

Al-Qadir

An International Journal of Islamic Studies
(Bi-Annual)

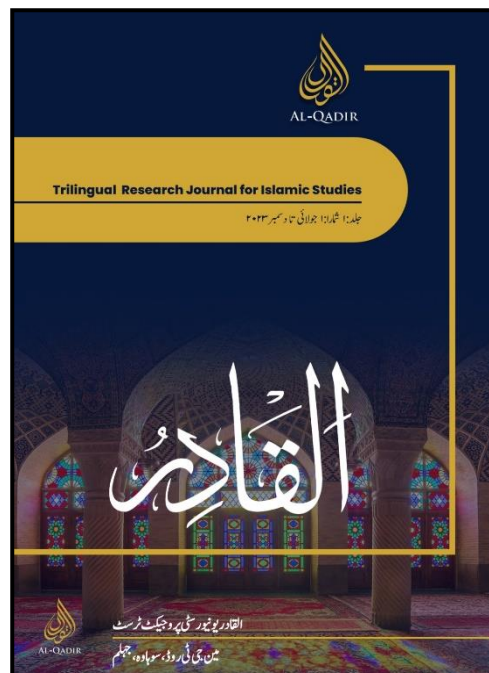
Trilingual: Urdu, Arabic and English

<https://ojs.alqadir.edu.pk>

Published By:

Al-Qadir University Project Trust

Website: www.ojs.alqadir.edu.pk



Topic

DECONSTRUCTION AND IQBAL'S SUFI EPISTEMOLOGY: FIVE KEY MOMENTS

Author

Amjad Hussain

Lecturer

National University of Modern Languages,
(Peshawar Campus)

Email: amjadhussain@numl.edu.pk

How to Cite

Hussain, Amjad. (2023)

**DECONSTRUCTION AND IQBAL'S SUFI
EPISTEMOLOGY: FIVE KEY MOMENTS**

AL-QADIR (An International Journal of Islamic Studies)

1(1):1-16

<https://ojs.alqadir.edu.pk/index.php/Al-Qadirjournal/article/view/05>

DECONSTRUCTION AND IQBAL'S SUFI EPISTEMOLOGY: FIVE KEY MOMENTS

Amjad Hussain

Lecturer, National University of Modern Languages,

(Peshawar Campus)

amjadhussain@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

There is a distinct approach to Deconstruction in Pakistani academia and intelligentsia, i.e., nihilistic, meaning-denying. This approach is flawed. This paper shows that Derrida's concept of Deconstruction has got nothing to do with this approach. It contends that Deconstruction, as conceived by Derrida, is a further stamp of authentication on the philosophical foundations of Iqbal's Sufi epistemology. It shows the five key theoretical and philosophical moments in Derrida's thought that establish beyond any shadow of doubt that Iqbal's Sufi epistemology is best seen in consonance with rather than in opposition with Deconstruction as is the norm not only in Pakistani academia but in contemporary Muslim philosophy as well. There are very deep philosophical affinities between Derrida's intellectual genealogy and Iqbal's. These deeper laying philosophical affinities have remained ignored under pressure from a readymade Anglo-American version of Deconstruction. This is the biggest Houdini act that "capitalist modernity" has ever pulled. Contemporary Muslim scholarship has fallen for this flawed version of Deconstruction ignoring thereby one of the most important epochs in contemporary western philosophy (that Iqbal called our heritage) in its poststructuralist and postmodern shifts. This paper makes a case for a long delayed paradigm shift in contemporary Muslim scholarship by delineating these five key moments in Derrida's concept of Deconstruction that Muslim philosophy has been made to miss. They give us food for thought that might help Pakistani Muslim society, academia, and contemporary Muslim philosophy come out of the effects of Houdini's civilisational and cultural magic.

Key Words: Iqbal, Sufi Epistemology, Deconstruction, Derrida, Levinas.

Introduction

Contemporary Muslim scholarship exhibits a distinct approach to Deconstruction, effectively severing any possibility of mutual camaraderie between Islam and Deconstruction, and creating a barrier against any potential alliance between Sufism and Deconstruction, particularly Allama Muhammad Iqbal's reconstructed version of it.¹ This is, therefore, a multifaceted issue encompassing politics, philosophy, and religion. The question arises: why does Pakistani society miss this connection, and what factors contribute to this distortion of the natural alliance between Islam and Deconstruction?

The root of this problem lies in the foundations of contemporary Islamic thought, and its intellectual and philosophical roots. The proponents of "liberal imperialism" have created a structure that instructs Muslims to avoid Deconstruction/Postmodernism/Derrida because these modes of thought are seen as nihilistic and do not believe in meaning or metanarratives. Since they think that Islam is a meta-narrative, it is, therefore, advisable to avoid these modes of thought. This belief has trickled down to the nooks and corners of Muslim societies and second-tier scholarship, thereby artificially constructing a barrier that prevents an intersection between Iqbal/Islam and Deconstruction/Postmodernism/Derrida.

This paper seeks to demonstrate why contemporary Muslim philosophical thought is flawed and that how this flaw has led to an incorrect interpretation of the intersection of Islam and Deconstruction, resulting in a failure to provide leadership in thought and knowledge within Muslim societies. The paper will highlight five crucial moments in Derrida's thought that help us re-orient our understanding of not only his concept of Deconstruction but also the striking resemblances with Allama Muhammad Iqbal's avant-garde thought on every single Derridian moment. This rethinking is critical to our conception of the intersection of Islam/Sufism/Iqbal and Deconstruction/Postmodernism/Derrida.

¹ Javaid, Ahmad. "Post Modernism - Some Aspects (1) کچھ پہلو - مابعد جدیدیت -" YouTube. YouTube, October 8, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4yV-LUu2Sw&t=1757s>.

First Moment: Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Heidegger believed that Western society had failed to produce an authentic human being and was instead fed a distorted idea of Being by its religious structures.² Thus, he suggested, in a somewhat Nietzschean vein, “transvaluation of all values” and the “destruction of the history of ontology” in the West because western society, i.e., Christianity, has failed to produce a “Dasein,” “an authentic human being.”³ This idea was not dissimilar to Nietzsche’s call for a similar destruction in the face of a similar.⁴

Derrida, who grew up in a French philosophical tradition beholden to the “three H Generation” (Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger),⁵ used Heidegger to critique the “atheistic existentialism” of Jean-Paul Sartre.⁶ However, contemporary Muslim scholarship has failed to read Derrida and has made assumptions about his concept of Deconstruction. They particularly failed to see the fine distinction that Derrida makes before modernist/atheistic/rationalist western society, just like Heidegger from whom he infers “destruction” encapsulated in Deconstruction, that their Structuralist thought cannot understand the link between “the sensible’ and “intelligible”:

“When Lévi-Strauss says in the preface to *The Raw and the Cooked* that he has “sought to transcend the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible by operating from the outset at the level of signs,” the necessity, force, and legitimacy of his act cannot make us forget that the concept of *the sign cannot in itself surpass this opposition between the sensible and the intelligible*. The concept of the sign, in each of its aspects, has been determined by this opposition throughout the totality of its history. It has lived only on this opposition and its system.”

How could Muslim philosophy, bred in its own philosophical traditions, miss this Derridian point that ushered in a whole movement away from Structuralism and towards Poststructuralism? This was *the* argument of a Persian philosopher, Mir Damad:

² Ludemann, 2014, p.15

³ Ibid, p.15

⁴ Kaufmann, Walter. *Friedrich Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Penguin Books., 1978.

⁵ Ludemann, p. 11

⁶ Baring, Edward. *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945–1968*. Vol. 98. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

In establishing a relation between numbers, letters of the alphabet, and the heavens, Mir Damad, like many sages before him, seeks to point out **the common ground between** the book of revelation and the book of nature, as well as the relation **between** the sensible world and the intelligible world.⁷

Is this argument against God? Both Derrida and Mir Damad are making an identical claim. Then why Deconstruction is considered nihilistic, atheistic, and a threat to Islam? This flawed attitude to Deconstruction has prevented them from understanding the potential of Deconstruction, particularly its critique of reducing religion to “a metaphysics of presence,” which does not produce Dasein or authentic human beings. What else is Iqbal’s argument? Mard-i-Momin is a Dasein, an authentic human being.

Both Deconstruction and Derrida are sensitive to the modernist narrative and the sleight of hand it plays in defining meaning. The question then arises: is this sensitivity to meaning affirming or meaning denying? Is it nihilistic or a way out of nihilism?

Second Moment: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

In his conception of Deconstruction, Jacques Derrida draws on Sigmund Freud’s concept of “dissociation,” or “the return of the repressed,”⁸ to challenge the rationalist, structuralist construction of the development of human language. In classic structuralism, writing was inferred from speech and language was said to work according to a system of arbitrarily placed binaries, including the culture/nature divide. Derrida deconstructs this binary in his 1967 lecture at John Hopkins University, arguing that the very idea that a sign could understand the difference between the sensible and the intelligible is flawed.⁹ He further contends that the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible is beyond the sphere of modernist, rationalist, atheistic thought, and he uses the idea of “the prohibition of incest” to deconstruct the artificial binary of culture/nature inculcated by structuralist thought. By revealing the limitations of modernist thought, Derrida’s deconstruction of the philosophical foundations of structuralism

⁷ Nasr, Syed Hossein. *The School of Isfahan*. In Sharif, M M, (Ed.) *A History of Muslim Philosophy. Vol. 1*. 1963, p.922

⁸ Ludemann, p.21

⁹ Derrida, J. ‘Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences’. In Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Routledge, 2001.p.355

opens up new possibilities for understanding the relationship between ‘the book of revelation’ and ‘the book of nature.’

Derrida’s deconstruction of the fundamental binary of Culture/Nature in Structuralism is very important because this will further reveal Muslim philosophy’s flawed inferences from the project, aims, and direction of Deconstruction. Derrida argues that Structuralism’s discipline of ethnography has studied every ancient society in existence at that time and it has consistently noticed that in all these ancient societies “incest” is prohibited.¹⁰ Derrida says that since they cannot understand, owing to their atheistic/rationalist/modernist/Darwinian philosophical foundations, this moral/ethical rule in nature, therefore, they call it “the Scandal.” Derrida, both logically and philosophically deconstructs the atheism rooted in western, “Euro-centric” thought. Quantum physics, that Iqbal used to make Muslim scholarship sensitive to, has further dented this structuralist argument. And how does Muslim philosophy understand Deconstruction and Derrida? Nihilistic, against meat-narrative, atheistic.¹¹ Contemporary Muslim scholarship is clearly not reading Derrida on their own but they are rather fed Derrida by an Anglo-American structure. (Aaron W. Hughes’ argument in *Theorizing Islam* sheds further light on how contemporary Islamic Religious Studies are managed and controlled.)¹²

In the same vein, ‘Writing’, Derrida argues, was not inferred from speech but has come at once and that Structuralism cannot understand this argument because it needs a physical cause for everything; and because it believes, owing to its Darwinian foundations of thought, that Language has evolved word by word over a long evolutionary history. It is, therefore, Structuralism’s “return of the repressed”:¹³ the more Structuralism represses this idea of Writing the stronger it re-appears in Structuralism’s Freudian slips. Is this not a repetition of the Quranic idea that Language had been preserved in ‘al-Lawh al-Mahfuz’ (The Preserved Tablet)?¹⁴

¹⁰ Derrida, 2001, p.357

¹¹ Inayatullah, Sohail, and Gail Boxwell. "Islam, postmodernism and other futures a Ziauddin Sardar reader." (2003). See also Ahmed, Akbar S. *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and promise*. Routledge, 2013. And Ramadan, Tariq. *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹² Hughes, Aaron W. *Theorizing Islam: Disciplinary deconstruction and reconstruction*. Routledge, 2014. p.118

¹³ Ludemann, 2014, p.21

¹⁴ Quran 85:22

Contemporary Muslim philosophy has been kept away from understanding this intersection between Islam and Deconstruction.

It is important to understand key philosophical, ethical, and political concepts underlie Deconstruction. At its core, the Deconstruction has a very religious bent. Derrida's deconstruction of Structuralism was a major philosophical turning point, as it revealed the limitations of the structuralist approach and called into question many of its fundamental assumptions. One of these assumptions was the idea that language was a stable, rational system that could be objectively studied and understood. Derrida showed that language was much more complex and fluid than Structuralism had assumed, and that it was constantly evolving and changing in ways that were difficult to predict or control.

Another important concept in the passage is the idea of "the Scandal." This refers to the ethical and moral structures that underlie human culture and behavior, but which Structuralism could not fully account for. Derrida argued that these structures were inherent in nature itself, and that they could not be reduced to simple binary oppositions. In other words, the Scandal represented a challenge to the rationalist, materialist, and atheistic worldview that Structuralism embodied.

It is obvious, therefore, that the philosophical tone of Deconstruction is one of skepticism towards Euro-centric modes of knowledge and, in an Iqbalist spirit, promotes critical inquiry. It seeks to question the assumptions of Structuralism and reveal its limitations, while also suggesting that there are deeper and more complex forces at work in human language and culture than Structuralism could ever fully capture. It raises important questions about the nature of language, culture, and the human condition, and invites us to think deeply about these issues in new and challenging ways. Contemporary Muslim philosophy has missed to capitalize on Derrida's critical insights.

Third Moment: Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Derrida was interested in Marx's concept of justice, particularly his critique of capitalism and the way it perpetuates social inequality. In Derrida's view, the idea of justice is always bound up with power and the structures that sustain it, and therefore it is always contested and open to interpretation. Derrida had famously said that "Deconstruction is Justice" and that "Justice

is Deconstruction.”¹⁵ He also called Justice to be something “undeconstructible.”¹⁶

In his own work, Derrida sought to apply this insight to a wide range of cultural and philosophical texts, using deconstruction to uncover the hidden assumptions and contradictions that underpin dominant discourses of power. Through this process of critical analysis, he hoped to challenge the status quo and open up new possibilities for thinking and acting in the world.

One of the key ways that Derrida engaged with Marx’s concept of justice was through his critique of “logocentrism” - the belief that language can capture and represent reality in a straightforward way. Derrida argued that this view is deeply problematic, because it ignores the ways in which language is always mediated by power relations and historical context. By exposing the gaps and fissures in dominant discourses, deconstruction can help to create spaces for alternative ways of thinking and speaking about justice.

The early members of the Frankfurt School, a group of German philosophers and social theorists, viewed Marx’s concept of justice as primarily concerned with the problem of exploitation and domination. For instance, in his wonderful book, *Marx’s Concept of Man*, Erich Fromm argues:

Marx fought against religion exactly because it is alienated, and does not satisfy the true needs of man. Marx's fight against God is, in reality, a fight against the idol that is called God. Already as a young man he wrote as the motto for his dissertation "Not those are godless who have contempt for the gods of the masses but those who attribute the opinions of the masses to the gods." Marx's atheism is the most advanced form of rational mysticism, closer to Meister Eckhart or to Zen Buddhism than are most of those fighters for God and religion who accuse him of “godlessness.”¹⁷

The early Frankfurt School saw Marx’s analysis of capitalism as revealing a system in which a small ruling class of capitalists was able to exploit and

¹⁵ Ludemann, 2014, p.72. See also Derrida, Jacques. "Force of law: The “mystical foundation of authority”." *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Routledge, 2016. 3-67. And Caputo, John D. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Indiana University Press, 1997.

¹⁶ Ludemann, 2014, p.72

¹⁷Fromm, Erich. *Marx's Concept of Man: Including 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts'*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013., p.62-63

dominate the working class, which was forced to sell its labor power in order to survive. This led to a situation of profound social injustice, in which the vast majority of people were denied the basic necessities of life while a small minority enjoyed immense wealth and power. For the Frankfurt School, this problem of exploitation and domination was not limited to the economic realm, but extended to all areas of social life, including culture, politics, and ideology. They believed that a critical theory of society needed to address this problem of injustice in all its dimensions, and to develop strategies for overcoming it. This Iqbal's Marx as well.

Derrida inherited this Marx from the early Frankfurt School and used him to conceptualise 'Deconstruction as Justice'. Unlike Muslim scholarship whose Marx is influenced by Engels and Lenin or Mao, Derrida was influenced by the early Frankfurt School's interpretation of Marx's concept of justice, which focused on the problem of exploitation and domination in capitalist societies. In all of them, Marx is no longer an atheist but a mystic who is seeking Man's redemption. Muslim philosophy's Marx, unlike Iqbal's, is an atheist. It is clear who has been feeding this Deconstruction/Marx/Iqbal/Islam to them.

In fact, Derrida's conception of justice is much broader and more complex than a simple critique of capitalism. For Derrida, justice is a fundamental ethical and political issue that involves the deconstruction of hierarchical and binary oppositions that have historically shaped our understanding of power relations, identity, and difference.

In this sense, Derrida's concept of justice is closely linked to his idea of deconstruction, which involves the identification and analysis of the underlying assumptions and contradictions that exist within these binary oppositions. By deconstructing these oppositions, Derrida seeks to challenge the systems of power that have been built upon them, and to open up new possibilities for more just and equitable ways of thinking and acting.

So while Derrida's engagement with Marx's concept of justice was certainly an important influence on his thinking, it is just one of many different threads that contributed to his broader understanding of justice as it relates to deconstruction.

Fourth Moment: Fredrick Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Nietzsche's concern with meaning is the fourth major influence on Derrida's conception of Deconstruction. He is another German philosopher

who has been fed as an atheist to contemporary Muslim scholarship but who comes as a mystic in Iqbal, the early Frankfurt School, and Derrida. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, specifically his questioning of traditional concepts of meaning, was a significant influence on Jacques Derrida's concept of Deconstruction. Nietzsche argued that Christianity/western civilization has failed to produce a Superman. This idea challenged the notion of Judeo-Christian western civilization that believed that was ahead of the rest of the world. Nietzsche punctures this inflated western ego. He advocated instead "transvaluation of all values" because of Christianity's failure to produce an ethical/moral structure where Man is not an ordinary human being but an *Übermensch*, a Superman.¹⁸ He prophetically predicted the trajectory of Western civilization under the sign of rationalism and Derrida drew upon Nietzsche's critique of the construction of meaning by Christianity to argue that language itself was inherently unstable and that meaning was never fixed or absolute. Deconstruction, therefore, sought to reveal the ways in which language and meaning were constructed and to deconstruct the binary oppositions that underpinned them.

Especially, Nietzsche's concept of the "transvaluation of all values" is a central idea in Derrida's conception of Deconstruction. Nietzsche argued that our traditional moral values are based on a false metaphysical belief in absolute truths and that we must question these values in order to create new ones. He suggested that this could be done through a "transvaluation of all values," which involves re-evaluating the values that underpin our society and creating new ones that are more life-affirming.

Derrida was influenced by Nietzsche's ideas and incorporated them into his own conception of Deconstruction. For Derrida, the task of Deconstruction is to reveal the instability and uncertainty that underlies all systems of thought and to challenge the authority of any absolute or fixed meaning. He saw this as a necessary step in the creation of new values that could better serve our needs and desires. In this sense, Derrida's concept of Deconstruction is not just a critique of existing systems of thought, but also a positive project that seeks to create new ways of understanding the world. By questioning the authority of traditional meanings and values, Derrida aimed to open up new possibilities for thought and action. As we shall see, this is what inferred by Iqbal from all these sources as well, which creates

¹⁸ Kaufmann, Walter. *Friedrich Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Penguin Books., 1978.

a certain avant-garde aura around Iqbal's political, religious, and philosophical project. This is crucial for any understanding of Sufism and Deconstruction.

Fifth Moment: Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995)

Emmanuel Levinas' concept of "the Other" was the fifth most significant in Derrida's conception of Deconstruction.¹⁹ Levinas argued that ethics begins with the recognition of the other as fundamentally different and that the self is responsible for the other. This is in contrast to traditional Western philosophy, which has placed the self at the center and marginalized the other. Derrida took this idea of the Other and incorporated it into his deconstructionist project, arguing that traditional Western thought has not properly recognized the Other and that deconstruction can help to bring the Other to the forefront. Derrida saw his deconstructionist approach as a way of promoting a more ethical and just approach to thinking and interacting with the Other.

At the heart of Derrida's conception of Deconstruction is a moral and ethical project that draws on mystical insights. Through Deconstruction, Derrida seeks to challenge the dominant systems of thought and language that perpetuate the marginalization and oppression of the Other. For Derrida, the Other is not simply a human other but a broader concept that encompasses all that lies beyond the self. The Other represents the unknown, the different, and the unassimilable, and it is the encounter with the Other that disrupts the fixed meanings and binaries that structure our world. In this sense, Deconstruction is a mystical project that seeks to move beyond the limiting structures of thought and language to encounter the Other. It is a project of transgressing boundaries and opening oneself up to the infinite possibilities of the Other. This mystical project of Deconstruction is a moral and ethical one because it involves a radical responsibility towards the Other. Derrida's conception of the Other demands an ethical response that recognizes the Other's difference and affirms their right to be different.

In Levinas' philosophy, which heavily influenced Derrida's Deconstruction, this responsibility is described as a "face-to-face" encounter with the Other,

¹⁹ Critchley, Simon. *Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

in which the self is called to respond to the Other's infinite demand for recognition and justice. Derrida's Deconstruction takes this ethical demand and expands it to a critique of language and culture, challenging the fixed meanings and binaries that create the conditions for oppression and marginalization. Through this mystical and ethical project of Deconstruction, Derrida seeks to move beyond the limited structures of thought and language to encounter the infinite and transformative possibilities of the Other.

Derrida's project resembles Allama Muhammad Iqbal's Sufi-epistemology. Both thinkers emphasize the importance of questioning and challenging traditional structures and ways of thinking in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of reality. Derrida's Deconstruction involves analyzing the underlying assumptions and binaries that shape our thinking, and demonstrating how they are not fixed and stable but instead constantly shifting and unstable. Similarly, Iqbal's Sufi-epistemology emphasizes the importance of transcending the limitations of conventional modes of thinking in order to attain a more profound understanding of reality. Furthermore, both Derrida and Iqbal advocate for a moral and ethical approach to knowledge and understanding. Derrida emphasizes the importance of understanding "the Other" and the need to embrace difference and diversity, while Iqbal emphasizes the importance of self-realization and the cultivation of a strong moral character. Both thinkers are critical of traditional modes of thinking that prioritize narrow interests and fail to recognize the importance of ethical and moral considerations in knowledge production. In other words, Derrida's concept of Deconstruction is a complex and multifaceted philosophical approach that draws on various influences, including structuralism, Marxism, Nietzsche's and Heidegger's philosophies, mysticism, and Levinas's ethics. Derrida's Deconstruction involves a critical analysis of binary oppositions, the destabilization of the hierarchy of meaning, and the questioning of any fixed, totalizing systems of thought. This approach is not just a linguistic or literary theory but a broader philosophical, ethical, and political project that calls into question the very foundations of modern Western thought. Through Deconstruction, Derrida seeks to challenge dominant narratives of truth, expose the hidden power relations in language, and promote a more just and ethical understanding of the world. The influence of mysticism and Sufi-epistemology in Derrida's thought further emphasizes

the ethical and moral dimensions of Deconstruction and highlights the importance of acknowledging “the Other” and recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings. Overall, Derrida’s Deconstruction represents a significant contribution to contemporary philosophy and remains a subject of ongoing scholarly debate and discussion.

Iqbal’s Sufi Epistemology and Deconstruction

Iqbal's Sufi-epistemology is based on the idea that the ultimate reality is a dynamic and creative force that is constantly manifesting itself in the world. This force is called the “Self” or the “Divine Ego” and is the source of all knowledge, creativity, and beauty. According to Iqbal, human beings can access this reality through intuition and inspiration, which he calls “Shuhūd” and “Kashf” but also through the “intellectual test” that offers a unique combination of religion, science, and philosophy.²⁰ These mystical experiences are no different from other experiences that human knowledge is based on and allow individuals to transcend the limitations of reason and logic and enter into direct communion with the divine.

In Iqbal’s Sufi-epistemology, knowledge is not a static or fixed entity but is rather a process of continuous discovery and revelation.²¹ The purpose of human existence is to participate in this process of knowledge acquisition and to contribute to the ongoing development of the universe. This involves a constant striving for self-realization and the cultivation of a deep sense of responsibility towards the world and others. Iqbal’s Sufi-epistemology emphasizes the importance of moral and ethical values in the pursuit of knowledge and the development of the self. The ultimate goal of human existence is to achieve a state of “Taqwā” or God-consciousness, which involves a complete submission to the divine will and a deep sense of compassion and love for all creation. Emmanuel Levinas’s conception of the Other, Heidegger’s emphasis on Dasein or an authentic human being, Marx’s conception of Justice and human freedom, Nietzsche’s insistence on Meaning, and Sigmund Freud’s idea of ‘writing’ as “the return of the repressed” in atheistic, Darwinian senses are already prefigured in Iqbal’s Sufi-epistemology. For instance, in Sufi-epistemology, the concept of ‘the Other’ refers to the recognition and acknowledgement of the unique

²⁰ Iqbal, 2013, p.22

²¹ Iqbal, 2013, p.116

individuality and dignity of other people, creatures, and things in the world. The Other is seen as a distinct and irreducible presence that cannot be fully grasped or subsumed under one's own perspective or interests. It is a recognition of the inherent value and worth of the other, which demands an ethical response of respect, compassion, and justice:

...[**the Saying**] is the performative stating, proposing, or expressive position of myself facing the Other. It is a verbal or non-verbal ethical performance, whose essence cannot be caught in constative propositions. It is a performative *doing* that cannot be reduced to a constative description. By contrast, **the Said** is a statement, assertion, or proposition (of the form S is P), concerning which the truth or falsity can be ascertained.²²

In Sufi thought, the recognition of 'the Other' is intimately connected to the recognition of the Divine. The Sufi mystical experience involves a realization of the Unity of Being, which transcends the dualistic categories of self and other, subject and object, and reveals the underlying Oneness of all existence. This mystical intuition leads to a profound ethical orientation towards the world, as the Sufi recognizes that the other is not fundamentally separate or opposed to the self, but rather a manifestation of the same Divine Reality.

This recognition of the Other in Sufi-epistemology has important implications for moral and political philosophy, as it challenges the dominant paradigms of individualism and self-interest, and calls for a more inclusive and compassionate approach to social relations. It also emphasizes the importance of empathy, dialogue, and mutual understanding in bridging the gaps between different perspectives and cultures.

Furthermore, Justice was a central focus of Iqbal's philosophy, as he believed that it was the foundation for a just society and that all individuals had a responsibility to work towards promoting justice. Iqbal's understanding of justice drew on a variety of sources, including Quran, Islamic philosophy, and the ideas of Western thinkers such as Marx and Nietzsche. He saw justice as being intimately connected with issues of power and domination, and believed that it was necessary to challenge unjust power structures in order to achieve a more just society. Iqbal's

²² Crichtley, 2014, p.7

philosophy was thus deeply concerned with the ethical and moral dimensions of human life, and he saw the pursuit of justice as a fundamental aspect of human existence. Furthermore, Iqbal's emphasis on *ijtihad* reflects a similar spirit of critical inquiry and re-evaluation that underlies Derrida's deconstructive approach. In this sense, Iqbal's emphasis on *ijtihad* and Derrida's emphasis on avoiding the pitfall of 'a metaphysics of presence' or Nietzsche's "transvaluation of all values" involve a critical re-examination of traditional concepts and values, and what Iqbal calls "a worn-out' metaphysics."²³

In the same vein, both Derrida's deconstruction and Iqbal's Sufi epistemology challenge the binary oppositions and dichotomies in language and thought. Derrida argues that language and meaning are inherently unstable and that there is always a gap between the signifier and the signified. He deconstructs binary oppositions such as presence/absence, speech/writing, and inside/outside, showing how each term relies on the other for its meaning and how the binary opposition itself is unstable. Similarly, Iqbal's Sufi epistemology challenges the binary opposition between subject and object, showing how the knower and the known are intertwined and interconnected. He argues that the ego, or self, is not a fixed and stable entity, but rather an ever-changing and dynamic process that is constantly interacting with the world around it. Both Derrida and Iqbal also emphasize the importance of context and the contingency of meaning. Derrida argues that meaning is always contextual and that there is no fixed or essential meaning to any text or concept. Similarly, Iqbal emphasizes the importance of context in understanding knowledge and truth, arguing that knowledge is always situated in a particular historical and cultural context. Overall, both Derrida's deconstruction and Iqbal's Sufi epistemology challenge the traditional ways of thinking and understanding language, knowledge, and truth. They both offer alternative ways of approaching these concepts, emphasizing their complexity, contingency, and interconnectedness.

Conclusion

Every single moment that informs Derrida's conception of Deconstruction is part of Iqbal's Sufi-epistemology. Be it the Heideggerian idea of an "authentic human being" or the destruction of rationalist/atheistic

²³ Iqbal, 2013, p.72

structuralism, or the pursuit of Justice and Meaning as it appears in Marx and Nietzsche, or the very Sufi/Levinasian notion of putting “the Other” before one’s own self are markers or some of the most abiding themes in Iqbal. How then can one argue that there is no proximity between the two streams as contemporary Muslim philosophers have argued? It, therefore, has become obvious that Muslim scholarship has been fed a certain line about Deconstruction which curtails its ability to gel with Iqbal and Islam thereby delaying our social transformation. This is indicative of a deep malaise in contemporary Muslim scholarship which is unable to reflect on its own cultural and religious roots to understand the intersection of Islam and Deconstruction. This is indicative of our intellectual *cul de sac*. The only way to emerge out this intellectual stupor is to re-orient our understanding of Iqbal and his Sufi-epistemology which is taught to us, ironically, by Derrida’s Deconstruction.

References

- Ahmed, Akbar S. *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*. Routledge, 2013.
- Baring, Edward. *The young Derrida and French philosophy, 1945–1968*. Vol. 98. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Caputo, John D. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Critchley, Simon. *Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
- Derrida, J. ‘Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences’. In Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Routledge, 2001.
- Iqbal, M. (2013). *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. “Force of law: The “mystical foundation of authority”.” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Routledge, 2016.
- Derrida, Jacques. (2001). ‘Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences’. In *Writing and Difference*. Routledge.
- Fromm, Erich, and Karl Marx. *Marx's Concept of Man: Including 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts'*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Suny Press, 2010.
- Hughes, Aaron W. *Theorizing Islam: Disciplinary Deconstruction and Reconstruction*. Routledge, 2014.
- Inayatullah, Sohail, and Gail Boxwell. "Islam, postmodernism and other futures a Ziauddin Sardar Reader." (2003).
- Kaufmann, Walter. *Friedrich Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Penguin Books., 1978.
- Lüdemann, Susanne. *Politics of Deconstruction: A New Introduction to Jacques Derrida*. Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Nasr, Syed Hossein. *The School of Isfahan*. In Sharif, M M, (Ed.) *A History of Muslim Philosophy. Vol. 1*. 1963
- Quran 85:22
- Ramadan, Tariq. *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Richardson, William J. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.

Javaid, Ahmad. “Post Modernism - Some Aspects (1) - کچھ پہلو - مابعد جدیدیت - Ahmad Javaid.” YouTube. YouTube, October 8, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4yV-LUu2Sw&t=1757s>.