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RELIGION AS COMING HOME

ANNOTATIONS AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIA ON MUHAMMAD IQBĀL'S *THE RECONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN ISLĀM*

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIA

I am greatly honored by the invitation to deliver this 1997 lecture in honor of Muḥammad Iqbāl. He speaks archetypically for the people of Pakistan, yet his brilliant exploration of the beauty and majesty of the Islāmic religious vision stands as a beacon for all believers wherever they may be.

Even more, I am grateful to Muḥammad Iqbāl for the example of his determination to respond with vigor and creativity to the great challenge to human meaning in our times, and to do so not by compromising religious vision, but precisely by plumbing in faith its richness.

Indeed, if there be truth in the common-place that the first millennium was focused upon God and the second upon man, then Iqbāl may be the harbinger of our new millennium, pointing the way to a vision that reunites both.

But how can the past give birth to the future; in particular, how can earlier human vision, especially that of a person who has passed from his life, generate new insights deep enough to help elucidate what both transcends human life and makes it possible?

One thinks immediately that this might be done by adding from other traditions or subsequent times. But there is danger in this of constructing an odd creature, recalling the definition of

the camel as a horse made by a committee. True growth may be catalyzed from without, but it must emerge from within, from the home, the hearth and the heart. Here a story, my story, might help to suggest how this could be done for the thought of Muḥammad Iqbāl.

PROLOGUE: A STORY

In recent years it has become the custom to tell one's story as a way of shedding light upon the vital sources of one's insight and inspiration, what one values, and what one is really about in one's life. My story in philosophy is one of coming home by leaving home; hopefully it might help in reconstructing the *Reconstruction*.

As a young man I left homeland in order to undertake my education in the premier Catholic university, the Gregorian in Rome. There, the Jesuits labored mightily for the mystical number of seven years to introduce me to the philosophy and theology of the Graeco-Roman Christian tradition, reading Augustine in the light of Plato and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* in the light of Aristotle. This is one of the great traditions of religious thought; it is the one in which I was born as a philosopher and which I have always been grateful to know and to savor.

My doctorate in philosophy was a first step outward to the work of the Protestant Christian philosopher-theologian, Paul Tillich. I then remained to teach metaphysics and philosophy of religion at the Catholic University of America. These courses followed the Aristotelian model, beginning from the world and reasoning to God after the pattern of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Thomas' five ways.

After some twelve years (another mystical number) it was time to step out of the Western Christian tradition as a whole. At the University of Madras, I was most graciously received by Prof. T. N. P. Mahadevan who, with personal conviction and passionate commitment, introduced me to the Hindu metaphysical tradition, especially the non-dualist (*advaita*) tradition

of the great Shankara. This was a second decisive experience for me and one which, with the help of Prof. Balasubramaniam, I have renewed and extended whenever possible.

Surprisingly, however, in taking me away from home, these studies brought me home at a yet deeper and truer level. Opening the text of the *sutras*, the great systematic summa of the Hindu tradition, I found that rather than arriving at the divine life only at the end in the Aristotelian manner, it began with God: the first *sutra* announced the inquiry into Brahma which the second *sutra* described as "that from which, in which and into which all is."[1]

Suddenly, as with Marx's process of standing Hegel on his head, I found that my reading of Thomas' five ways to the existence of God was being inverted and, to my surprise, that it was thereby deepened and corrected. Reading the *sutras* enabled me to grasp that the deeper sense of Thomas' "ways" was not to deduce the infinite from the finite (a real contradiction in terms), but to reconnect all such things to the source of their being and meaning. From whatever point of view — origin, level of perfection, or goal — God alone is self-explanatory; all else takes its origin from him, manifests his divine life, and searches for its fulfillment in transcending itself toward others and ultimately toward Him. Human life is thereby freed from egoistic self-enclosure and its corollary, mutual conflict. Instead, life is essentially open to, and reflects, that infinity of being and meaning in which all else is grounded.

The long road to the other side of the world had brought me finally home to the foundational truth of my own philosophical tradition.

Thus, our theme is: leaving home in order to return enriched, and not so much by what is found elsewhere, but especially by the deeper meaning one is enabled thereby to draw out of one's own tradition. This recalls the history of Abraham, our common father in faith. Here, I would like to investigate the possibilities of such an approach for the thought of Muḥammad Iqbāl following broadly his three stages: (*a*) faith or belief, (*b*) thought

or rational understanding, and (*c*) personal discovery and assimilation.

ARCHEOLOGY OF HUMAN THOUGHT AS RECONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS AWARENESS

In our modern secularist context the foundational religious meaning of life has been extensively forgotten. Instead, the rare and relatively recent phenomenon of a world-view precinding from, or neutral to, the divine has come to be taken as the honest base line from which the religious issue should be considered. For Iqbāl this is quite out of the question, analogous to defining the mind on the basis of but one of its limited (analytic) processes. Hence, he does not go far in the first chapter of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islām* before stating as its principle what the *sutras* exemplified both in its text and in its structure, namely, that: "It is in fact the presence of the total infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible."[2] The genius of his work is its powerful and intricate elaboration of this theme.

This paper will attempt to suggest three ways in which Iqbāl's thesis might be supplemented: first, from the point of view of an archeology of religious thought in support of his conviction that thought is natively religious; second, by elements from systematic philosophy with a view to understanding the meaning this religious insight gives to human life; third, by drawing upon a phenomenology of religious consciousness to see how assimilation of this insight might open new ways of creating human comity for the millennium now dawning.

To begin, in a typically brief but pregnant way Iqbāl notes that "to the primitive man all experience was supernatural."[3] Rather than being simply a reference to dead facts from the past, this points to the total cumulative human experience regarding the essential importance of religion as manifested by human life. Moreover, it suggests the common ground the many cultures need as they begin to interact more intensively. It seems then the place to begin.

From earliest times human thought has always and everywhere had a sacred center. It is possible to track the evolution of this constant awareness by relating it to the three dimensions of the human mind. The first is the external senses of sight, touch and the like by which one receives information from the external world. The second is the internal senses of imagination and memory by which one assembles the received data in a manner which enables it to represent the original whole from which the various senses drew their specific data, to represent these and other data in various combinations, or to recall this at a later time. Finally, beyond the external and internal senses is the intellect by which one knows the nature of things and judges regarding their existence.[4]

Not surprisingly, upon examination it appears that the actual evolution of human awareness of the sacred follows this sequence of one's natural capacities for knowledge. In all cases it is intellectual knowledge that is in play, for religious awareness concerns not the characteristics or shapes of sensible objects, but existence and indeed the one who gave his name as "I am Who I Am." But this was articulated successively, first in terms of the external senses in the totemic stage of thought, then in terms of the internal sense in the mythic period, and finally in properly intellectual terms as the origin of philosophy or science.[5]

To follow this evolution it should be noted that for life in any human society as a grouping of persons there is a basic need to understand oneself and one's relation to others. It should not be thought that these are necessarily two questions, rather than one. They will be diversely formalized in the history of philosophy, but prior to any such formalization, indeed prior even to the capacity to formalize this as a speculative problem, some mode of lived empathy rather than antipathy must be possible. Plato later worked out formally and in detail that the unity of the multiple is possible only on the basis of something that is one, but the history of social life manifests that present in the awareness of the early peoples and according to their mode

of awareness there always has been some one reality in terms of which they understood all to be related.

Totemic Thought

The earliest understanding by peoples of themselves and their unity with others and with nature was expressed in terms of the objects of the external senses, such as an animal or bird: peoples spoke of themselves by simple identity with the animal or bird which was the totem of their clan. The primitive or foundational mode of self-understanding was the totem. Levy Bruhl expresses this in a law of participation. Persons saw themselves not merely as in some manner like or descendent from their totem, but instead asserted directly: "I am lion." In these terms they found their identity and dignity, considered themselves bound to all others who had the same totem, and understood by analogy of their totem with that of other tribes the relations between their two peoples for marriage and the like.[6]

Moreover, the totem, in turn, was not simply one animal among others, but was in a sense limitless: no matter how many persons were born to the tribe the potentiality of the totem was never exhausted. Further, it was shown special respect, such as not being sold, used for food or other utilitarian purposes which would make it subservient to the individual members of the tribe or clan. Whereas other things might be said to be possessed and used, the totem was the subject of direct predication: one might say that he had a horse or other animal, but only of the totem would one say that he is, *e.g.* lion.

The totem then was the unique limitless reality in terms of which all particular people and things had their being and interrelation. It was the sacred center of individual and community life in terms of which all had meaning and cohesion. It made possible the sense of both personal dignity and interpersonal relations, which were the most important aspects of human life. This it did with a sense of direct immediacy that would be echoed, but never repeated, in subsequent stages of more formal religious thought.

Whether this be seen as religious or proto-religious, what it shows is that religion is not something added to a secular universe, but the basic and essential insight of even the simplest forms of human community. The issue then is not whether there be room for religion alongside public life or how to protect one from the other, but how religion functions as the root of human meaning and community.

Mythic Thought

The totem was able to provide for unity and meaning while the life of all members of the tribe remained similar. But its manner of expressing unity became insufficient as society became more specialized and differentiated. The bonds between members of the tribe came to depend not merely upon similarity and sameness, but upon the differentiated capabilities of, *e.g.* hunters, fishers and eventually farmers. With this ability to be both united and differentiated came an appreciation as well of the special distinctiveness of the sacred center above the many individuals of which it was the principle and center. What in totemic thought previously had been stated simply by identity (I am lion) could now be appreciated as greater than, and transcending, the members of the tribe. This is reflected in the development of priesthood, rituals and symbols to reflect what was no longer seen simply as one's deepest identity.[7]

Such a reality could no longer be stated in terms corresponding to the external senses, but rather was figured by imagination. The terms drawn originally from the senses now were reconfigured in forms that expressed life above men and which stood as the principle of their life. Such higher principles, as the more knowing and having a greater power of will, would be personal; and as transcendent persons they would be called gods.

It would be incorrect then to consider this, as did Freud and Marx, to be simply a projection of human characteristics. On the contrary, the development of the ability to think in terms shaped by the imagination released human appreciation of the principle

of life from the limitations of animals, birds and other natural entities available to the external senses and allowed the transcendence of the principle of unity to be expressed in a more effective manner. This was not to create the sense of transcendence; rather it allowed the unique and essential foundation of human meaning of which Iqbāl spoke to find new expression in terms of evolving human capabilities.

Of this the *Theogony*,[8] written by Hesiod (ca. 776 BC), is especially indicative because the gods stated the reality of the various parts of nature. When Hesiod undertook to state how these were interrelated he in effect articulated the unity and interrelation of all in God, which is the basic sense of religion.

His work has a number of important characteristics. First, it intends to state the highest possible type of knowledge. Thus, it begins with an invocation to the Muses to provide him with divine knowledge: "These things declare to me from the beginning, ye Muses who dwell in the house of Olympus."[9] Secondly and correspondingly, it is concerned with the deepest issues, namely, the origin and unity of all things: "Tell me which of them came first" he asked, and then proceeded to a poetic delineation of the most important religious issues, from the justification of the divine reign (later named "theodicy" by Leibniz) to the understanding of evil.[10] Thirdly, because it was written as the period of purely mythic thought was drawing to a close – within two centuries of the initiation of philosophy in Greece – Hesiod was able to draw upon the full resources of the body of Greek mythology, weaving the entire panoply of the gods into the structure of his poem. He collected and related the gods not externally in a topographical or chronological sequence, but in terms of their inner reality and real order of dependence. Thus, when in the *Theogony* he responds to the question: "how, at the first, gods and earth came to be," his ordering of the gods weds theogony and cosmogony to constitute a unique mythical understanding regarding the unity and diversity of reality.

The order of the parts of the universe is the following. The first to appear was Chaos: "Verily at the first Chaos came to be."

Then came earth: "but next wide-bosomed Earth the ever sure foundation of all," and starry Heaven: "Earth first bore starry Heaven, equal to herself." From Earth, generally in unison with Heaven, were born Oceanus and the various races of Cyclopes and gods, from whom, in turn, were born still other gods such as Zeus and the races of men.

The understanding of the unity of reality expressed by this poem is the very opposite of a random gathering of totally disparate, limited and equally original units. On the contrary, the relation between the gods, and hence between the parts of nature they bespeak, is expressed in terms of procreation. Hence, every reality is appreciated as related positively to all others in its genetic sequence.

This relatedness of things does not depend upon a later and arbitrary decision, but is equally original with their very reality; indeed, it is their reality. Neither it is something which involves only certain aspects of the components of the universe: it extends to their total actuality. This includes actions: Rhea, for example, appeals to her parents for protection from the acts of her husband, Cronos, against his children. Hence, the understanding which the poem conveys is that of a unity or relation as original as the reality of things and on which their distinctive character and actions depend.

This unity is understood to be by nature prior to diversity as understood by the genetic structure in which each god proceeds from the union of an earlier pair of gods, while all such pairs are descendents of the one original pair, Earth and Heaven. Further, the procreation of the gods proceeds from each of these pairs precisely as united in love, under the unitive power of Eros who is equally original with heaven and earth.

From what has been said we can conclude that unity pervades and precedes gods and men. All is traced back to Earth and Heaven as the original pair from whose union, under the impetus of Eros, all is generated. But what is the relation between Heaven and Earth? This question is at the root of the

issue of unity as expressed in mythic terms. It promises to be able to take us to a still deeper and more properly religious understanding if we return to the text and use the proper etymological tools.

The text states the following sequence: Chaos, Earth, Heaven. Unfortunately, since the Stoics, Chaos has come to mean disorder and mindless conflict or collision. Aristotle, however, in his Physics referred to chaos as empty space (*topos*).[11] Etymologically, the term can be traced through the root of the Greek term 'casko' to the common Indo-European stem, 'gap'. Using this stem as a sonar signal, as it were, in order to sound out mythic thought across the broad range of the Indo-European peoples, the term has been found to express a gaping abyss at the beginning of time as for example the derivative 'ginungagap' in Nordic mythology.[12] Kirk and Raven confirm this analysis and conclude that 'chaos' meant, not a state of confusion or conflict, but an open and perhaps windy space which essentially is between boundaries.[13]

Returning to the text of the *Theogony* in this light, it will be noted that it does not say "In the beginning" or speak directly of a state prior to Chaos, but begins with Chaos: "At first Chaos came to be." But there is no suggestion that Chaos was the original reality; on the contrary, the text is explicit that chaos came to be: "*He toi men protista Chaos genet.*"[14] Further, Chaos is a space to which boundaries are essential. These, it would seem, are the gods which the text states just after Chaos, namely, Earth and its equal, Heaven. These are not said to have existed prior to chaos and to have been brought into position in order to constitute the boundaries of the 'gap'; rather, they are said somehow to follow upon or arrange on the basis of chaos.

Thus, Kirk and Raven understand actively the opening verses of the body of the text, namely, "Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth ... and Earth first bore starry Heaven equal to herself," to express the opening of a gap or space, which thereby gives rise to Heaven and Earth as its two boundaries.[15]

For its intelligibility, this implies (*a*) that an undifferentiated unity precedes the gap, and (*b*) that by opening or division the first contrasting realities, namely, Heaven and Earth, were constituted. That is, on the basis of the gap one boundary, Heaven, is differentiated from the other boundary, Earth: by the gap the boundaries identically are both constituted and differentiated as contraries. As all else are derivatives of Chaos, Earth and Heaven in the manner noted above, it can be concluded that the entire differentiated universe is derivative of an original undifferentiated unity which preceded Chaos.

It would be premature, however, to ask of the mythic mind whether this derivation took place by material or efficient causality; that question must await the development of philosophy. But the original reality itself is not differentiated; it is an undivided unity. As such it is without name, for the names we give reflect our sense perceptions, which concern not what is constant and homogeneous but the differentiated bases of the various sense stimuli. What is undifferentiated is not only unspoken in fact but unspeakable in principle by the language of myth, which depends essentially upon the imagination.

Nonetheless, though it is unspeakable by the mythic mind itself, reflection can uncover or reveal something of that undifferentiated reality which the *Theogony* implies. We have, for instance, noted its reality and unity. This lack of differentiation is not a deficiency, but a fullness of reality and meaning from which all particulars and contraries are derived. It is unspeakable because not bounded, limited and related after the fashion of one imaged contrary to another. This is the transcendent fullness that is at the heart of the Hindu *advaita* or non-dual philosophy; it is also the total infinite to which Iqbāl referred as that which makes finite thinking possible.

It is the source of that which is seen and spoken in our language, which is based in the imagination and which Hindu thought refers to as the world of names and forms. Further, it is the source, not only whence the differentiated realities are derived, but of the coming forth itself of these realities. This is

reflected in two significant manners. First, Eros, which itself is said to come from Chaos, is the power which joins together in procreative union the pairs of gods, thereby reflecting the dynamic manifestive and sharing character of the undifferentiated reality.

Negatively, this is indicated also by the acts which the *Theogony* describes as evil. For example, it says that "Heaven rejoiced in his evil doing," namely, hiding away his children in a secret place of Earth as soon as each was born, and not allowing them to come into the light. Cronos is termed "a wretch" for swallowing his children. In each case evil is described as impeding the process by which new realities are brought into existence. This implies that its opposite, the good, involves essentially bringing forth the real. The undifferentiated unity is origin of the multiple and differentiated; in terms we shall encounter below, it is participative.

Finally, it can now be seen that all the progeny, that is, all parts of the universe and all humans, are born into the unity of a family. This traces its origin, not to a pair of ultimately alien realities and certainly not to a human chaos as conflict, but to the undifferentiated Unity. Just as there is no autogenesis, there is no unrelated reality or aspect of reality. It would seem, then, that verses 118-128 of the hymn imply a reality which is one, undifferentiated and therefore unspeakable, but productive of the multiple, generous and sharing. For the Greek mythic mind then, beings are more one than many, more related than divided, more complementary than contrasting.

As a transformation of the earlier totemic structure, mythic understanding continues the basic totemic insight regarding the related character of all things predicated upon a unity and fullness of meaning. By thinking in terms of the gods, however, myth is able to add a number of important factors. First, quantitatively the myth can integrate, not only a certain tribe or number of tribes, but the entire universe. Second, qualitatively it can take account of such intentional realities as purpose and fidelity. Third, while implying the unitive principle expressed in

totemic thought with shocking directness ("I am lion"), it adds the connotation of its unspeakable and undifferentiated but generous character.

The expression of all this in terms of the forms available to the mythic internal sense of imagination had its temptations. These were pointed out by Xenophanes, who noted that by the time of Homer and Hesiod a perfervid imagination had gone from expressing the transcendence of the gods to attributing to them as well the many forms of evil found among men;[16] the very principles of meaning and value could point as well to their opposites. Thinking in terms of the imagination was no longer sufficient and the intellect needed to proceed in its own terms beyond sense and imagination, to enable the deeper sense of the gods and of nature to be expressed and defended against confusion and corruption. As the mind proceeded to operate in properly intellectual terms, rather than through the images of mythic thinking, science and philosophy replaced myth as the basic mode of human understanding.

First Philosophy

Once begun, philosophy made spectacularly rapid progress. Within but a few generations, the human intellect had worked out a structure of the physical world using basic categories of hot and cold, wet and dry, available to the external senses, along with mechanisms of vortex motion.[17] Mathematical reason worked with the internal senses to lay down the basic theorems of geometry.[18] In brief, by developing properly intellectual terms the Greeks elaborated with new and hitherto unknown precision insights regarding physical reality.

But that had never been the root human issue. Totemic and mythic thoughts were not merely ways of understanding and working with nature, although they did that as well. Fundamentally they concerned the metaphysical and religious issues of what it meant to be, the divine basis of life, and the religious terms in which it needed to be lived. After the work of others in conceptualizing the physical and mathematical orders,

Parmenides was able to take up the most basic questions of life and being in properly intellectual metaphysical terms.

First, he bound the work of the intellect directly to being: "It is the same thing to think and to be" (fragment 3).[19] Hence, the requirements of thinking would manifest those of being. Second, he contrasted being with its opposite, nonbeing, as something to nothing at all (fragment 2). This principle of non-contradiction was a construct of the mind; like *pi* in geometry it was something good to think with, for it enabled the mind to reflect upon the requirements of both being and mind so as to avoid anything that would undermine their reality.

Speaking still in a mythic language, the Proemium of Parmenides' famous poem described a scene in which he was awakened by goddesses and sent in a chariot drawn by a faithful mare along the arching highway that spans all things. In this process he moved from obscurity to light, from opinion to truth. There, the gates were opened by the goddess justice as guardian of true judgements and he was directed to examine all things in order to discern the truth.

Parmenides then images himself proceeding further along the highway[20] till he comes to a fork with one signpost pointing toward being as essentially beginning. Here, Parmenides must reason regarding the implications of such a route. If "to begin" means to move from nonbeing or nothingness to being, were "to be" to include "to begin", that would mean that being included within its very essence nonbeing or nothingness. There would then be no difference between being and nothing; being would be without meaning; the real would be nothing at all. If, conversely, from this notion of beginning such nonbeing is removed, then it emerges as essentially not beginning, but eternal. This is the first requirement of being: the possibility of taking the fork which would have being as essentially beginning is excluded; being is essentially eternal and all that begins can only derive therefrom.

The chariot then moves along the highway of being, and the procedure is analogous at the two subsequent forks in the road

where the signposts tempt one to consider being as changing and multiple respectively. Each of these, Parmenides reasons, would place nonbeing within being itself, thereby destroying its very character as being. Nonbeing is contained in the notion of change, in as much as a changing being is no longer what it had been and not yet what it will become. But if such nonbeing pertained to the essence of being, it would destroy being. When, however, nonbeing is removed, then being emerges as unchanging. Similarly, nonbeing is essential to the notion of multiplicity, in as much as this requires that one being not be the other. When, however, nonbeing is removed what emerges is one. These then are the characteristics of being: it is infinite and eternal, unchanging and one.

Such being transcends the multiple and changing world in which we live: it is in a manner more perfect than could possibly be appreciated in the graphic terms of the internal senses of imagination, which defined the nature of human capabilities in the stage of myth.

In this way Parmenides discerned the necessity of absolute, eternal and unchanging being — whatever be said of anything else. Neither being nor thought makes sense if being is the same as nonbeing, for then to do, say, or be anything would be the same as not doing, not saying or not being. As the real is irreducible to nothing and being is irreducible to nonbeing — as it must be if there is any thing or any meaning whatsoever — then being must have about it the self-sufficiency expressed by Parmenides' notion of the absolute One.

One can refuse to look at this issue and focus upon particular aspects of limited realities. But if one confronts the issue of being, it leads to the self-sufficient as the creative source of all else. Without this all limited beings would be radically compromised — not least, man himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aristotle would conclude the search for the nature of being in his *Metaphysics* with a description of divine life.[21]

The issue then is not how the notion of the divine entered human thought; it has always been there, for without that which is One and Absolute in the sense of infinite and self-sufficient, man and nature would be at odds: humankind would lack social cohesion. Indeed, thinking would be the same as not thinking just as being would be the same as nonbeing.

From the above archeology of human thought in its totemic, mythic and first philosophical stages, it can be concluded with Iqbāl that it has been religious insight regarding the Absolute which has made finite thinking possible. Leaving home and going deeply into the past thus brings us home to reconstruct the deep truth of our faith regarding knowledge, namely, not only that it can also be about religion, but that in essence thought is itself the religious reconstitution of all in God: this is what knowledge most fundamentally is.

There are two implications of this archeology which I would like to cite here. The first concerns the relation of a people to the message of a prophet. As the basis of the human self-understanding of the different cultures is essentially religious, a divine revelation through a great prophet comes not as alien and conflictual, but as a special divine help to appreciate, purify and strengthen a culture. The message of the prophet evokes the divine life which lies within; it enables each people to plunge more deeply into the infinite ground of their cultural traditions and to bring out more of its meaning for their life. Indeed, confidence (etymologically rooted in "faith") and commitment to one's tradition as grounded in the infinite means precisely expecting it to have even more to say than a people has yet articulated. In this light, the prophet's voice is a call to delve anew into one's tradition, to bring out more of its meaning for one's times and to live this more fully. This is a voice to which one can respond fully and freely.

In this sense I hope you will permit me to take issue with Iqbāl's seemingly overly Darwinian description of the first period of religious life as

> a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of the command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence insofar as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned.[22]

The archeology of human thought suggests that the response of a people to the message of the prophet is more precisely a renewal and reaffirmation of their deep self-understanding. This is truly a homecoming in whose very essence lies the deep freedom of the peace one experiences in returning home after a long and confusing day. But I suspect that Iqbāl would not disagree with this, for in reality it is an application to culture of what he concluded regarding thought as being made possible by the presence therein of the total infinite,[23] and even regarding the natural order, namely that "there is no such thing as a profane world ... all is holy ground," citing the Prophet: "The whole of this earth is a mosque."[24]

A second implication can be of special importance in these times of intensifying communication and interaction between peoples. If the future is to hold not Huntington's conflict of civilizations, but their cooperation in a shrinking world, then it is important to see how the civilizations deriving from prophets and religious traditions can relate one to another. Hermeneutics can be helpful here with its suggestion that in order to delve more deeply it is helpful to hear not only reformulations of what we ourselves say in our own horizon, but new formulations from other traditions regarding the basically shared truths of our divine origin and goal. As Iqbāl is supported by an archeology of knowledge indicating that all knowledge is grounded in the divine, then we can expect that religious texts from the traditions of other great prophets will evoke new echoes from the depths of our own tradition. In this light interchange with other traditions comes not as a threat. Rather, cultural interchange can enable us

to make our pilgrimages, each more unerringly along our own path, to the one holy mountain[25] which Iqbāl refers to as the total absolute. Other forms of cooperation can, and indeed must, be built upon this.

SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE RELIGIOUS RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN PERSON

There is another implication of arriving at Iqbāl's sense of the essentially religious character of thought through an archeology of human thinking. This relates to his concern to protect religion against the tendency of analytic rationality to reduce the mind to its empirical content and to bind it to the material, or at least to what could clearly and distinctly be conceived by the human mind. Iqbāl's approach was to show the limited character of such a view, not only in terms of its objects, but especially as a description of thought itself. He did this by majestically describing the broad (religious) reaches of the mind. For this he reinterpreted time, light and freedom in ways that echoed the thought of such of his contemporaries as Bergson, Whitehead, Alexander, Royce and Einstein, whose thought he much enriched with the cultural resources of the Islāmic tradition. This is a special power and grace of his thought.

There is here a significant contrast to al-Ghazāli whose *Munqidh* I most highly admire (and indeed am in the process of annotating and publishing it). In describing his itinerary to the mystic life al-Ghazāli considered thought to be limited and therefore in the end inadequate or even subversive for religious life. This implied a rupture of thought and faith which even Averroes (Ibn Rushd) was not able to repair. In our times this has become particularly worrisome, for the Enlightenment has radicalized this gulf by reducing all thought rigorously to contrary and hence limited concepts: the modern world in which we live has been built in these terms. It should not be surprising, indeed it is a point of honor, that Islām always has stood firmly against such "enlightenment". Some have reacted by rejecting modernity in bloc — even at time violently and self destructively. Iqbāl's response is different. He is eloquent in his

exposition of the essential importance of limited, categorical thought, precisely in its own sphere, and reaches out to welcome the positive contributions of modernity.

But he gives voice to infinitely richer domains of thought grounded in the divine. Thus the divine appears, as it were, dimly as the background of every limited human encounter; human life becomes theonomous and can be seen in its transcendent significance. For Iqbāl when related to their infinite ground science and technology become concrete manifestations and articulations of the meaning of God in time.

But as he speaks on this subject in his *Reconstruction* Iqbāl edges ever closer to that mystical vision of Ḥallāj in which all is so suffused with divine light and meaning that man and nature seem almost divine. Iqbāl reacts against any identification of the two and with the full force of the Islāmic tradition of fidelity would answer: 'Never, there is but one God and no other!'

In this lies the contemporary drama of Islām as of all religious visions, for man today is intent upon an answer to the question of "how he is to be understood?" Note this is not the question of how God could create our world of finite beings. The answer to that question is hidden in divine love which we can seek to acknowledge (as we shall suggest below), but never to understand in itself, for such understanding is the divine life itself. Rather, the question is how, in the light of this revelation of God's love, we can overcome the hubris by which the human ego claims to be absolute, and yet understand the reality of the human person as having the autonomy required for the responsibility and creativity required in order to survive and flourish. How can men and women come truly alive so as to recognize themselves fully as images of God, yet not be God; and moreover in the image of their creator to undertake a creative exercise of their proper freedom and responsibility.

This is a point of high metaphysics on which I would like to suggest a way to carry forward Iqbāl's work and, after the image of leaving in order to return.

We all know and greatly admire the work of such Islāmic scholars as al-Fārābi, Avicenna and Averroes, who drew upon and developed the Greek philosophical heritage; it is a part of our common heritage which was interrupted in Islām. After the interchange between Ghazāli and Averroes this Graeco-Islāmic effort was broadly abandoned. In the metaphysical quest the relay was passed to another religious tradition, that of the Western Christian philosophers of the high Middle Ages: Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, and their schools.

Iqbāl suggests two reasons why the path of Aristotle and Averroes was found to be finally inimicable to the Islāmic vision. First, the notion of an immortal agent intellect stood in the way of the value and destiny of the human ego[26] and hence of one's full personal spirituality and responsibility; and second the orientation to high metaphysical theory diverged from the concrete inductive orientation of Islām.[27] But the concrete point in time at which Greek thought was abandoned was that of the dispute over the agent intellect, and hence it seems best to begin with this issue.

Here one could wonder whether the Graeco-Islāmic tradition was abandoned just a bit too soon, for in the Christian tradition of scholarship Aquinas' religious response was imminent and would enable the Greek tradition to evolve into modern thought. In view of this a project of reconstruction in Islām could be particularly interested in that work of Thomas Aquinas as part of its effort to discover how Islām can be truly at home in modern times and creative in modern terms. Any such insights would, in turn, be of great interest to all other religious traditions, each of which is struggling with this issue each in its own way.

Hermeneutics tells us that in approaching an issue we need a question in order to focus our attention and be able to draw new insight. Iqbāl provides the questions we should ask for the project of religious reconstruction; they concern existence and its implication for creation and the religious sense of man.

Existence and the Reconstruction of Being in God

Iqbāl sees as key to religious reconstruction overcoming the relatively passive sense of reality found in the formal order characteristic of the Platonic strain of modern rationalism. In this light limited realities passively replicate the archetypal forms or ideas, but add nothing new; finite reality is drained of its vitality and reduced to a shadow. Instead, Iqbāl calls for a turn to the active character of reality. This suggests that we look in Christian philosophy for the emergence of being as existence. It was indeed this which characterized the thought of Thomas and gave it such prestige in Christian circles.

Although Greek philosophy grew out of an intensive mythic sense of life in which all was a reflection of the will of the gods, nonetheless, it presupposed matter always to have existed. As a result, the focus of its attention and concern was upon the forms by which matter was determined to be of one type rather than another. For Aristotle, physical or material things in the process of change from one form to another were the most manifest realities and his philosophizing began therefrom. This approach to philosophy first through sense encounters with physical beings corresponded well to our human nature as mind and body, and could be extended to the recognition of divine life. But Iqbāl wants more; for him "it is in fact the presence of the total infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible." The Greek philosophical awareness of what it meant to be real would need considerable enrichment in order to appreciate the foundational significance for human thought of its grounding in a fully transcendent and infinite Being.

It was just here that the development of the prophetic Judeo-Christian context had an especially liberating effect upon philosophy. By applying to the Greek notion of matter the Judeo-Christian heritage regarding the complete dominion of God over all things, the Church Fathers opened human consciousness to the fact that matter, too, depended for its reality upon God. Thus, before Plotinus, who was the first philosopher to do so, the

Fathers already had noted that matter, even if considered eternal, stood also in need of an explanation of its origin.[28]

This enabled philosophical questioning to push beyond the form, nature or kind to existence and, hence, to deepen radically the sense of reality. If what must be explained is no longer merely the particular form or type of being, but matter as well, then the question becomes not only how things are of this form or that kind, but how they exist rather than not exist. In this way the awareness of being evolved beyond change or form;[29] to be real would mean to exist and whatever is related thereto. Quite literally, "to be or not to be" had become the question.

By the same stroke, our self-awareness and will were deepened dramatically. They no longer were restricted to focusing upon choices between various external objects and modalities of life — the common but superficial contemporary meaning of what Adler terms a circumstantial freedom of self-realization, nor even to Kant's choosing as one ought after the manner of an acquired freedom of self-perfection; this remains within the context of being as nature or essence. The freedom opened by the conscious assumption and affirmation of one's own existence was rather a natural freedom of self-determination with responsibility for one's very being.[30]

One might follow the progression of this deepening awareness of being by reflecting upon the experience of being totally absorbed in the particularities of one's job, business, farm or studies — the prices, the colors, the chemicals — and then encountering an imminent danger of death, the loss of a loved one or the birth of a child. At the moment of death, as at the moment of birth, the entire atmosphere and range of preoccupations in a hospital room shifts dramatically, being suddenly transformed from tactical adjustments for limited objectives to confronting existence, in sorrow or in joy, in terms that plunge to the center of the whole range of meaning. Such was the effect upon philosophy when the awareness of being developed from being merely this or that kind of reality, to the

act of existence in contrast to non-existence, and hence to human life in all its dimensions and, indeed, to life divine.

Cornelio Fabro goes further. He suggests that this deepened metaphysical sense of being in the early Christian ages not only opened the possibility for a deeper sense of freedom, but itself was catalyzed by the new sense of freedom proclaimed in the religious message. That message focused not upon Plato's imagery of the sun at the mouth of the cave from which external enlightenment might be derived, but upon the external Word or Logos, through and according to which all things received their existence, and which enlightened their conscious life.

> In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.
>
> The same was in the beginning with God.
>
> All things were made by him; and without him was made nothing what was made.
>
> In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
>
> And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
>
> .....
>
> That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.[31]

Thus the power of being bursts into time through creator and prophet:

- it directs the mind beyond the ideological poles of species and individual interests, and beyond issues of place or time as limited series or categories;
- it centers, instead, upon the unique reality of the person as a participation in the creative power of God, a being bursting into existence, which is and which cannot be denied;

- it rejects being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than its full reality;
- it is a self or in Iqbāl's term an 'ego', affirming its own unique actuality and irreducible to any specific group identity; and
- it is image of God for whom life is sacred and sanctifying, a child of God for whom to be is freely to dispose off the power of new life in brotherhood with all mankind.[32]

It took a long time for the implications of this new appreciation of existence and its meaning to germinate and find its proper philosophic articulation. Over a period of many centuries the term 'form' was used to express both kind or nature and the new sense of being as existence. As the distinction between the two was gradually clarified, however, proper terminology arose in which that by which a being is of this or that kind came to be expressed by the term 'essence', while the act of existence by which a being simply is was expressed by 'existence', (*esse*).[33] The relation between the two was under intensive, genial discussion by the Islāmic philosophers when their Greek tradition in philosophy was abrogated.

This question was resolved soon thereafter in the work of Thomas Aquinas through a real distinction which rendered most intimate the relation of the two principles as act and potency and opened a new and uniquely active sense of being. This is not to say that Ghazāli was wrong in opposing Averroes or that Islām was wrong in choosing the side of Ghazāli in this dispute. Aquinas also had to overcome the Latin Averroists in the course of his intellectual battles in Paris. But Iqbāl's intuition of the need to proceed in terms of being as active suggests the importance of this juncture in the history of thought. With this the Christian metaphysical tradition went on to develop technical tools important for understanding human life in this world.

Being and the Reconstruction of Man in God

This focus upon being as active had profound implications for the understanding of man in God. It had crucial importance first for the sense of the divine itself. In Plato's more passive vision the divine as active would appear below the idea of the Good or the One as the object of contemplation. Taking being in a more active sense allowed Aristotle to think of divine life as an active thinking on thinking.

Iqbāl and the Islāmic tradition rightly feared that this notion, if a product of human reasoning, would be essentially limited and limiting. This is his incisive and trenchant critique of the cosmological and other modes of reasoning to God. Certainly reasoning in terms of limited and limiting forms and categories would be subject to this critique, but as just noted these were argued rather in terms of existence, which is affirmation without negation and hence without limitation.

Nevertheless, Iqbāl makes a key contribution to any appropriate reading of a systematic Christian philosophy by reminding one that the notion of God is not a product of human reasoning. Rather, as seen above through the archeology of human knowledge, the absolute is there as the center of human life in its earliest totemic mode; it flowers as humankind achieves a mythic mode of thought; and it is the beginning of the founding of Greek metaphysical thought by Parmenides. According to Augustine's dialectic of love, it is not we who first loved God, but He who first loved us; from him come life and light and love.

In this light the classical "five ways" to God have been largely misunderstood. They are not proofs for the existence of God, much less ways of constructing the reality of God. Instead they are ways of binding back to God (*re-ligio* as one of the etymologies of 'religion') all things, whether considered in terms of their origin, their level of being, or their goal, purpose or meaning. Despite his critique of the cosmological arguments, Iqbāl seems to intuit this when he writes that their true

significance will appear only "if we are able to show that the human situation is not final."[34]

In this light, one need not fear that an affirmation of man whether by personal freedom or technological means will be detrimental to religion. Rather human life becomes the proclamation of God's wisdom, power, love and providence. On this basis Thomas proceeds systematically to shed the requirement not only of an eternal agent intellect, but even of a special divine illumination for each act of reason, and of seeds of possibility for all new realizations – all of which were ways by which the earlier Christian Platonism had attempted to preserve a role for God in human progress. Instead man himself is seen as sacrament of God, His sign and symbol, creative vicegerent and artist in, and of, this world. Thus Thomas does not hesitate to affirm of man whatever is required in order that, properly according to his own nature and in his own name, man is able to fulfil these roles in this world. This is the proper autonomy of man in God; we might say that man truly comes home in God.

Participation and the Reconstruction of Religious Vision

The existential sense of being and its openness to the infinite has allowed more recently for a renewed appreciation of Thomas' structure of participation by which human autonomy is an affirmation, rather than a derogation of God. In any limited being, its essence or nature constitutes by definition a limited and limiting capacity for existence: by it, the being is capable of this much existence, but of no more. Such an essence must then be distinct from the existence because, of itself, existence bespeaks only affirmation, not negation and limitation.

But such a being, whose nature or essence is not existence but only a capacity for existence, could not of itself or by its own nature justify its possession and exercise of existence. The Parmenidean principle of non-contradiction will not countenance existence coming from non-existence, for then being would be reducible to nonbeing or nothing. Such beings, then, are

dependent precisely for their existence, that is, precisely as beings or existents.

This dependence cannot be upon another limited being similarly composed of a distinct essence and existence, for such a being would be equally dependent; the multiplication of such dependencies even infinitely would multiply, rather than answer, the question of how composite beings with a limiting essence have existence. Hence, limited composite beings must depend for their existence upon, or participate in, uncomposite being whose essence or nature, rather than being distinct from and limiting its existence, is identically existence. This is Being Itself – the total infinite to which Iqbāl refers as making finite being and thinking possible.

That uncomposite Being is simple, the One *par excellence*; it is participated in by all multiple and differentiated beings for their existence. The One, however, does not itself participate; it is the unlimited, self-sufficient, eternal and unchanging Being which Parmenides had shown to be solely required for being. "Limited and composite beings are by nature relative to, participate in, and are caused by the unique, simple and incomposite being which is Absolute, unparticipated and uncaused."[35]

This sense of participation makes it possible to speak of the nonreciprocal relation of finite to infinite and to identify the essentially caused character of the former.[36] This is a crucial step beyond the Platonic tradition which rightly can be criticized for failing to develop adequate tools for distinguishing man from God. An existential metaphysics understands causality in terms of participation in the infinite. Hence, even while placing central emphasis upon union with the divine, by its conceptual and ontological structures it never loses sight of their distinction. Nevertheless, through making this distinction it sees every aspect of the caused or created being as totally derivative from, and expressing, the infinite. Let man be man; indeed let all creatures be, for they glorify God the Infinite and Almighty, the Munificent and Merciful!

For his sense of participation some early Church Fathers placed Plato among the prophets. As clarified and enriched by Aristotle's sense of being as active, by the work of his great medieval Islāmic commentators and by the Christian existential sense of being, this metaphysics can provide the systematic clarification needed by Iqbāl's instinctive insights regarding religion in order that they be articulated for the increasingly structured physical and social environment in which we live. In the face of the dilemma of human hubris vs. religious passivity in our days, this provides indispensable help in responding to the need of those devoted in faith. For it can aid them to understand better the relation of their increasingly complex life to God and assist them in living their faith in our times; in a word, to come home and to be at home religiously in our times.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF GIFT AS RELIGIOUS RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL COHESION

For Iqbāl making man at home in the world might be a proper task for "metaphysics ... a logically consistent view of the world with God as part of that view." But he sees another stage in which

> metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness.[37]

Iqbāl would probably be very interested in recent developments in phenomenology. For him

> the inspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and, as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were.

> Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experience, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy thought must rise higher than itself, and find its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer — one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islām.[38]

Hence the search into human subjectivity is really at the heart of Iqbāl's concern for the reconstruction of religion. He brilliantly rearticulated the Islāmic vision in terms of the vitalism of his time as part of this century's renewed discovery and appreciation of human subjectivity. It is necessary to follow the emergence of this attention and to elaborate the possibilities of the phenomenology to which it led in order to extend Iqbāl's work of religious reconstruction. This would liberate the human spirit from egoism, and bring it finally home – this time not only to self, but to others and to God.

At the beginning of this century, it appeared that the rationalist project of stating all in clear and distinct objective terms was close to completion. This was to be achieved in either the empirical terms of the positivist tradition of sense knowledge or in the formal and essentialist terms of the Kantian intellectual tradition. Whitehead writes that at the turn of the century, when with Bertrand Russell he went to the first World Congress of Philosophy in Paris, it seemed that, except for some details of application, the work of physics was essentially completed. To the contrary, however, the very attempt to finalize scientific knowledge with its most evolved concepts made manifest the radical insufficiency of the objectivist approach.

Similarly, Wittgenstein began by writing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*[39] on the Lockean supposition that significant knowledge consisted in constructing a mental map corresponding point to point to the external world as perceived by sense experience. In such a project the spiritual element of understanding, *i.e.* the grasp of the relations between the points on this mental map was relegated to the margin as simply

"unutterable". However, experience in teaching children led Wittgenstein to the conclusion that this empirical mental mapping was simply not what was going on in human knowledge. In his *Blue and Brown Books*[40] and his subsequent *Philosophical Investigations*[41] Wittgenstein shifted human consciousness or intentionality, which previously had been relegated to the periphery, to the very the center of concern. In this context the focus of his philosophy was no longer the positivist replication of the external world, but the human construction of language and of worlds of meaning.[42]

A similar process was underway in the Kantian camp. There Husserl's attempt to bracket all elements in order to isolate pure essences for scientific knowledge forced attention to the limitations of a pure essentialism and opened the way for his understudy, Martian Heidegger, to rediscover the existential and historical dimensions of reality in his *Being and Time*.[43] The religious implication of this new sensitivity was articulated by Karl Rahner in his work *The Spirit in the World* and by the Second Vatican Council in *The Church in the World*.[44]

For Heidegger the meaning of being and of life was unveiled in conscious human life (*dasein*) lived through time and therefore through history. Thus human consciousness becomes the new focus of attention and the uncovering or bringing into light (the etymology of phenomenology) of its unfolding patterns and interrelations would open a new era of human awareness. Epistemology and metaphysics would develop in the very work of tracking the nature and direction of this process.

Thus, for Heidegger's successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, the task becomes the uncovering of how human persons, emerging in the culture of a family, neighborhood and people, exercise their freedom and weave their cultural tradition. This is not history as a mere compilation of whatever mankind does or makes, but culture as the fabric of human symbols and interrelations by which a human group unveils being in its time.

Iqbāl provides needed direction here by pointing out that a religious outlook is not an external search for power and control susceptible of empirical investigation and pragmatic interpretation. Rather religion entails an inner attitude which takes us to the very roots of our being and even to its source.

This points us deeply into human subjectivity, but what is its ultimate meaning for life? Is this new focus upon human subjectivity but another chapter in *Paradise Lost* in which humankind attempts to seize its own destiny, thereby excluding God? Or is it to interact more consciously, to attack others more devastatingly, killing not only bodies but spirits as well? Is the new awareness of cultures to open new periods of persecution and cultural genocide? Very concretely, "Can we get along" as peoples, cultures and civilizations?

"Appreciation"[45] is a key element in Iqbāl's thought regarding religion. It unites the elements of our previous sections regarding systematic philosophy, namely, existence, the subsistence of man and the causal participation of human life in the divine. It does so, however, not as effective, objective realities to be known, but as subjective realities lived and savored in a manner that is itself as religious as prayer and contemplation. This is the intent of a phenomenology in terms of the consciously lived appreciation for our life as gift; it leads one to the total absolute now, however, not only as a condition of knowledge, but as the source and hence the goal of love.

One can begin with the person as a polyvalent unity operative on both the physical and non-physical levels. Though the various sciences analyze distinct dimensions, the person is not a construct of independent components, but an identity: the physical and the psychic are dimensions of myself and of no other. Further, this identity is not the result of my personal development, but was had by me from my beginning; it is a given for each person. Hence, while I can grow indefinitely, act endlessly, and do and make innumerable things, the growth and the actions will be always my own; I am the same given or person who perdures through all the stages of my growth.

This givenness appears also through reflection upon my interpersonal relations. I do not properly create these, for they are possible only if I already have received my being. Further, to open to others is a dynamism which pertains to my very nature and which I can suppress only at the price of deep psychological disturbance. Relatedness is given with one's nature; it is to be received as a promise and a task; it is one's destiny. What depends upon one is only the degree of one's presence to others.[46]

Unfortunately, this givenness is often taken in the sense of closure associated with the terms 'datum' or 'data', whether hypothetical or evidential. In the hypothetical sense, a given is a stipulation agreed upon by the relevant parties as the basis for a process of argumentation: Granted X, then Y. Such are the premises of an argument or the postulates in a mathematical demonstration. In the evidential sense, data are the direct and warranted observations of what actually is the case. In both these meanings the terms 'given' or 'data' direct the mind exclusively toward the future or consequent as one's only concern. The use of the past participle of the verb stem (*data*) closes off any search toward the past so that when one given is broken down by an analysis new givens appear. One never gets behind some hypothetical or evidential given.

This closure is done for good reason, but it leaves open a second – and for our purposes potentially important – sense of 'given'. This is expressed by the nominative form, '*donum*' or gift. In contrast to the other meanings, this points back, as it were, behind itself to its source in ways similar to the historians' use the term 'fact'. They note that a fact is not simply there; its meaning has been molded or made (*facta*) within the ongoing process of human life.[47] In this sense it points back to its origin and origination; it could be the road home.

However, this potentially rich return to the source was blocked at the beginning of the 19th century by a shift to an anthropocentric view. In this horizon facts came to be seen especially as made by man who is conceived either as an

individual in the liberal tradition, or as a class in the socialist tradition – to which correspond the ideals of progress and praxis, respectively. Because what was made by man could always be re-made by him,[48] this turned aside a radical search into the character of life as gift. Attention still remained only upon the future understood simply in terms of man and of what man could do by either individual or social praxis.

There are reasons to suspect that this humanism is not enough for the dynamic sense of a cultural heritage and the creative sense of harmony as cooperation with others. Without underestimating how much has been accomplished in terms of progress and praxis, the world-wide contemporary phenomenon of alienation, not only between cultures but from one's own culture and people, suggests that something important has been forgotten.

First, as notes Iqbāl, by including only what is abstractively clear, these approaches begin by omitting that which can be had only in self-knowledge, namely, one's self-identity and all that is most distinctive and creative in a people's heritage. Focusing only upon what is analytically clear and distinct to the mind of any and every individual renders alien the notes of personal identity, freedom and creativity, as well as integrity, wholeness and harmony. These characterize the more synthetic philosophical and religious traditions and are realized in self-knowledge, deep interpersonal bonds,[49] and under the personal guidance of a teacher, spiritual director or *guru*.[50]

Second, there is the too broadly experienced danger that in concrete affairs the concern to build the future in terms only of what has been conceived clearly and by all will be transformed, wittingly and unwittingly, into oppression of self-identity and destruction of integrative cultures both as civilizations and as centers of personal cultivation. Indeed, the charges of cultural oppression from so many parts of the world lead one to doubt that the humanist notion of the self-given and its accompanying ideals can transcend the dynamics of power and leave room for persons, especially for those of other cultures.

Finally, were the making implied in the derivation of the term 'fact' from '*facere*' to be wholly reduced to 'self-making', and were the given to become only the self-given, we would have stumbled finally upon what Parmenides termed "the all impossible way" of deriving what is from what is not.[51] Iqbāl's essential insight — shared by the Hindu, Islāmic and Judeo-Christian traditions — that all is grounded in the Absolute should guard against such self-defeating, stagnating and destructive self-centeredness.

Person as Gift in God

It is time then to look again to the second meaning of 'given' and to follow the opening this provides toward the source as implied in the notion of gift. Above, we noted that self-identity and interpersonal relatedness are gifts (*dona*). We shall now look further into this in order to see what it suggests regarding the dynamic openness required for cooperation between persons and cultures.

First, one notes that as gift the given has an essentially gratuitous character. It is true that at times the object or service given could be repaid in cash or in kind. As indicated by the root of the term 'commercial', however, such a transaction would be based on some merit (*mereo*) on the part of the receiver. This would destroy its nature as gift precisely because the given would not be based primarily in the freedom of the giver.

The same appears from an analysis of an exchange of presents. Presents cease to be gifts to the degree that they are given only because of the requirements of the social situation or only because of a claim implicit in what the other might have given me. Indeed, the sole way in which such presents can be redeemed as gifts is to make clear that their presentation is not something to which I feel obliged, but which I personally and freely want to do. As such then, a gift is based precisely upon the freedom of the giver; it is gratuitous.

There is striking symmetry here with the 'given' in the above sense of hypothesis or evidence. There, in the line of

hypothetical and evidential reasoning there was a first, namely, that which is not explained, but upon which explanation is founded. Here there is also a first upon which the reality of the gift is founded and which is not to be traced to another reality. This symmetry makes what is distinctive of the gift stand out, namely, that the giving is not traced back further precisely because it is free or gratuitous. Once again, our reflections lead us in the direction of that which is self-sufficient, absolute and transcendent as the sole adequate source of the gift of being. Phenomenological reflection leads us home to what Iqbāl intuited, namely, that only a total absolute makes possible anything finite, including our very selves.

Further, as an absolute point of origin with its distinctive spontaneity and originality, the giving is non-reciprocal. To attempt to repay would be to destroy the gift as such. Indeed, there is no way in which this originating gratuity can be returned; we live in a graced condition. This appears in reflection upon one's culture. What we received from the authors of the *Vedas*, a Confucius or Muḥammad can in no way be returned. Nor is this simply a problem of distance in time, for neither is it possible to repay the life we have received from our parents, the health received from a doctor, the wisdom from a teacher, or simply the good example which can come from any quarter at any time. The non-reciprocal character of our life is not merely that of part to whole; it is that of a gift to its source.[52]

The great traditions have insisted rightly both upon the oneness of the absolute reality and upon the lesser reality of the multiple: the multiple is not The Real, though neither is it totally non-reality. Anselm's elaboration of the notion of privation contains a complementary clarification of the gratuitous character of beings as given or gifted. He extended this notion of privation to the situation of creation in which the whole being is gifted. In this case, there is no prior subject to which something is due; hence, there is no ground or even any acceptance. Anselm expressed this radically non-reciprocal nature of the gift — its

lack of prior conditions — through the notion of absolute privation.

It is privation and not merely negation, for negation simply is not and leads nowhere, whereas the gift is to be, and once given can be seen to be uniquely appropriate. It is absolute privation, however, for the foundation is not at all on the part of the recipient; rather it is entirely on the part of the source.[53]

To what does this gift correspond on the part of the source? In a certain parallel to the antinomies of Kant which show when reason has strayed beyond its bounds, many from Plotinus to Leibniz and beyond have sought knowledge, not only of the gift and its origin, but of why it had to be given. The more they succeeded the less room was left for freedom on the part of man as a given or gift. Others attempted to understand freedom as a fall, only to find that what was thus understood was bereft of value and meaning and hence was of no significance to human life and its cultures. Rather, the radical non-reciprocity of human freedom must be rooted in an equally radical generosity on the part of its origin. No reason, either on the part of the given or on the part of it origin, makes this gift necessary. The freedom of man is the reflection of the pure generosity by which it is given: If in general man is the image of God, then in particular human freedom is the image of God's love.

At this point philosophy begins to gain that intimacy which Iqbāl sees as characterizing religion. The intellect takes on that union which is more characteristic of a mystical state. One appreciates one's freedom as given and responds freely and spontaneously. This, in turn, enables one to respond freely in love to the love by which one's heart has been given. This, in turn, transforms it into generosity in image of the outgoing love of my creator.

Yet in all this the metaphysics of existence keeps cause and effect distinct from one another so that I am not absorbed into the divine love by which I am given, but instead am affirmed as

being in my own right and hence as outgoing generous source in this world.

Thus religion as appreciation entails not withdrawal from the world, but its engagement and transformation. This appears from a continuation of the phenomenology of self or ego as gift, which implies in turn a correspondingly radical openness or generosity. Man as gift is not something which is and then receives. It was an essential facet of Plato's response to the problems he had elaborated in the *Parmenides* that the multiple can exist only as participants of the good or one. Receiving is not something they do; it is what they are.[54] As such at the core of their being they reflect the reality of the generosity in which they originate. Understanding oneself as gift entails understanding oneself also as giving of oneself in openness to others.

Cultural Harmony and Creative Interchange as Gratitude to God

This sense of gift may make it possible to extend the notions of duty and harmony beyond concern for the well-being of those with whom I share and whose well-being is in a sense my own. The good is not only what contributes to my perfection, for I am not the center of meaning. Rather, being as received is essentially outgoing.

This has two important implications for our topic. Where the Greeks' focus upon their heritage had led to depreciating others as barbarians, the sense of oneself and of one's culture as radically given or gifted provides a basic corrective. Knowing and valuing oneself and one's culture as gifts implies more than merely reciprocating what the other does for me. It means, first, that others and their culture are to be respected simply because they too have been given or gifted by the one Transcendent source. This is an essential step which Gandhi, in calling outcasts by the name "*harijans*" or "children of God", urged as to take beyond the sense of pride or isolation in which we would see others in pejorative terms.

But mere respect may not be enough. The fact that I and another, my people or culture and another, originate from, share in, and proclaim the same "total absolute", especially as this creates not out of need but out of love, implies that the relation between cultures as integrating modes of human life is in principle one of complementarity and outreach. Hence, interchange as the effort to live this complementarity is far from being hopeless. In the pressing needs of our times only an intensification of cooperation between peoples can make available the needed immense stores of human experience and creativity. The positive virtue of love is our real basis for hope.

A second principle of interchange is to be found in the participated — the radically given or gifted — character of one's being. As one does not first exist and then receive, but one's very existence is a received existence or gift, to attempt to give back this gift, as in an exchange of presents, would be at once hopelessly too much and too little. On the one hand, to attempt to return in strict equivalence would be too much for it is our very self that we have received as gift. On the other hand, to think merely in terms of reciprocity would be to fall essentially short of my nature as one that is given, for to make a merely equivalent return would be to remain centered upon myself where I would cleverly trap, and then entomb, the creative power of being.

Rather, looking back I can see the futility of giving back, and in this find the fundamental importance of passing on the gift in the spirit in which it has been given. One's nature as given calls for a creative generosity which reflects that of one's source. Truly appropriate generosity lies in continuing the giving of which I have received through shaping one's cultural tradition creatively in response to the real present-day needs not only of ourselves, but of others, cooperating in kind to the creative gifts at the heart of other cultures so that all may be truly at home. This requires a vast expansion or breaking out of oneself as the only center of one's concern. It means becoming appreciative and effectively concerned with the good of others and of other

groups, with the promotion and vital growth, of the next generation and those to follow. Indeed it means advancing Iqbāl's insight regarding religious thought another step further to a total harmony of man and nature which reflects the total absolute as the condition of possibility of all.

Implications of Religious Reconstruction for Life in Our Times

The implications of such generosity are broad and at times surprisingly personal. First, true openness to others cannot be based upon a depreciation of oneself or of one's own culture. Without appreciating one's worth there would be nothing to share and no way to help, nor even the possibility of taking joy in the good of the other. Further, cultural interchange enables one to see that elements of one's life, which in isolation may have seemed to be merely local customs and purely repetitive in character, are more fundamentally modes in which one lives basic and essential human values. In meeting others and other cultures, one discovers the deeper meaning in one's own everyday life.

One does more than discover, however. One recognizes that in these transcendental values of life — truth and freedom, love and beauty — one participates in the dynamism of one's origin and hence must share these values in turn. More exactly, one can come to realize that real reception of these transcendental gifts lies in sharing them in loving concern in order that others may realize them as well. This means passing on one's own heritage not by replicating it in others, but by promoting what others and subsequent generations would freely become.

Finally, that other cultures are quintessentially products of self-cultivation by other spirits as free and creative images of their divine source implies the need to open one's horizons beyond one's own self-concerns to the ambit of the freedom of others. This involves promoting the development of other free and creative centers and cultures which, precisely as such, are not in one's own possession or under one's own control. One

lives then no longer in terms merely of oneself or of things that one can make or manage, but in terms of an interchange between free persons and peoples of different cultures. Personal responsibility is no longer merely individual decision making or for individual good. Effectively realized, the resulting interaction and mutual fecundation reaches out beyond oneself and one's own culture to reflect ever more perfectly the glory of the one source and goal of all.[55]

This calls for a truly shared effort in which all respond fully, not only to majority or even common needs, but to the particular needs of each. This broad sense of tolerance and loving outreach even in the midst of tensions is the fruit of Iqbāl's religious attitude of appreciation as mediated through a phenomenology of gift. It has been described by Pope John Paul II as a state in which violence cedes to peaceful transformation, and conflict to pardon and reconciliation; where power is made reasonable by persuasion, and justice finally is implemented through love.[56]

(1997)

NOTES

1 The Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana with commentary by Sankara, trans. by G. Thibaut (New York: Dover).

2 (Lahore: Ashraf, 1942), p. 6.

3 *Ibid*, p. 17.

4 It was according to this threefold structure in both Aquinas' *Commentary* on Boethius' work *On the Trinity* pp. 3 and 5. Descartes' procedure for placing under doubt all that arises from the three sources of knowledge until knowledge from that source could be certified as true. Aristotle's dictum regarding humans as physical and spiritual held that there is nothing in the intellect which is not first in the senses.

5 Indeed, one might define philosophy and science precisely as knowledge of the various aspects of reality in terms proper to human reason and hence expressive of the nature or existence of the things themselves.

6 L. Levy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), ch. II.

7 *Ibid*, ch. XII. See also Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), ch. I; and G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The PreSocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960), pp. 26-32.

8 Hesiod, *Theogony* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953).

9 Xenophanes, fragments 11, 14-16 in George F. McLean and Patrick J. Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 31.

10 George F. McLean and Patrick Aspell, p. 4. See also by the same authors, *Ancient Western Philosophy: The Hellenic Emergence* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1971).

11 Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 12-13.

12 *Physics* IV, 1, 208b31.

13 Jaeger, p. 13.

14 G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, pp. 26-32.

15 Hesiod, the *Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. by H. G. Evelyn-White (London: Heinemann, 1920), p. 86.

16 Kirk and Raven, loc. cit.

17 Anaximander, fragments, see McLean and Aspell, *Readings*, pp. 14-17; McLean and Aspell, *Ancient Western Philosophy*, pp. 22-28.

18 *See* McLean and Aspell, *Ancient Western Philosophy*, ch. III.

19 Parmenides, fragments, see McLean and Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy*, pp. 39-44.

20 Fragment 8, see Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Images and Argument in the Fragments* (New Haven: Yale, 1970).

21 *Metaphysics* XII, 7, 1072 b 26-29.

22 Iqbāl, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islām*, p. 180.

23 *Ibid*, p. 6.

24 *Ibid*, p. 155.

25 Old Testament.

26 Iqbāl, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

27 *Ibid*, pp. 128-129, 142.

28 G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Unity of Man in God* (Madras: The University of Madras, 1978), pp. 53-57.

29 Aristotle had taken the compossibility of forms as a sufficient response to the scientific question of 'whether it exists'. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Medieval Thought* (Toronto: P I M S, 1978).

30 Mortiner J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958), I, 609.

31 John I: 1-5, 8.

32 C. Fabro called the graded and related manner in which this is realized concretely an intensive notion of being. Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalite Selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Pub. Univ. de Louvain, 1961).

33 Cornelio Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica de Partecipazione Secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Societ Ed. Internazionale, 1950), pp. 75-122.

34 Iqbāl, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

35 *Ibid.*

36 This, it would seem, may be better than saying as does Iqbāl that "the true infinite does not exclude the finite; it embraces the finite without effacing its finitude." It would enable him also to escape the entanglements he finds in the so-called "cosmological argument". Indeed, the argumentation requires a metaphysical stage in order to have a positive conclusion. Iqbāl, *Op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

37 *Ibid*, p. 180.

38 *Ibid*, p. 62.

39 Tr. C. K. Ogden (London: Methuen, 1981).

40 (New York: Harper and Row).

41 Tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

42 Brian Wicker, *Culture and Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 68-88.

43 (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

44 *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: New Century, 1974).

45 Iqbāl, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

46 Maurice Nedoncelle, "Person and/or World as the Source of Religious Insight" in G. McLean, ed., *Traces of God in a Secular Culture* (New York: Alba House, 1973), pp. 187-210.

47 Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 34-42. I am particularly indebted to this very thoughtful work for its suggestions. I draw here also upon my "Chinese-Western Cultural Interchange in the Future" delivered at the International Symposium on Chinese-Western Cultural Inter-change in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of Matteo Ricci, S. J., in China (Taiwan: Fu Jen University, 1983), pp. 457-72.

48 Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, nos. 6-8 in F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), pp. 82-84. Schmitz, *Ibid.*

49 A. S. Cua, *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), chaps. III-V.

50 W. Cenkner, *The Hindu Personality in Education: Tagore, Gandhi and Aurobindo* (Delhi: South Asia Books, 1976).

51 Parmenides, Fragment 2.

52 Schmitz, pp. 44-56.

53 Anselm, *Monologium*, cc. 8-9 in *Anselm of Canterbury*, eds. J. Hopkins and H. W. Richardson (Toronto: E. Mellen, 1975), I, pp. 15-18. *See* Schmits, 30-34.

54 R. E. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues" in his *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London: Routeledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 43-60.

55 Schmitz, pp. 84-86.

56 John Paul II, "Address at Puebla", *Origins*, VIII (n. 34, 1979), I, 4 and II, 41-46.

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