IQBAL—The Problem of Poetic Belief

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My purpose in writing this article is to have a look on Iqbal's dilemma of being a poet-philosopher in the light of some recent observations made by some notable Western literary critics on the principles of literary criticism, with particular reference to the problem of poetic belief. I would give a brief exposition to Eliot's relevant theories of criticism such as the Impersonal Theory of Poetry, Form and Matter, Poetry and Religion and Poetic belief. I would then endeavour to apply these canons of literary criticism to the works of Iqbal, with a view to finding out how far Iqbal's philosophical pronouncements could succeed in accomplishing the poetic assent; how far Iqbal succeeded in being a poet in spite of his being a philosopher. I shall have also to discuss whether any such problem does arise at all. Is there any bar on a poet being a philosopher and *vice versa*? I have asked a question to myself whether Iqbal's poetic genius was hampered by his philosophy or whether his philosophy sharpened his calibre as a poet. This question presupposes the problem as to the function of a poet whether he is there to give a message or simply to provide joy to his readers; or whether these two propositions are exclusive to each other that is if he delights, he cannot instruct, or if he instructs he can not delight. This leads us to the basic question of the nature of Art, whose interpretations can be many. Our critical literature is full of such discussions right from Aristotle to Eliot, including such great names as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Dryden, Arnold, Hali, etc. I do not intend to discuss these theories of Arts but it would be both interesting and useful to find out whether Iqbal himself had any theory of Arts, or was it necessary for him to have one.

It is not necessary for a poet to know or have any specific theory of Art on which to mould his creations; many great poets such as Dante, Shakespeare, Meer and Ghalib did not possess any such theory of Art. A great artist does not bother to know or frame any theory of Art; at times he transcends all principles and canons of Art and moulds and modifies the existing ones by his own poetic genius. Coleridge has rightly observed that *every great and original writer*, in proportion as he is great or original, *must himself create the taste by*

which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen. A great poet refuses to be judged by the existing principles of criticism; it would be an unsuccessful attempt to judge Shakespeare by a ready-made packet of principles of literary criticism. And, in fact, it is not always useful and rewarding for a poet to have a theory of Art of his own. At times, T. S. Eliot's poetry and literary criticism seem to complement each other and this may prove fatal to both. It is also not possible for a literary system-maker to apply all his theories of Art on his own poetry and to achieve the desired effects. We may appreciate and pay our respects to the soundness of the theory of poetry propounded by William Wordsworth in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads but we are not happy to see its practical application on his lyrical ballads; neither the ballads fully adhere to the principles nor do they emerge as great poetry on this basis alone.

I want to point it out that literary criticism is not prior to literature itself. Aristotle had propounded his ideas on drama in his Poetics by deducing such principles from the works of Greek dramatists themselves. His material was already available; he simply analysed them and generalized the principles, with no doubt some of his own profound observations. I do not deny the importance of literary criticism but the extent of its importance or otherwise is out of the scope of this article. At the moment, we are interested to find out whether we can make out a plausible theory of Art from the poetry of Iqbal or not. I submit that Iqbal has, in quite a few of his verses, put forth his own Theory of Art; we want to judge it in the light of some current theories of Art of notable Western Literary critics, with particular reference to our problem of poetic belief.

Looking at the Urdu Tradition, we find that Persian Tradition of Ghazal has played a vital and prominent role in its shaping and development. It is full of amorous emotions; love-poetry is, perhaps, the most important part of our entire poetry. I do not claim that for being so, it is an inferior poetry; it has enriched our literature with very beautiful and significant similes and metaphors. But with insistence on this kind of poetry and as an easy frame and model for the new poets, *Ghazal* degenerated to a great extent as we find in *Daag* and *Ameer Meenai*; in fact, to a great extent, it had lived its life and had its culmination in such great poets as *Meer* and *Momin*; I do not still hold that in the hands of a great poet, say like *Hasrat Mohani* or *Firaque Gorakhpuri*, it would not flower into great poetry; but as a tradition, love poetry with exuberant and abundant decorative but

off-beaten metaphors and monotony of emotions, which were at times insincere, had lost its grip, and barring a few great poets, it was heavily condemned by such recognised critics, as *Hali, Azad* etc. As a revolt against it, a departure from this tradition took place in the works of Hali and it found its culmination in Iqbal.

To my mind, Iqbal is a sharp departure from the Urdu tradition of *Ghazal*. Barring a few notable exceptions our poets were not preoccupied with social, national or philosophical problems. I have no intention to say that poetry with social, national or philosophical bias is great poetry, though in the hands of a great poet, it can be. I also do not say that we do not have great poets in our language; there had been poets who had philosophical flashes, had deep insight into human nature, and were possessed with religious fervour; there were mystic-poets in our language; but, I submit, that such poets do not fall into the major tradition of poetry; I further submit that love-poetry with a deep print of Persian Tradition, with all its metaphors and mechanics has been our major tradition; Iqbal has been a departure from this tradition; and has heralded a new era of poetry which we see in the post Iqbalian era which include such poets as *Faiz*.

Kalimuddin Ahmed remarks about Iqbal's theory of Art: "He has something to assert and he believes that every artist as well must have something to assert". As a poet, he assumes a new role; he refuses to be simply a provider of joy; he believes that a poet has a definite function to perform and he volunteered himself to fulfil that function—to give an inspired message to the sleeping world to awaken it to action. In the words of Shelley, Iqbal considered the function of a poet to be a "trumpet of a prophecy". He believed:

شاعری جزویست از پیغمبری

Poetry is a part of Prophethood

We can substitute Iqbal for Shelley when he, addressing to the West Wind, indentifying himself with it, says:

Drive my dead thoughts over the Universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

the trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

Iqbal never believed in the common place theory of 'Art for Art's sake'; we can find a number of verses in Iqbal's poetry in which he warns his readers not to take him a poet in the usually accepted derogatory sense of the word that is an entertainer:

میری نوائے پریشان کو شاعری نہ سمجھ کہ میں ہوں محرم راز دروں خانہ

Do not consider my anxious utterances as Poetry

I share the secrets of the inner abode.

Iqbal wanted poetry to work; he wanted the sleeping humanity to awaken to act. While once comparing himself with Tagore, Iqbal said that "Tagore preaches rest; Iqbal preaches action". Thus it can be observed that Iqbal believed in a purposive poetry. Iqbal took poetry as a powerful agent to quicken the sleeping energies and latent powers to act. He whole-heartedly condemns the poet who is sitting in an ivory tower, who escapes from the grim realities of life, who seeks refuge in an escape to the romantic world, one who only arouses our aesthetic responses; in his اسرار خودی (Secrets of the self) he tells the poet about his function and exhorts him to action:

اے میان کیسہ ات نقد سخن بر عیار زندگی او را بزن
مدتے غلطیدہ اندر خریر خوبہ کر پاس درشتے ہم بگیر
خویش را بر ریگ سوزاں ہم بزن غوطہ اندر چشمہ زمزم بزن
مثل بلبل ذوق شیون تا کجا در چمن زاداں نشیمن تا کجا
اے ہما از یمن واست ارجمند آشیانے ساز بر کوہ بلند
تاشوی در خورد پیکار حیات جسم و جانت سوزد از نار حیات

If thou hast the coin of poesy in thy purse,
Rub it on the touchstone of life;
For a long time thou hast turned about on the bed of silk;
Now accustom thyself to rough cotton!
Now throw thyself on the burning sand.
And plunge into the fountain of Zemzem!
How long make thine abode in gardens?
O thou whose auspicious share would do honour
Build a nest on the high mountains to the Phoenix

That thou myst be fit for life's battle,
That thy body and soul may burn in life's fire!

The poet according to Iqbal is a part of battle going around him. He is an inspired person with a mission and he wishes to inspire and enthuse others to take part in the struggle; thus he is a vehement believer in the theory of 'Art for Life's sake' and has a message to give to humanity.

There enters the philosopher who wants to communicate his ideas to the people and he has chosen the medium of poetry to do so.

With some caution, I wish to submit that he was a philosopher first and poet later; as I have said that this proposition is capable of being grossly misunderstood, I would like to explain this position at some length. Iqbal as a human being had a particular point of view; he was a religious man and considered the salvation of mankind to lie in the fulfilment of the commandments of religion. He tried to take his inspiration from the Holy Quran and wanted people to follow the dictums of the Holy Book. From his own reading and experiences in life, he developed a religious mysticism as seen in Rumi and his own philosophy of Self which he found not only compatible with Islam but also a very effective means to fulfil men's mission in the World as propounded in Islam. I suggest that Iqbal had a missionary zeal for his belief and wanted to communicate this belief to the humanity; his first and foremost motive was to communicate his message, which he loved so much. He was an inspired person. Any such person who is so inspired, having a refined sensibility as he had, would have chosen the most befitting medium that is poetry. To quote Kalimuddin Ahmed again: "At times, Iqbal disclaims any desire to be considered a poet. Philosophy calls him and his main concern is to give expression to his philosophic ideas—ideas that appear valuable to him. He is no poet, he says. He has something to say and he uses poetry merely as a vehicle of expression, because probably, it enables him to express his thoughts in a concise, emphatic, concentrated and memorable fashion. 'I am not writing poetry'; 'I am not aware of the finer points of art';—such sentences occur frequently." Whether he succeeded in his attempt of putting his thoughts in its emotional equivalent is yet to be seen. Whether what he says in verse is simply philosophy or is it poetry in its real sense of the word, that is the basic question; has he been able to achieve poetic assent for his own philosophical ideas? Could he have a harmonious blend of philosophy

and poetry? Did he possess a unified sensibility? Can a philosopher be a poet? Does he lose his poetic value if he has a system of philosophy to propound? Can we say that in spite of his philosophy, he was a great poet? These are the questions which we have to answer in this paper.

Before we go on to answer all these questions in the light of the western canons of literary criticism, it would be fruitful if we may also have a look at Iqbal's process and mode of writing poetry. It is always very difficult to know the mechanics of writing poetry; even a poet would find it difficult to explain how he writes poetry. No doubt this question will receive more attention and investigation, when we come to describe and discuss Eliot's Impersonal Theory of Poetry. However, we have some first hand account of Iqbal's process of writing poetry. In a recent biography of Iqbal (روزگار فقیر) it has been claimed that Iqbal himself described his mode of writing. He was not a craftsman to put his thought in the form of verse whenever he wanted or whenever he was asked to. He had rare flashes of inspiration, say twice or so in a year, when he could write verse at length; whenever he was inspired to write, he would seek seclusion and would be nervous, as if something has been revealed upon him. *As claimed, he said, he would not be getting the idea first, but the entire verse dawned upon him suddenly in its final form.* It is said that his famous poem "Masjid-e-Qartaba" (the mosque of Qordova) dawned upon him in the shape of a prayer after he had performed "the Namaz" at the famous and historical mosque of Kordova. This shows that Iqbal was an inspired poet. In the words of Shelley, Iqbal is a hierophant of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirror of the gigantic shows which futurity cast upon the present; the words which express what he understands not; the trumpet which sings to battle and feels not what he inspires, the influence which is moved not, but moves. This, if this explanation is authentic, creates a very difficult question for us to solve. A poet who was inspired and obsessed with his missionary idea was not a deliberate versifier; it were at the sudden flashes of inspiration that he propounded his ideas in poetry that no deliberate and painful craftmanship entered into his poetry. This paradox has to be explained if we have to answer any of our questions satisfactorily.

II

As said above it is my endeavour to evaluate Iqbal's poetry in the light of Eliot's critical canons as propounded from time to time, with

our basic problem of Iqbal's success or otherwise of achieving the status of great poetry for his philosophical thought. It, then, becomes necessary to have a look at Eliot's ideas on such major issues as are relevant to our problem. I have chosen Eliot as he is the critic of the age for the West. He has been responsible for the reshaping of the taste of the contemporary world and also of the generations to come. He has been declared as one of the best arbiters of taste of our generation.

As early as 1921, Eliot had propounded his Impersonal Theory of Poetry. His early criticism has a stamp of his being an intellectual. He had at least two important suggestions to make; firstly he would consider the role of intellect in the processes of poetry as important. He liked the poet "to have a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling" or to quote another of his remark: "to feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose'. This logically leads to the elimination of thought or idea as such in poetry. He considers, at this occasion, the use of personal ideas and philosophies in poetry as undesirable. He did not like the poet to have a concept. According to him, *the poet should replace the philosopher*. He is, however, confronted with a great problem; how is he going to pass judgments on such great philosophic poets as Lucretius and Dante, whereas Santayana in an earlier work (1910), declares that the poet is never greater than when he grasps and expresses the philosophic vision of his universe, as Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe did for successive ages. Eliot has a solution for his dilemma. "*Eliot finds*", remarks Kristian Smidt, "*philosophies justifiable in poetry only if, as with Lucretius and Dante, they serve, not their own ends, but those of the poetry. Therefore it is safest for the poet to borrow his ideas, so as not to fall into the temptation of subordinating poetry to speculation*". Thus, to put it into fewer words, it is not the function of a poet to argue, persuade, teach or speculate. 'Accordingly, the poet can deal with philosophical ideas, not as matter for argument, but as a matter of inspection. And for this purpose traditional ideas are better than original ideas'. This logically leads to the idea of the poets suppressing his own personality. To quote him again: The progress of an artist is a continual self sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science "The most perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers".

As the concluding part of his celebrated essay on 'Tradition and

the Individual Talent', Eliot says that poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from these things.' Eliot does not, perhaps, have the faith in the spiritual nature of man. He thinks that the poet is only a particular medium in which 'impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.'

This leads us to the question of the poetic processes. Eliot declares that the poet's mind is a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. At which moment the mind acts as a catalyst and there occurs a spontaneous fusion with the effect of creating a new art emotion. *And it is not the greatness, the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts*". This theory of the poetic processes brings Eliot very near to the concept of *supernatural inspiration*. It is no more a matter of conscious technique. It seems that Eliot, at the moment, believes in a kind of aesthetic mysticism.

If we analyse the above observations, we come to the following conclusions: (a) The poet must avoid 'the expression of his personality'—that is he must avoid ideas and philosophies, and if he does express, he must serve the end of poetry and not his own end: he has to avoid the dangerous situation of 'falling into temptation of subordinating poetry to speculation'; the poet must escape from his personality and emotions. In fact he must avoid being deliberate and conscious in the expression of his philosophies and ideas. (b) Eliot very nearly believes in the theory of supernatural inspiration. He insists upon the value and importance of the 'intensity of the artistic process' rather than on the intensity of emotion and that leads him to a kind of 'aesthetic mysticism'. In short, it approaches the same theory of Shelley that he propounded when he says that 'Poets are the heirophants of an unapprehended inspiration'. His above theory that is the Impersonal Theory of Poety was a very impressive one and its echoes were heard around twenties in the works of contemporary writers both creative and critical, but such a position was difficult to be maintained. Whatever the case may be, in poetry, no doubt, according to Eliot, these personal emotions were to be reshaped so as to be objectified having a universal appeal. In fact, what Eliot was trying to do at that time was to check the unrestrained emotions that the Romantics believed to play upon their poetry.

Later on Eliot had to modify his position; while speaking of Ben Jonson, he says that we can't fully understand him unless we know the poet, Ben Jonson, as a person. In 1940, when he was lecturing on W. B. Yeats, he thought that "the kind of impersonality which was more that of the mere skilful craftsman was achieved by the mature poet 'who, out of intense and personal experiences, is able to express a general truth: retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol'. We can now see that Eliot does not himself insist on his views of 1919. In fact Eliot is neither simply individualistic nor traditionalist alone; he is both; he believes in the harmonious blend of the both. Even psychologically, it will be impossible to depersonalize poetry completely. The poet's own experience directly and passions aroused thereof have a vital role to play in the creation of poetry. It is one thing to demand an escape from personality, and another thing to do it. It is an impossible ideal.

As far as the use of ideas in poetry is concerned, it also passed through modifications and changes. What he was trying to do in 1919 was the result of his belief that Art or Literature is merely presentation; it is not an exploration. We can, however, see that his own poetry such as 'Four Quartets' is not presentation but exploration. Lucretius and Dante are poets whose works are of permanent value though they are 'unashamedly didactic' full of poets' ideas and philosophies. His original view on the nature of poety was that great poetry must be Universal. In the October 1932 issue of 'Criterion', he said that "All great Art is in a sense a document of its time; but great art is never merely a document, for mere document is not art. All great art has something permanent as well as changing..... *And as no great is explicable simply to the Society of its time, so it is not fully explicable by the personality of its author; in the greatest poetry there is always a hint of something behind*, something impersonal, something in relation to which the author has been no more than the passive (if not always pure) medium".

The above statement, particularly his assertion of 'a hint of something behind' alludes that Eliot believes in the divine inspiration of the poet. As has already been discussed about the poetic processes, he seems to believe in the aesthetic mysticism. The only explicit statement that he makes on this thesis while he was broadcasting on Vergil and the Christian:..... "*if the word 'inspiration' is to have any meaning it must mean just this, that the speaker or writer is uttering something which he does not wholly understand——or which he may even misinterpret when*

the inspiration has departed from him. This is certainly true of poetic inspiration. As poet may believe that he is expressing only his private experience his lines may be for him only a means of talking about himself without giving himself away; yet for his readers what he has written may come to be the expression both of their own secret feelings and of the exultation or despair of a generation'.

Eliot, on the basis of his *proable* theory of inspiration does not deny the poet his social role, particularly with reference to the use of language by the poet; however, this discussion is out of the scope of the present article. I would now like to sum up his ideas on this particular theme and to see it in the light of Santaya's observations on philosophical poetry before moving on to his observations on his important theory of 'Form and Matter'.

It must have been noted that there has been an evolutionary process in Eliot's critical thoughts. We cannot consider his earlier statements *final* without taking into account what he had to say later. No doubt, he insisted on the complete depersonalization of poet, but he had to allow that the poet's own emotions are important; he did not like that poet should express his ideas and philosophies, but he had to yield before Lucretius and Dante because they primarily served the cause of poetry. He believed that there was unconscious activity in the poetic process but he had also to accept that there was much conscious activity present too while the poet was writing a poem. We have to ask a question what is he trying to say after all. Eliot seems to say that *poetry is poetry*; every other thing is irrelevant whether it has philosophy or not; whether it is didactic or not; whether it is intuitional or deliberate; he is all the time occupied with *Universal and Permanent poetry*; in fact, at times he has been unconsciously trying to explain his own poetic works. While writing about 'Poetry and Philosophy' he says "we say, in a vague way, that Shakespeare, or Dante, or Lucretius, is a poet who thinks even that Tennyson is a poet who does not think. But what we really mean is not a difference in quality of thought but a difference in quality of emotion. *The poet who 'thinks' is merely the poet who can express the emotional equivalent of thought*" or the sole judge of the poetry which is philosophical or which is loaded with thought, is the success or otherwise of its being able to 'express the emotional equivalent of thought or the philosophy which the poet is aiming to express. It is not necessary that the poet himself, preferably, be not interested in the thought itself; he may be. In order to elaborate his ideas further, he illustrates his point by discussing

Shakespeare: "Champions of Shakespeare as a great philosopher, have a great deal to say about Shakespeare's power of thought, but they fail to show that he thought to any purpose; that he had any coherent view of life, or that he recommended his procedure to follow." This statement can also be true to *Ghalib* but this can not be true to Iqbal. *Shakespeare and Ghalib did not think to any purpose but Iqbal did, and we have to see whether Iqbal was capable of expressing the thought (to some purpose) in its emotional equivalent or not.*

Eliot's bias for poetry is so great that he seems to dream of *a pure poetry* and *a pure poet* that is a poet is poet and nothing else. It seems that his study of Coleridge and Shelley affected him very much to come to this conclusion. To him, they should have been greater poets had they not been having their own philosophical and critical opinions about art and life. Goethe did not impress Eliot much because he is too didactic and philosophical. He would not believe that Dante had a philosophy; it was Saint Thomas who supplied him a ready-made philosophy as did *Seneca* to Shakespeare; neither Shakespeare nor Dante did any real thinking—that was not their job; and the relative value of the thought current at their time, the material enforced upon each to use *as the Vehicle of his feeling*, is of no importance." It seems that thought is only a vehicle of the poet's feelings and the value of thought is of no importance. In fact, what he is trying to say is that thought particularly the poet's own thought is deadly to poet. It is only when the poet is able to express *his or other's thought into its emotional equivalent*, that we pardon him of his crime of using thought, because our response to such poetry would then be emotional and not intellectual since what the poet is conveying to us is an emotionalised thought; and that can only serve the purpose of poetry. Eliot very emphatically says "Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion; it has its own function. But this function is not intellectual but emotional. it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms".

While discussing about the three philosophical poets of Europe that is Lucretius, Dante and Goethe, George Santayana, after giving a brief account of the three main currents of European philosophy that is *Naturalism, Supernaturalism and Romanticism* wonderingly remarks: "Can it be an accident that the most adequate and probably the most lasting exposition of these schools of philosophy should have been made by the poets: Are poets, at heart, in search of a philosophy? or philosophy, in the end, nothing but poetry?".

George Santayana has raised a fundamental question and we have to see what answer does he give to such a problem, and to what extent it was satisfactory. If philosophy is 'an investigation into truth' or 'reasoning upon truths supposed to be discovered' then there is nothing in philosophy akin to poetry. There is nothing poetic in the works of philosophers. Even in the poetry of Lucretius, Dante and Iqbal, there are some passages where it simply presents philosophy as suger-coated bitter tablets, which have no poetry. Santayana says: "Poetry cannot be spread upon things like butter; it must play upon them like *light* and be the medium through which we see them". In Lucretius, it is not a sugar-coated pill; in his preface, he addresses his reader ..... if happily by such means I might keep thy mind intent upon my verses, until thy eye fathoms the whole structure of nature, and the fixed form that makes it beautiful.

George Santayana has brought out a vital fact when he says that "in philosophy itself investigation and reasoning are only preparatory and servile parts, means to an end. They terminate in *insight* or what in the noblest sense of the word may be called *theory*—a steady contemplation of all things in their order and worth." Thus we find there is a common element in Poetry and philosophy. He further adds: "Such contemplation is imaginative. No one can reach it who has not enlarged his mind and tamed his heart. A philosopher who attains it, is for the moment a poet; and a poet who turns his practised and passionate imagination on the order of all thing, or on anything in the light of the whole, is for that moment a philosopher. Thus a harmonious *blend* of a philosopher-poet can be found in a person who has a vision, an insight, a theory and can apply his *practiced and passionate imagination to it*. But still a poet who is a philosopher has a great difficulty in achieving this end because 'philosophy is something reasoned and heavy; poetry something winged, flashing and inspired. There is a danger that the inspiration is lost in the sand of versification of an idea. Long poem has to be deliberate and can not boast of poetic inspiration all through; that was, perhaps, the reason that Eliot considered philosophy and ideas dangerous to poetry; the flashy inspiration would not be able to carry on its wings the heavy and ponderous philosophy to a long way and poetry would lose its value; the poet would then serve the purpose of philosophy or of himself and not of poetry. What answer Santayana has to give to the substantial danger?

Santayana analyses as to why long poems do generally fail, when

he says: "If it be a fact, as it often is, that we find like things pleasing and great things arid and formless, and if we are better poets in a line than in an epic, *that is simply due to lack of faculty on our part, lack of imagination and memory and above all to lack of discipline.*" Santayana has a psychological explanation to his thesis. Why is it after all that 'the short-winded poet himself excels the common unimaginative person or is it so that he feels more.' "Rather I suppose, in that he feels more; in that his moment of intuition though fleeting, has a vision, a scope, a symbolic something about it that renders it deep and expressive. Intensity, even momentary intensity, if it can be expressed at all comports fullness and suggestion compressed into that intense moment..... To this fleeting moment the philosopher, as well as the poet, is confined..... *What makes the difference between a moment of poetic insight and a vulgar moment is that the passions of the poetic moment have more perspective*. Santayana further adds: "Even the short winded poet selects his words so that they have a magic moment in that which carries us, we know not how, to mountain tops of intuitions. Is it not the poetic quality of phrases and images due to their concentrating and liberating the confused promptings left in us by a long experience? When we feel the poetic thrill, is it not that we find sweep in the concise and depth in the clear, as we might find all the lights of the sea in the water of a jewel. And what is a philosophic thought but such an epitome".

So if a poet has a vision of the Universe, develops a system of thought and thinks to purpose, gives models of things, speaks about all the things we care for. What would be his problem? In such a case, the poet would be requiring much more poetical vision than the poet who suggests a few things which on account of his poetic vision, 'Stretches our attention and makes us rapt and serious'.

To bring out this explanation fully, I will have to quote Santayana at some length: "Form a like experience, give some scope and depth to your feeling, and it grows imaginative, give it more scope and more depth, focus all experience within it, make it a philosopher's vision of the world, and it will grow imaginative in a superlative degree, and be supremely poetical. The difficulty, after having the experience to symbolize, *lies only in having enough imagination to hold and suspend it in a thought*; and further to give this thought *such verbal expression* that others may be able to *decipher it*, and to be stirred by it as by a wind of suggestion sweeping the whole forest of their memories. Poetry, then, is not poetical for being short-winded or incidental, but on the

contarary, for being comprehensive and having range. If too much matter renders it heavy, that is the fault of the poet's weak intellect, not of the outstretched world. The picture that would render his larger subject would not be flatter and feebler for its extent, but on the contrary, deeper and stronger since it would possess as much unity as the little one with greater volume. As in a supreme dramatic crisis all over life seems to be focussed in the present and used in colouring out consiousness and shaping our decisions, so for each philosophic poet the whole world of men is gathered together, and he is never so much a poet as when, in a single cry, he summons all that has affinity to him in the Universe, and salutes his ultimate destiny. It is the acme of life to understand life. The height of poetry is to speak the language of gods".

It is therefore clear from Santayana's elaborate psychological analysis that philosophical thought or a system of thought of all things around us is not fatal to poetry; on the other hand, in the case of a person who has strong intellect and greater imagination with discipline, philosophical ideas would make his poetry great as he would have comprehensive view of life and not a cursory one. Great poetry depends upon the depth and greatness of the poet's vision and perhaps a great poet has to have some scheme of things, though at times he may not always be able to succeed to make his vision fully dawned upon his readers. We have to see how Iqbal succeeded in achieving this end and under what circumstances. But before we proceed to examine Iqbal, we have to deal the other problem that is concerned with 'Matter and form' for being equipped fully for our discussion of Iqbal's success or otherwise of his achieving the poetic assent for his philosophical ideas.

I have already inferred before that Eliot seems to give us an idea of pure poetry. He seems to impose upon us a conception of poetry as some sort of pure and rare aesthetic essence. There are several of Eliot's utterances which go to support this idea. He once emphatically said: "*Not our feelings, but the pattern which we make of feelings*, is the centre of value". Speaking about the use of language in poetry, he says: 'What is poetic about poetry is just the invention or discovery or elaboration of *a new idiom in verse*'. Insisting on the formal qualities of verse, he remarks: "Poetry begins, I dare say, with a savage beating of a drum in a jungle, and it retains that essential of percussion and rhythm". To the problem of communication that what is communicated in a poem, Eliot observes: "If poetry is a form

of 'Communication', yet that which is to be communicated is the poem itself and only incidentally the experience and the thought" which are in it. Eliot has repeated that interest in poetry is 'primarily a technical interest'. There has to be something in the poem which keeps the reader's mind 'diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work'. About his own poetry, he says that he did invent some poetry out of nothing because they (certain passages in his poetry) sounded well.

Should we then infer that Eliot believes in the doctrine of art for art's sake. What we mean by the phrase 'art for art's sake' is *pure enjoyment*. Eliot should not be mistaken, though he allows strong suspicions, to be an aesthetician in the sense of believing the doctrine of 'art for art's sake'. While talking about the art of Milton, Eliot says: "The music of verse is strongest in poetry which has a definite meaning in the properest words."

In a way form seems to be subservient to meaning. If we study the external influences on the poet which proves as motive force for him to write verse, it is the meaning he wishes to communicate. "Any radical change in poetic form is likely to be the symptom of some very much deeper change in society and in the individual', says Eliot.

These statements taken together are contradictory. Eliot cannot carry on consistently with his theory of the primacy of form. However, if we study him further, he seems to believe in an integral view of the relation between form and matter.

It seems he believes that the poet's meanings were being worked up for a long time; by the time, he is writing the poem, his meanings have erupted out; what is left now is a conscious art to dress it into form, but not exactly so because Eliot has already said in his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' that if feeling, phrases and images are stored up together and finally fused that they are, *this can only mean that form and matter are born together in a single creative act, and that they are equally important and valuable components of the poetry that is created*'. In fact Eliot is not so obscure as he seems to be. He takes a poem as a whole and does not bifurcate it into form and matter. No doubt, there would be imperfect matter, and imperfect poem where form may look separate from the meaning but in worthy poetry they are the same things. A masterpiece is created when in a poem 'medium and material, form and content, are indistinguishable.' We

can't possibly have poetry of 'great musical beauty which makes no sense'. 'What matters, in short, is the whole poem'.

T.S. Eliot is a career. He outgrows the views he held on or around 1921. On the whole he maintained that philosophical ideas are of no importance to the poet, that 'art is independent and supreme in its own sphere'. He criticized Mathew Arnold for defining literature as 'criticism of life'. He seemed to agree with Jacques Riviere in his estimate of the use of poetry as it was entertained by Moliere and Racine that they wrote for the entertainment of decent people.

This theory of 'Art for Enjoyment', perhaps, was the main idea, when he said in his 'The Music of Poetry' that the end of understanding poetry is enjoyment and.....this enjoyment is gusto disciplined by taste'.

Any didactic poetry is inferior, according to T.S. Eliot but he said while writing on "The Lesson of Baudelaire" that "all first rate poetry is occupied with morality". In his 'After Strange Gods' he considered it desirable to subject poetry to the rule of religion by deliberately applying the criterion of Christian orthodoxy to a number of writers as the supreme test of the value of their works.

How does Eliot reconcile such contradictory observations? The basic question posed to him is whether poetry has a cultural function, whether it is capable of saving us, or he should agree with Jacques Maritain that it is deadly error to expect poetry to provide the supersubstantial nourishment of man. Eliot, that too the later Eliot who outgrew his earlier ideas, agrees with Maritain's Thomistic aesthetics. Eliot would consider it now valid that all beauty emanates from God and thus belongs to the transcendental order. Fine arts assume now greater importance as exponent of beauty. It means that they are completely to be disinterested; they cannot perform any cultural function; they cannot save us; they cannot be didactic. Fine arts are an end in themselves; they are the works of beauty. Letting the human element enter into it, we come to have some moral bias as it would emerge in the spiritual struggle of man. Maritain believes in the goodness of human nature; while Eliot does not fully agree with him. Kristian Smidt brings a comparison in Eliot's and Maritain's ideas on the possible ascendance of pure poetry. He says: 'Form in poetry is the pattern of metre, sounds, images, ideas and the pattern of lines, colours, etc.. in the images called up: it is harmony, correspondence,

symmetry, balance, the static reality. Jacques Maritain by his emphasis on pure form suggests that these lines can reach or enable us to reach the high realms of the spirit. And Eliot seems to express a similar idea in *BURNT NORTON:*

> Only by the form, the pattern,
>
> Can words or music reach
>
> The Stillness

Eliot does not fully reject the idea of the cognitive function of poetry. "Poetry may, occasionally, be related to mystical apprehension. The poet may be groping for the inexpressible; he may be "occupied with *frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail,* though meaning still exist". Though Eliot is diffident about the entire problem, yet, writes Kristian Smidt, "Eliot is very wary and non-committal on this point, but when he says that there is a relation (not necessarily noetic, perhaps merely psychological) between mysticism and some kinds of poetry, or, some of the kinds of state in which poery is produced, he at least admits the possibility of a *noetic relation*".

Discussing the tendencies of the modern writers, particularly the fiction writers, he declares that we have completely separated literature from religion, but 'the separation' is not, and can never be complete. It is incomplete on the unconscious plane. There seems to be conflict in Eliot himself. He wishes to see the end of poetry served and does not at the same time, being a religious man himself, want to exclude religion completely from the purview of poetry. He would be very happy if poetry, over and above of its own purpose, could serve the purpose of religion. It would not be out of place to quote him on this point: "*Poetry is of course not to be defined by its uses. If it commemorates a public occasion, or celebrates a festival, or decorates a religious rite, or amuses a crowd, so much the better. It may affect revolutions in sensibility such as are periodically needed. It may make us from time to time a little aware of the deeper, unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being, to which we rarely penetrate*".

Let poetry be poetry, and let it also serve religious purpose; Eliot would not mind it "Eliot admits that these things are compatible with the greatest poetry, provided they comply with the conditions set by the work of art and do not intrude as foreign elements." Great poets transcend the limitation which may be deadly for lesser craftsman.

They possess, or we expect them to possess a 'general awareness', which enables them to move freely and securely, whatever subject matter they choose or find. In fact, *Eliot has failed to define exactly the relations between poetry and religious belief.* What he recognizes and what is so very natural, is the practical necessity of the two; he does not conceive of them, as being placed in ideal necessity. *He wants 'a literature' which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately, and definitely religious.*

III

We are now approaching the final stage of our exposition, that is, of 'Poetic Belief'.

When a Muslim reads Dante or a non-Muslim reads Iqbal, he is confronted with a difficult situation. How far can he enjoy poetry conveying beliefs contrary to his own belief? Should a reader believe what he reads? What would be the difference in his enjoyment if he does not believe in what the poet says. Should a poet believe in whatever he himself says? Should he believe fully or can he live by the partial belief in what he says? Can't a poet or his reader fully enjoy writing or reading what he does not, at all, or partially, believe? What is the essential relation between our enjoyment and belief while we are reading poetry?

Eliot frequently discussed these questions of belief and tells us that neither the poet nor the reader is obliged to believe in the ordinary way in the ideas which have been assimilated into the poetry or on which the poetry more or less tacitly rests. It is not very hard to find how Eliot must have come to have such a theory of Poetic belief. As a young agnostic, he read Dante and enjoyed him without believing wholly what Dante says. He thought *if he would be compelled to believe in all what Dante says, his pleasure of reading him would diminish.* He, therefore, conveniently tailored his theory of poetic belief. He even thought that a poet aso needs not believe what he says in his poetry, and it is better if he does not; he, then, would not serve the end of his belief; he would keep the flag of poetry high. Eliot found this theory a favourable defence for his own poetry. In 1927, when he entered the Anglican Communion he had to change some of his ideas but not fundamentally. It seems that "Eliot's point of view is psychological rather than dogmatic (actually he fails to distinguish between belief as personal conviction and belief as impersonal dogma)", and from this point of view it is natural to regard matters of belief as

being in a state of flux determined by individuality and historical climate. This way of looking at belief makes it a kind of constantly repeated interpretation of dogma in relation to the spirit of the age. And for such a task of interpretation the poet, we may conclude, is peculiarly fitted for it demands a great deal of intuition and sympathetic imagination. Thus, by what he implies, perhaps, rather than by what he actually says, Eliot relates the psychological nature of belief much more closely than is usual to the nature of the poetic imagination.

Eliot remarks: "We are forced to believe that there is a particular relation between the two, and that the poet 'means what he says'. If we learned for instance, that De Rerum Nataur was Latin exercise which Dante had composed for relaxation after completing the Divine Comedy, and published under the name of one Lucretius, I am sure that our capacity for either poem would be mutilated. Mr. Richard's statement (Science and Poetry, P.76 footnote) that a certain writer has effected a complete severance between his poetry and belief is to me incomprehensible".

Christian Smidt has ably pointed out three possible 'particular relations' between poetry and belief: *First*, there is the poetic use of philosophical ideas as a kind of game.....The game consists in making a kind of pattern of ideas, and for this purpose it is evident that borrowed ideas (and emotions) may serve the poet's turn as well as his own. Since every thing is proffered in play, the question of sincerity does not arise. *Secondly*, there is the emotional rendering of the poet's philosophy, which, as in the case of Lucretius or Dante, appears as a *fusion* between the philosophy and his natural feelings'. Eliot thinks that poems in which such a fusion has taken place were not designed to *persuade the readers to an intellectual assent* but to convey an emotional equivalent for the ideas.....The *third* possible legitimate relation between poetry and belief is that of poetic illustration of a philosophy which is already existent and moreover really accepted, so as to need no rational presentation or justification".

Whatever the objects of a poet may be in using a belief of whatever kind it may be according to Eliot, *great ideas or valid ideas do not simply themselves make poetry great;* even if the poet's ideas are acceptable to us; because his ideas agree with ours, it does not make by itself great poetry. But it shoud also not be considered that belief is quite immaterial to the poet; the belief is a kind of alloy to him, from which is derived his true material.

Now as far as the experience of a reader is concerned, one would very much like the reader to "recapture the emotion and thoughts of the poet", but Eliot likes him to enjoy poetry in his own way, "provided his appreciation is not too one-sided". He would suggest that "what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author". The reader, therefore, has a certain scope for finding his own beliefs in what he reads and colouring it with his own view of life. But in many cases he comes up against ideas or beliefs which are obstinately explicit and must be either accepted or rejected. And this brings us to the centre of the problem of the reader's poetic assent.

We are thus faced with the problem how far the reader can go along with the poet. He has to make his choice. This is a very important question and we have to see how Eliot solves it. In his famous essay on Dante, he says, and here, I have to quote him at some length: "If there is literature, if there is poetry, then it must be possible to have full literary or poetic appreciation without sharing the beliefs of the poet."

"If you deny the theory that full poetic appreciation is possible without belief in what the poet believed, you deny the existence of 'poetry' as well as 'criticism,' and if you push this denial to its conclusion, you will be forced to admit that there is very little poetry that you can appreciate and that your appreciation of it will be a function of your philosophy, or theology or something else. If on the other hand, I push my theory to the extreme, I find myself in a great difficulty. I am quite aware of the ambiguity of the word 'understand'. In one sense, it means to understand a view of life (let us say) without believing in it, the word 'understand' loses all meaning and the act of choice between one view and another is reduced to caprice. But if you yourself are convinced of a certain view of life, then you irresistibly and inevitably believe that if any one else comes to 'understand' it fully, his understanding must terminate in belief. It is possible and sometimes necessary, to argue that full understanding must identify itself with belief. A good deal, it thus turns out, hangs on the meaning, if any, of this short word 'full'.

In short, both the views I have taken in this essay and the view which contradicts it, are pushed to the end, what I call heresies (not of course, in the theological, but in a more general sense).

So I can conclude that *I cannot, in practice wholly separate my poetic appreciation from my personal beliefs.* Also that the distinction

between a statement and a pseudo-statement is not always in particular instances, possible to establish.....

Actually, one probably has more pleasure in the poetry when one shares the beliefs of the poet; on the other hand *there is a distinct pleasure in enjoying poetry as poetry when one does not share the belief*, analogous *to the pleasure of 'mastering' other men's philosophical systems.* It would appear that 'literary appreciation' is an abstraction, and pure poetry is phantom; and that both in creation and enjoyment much always enters which is, from the point of view of 'Art' irrelevant.

If the beliefs presented by a poet do not agree with our beliefs, it should not hamper the capability to enjoy the poem itself since enjoyment arouses from its *understanding*".

If Eliot can't enjoy Shelley's poetry, it is not because he does not have the same beliefs but because Shelley's poetry is not coherent, mature and is not founded on the facts of life. Let the poet present any theory or doctrine but for us as readers, it must have requisite qualities to reach our understanding fully. Eliot does not insist that a poet or a reader should completely shut his mind from all ideas; after all, poetry uses ideas, sometimes deliberate ideas. He advises the readers to suspend their belief or disagreement, for if they want to enjoy a poetic piece *they must give poetic assent to the poem* temporarily forgetting their own ideas and beliefs.

He candidly says "It is wrong to think that there are parts of the *Divine Comedy* which are of interest only to Catholics or to mediaevalists.....You are not called upon to believe what Dante believed, for your belief will not worth more of understanding and appreciation; but you are called upon more and more to undersand it. *If you can read poetry as poetry. you* will 'believe' in Dante's theology exactly as you believe in the physical reality of his journey; that is *you suspend both belief and disbelief.* I will not deny that it may be in practice easier for a Catholic to grasp the meaning, in many places, than for the ordinary agnostic; but that is not because the Catholic believes, but because he has been instructed."

It is not only in the regions of thought that the problem of poetic belief arises, but also in the realms of feelings. I. A. Richards, while agreeing with Eliot that the reader may not strictly and necessarily believe in the ideas of a poet, divides belief into two categories, 'intellec-

tual belief' and 'emotional belief' but this distinction does not fit in Richard's own observation in 'Principles of Literary Criticism', where he considers aesthetic and any other experience as similar; in fact, he believes in the *Psychic Unity*. Eliot would not agree to such a distinction; according to him the response of a reader to a poem should be taken as a whole. But, however, it does not mean that only rational analysis of a certain verse can carry us to the poetic assent. It is not only intellectual but emotional assent, a matter of sympathy with the poet's ideas, but whatever their contents may be, they have to be taken as a whole, a unity. Besides, belief can vary from mood to mood; when we are in a strict scientific bent of mind, we accord belief only to those things which are demonstrable; but, if we are in a romantic mood, we can sympathetically respond to a fairy land story. *It is the tone of the poem which givesus an initiative*, which carries to *a particular direction*. A poem which satisfies both our rational and emotional responses, gets, however, greater poetic assent.

III

Now, our first and foremost question that arises from the lengthy discussion we have had before is why at all there is a problem of poetic belief in Iqbal?

Why not such a question arises in the context of Ghalib? I have already said that our major Urdu tradition is *Ghazal* and in this genre of poetry, each verse has a different theme, and there is no unity of theme or thought or emotion in one single *Ghazal;* no doubt we may talk of a mood or a tone of a particular poet from the reading of his entire poetry but generally with a Ghazal Poet, this is very rare except the one like *Faiz* whose *Ghazal* moves like a *Nazam*.

It is not too much to say that the problem of poetic belief does not at all arise before Iqbal. The reason is that, perhaps, it is for the first time in Urdu poetry that *Nazam* gets a firm footing and flowers into an important tradition. No doubt, we have long poems like *Anis's* and *Dabir's Marsias*, *Naseem's*, *Shauq's* and Mir Hasan's *Masnawis*, *Zauq's* and *Sauda's Qaseedas*, but these can be either recognised as narrative poetry or nature poetry or the ghazal-poetry. In fact, *when I speak of a Nazam' I mean a poem laden with ideas, with thought, with one consistent theme, one tone.* Such a poem is not found in Urdu poetry before Iqbal; and it is not found in Iqbal as an instance, in fact,

it comprises the major part of Iqbal's major Poetry. The art of writing this kind of poem has not only began but also matured in Iqbal.

Iqbal's literary products provide a very interesting study of his mental development and the change in attitudes and finally the consolidation of his ideas into a firmer theory of life. Now I would suggest that Iqbal began as a poet, it was much later that he became a poet philosopher. His early poetry does not offer any serious problem. He had astray ideas and started as a poet of nature and patriotism. It is only after the publication of *Bal-e-Jabril* in 1935 and *Zarab-e-Kalim* in 1936 that he emerged as a philosophic poet. On their basis, his *Payam-e Mashrique*, *Asrar-e-Khudi* and *Ramoze-e-Bekhudi* strengthened his stand as a Philosopher-poet. At the moment we have no concern with his philosophical prose writings. Our main purpose is to find out what happened to Iqbal's poetry when he developed a common theme in his poetic works.

I have no doubt that a poet without a system of philosophy has better chances of success as a poet. The reason is, in such a case, the poet is not cut off from other streams of experience. A poet who has a philosophy to convey, deliberately ignores all other experiences, which, in no way, are inferior to his philosophic ideas, which may be as valuable as any other. Besides his art is circumscribed by his patent thoughts. Perhaps for that very reasons, *Akbar Allahabadi* and *Nazeer Akbarabadi* are not as great poets as Meer and Ghalib. *Now in order to transcend these difficulties, the poet has to have greater intellect and deeper and concertrated vision of life as Santayana holds.* There is also much truth in Eliot's remarks that Philosophy is, in a way, dangerous to a poet, because, he then serves the purpose of philosophy and not of poetry. But there are in this case, two important matters which we must take into account. It should not be accepted that the poet expresses his own feelings and ideas alone. Secondly with a great intellect and a great soul, a philosophy may become life-philosophy, that is, it may become a part of his personality, that it is imbibed by him, that he has not to think it every time, that it has become a part of his emotions; in such a case to my opinion, his philosophy should not hamper his poetry. With a great mind, *philosophy should assist the poet in becoming a greater poet; it is with an inferior mind that philosophy becomes a precarious thing.* As Santayana says, it is not the stretched world which is at fault with our narrow and diffused vision.

Granting that a poet may not necessarily believe in what he says,

it may be confidently said that a poet with great and disciplined intellect and a concentrated and deeper vision, believes in whatever he says and may produce great poetry. Iqbal is one such poet, who believes in what he says because he is man of vision; he thinks to purpose, he has a system of philosophy which he has absorbed into his emotions and life; he has a deeper and pervasive vision of things around; he has a comprehensive view of life; he is an inspired person. Now with Iqbal of forties deliberate attempt is out of question; Iqbal would have an inspiration and he would have content and form together. No doubt Eliot insists at times that it is a poem as a whole and not its ideas which are communicated but he finally submits to the fact that neither of the two is prior; form and matter are integral to each other. That seems to be a perfect truth in Iqbal.

It is only when that Iqbal fails to comprehend a particular idea deeply that he fails as a poet; or where he makes deliberate attempts to explain his philosophy that he does not achieve poetic arsent, for example at places in *Asrar-e-Khudi* and *Ramoze-e-Bekhudi*. And this is not unique with Iqbal; Goethe also fails at time as a poet where he is not inspired; where he is deliberately writing. An inspired poet, at an inspired moment writes great poetry retaining all his philosophy without any loss to his poetry. I think that borrowed ideas can never become a part of a poet's mental and emotional contents to the extent that he expresses them without thinking.

Iqbal at a time of his life was two persons, one, a philosopher, and the other a poet, but later the philosopher dominated. He thought and thought to purpose, and to such an extent that his thought wholly became the part of his feelings and emotions. Now when the poet and philosopher became so intermingly one in the maturing integration of his personality he wrote great poetry that can guide the philosophers. thinkers and the makers of history.

Now, if a poet philosopher is such a unity, with him should not, in fact, arise any such problem as of poetic belief, because as a poet, the rational and the emotional blend in him so marvellously that his philosophy is his passion. On this very basis, I contend that all his poetry which does not reflect his well settled attitude of life is an inferior one as compared to his philosophic poetry. In fact, this looks strange; it has been generally believed that a poet who has flashes is a greater poet, for example *Ghalib*. No doubts can be cast on the greatness of *Ghalib*, but he is great not only because he has flashes, but on

other grounds too which cannot be discussed in this article. Why does this phenomenon occur with Iqbal?

What we find in Iqbal's verse is the emotional equivalent of his thought and since his major passion was his philosophy, he is a great poet, when he writes philosophic poetry. Now here, we should not misunderstand the term *philosophic poetry; by it I mean the poetry which expresses the well-settled passion towards life and things.* The reader, after all, does not read his poetry, primarily to receive instruction; it may incidentally be there, but his primary response is emotional and he readily gives *poetic assent* to it and sympathises with it. Empodocles has written his philosophy in verse; it is not poetry because it is only a way of writing with him.

To sum up, I would submit that a poet like Iqbal is an inspired person, he writes poetry when he gets an inspiration. He has a vision of life and he imbibes it to the extent that it becomes a part of his personality. He thinks and thinks only, but when he writes, he does not think because by that time his thinking has become a passion. Such a poet does not convey ideas; he conveys the emotional transformation of the ideas. And such poetry must achieve poetic assent. Iqbal's major poetry was such a poetry in which the distinction of form and content, meaning and expression, thought and medium are transcended, and therefore it is the Master Passion identical with the Elan-vital, that was Iqbal.

I would suggest that a full-fledged Passion is emotion and thought, concept and image, content and form all together. It stirs up thinking, sentiments, motives, in short, the whole personality of the reader at the same time. And Iqbal's poetry is an all-embracing passion which by itself evokes poetic assent and suspends the beliefs of the reader.