as the Caliph. They must be thoroughly educated especially in the affairs of the state and the society.[366] In this connection, Iqbal highlighted another important aspect of the government in Islam, i.e., the public criticism of the Caliph and his government, and dismissal if he fails to produce good results. Generally, during the early Caliphate, deposition or the dismissal of the Caliph or an officer took place in the mosque when they failed to maintain good conduct in accordance with the teachings of Islam. People had the right to address the issue in the mosque at the time of the congregation prayer. The mosque, in fact, is the Muslim forum, as Iqbal argued, and the institution of daily prayers is closely connected with the political life of Muslim communities. Apart from its spiritual and social functions, the institution was meant to serve as a ready means of constant criticism of the government and the state.[367] According to Iqbal, the use of force or forced election is quite illegal. If anyone argues that forced election becomes legal in times of political unrest, Iqbal considered such a person as opportunistic and contended that

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[364] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

[365] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[366] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[367] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

for this kind of opportunist view, we do not find any support in the law of Islam.[368]

On the issue of the nature of the relationship of the elected and the elector, Iqbal maintained that it is a kind of contract (*Aqd*) binding together both parties to achieve some higher and noble goals of society. The Caliph is responsible for some basic duties which are universal in nature, for example, his duty is to define and defend the religion, to enforce the law of Islam, to levy customs and taxes according to the law of Islam, to pay annual salaries and to direct the State treasury properly and ultimately bring peace and prosperity. If he fulfils those conditions, the people have mainly two duties in relation to him, viz., to obey him, and to assist him in his work. All this implies that the origin of state and government is not by force but by free consent of individuals who unite to form a brotherhood, based upon legal equality, in order that each member of the brotherhood may work out the potentialities of his individuality under the law of Islam. The aim of government is to maintain peace, security and to bring prosperity.[369] In short, the fundamental principle as laid down in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* is the principle of election; the details or rather the translation of this principle into a workable scheme of government is left to be determined by other considerations of time and space. Un- fortunately, this principle of election was not developed further and not institutionalised in the Muslim world. Consequently, Muslims failed to develop the requisite new political ideas and institutions.

2. Political sovereignty: Political sovereignty belongs to the people, i.e., the absolute equality of all members of the community in the eyes of the law. There is no aristocracy in Islam. There is no privileged class, no priesthood, no caste system. Islam is a unity in which there is no distinction, and this unity is secured by making men believe in the two simple propositions–the unity of God and the mission of the Prophet–propositions which are certainly of a supranational character, but based as they are on the general religious experience of mankind, are intensely true to the average human nature. This principle of the equality of all believers helped Muslims to rise as

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[368] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[369] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

the greatest political institution within a few centuries of the Islamic *Hijrah* calendar. Islam works as a levelling force; it gives the individual a sense of his inward power; it elevates those who are socially low. The elevation of the downtrodden was the chief secret of the glory of the Muslim political institution in India.[370] Iqbal raised this practical question and answered that if this principle is practiced it would give good results and if it is not put into practice sincerely particularly by those who are in charge, i.e., the rulers, it will not yield the same good results.

Iqbal argued: "The law of Islam does not recognize the apparently natural differences of race, nor the historical differences of nationality. The political ideal of Islam consists in the creation of a people born of a free fusion of all races and nationalities. Nationality, with Islam, is not the highest limit of political development; for the general principles of the law of Islam rest on human nature, not on the peculiarities of a particular people. The inner cohesion of such a nation would consist not in ethnic or geographic unity, not in the unity of language or social tradition, but in the unity of the religious and political ideal; or, in the psychological fact of ' like-mindedness'…The membership of this nation, consequently, would not be determined by birth, marriage, domicile or naturalization. It would be determined by a public declaration of 'like-mindedness,' and would terminate when the individual has ceased to be like-minded with others. The ideal territory for such a nation would be the whole earth…The realization of this ideal, however, is not impossible, for the ideal nation does already exist in germ. The life of modern political communities finds expression, to a great extent, in common institutions, law and government; and the various sociological circles, so to speak, are continually expanding to touch one another. Further, it is not incompatible with the sovereignty of individual states, since its structure will be determined not by physical force, but by the spiritual force of a common ideal."[371]

Thus, Iqbal argued that Islam creates in its followers internal cohesion necessary for social organization and collective developmental efforts. It also warns against the forces of disintegration in the society. This instinctive

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[370] *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.
[371] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

perception of an individual is absolutely necessary and this is, no doubt, the result of the much deeper foundation in the conscience of the followers of Islam. This sense of cohesion is the source of life. It is developed based on certain well-defined principles and boundaries. Islam provides these spiritual principles, for man, society and state, which carry, as experience subsequently proved, great potentialities of expansion and development. Iqbal believed that Islam is a religious community in a much deeper sense than other communities whose structure is determined partly by religion and partly by the idea of race. He said: "Islam repudiates the race idea altogether and founds itself on the religious idea alone. Since Islam bases itself on the religious idea alone, a basis which is wholly spiritual and consequently far more ethereal than blood relationship, Muslim society is naturally much more sensitive to forces which it considers harmful to its integrity."[372] Iqbal argued that it was wrong to say that science was the greatest enemy of Islam: "No, it is the race-idea which is the greatest enemy of Islam; in fact, of all humanity. It is, therefore, the duty of all lovers of mankind to stand in revolt—against this dreadful invention of the Devil."[373] In fact for Iqbal the nationalist theory of the state, therefore, is misleading inasmuch as it suggests a dualism which does not exist in Islam.[374] Iqbal asserted that the modern culture based as it is on national egoism is only another form of barbarism.[375] Therefore, the separation of Church and State and, consequently, the emergence of secularism and nationalism have undermined the ethical and political ideals of man and society. Iqbal maintained that the Europe today presents the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement because of its insistence on materialism and individualism.[376] This is the reason why Iqbal believed that the present-day political ideals, as they are being shaped by these ideologies, may affect the original nature and character of man and the structure of society. He declared: "I am opposed to nationalism as it is understood in Europe, not because, if it is allowed to develop in India, it is likely to bring less material gain to Muslims. I am opposed to it because I see in it the germs of atheistic materialism which I look upon as the greatest danger to modern humanity. Patriotism is a perfectly natural virtue and has a

[372] Mohammad Iqbal in *Discourses of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 217-218.
[373] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 98-99.
[374] Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, op. cit., p. 156.
[375] *Ibid.*
[376] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

place in the moral life of man. Yet, that which really matters is a man's faith, his culture and his historical tradition. These are the things which, in my eyes, are worth living for and dying for, and not the piece of earth with which the spirit of man happens to be temporarily associated.'[377]

According to Iqbal nationality which is not deeply rooted in spirituality generates the feeling of communalism. He asserted that it is obvious that the nationalist, whose political idealism has practically killed his sense of fact, is intolerant of the birth of a desire for self-determination in the heart of the people of another faith or nationality. He thought wrongly that the only way to Indian nationalism, for example, lies in a total suppression of the cultural entities of the country. The fact is that only through the interaction of different faiths and cultures alone can India develop a rich and enduring culture. A nationalism achieved by such methods of suppression can mean nothing but mutual bitterness and even oppression.[378] A nationalist, therefore, ignores this fact and puts emphasis on artificial factors for unity and solidarity. True solidarity is based simply on the spiritual and ethical foundation. In the case of Muslims, Iqbal argued, the unity and solidarity is achieved only on the basis of faith. The "simple faith of a Muslim is based on two propositions—that God is one, and that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be up on him, is the last of the line of those holy men who have appeared from time to time in all countries and in all ages among all peoples to guide mankind to the right ways of living." If, as one can think, a dogma must be defined as an ultra rational proposition which, for the purpose of securing religious solidarity, must be assented to without any understanding of its metaphysical import, then these two simple propositions of Islam cannot be described even as dogma, for both of them are supported by the experience of mankind and are fairly amenable to rational argument.[379] The "meaning of these two propositions are simple: No spiritual surrender to any human beings after Muhammad, peace be upon him, who emancipated his followers by giving them a law which is realizable as arising from the very core of

[377] Mohammad Iqbal in *Discourses of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 84.
[378] *Ibid.*, p. 231.
[379] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

human conscience. Theologically the doctrine is that the socio-political organization called 'Islam' is perfect and eternal."[380]

Iqbal contended that the student of history knows very well that the last and authentic revelation from God as Islam was sent and spread at a time when the old principles of human unification, such as blood relationship and throne-culture, were failing. It, therefore, finds the principle of human unification not in the blood and bones but in the minds of man. Indeed, its social message to mankind is: "De-racialize yourself or perish by internecine war."[381] Does this mean that Islam is totally opposed to race? Iqbal said no. Its history shows that in social reform it relies mainly on its scheme for gradual de-racialization and proceeds on the lines of least resistance.[382] If the meaning of race and patriotism is understood properly then it is not difficult to see the attitude of Islam towards nationalist ideals, such as in the following statement: "Nationalism in the sense of love of one's country and even readiness to die for its honour is a part of the Muslim's faith; it comes into conflict with Islam only when it begins to play the role of a political concept and claims to be a principle of human solidarity demanding that Islam should recede to the background of a mere private opinion and cease to be a living factor in the national life."[383] Furthermore, it becomes a problem when it demands from people their complete self-effacement. Islam already accommodates nationalism, for Islam and nationalism are practically identical. It implies that for Iqbal the basis of the state and government is Islam. This means that the fundamentals of Islamic solidarity are not in any way shaken by any external or internal forces. The solidarity of Islam consists in a uniform belief in the two structural principles of Islam supplemented by the five well-known 'practices of the faith.' These are the first essentials of Islamic solidarity, which has, in this sense, existed ever since the days of the Holy Prophet, peace be up on him, until it was recently disturbed by the Bahais in Iran and the Qadianis in India. Politically, the solidarity of Islam is shaken only when Muslims states war on one another; religiously, it is shaken only when Muslims rebel against any of the basic beliefs and practices of the

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[380] *Ibid.*, p. 237.

[381] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[382] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[383] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Faith. It is in the interest of this eternal solidarity that Islam cannot tolerate any rebellious groups within its fold.[384] As Iqbal understood, it is Islam which guarantees for a practically uniform spiritual atmosphere in the world of Islam. It facilitates the political combination of Muslim states; this combination may either assume the form of a world-state (ideal) or of a league of Muslim States, or of a number of independent states whose pacts and alliances are determined by purely economic and political considerations.[385]

One can see Iqbal delineated a peculiar conception of nationality. He asserted: "It is not the unity of language or of country or the identity of economic interests that constitutes the basic principle of our nationality. It is because we all believe in a certain view of the Universe, and participate in the same historical tradition that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam. Islam abhors all material limitations, and bases its nationality on a purely abstract idea objectified in a potentially expansive group of concrete personalities. It is not dependent for its life-principles on the character and genius of a particular people; in its true sense, it is non-temporal, non-spatial."[386] In his view even a mere belief in certain propositions of a metaphysical importance is the only thing that ultimately determines the structure of the Muslim community. For him "to try to convert religion into a system of speculative knowledge is absolutely useless and even absurd, since the objection of religion is not ' thinking about life'; its main purpose is 'to build up a coherent social whole,' for the gradual elevation of life."[387] It is so, because religion by itself is metaphysics, in so far as it calls up into being a new universe, with a view to suggest a new type of character, tending to universalize itself, in proportion to the force of the personality in which it originally embodies itself. It is self- evident that Islam has a far deeper significance for its followers than merely being religious; it has a peculiarly national meaning without which the communal life is unthinkable. It requires a firm grasp of Islamic principles. He said, "The idea of Islam is that our Eternal Home or Country, wherein we live, move and

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[384] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

[385] *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.

[386] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[387] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

have our being is Islam itself. To us it is above everything else as England is above all to the Englishman, and 'Deutschland unber alles' to the German: Islam is our homeland."[388]

Iqbal asserted that the unity of religious belief on which Muslim communal life depends is supplemented by the uniformity of the Muslim culture. Mere belief in Islam, though exceedingly important, is not sufficient. In order to participate in the life of the communal self, the individual mind must undergo a complete transformation. Just as the Muslim community does not recognize any ethnical differences, and aims at the subsuming of all races under the universal idea of humanity, so is its culture relatively universal and not indebted for its life and growth to the genius of one particular people.[389] In order to become a living member of the Muslim community, the individual, besides having an unconditional belief in the religious principle, must thoroughly assimilate the culture of Islam. The objection of this assimilation, as Iqbal maintained, is to create a uniform mental outlook, a peculiar way of looking at the world, a certain definite standpoint from which to judge the value of things, which sharply define community and transform it into a Corporate Individual, giving it a definite purpose and ideal of its own.[390]

Based on his understanding and observation of modern realities of nationalism and nationalities and the understanding of the basis of unity and solidarity of a community, Iqbal rejected the so-called nationalism and geographical nationality. He realized that the idea of nationality based on race or territory was making headway in the world of Islam, and Muslims who have lost sight of their own ideal of a universal humanity, were being lured by the idea of a territorial nationality. He felt it was his duty as a Muslim and as a lover of all mankind, to remind them of their true function in the evolution of mankind. Tribal or national organizations on the lines of race or territory are only temporary phases in the unfolding and upbringing of collective life, and as such he had no quarrel with them, but he condemned them in the strongest possible terms when they were regarded as the ultimate expression

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[388] *Ibid.*

[389] *Ibid.*

[390] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

of the life of mankind.[391] He said: "I have been repudiating the concept of nationalism since the time when it was not well known in India and the Muslim world. At the very start it had become clear to me from the writings of European authors that the imperialistic designs of Europe were in great need of this effective weapon--the propagation of the European conception of nationalism in Muslim countries--to shatter the religious unity of Islam to pieces. And the plan did succeed during the Great War."[392] Iqbal at this stage realized that it had now reached its climax in as much as some of the religious leaders lent their support to this conception. Strange indeed, he said, are the vicissitudes of time. Formerly, the half-westernized educated Muslims were under the spell of Europe: now the curse has descended upon religious leaders as a result of which they are unable to see the fact—an empirical fact. The land or geographical territory has no meaning. The word 'country' is merely a geographical term and as such, does not clash with Islam. Its boundaries change with time. Till recently those living in Burma were Indians; at present, they are Burmese. In this sense every human being loves the land of his birth and according to his capacity remains prepared to make sacrifices for it. Some unthinking persons support this by the saying "love of one's native country is a part of one's faith," which they think is a tradition of the Prophet, but this is hardly necessary. Iqbal believed that the love of one's native land is a natural instinct and requires no impressions to nourish it. In the present day political literature, however, the idea of 'nation' is not merely geographical; it is rather a principle of human society and as such a political concept. Since Islam is also a law of human society, the word 'country,' when used as a political concept, comes into conflict with Islam. One should know better that in its principles of human association Islam admits of no *modus vivendi* and is not prepared to compromise with any other law regulating human society. Indeed, it declares that every code of law other than that of Islam is inadequate and unacceptable.[393]

Iqbal simply asserted that besides rational arguments, experience also proves the truth of the abovementioned claim of Islam. He contended that if the purpose of human society is to ensure peace and security for the nations

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[391] Mohammad Iqbal in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

[392] Mohammad Iqbal in *Speeches and Statements Of Iqbal*, op. cit., p. 224.

[393] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

and to transform their present social organism into a single social order, then one cannot think of any other social order than that of Islam. This is so because Islam does not aim at the moral reformation of the individual alone; it also aims at a gradual but fundamental revolution in the social life of mankind, which should altogether change its national and racial viewpoint and create in its place a pure human consciousness. Iqbal further developed his thought and claimed that the history of religions conclusively show that in ancient times religion was national as in the case of Egyptians, Greeks and Iranians. Later on, it became racial as that of the Jews. Christianity taught religion as an individual and private affair. With religion having become synonymous with private beliefs, Europe began to think that the state alone was responsible for the social life of man. Iqbal further advanced his idea and asserted that it is Islam and Islam alone which, for the first time, gives the message to mankind that religion is neither national and racial, nor individual and private, but purely human and that its purpose is to unite and organize mankind despite all its national distinctions. Such a system cannot be built on beliefs alone. This is the only way in which harmony and concord can be introduced in the sentiments and thoughts of mankind. This harmony is essential for the formation and preservation of a community.[394]

Iqbal observed that any other way will be irreligious and contrary to human dignity. He was convinced that the history of Europe is a testimony to this fact. The European found in nationality the basis of solidarity of European nations. But what has been the end of this choice?[395] It resulted in the form of rationalism and secularism, i.e., a war between the principles of religion and state and, finally, denial of spirituality. Where did these forces drive Europe to? To irreligiousness, religious skepticism and economic conflicts.[396] The land is not sufficient basis for a nation, there are a number of other forces which are necessary for the formation of a nation.[397] We must be fully aware of the consequences of this view of nationalism. No one should misunderstand that religion and nationalism may go hand in hand. If anyone thinks in this way then he should also understand that this course will

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[394] *Ibid.*, p. 226.

[395] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

[396] *Ibid.*

[397] *Ibid.*

ultimately lead to irreligiousness. And if this does not happen, then, Islam will be reduced to an ethical ideal, indifference to its social order as an inevitable consequence.[398] Islam rejects totally the idea that religion and politics are entirely separate and emphasizes the need to maintain the Islamic cultural identity. Religion cannot be a private affair; "it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man." The real question here is this: Are Muslims collectively a single, united and definite party founded on the unity of God and the finality of Prophethood as its basis, or are they a party which owing to the requirements of race, nation, and colour can, leaving aside their religious unity, adopt some other social order based upon a different system and law?[399]

Iqbal asserted that if we look in the Qur'an we would find that the Qur'an uses the word *'qawm'* hundreds of times. The Qur'an also uses the word *'Millah'* repeatedly. What do *qawm* and *millah* mean in the Qur'an? Is not the word *'ummah'* also used in addition to these two words to denote the followers of the Prophet? Are these words so divergent in meaning that because of this difference one single nation can have different aspects, so much so that in matters of religion and law, it should observe the divine code, while from the viewpoint of nationality it should follow a system which may be opposed to the religious system?[400] Iqbal contended that wherever the Qur'an calls upon the people to follow and join the Muslim party, the word *'millah'* or *'ummah'* is used.[401] He questioned: "What I have said above means that, so far as I have been able to see, no other word except *ummah* has been used for Muslims in the Holy Qur'an. If it is otherwise I would very much like to know it. *Qawm* means a party of men, and this party can come into being in a thousand places and in a thousand forms upon the basis of tribes, race, colour, language, land and ethical code. *Millah*, on the contrary, will carve out of the different parties a new and common party. In other words, *millah* or *ummah* embraces nations but cannot be merged in them."[402]

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[398] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[399] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

[400] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

[401] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

[402] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

It was quite clear to Iqbal that the name of the faith which the Muslim community professes is 'al-Dīn al-qayyim' in which term lies concealed a remarkable Qur'anic point, namely, that it is this religion alone in which is vested the responsibility of sustaining the present and future life of a group of people which surrenders its individual and social life to its system. In other words, according to the Qur'an, Iqbal believed, it is the religion of Islam alone which sustains a nation in its true cultural or political sense. It is for this reason that the Qur'an openly declares that any system other than that of Islam must be deprecated and rejected.[403] For Iqbal, to ignore the Muslims or to make them subservient to some other social order and then to seek some other kind of freedom was simple meaningless.[404] The ultimate purpose of the Prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, he argued, was to create a society which follows the Divine law which the Prophet received from God. In other words, the objective is to purify the nations of the world of the abuses which go by the name of time, place, land, nation, race, genealogy, country, etc., although the differences of nations, tribes, colours, and languages are at the same time acknowledged.[405] What Iqbal argued was that history is a witness to the fact that it was Islam which removed the material differences from the nations of the world and brought about harmony among them in spite of their differences in nations, tribes, races, colours, and languages. Islam has done something in thirteen hundred years what other religions could not do in three thousand years.

Iqbal asked his people to take for granted that the religion of Islam is an imperceptible biological-psychological activity which is capable of influencing the thoughts and actions of mankind without any missionary efforts. Remember that those who try to invalidate such an activity by the innovations of present day political ideas, in fact, create violence to mankind as well as to the universality of the Prophetic mission which gave birth to it. By accepting nationalism, on one hand, we accept that mankind is divided into several conflicting nations and, on the other, we will find it impossible to bring about unity among them. It also gives birth to the conception of the relativity of religions, i.e., the religion of a land belongs to that land alone and

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[403] *Ibid.*, pp. 234-235.
[404] *Ibid.*, p. 235.
[405] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

does not suit the temperaments of other nations of other times. This led to irreligiousness and scepticism.[406] There is no doubt that the history of mankind is an infinite process of mutual conflicts, sanguine battles and civil wars. Does it mean that under these circumstances we cannot have among mankind a constitution which can guarantee at the social level peace, security and prosperity? The Qur'anic answer is: No. We can have a constitution which can guarantee peace, security and prosperity provided man takes for his ideal the propagation of the unity of God in the thoughts and actions of mankind. The search for such an ideal and its maintenance is no miracle of political manoeuvring. It was empirically proven by the Prophet that based on the unity of God, he practically destroyed self-invented distinctions and superiority complexes of nations of the world and there emerged a community which manifested solidarity, peace, security and prosperity at social and political levels, while maintaining the civil and political rights of the individual and the rule of law for centuries.[407]

Conclusion

This exploration into several dimensions of Iqbal's thoughts including his political thought clearly illustrates that from the very beginning Iqbal was sure that the denial of spirituality and acceptance of materialism by both the east and the west were based on false foundations which gave rise to destructive ideologies such as secularism and nationalism. The present day crisis and chaos in human life are basically caused by this false understanding of the nature of the universe and man. It was also made clear by Iqbal that except for Islam there is no other religion or ideology which can provide spiritual principles upon which a healthy society can be developed. All other religions and ideologies, unfortunately, have rejected reality and insisted on falsehood. This is very clear from their fragmented approach to life and society. Religions in reality have accepted comprehensive secularism. Iqbal, therefore, was convinced that Islam, being an authentic divine source of spirituality, is the only way of life which can provide a solid foundation for the organization of life and society as it defines them as an undivided single unit. With this firm conviction he wanted to develop the society and state on

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[406] *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.
[407] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

the basis of Islamic spirituality. Hence, he made it very clear when he first issued his statement that he wanted to create a separate state for Muslims in India–an Islamic state. He said: "I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interest of India and Islam. For India it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power; for Islam an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times."[408] This statement is a further evidence that Iqbal wanted to revive Islam and Islamic civilization for the sake of the safety of humanity. He, therefore, made it clearer that the creation of a separate Islamic state does not mean in any way the formation of a rigid, fanatic and fundamentalist religious state. He observed that no one should misunderstand "that the creation of autonomous Muslim states will mean the introduction of a kind of religious rule in such states."[409] Iqbal argued that the formation of an Islamic state on certain issues is directly in line with the thinking of modern age wherein freedom of the individual and representative governments are considered fundamental institutions of modern life. An Islamic state would be a welfare state. It stands for peace, security and prosperity of the people. It comes into existence with the consent of the people. It runs on the basis of a constitution and rule of law. He, therefore, elaborated as we have discussed above different aspects of Islamic political system and its principles.

What Iqbal said and suggested of the formation of Islamic state seems to be relevant even with the passage of time. Since the Muslim political leadership of the world did not take seriously the establishment of Islamic states for their own interest in their countries, therefore, the cherished goals of peace, security and prosperity for all are not yet realized. On the part of Muslims, they not only ignored Iqbal's advice but they also adopted all Western models and institutions based on the Western thought that with this false expectation they will achieve real development. However, the realities of the Muslim countries manifest that even after a passage of fifty years, they are still dependent on the developed West. Not only are they undeveloped

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[408] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[409] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

but their position in international politics is also insignificant. Iqbal thought that Muslims will not only achieve development but they will also be able to save humanity by way of practicing in the state and government the spiritual principles of Islam. But the rejection and denial of Muslims of the revival of Islam and Islamic civilization as a whole has brought them into this unfortunate state of affairs. Is it not a fact that the *Ummah* at the moment stands at the lowest rung of the ladder of other nations? In the last century, no other communities have been subjected to comparable defeats or humiliations as the Muslims. Iqbal noted that: "Muslims were defeated, massacred, double-crossed, colonized and exploited, proselytized, forced or bribed into conversion to other faiths. They were secularized, Westernized, and de-Islamized by internal and external agents of their enemies."[410] In today's world Muslims are presented as aggressors, destructive elements, terrorists, uncivilized, lawless people, fanatic, fundamentalist, backward and undeveloped. All this is caused by secular states and secular leadership. Secular regimes and rulers have become biggest obstacles towards the formation of Islamic states. It was under the colonial rule that a number of institutions based on Western models were first imposed upon Muslim communities as part of the 'civilizing mission' of the colonialists of the West, which in fact was the worst part of imperialism. Law, judiciary, economy, education, administration, language, literature, arts, architecture, in short all elements of society and culture are subjected to westernization. As part of the strategy of the rulers of Western countries, there emerged the so-called independent Muslim countries that are, in fact, a breakdown of the Muslim power into sovereign nation-states with a new type of leadership imposed upon Muslims. This leadership carries the names of Muslims but is completely loyal to the Western imperialist rulers' interests. These are the rulers, not the masses, of the Western countries, who have imperialist tendencies for their political interests and not national interests, and cause all sorts of problems to the people of the east and the west. The new leadership of the Muslim countries is committed to secularization and modernization of Muslim societies on western lines to please and get support of the rulers of the Western world. This new leadership is not a true representative of the Muslim masses; it came to power with the help of Western rulers. People in the East and in the West are misguided in the name of national interest. In

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[410] *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*, IIIT, Herndon, 1989, p. 1.

fact, it is not the national interest but the interest of the rulers. As a result, the leaders try to develop values and concepts of the Western powers, as asserted by Iqbal: "It was Muslim rulers who wanted to modernize their countries, as well as personally to enjoy European comforts; and these Muslim rulers did not hesitate to get themselves and their countries involved as debtors in the world financial system or entangled in the web spun by Western spiders."[411] They knew very well that this would eventually create great social upheavals in their countries, but they continued this because that was the main source of their grip on power. To consolidate their power, along with other strategies, they also used the secular educational system as the main source of further disunity and fragmentation of Muslim societies. Through the uncritical introduction of the modern Western secular educational system, Muslims were divided into traditionalists, modernists, liberals and secularists and even westernized Muslims. In this way they fulfilled the interests of the rulers of the Western powers. Consequently, in many countries, leaders have almost lost the consent and support of the people for the legitimacy of their rule. For the sake of their own interests, Western rulers, who continued their imperialist tendencies, supported these unjust and illegitimate rulers and sacrificed democratic goals. In this way, the Western rulers have committed, and are still committing a crime against humanity and the price is being paid by the innocent masses of these Western countries that they are now unable to enjoy peace and security in their own homes. The Western major powers who claim to uphold and promote democracy and democratization support undemocratic rulers and deny the democratic rights of the people in the Muslim world. Muslim rulers still continue to deny the rights of the people for a representative government of the people. If any where this right was exercised, it was within the framework of the secular system. Organizations and individuals who stand for democratic principles within the framework of Islamic spirituality are labeled as 'fundamentalists' or 'militants' and finally are suppressed by force. These Muslim rulers have committed a double crime. On the one hand, they refuse the fundamental rights of the people of the formation of the representative government on the basis of free and fair elections; on the other, they label the Islamists as fundamentalists and suppress them. All this

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[411] William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity,* Routledge, London, 1988, p. 46.

is done with the blessings of the imperialist rulers of the West–the so-called champions of democracy and human rights. Finally, a big gap emerged between rulers and the masses in the Muslim world. Even today, many Muslim political leaders who hold power do not represent the voice of the people and depend totally on the support of the Western major powers. If Muslims want to change this state of affairs, as envisioned by Iqbal and other Islamic revivalists, then there is no other way for them except to work hard, sincerely, wisely and intelligently for the reconstruction of the Islamic thought, strategic struggle for the formation of Islamic states and representative governments, for the revival of Islam and Islamic civilization which would mean establishing peace, security and prosperity for humanity.

TWO POETS AND THEIR NOSTALGIC LOOK BACK TO SICILY: IBN HAMDIS AND MUHAMMAD IQBAL

"But I am a lover; loud crying is my faith"

(M Iqbal)

Emanuela Mignani, Modena

I. Sicily: a short historical survey up to I266

During the VIII century B.C. Sicily was colonized by the Greeks and the Phoenicians and, five centuries later, it became a Roman province. During the early Middle Ages it was occupied by the Vandals, the Ostrogoths and in the early VI century (535) the Byzantine general Belisarius started the conquest of the island which remained under the Byzantine rule for about three centuries.

In the meantime, in 633, brave and courageous Arabs left Hijaz and their country to spread Islam and conquer new lands: only less than a century later, from Spain to Khorasan, pious people, victors and vanquished, prayed Allah five times a day.

Starting from 646, under the rule of Mu'awiyah, the first Arab ships were built and the fleet was soon a significant element in the process of spreading the Arab supremacy over the neighbouring coasts and the Mediterranean islands. The crews of the Arab ships were mainly composed of people coming from the north-western and northern coasts of Africa, the area called Ifriqiya.

In the VII-VIII centuries Sicily was object of Arab raids but the Byzantine ships were able to repel the attacks of those still weak attempts to invade the island.

But in June 827, under the approval of Ziyadat Allah I, the Aghlabid *amir* of al-Qayrawan, the seventy year old Asad ibn al-Furat up to then devoted to religious and law studies took the lead of the fleet, about seventy ships, and headed for Sicily. They reached the western coast of the island, landed at Mazara and won the enemy Byzantine forces. Shortly after the successful exploit, Asad moved towards Syracuse, the capital, but along the way he died of plague: that is how it finished the life of a man who, born in Khorasan, reached Ifriqiya when he was a child, devoted his life to Islam and as a true believer ended his days in a foreign land where he wanted to spread his faith. Asad's surviving forces, helped by new forces who joined them coming from Ifriqiya now and then, continued their task and took possession of important towns: Palermo (83I), Messina (842), Ragusa(849). Khafagia, the new leader of the Arab forces, conquered Noto in 864 and Syracuse in 878, after a long siege. Almost all Sicily was now under the Arab rule. Ibrahim II, the Aghlabid amir who went to Sicily in 902 to complete the conquest of the island, won the remaining enemy forces in a few months.[412]

From 902 to 1060 Sicily was completely under the Arab rule: the first rulers were the Aghlabids, followed by the kalbits. In 947 Hasan al-Kalbi settled in Sicily: the years of the kalbit dynasty government of the island (947-1053) might be called the "golden age" of Islamic Sicily.

Towards I040-60 there was a number of independent signorias (local independent governing bodies) and the Arab emirate started splitting into some independent principalities: that uncertain situation, no longer stable and strong, caused the end of the Arab supremacy in Sicily and in thirty years (I061-I091) the Normans conquered all the island)[413] Palermo was the new capital of the island.

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[412] The brave *amir* died the same year in the South of Italy where, after crossing the Straits of Messina, he wanted to continue his war against the unbelievers.

[413] The Normans were originally pagan barbarian pirates from Denmark, Norway and Iceland. They settled in France Normandy in the IX century, then they converted to Christianity and adopted the French language. They invaded Britain in 1066. Another expansionary campaign brought them to southern Italy and Sicily, where they remained up to I266.

In the battles against the Normans a lot of Arabs were killed, some left Sicily taking refuge in Ifriqiya, Egypt or Spain. But a number of them did not leave the island: most of them had a poor and simple life but some were greatly appreciated by the Norman kings as they were good merchants, excellent craftsmen and men of letters. The rough Normans were fascinated by the refined Arabic lifestyle and culture, even if they supported their Christian faith, they allowed the Arabs to practise their religion. Even if they considered the Arabs a subjugated people, they were able to appreciate and recognize the good qualities of the Arab artisans and learned people. Near the Norman churches and palaces (often built and ornamented by Arab artisans) the elegant minarets still stood out.

Rare are the finds (intact and unaltered by the passing of time and unappropriate use) belonging to the Arab "golden age" in Sicily. What we know about that period is mostly due to the scientific, literary and artistic activity of those Arab and Muslim who lived during the Norman occupation of the island.

A tombstone can give us an idea of the multicultural education of the age and of the great esteem and consideration for the Arabs in general and the Arabic language in particular. The tombstone was made in I049 to commemorate the death of the mother of a Christian priest; the text is in four languages: Arabic, Greek, Latin and Hebrew.[414]

2. Ibn Hamdis and his nostalgia for Sicily

As we know, starting from the VII century the Arabic culture spread all over the territories the Arabs conquered. It drew new impetus from the contacts with the peoples subdued and the frequent migration, from one area to another, of significant learned people contributed to create the splendid medieval Arab paideia, a unique phenomenon in the history of literature and science.

Of course poetry, the chief art form in the age of Jahiliyya (when it had also a high social importance), continued to be a significant form of

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[414] F. Gabrieli, U. Scerrato, *Gli Arabi in Italia,* n a n o , 1993, p. 158.

artistic expression.

During the Umayyad caliphate the contact with other peoples enriched poetry with new themes and during the Abbassid caliphate also the style of some poets changed. The "new poets" (the muhdathun), who lived in the learned and refined setting of the age, wrote poems which were mostly outstanding for their elegance, linearity and straight forwardness. The new literary trend reached Spain and from there Sicily (X century), where, especially under the Kalbit caliphate, a large number of poets were active– Ibn al-Qatta' collected, in an anthology, the poems of about one hundred and seventy poets of Sicily. Unfortunately most of the anthology was lost in the course of time.[415]

Therefore our knowledge of the Arabic poetry in Sicily would have been poor (based on a few manuscripts and later quotations of names and lines) if Michele Amari (1806-I889) had not collected what is probably Ibn Hamdis' complete poetic output, about 350 poems. Celestino Schiaparelli (184I-1919) edited the poems of Ibn Hamdis, which were first published in 1897 in the original Arabic version. Only in 1998 Stefania E. Carnemolla edited and published the first Italian version of Ibn Hamdis' diwan. It is Sciaparelli's translation based on Amari's Italian version of the poems.[416]

Ibn Hamdis is considered the most significant Arab poet born in Sicily. 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdis was born in Syracuse, probably in 1055. We know that he came from a wealthy family and that his adolescence and youth were light-hearted and carefree. But in I078-9 he had to leave Sicily. The Normans had already begun the conquest of the island and a lot of Arabs left, looking for a peaceful refuge. He never returned to Sicily. He reached Spain and he spent some years in Seville, at the court of al-Mu'tamid[417] who, patron of poets, had made the town and his palace a refined and brilliant meeting centre of learned people in general and of

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[415] Ibn al-Qatta' (Sicily 1041- Egypt 1121): he was a great lexico grapher and grammarian.

[416] Ibn Hamdis, *Il Canzoniere,* translated by C. Schiaparelli, ed. Stefania Elena Carnemolla, Palermo, 1998.

[417] *Amir* of the Muslim-Arab 'Abbasid dynasty that arose in Seville at the beginning of the XI century.

poets in particular. Those years were for Ibn Hamdis a second pleasant period of his life. He took part in the life at court, wrote poems greatly appreciated and celebrated the memorable events of the age, in particular al-Mu'tamid's victory over the Christian troops of Alfonso VI (in the battle of az-Zallaqah, 1086). But also that pleasant portion of his life was to be short. In 1091 the Almoravid amir Yusuf Ibn Tashufin besieged Seville and won the army of al-Mu'tamid. Ibn Hamdis had to leave Andalusia and reached the norther coast of Africa.

The third part of his life was spent mainly in Mandiyah and Bijdyah where he was appreciated by the amirs of the two towns, but on the whole his life was now sad and nostalgic for the golden days gone by. He ended his life in Bijayah or, more probably, in the isle of Lajorca. It was July 1133.

Ibn Hamdis drew inspiration for his poems (more than six thousand lines) mostly from the pleasant moments of his life and from episodes which took place at the courts of the amirs who gave him hospitality. So he described the amirs, their successful deeds, their feasts and entertainments, splendid gardens, palaces, sweet girls, flowers, animals, rivers, the waning moon, the sea. In these poems his style is often elaborate, rich in skilful similes, figurative and formal, always refined. But the poet is actually great when he speaks about his lost youth and his Sicily, the land of his fathers, of his pleasant adolescence, of the splendid society, culture and way of life of the Arabs. He speaks to us with sincere and moving words, pointing out his nostalgic feelings. His style seems to have been influenced by the poets "muhdathun" and is now more fluent, natural, spontaneous and elegant.

His Sicily is

A country the dove lent its collar

and the peacock covered with the mantle of its feathers.

The poppies seem wine

and the courtyards the glasses.[418]

But the sad notes soon prevail and pervade the lines about his life in Sicily

I remember Sicily and despair renews at its recollection.

………….

If my tears did not taste bitter

I would believe they are its rivers[419]

Now the poet is old,

My youth has passed away and my white hair

has frightened my antilopes and scattered them away.[420]

And he often lingers over his past youth, thinks of the Arabs defeated by the Normans and expresses a wish:

May God guard a house in Noto[421]

and rain clouds converge there.

Every hour I think of it

and I send it the tears I shed.

I am nostalgic for the house,

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[418] lbn Hamdis, *ll Canzoniere*, *op. cit.*, p. 429. (The English version of the poems is mine).

[419] *lbid.*, pp. I89, 190

[420] *lbid.*, p. 264

[421] A town where the poet probably lived for some time

the neighbours, the honesty of the girls.

He who left his heart in that place

with his body desires to return.[422]

Now

I see my country insulted by the Rum who

promenade where the inhabitants lie buried,

they do not have to face the strong defenders any longer.

If those graves could be opened wide they would fling outside fierce lions to attack them.

But I see that when a lion is far from the bush the arrogant wolf shows off.[423]

He addresses the wind and the sea to voice his endless longing for Sicily:

Oh wind! when you blow the rain clouds

to water the parched fields

send me the dry clouds

so that I may wet them with my tears.

………

Oh sea! beyond there is my paradise

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[422] *Poeti Arabi di Sicilia*, ed. Francesca Maria Corrao, (Messina, 2002), pp. 143-45.

[423] lbn Hamdis, *II Canzoniere, op. cit.*, pp. 252,253.

where I wore joy, not sadness.

When I tried to find there a dawn

you interposed a sunset.

If I could have got what I desired,

when the sea prevented me from meeting it,

I would have crossed it, riding the crescent moon as if it

were I could embrace there the sun.[424]

The recollection of his relatives buried in Sicily and his deep love for the island and for the Arabs who lived there make him express a desire, almost a prayer:

Long live that island and its learned people,

long live its vestiges and remains.

Long live the perfume which exhales from there

and which the mornings and the evenings bring up to us.

Long live the living and the dead whose limbs

lie peacefully in their graves.[425]

Yes, Sicily will live on, it will resist the passing of time so as to become an everlasting token of its past Muslim glory. One day another great poet will be able to look at it with renewed love for the island and his Arab forefathers.

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[424] *Ibid.*, pp. 78,79
[425] F.Gabrieli, U. Secerrato, *op. cit.*, p. 737.

3. Muhammad lqbal's "Sicily"

SICILY

Cry your heart out, eyes of mine,

That are weeping tears of blood!

There is the tomb of Arabian civilisation!

Once this place was full of commotion

5   *Because of those desert-dwellers*

Whose ships sported the ocean as if it were a playground,

Who made the courts of kings quake,

And in whose swords dwelt lightening;

They were harbingers of a new world –

10 *Their restless sword devoured the Old Era*

They revived the dead world with the call of 'Rise!'

Releasing man from the fetters of superstition.

Their resounding call– "God is the Greatest!"–

Is still music to the ears– is that call now stilled forever?

15 *Sicily! You are the pride and honour of the seas.*

You are like a guide in this desert of water.

May your beauty spot forever adorn the ocean's cheek,

And may your lights reassure the manner.

May your scenes forever be pleasing to the traveller's eye,

20 *And the waves forever dance on the rocks round your shore.*

You once nurtured the civilisation of that nation

Whose world-inflaming beauty dazzled the beholders' eyes.

The nightingale of Shiraz lamented over Baghdad;

Dagh wept tears of blood over Jahanabad;

25 *And, when the heavens destroyed the state of Granada,*

The grieving heart of Ibn-i Badrun cried out in pain.

A sorrowful Iqbal must carry out the duty of mourning you –

Fate chose a heart that was your intimate.

Whose is the story that your remains conceal?

30 *The silence of your shores is as eloquent as speech.*

Speak to me of your sorrow – I too am sorrowful.

I am the dust of the caravan that came to you as its destination.

Add colour to that old picture and show it to me;

Tell the story of old times and fire me with longing.

35 *I will carry your gift all the way to India:*

Here I myself weep– there I will make others do so.[426]

In 1905, Muhammad Iqbal was sailing from Bombay to England. He wanted to study there and to get in touch with western civilization. He was twenty– eight years old, a distinguished young man of refined features and piercing eyes.

While sailing the Mediterranean he found himself in front of a beautiful sight, Sicily at a distance. We may suppose that he was leaning on the rail, motionless and fascinated by the view, perhaps with his eyes screwed up he tried to see the island better and to visualize its past story.

The poet is emotionally prostrated with grief at the thought of what Sicily meant for the Arabs:

Cry your heart out, eyes of mine,

That are weeping tears of blood!

There is the tomb of Arabian civilisation! (II. 1-3)

The past glory of the Arabs re-emerges all of a sudden: "once" introduces the images (1I.4-I2) which remind us of that great age: the supremacy of the shins, the glittering swords, which were "restless" (l.10), eager to slash their way to destroy the old pagan world and to bring it to a new life "with the call of 'Rise!' (I.ll) Sicily is both the symbol of that grandeur and its tomb, the island is still resonant with memories and the awareness of this status leads the poet to ask a question:

Their resounding call– 'God is the Greatest!'-

Is still music to the ears - is that call now stilled forever?

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[426] Mustansir Mir, *Tulip in the Desert*, (London, 1990), pp. 117-8.

The island is mute and the poet does not give an answer, or better, the answer, perceived as a whisper of uncertainty carried by the waves, is turned by the poet into a wish, almost a prayer, the splendid sequence of eight lines, 15-22.

Just like Ibn Hamdis, the Indian poet hopes that Sicily will live forever, the island must be a reassuring light for the travellers, must "adorn the ocean's cheek" (1.17) as if it were a jewel, precious and rare, surrounded by the waves, longing to touch its beautiful shores. Sicily must be immortal because, long ago, its beauty fascinated the Arabs who landed and settled there. Sicily housed and nourished those people, receiving, in return, the precious gift of the splendid civilization of the Arabs whose world-inflaming beauty dazzled the beholders' eyes (I.22) and the privilege to remind the future generations of its greatness. But Sicily - the poet is going to realize must be immortal above all because the sad end of the Arab supremacy on the island is such a dramatic and painful event that we, keeping its memory vivid in our minds, must act so that there are no more 'tombs' of the Arab civilization.

The poet remembers other places with the same destiny as Sicily and the poets who mourned their dramatic end in their lines. Baghdad, which was destroyed in 1258 by the Mongol Hulagu Khan and for which the "nightingale of Shiraz" (I.23), the poet Sa'di shed bitter tears; Shah-Jahanabad, the occupation of which by the British army in 1857 was commemorated by Nawwab Mirza Khan (Dagh) in his sad and moving lines; Granada, the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, which was conquered by the Catholic monarchs in 1492, its tragic loss was *the* subject of the melancholic lines of Ibn 'Abdun.[427]

The recollection of those places and poems crosses the poet's mind and leaves him even more sorrowful than before, but also determined to follow the shining example of the three poets.

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[427] Ibn Badrun was the editor of the poem.

A sorrowful Iqbal must carry out the duty of mourning you. (l.27)

He is the right person who can accomplish the task: he is a Muslim, a sensitive, responsive and learned young man, in fact

Fate chose a heart that was your intimate. (1.28)

In a last desperate attempt to know something more about the past glory of the Arabs in Sicily, the poet asks the island to speak to him: he is "the dust of the caravan" (1.32), the one left behind, neglected and abandoned, but perhaps the only one eager, to know. He would like to know all the sorrowful stories hidden behind the ruins and asks the island to "add colour" (I.33). The "new" image of the island and the "new" stories would be a nourishment for the poet who suffers but desires to know. But the island is still silent. The dull silence might seem to the poet a failure, a quest without achievement, but he knows that the unsaid is superior to the said. So, feeling an urging desire (sorrow and passion mixed together), perhaps with a yearning sigh, he says to the island:

Fire me with longing. (1.34)

For a moment we readers feel suspended, intoxicated by the beauty of these words: firstly because the word "fire" points out the passionate attraction of the poet towards the island which must be a light, a beacon for every Muslim passing by; secondly because the word "longing" points out the poet's nostalgic look back to Sicily, a longing which is also a warning to all the Muslim people of our age. "Fire" and "longing", seemingly negative words, have the positive connotation of "light" and "warning". In these words the poem, where nothing is conceded to fantasy or illusion, attains a perfect extraordinary poise.

The poet perceives the beauty and the meaningfulness of his sensations, is enriched by the new experience and by his emotional response to the suggestions of the island, and, now sure and confident of his task, says:

I will carry your gift all the way to India:

Here I myself weep there I will make others do so. (11. 35, 36)

Contrary to Ibn Hamdis, who was never to see his homeland again, Muhammad Iqbal will return to India and, contrary to Ibn Hamdis, he will not merely linger over a cherished longing for Sicily. He has a task he is destined for.

As a new storyteller, he will speak of the "silent" Sicily and will tell the "unsaid" stories of the island, no longer only a tomb but a warning light. His beloved Indian people will learn to love the past to improve the present, with a new full consciousness of the Arabian and Islamic civilization.

The poet was travelling westward and now Sicily was vanishing from sight. The young man kept on looking eastward and gazed at the fading shape of the island. He saw its inner light pointing to the East, the Hijaz of his ancestors and India, his present and future world. Perhaps, right then, he thought that one day he would write a poem on the island.